

INCITING THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION: BLACK NEOCONSERVATISM IN
THE POST-CIVIL RIGHTS ERA

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of Cornell University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Professional Studies

by

La TaSha Beatrice Levy

January 2007

©2007 La TaSha Beatrice Levy

ABSTRACT

Black neoconservatism is one of the most contested political ideologies of the Post-Civil Rights era. As a challenge to mainstream Black political thought, Black neoconservatism enjoys a particular celebrity as the “bold new voice” in American racial discourse. This thesis critically analyzes Black neoconservative ideology as a counter-discourse: a direct opposition to the liberalism of the 1960s and the legacy of the Civil Rights and Black Power eras.

The emergence of Black neoconservatives as a significant collective in the Post-Civil Rights era correlates with the rise of the New Right in American politics since the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. The New Right has forcefully disputed the philosophy and strategy of civil rights legislation and the traditional quest for racial equality and justice. Black neoconservatives play an increasingly significant ideological role in conservative politics and public debate in the Post-Civil Rights period. Furthermore, their racial identity lends credence to the New Right’s attack on social policy that disproportionately benefits Black people in general and the Black poor particularly. Black neoconservatives dissent from the prevailing convention that racism and White supremacy have become subtle, but nevertheless remain formidable. They insist that civil rights legislation, government intervention and liberal programs have created a pathological dependency among African Americans. Black neoconservatives contend that this dependency is the true cause for the debilitating conditions of the Black underclass and the slow progress among African Americans. Essentially, Black neoconservatives blame the Black Power era for instilling a sense of entitlement among African Americans, and they charge civil rights leaders with profiting from the manipulation of racism.

The core of Black neoconservative critiques is their presumption that African Americans subscribe to a victim-oriented identity that exaggerates the saliency of racism in order to evoke “white guilt.” They argue that welfare and affirmative action are two bankrupt policies that perpetuate victimization and dependency among African Americans and impede racial progress. As such, Black neoconservatives maintain that self-help and personal responsibility are the only solutions to the nation’s enduring race problems.

Black neoconservatives are presumed to be marginal voices among the vast majority of African Americans. Nonetheless, they are gaining wider currency in the American racial discourse to ultimately shape racial attitudes and change public policy. Furthermore, this thesis posits that Black neoconservatives have taken a political posture that negates the legacy of Black liberation struggles in the United States, which is grounded in an emphasis on Black identity and opposition to racism. Although Black neoconservatives claim their ideology is rooted in the philosophy of Booker T. Washington, this thesis explores the ideology of archconservative George S. Schuyler as a prototypical progenitor of Black neoconservatism. The thesis details the political positions of Black neoconservatives by examining the works of Thomas Sowell, John McWhorter, Shelby Steele, Star Parker, Stephen Carter, Ward Connerly and Glenn Loury.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

La TaSha Levy was born in Washington D.C. on May 29, 1978 to Tanya C. Levy and William Parran. Raised by her mother, La TaSha enjoyed the spoils of being “the baby;” her sister La Shonne is eleven years her senior. Unfortunately, both of La TaSha’s parents have since passed on, but their emphasis on education, their love, encouragement and memory provide everlasting guidance and comfort in her life.

As a pre-teen, adverse circumstances prompted La TaSha’s mother to move to Alexandria, VA. The transition from “Chocolate City” to a predominantly White one peaked La TaSha’s interest in studying Black history and culture because of its omission in her school’s curriculum. At the age of 13, she enrolled in a Saturday program called Know Your History, sponsored by the Alexandria-Fairfax Alumni chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

Know Your History grounded its students in the legacy of African people in order to instill a sense of purpose, responsibility and a positive self-concept among young people during the crucial years of their development. La TaSha thrived in Know Your History and subsequently in school, as she applied her Saturday lessons to other areas in her life, especially in the classroom. In high school, she was the president of the Black Cultural Alliance and organized the school’s Black History Month program for three consecutive years.

La TaSha attended Hampton University for two years before transferring to the University of Virginia where she was afforded the opportunity to major in African and African American Studies. Upon graduating in the year 2000, La TaSha returned to Washington, DC to teach English and Social Studies at Maya Angelou Public Charter School. In 2001, she was honored with the opportunity to serve the University of

Virginia community as the Assistant Dean of the Office of African-American Affairs and Director of the Luther P. Jackson Black Cultural Center. After three years, La TaSha decided to pursue graduate study in the field she holds dear and enrolled in the Africana Studies and Research Center in 2004.

In the fall of 2006, La TaSha will join the first cohort of Northwestern's Ph.D. program in African American Studies.

This thesis is dedicated to Sowande Tichawonna and Jeffrey Reid,
The founders of Know Your History.
Thank you for planting the seed.

“I am because you are.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the Creator for strength and courage and for the many blessings bestowed upon me. Thank you Creator for surrounding me with extraordinary people, young and old, near and far who sustain me and make me whole, especially given the loss of my parents. Thank you Creator for blessing me with the memory of a phenomenal mother and woman. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to become close to my father and grow to love, trust and adore him.

I thank my parents, Tanya C. Levy and William Parran, for being just good old-fashioned folks, for their support, encouragement and sacrifice. Being at Cornell was excruciating without you because I wish you two were here to share my accomplishments. Although you are not with me physically, I feel your presence and exalt your memory. I miss you immensely.

There are so many people who have contributed to my success and sanity. I want to thank my sister La Shonne for your support, and for trying to make room for me when I come home to visit. I especially want to thank my Aunt Carolyn for sending me cards and calling me almost every week to check on me, I truly appreciate it. I thank my surrogate mother, Shirley Holbrook for your unwavering love and support. I miss you. Thank you Aunt Sondra for all of the trinkets and gifts you always give to me. I always enjoy our visits. I am also very grateful for the love and support of my Uncle Wilson and Aunt Debbie. I don't know how I would have managed without you. Thank you Uncle Teddy for your encouragement and support, I really appreciate you for being there for me. Family is so important to me, and I thank all of my cousins, my godmother Beverly, Mr. Holbrook, Uncle David, Lee, Dickie—and so many others. I love you and appreciate all that you all have given and

done for me during the various stages of my life. Rest in peace Aunt Janice, Aunt Berthalene, Andre, Grandma, Ernie, and Aunt Kathleen.

I am the luckiest person in the world because my best-good-friend is an Angel—Thank you Tammy for holding a sister down! Whether it was listening to me struggle or helping to brainstorm ideas for papers, you are such a tremendous source of comfort and inspiration. I am forever grateful for the numerous occasions you put some “change” in my account and my pocket, without me having to ask. Your support meant so much to me. Thank you for taking care of me.

For some reason, being in Ithaca made me a little more distant than I needed to be. My friends mean the world to me, and even though I did not call as often, you all are always in my heart, on my mind and in my prayers. I am thankful for my best friend Erica, my “partner in struggle.” One of these days, we are going to get our lives in order! Thank you for laughing at me. I love your smile. I want to also thank my beautiful friend Shirelle for making *me* laugh!! I truly appreciate your warmth and for opening your home to me when being in Shonne or Damian’s bed was getting to be a little too much. I also thank Shirelle and my “big sister” Nataki for partying with me when I came into town. I appreciate my “lil sister” Lisa and Sharmaine for also being wonderful friends to me. Thank you Sharmaine for being the ONLY person to visit me in Ithaca. Lisa and Erica know they wouldn’t have made it here if you didn’t suggest the trip and drive. In addition, I want to thank “Brien from Atlanta.” I can’t begin to express how grateful I am for your kindness and compassion. Thank you for always being there for me. To all of my dear friends who helped to prep me before I arrived in Ithaca—among them is Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou, thank you so much for your support! I especially want to thank Arkee Hodges for your guidance during the beginning stages of this journey. Even though we don’t speak often, I appreciate your friendship and admire your drive and vision. I also want to thank a couple of my

former students for keeping in touch and raising my spirits. Thank you Adrianna Cofield for your sunshine, I'm so proud of you. You were my first student, and you make me feel like I actually did a good job! You are such an inspiration to me. Keep up the great work. I also want to thank three of my former students at UVA—Thank you Ciandress for IM'ing me during those late night hours, and checking up on my progress with this thesis! It's always a pleasure to hear from you. Special thanks to Alea for inspiring me to write poetry again. And of course, Keonna Carter—"the Kid"—thank you for trusting me with your drama! I appreciate you for checking in with me from time to time, and I look forward to our friendship developing once I move to Chicago!

I wouldn't have made it to Cornell without the encouragement and support of my mentor Dr. M. Rick Turner. I am indebted to you for believing in me. Working with you and Dean Sylvia Terry was truly a blessing. You are an exceptional teacher and a superb role model, and I am truly privileged to have been your student. I am thankful for you and Mrs. Tamara Turner for your guidance, your love and support. I miss my family at the University of Virginia: Kyle Bowman, Betty Bowman, the Sistah-Circle, Colette Dabney, Beverly Adams, Paul Gaston, Deborah McDowell, Terri Moore, Corey Walker and so many others—I love you all.

It's funny how I have come across so many extraordinary "older" women who make me think of my mother. By no accident I have been blessed with the love and support of Maxine Holland, whose eyes are as piercing as Tanya's, and who ironically shares my mother's love for dance and clutter as well! Thank you Ms. Maxine for being a dear friend. I truly miss you and Mrs. Tamara Turner, our long talks and snacks! I have learned so much from you two, and cherish the times we've spent together.

When I first began to take the first steps to apply to graduate school I called on my favorite professor from Hampton University, Dr. Alan Colon for guidance. Dr. Colon, I remember you were there for me when the loss of my mother was fresh. I learned so much from you. You are such a tremendous source of inspiration and I am ecstatic that we have reconnected. I carry your lessons with me always and appreciate your commitment to Black Studies and to students. Thank you.

Finally, I thank my Cornell family at the Africana Center! I truly appreciate the opportunity to study under such remarkable people: my professors Dr. N'Dri Assie-Lumumba, Dr. Ali Mazrui, Dr. James Turner, and Dr. Ayele Bekerie—It was a pleasure! I want to thank my special committee, Dr. James Turner and Dr. Robert Harris, Jr., for your guidance in writing this thesis. It was an honor to work with you two. I especially want to thank Mwalimu Abdu Nanji for being so supportive of me. You are often known for your relaxed, carefree and positive spirit, but you are also a brilliant mind, and I've learned so much from you. Thank you for your guidance during the beginning stages of my thesis and for your patience and flexibility. I truly appreciate you. I also cherish the moments I have had with Dr. Assie-Lumumba outside of the classroom. Having the opportunity to spend time with you was a blessing. Thank you for your passion, your courage and your love for students. You are absolutely amazing. In addition, I am forever indebted to Dr. James Turner for having such a profound impact on me. I admire your brilliance, integrity and your "cool." Thank you for always being an advocate and for your commitment to the discipline. You are a living legend, and it's been an honor to know you.

Finally, I want to thank my cohort! Even though you all have seen my ugly sides, you still lift me up. Thank you so much for being serious scholars who know how to have a good time. Balance is so important, and I am so blessed to have had you all in my life. Thank you Jody-Anne for being a friend to me. I appreciate the

times that you allowed me to cry on your shoulder and for all the times you made us laugh. “*At the end of the day Folks...*” you are a joy to be around. Thanks Shelly “*It’s gonna be okay...*” and Billye “*Greetings*” for your support and encouragement. You two were definitely sources of positive energy. I’m also really proud of both of you. Thank you Terrence for saving my life on so many occasions. “*So, you wanna hear something funny...*”—you have been a remarkable friend, and I truly appreciate you for being there for me. Taj, you are so inspiring. Thank you for being my ace! I will never forget your support and the example you lead. I can’t think of one of your common sayings, I just remember you swinging and jumping on everything.

I also want to thank the class before us for welcoming me to Ithaca and embracing me during my first year, especially Candace, Jonathan, Richard, Ann, and James. I sincerely appreciate Candace for your support and friendship, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for taking care of my cat, Magick!

I definitely would not have made it through without the support and encouragement of Jonathan. Over the past two years, you have been an exceptional friend and role model. Thank you for taking care of me and for “helping me carry my burdens.” You are such a beautiful person and I treasure your friendship.

My journey has definitely been blessed by the presence of Jimmy and Denine. I thank you two for being here and for being so supportive. Thank you Denine for being such a beautiful and giving person, and also for your assistance with the editing of this thesis. I also want to thank Frederick for your warmth and great conversations. Good luck to all of the first-years. I wish you all the best! Special thanks to Professor Grady-Willis, Professor Gerald Jackson and Professor Edmondson for your support. I also want to acknowledge the staff, especially, Judy, Sheila, Eric, and Sharon—thank you for your assistance. Ken Glover, you are amazing. Thank you so much for your

presence. You do an excellent job with Ujamaa and your spirit is so important to our community. Thank you for your support.

Lastly, I want to thank my love and joy, my nephew Damian who is 9 and my goddaughter Devin who is 5. You two are beautiful, marvelous, intelligent and just hilarious. I want so much for you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction		1
Chapter One:	Charting the Black Alternative: Booker T. Washington and George S. Schuyler	21
Chapter Two:	The Rise of Black Neoconservatives	62
Chapter Three:	Alternative Visions: The Truth According to Black Neoconservatives	85
Chapter Four:	A Closer Look: Illuminating the Personal Scripts of Black Neoconservative Celebrities	118
Conclusion		162
References		182

INTRODUCTION

Black neoconservatism is one of the most contested political ideologies of the Post-Civil Rights era. As a significant challenge to the mainstream of Black political thought, Black neoconservatism enjoys a peculiar celebrity as the “bold new voice” in the American racial discourse. Black neoconservatives often pride themselves on pushing against the grain, countering well-established, historical sentiments among African Americans. They have made it their mission to oppose what they consider to be the “dominant narrative” of the Black experience and the “guiding paradigm” for racial uplift. Conservative authors Joseph Conti and Brad Stetson discuss the purpose of dissent among Black neoconservatives. They explain:

At its most fundamental level, theirs is a *debunking project*. It is a protestation concerning the dominant, routinized racist philosophy at work in America. It rejects the conventional wisdom that a liberal political agenda is identical with the best interests of black Americans...¹

Like Conti and Stetson, Black neoconservatives suggest that the dominant narrative bloomed in the late 1960s when Black became “beautiful,” and African Americans increasingly embraced their African heritage by identifying with Africa as a homeland and as a source of cultural inspiration and historical memory. However, some African Americans who felt marginalized during this historical moment have organized themselves as strident voices. According to Conti and Stetson, they are “...a minority within a minority, criticizing certain now-entrenched attitudes that in the 1960s, spoke with romantic passion. The years have transformed those espousing these once-revolutionary viewpoints into what the New Black Vanguard perceives as imperious

¹ Joseph Conti and Brad Stetson, *Challenging the Civil Rights Establishment: Profiles of a New Black Vanguard* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 9.

and doctrinaire sentiments of “proper” racial attitudes.”² Thus, Black neoconservatives argue that the narrative of Black America that largely characterizes the Post-Civil Rights era is one that is abstract, superficial, bankrupt, and stifling, and it ignores the “real problem” and the “truth” about Black America.

The narrative that typifies African American political culture was actually born out of a protracted struggle for freedom and equality, creating a Black identity that not only purports a particular cultural and historical experience among African Americans, but also identifies a common goal and a common oppressor among Black people of the African Diaspora. Yet, Black neoconservatives insist that the dominant narrative is a litany of depressing events, violence and a culture of failure. And so the story goes...*Black people were slaves, brutally treated as second-class citizens by White racists who maintain their superiority through “institutional racism.”* Black neoconservatives suggest that images of “the man” and “the system” are used as symbols to convey the paradigm that charges “whiteys” for keeping their boots on the necks of Blacks, holding back their means to success and relegating them to the lowest level of society. Joblessness, crime, drug abuse, single motherhood and poverty are all attributed to “the system” of racism. Despite the role of capitalism and racism in perpetuating extreme inequality concentrated among African Americans, Black neoconservatives reject this narrative and what they assume is the conventional response that follows it—that Blacks must unite, instill a sense of racial and cultural pride among themselves and hold the United States government accountable and responsible for the state of Black America.

This thesis critically analyzes Black neoconservatism as a counter-discourse: a direct challenge to the liberalism of the 1960s and the legacy of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. Black neoconservatism argues its own narrative, which

² Ibid., 10.

dismisses the racial sins of the past and instead promotes the idea of a reformed nation that repented during the Civil Rights movement. According to this narrative, the United States is the home of broad opportunity in which Blacks do not take sufficient advantage. Moreover, the relics of the past: *whitey*, *the man* and *the system* are no longer roadblocks to opportunity or development. As such, Black neoconservatives maintain that circumstance is determined by one's own work ethic and personal choices. Hence, the guiding paradigm of Black neoconservatism is that Blacks must now take responsibility for their own development and the nation must take a colorblind approach in all things in order to heal from its racial past. Political scientist Michael Dawson defines ideology as:

...a world-view readily found in the population, including sets of ideas and values that cohere, that are used publicly to justify political stances, and that shape and are shaped by society. Further, political ideology helps to define who are one's friends and enemies, with whom one would form political coalitions, and, furthermore, contains a causal narrative of society and the state. Cognitively, ideology serves as a filter of what one "sees" and responds to in the social order.³

The thesis uses Dawson's definition of ideology to examine the doctrine that guides Black neoconservatism.

Black neoconservatives have forcefully come from the margins during the Post-Civil Rights era to fearlessly define and deconstruct the problems of Black America. The main purpose of Black neoconservatives is to challenge Black Power and the legacy of the Civil Rights movement, which they refer to as "the civil rights establishment" in neoconservative parlance. They use the term as defined by Clint Bolick in *Changing Course: Civil Rights at the Crossroads*, who "understands the 'civil rights establishment' as a core of groups and organizations committed to

³ Michael Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary Africa- American Political Ideologies* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 4-5.

advancing, through political means, a revised agenda, not of civil rights, but of social entitlement and privilege.”⁴ Black neoconservatives have made it their business to castigate Civil Rights and Black Nationalist leaders and organizations by labeling them as “race-mongers,” “race-baiters,” and the “soul patrol.” However, their critiques of the Civil Rights movement are not the most controversial aspects of their ideology. The legacy of the Civil Rights movement leaves much to be desired as African Americans continue to struggle politically, socially and economically. Indeed, many of the goals of the movement, including integration, have always been points of contention among Black people as the Black Power movement demonstrates. However, Black neoconservatism is most provocative because of its underlying ideology of colorblindness that fuels a series of problems in the larger context of Black liberation struggle. Yet, this thesis suggests that Black neoconservatism offers a valid critique of White liberalism and the way in which the Democratic Party has taken African American voters for granted. Even though Black neoconservatism challenges African American loyalty to the Democratic Party, there is also a question about the extent to which the Republican Party serves as a viable alternative for African Americans.

Beginning with the Fairmont Conference of 1980 held in San Francisco, California, as the site of a nascent ideology among Black conservatives, the thesis examines the trajectory of Black neoconservatism primarily from 1980-2004. This time period is significant due to the widespread conservatism that swept the political scene of the presidential election of Ronald Reagan and remained a constant thread in American politics through George Bush’s administration and even Bill Clinton’s moderate liberalism.

⁴ Conti and Stetson, 4.

To set the stage for the rise of Black neoconservatism, political scientist Ronald Walters notes that there was only one Democratic presidential administration from 1968 to 1992. He states:

This transition period prepared the ground for the emergence of the new Black Conservatives, who are very different from their Black Republican predecessors. They have moved beyond the older economic utilitarianism that prompted their precursors to become associated with the Republican Party and adopted the more comprehensive and orthodox Conservative ideological framework, which encompasses a strongly Conservative economic and social orientation together with an anti-civil rights posture.⁵

Walters' observation suggests that the extensive reign of conservative presidential administrations created an environment that provided Black neoconservatives with a platform, moving them from the margins of political discourse. Likewise, historian Manning Marable explains, "...By the 1990s the political terrain shifted even further to the right. Although a Democrat was elected to the presidency in 1992, the Clinton administration pursued policies that only 20 years before would have been described as "Liberal Republicanism."⁶

Adolph Reed, Jr. explains this shift in the 1990s as the consolidation of a "hegemonic ideology" that gained currency since the election of Ronald Reagan.⁷ According to Reed, liberal Democrats commissioned to prove their loyalty to the American mainstream, defined as working- and middle-class Whites, by distancing themselves from special interest groups. In effect, liberals retreated from the quest for racial justice and equality due to their concern about being held in disfavor by the

⁵ Ronald Walters, *White Nationalism, Black Interests: Conservative Public Policy and the Black Community* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 235.

⁶ Manning Marable, *Black Liberation in Conservative America* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1997), 1997.

⁷ Adolph Reed, Jr., ed., *Without Justice for All: The New Liberalism and Our Retreat from Racial Equality* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 1.

majority of Whites who are regarded as the nation's social conservatives.⁸ Race issues, especially as they pertain to African Americans, were considered divisive. Ultimately, both Republicans and Democrats circumvented racial justice by placing emphasis on personal responsibility. Reed observes:

Using race—more specifically, opposition to blacks—as a foundation for political solidarity among whites who on that basis support policies and programs that might otherwise disadvantage them is a motif in American politics that can be traced back through the white supremacist consolidation in the South at the end of the nineteenth century, to the formation of the antebellum Jacksonian coalition, and all the way to Bacon's Rebellion in the 1670s.⁹

Ronald Walters confirms Reed's observation with an analysis of the First and Second Reconstructions. Similar to Reed's "hegemonic ideology," Walters identifies White Nationalism as the organizing principle upon which the majority of Whites have aligned themselves "not only against the state but also against the presumed clients of the state who are perceived to constitute the 'offensive culture.'" ¹⁰ Walters postulates, "Blacks have become a main aspect of the 'offending culture,' and some Nationalist Whites have come to feel that it is legitimate to express their views by physical, verbal and policy attacks on Blacks—or on symbols of Black progress and community well-being—as a mechanism for restoring their own self esteem."¹¹ The 1990s epitomize this trend as President Bill Clinton endorsed a neoliberal agenda that departed from the liberalism that was characteristic of the Democratic Party since Franklin D. Roosevelt, in both economic and racial terms.

Similarly, Philip Klinkner suggests that Clinton's neoliberalism abandoned equality and justice, particularly for African Americans, as such principles became

⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁹ Ibid., 6.

¹⁰ Walters, 22.

¹¹ Ibid.

increasingly “unpopular and an affront to ‘traditional’ values.”¹² Equality and justice were replaced by accentuating personal responsibility and behavior, and the 1960s were blamed for proliferating divisive “identity politics.” By the end of the 1990s, the distinctions between Democrats and Republicans, neoliberals and conservatives were nebulous as the New Right gained currency in American politics.

Eventually, conservative political influence became institutionally entrenched in American politics once George W. Bush appointed conservative African Americans to his presidential cabinet in the year 2000. The visibility of Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice projected a different face of the Republican Party that provided the opportunity to attract more African Americans to the GOP and support conservative policies.

The rise of Black neoconservatives in the Post-Civil Rights period is also significant because of the absence of a recognizable and progressive national Black leadership. Lewis Randolph submits, “The deaths of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Fannie Lou Hamer and others created a leadership vacuum. Additionally, Black leadership representing the liberal and Democratic Party section of the U.S. political spectrum found itself ineffective in responding to a plethora of social and economic problems.”¹³ Unfortunately, civil rights organizations, particularly the NAACP, have not put forth strategies to combat the changing terrain of racial politics and inequity. According to Derrick Bell:

Given the setbacks in civil rights suffered in recent decades, and the decline in the relative well-being of so many people of color, civil rights adherents need to reconsider our racial goals. We need to examine what it was about our reliance on racial remedies that may have prevented us from recognizing that these legal rights could do little more than bring about the cessation of one

¹² Philip A. Klinkner, “Bill Clinton and the Politics of the New Liberalism,” in *Without Justice for All*, ed. Adolph Reed, Jr. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 12.

¹³ Lewis Randolph, “Black Neoconservatives in the United States: Responding with Progressive Coalitions,” in *Race and Politics*, ed. James Jennings (London: Verso, 1997), 152.

form of discriminatory conduct that soon appeared in a more subtle though no less discriminatory form. I hope this examination leads us to redefine goals of racial equality and opportunity to which blacks have adhered for more than a century.¹⁴

Black leadership has yet to effectively meet the challenges of the Post-Civil Rights era, which requires alternatives to legislative battles and a critical analysis of what constitutes racial equality. It is within this context that Black neoconservatism came to thrive on the political landscape as they offer their own alternative vision.

Black neoconservatives identify themselves as “dissenters.” Although they claim their dissent is rooted in individualism, a founding tradition of the United States, this thesis seeks to identify their collective politics and the guiding principles of their dissent. Dissension among segments of African Americans is not new. However, given the peculiar racial climate of the Post-Civil Rights/Post-Black Power era, in which legalized racism through segregation was largely abolished, this thesis interrogates the particularities of Black neoconservatives during a new age of racial politics. Upon identifying the key figures and programmatic agenda, the thesis conceptualizes Black neoconservatism as a solidified, political movement that challenges liberalism and is a direct response to Black consciousness of the Black Power era. Black neoconservatives essentially dissent from what they refer to as “racial loyalty” and solidarity among African Americans.

The thesis utilizes core political texts to identify Booker T. Washington and George S. Schuyler as progenitors of Black neoconservatism since both of them represent alternative views within African American political culture. Subsequently, the thesis delineates the standard principles, political positions and epistemology of Black neoconservatism. I examine the works of Stephen Carter, Shelby Steele, John

¹⁴ Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 187.

McWhorter, Ward Connerly, Star Parker and Thomas Sowell as seminal texts that provide insights to the common threads among dissenters that this thesis characterizes as “Black neoconservative.” Even though most of these individuals do not identify themselves as neoconservative—often rejecting the term because of its stigma—this thesis purports an interpretation of the label as one that best describes the new age conservatism among Black dissenters that embraces a particular vision for Black America.

Dawson identifies Black conservative ideology as the least effective and the most problematic among the masses of Black people.¹⁵ While scholars may agree with Dawson’s assessment of the impact of Black neoconservatives, their prominence on the center stage of racial politics in the Post-Civil Rights era is a formidable challenge to the racial orthodoxy of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements and White liberalism. Though their influence in electoral politics is limited, their political arguments are receiving broad attention and patronage. Essentially, the thesis explores the following research questions: What is Black neoconservatism? Who is their constituency? How are they organized? What is their relationship to the Republican Party and to White neoconservatism? In what ways do Black neoconservatives maintain and depart from the legacy of Booker T. Washington and George S. Schuyler? What are the core beliefs, values and political positions of Black neoconservatism? How do their personal experiences inform their political stances? How does Black neoconservatism converge or depart from traditional Black conservatism? What are the logic, contradictions and deficiencies of their arguments?

Authors Stan Faryna, Brad Stetson and Joseph G. Conti argue that Black conservatism is not definitive or monolithic. They suggest, “Conservative African

¹⁵ Dawson, 281.

Americans speak in many different voices and hold a variety and sometimes divergent opinions and ideas...”¹⁶ Interestingly enough, the authors continue:

But they are all characterized by a sanguineness about the American prospect and a humanistic—as opposed to a race-centered—consciousness that leads them to manifest social, political, and economic concerns that are not tinged with the hue of racial victimization which is so pervasive in the discourse of conventional black advocates.¹⁷

While conservative African Americans do in fact hold a variety of opinions and ideas, this thesis posits that the particular social, political and economic concerns of Black neoconservatism formulate a specific definition that may be fluid, but is still coherent. Lewis Randolph cites the following directives as central to the Black neoconservative agenda:

First, do away with affirmative action; second, follow the “Booker T. Washington approach” to uplift the Black poor; third, do not rely on government to address race problems in America; fourth, focus exclusively on self-help programs and activities for resolving problems in the African American community; and finally, demand that the African American middle class take responsibility for instructing the Black poor about morals and family values as a way to fundamentally assist them in escaping poverty.¹⁸

My research expands upon Randolph’s succinct definition by conceptualizing Black neoconservatism as a political ideology of the Post-Civil Rights era that embraces colorblindness and rejects Black identity and political culture that were pronounced during the Black Power era.

I also identify the core of Black neoconservative ideology as an alternative approach to racial politics and identity in America that defames liberalism and Black

¹⁶ Stan Faryna et al., eds., *Black and Right: The Bold New Voice of Black Conservatives in America* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), xiv.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Randolph, 149.

consciousness of the 1960s and the Black underclass. Black neoconservatives' recently established relationship with the Republican Party and its "outsider" critiques of the Black underclass characterize its newness within the stream of African American political and racial discourse. Black neoconservatives are generally opposed to affirmative action and expansion of the welfare state for African Americans. They are anti-government intervention, programs and set-asides; and they dismiss racism as a systemic barrier for African American development and success. They blame a culture of "victimology" as central to the stifling conditions of Black America. Yet, they believe in the values and culture of the White middle class as normative. They criticize the Black underclass for having a degenerate culture, which is presented as the cause for the plight of the urban poor, and they propose self-improvement as the only solution. In addition, they advocate individualism and assimilation, reject race consciousness and collective identity, and claim to speak the truth about race relations in America and Black people in particular.

Those who are the most notable public voices of Black neoconservatism are intellectuals, government officials, journalists and civic activists. Thus, they utilize a holistic approach in their attempts to reshape the attitudes of American citizens, increase advocacy for the Republican Party and ultimately to change public policy. In one of the few comprehensive books that critique contemporary Black conservatives, *Dimensions of Black Conservatism in the United States: Made in America*, editors Gayle T. Tate and Lewis A. Randolph provide a critical analysis of the role of Black conservatives throughout United States history. In their examination, Tate and Randolph identify three main ideological strains of contemporary Black conservatives that have come to prominence since Reagan's administration: antistatists, organic, and

neoconservative.¹⁹ Antistatists are those who advocate “a restrictive role of government,” and “favor an increased reliance on individual initiatives.”²⁰ Accordingly, “antistatists represent the ‘establishment’ or the moderate wing of the Republican Party.” Since the 1980s, Black antistatists include Glenn Loury, Thomas Sowell and Walter Williams among others.²¹ However, Tate and Rudolph note that the contemporary antistatists are far more conservative than their predecessors of the 1960s and 1970s. They submit:

In essence, these antistatists believe that if blacks simply work harder, and place more emphasis on achievement rather than the historical and contemporary racial constraints—enslavement, segregation, and racial profiling—and the struggle for social equality, they will ameliorate most of their problems.²²

Hence, contemporary antistatists focus most of their criticism on the Black underclass and note the failure of Great Society programs like affirmative action and welfare, which they contend have strengthened a sense of dependency and hopelessness among African Americans.²³

Tate and Randolph suggest that organic conservatism characterizes the “religious far right” of the Republican Party. They state, “Their intricate network of foundations, think tanks, institutions, radio and television shows, and publishing houses have strengthened and promoted their ideological positions.”²⁴ Historically, White organic conservatives opposed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. However, their Black contemporaries like Armstrong Williams, Elizabeth Wright, Anne Wortham and Alan Keyes focus their attention on the moral

¹⁹ Gayle T. Tate and Lewis A. Randolph, eds., *Dimensions of Black Conservatism in the United States: Made in America* (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2002), 2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 3.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

decay of the Black community and traditional family values. Therefore, this group of Black neoconservatives traces the problem of the urban poor to Black people themselves—who in their summation—are responsible for the absence of work ethics, poverty, drug abuse and broken families in Black communities.²⁵

The final component of contemporary Black conservatism is neoconservatives. Tate and Randolph define this subset as:

...principally former liberals who were disillusioned with the liberal social agenda of the 1960s and 1970s and are now opposed to liberalism in general, and more specifically, to the government expansion of the welfare state. This group is loosely comprised of former black power advocates, progressive liberals, socialists and communists.²⁶

Like the organic conservatives, neoconservatives emphasize traditional family values, but they primarily bring focus to the issue of meritocracy and anti-affirmative action or racial preference as the core of their ideology. In this category, Tate and Randolph include Shelby Steele, Stephen Carter, Tony Brown, Clarence Thomas and Roy Innis.²⁷ The editors note, “Some of the neoconservatives are recent converts to the conservative movement and have quickly been able to gain media visibility by emphasizing traditional family values, the ineffectiveness of affirmative action, and the viability of capitalism for all Americans.”²⁸

Although Tate and Randolph’s analysis is useful, the thesis differs in its use of “neoconservative” as the larger rubric under which the other categories fall. Therefore, one’s classification as an antistatist, organic or former liberal all fall under the category of neoconservative. In addition, this thesis departs from *Dimensions of Black Conservatism in the United States* by bringing focus to the group of “dissenters”

²⁵ Tate and Randolph, 4.

²⁶ Ibid., 4.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

who have come to prominence in tandem with Ronald Reagan's political influence. Yet, the book provides important insights that helped to steer the direction of this thesis, which set to fill the void in the current literature on Black neoconservatives.

Black Conservatism vs. Black Neoconservatism

It is important to distinguish Black neoconservatism from Black conservatism. Lewis Randolph purports "that the earlier version of Black conservatism had a pragmatic and philosophical orientation that allowed its supporters to work with liberals."²⁹ Conti and Stetson expand this point when they contend, "The New Black Vanguard is 'new' in the sense that today it stands in stark opposition to, and has the potential to end, the longstanding political hegemony of the 'civil rights establishment.'"³⁰ In addition, the Black neoconservative dismissal of racism and rejection of racial identity also provide points of contention with traditional Black conservatism. While African Americans are generally social conservatives, their political orientations have always fallen to the left of the American political spectrum. Political scientist Ronald Walters observes:

...As early as 1978 there was evidence that for Blacks in general, "issue Conservatism" does not translate into political Conservatism. One might theorize that there is little direct correlation because many Blacks place higher priority on issues such as socioeconomic status, equality, fair treatment and the urgent necessity to employ nonconservative methods to attain them. Law suits, protest demonstrations and political mobilization all indicate a strong orientation toward social change rather than toward the stability offered by Conservatism.³¹

Given racial inequality and discrimination, African Americans have had very little to conserve in the social and political arenas.

²⁹ Randolph, 151.

³⁰ Conti and Stetson, 41.

³¹ Walters, 230 - 231.

Essentially, Black neoconservatism is a “new” phenomenon ushered in by the Reagan administration, which precipitated a unique strand of conservatism that is distinct from the traditional conservatism known to many African Americans. This neoconservatism both sustains and departs from traditional Black conservatism. First, it maintains the tradition of those Blacks who prefer assimilation, embrace White cultural norms and seek approval from Whites. The tug between integration and autonomy, complicity and resistance has been an ongoing struggle throughout the experiences of Black people in the United States. More importantly, Black neoconservatism presents a major departure from traditional Black conservatism in its organization and sponsorship, its dismissal of racism and racial identity, coupled with its affiliation with a political party.

Michael L. Ondaatje also makes an important observation of “new” Black conservatives. He writes:

What is striking, then, about contemporary black conservatives is that, unlike their predecessors, they have relatively few links with black social and political customs and institutions, and are not structurally accountable to the community for which they claim to speak...Today’s black conservatives have been able to propose ideas for alleviating black social misery with scant regard for the dominant pattern of opinion among African American people themselves.³²

Here, Ondaatje highlights the fact that most Black neoconservatives are not grounded in Black communities nor do they have allegiance to Black institutions. Essentially, their influence primarily rests outside of Black communities. The evolution of Black conservatism attests to the fact that all ideologies are fluid and are often reshaped and reformulated over time and space. Yet, Black neoconservatism distinguishes itself by

³² Michael L. Onadaatje, “Counterfeit Heroes or Colour-Blind Visionaries? The Black Conservative Challenge to Affirmative Action in Modern America,” *Australian Journal of Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2, December 2004, p. 32., <www.anzasa.arts.usyd.edu.au/a.j.a.s/docs/contents_2004.htm> (30 April 2006).

its unprecedented patronage from White conservative think tanks and foundations and its anti-civil rights posture.

The Angry Turn of Civil Rights

Black neoconservatives profess that “Black racism” took center stage once the Civil Rights movement diverged from its original purpose. Instead of transitioning into a colorblind America, Black Power produced a climate of hostility, transforming the Black liberation struggle into a web of anger, entitlement, despondency, underachievement and White guilt. Author Shelby Steele notes, “With integration, black entitlement derived from constitutional principles of fairness. Black power changed this by skewing the formula from rights to color—if you were black, you were entitled.”³³ Thus, Black neoconservatives claim that Black Power transformed the path toward racial harmony, and African Americans took advantage of the nation’s vulnerability beset by the Civil Rights movement. As such, African Americans use their race as a tool of power that ravishes Whites with guilt. Black neoconservatives insist that African Americans are then accorded various privileges and preferences namely affirmative action and welfare. Even though their critiques often target Black Power, affirmative action and programs for the poor were objectives of the Civil Rights movement.

John McWhorter pushes the envelope even further when he argues:

Before the 1960s, Civil Rights leaders were focused on eliminating discriminatory practices. The idea was that with these concrete barriers eliminated, black Americans would make their way to the mountaintop *even in a less than ideal world*. Since then, however, the new assumption has been that our job is to eradicate not discrimination but “racism”—how whites feel about us—regardless of whether or not there are discriminatory laws on the

³³ Steele, Shelby, *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 140.

books. You know, that “racism” we can tar whites for and leave them with nothing to say. While we walk away feeling triumphant—sweet solace for a people with our history...Racism, then, is not “What we really need to be talking about.”³⁴

Moreover, McWhorter submits that there are three ideologies that took center stage within Black America since the late 1960s: the cult of Victimology, the cult of Separatism and the cult of Anti-Intellectualism. These ideologies are the new enemies of Black progress, which Black people have brought upon themselves because they choose to identify with these supposed cults. According to McWhorter, the “cults” are all rooted in the Black Power era that presumably produced an exaggerated Black victimization that shapes Black identity and culture.

Another level of Black neoconservatism purports that racism is not nearly as vicious as it was forty years ago and even before the revolutions of the 1960s Blacks were steadily advancing economically and socially. Since Blacks no longer have to contend with structural racism sanctioned by law, Black neoconservatives maintain that their lack of success must be inherent, at least culturally. From IQ scores and other standardized testing to current housing segregation and exponential incarceration rates, Black neoconservatives argue that any of the set backs that Blacks now experience must be of their own doing. McWhorter suggests:

Yet the fact remains that even before the Civil Rights Act and its progeny, such as Affirmative Action and expanded welfare, black incomes and employment were on the rise—we were on our way to realizing ourselves even *without* a leg up, although without King it may have taken longer.³⁵

Like McWhorter, the neoconservatives also mention various surveys that reflect the decline of racism, insinuating that Whites no longer hold racist attitudes toward

³⁴ John McWhorter, *Authentically Black: Essays for the Black Silent Majority* (New York, NY: Gotham Books, 2004), 21-22.

³⁵ McWhorter, *Authentically Black*, 17-18.

Blacks. In fact, they often make reference to the moral enlightenment that swept White citizens in the 1960s, which resulted in major changes in terms of racial attitudes. As their primary evidence, Black neoconservatives illuminate the notion that most Whites openly reject and refuse to identify with anyone who espouses White supremacy. To them, this is a sure marker of the declining significance of race and racism. Black neoconservatives fail to acknowledge the distinction between White supremacy—which is institutional and structural—from the prejudiced attitudes and beliefs of individuals. McWhorter argues:

Whites responded to Dr. King’s moral call to eliminate legalized segregation, and have come a long way in recasting their vision of blacks as humans rather than chattel. For most Whites today, to be called a racist is as horrifying a prospect as being pegged as a witch was in Colonial America. But Whites have gone about as far as they will; the rest of the job is ours.³⁶

McWhorter does not explain how African Americans are to achieve political and economic parity if Whites will not go any further than recognizing Blacks as human beings. He refuses to acknowledge the power dynamics that are drawn along racial lines. Instead, Black neoconservatives insist that African Americans have changed for the worst and have become more race conscious than ever before despite congenial racial attitudes among Whites. Since Black neoconservatives overwhelmingly support the position that racism is no longer a significant aspect of American society, it is often dismissed as an unfortunate blunder in American history. Their ideology assumes that racism ended with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and they often espouse a faith in the goodwill of White people. The problem is with Blacks themselves, who according to the neoconservative position are the racists, blaming almost every unfortunate human condition on the quintessential “white man.” Their writings

³⁶ Ibid., 34.

consistently accuse Blacks of playing the infamous “race card” in order to invoke White guilt. For them, the race card is the new “Black Power,” which is exploited to mask or explain away real deficiencies among African Americans.

Outline of Chapters

In chapter one, “Charting the Black Alternative: Booker T. Washington and George S. Schuyler,” the thesis gives a brief history of Black conservatism, identifying a continuum of Black alternative thought among African Americans. The chapter traces the historical roots of Black neoconservatives by linking them to Booker T. Washington and George S. Schuyler, both of whom serve as endearing symbols and models of inspiration for the Black neoconservative movement.

Chapter two, “The Rise of Black Neoconservatives,” details the Black Alternatives Fairmont Conference of 1980 and the Republican Party’s mission to cultivate a new Black leadership. The chapter discusses the key figures, organizations and patrons of Black neoconservatives, their constituency and their relationship to White neoconservatives.

In chapter three, “Alternative Visions: The Truth According to Black Neoconservatives,” the thesis details the central components of Black neoconservative philosophy and public policy. It identifies colorblindness as the core of Black neoconservative ideology and details its primary arguments, which include issues of racial and individual identity, the saliency of racism, affirmative action, welfare, the Black underclass, self-help, victimization, personal responsibility and morality. This chapter also discusses the tone of Black neoconservative censures that often compares African Americans to children or animals.

Chapter four, “Taking a Closer Look: Illuminating the Personal Scripts of Black Neoconservatives,” scrutinizes the life experiences and personal stories of Ward

Connerly, Star Parker, Shelby Steele and Glenn Loury, all of whom are critical to the shaping and perpetuation of Black neoconservative ideology. Subsequently, the chapter illuminates the way in which Black neoconservatives rely on their personal racial experiences to inform their epistemology and validate their political positions.

The conclusion gives a brief overview of conservatism in African American political thought, civil rights, resistance, and the rise of the New Right. It also restates the dilemma of Black neoconservatism as an ideology that gives a platform for marginalized voices within African American political culture, but also serves the agenda of White conservatives. In addition, the conclusion summarizes the work of the individuals highlighted in this thesis; Thomas Sowell, Shelby Steele, John McWhorter, Star Parker, Ward Connerly, Stephen Carter and Glenn Loury. While Black neoconservatism offers a self-criticism that is necessary, the conclusion posits that Black neoconservative ideology fails to offer a viable alternative for African Americans due to its condescending tone, its rejection of African American identity and culture and its alliance with White conservatives.

CHAPTER ONE
CHARTING THE BLACK ALTERNATIVE: BOOKER T. WASHINGTON AND
GEORGE S. SCHUYLER

Booker T. Washington; The Founding Father of Black Neoconservatism

Black neoconservatives laud Booker T. Washington as a visionary leader whose philosophy provides a blueprint for solving the race problem that continues to impact American life, especially concerning the problem of the Black underclass. Washington's personal journey is the ultimate success story as the former slave struggled to attain an education. Ultimately, his achievement inspired him to establish an institution in the interests of the Black race.

Just sixteen years after the abolition of slavery in the southern United States, Washington committed his life to building Tuskegee Institute, the symbol of his program for industrial education. Tuskegee balanced facets of industry, academics, and moral and religious training in order to produce teachers "with not only trained heads and hearts, but with trained hands."¹ He expected his students to become business and property owners. More importantly, he prepared his students to serve their communities as competent teachers and role models who harnessed the skills to show their people how to empower and make a living for themselves.² Tuskegee Institute was more than a "Normal School;" it was very much dedicated to shaking off the degradation of slavery by emphasizing cleanliness, high character, Christianity and morality. Washington's obsession with missing buttons and his "gospel of the nightshirt and toothbrush" exemplified his passion to reclaim freedom by *civilizing*

¹ Booker T. Washington, "The Educational Outlook in the South," in *Booker T. Washington and His Critics: The Problem of Negro Leadership*, ed. Hugh Hawkins (Lexington, KY: D.C. Heath and Company, 1962), 9.

² *Ibid.*

African Americans in a sense, and teaching them to take ownership and pride in their bodies and appearance, a simplicity that was denied them during enslavement.³

Washington was certain that African American success depended on economic development rather than social and political equality. Since freedom was fairly new to African Americans, he urged them to develop their skills in agriculture, mechanics and other everyday forms of labor and production in order to become useful, upstanding citizens. Washington employed the notion of self-reliance by instilling in his students the importance of work and the “dignity of labor.” Students were required to engage in the remarkable work of erecting the school buildings as well as the furniture and other necessities. They were taught to depend on no one but themselves and to also have confidence in their abilities to produce for themselves. Washington insisted, “INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION...kills ‘two birds with one stone’...secures the co-operation of the whites, and does the best possible thing for the black man.”⁴ Washington set out to prepare Blacks to earn the respect of Whites through economic development, which he believed would then lead to the granting of full rights as citizens.

Industrial education was appealing to those Whites who believed that this model did not “spoil” the Negro. Hence, Whites could also benefit from the skilled labor of African Americans. Washington maintained, “Harmony will come in proportion as the black man gets something that the white man wants, whether it be of brains or of material.”⁵ As such, Washington was sure that racial tension would dissipate once African Americans provided a service or product that Whites found useful.⁶ He understood the relevance of capitalism and believed that African

³ Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery in Three Negro Classics* (New York: Avon Books, 1965), 96.

⁴ Washington, “The Educational Outlook in the South,” 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 149.

Americans must find a place in the market in order to earn the respect of Whites and enjoy full citizenship.

Washington's Compliance with the Status Quo

In addition to appeasing Whites through industrial education, Washington also secured their cooperation by taking a non-threatening position that was nearly subservient. Even though many Whites resisted Emancipation and Reconstruction, often using violent means through the Ku Klux Klan, mob violence and lynching, Washington was careful not to alienate his potential donors by denouncing the racism of the South. He stated, "I learned that it is a hard matter to convert an individual by abusing him, and that this is more often accomplished by giving credit for all the praiseworthy actions performed than by calling attention alone to all the evil done."⁷ It is with no surprise that Washington's methods produced students who were less threatening to Whites, for he believed that the elevation of the race depended largely upon friendly relationships between the races.⁸ His objection to more aggressive tactics to securing African American rights was clear in many of his speeches as he alludes to the folly of "superficial" equality. At the Tuskegee Negro Conference of 1900, its first declaration reads:

More and more, as a race, we feel that we are to work out our destiny through the slow and often trying processes of natural growth rather than by any easy, sudden, or superficial method; and while we are trying to make ourselves worthy citizens we ask the patience and good will, and appeal to the sense of justice, of our white friends.⁹

⁷ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 137.

⁸ Washington, "The Educational Outlook in the South," 6.

⁹ Max Bennett Thrasher, *Tuskegee: Its Story and Its Work*, (First Published, 1900; reprint, North Stratford, NH: Ayer Company Publishers, Inc., 2000), 172.

Obviously, many Southern Whites could appreciate Washington's patience because they still had a difficult time accepting Blacks as equals. Kelly Miller, Professor of Howard University during the early 1900s, offers an assessment of Washington's relationship with Whites. He states:

Mr. Washington's popularity and prominence depend largely upon the fact that his putative policy is acceptable to the Southern whites, because he allows them to believe that he accepts their estimate of the Negro's inferior place in the social scheme. He is quiescent if not acquiescent to the white man's superior claims. He shuts his eyes to many of the wrongs and outrages heaped upon the race. He never runs against the Southerner's traditional prejudices. Even when he protests against his practices the protestation is so palliatory that, like a good conscience, it is void of offence. Equality between the races, whether social, political or civil, is an unsavory term to the white man's palate, and, therefore, Mr. Washington obliterates it from his vocabulary.¹⁰

While Miller may assume that Washington strategically "wore the mask" to some extent in his complicity with notions of Black inferiority, it is this very stance that earned Washington the scorn of many African Americans, who believed that his leadership compromised the struggle for equality.

The Atlanta Compromise

Even though Washington's life story is one that inspires as he survived the inhumanity of enslavement to become the preeminent leader during the turn of the twentieth century, it was his deferential demeanor with Whites that tainted his leadership and legacy. His national leadership was solidified in 1895 at the Atlanta Exposition where Washington delivered a monumental address before Southern Whites and Northern philanthropists. Washington notes, "I knew, too, that this was the first time in the entire history of the Negro that a member of my race had been asked to speak from the same platform with White Southern men and women on any

¹⁰ Kelly Miller, "Washington's Policy," in *Booker T. Washington and His Critics*, 52.

important National occasion.”¹¹ As such, Washington painstakingly delivered a message of racial cooperation that he believed was the most judicious in garnering the support of both races and the most practical for African American development.

The central issue of the infamous speech was determining the conditions upon which Whites would accord equality to African Americans. He first warned African Americans to not get ahead of themselves in their quest for equality. Instead, he insisted that they must work their way up from the bottom in order to present themselves as undisputedly worthy of respect and equal rights. Hence, he urged African Americans to dispel racial animosity or suspicion of their oppressors and instead ingratiate themselves as friends of their White neighbors. He then implored African Americans to “cast down their buckets” in common labor such as agriculture, mechanics, commerce and domestic service; for the masses were just one generation removed from the drudgery of slavery on Southern plantations, but were still amidst new forms of enslavement sustained by the coercive conditions of sharecropping.

The lion’s share of Washington’s speech directly addressed Whites, whom he set out to indulge, if not coddle, by relapsing into the age-old images of happy, docile Negroes. Washington appeased Whites by reminding them that their support, especially for industrial education, would produce, “the most patient, faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful people the world had ever seen.”¹² He revived the comforts of slavery by urging Whites to “cast down their buckets” among their former slaves who proved to be loyal and caring, and who in the future, shall maintain their allegiance and submission “with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to lay down our lives, if need be, in defense of yours.”¹³ With this speech, Washington convinced Whites that African Americans were not ready to fully exercise their

¹¹ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 142.

¹² *Ibid.*, 148.

¹³ *Ibid.*

freedom. He states, “It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercise of those privileges.”¹⁴ Not only were Blacks not ready for full equality, Washington maintained that fighting for social equality was “of the extremest folly and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of *severe* and constant struggle rather than *artificial forcing*.”¹⁵ This statement validated White Southerners’ aversion to social and political equality for African Americans, presuming that outside agitators were trying to force the South into a dubious lifestyle that neither Blacks nor Whites seemed to want. Washington ensured his White brethren, “In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.”¹⁶ For Washington, mutual progress was grounded in industry where Blacks could raise themselves up as business and property owners and as useful laborers for Whites.

Even though Washington’s philosophy appeals to Black neoconservatives, it was this very address that moved African Americans to criticize Washington’s tactics. After the “Atlanta Compromise” Washington became a giant. His authority was widespread from presidential appointments to funding for institutions. Yet, some African Americans questioned his motives and stern influence. W.E.B. DuBois contends:

After a time, almost no Negro institution could collect funds without the recommendations or acquiescence of Mr. Washington. Few political appointments were made anywhere in the United States without his consent. Even the careers of rising young colored men were very often determined by his advice and certainly his opposition was fatal.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid., 149.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 148.

¹⁷ W.E.B. DuBois, “My Early Relations with Booker T. Washington,” in *Booker T. Washington and His Critics, The Problem of Negro Leadership*, ed. Hugh Hawkins (Lexington, KY: D.C. Heath and Company, 1962), 29.

Washington's iron hand, his silence on social justice issues and his heavy control over the media made him one of the most influential and controversial figures of his time. Nevertheless, Black neoconservatives find solace in Washington who *proved* his worth and *earned* the admiration of Whites, and who did not find it necessary or wise to hold Whites in contempt for the destitute state of Black Americans. In Washington, Black neoconservatives have a perfect mold for their ideology—one that promotes interracial harmony by making friends with influential Whites and rejects the dissenting voices among African Americans who demand political and social equality. Washington was one who could easily assimilate into White culture. He defied the public image of Blacks as lazy, drunken menaces to the social order. Washington was safe on the surface, but more importantly he was compliant. He was careful not to shake up the “order” of the South, insisting that the fate of African Americans rested on maintaining a friendly, mutual relationship with Whites. He promoted the idea that Blacks must prove their worth before gaining an equal footing with Whites, without the benefit of special programs or policies. Washington simply employed hard work as the key to Black progress and success. Although accommodationists like Washington and Black neoconservatives are often reprimanded by many African Americans, their politics accord them special privileges among Whites. In addition, the notion that African Americans must first “qualify” for basic civil rights stems from the same source that claims the institution of slavery “civilized” enslaved Africans.

A Model for Contemporary Conservatives

The parallels between Booker T. Washington and Black neoconservatives are evident, even in terms of the historical moments in which both of them came to thrive. Ronald Walters describes the “convergence of interests among a critical mass of Whites during Reconstruction” that replicated itself one hundred years later after the

Civil Rights movement, commonly referred to as the Second Reconstruction.¹⁸ Although the First and Second Reconstructions exemplify the nation's reform efforts to grant some level of equality to Blacks, both turbulent events gave way to a climate of resistance, especially among White conservatives. Walters suggests:

In the politics of resentment that fueled the first and now the second Reconstruction, a similar ideology obtains: Blacks are an inferior group making a claim to equality with the dominant class to which they are not entitled. This notion of Black inferiority is present both in the older, cruder claims of racists—that Blacks are a subhuman species—and in the more sophisticated claims of postmodern “Bell Curve” intellectual elite theorists...who argue that Blacks lack the intelligence of Whites and are, therefore, not entitled to special consideration in employment or other areas of opportunity...¹⁹

Thus, the First and Second Reconstructions are marked not only by White resistance but also by high-profile dissent among a small margin of Blacks. Washington's contention with the policies of Reconstruction mirrors the Black neoconservative critiques of the civil rights legacy. Washington states, “I felt that the Reconstruction policy, so far as it related to my race, was in a large measure on a false foundation, was artificial and forced.”²⁰ Like Washington, Black neoconservatives reject the policies that seem to force the nation to “give away” opportunities to Blacks through affirmative action, diversity goals and the expansion of welfare. In fact, Black neoconservatives insist that these opportunities are based on skin color alone, rather than historical practices of racism and exclusion.

Both Washington and Black neoconservatives seemingly align themselves with Whites as they acquiesce to the notion of Black inferiority. In a sense, they defer to White superiority by challenging African Americans to refuse any concessions to

¹⁸ Ronald Walters, *White Nationalism, Black Interests: Conservative Public Policy and the Black Community* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁰ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 73.

restore justice and first “prove” that they are equal to Whites, both mentally and culturally. It is within this context that Booker T. Washington and his contemporary admirers came to symbolize the “Black alternative.”

Washington differs from his followers in that he did advocate the responsibility of the government to provide some provision (or form of reparation per se) for the country’s exploitation of Black labor. He explains:

I had the feeling that it was cruelly wrong in the central government at the beginning of our freedom, to fail to make some provision for the general education of our people in addition to what the states might do, so that the people would be the better prepared for the duties of citizenship.²¹

Here, Black neoconservatives break from Washington in that they reject any government policy that specifically targets African Americans. Even though Washington believed that Whites did bear some responsibility for the conditions of Black America due to the ways in which they attempted to keep African Americans ignorant and enslaved, Black neoconservatives may argue that Washington’s position on government involvement was simply a sign of his time. They often postulate that African Americans are so far removed from what their ancestors may have endured a century before that any governmental intervention would be an insult to the strength and integrity of African American people.

Neo-Washingtonians

Essentially, Black neoconservatives have transformed Washington’s philosophy to fit their own. Conservative Brian Jones discusses what he calls “the insurgent neo-Washingtonian model of leadership”²² that contemporary Black

²¹ Ibid.

²² Brian Jones, “Two Visions of Black Leadership,” in *Black and Right: The Bold New Voice of Black Conservatives in America*, eds. Stan Faryna, et al. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 36.

conservatives are bringing to the center stage. According to Jones, the neo-Washingtonian model “responds not to the perceived limitations of the American system, but rather to the real opportunities extant within it...”²³ He continues:

Thus, it may be said that while the civil rights movement opened the door of progress to African Americans, the question remains whether black leadership in the 1990s struggles simply to open the door even wider or whether it prepares all African Americans to take a step across the threshold.²⁴

Jones maintains that Washington presented the best model of leadership for African Americans: one that was based on economic empowerment and cultural values. He cites the erosion of black institutions and businesses during the Post-Civil Rights era as an example of African Americans losing control of their economic destiny. Jones’ argument is confounded by his assertion that it was the civil rights leadership—instead of systemic racism or misguided notions of integration—that destroyed Black institutions such as banks, insurance companies and profitable Black neighborhoods. Jones suggests:

But because the prevailing leadership of the black community remains obsessed with the blight of racism, it is ill-suited to address the contemporary hopes and fears of the rank and file. By its persistent, almost pathological exaltation of racism as the fundamental impediment of black progress, the leadership shifts to outside forces the responsibility for problems confronting blacks.²⁵

Interestingly enough, Jones proposes that neo-Washingtonians assert their influence and empower African Americans by advocating market-oriented reform of public education, crime control, welfare reform and family restoration. The correlation between Booker T. Washington and Jones’ program for school choice, tough crime

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 38.

laws and nuclear families is unsubstantiated. Yet, Jones insists that the neo-Washingtonian model carries on the tradition of empowering individuals.

Another Black neoconservative, Stuart DeVeaux, argues that Booker T. Washington is the model of an authentic Black identity that was “grounded in high moral standards and self determination.”²⁶ DeVeaux believes that liberal programs and the rhetoric of Black leadership destroyed this authentic Black identity. However, DeVeaux uses Washington’s acceptance of an honorary degree from Harvard University as his best example of self-determination. This is problematic because DeVeaux bases Black self-determination on the acceptance or validation of Whites. In his example is the grandeur of Harvard, not of the self-determining spirit of enslaved African Americans. Notwithstanding, DeVeaux insists that Black people need to reclaim the identity that they lost: an identity that was exemplified through one’s “ability to persevere against the most difficult challenges.”²⁷ Washington personifies DeVeaux’s point because Washington was a slave who pulled himself up by his own bootstraps to gain the admiration of Whites, a clear marker of success for many Black conservatives.

Black neoconservatives also scoff at the way in which Washington’s legacy has been vilified. Conservative Lee Walker posits:

How ironic that Booker T. Washington, a man of such great intellect and accomplishment, a giant of his time, would be so villainized, and largely by other blacks. Have they forgotten that this self-made man was the first black American on a U.S. coin; on a postage stamp; to be invited to dinner by a U.S. president; to have tea with the queen of England?²⁸

²⁶ Stuart DeVeaux, “Young, Black, and Republican,” in *Black and Right: The Bold New Voice of Black Conservatives in America*, eds. Stan Faryna, et al. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 25.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Lee Walker, “What ‘Black Conservative’ Means to Me,” in *Black and Right: The Bold New Voice of Black Conservatives in America*, eds. Stan Faryna, et al. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997) 30.

Like DeVeaux, Walker mentions a number of Washington's accomplishments, most of which are essentially imprinted by White acceptance. Yet, Walker also notes that Washington was a married man who raised a family, playing into Black neoconservative ideas that the breakdown of the Black family and unwed Black mothers are the primary cause for the current demise of Black communities. Although Black neoconservatives may not agree with Washington's separatism, they bask in the respect, admiration and comfort of Whites.

For Black neoconservatives today who claim to model themselves after Washington, the question remains, do African Americans have to align themselves with conservative Whites who have maintained a history of hostility toward African Americans and uphold anti-civil rights postures? Black neoconservatives and contemporary critics of Washington tend to forget or ignore the fact that Washington inspired the largest mass movement among Blacks in America under the leadership of Marcus Garvey. Similarly, Garvey advanced a philosophy of self-determination. Like Washington, Garvey advocated Black owned and operated businesses. He agreed with Washington's premise that we can be "one as the hand and as separate as the five fingers in all things purely social."²⁹ Garvey also conveyed a strong Black identity and racial pride, which is often mistakenly denied Washington in the general remembrance of him. Yet, Black neoconservatives would be hard pressed to honor the accomplishments of Marcus Garvey. In fact, many of them would probably adopt George Schuyler's disposition regarding the Garvey movement as an anti-White, idealistic downfall in African American history. Even so, Angela Dilliard notes the attempts of Elizabeth Wright and Alan Keyes who try to claim Garvey's legacy as canonical of Black neoconservatism. Dillard explains that these Black neoconservatives attempt to authenticate their politics by employing a

²⁹ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 148.

misinterpretation of Garvey's legacy and a selective reading of his ideas.³⁰ Even though Wright and Keyes have tried to claim Garvey as their own, Garvey's race consciousness and his critiques of White racism and the hypocrisy of America make him incompatible with Black neoconservatism.

In short, Black neoconservatives align themselves with Booker T. Washington in the following capacities:

- 1) Black neoconservatives share Washington's belief that self-reliance is the answer to the nation's enduring race problem.
- 2) Black neoconservatives use Washington's emphasis on "work" to castigate the Black underclass and Black women who are welfare recipients.
- 3) They both accentuate character, morality and Christianity as prescriptions for the supposed degenerate culture of African Americans.
- 4) They both insist that Blacks must prove their worth to Whites before they are granted equality.
- 5) Both are accommodationists defined as those who compromise with or adapts to the viewpoint of the opposition.
- 6) Both are patriotic and believe in the good faith and promise of the nation.
- 7) Both emphasize the improvement of racial attitudes among Whites and censure race consciousness among African Americans.
- 8) They both excuse racial disparities by placing culpability on African Americans' own shortcomings, considered by some as "blaming the victim."

³⁰ Angela D. Dillard, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner Now?: Multicultural Conservatism in America* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), 42.

In addition, Black neoconservatives share a major contradiction with Washington. Similar to Washington, Black neoconservatives implore African Americans to be self-reliant, yet they are heavily dependent upon the financial backing of the White elite, although in a different capacity than Washington. On the one hand, Washington did in fact believe that Whites owed Blacks a debt for centuries of free labor that enriched the country immensely. As such, he charismatically garnered financial support from Whites to benefit Tuskegee Institute, which essentially taught African Americans how to help themselves. Contrarily, Black neoconservatives rarely use the money from White individuals, corporations or think tanks to fund programs that benefit Black people. Their insistence on self-reliance is directed towards the Black poor, but their financial support from Whites is for their own individual gain and self-aggrandizement.

Booker T. Washington's version of self-reliance was based on what Black neoconservatives may call "groupthinking" or "raceholding" because it conceptualized African Americans as a distinct group, race or community. Today, Black neoconservative notions of self-reliance are based solely on the individual and are largely anti-group or anti-race. Unlike Washington, there is no program for racial uplift except conservative directives for the Black underclass. Actually, Black neoconservatives do not continue Washington's legacy to any significant degree, for they fail to devise concrete strategies and a programmatic agenda for African Americans.

The Ultimate Iconoclast; George S. Schuyler

The foundation of Black neoconservative ideology may be founded in Booker T. Washington's emphasis on self-help and accommodation, but the tone of its popular writings actually follows the tradition of George S. Schuyler who built his career as

the “Black Alternative” during the Harlem Renaissance. A prolific journalist, satirist and a cynical cultural critic, Schuyler used his brash tongue, quick wit, humor and intelligence to challenge the mainstream of racial politics and Black culture for over half a century. According to Ronald Walters, “The bridge between Washington/Council era and modern-day Black political conservatism lies in the thinking and writing of George S. Schuyler.”³¹ Schuyler’s appeal to Black neoconservatives stems from his courage to live his life as a “lonely iconoclast” who dissented from the dominant political views among African Americans. The scathing tones that exude from Schuyler’s articles and essays can be found in the acidic voices of John McWhorter, Shelby Steele, Armstrong Williams and Larry Elder. “The truth hurts” is their mantra as they pride themselves on revealing certain beliefs and behaviors they claim are taboo among Blacks.

For the old and new conservatives, dealing with painful truths is the only way to set Blacks free from their subjugation in the United States. At the heart of their truth is countering what they perceive is the failure of Black leadership and Black culture. No one captured this role more than Schuyler who used his pen to lament the conventions and underlying principles of America’s racialized society. Schuyler insists, “Whatever I think is wrong, I shall continue to attack. Whatever is right, I shall continue to laud...I have always been more concerned with being true to myself than to any group...I shall continue to pursue this somewhat lonely and iconoclastic course.”³² Even though Schuyler began this lonely course as a socialist, he eventually evolved into an archconservative and virulent anti-Communist. Yet, there was a strand of conservatism and Washingtonian virtues that surfaced from time to time throughout his career despite his bouts with radicalism and militancy.

³¹ Walters, 227.

³² Michael W. Peplow, *George S. Schuyler* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 17.

Ann Rayson argues that the label “assimilationist” is misdirected and undeserving of a man like Schuyler whose politics cannot be easily categorized. However, Rayson’s own definition of assimilationist is questionable. In her article, “George Schuyler: Paradox Among ‘Assimilationist’ Writers,” Rayson notes Robert Bone’s definition of assimilationist as “at bottom a matter of changing one’s reference group, an attempt to abandon ethnic ties and identify with the dominant majority.”³³ It is Rayson’s contention, along with other authors like Michael Peplow that George Schuyler was far from an assimilationist, as his affiliation with the John Birch Society and other ultra conservative entities does not reflect the beliefs and values of the majority of White Americans. In their summation, Schuyler identified with yet another minority—“the American right-wing, socio-political conservative.”³⁴ In fact, Rayson uses a dubious conceptualization of an assimilationist as one who “does not make political or moral distinctions on the basis of color.”³⁵ Rayson seems naïve in her estimation of the popularity of conservatism, racist and even anti-Black attitudes that were gaining currency among the White populace, especially during the late seventies and early eighties. The mainstream has never been colorblind in its political and moral affairs. Yet, one thing for certain is Schuyler’s commitment to challenging the core racial conventions of both Blacks and Whites. Not surprisingly, his growing allegiance to White conservatives later in life further alienated him from African Americans as an assimilationist at best and race traitor at worst.

³³ Ann Rayson, “George Schuyler: Paradox Among ‘Assimilationist’ Writers,” *Black American Literature Forum*, Vol. 12, No. 3. (Autumn 1978): 102.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

The Making of a Black Conservative

George Schuyler's autobiography *Black and Conservative* departs from traditional autobiography, giving very little insight to the details of Schuyler's personal life. Instead, the autobiography further explains his contentious positions on race and attempts to identify Schuyler as a die-hard conservative throughout his entire life. While the book maintains its anti-Communist manifesto, it does reveal certain contradictions and complexities of Schuyler's lonely personality that always seemed out of sync with the majority of African Americans.

Born in 1895, Schuyler grew up in Syracuse, New York, noting his family to be "the only colored one on the street."³⁶ He remembers, "Indeed, people thought of each other as individuals and families rather than as colors and races."³⁷ Yet, the fact that his family was the only family of color on his street may explain the reason why color was not a major issue for his neighbors. Contrarily, Schuyler's family was not totally blind to race. He cherished his grandmother's dramatic tales of vigilante Whites and abolitionists who fought to save enslaved Blacks. When a boy at school called Schuyler a nigger, he was comforted by his mother's praise of "outstanding coloured people" throughout history.³⁸ In addition, Schuyler relished the stories in *The Black Phalanx*, which detailed the heroic role of Black soldiers in every war the country fought. He claims, "This was a fascinating revelation, and no colored child could harbor any feeling of inferiority afterward."³⁹

Schuyler goes on to describe the unfortunate condition of the token integration of majority White neighborhoods, which produced an absence of Blacks in high positions of "leadership or authority." He observes, "However confident he may be of

³⁶ George S. Schuyler, *Black and Conservative: The Autobiography of George S. Schuyler* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House Publishers, 1966), 4.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

his inner worth, seeing no one of his kind who has accomplished anything and been rewarded, his confidence is apt to be shaken.”⁴⁰ Even though Schuyler often railed Black identity and collectivism, his biography describes his childhood as a testament to the important role that Black history and culture can play in the development, confidence and self-esteem of a Black child. Schuyler also argues for the necessity of positive Black role models, all of which he believes is responsible for his own self-image that he claims never embattled feelings of Black inferiority.⁴¹

Although Schuyler took pride in the accomplishments of Black people, his family also harbored a disdain for Blacks who had been enslaved. Schuyler’s family “boasted of having been free as far back as any of them could or wanted to remember, and they haughtily looked down upon those who had been in servitude.”⁴² He admits, “The old Northern Negro families had the habits, traits, and outlook of the whites for whom they worked and whose prejudices they shared.”⁴³ In fact, Schuyler’s colorblind community came to a screeching halt when three Negro families moved to his block. It was his own family’s prejudices that loom large in his recollection. Schuyler explains:

They were all Southerners recently moved to the city, and my mother did not associate with them. She felt that they were uncouth. They were never invited to our home. They had no standards, she charged, and didn’t know how to act. On the other hand, she was quite friendly with a couple of white families that lived across the fields on another street...These families were Yankees, and my mother said they were her kind of people.⁴⁴

From a very young age, Schuyler’s racial identity was influenced by the racial prejudices of both his family and his White neighbors. Furthermore, Schuyler admits

⁴⁰ Ibid., 19.

⁴¹ Ibid., 18.

⁴² Ibid., 4.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 11-12.

that he did not know the two other colored girls in his high school, and his mother “warned against associating with them or their family.” At the same time, Schuyler mentions, “With our immediate white neighbors I remained friendly, often chummy, but I was not invited to their house parties as were white youths from across town.”⁴⁵ His conflicting recollections of his childhood and the racial attitudes of his family and White neighbors unveil *real* racial prejudices that were mitigated by silence.

Even though Schuyler highlights the *de facto* segregation of the North and the systematic exclusion of Blacks from the labor industry, his loyalty to the American creed overshadows the everyday experiences of Black Americans. Despite his own admission of widespread discrimination, Schuyler concludes that Blacks will only progress to the extent to which they take advantage of the opportunities afforded to them.

Interestingly enough, Schuyler is known for rebuking those African Americans who attempted to be “white” through hair straightening and skin lightening techniques. Yet, his autobiography discloses his own preoccupation with color. Every single description of Black people in his book incorporates a shade on the color gradation. From “beautiful quadroon” to “black,” Schuyler is sure to size his characters up according to their skin tone. He makes it painfully obvious that light skin is preferred. His colorful descriptors include “lovely café au lait of an interracial couple;” “ravishingly beautiful quadroon;” and “a dark girl with Indian features.” Chandler Owen is “a light-brown-skinned man.” Marcus Garvey is “short, smooth, black, pig-eyed, corpulent...” A. Phillip Randolph is “slender, brown-skinned, handsome, erect and always immaculately dressed.”⁴⁶ His preoccupation with describing a person’s specific shade brings to mind the age old childhood rhyme: *If*

⁴⁵ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 91, 96, 98, 135.

you're white you're right, if you're yellow you're mellow, if you're brown stick around, if you're black get back.

Schuyler's descriptions of the two women in his life further illustrate the politics of color. He took pride in his "quadroon beauty, laughing and voluptuous...the type of gorgeous female a young man delights to be seen with strolling on the avenue or in a night club or restaurant."⁴⁷ In this instance, Schuyler inadvertently illuminates the color issue within the Black community, whereby some Black men bask in the lightness, "damn near white"(ness) of their women, especially out in public. A light woman with "good hair" was as close of a prize as a White woman, bestowing status among their Black men. His family's generational color prejudice feeds his obsession as it somehow marks more than a simple, meaningless descriptor.

The second woman that Schuyler mentions in his memoirs is Josephine Cogdell, a White Texan from a wealthy family whom he marries, becoming one of the most famous interracial couples of the early twentieth century. The Schuyler family defied the taboo of interracial marriages, as it was still illegal in many states at the time, including Texas. Schuyler describes his love as "beautiful, charming, vivacious, fashionably dressed, sharp, witty, and well-read..."⁴⁸ Here, his descriptors differ from the rest, leaving her skin tone irrelevant unlike the "colored" folks throughout the book. Josephine's whiteness is invisible, or maybe obvious. He explains, "She saw Negroes as I saw whites, as individuals."⁴⁹ Notwithstanding, Cogdell also believed that interracial marriage was the ultimate solution to the nation's race problem. Taking an interest in eugenics, she maintained that such unions would produce

⁴⁷ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 163.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

extraordinary offspring due to “hybrid vigor,” combining the best from each race.⁵⁰ Truly, their daughter Philippa was a talented musician, but Cogdell’s endorsement of eugenics is a critical ideological position that invariably purports inherent deficiencies among Blacks.

Further research shows that despite Philippa’s talent, her life epitomized the “tragic mulatto” in a world that was subsumed with White supremacy and racism. Biographer Kathryn Talalay unravels the intricate tapestry of Philippa’s double existence. For many African American children, Philippa was a role model. She learned to read and write at age two and began to compose music at age five.⁵¹ Despite her talent, racism in the United States stunted Philippa’s success as she had to tour outside of the country to make a living as a concert pianist. Moreover, her mother’s Texan family had nothing to do with her regardless of “hybrid vigor.” Even so, Philippa identified more with her “White” self, and came to resent her blackness and the discrimination and exclusion that came along with it. According to Philippa, she would not make the mistake her mother made by marrying a Black man. As such, she made a mission of traveling to Europe in order to find an “Aryan” husband.

Philippa’s identity crisis becomes even more apparent when she describes her travels to Madagascar. In a letter to her mother, Philippa exhorts, “It is obvious that these people were Malayan descendants.” She describes their culture as delicate, agreeable, having no barbaric customs, and non-aggressive. The letter reads:

They consider themselves oriental not africans... This land isn’t African any more than Cyrus is...Actually, since my ancestors came from here, I HAVE NO

⁵⁰ Tonya Bolden, “Josephine ‘Jody’ Cogdell,” in *African American Writer: A Dictionary*, eds. Shari Dorantes Hatch and Michael R. Strickland (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2000), 318.

⁵¹ Jeffrey B. Leak, ed. *Rac[e]jing to the Right: Selected Essays of George S. Schuyler* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), xxviii.

RELATIONS TO AFRICA AT ALL...So I am Malay-American-Indian and European [emphasis not added].⁵²

Philippa's discovery reads as a sigh of relief, a sense of comfort. Her identity reflects anything and everything but Black and African. Obviously, being "half-colored" seemed to be Philippa's greatest barrier to being accepted and feeling whole. Philippa's story is significant because George Schuyler was a champion of individualism, and like his conservative contemporaries he emphasized family as the source of success for any individual regardless of race. He postulates, "With a safe base at home, one can go out more freely and have confidence to contend with society. This is the conservative view which I held from the beginning."⁵³ His words have a romanticized passion that erupts in a society in which much of the wealth and power is divided along racial lines. Philippa's tragedy is a testament to the ills of racism that can break an individual down regardless of their talents and strong, conservative family values. Author Talalay notes, "Like her father, Philippa struggled much of her life with both her pride and her shame about her African American roots."⁵⁴

The personal stories of George S. Schuyler and his family expose the complex racial dynamics that inevitably took its toll on Schuyler's identity, which never firmly rested its loyalty among African Americans. Unfortunately, Schuyler remained lonely in both a political and personal sense. In 1967, Philippa tragically died while investigating conditions in Vietnam as a journalist. Two years later, Josephine Cogdell Schuyler finally fulfilled her threats over the years to commit suicide, leaving Schuyler to continue to chart a lonely course. His life's work is also tortuous.

Schuyler, The Messenger

⁵² Kathryn Talalay, *Composition in Black and White: The Life of Philippa Schuyler* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 192.

⁵³ Schuyler, *Black and Conservative*, 253.

⁵⁴ Talalay, 191.

Schuyler began his career in 1923 as a correspondent for the *Messenger*, a Black publication led by A. Phillip Randolph and Chandler Owen. Founded as a socialist journal, the *Messenger* gave Schuyler a platform for his racial satire primarily in the form of a popular column called “Shafts and Darts.” Biographer Jeffrey B. Ferguson details the targets of Schuyler’s work, “including [Marcus] Garvey, whom he calls the “Self-Styled Emperor of Africa” and the “Imperial Blizzard”; Negro Communists of the African Blood Brotherhood, whom he chides for their greed and lack of membership; [W.E.B.] Du Bois, whom he calls a self-serving windbag and friend of the Ku Klux Klan for his emerging nationalism; and [Kelly] Miller, whom he calls the “Moutheamatician of Howard.”⁵⁵ Ferguson continues:

The German fascists, the Ku Klux Klan, black northern machine politicians, and “the hat-in-hand Negroes of the Washington snobocracy”...all get a few choice drops from Schuyler’s acid-dipped pen. The list of Schuyler’s targets seems almost as long as the nasty arsenal of insults he uses to undermine its unlucky members, all of whom he portrays in true *Messenger* style as greedy, stupid, self-serving, petty and barely fit to have a voice in the public discourse.⁵⁶

Schuyler’s vitriolic criticisms of the predominant racial themes and leaders of the day earned him the notoriety that would span his career for several decades.

Schuyler’s writing style and satirical genius proved to be lucrative as he secured a long career with the *Pittsburgh Courier* in 1924 serving as columnist, editorial writer, associate editor and international correspondent for over forty years. He became the most widely syndicated journalist in both Black and White newspapers. Author Robert Hill attests, “As the leading black journalist of the depression era, Schuyler was profoundly conscious of the important role the black

⁵⁵ Jeffrey B. Ferguson, *The Sage of Sugar Hill: George S. Schuyler and the Harlem Renaissance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 80.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 81.

newspaper performed in mirroring and molding African American consciousness as a distinctive part of the American social order.”⁵⁷ In 1931, Schuyler published *Black No More*, the first full satire and science fiction book written by an African American. His second novel, *Slaves Today* is noted as the first novel written by an African American about Africa. In addition, Schuyler produced a notable history of Black journalism entitled *Fifty Years of Negro Journalism*. While Schuyler’s contributions are significant, his current obscurity from historical memory may be a consequence of his mission to live his life as a lonely iconoclast and ruthless critic.

During his early years, Schuyler masterfully used satire as a mode of critique of the often-serious issues of race and racism. His longest running column in the *Courier* called “Views and Reviews,” along with his series “Aframerica Today” and “Slaves in Liberia” engaged a number of critical issues affecting Black people from black owned businesses to corruption in the first Black colony in Africa. Even if African Americans disagreed with his stance, many were still attracted to his humor. As W.E.B. DuBois admits, “George Schuyler, so far, is talking things that most people do not want to hear...One has to read what he says, whether he agrees with it or not.”⁵⁸ Through speaking engagements, freelance writing and his work for the *Courier*, Schuyler earned a modest living, making a place for him and his family in Harlem’s high-profiled Lincoln Apartments known as Sugar Hill. His esteemed neighbors included W.E.B. DuBois, Walter White and Jack Johnson.⁵⁹ According to James Miller, “...for four decades he knew, worked with, and quarreled with many of the significant political, social, and literary figures in the black community.”⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Robert Hill, “Introduction,” in *Ethiopian Stories: George S. Schuyler* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1994), 52.

⁵⁸ W.E.B. DuBois, “The Browsing Reader,” *The Crisis* 38 (January 1931): 16, quoted in Michael Peplow, *George S. Schuyler* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 31.

⁵⁹ Ferguson, 18.

⁶⁰ James A. Miller, “Forward,” in *Black No More*, George S. Schuyler (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1989), 3.

Schuyler's inside connection to the Black elite provided a certain insight that informed his criticism of what he mocked as the Black "snobocracy."

Schuyler's "Acid-Dipped Pen"

While Schuyler always invoked controversy in his articles, his critics vehemently charged him as an Uncle Tom when he published "The Negro Art Hokum," a denunciation of the Harlem Renaissance. In this article, Schuyler defies the claim of a "separate Black American culture"⁶¹ during a time when Black artists toted the "New Negro"—the political rebirth and change of consciousness that African Americans forcefully expressed through literature, poetry, music and art. Author Michael Peplow surmises that Schuyler maintained the position "that all men are brothers under the skin, that art is more a product of environment than genetics, and that black literature should avoid being "peculiar" (i.e. inferior) and should stay within the mainstream."⁶² In response to the condemnations as a race traitor, Schuyler insists that he was often misunderstood. His rejection of a separate Black culture was to him a rebuke against racism, which defined Blacks as different, thus inferior to Whites. Schuyler dismissed the notion that certain artistic expressions were reflections of one's race as sheer nonsense. Accordingly he submits:

True, from dark-skinned sources have come those slave songs based on Protestant hymns and Biblical texts known as the spirituals, work songs, and secular songs of sorrow and tough luck known as blues, that outgrowth of ragtime known as jazz (in the development of which whites have assisted), and the Charleston...But these are characteristics of a caste in a certain section of the country. They are foreign to Northern Negroes, West Indian Negroes, and African Negroes. They are no more expressive or characteristic of the Negro race than the music and dancing of the Appalachian highlanders or the

⁶¹ Ferguson, 184.

⁶² Peplow, 37.

Dalmation peasantry are expressive or characteristic of the Caucasian race...It is merely a coincidence that this peasant class happens to be of a darker hue.⁶³

Schuyler instigates even further in this article when he calls the African American a “lampblack Anglo Saxon” insisting that the American Negro is simply an American. Here, Black neoconservatives share Schuyler’s view that Black Americans have more in common with their White neighbors than their African brothers in the Diaspora and that Black cultural traditions are primarily based on a false imagination. Walters posits:

Schuyler and other Black Conservatives have overlooked the implications of the strong collective culture their forebears brought with them from Africa and which, to a substantial extent, was kept alive by the necessity of the work routine and living circumstances of the slave culture that nurtured family reconstitution and other survival mechanisms after official slavery ended.⁶⁴

Years later, Schuyler reflects on the controversy surrounding “The Negro Art Hokum,” yet he maintains his position. He insists that the African American “was an American, albeit a lower caste one, and had no more recollection of, connection with, or interest in Africa than any other American. This was treason at a time when there was so much talk about African heritage.”⁶⁵ Ironically, Schuyler’s remembrance is a contradiction within itself. He failed to connect this excessive talk about African heritage among Harlemites with a genuine interest and identity with Africa.

Interestingly enough, Schuyler denied a connection or interest in Africa during the height of Marcus Garvey’s Back to Africa movement, considered the largest mass movement among African Americans in history. Even if Schuyler embraced aspects of Booker T. Washington’s platform, he aggressively rejected and ridiculed Garvey, Washington’s protégé. Schuyler used every opportunity in both *The Messenger* and

⁶³ Ibid., 35.

⁶⁴ Walters, 228.

⁶⁵ Schuyler, *Black and Conservative*, 157.

Pittsburgh Courier to attack Garvey's character and what Schuyler believed to be "grandiose schemes." For Schuyler, Garvey was a charismatic leader who "hypnotized" his followers with "his bull voice and his cry of Africa for the African at the same time when the independence of the Dark Continent was the sheerest wishful thinking of a few racist zealots."⁶⁶ Schuyler impugned Garvey as having brought with him from Jamaica a hatred of White people. In his condemnations of Garvey as a racist, Schuyler refused to acknowledge that Garvey's rhetoric embraced Black people and culture rather than endorsed the hatred of White people. Instead, Schuyler maintained that "hatred for whites" was the motivating force that fueled the popularity of the UNIA and the Nation of Islam.⁶⁷

Moreover, Schuyler notes Garvey's hostility toward "octoroons, quadroons and mulattoes," which Schuyler attributes to the Caribbean and Latin America's color caste system.⁶⁸ Not only did Schuyler accuse Garvey of spreading color prejudice in America as a disservice to Blacks, he in essence denies the fact that the United States also has a color complex. The first half of Schuyler's memoirs entails his own emphasis on skin color, which contradicts his assertion that the growth of color classes among Blacks was largely stunted by America's one drop rule, a racial theory that classified individuals with even one-sixteenth of African ancestry as Black. Even if one drop of blood made an individual Black in America, standards of beauty and acceptance into the mainstream often accorded various privileges, opportunities and desirability to those who closely favored Whites. Nonetheless, Schuyler claims that Garvey played on the color differences among Black Americans to advance his selfish ploys. While acknowledging Garvey's color consciousness, John Hope Franklin suggests:

⁶⁶ Ibid., 120.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 121.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 122.

The basis for Garvey's wide popularity was his appeal to race pride at a time when Negroes generally had so little of which to be proud. The strain and stress of living in hostile urban communities created a state of mind upon which Garvey capitalized. Garvey called upon Negroes, especially the ones of the darker hue, to follow him. He exalted everything black. He insisted that black stood for strength and beauty, not inferiority. He asserted that Africans had a noble past, and he declared that Negroes should be proud of their ancestry.⁶⁹

Schuyler ultimately denied Garvey's success, insisting that the masses of Black people did not resonate with Garvey's plans to return to Africa. Even if many African Americans had no desire to leave the United States, Schuyler totally dismissed Garvey's philosophy of self-help and racial pride, which had mass appeal in a society that bestowed second-class citizenship upon its Black citizens, regardless of skin tone.

Schuyler may have adorned the label of race traitor, but all of his writings were not against race. In fact, Schuyler supported the viability of African American political and economic unity even if he rejected racial and cultural solidarity, which represents a fundamental contradiction. His use of the term *Aframerica* signified his belief in some level of allegiance among American Blacks. He advocated the collective support for Black owned businesses and urged African Americans to make opportunities for themselves through cooperatives. Black neoconservatives not only follow Schuyler's emphasis on Black business as a feature of their ideas of self-help, but they also share Schuyler's promotion of positive Black history to a small degree. For instance, Schuyler promoted racial pride by celebrating historical figures like Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner, Phillis Wheatley and Harriet Tubman. Schuyler also took credit for urging historian J.A. Rogers to write a monthly column in the *Messenger* highlighting the achievements of Blacks in history.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, 3rd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 490.

⁷⁰ Schuyler, *Black and Conservative*, 159.

While Black neoconservatives sometimes advocate the emphasis of “positive” history of Black people, one wonders if Black neoconservatives would support Schuyler’s insistence on erecting monuments in commemoration of Black heroes. The Black neoconservative stand on this issue is not one that can be easily contained. Even so, Schuyler was a strong voice of dissent during the 1920s and 1930s, but he still harbored a commitment to Black people. Somehow, Schuyler was able to reconcile racial pride without full racial identity.

Phantom Racism of the “Jim Crow” South

Schuyler continued to provide fodder for his critics as he berated Black leaders and conventional racial attitudes. In his reports on the conditions of Southern Blacks in 1925-1926, Schuyler concluded that segregation was less of a race problem than a local problem, viewing Jim Crow as a polite inconvenience. He mildly states, “It would have been very helpful in many places if I had been able to check in at a white-operated hotel and eat there.”⁷¹ Hence, Schuyler obeyed the laws of segregation and found that race relations varied according to location. He concludes, “To me the myth of white “hatred” of Negroes was soon dissipated.” Schuyler vows that he made a number of good friends among the Southern Whites, and insists that “it was dangerous to generalize” and “that people were humans and individuals before they were racial stereotypes.”⁷²

Similarly, in the 1930s Schuyler’s travels to Mississippi were flanked with positive notes about Southern life along with numerous insults to the Black press. Schuyler assumes that Southern Whites were hospitable towards him because he “made a point of being fair. Other Negro newspapers were not.”⁷³ He spoke of the

⁷¹ Ibid., 154.

⁷² Ibid., 157.

⁷³ Ibid., 228.

“bias and distortion which was the usual fare in the Negro and so-called liberal press.” According to Schuyler, the *Pittsburgh Courier* was the only credible Black newspaper. In his “balanced picture” of Mississippi, Schuyler boasts as a Negro-first noting, “Nobody had ever spoken kindly and sympathetically about Mississippi before.”⁷⁴ This is yet another example of Schuyler’s dare to be unorthodox. Yet, his narratives raise questions to how well he, as a Northerner whose family was untouched by slavery, really understood the consequences of Jim Crow. Schuyler notes:

One of the things that struck me in visiting many Southern cities was that one found Negro and white families side by side in the same block to a greater extent than in numerous Northern cities. I found many such blocks in Jackson, Mississippi. While the children did not attend school together, they played together, which is *equally important* [emphasis added].⁷⁵

Here, Schuyler fails to realize that recreation and education could never be equally important, as enslaved children were also allowed to play with White children who were still considered the masters of the former. In addition, he conveniently depreciates the structural racism that even forced Blacks to step into the gutter as their White neighbors walked along the sidewalks. Essentially, Schuyler’s assessment of the segregated South began to reflect those of Booker T. Washington. Schuyler states, “After my Southern tour, I concluded that most of the Negro’s difficulties and problems could be greatly ameliorated through his own efforts in cooperation with willing whites who recognized that such would be mutually advantageous.”⁷⁶

In addition, Black neoconservatives share Schuyler’s preoccupation with race while simultaneously denying its saliency. Schuyler states:

⁷⁴ Ibid., 229.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 234.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 160.

Some of the more racially chauvinistic of my Negro friends have occasionally charged that I am not a “Race Man.” This is quite true. I have no concern for anything as abstract as race, whatever a race may be...As far back as I can remember, I felt no awesome or worshipful attitude toward the brethren of porklike epidermis nor any sense of shame or inferiority concerning the tarbrushed folk with whom I am identified.⁷⁷

The contradictions of this statement are glaring as Schuyler’s work was always concerned with race. Even Peplow admits, “But it is interesting to note that although Schuyler denounced the emphasis on color, all of his fiction and essays were about the ‘color problem’ in the United States...Schuyler did not write ‘raceless’ literature...”⁷⁸ Even though Schuyler’s articles challenged the racial hierarchy, his focus on race proves that it has substantial consequences in society. Even as he rejected the terms of racial classification, rarely did Schuyler write about “universal themes.” Like Black neoconservatives today, Schuyler’s success was predicated on the manner in which he approached racial themes in his writing.

During the very same time of Schuyler’s renunciation of racial concerns, he may not have felt the shame of his “tarbrushed folk” but he certainly became committed to the humanity of Ethiopians, who were resisting Italian imperialism and conquest in 1935. Hill observes, “Schuyler would undergo a sudden and remarkable political conversion. Abandoning his previous opposition to the concept of racial militancy, he emerged in 1935-36 as one of the most outspoken voices defending the ideal of racial solidarity in support of Ethiopia.”⁷⁹ Schuyler used his columns to rally African American financial and moral support for Ethiopia, “one of the few remaining exceptions to imperialist rule.”⁸⁰ According to Schuyler, Ethiopia “stands as a living disproof of the assertions of our detractors that Negroes have always been slaves and

⁷⁷ George S. Schuyler, “Views and Reviews,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 February, 1935, quoted in Robert Hill, *Ethiopian Stories: George S. Schuyler* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1994), 53.

⁷⁸ Peplow, 38.

⁷⁹ Hill, 24.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

are incapable of self-government.”⁸¹ Hill suggests that when it came to Ethiopia, Schuyler began to sound more like his “whipping boy,” Marcus Garvey. Author James O. Young notes the obvious contradictions of Schuyler’s career through the 1930s. He states:

Throughout the decade he consciously argued against any form of race separatism or chauvinism. In fact, he saw the ultimate solution to the race problem in the amalgamation of the races. And yet, almost simultaneously with his outbursts against chauvinism and separatism he would make appeals for blacks to be more race conscious.⁸²

This fluctuating back and forth between race consciousness and race neutrality is a testament to the complexity of George Schuyler’s personality and the ubiquitous influence of race and racism.

Conservative at the Core: Schuyler, the Propagandist

During the 1930s, Schuyler’s tone oscillated between satirist and propagandist. Young observes, “...As the decade drew to a close, an increasingly pessimistic Schuyler offered his readers fewer and fewer humorous sketches. This departure from satire indicated a significant ideological shift.”⁸³ That shift of course, moved further to the right as Schuyler began to heavily endorse American propaganda that was anti-Communist and later, anti-civil rights.

Instead of indicting racism and White supremacy, Schuyler blamed Communism for the racial consciousness and growing resistance among African Americans. His repudiation of Communism may have begun with the Scottsboro case of 1931 in which nine Black youths were accused and convicted of raping two White

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² James O. Young, *Black Writers of the Thirties* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 89.

⁸³ Ibid., 85.

women on a train in Alabama, igniting racial hysteria throughout the country. Schuyler jumped on board charging the Communists with stealing the case and exploiting it for their own gain. He states, “From its founding in 1919, the Comintern saw the need for utilizing racial and nationalistic prejudices and antagonisms to split the populations and stir civil war, and in consequence the value to them of the Scottsboro case was clearly seen.”⁸⁴ Schuyler continuously blamed Communism for stirring up racial antagonisms between Blacks and Whites, often denying the influences of American racism and White supremacy in stirring up its own matters.

Schuyler’s increasing disdain for Black leadership supplanted his alienation. Often hurling insults to what he referred to as “race agitators,” Schuyler repeatedly denounced civil rights leaders. He affirms, “I continued to write all of the editorials of the paper and tried to keep our readers on an even keel during the civil rights hysteria when the Negro press generally surrendered leadership to the professional agitators and their competing mobs vying for larger slices of the available civil rights dollar.”⁸⁵ Ultimately, Schuyler believed that the tactics of the Civil Rights movement through civil disobedience, protests and demonstrations only intensified White resentment and created more enemies among them.

According to Schuyler, gradual progress, justice and equality were inevitable and the civil rights “hysteria” compromised the natural evolution of minds and attitudes. He then uses his pen to castigate civil rights leaders as self-interested individuals who took advantage of the Black masses and whose pockets grew fatter due to their investment in exaggerated Black oppression and victimization. Schuyler preferred that equality and justice evolve on a basis of “true public will” and not some false notion that forces Whites to go against their prejudiced feelings toward Blacks,

⁸⁴ Schuyler, *Black and Conservative*, 188.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 338.

no matter how debased or immoral. Essentially, he believed that a change would come with time and education, as he continuously noted the positive aspects of Black life and interracial relationships that transpired without federal legislation.⁸⁶ Schuyler writes:

The principal case against a federal Civil Rights law is the dangerous purpose it may serve. It is still another encroachment by the central government on the federalized structure of our society. Armed with this law enacted to improve the lot of a tenth of the population, the way will be opened to enslave the rest of the populace. Is this far fetched? I think not. Under such a law the individual everywhere is told what he must do and what he cannot do, regardless of the laws and ordinances of his state or community. This is a blow at the very basis of American society which is founded on state sovereignty and individual liberty and preference...When this happens, the United States as a free land will cease to exist.⁸⁷

Not only does Schuyler endorse states' rights and insinuate that civil rights for Blacks compromises the freedom of the nation, he further contends that the plight of Black Americans is far better than any other group of "Negroes" all over the globe. In several articles and interviews, Schuyler mentions that the most debased "Negro" in Mississippi is in the most favorable condition of the African Diaspora.

Similar to Booker T. Washington, Schuyler insisted that Blacks have the best opportunities in America. Therefore, agitation and African Americans' expectations of government and society are excessive and unprecedented in other parts of the world. For Schuyler, "agitators" stir up desires and demands that will take a long time to realize. He celebrated Frederick Douglass and Washington as two men who understood that Blacks "need more optimism and less pessimism."⁸⁸ This is a

⁸⁶ George S. Schuyler, "The Case Against the Civil Rights Bill (1963)," in *Rac[e]Jing to the Right: Selected Essays of George S. Schuyler*, ed. Jeffrey B. Leake (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 101.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁸⁸ Schuyler, *Black and Conservative*, 121.

cornerstone of the Black neoconservative movement, which aligns itself with Schuyler as he bawls, “Once we accept the fact that there is, and will always be, a color caste system in the United States, and stop crying about it, we can concentrate on how best to survive and prosper within that system.”⁸⁹ The key to prosperity within the system, according to Black neoconservatives, rests within the ideals of personal responsibility, merit, self-help and more significantly taking advantage of the vast opportunities that America grants to its citizens despite the pitfalls of racism and classism.

Down with the King

Ferguson suggests that George Schuyler may have received little academic attention because he “said the wrong thing, in the wrong tone, about the wrong man, at the wrong time...”⁹⁰ In 1964, Schuyler condemned Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. Consequently, Jeffrey B. Leak insists that Schuyler’s article “King: No Help to Peace” represents the apogee “at which Schuyler becomes a political outcast in African American political communities.”⁹¹ In his biting remarks, Schuyler contends, “Dr. King’s principal contribution to world peace has been to roam the country like some sable typhoid-Mary, infecting the mentally disturbed with the perversion of Christian doctrine, and grabbing lecture fees from the shallow-pated.”⁹² Schuyler blamed King for the brutal violence of the police who used dogs and water hoses on peaceful demonstrators. In Schuyler’s summation, the police were provoked, and King was principally responsible for inciting the violence, bloodshed and mass incarceration that brought international shame upon the nation. In

⁸⁹ Ibid., 121-122.

⁹⁰ Ferguson, 3.

⁹¹ Jeffrey B. Leak, ed., *Rac[e]ing to the Right: Selected Essays of George S. Schuyler*, (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 104.

⁹² Schuyler, “King: No Help to Peace (1964)” in *Rac[e]ing to the Right: Selected Essays of George S. Schuyler*, ed. Jeffrey B. Leak (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 104.

addition, Schuyler stayed true to his ideology as he paints King “Red,” suggesting a strong affiliation with Communism. Schuyler writes, “Methinks the Lenin Prize would have been more appropriate for him...”⁹³ Thus, Schuyler insisted that King’s leadership did nothing but deteriorate race relations. Even more, this article appeared in the *Manchester Union Leader*, which is known for its right-wing conservatism. Schuyler’s derisions against civil rights and Dr. King proved to be lucrative as he continued to write articles for the *Manchester Union Leader* in addition to other ultra-conservative publications.

While both Ferguson and Leak believe that Schuyler’s audacity to disparage a giant like Dr. King resulted in his downfall, Schuyler had already driven a wedge between himself and other African Americans through his long career of ridicule and criticism, and his questionable activities prior to the King article. Ferguson affirms, “The King incident provided only one in a series of statements made by Schuyler that seemed almost calculated to make the vast majority of black people hate him.”⁹⁴ In 1961, Schuyler joined The New York State Conservative Political Association, Inc. to mobilize support for a Conservative Party. Three years later, Schuyler ran for Congress on the Conservative ticket against Adam Clayton Powell. Schuyler attests, “The campaign attracted a lot of attention and gave added interest to a widely-published North American Newspaper Alliance interview in which I blamed the Harlem race riots on the incessant incitement of civil rights leaders.”⁹⁵ Schuyler then published his sentiments in the *New York Times*, blaming Dr. King, Bayard Rustin, James Farmer and James Forman for the racial strife in New York and against the pleas of *Courier* editors.⁹⁶ Leak states, “Frustrated with his marginal position as a

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ferguson, 4.

⁹⁵ Schuyler, *Black and Conservative*, 348.

⁹⁶ Ferguson, 4.

conservative intellectual in the 1950s and 1960s, Schuyler's 'blind loyalty to the nation' becomes disturbingly apparent as he focuses on extreme forms of conservative idealism rather than racial justice."⁹⁷ Hence, Schuyler's allegiance to the far right was further solidified by his endorsement of Barry Goldwater for the presidency despite the fact that many African Americans opposed Goldwater's campaign due to his racism and opposition to the Civil Rights Act.

Schuyler suspected that he was an Uncle Tom to those who had no answers or challenges to his stance on civil rights. It was his assertion that the Civil Rights movement was ultimately spawned and undergirded by Communists. Schuyler reiterates:

From the beginning of the so-called Negro Revolution and the insane antics identified with it, I had taken the same position editorially and in my column that I had throughout the years. I had opposed all of the Marches on Washington and other mob demonstrations, recognizing them as part of the Red techniques of agitation, infiltration and subversion.⁹⁸

Schuyler's anti-Communist crusade is also reflected in his remarks that the defining song of the movement "We Shall Overcome" was a slogan first popularized by forces of Fidel Castro. He even attributed the call against police brutality to the "international Communist conspiracy against the police in capitalist countries...designed to undermine public faith and confidence in the police as preservers of the public peace and property."⁹⁹ Even as Schuyler's views further alienated him from African Americans, his Communist-conspiracy theories and anti-civil rights posture earned him influence and visibility among conservative

⁹⁷ Leak, x.

⁹⁸ Schuyler, *Black and Conservative*, 341.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 346.

Republicans. His race articles in conservative journals began to reach wide audiences among Whites.

X Marks the End of Schuyler's Career

Schuyler's last article, published in 1973, continued his quest as the ultimate renegade as he attacked yet another giant among African Americans, Malcolm X. The article, "Malcolm X: Better to Memorialize Benedict Arnold" provides an overview of Malcolm's life tailored made for a conservative audience. In classic Schuyler-style, the iconoclast scorns the ways in which people have memorialized Malcolm X since his death in 1965. Schuyler retorts, "Malcolm was fatally perforated by gunfire from fellow Black Power zealots as he delivered one of his rants at Harlem's Audubon Ballroom..."¹⁰⁰ Almost two decades after the Cold War, Schuyler still played into the Communist paranoia, referring to the speakers at Malcolm's funeral as the infamous "Reds." He derided Malcolm as a charlatan and referred to his followers as "mobsters" and Elijah Muhammad as the "boss." Schuyler claims, "Malcolm was a bold, outspoken, ignorant man of no occupation after he gave up pimping, gambling, and dope-selling to follow Mr. Muhammad. Like most of the loud-mouthed black leaders, he had but a tiny following, perhaps not more than a couple of hundred...and all equally ignorant, if not more so."¹⁰¹ His condescending tone and misrepresentation of Malcolm's legacy seems palpable to ultra-conservative Whites who either knew very little about Malcolm or questioned the country's recognition of his leadership. Schuyler exhorts, "During the past generation the black 'leaders' afflicting the nation have been mediocrities, criminals, plotters, and poseurs like Malcolm X. Go down the

¹⁰⁰ Schuyler, "Malcolm X Better to Memorialize Benedict Arnold," in *Rac[e]ing to the Right: Selected Essays of George S. Schuyler*, ed. Jeffrey B. Leak (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 134.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

list and you have to search hard to find even a few that are worthy of an invitation to tea.”¹⁰² Not only does Schuyler delineate between Black leaders and Booker T. Washington, who was invited to have tea with the Queen of England, his condemnations justified the status quo and its racist and exclusive underpinnings.

In essence, Schuyler’s article fueled White resentment to the civil rights legacy. He declares, “It is not hard to imagine the ultimate fate of a society in which a pixilated criminal like Malcolm X is almost universally praised, and has hospitals, schools, and highways named in his memory! What is amazing is that no one dares say that we might as well call out the school children to celebrate the birthday of Benedict Arnold.”¹⁰³ Schuyler’s reference to Malcolm as a traitor to the nation is grounded in an article that also chides prison reform and alludes to the growing prison population that in Schuyler’s estimation, produces the Black Panthers, “The Eldridge Cleavers, the Hubert ‘Rap’ Browns and the Malcolm Xs.” This imagery played into the fears of many Whites at the time of its publication, as the Black Power movement was aggressively infiltrated, destroyed and eventually reached its demise by 1975. Ferguson suggests “Becoming a conservative—especially an outspoken archconservative—allowed him to play his favorite game: flirting with the status of ‘race traitor.’ ”¹⁰⁴ Schuyler’s dissent and his virulent defamation of Black political figures was a staple throughout his career that inevitably functioned within a historical context that was much more than a game; in fact, it seemed antithetical to social justice and equality for African Americans. According to a review by the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, “Better than any other white man at the time, Schuyler made deeply flawed but potent arguments for segregationists and black

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ferguson, 6.

accommodationists.”¹⁰⁵ Essentially, Schuyler may not be an assimilationist according to some definitions, but his views were certainly accommodating to Whites as they helped to maintain racial inequality.

Schuyler’s “Anti” Legacy

As an incessant critic, Schuyler rarely provided answers and alternatives to the dominant racial discourse. According to Ferguson, “...he challenged the whole idea of a so-called Negro Problem and questioned the adequacy of problem/solution thinking in approaching issues of social justice.”¹⁰⁶ Much like his neoconservative predecessors, Schuyler suggested that his role was to start a counter discourse, to get people thinking and the people will work out their own solutions.¹⁰⁷ Since Black neoconservatives do not offer a coherent strategy to combat racism or uplift African Americans as a collective, their ideology is much more in concert with Schuyler’s legacy than that of Booker T. Washington. Angela Dillard presumes that Schuyler has been largely omitted from the Black neoconservative canon because he also attacked the earlier phases of the Civil Rights movement. This provides a major contradiction for Black neoconservatives who “have taken great pains to demarcate the ‘heroic’ phase” of the movement and herald the earlier works of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, Dillard agrees that Schuyler is an obvious progenitor to Black neoconservatism. Below are notable connections between Schuyler and contemporary conservatives:

¹⁰⁵ “The First Black Conservative,” Review of *Rac[e]ling to the Right: Selected Essays of George S. Schuyler* edited by Jeffrey B. Leak, *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 34 (Winter 2001/2002): 134.

¹⁰⁶ Ferguson, 30.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Dillard, 46.

- 1) Black neoconservative dissent against civil rights and the manner in which they lambaste civil rights leaders often manifest as brutal name calling, which was Schuyler's lasting trademark.
- 2) Like Schuyler, Black neoconservatives vilify black leaders that they believe Black people follow blindly, without question or critical engagement.
- 3) Similar to Schuyler, Black neoconservatives prove their allegiance to conservatism through their association with ultra-conservative organizations, foundations, think tanks and individuals.
- 4) Both Schuyler and Black neoconservatives use the media as a platform to voice their dissent. They are most popularized through print media, as their articles and books have wide currency among certain audiences.

Of course, Black neoconservatives depart from Schuyler in a number of ways. Yet, their mission to dissent within the racial arena exposes particular objectives that coalesce. In contrast, Schuyler was in fact a lonely iconoclast who never amassed a significant following among African Americans. However, Black neoconservatives do not find themselves in such a lonely disposition. By 1980, they began to organize themselves as a collective to undoubtedly influence racial politics in this nation, with or without a mass following.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RISE OF BLACK NEOCONSERVATIVES

The post civil rights era is marked by a series of neo-ideologies. Neoliberalism, neoconservative, and neorevolutionary are a few of the labels used to mark a new era of theory and politics in the New World Order. Black neoconservatism follows this trend as it signifies a point of departure from tradition that infuses conservative elements of Booker T. Washington and George S. Schuyler. This unique strand of Black conservatism is facilitated by the popularity of public intellectuals who advocate a particular agenda as it relates to African Americans and racism.

Like their predecessors Black neoconservatives carry on a tradition of anti-civil rights and an optimism of America's political and social institutions. What makes Black neoconservatism "new" is their predominance in the media as the center of racial discourse, regardless of its marginality among the masses of Black people. Unlike the conservative individuals of the past, Black neoconservatives have the capacity to organize as a collective. They cite each other's work; they have been awarded fellowships with the same core of conservative think tanks and foundations; and they have initiated a number of publications and organizations to espouse their beliefs. The twist that Black neoconservatives add to traditional Black conservatism goes beyond thrift, hard work and a strong Christian foundation—it provides a vision of a raceless, colorblind America, and a dissension against Black culture. Black neoconservatives reject social policy targeted toward African Americans, and they counter the notion that African Americans are perpetual victims of racism.

Black neoconservatives are dissenters indeed; but they do not dissent against racism. Their dissent departs from the traditional Black dissenters like Frederick

Douglass, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Malcolm X who all dissented in the spirit of African American freedom and equality. Black neoconservatives profess that freedom is won, and equality is superfluous. As such, they dissent from dominant Black political thought, culture and identity. Its sponsorship by White conservative foundations and its endorsement of the Republican Party has taken the once marginal viewpoint from the fringes to the very center of Post-Civil Rights racialized politics.

The Fairmont “Black Alternatives” Conference

Black neoconservatism gained currency with Ronald Reagan’s administration in 1980, as the “Black Alternatives” Conference laid the foundation for a burgeoning movement among Blacks to the far right. Ultimately, Reagan’s administration made a concerted effort to organize what it hoped would be a new Black leadership. Such a feat began with Richard Nixon who attempted to court African Americans during the 1970s in order to squelch or control Black militancy. Interestingly enough, Reagan was able to attract a significant number of Black supporters, including former Black Power radicals and civil rights leaders despite the racism that was associated with his campaign and administration.¹

Nonetheless, the Black Alternatives Conference held at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco, California represented a shift from moderate Black Republicanism to a brand that was more visible and extreme. Political scientist Ronald Walters notes, “The initiative to develop new Black leadership received support from Newt Gingrich, who declared: ‘It is in the interest of the Republican Party and Ronald Reagan to invent new black leaders, so to speak...’ ”² Officially convened by the Institute of Contemporary Studies, Reagan’s link to the conference was facilitated primarily

¹ Manning Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 179-181.

² Walters, 224.

through Edwin Meese, III who resigned from the directorship of the institute to join the new administration. Often referred to as “The Fairmont Conference,” the participants were primarily chosen by Henry Lucas, Jr. who succeeded Meese as the director of the Institute, and Thomas Sowell, an economist of Stanford University, senior fellow of the Hoover Institution and a long distance runner of Black neoconservatism. Lucas and Sowell fashioned this group of potential leaders based on their expertise in four areas: economics, education, business/professions and politics. An examination of the conference papers, compiled in a book called *The Fairmont Papers*, highlights economics as the predominate theme that propels the discussion on education, business and politics. The purpose of the conference was to organize Black individuals to challenge the civil rights leadership. Sowell and Lucas attracted figures like Walter Williams, Martin Kilson, Tony Brown, Clarence Pendleton, Jr. and Clarence Thomas. Other participants included liberals with alternative ideas and influence such as Percy Sutton and Charles V. Hamilton, coauthor of *Black Power* with Stokely Carmichael. The conference set out to provide alternate approaches to alleviating the conditions of the Black sector that continued to deteriorate alongside a growing Black middle class. Lucas explains in depth:

The whole concept of this conference is to provide a forum for exchange of ideas. This forum is to make known to this administration and to the private sector that there are people—black people—here who are competent, who are talented, who think differently, who want to examine the past; people who, if this is the case, are willing to say that some approaches have not worked and that we do need a change...Hopefully, this administration and the private sector and all the other sectors of our economy that are interested in this particular problem will begin to solicit the advice of those who are participating in these types of forum.³

³ Henry Lucas, Jr. “Finding Common Interests,” in *The Fairmont Papers: Black Alternatives Conference San Francisco December 1980* (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies), 92.

Lucas alludes to what the “new Black leaders” believe is the failure of civil rights legislation, and he implores Reagan and other White officials to look to their group for new strategies. This insistence that the new administration defers to the new Black conservatives is one of the reasons this group has been charged with pandering to White interests. The Black alternative thinkers, for the most part, reject liberalism as a key feature of Black political thought. Instead, the conference espoused the Protestant work ethic and free market approaches, which are central to American conservatism, but are marginal remedies to the racialized experiences of African Americans.

Oscar Wright reflects the optimism of the participants who regarded Ronald Reagan’s leadership as a promise in the right direction. Wright states, “When [Reagan] talks about local control, I think about community control. And when he talks about helping all the people in this country, I do not see colors. I see myself as an American citizen striving for the same goals as other American citizens.”⁴ Here, Wright kicks off the conference with colorblindness by embracing a national identity that is void of race and turns a blind-eye to the racial controversy surrounding Reagan’s campaign. Clarence Thomas affirmed Wright’s statement when he suggests, “Personally, I believe that, as black people beginning the 1980s, we need to look more to ourselves for solutions...”⁵ Even though Thomas may have been inspired by Booker T. Washington’s approach to solutions, Walter Williams advocated a strict colorblind approach to solving the problems that afflict African Americans. In fact, he insisted that there should be no special programs whatsoever that solely target any one group of people. Even if the point of the conference was to provide “Black alternatives,” Williams maintained the colorblind current. He remarks:

⁴ Oscar Wright, “Politics and Opportunity: The Background,” in *The Fairmont Papers*, 18.

⁵ Clarence Thomas, “Being Educated Black,” in *The Fairmont Papers*, 83.

I hope black people would not go to the Reagan administration—black people as conservatives cooperating with other conservatives—and ask for their own brand of special favors...I think we should lobby for freedom for all Americans...If we are going to turn the country around, I think that we need to make it an ocean-to-ocean phenomenon and not create special advantages for special people.⁶

Essentially, Williams believed that African Americans must adopt a stance that is most palpable for Whites, especially White conservatives. He disagreed with those participants who attempted to use free enterprise principles in order to uplift the Black poor. Williams insisted that free enterprise was not a concept that was “restricted to North Philadelphia and Harlem.”⁷ According to Williams, the alternative to the mainstream of Black political engagement must shed its focus on Black people and employ a humanistic consciousness that incorporates all Americans, and as such appeals to the majority of Whites who will offer support.

While the conference began with the issue of colorblindness, Wendell Wilkie Gunn presented a paper that departs from the traditional Black politics by interrogating the issue of “equality.” Gunn vows, “We simply seek opportunity to contribute to society and, in turn, to reap benefits commensurate with those contributions.”⁸ Gunn’s contention is that Blacks must not fight for “equal share in America’s wealth, but rather for equal access to America’s promise.”⁹ For Gunn, the final analysis is economic freedom, rather than economic equality, which most Black neoconservatives view as an unreasonable request. Even George S. Schuyler, a former socialist concludes in his memoir, “We do not need to share the wealth as much as we need to share our heritage so that all may proudly claim ownership in it.”¹⁰ Like

⁶ Walter Williams, “Reply to Dan Smith,” in *The Fairmont Papers*, 105.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Wendell Wilkie Gunn, “Economic Freedom, Economic Gains,” in *The Fairmont Papers*, 24.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Schuyler, *Black and Conservative: The Autobiography of George S. Schuyler* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House Publishers, 1966), 352.

Schuyler, who later renounced his socialist past, the Fairmont Conference refrained from seriously critiquing capitalism and its intersections with race. The participants were mostly intellectuals and academics who were optimistic about the prospects of capitalism as it pertains to all Americans. In addition, they were extremely hopeful and supportive of what would soon become known as “Reaganomics” and the “Reagan Revolution.”

The State Against Blacks

Walter Williams continued the discussion of economic freedom as he criticized the expansive role of government since Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society programs. Williams maintained that Black people do not need special programs like affirmative action, small business loans, and minimum wage laws. According to Williams, “They need government to get off their backs.”¹¹ Williams’ alternative approach to economics involves dismantling state intervention, which he believes has heavily victimized African Americans. In addition, he suggests, “I would urge that in the 1980s we pay more attention to the rules of the game and its realities, and let the notion of discrimination play a smaller role in evaluating the problems of blacks in the United States.”¹² Williams would soon publish *The State Against Blacks*, detailing the ways in which government interventions and regulations have crippled Black progress.

Economist Milton S. Friedman further implicated the state in his paper entitled *Government is the Problem*. A senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Friedman drew upon his Jewish heritage to frame his discussion on the power of Whites to discriminate and the irrationality of the oppressed to depend on its historical oppressors for salvation. In his presentation Friedman argued against affirmative

¹¹ Walter Williams, “Legal Barriers to Black Economic Gains: Employment and Transportation,” in *The Fairmont Papers*, 26.

¹² *Ibid.*, 30.

action. He contends, "...If you believe that Supreme Court decisions are going to be able to stop a majority of the population that is prejudiced from using its power to benefit itself rather than the people who are disadvantaged, you are kidding yourself. That is not the way out."¹³ His position is one that mirrors the arguments of many Black Power advocates. Nonetheless, "the way out" for Friedman and other participants of the conference is to give local communities the freedom to work out their own problems, "by themselves through voluntary activities."¹⁴ Friedman reiterates Thomas Sowell's contention when he states, "The Jews certainly did not succeed because they were getting special government privileges. The Japanese did not succeed on that ground. The Chinese did not succeed on that ground. They all succeeded by taking advantage of the opportunities that the private market offered to them."¹⁵ In concert with Friedman's position, most of the contributors of the conference highlighted the importance of community control, individual choice and freedom from government intervention, which they believe encourages "an unfortunate dependency." Indeed, Friedman referred to the "culture of poverty" thesis, which submits that the government has produced an impoverished class among the poor through special programs and entitlements like welfare, subsidized housing and failing public "government" schools.

Education

As participants engaged the issue of education as the "keystone to black economic development," much emphasis was placed on secondary schools and the role they play in preparing Black students for higher education and the attainment of

¹³ Milton S. Friedman, "Government is the Problem," in *The Fairmont Papers*, 149.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 151.

technical skills.¹⁶ Thomas Sowell gave a compelling critique of the *Brown v. Board* decision of 1954 that deemed segregated schools as inherently unequal.¹⁷ Sowell illuminated the fact that concrete barriers define segregation within every institution except schools. For instance, Sowell argued that hotels, airports and hospitals are not considered segregated unless there is a law or decree that excludes certain groups of people. He insisted that only schools are categorized according to such narrow terms, advancing the myth that all-Black schools are automatically inferior.¹⁸ Sowell cited Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C., as a prime example of a thriving segregated school whose Black students outperformed Whites all over the country. As such, Sowell bemoaned successful schools like Dunbar that have deteriorated since the era of desegregation, which he believes put forth spurious notions of “separate” as unequal and “Black” as inferior.¹⁹ Ultimately, Sowell emphasized the “freedom of choice” and presented school vouchers as one possible solution. He states, “The real answer is to leave the question to the millions of parents and children themselves, leaving them with the freedom to choose where they want to go and not how they can fit into someone else’s grand design.”²⁰

Leadership

The closing segment of the *Fairmont Papers* addressed the issue of leadership. Martin Kilson acknowledged that a “homogenized black leadership” was necessary for its time when racism was “fierce, violent at many times, and highly uniform.”²¹ Kilson suggested that a new era calls for a diversification of attitudes, leadership, as

¹⁶ Randolph W. Bromery, “What Can Be Done?” in *The Fairmont Papers*, 60.

¹⁷ Thomas Sowell, “False Assumptions about Black Education,” in *The Fairmont Papers*, 64.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 66-67.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

²¹ Martin Kilson, “Widening Our Reach,” in *The Fairmont Papers*, 134.

well as diverse political-party affiliation. Moreover, he hoped for a new Black trans-ethnic leadership that reaches “across ethnic and racial boundaries.”²² Friedman endorsed both Kilson and Walters’ positions that the new Black leadership must organize coalitions for programs that benefit everybody, not Blacks and Hispanics, but “a wide class of people.”²³

Even though Martin Kilson initially endorsed the Fairmont Conference and its alternative conservatism, he has since become an ardent critic. By 1993 Kilson argued that new Black conservatism has failed to reach the masses of African Americans because it has been extremely reactive, instead of proactive. Even though his paper at Fairmont advocated the proliferation of conservatism and Republican support among African Americans, Kilson later retracts, “American conservatism—old and new—has exhibited a crass indifference to proactive and problem-solving responses to our racial-caste legacy, claiming a zero track record in constructive programs, whether in the private or public sector.”²⁴ Perhaps Kilson has been turned off by his former comrades like Pendleton, Sowell, Meese and Thomas who eventually abandoned a commitment to Black people in their quest to reach across ethnic and racial boundaries.

Nevertheless, the Fairmont Conference represented a seemingly noble effort to find new strategies for Black America. Yet, the fact remains that the New Black Vanguard, as they often refer to themselves, is an invention of leadership that was raised and sponsored outside of the Black community in the interest of the Republican Party. The conference was productive in its attempt to challenge the personalities that were designated as the official spokespersons for Black America. However, Clarence Thomas offers an honest assessment. He discloses:

²² Ibid., 133.

²³ Friedman, 151.

²⁴ Martin Kilson, “Anatomy of Black Conservatism,” *Transition Magazine* 59 (1992): 6-7.

In retrospect, however, the composition of the conference, the attendees, and their various motives for being there should have been an indication of the problems we would encounter in providing alternative thinking in our society. Some of us went because we felt strongly that black Americans were being fed a steady diet of wrong ideas, wrong thinking and certainly nothing approaching pluralism. There were some others, however, who appeared there solely to gain strategic political position(s) in the new Administration. This would be the undoing of a great idea. But even so, hopes were high, expectations and spirits were high, and morale was high. For those of us who had wandered in the desert of political and ideological alienation, we had found a home, we had found each other.²⁵

Thomas maintains that the conference was not designed to be anti-anyone; they were simply advocating pluralism of thinking among African Americans. However, the articles, books and television appearances that have come to categorize Black neoconservatism are painfully clear about who and what they are against. Black neoconservatism distinguishes itself in that it was indeed organized to convene individuals who were to become key players in a movement as the Black alternative to racial politics in the United States.

Indeed, the Fairmont Conference was a historic event that spawned numerous Black conservative organizations and a score of Black alternative books and articles that flooded public discourse on race. The conference participants may have begun their dialogue as alternative solutions to the conditions of the Black poor, but many of the contributors abdicated this position and moved toward resurrecting the culture of poverty thesis and harshly attacking the “behavior” of the Black poor, namely the Black underclass. Their criticism often lacks a critique of the conditions that create extreme poverty in the first place. Notwithstanding, the Fairmont Conference, which is rarely referred to by its original name, marks the beginning of a movement among conservative Blacks to sharply challenge civil rights legislation and leadership and

²⁵ Clarence Thomas, “No Room at the Inn: The Loneliness of the Black Conservative,” in *Black and Right: The Bold New Voice of Black Conservatives in America*, eds. Stan Faryna, Brad Stetson and Joseph G. Conti (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 5-6.

counter the fundamental principles of the Black revolution exemplified in the Civil Rights and Black Power movements.

The Fairmont Conference set the parameters and agenda that gave rise to a group now referred to as Black neoconservatives. Their rise to the center was inspired by the visibility of Black conservatives in Reagan's administration coupled with the support of conservative foundations that helped to produce a body of literature that reflects the tenets of the Black neoconservative movement. These individuals found that "they were not alone" in their alternative approaches to race and have since set the movement into motion.

The term "neoconservative" was first used as a disparaging term to describe White liberals who were basically changing their political positions. These individuals were becoming increasingly disillusioned with the Left particularly during the late 1960s with the implementation of President Johnson's Great Society programs. Also, the neoconservatives objected to what they believe was the angry turn of the Civil Rights movement—the counterculture. These former liberals started to identify with so called traditional American values like family, morals, merit and other aspects of America's national myth and subsequently joined the Republican Party. The student rebellions and counterculture made these liberals realize that they were cultural conservatives after all. Michael Harrington referred to this group of White men as "neoconservatives" as a form of ridicule. Although, most of the marked men rejected the term, some of them embraced it and put forth their own self-definition. In fact, they consider neoconservatism as an "intellectual orientation" that flourished with the publication of *The Public Interest* magazine. The White neoconservatives claim there is no one group or organization, and those who are considered neoconservatives rarely agree; they have divergent opinions and ideas. But one thing is clear; many of them seem to agree that Black people are a problem, and

that this problem exploded in the late sixties in urban ghettos. In addition, the core of the problem is Black culture, not racism, and they ultimately blame government for crippling Blacks through welfare and affirmative action. The White neoconservatives blame Black culture for perpetuating poverty, crime, immorality, and anti-intellectualism, among other things.

Comparatively, Black neoconservatives are a distinct group and their politics are a little more complex. While the White neoconservatives may claim that their orientation is not an organized movement, the same cannot be said for Black neoconservatives who were indeed organized first through the Fairmont Conference. Since the conference, Black neoconservatives have organized themselves primarily along four sects: 1) public intellectuals; 2) politicians and government officials; 3) civic activists; and 4) journalists.

Public Intellectuals

The public intellectuals have played a critical role in producing articles and books that help to define Black neoconservatism as a movement that seeks to transform the way in which America engages its race problem. Among this class are Stephen Carter, Glenn Loury, Thomas Sowell, Shelby Steele, Carol Swain, Ann Wortham and Walter Williams. Usually, these intellectuals separate their academic work from their “race work.” The public intellectuals engage in an analysis and critique of race relations, and more specifically African American politics and identity as an extracurricular exercise of sorts. Essentially, their place in the academy validates their contentious racial positions. Their work often assumes the role of providing the “inside scoop” on Black life, Black culture, values and attitudes. While the public intellectuals dismiss and interrogate race, they use their skin color to validate their insights. This class of Black neoconservatives is the most significant

because their work gives credence to the other three spheres. Also, they help to shape and legitimize the dominant racial views among Whites that purport an increasingly deracialized and just society, juxtaposed to the reality of anti-Black sentiments and a proliferation of White nationalism.

Politicians and Government Officials

The class of politicians plays a crucial role in changing the political landscape by altering the legacy of civil rights legislation. Clarence Thomas and Clarence Pendleton, Jr., both beneficiaries of the Fairmont Conference, transformed the rhetoric of the public intellectuals into public policy during their reign in Ronald Reagan's administration. Ronald Reagan appointed Thomas and Pendleton to key civil rights commissions in the 1980s, which resulted in the subsequent erosion of anti-discrimination laws. Pendleton replaced the moderate Republican Arthur Fleming as chair of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. Ronald Walters notes:

Pendleton immediately began criticizing the commission's own reports showing persistent high unemployment among minorities by countering that there was no need for the government to enforce affirmative action and other civil rights laws to address such inequities. He characterized affirmative action as "a bankrupt policy" and likened efforts to advance the status of Blacks to a "new racism."²⁶

In addition, Pendleton founded a Black conservative organization called the New Coalition for Economic and Social Change, supported by the Heritage Foundation.

The same year of Pendleton's appointment, Reagan initially offered Clarence Thomas the position of assistant secretary for civil rights. Thomas was insulted and declined the offer noting that his career was not in civil rights, yet he did in fact accept a position as assistant secretary of the Department of Education. Thomas reflects, "I

²⁶ Walters, 236.

always found it curious that, even though my background was in energy, taxation, and general corporate regulatory matters, I was not seriously sought after to move into one of those areas. But be that as it may, I was excited about the prospects of influencing change.”²⁷ In 1982, Thomas accepted the appointment as chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Even though this position required Thomas to enforce affirmative action laws and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, he aggressively challenged civil rights legislation and opposed affirmative action. Hence, the approach of Black neoconservatives was to employ a strict interpretation of civil rights law that inverses its original intent. Ward Connerly admits the deceit he was forced to implement as chief deputy director of the Department of Housing and Community Development. He acknowledges that he was charged to perform a “mercy killing from within.”²⁸ He details the mandate, “Eliminate positions, downsize the budget, ignore existing responsibilities, and propose statues to do away with important functions...”²⁹ Instead of ensuring justice and equality for African Americans, Black neoconservatives use their positions and manipulate race-neutral language to apply to all individuals, more significantly to Whites. Thomas reveals:

The early enthusiasm was incredible. We had strategy meetings among blacks who were interested in approaching the problems of minorities in our society in a different way—among blacks who saw the mistakes of the past and who were willing to admit error and redirect their energies in a positive way. There was also considerable interest (among some white organizations) in black Americans who thought differently. But, by and large, it was an opportunity to be excited about the prospects of the future—to be excited about the possibilities of changing the course of history and altering the direction of social and civil rights policies in this country.³⁰

²⁷ Thomas, “No Room at the Inn,” in *Black and Right*, 6.

²⁸ Ward Connerly, *Creating Equal: My Fight Against Race Preferences*, (San Francisco, CA: Encounter Books, 2000), 97.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Thomas, “No Room at the Inn,” in *Black and Right*, 7.

Essentially, Pendleton, Thomas and others have successfully contributed to the deracialization of laws that were designed to target Blacks and circumvent White racism.

The administrations of George H. Bush from 1988 to 1996 continued the tradition of both Nixon and Reagan, appointing African Americans to specific positions in order to legitimize the government's retreat from civil rights and protection for African Americans. Despite a less than stellar professional career, Clarence Thomas' nomination to the United States Supreme Court has had devastating effects on African American liberal politics, especially as it relates to affirmative action.

Civic Activists

The civic activists have mobilized grassroots campaigns to advance their agendas. This class includes Ward Connerly, Star Parker and Robert Woodson, Sr. Together, they have effectively highlighted three central issues to the Black neoconservative movement: self-help, affirmative action and welfare reform. Connerly was a champion of anti-affirmative action since the mid 1990s. As a member of the Board of Regents of the University of California, Connerly was the principal "mover and shaker" behind Proposition 209, an initiative that outlawed the use of affirmative action in California, and subsequently, Initiative 200 in Washington State. He is also the co-founder of the American Civil Rights Coalition and the American Civil Rights Initiative. The purpose of these organizations was to take Connerly's crusade against affirmative action to a national level by making racial preference a hot-button issue from state-to-state. His national speaking tour set out to gauge the country's sentiments regarding affirmative action and racial preference.³¹

³¹ Connerly, 205.

Star Parker is a former welfare recipient who claims to have repeatedly abused the welfare system. According to Parker, Christianity turned her life around as she got herself off of welfare and subsequently founded a Christian magazine. The magazine disintegrated after the Los Angeles riots of 1997, which also destroyed the facilities of many of her sponsors and advertisers. This occasion set her on a crusade of her own against welfare and in opposition to Black leaders and liberals. She is the founder of the Coalition on Urban Affairs, an organization that promotes conservative solutions, values and politics from the perspective of the Christian right.

In addition, Robert Woodson, Sr. is the founder of a conservative organization called the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, which uses government funding to revitalize low-income communities through grassroots initiatives to reduce crime, support families and create employment opportunities. During Reagan's administration, Woodson developed the Council for a Black Economic Agenda and is also a former official of the National Urban League. Woodson is also a caustic critic of African American leaders and politics. These Black neoconservatives are conservative institution builders, and at least Parker and Woodson work primarily with low income, African American communities.

Journalists/Media Commentators

Lastly, the journalists have been the pulse of the movement as they fire up the nation through newspaper and journal articles, television shows and radio appearances. These personalities are the active public debaters who make frequent guest appearances on various talk shows to advance the Black alternative mission of dissent. Its celebrities include Armstrong Williams, Stanley Crouch and Larry Elder.

The various classes of the Black neoconservative machine provide a wide approach to influence public sentiments on race and racism and to change public

policy. All four sects are heavily sought after for speaking engagements to represent an alternative Black perspective and an alternative Black leadership. Many Black neoconservatives are also businessmen and women who attempt to assume “new leadership” with a platform that emphasizes middle-class values, entrepreneurship and owning property. Their business orientation embraces capitalism and other American traditions such as individualism and the promise of the American Dream.

At first glance, Black neoconservatives seem to be heavily male-centered, but there are women who have also joined the neoconservative ranks, including Anne Wortham (whose work spans the 1970s), Star Parker, Carol Swain, Elizabeth Wright and Debra Dickerson. These women arguably do not receive as much media attention as the men. In *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner Now? Multicultural Conservatism in America*, Angela Dilliard provides an analysis of “multicultural conservatives,” which includes the rise of right-wing gays, women and neoconservatives of multi-ethnic backgrounds. In her summation, women neoconservatives “have also sided with the Religious Right on issues such as abortion, school prayer, sex education, and reproductive rights.”³² In fact, Black neoconservatives rarely engage gender issues or sexism unless they criticize feminists. Parker, at least shares with her male colleagues, hostility toward feminists as yet another special interest group that has defamed the role of women in the home. While Black neoconservatives often ignore women’s rights and gender inequity, their criticism is heavily targeted toward Black women who are presented as welfare queens and single parents who are destroying the family and producing delinquent children.

Since the Fairmont Conference numerous Black conservative organizations and websites have materialized. In fact, it is difficult to gauge the extent of their

³² Angela Dilliard, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner Now?: Multicultural Conservatism in America* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), 3.

growth because of their deliberate tendency to identify as a raceless entity even as they often organize themselves along racial lines. For example, the Black Alternatives Conference is now referred to as the Fairmont Conference and *National Minority Politics* magazine is now named *Headway*.

Conservative Organizations and Publications

While the number of conservative organizations may be vast, there is a small core of Black neoconservative organizations and publications that have had substantial influence in the media and in shaping public policies and opinion. One of the oldest Black conservative organizations is the Lincoln Institute for Research and Education based in Washington, D.C. Founded by Jay A. Parker in 1978, the Lincoln Institute is often referred to as the bastion of Black conservatism whose mission is to “keep the Reagan legacy alive in the Black community.”³³ Parker considers the Lincoln Institute as the “voice of freedom in the black community” that studies “public policy issues that impact the lives of Black middle America and makes its findings available to elected officials and the public.”³⁴ It also publishes a quarterly journal, the *Lincoln Review*.

The second most popular Black conservative publication is *Headway*, founded by Gwen Daye Richardson. Initially called the *National Minority Politics* newsletter, *Headway* has grown into a full fledge magazine that supports conservative ideas such as “free enterprise, family values, the importance of religious faith and a do-it-yourself philosophy as rigorous as Horatio Alger’s.”³⁵ The magazine features columns and

³³ The Lincoln Institute for Research and Education Home Page, <www.lincolnreview.com> (3 March 2006).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Stephen Goode, “Making Headway with the Masses: Headway, Magazine Covering Conservative Black Opinion,” *Insight on the News Internet Magazine*, 15 September 1997, <www.insightmag.com> (10 March 2006).

articles by Black neoconservative celebrities including Walter Williams, Thomas Sowell, Robert Woodson, Sr., among others. According to Richardson, the main purpose of the magazine is to increase interest in the Republican Party among African Americans thereby encouraging full participation in the nation's two-party system.³⁶ She states, "It limits anyone's choice if they're captive of any one party."³⁷ Yet, most if not all of the articles are highly critical of liberals and Democrats. In essence, the magazine encourages African Americans to totally change their allegiance in favor of the Republican Party. Richardson insists that African Americans are "natural constituents" of conservatism, and she cites school choice as an issue that conservatives can take advantage of in order to peak the interest of African Americans. In addition, Richardson began the Headway Political Action Committee to support Black conservative candidates for Congress.³⁸

Project 21 is another leading organization among Black neoconservatives. An initiative of the conservative National Center for Public Policy and Research, Project 21's purpose is to beef up the sphere of commentators by providing an influx of speakers who "have been interviewed by hundreds of media outlets and have written opinion editorials in newspapers all over the country."³⁹ According to the Project 21 web site, the organization refers to itself as the "National Network of Black Conservatives" whose members widely espouse their beliefs in local communities through editorials, panel discussions on public policy, speaking engagements and advising policymakers.⁴⁰ Initially, Project 21 surfaced as a reactive measure to the riots that transpired in Los Angeles as a result of the police beating of Rodney King. The National Center for Public Policy and Research resented the media's attention to

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Project 21 Home Page, <<http://www.nationalcenter.org/P21Index.html>> (3 March 2006).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

liberals and traditional Black leaders and instead convened Black conservatives to orchestrate an effort to gain media attention for “alternative” Black voices.⁴¹ Project 21 has been successful in this regard by acting as a “public relations network” whose mission is to increase recognition for Black conservatives from all walks of life. The organization boasts vast acclaim noting, “During the three year period 2000-2002, Project 21 members were cited or interviewed by the press 1,465 times. During the same period, op-eds by Project 21 members and staff were published in newspapers 713 times.”⁴²

Occasionally, Project 21 releases reports on Black America, which attract the attention of those who call upon the organization to comment on issues affecting African Americans and race relations in the United States. Some of those reports include a collection of essays on Black America such as “How Government Harms Charities...And How Some are Succeeding Anyway,” “The Health Care Ghetto: African Americans and Health Care Reform,” and “Smart Growth and Its Effects on Housing Markets: The New Segregation.”⁴³

Other Black conservative organizations include the Center for New Black Leadership and Black Political Action Committee, also referred to as Black America’s Pack. Essentially, Black neoconservatives and the organizations of which they are affiliates, bridge their conservative ideas with advocacy for policy changes and support for Black conservative politicians. Without a doubt, these individuals and organizations are undeniably patronized by White conservative foundations and think tanks.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Project 21, *Our History*, <<http://www.nationalcenter.org/P21History.html>> (3 March 2006)

⁴³ Ibid.

The Patrons

The patrons of Black neoconservatives include a network of foundations and conservative think tanks. The largest patrons appear to be the Heritage Foundation and the Hoover Institution of Stanford University. Thomas Sowell, Walter Williams, Shelby Steele, and Anne Wortham are all fellows of the Hoover Institution. In addition, John McWhorter is a senior fellow of the conservative Manhattan Institute. Robert Woodson, Sr. and Glenn Loury were members of the American Enterprise Institute. Furthermore, the Olin Foundation, Bradley Foundation and Scaife Foundation are fervent financial supporters of Black neoconservative publications. Obviously, White conservatives have a vested interest in African Americans who share their views. Black conservative denials of racism and their emphasis on self-help and insistence on letting Blacks, especially the poor “fend for themselves,” protect White conservatives from charges of racism for sharing the same views. According to Robert C. Smith and Hanes Walton, Jr.:

...One must analyze the ideas and thoughts of black conservatives in relation to their patrons, for it is only in this relationship that ideas, race, and power are ultimately joined. A Sowell, Steele, or Carter can come into play in a meaningful way only when their patrons have prepared a context for them.⁴⁴

Smith and Walton argue that Black neoconservatives have been quite successful in their role in the conservative establishment, which never intended to build a large support base among African Americans. Rather, Black neoconservatives legitimize their patrons’ attack on civil rights and the welfare state. In addition, they rationalize inequality and racial disparities by maintaining and defending the power structure.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Robert C. Smith and Hanes Walton, Jr., “U-TURN: Martin Kilson and Black Conservatism” in *Transition* 62 (1993): 209.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 214.

Interestingly enough, Smith and Walton note that during the presidencies of Ronald Reagan and George H. Bush, Republicans only attempted to win between 15 to 20 percent of African American voters.⁴⁶ The current administration under George W. Bush has made strides in this regard by attracting voters through the appointment of African Americans as top officials, but also in establishing a relationship with Black churches. Through faith-based initiatives, the Republican Party has courted Black ministers and supported the rise of Black mega churches in the last few years. Subsequently, Black ministers are often used as spokespersons for conservative values that stress personal responsibility and highlight the “deviant behavior” and immorality in Black communities.

In the 2004 presidential election, a significant number of African Americans supported George W. Bush because of the Republicans’ opposition to gay marriage, a socially conservative position that many Black ministers manipulated in order to resonate with African Americans. Republicans strategically appealed to the social conservatism that is often endemic of many Black churches. Even though Ronald Walters posits that social conservatism has not meant political conservatism for African Americans, the Post-Civil Rights era presents a peculiar situation that may contest Walters’ observation. In 2004, social conservatism became central within the political climate. Since many of the Black churches are attracted to funding from the government, they have been more easily co-opted by the conservative administration that has used the influence of religion to further its own agenda.

From public intellectuals to business leaders and ministers, Black neoconservatives are often used as ventriloquists for White conservatives. It is easy to assume that Black neoconservatives are simply pawns who seek individual rewards, financial success and recognition. While many of them do in fact play this role, as

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Clarence Thomas concedes, the reality is most of them genuinely believe in the ideology and political stances that they propagate. In fact, many of their scripts stem from their own personal experiences of marginality among African Americans.

CHAPTER THREE
ALTERNATIVE VISIONS: THE TRUTH ACCORDING TO BLACK
NEOCONSERVATIVES

Black neoconservatives profess an alternative vision of racial progress in the United States. In the tradition of Booker T. Washington and George S. Schuyler, Black neoconservatives consider themselves the harbingers of truth by illuminating what they consider to be the painful reality of Black deficiencies, both mental and cultural. It is their contention that these “deficiencies” are the primary obstacles to Black progress and equality. Like Washington and Schuyler, Black neoconservatives contest the idea that racism is the cause of the stifling economic, political and social conditions among African Americans. The truth according to Black neoconservatives is that African Americans must take personal responsibility for their lives in an age of unlimited opportunities and congenial racial attitudes among Whites. The focus of African American freedom struggles has included a condemnation of racism and exclusion and calls to the United States to address the contradictions of its founding principles of equality and justice. Black neoconservatives find themselves as contrarians to the conventional methods of African American freedom struggles, which they believe are misguided, anachronistic and disempowering.

Instead of holding “society” accountable for the uplift of African Americans, Black neoconservatives promote self-reliance, individualism and personal responsibility as core components of their ideology. In fact, much of their writings either dismisses or chastises the preoccupation with “society” as oppressive and unjust. Thomas Sowell critiques the concept of “society” as vague and ambiguous. He insists:

A prime obstacle is the prevailing intellectual vision which not only insists on a cultural relativism that denies that some cultures are more advanced than others, but which also treats group progress as a function of the way those groups are treated by “society.” While the actions of others have often had profound effects, whether on minority groups or on whole conquered nations, peoples are not mere creatures of other peoples—and their *long-run* fate, especially, is seldom determined by other peoples’ policies.¹

Sowell purports his theory that differences in culture determine where groups find themselves in relation to each other in any given society. For Sowell, culture is expressed through behavior rather than their statement of values, which he considers to be simply lip service. Hence, a group’s behavior is the true reflection of their culture. He argues, “...groups with different cultural heritages react very differently to the same current environment and the same objective opportunities.”² The implications of Sowell’s theory is that cultural behavior better explains African Americans’ economic, political and social position in the United States much more than a racist “society.”

Black neoconservatives endorse Sowell’s theory as they categorically maintain that African Americans have embraced the wrong cultural norms. Black culture is described as anti-intellectual, hedonistic, dependent on government, self-defeating, victim-laden, unpatriotic, anti-White, hostile, criminal, rebellious, “gangsta” and ghetto. Black neoconservatives contend that African American cultural behavior and values have made it difficult to fully assimilate into mainstream America.

United States Constitution and the Problem of Classification

The United States Constitution has been central to African American freedom struggles, which have forced the nation to stay true to its principles. In effect, the Constitution also plays a central role in the identity of Black neoconservatives who are

¹ Thomas Sowell, *Race and Culture: A World View* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1994), 10.

² *Ibid.*, 228.

strong proponents of the American creed. They incite a profound belief and loyalty to the United States as the purveyor of freedom and justice. As such, Black neoconservatives may be considered as constitutionalists, a category used by Charles V. Hamilton to articulate what he perceives as “five distinct themes in black political thought.”³ Instead of using the hackneyed labels of conservative, moderate, accommodationist, radical or militant, Hamilton prefers to use concepts that more accurately reflect goals and programs. In his opinion, labels are relative and are often oversimplified.

For Hamilton, the major themes that categorize Black political thought include constitutionalism, sovereign nationalism, plural nationalism, leftist thought, and pan-Africanism. In describing constitutionalism, he states:

Black Americans have a history of heavy reliance on the Constitution—particularly the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments—to support their arguments for equality. They have looked to that document to sustain their demand that racial segregation and discrimination be abolished....What the constitutionalists are struggling for is the actual implementation of the theoretical pronouncements in the Constitution...Essentially the position has been a simple and uncomplicated one: to constantly pressure the country to live up to the language and promises of the Constitution.⁴

Hamilton’s constitutionalists include Booker T. Washington, Monroe Trotter and W.E.B. DuBois. Although each of them occupies various localities on a scale from conservative to radical, Hamilton suggests they all differ in terms of tactics, not goals. According to Hamilton; Washington, Trotter and DuBois all had a sincere faith in the United States Constitution and at least Trotter and DuBois were strong advocates for integration.

³ Charles V. Hamilton, *The Black Experience in American Politics* (New York, NY: Capricorn Books, 1973), xxv.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

Hamilton's codification of Black political thought would place Black neoconservatives within the same category as the proponents of integration and the United States Constitution. Yet, Black neoconservatives pose a dilemma even for Hamilton's explicit categories, since they do not share the constitutionalists' loyalty to African American causes for freedom. Instead, the Black neoconservatives have employed colorblindness and individualism as a means of resisting "special interests." Their interpretations of the Constitution are conservative rather than liberal, and rest primarily on an obligation to protect Whites (or individuals), who they feel are the victims of civil rights legislation and programs that target African Americans. Black neoconservatives support the position that the United States Constitution is colorblind, and the nation should therefore accord no special privileges or acknowledgement of African Americans as a distinct group with a unique experience. Hamilton observes, "The constitutionalist definitely is loyal to the United States, but he also understands the tremendous anger and impatience (and in many instances, shares these feelings) of those black people who condemn and denounce the American political system."⁵ Hence, Black neoconservatives stand *outside* this realm of Black political thought since they often use the Constitution and colorblindness to delegitimize the anger and frustration that many African Americans harbor toward America's institutions.

In the Post-Civil Rights era, Black neoconservatives represent a sharp diversion from the struggle for "equality" insisting that racism is no longer a legal barrier and that all Americans (including African Americans) must adopt a strict interpretation of the Constitution (which is colorblind). They absolve all efforts to challenge the mainstream. Alternately, their program is to hold African Americans solely responsible for their class and conditions in society. Black neoconservatives contend that African Americans must prove that they are "equal" to Whites, despite

⁵ Ibid., 12.

the history of slavery, racism and discrimination. Labels like *accommodationist*, *assimilationist* and *conservative* may be appropriate descriptors for Black neoconservatives after all.

Not by the Color of Their Skin

Black neoconservatives profess to be the true keepers of Dr. Martin Luther King's dream of a colorblind America. They consistently make reference to Dr. King in justifying their contentious positions on race. Citing the legendary refrain of King's "I Have A Dream" speech, Black neoconservatives claim to adopt King's vision of a society whereby his children "will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."⁶ By taking King's words out of context, Black neoconservatives are quick to invoke the spirit of the Civil Rights movement and simultaneously shift the burden of racism onto African Americans. Black neoconservatives ignore King's resistance to racism and they maintain that color-conscious policies like the Civil Rights bills obviously discriminate against Whites. Consequently, Black neoconservatives have flipped racism on its head, making Whites the victims of "reverse discrimination."

The concept of colorblindness can be traced back to 1896 in the landmark decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Justice John Marshall Harlan's dissent illustrates the contradictions of colorblindness in a color-obsessed society. Harlan notes:

The white race deems itself to be the dominant race in this country. And so it is, in prestige, in achievements, in education, in wealth and in power. So, I doubt not, it will continue to be for all time, if it remains true to its great heritage and holds fast to the principles of constitutional liberty. But in view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior,

⁶ Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have A Dream" Speech, 1963 in *The Civil Rights Reader*, ed. Leon Friedman (New York, NY: Walker and Company, 1967), 112.

dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens.⁷

Indeed, Black neoconservatives support Harlan's summation that the nation does not have a caste and the Constitution "neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens," despite the nation's history of enslavement and segregation. Ultimately, Black neoconservatives comply with and uphold the dominant status of Whites "in prestige, in achievements, in education, in wealth and power."

In addition to using colorblindness as a means of denying racism, many Black neoconservatives also take a colorblind approach to identity by rejecting "Black" as a racial category. In fact, some of the Black neoconservatives scoff at the notion of using race, or more precisely "Black" as a means of identification. Certainly race is a social construct that was created in order to maintain power and privilege and to justify the exploitation of those considered as "others." Yet, Black neoconservatives rarely scold Whites for not only subscribing to the notion of race, but for also maintaining the racial hierarchy. Instead, Black neoconservatives reserve their criticism for Blacks only; who they insist are the one's who perpetuate racial division in America because of their group identity. Due to their colorblind ideology, many Black neoconservatives prefer to identify themselves as raceless individuals. Some of them identify themselves as anything and everything but Black.

Interestingly enough, some Black neoconservatives also reject "African American" as an ethnic identity. While many African Americans who identify as such understand the conception of "black" as a tool of racism and oppression, Black neoconservatives still conclusively reject ethnicity. Shelby Steele equates ethnic identity with self-doubt and insecurity. He maintains:

⁷ *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537, 552 (1896) quoted in *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform*, Derrick Bell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 26.

I think the most recent example of black pride-as-denial is the campaign (which seems to have been launched by a committee) to add yet another name to the litany of names that blacks have given themselves over the past century. Now we are to be African Americans...This self-conscious reaching for pride through nomenclature suggests nothing so much as a despair over the possibility of gaining the less conspicuous pride that follows real advancement...In the name "African American" there is too much false neutralization of doubt, too much looking away from the caldron of our own experience. It is a euphemistic name that hides us even from ourselves.⁸

In this statement, Steele does not recognize the name changing as an act of self-determination rather than a "reaching for pride." In fact, he fails to acknowledge the fact that Blacks have not had the power to name themselves. At least the terms *Negro*, *Black*, *Colored* and even *nigger* comprise the derogatory "litany of names" that Whites used to designate the "other." Steele disagrees with those who consider the term "African American" as a marker of ethnicity that identifies the reality of a viable culture, history and shared experience of those who are classified as Black in the United States. Even though "black" refers to skin color and is divorced from a landmass, Steele prefers this term over African American because he believes it forces Black people to deal with the reality of their experience in America, no matter how daunting.

While Black neoconservatives in particular moments in time and space acknowledge their Black identity, many of them strive to simply be recognized as *Americans*, with no hyphens. Black neoconservatives like John McWhorter deny that African Americans have any connection whatsoever to Africa. He states, "...Although I certainly feel 'black American,' I feel neither African nor in any sense just a few steps past being a white person's property. Given this, my connection to ancestors of six generations back who I know nothing about feels more academic than

⁸ Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 47.

spiritual.”⁹ In addition, McWhorter ridicules Blacks who identify with Africa and the notion of a homeland claiming:

Fewer positions on black uplift could be less promising than that we will lack inner pride until we studiously equate ourselves with people who do not talk, eat, move, dress, or even see the world the way we do, who are neither our immediate relatives nor usually even our close friends. Too seldom do “Mother Africa” advocates notice that, in any case, many Africans look askance at professional victimhood in black America, and are rather amused when we deign to consider ourselves “home” on African soil.¹⁰

Both Steele and McWhorter suggest that any preoccupation with Africa is superficial and it represents a denial among Black people that runs deep in terms of their true cultural experiences in America, which in their estimation are much more in concert with White Americans than with Africans. As such, a colorblind identity facilitates assimilation into the mainstream or White dominant culture. In addition to rejecting ethnic identity, Black neoconservatives also reject the White identification of Blacks as “other.” Much of their work incites a mission to prove that they have the same values, beliefs, goals and behaviors as Whites. This becomes clear as Black neoconservatives consistently paint the Black underclass as the new and improved “other.”

Black neoconservative advocacy for colorblindness is based primarily on two premises. The first assumes that being blind to color is a means of resistance to racial classification, which is often considered the basis of racism. It supports the notion that if skin color propels racism, then colorblindness purports race neutrality and is therefore fair and just. Black neoconservatives claim that the focus is then shifted to individualism, character and merit rather than skin color. For Black neoconservatives,

⁹ McWhorter, *Authentically Black: Essays for the Black Silent Majority* (New York, NY: Gotham Books, 2003), 89.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

the negation of race safeguards the core principles of the American creed and fosters national unity. Essentially, they believe if Whites are expected to be blind to color, then it is only fair that African Americans also don colorblindness and forego the policies and ideologies that center blackness. Secondly, Black neoconservatives often believe, as do many liberals, that colorblind policies will attract the support of Whites, because Blacks are removed as the target or sole beneficiaries. In *Declining Significance of Race*, economist William Julius Wilson argues that it becomes necessary to hide certain agendas behind universal programs “to which the more advantaged groups of all races and class backgrounds can positively relate.”¹¹ However, author Stephen Steinberg contends that the notion of a “hidden agenda” contradicts Wilson’s premise of a declining significance of race. The fact that one must “hide” a program that benefits Blacks shows that race is surely significant.¹² Nonetheless, Black neoconservatives attest that Whites will support policies that help everyone. In other words, policies will gain broad support if Whites are also beneficiaries.

Author Eduardo Bonilla-Silva challenges colorblindness in his book entitled, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. Throughout the book, Bonilla-Silva details the contradictions of colorblindness, which he refers to as colorblind racism: the new racism that has been able to maintain White privilege by sustaining relations of domination.¹³ He argues that colorblind racism helps to normalize racial inequality by portraying the dominant race as universal and blaming inequality on cultural deficiencies. In Bonilla-Silva’s assessment, colorblindness pretends to be progressive in its support of equality, fairness and meritocracy, which

¹¹ Stephen Steinberg, *Turning Back: The Retreat from Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995), 124.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 66-67.

allows its proponents to deny the existence of systematic discrimination and ignore the reality of racial inequality. He posits, “The political beauty of color blindness as an ideology is that it allows whites to state their racial views as if they were principled, even moral, positions.”¹⁴ Of even greater significance, Bonilla discusses the fact that the new racism does not have to use overt, hostile methods in order to sustain inequality. In fact, the dominant would rather maintain power through the consent of oppressed groups.¹⁵ Bonilla-Silva’s analysis aptly applies to Black neoconservatives who are in compliance—they embrace the culture, views and practices of the dominant as normative and justified.

Colorblindness is a tricky concept that allows people to put on color blinders; it does not mean that color does not exist. It simply tries to make color invisible. People who embrace colorblindness often fail to understand that the issue is not simply about skin color. They conveniently ignore the realities of race, culture and inequity. Color blinders allow them to dismiss all of these things by pretending they are invisible. As Steinberg suggests both liberals and conservatives have maintained the racial status quo through colorblindness. Furthermore, an examination of Black neoconservative ideology disproves the claim that Black neoconservatives hold a humanistic consciousness, rather than a race-centered one. In fact, their writings, commentaries and critiques are heavily race conscious as they hone their criticism on African Americans, especially the Black underclass. Their colorblindness ironically is extremely color conscious. Actually, they would not enjoy their celebrity if they were not race-centered.

By drawing upon the principles of the United States Constitution and other “sacred” documents like the Declaration of Independence, Black neoconservatives

¹⁴ Ibid., 80.

¹⁵ Ibid., 76.

have used colorblindness and “rugged individualism” to support political positions that are couched in racial conflict. More specifically, affirmative action and welfare are the two policies that are central to their antagonism. According to Clarence Thomas, “For blacks the litmus test was fairly clear. You must be against affirmative action and against welfare. And your opposition had to be adamant and constant, or you would be suspected of being a closet liberal.”¹⁶ In this sense, Thomas describes having to become a caricature of sorts in order to prove his alliance with White conservatives.¹⁷ On occasion, a Black conservative may take a moderate position and support affirmative action as in the case of J.C. Watts, Glenn Loury and Colin Powell. Their support for affirmative action may even preclude them from being labeled as neoconservative. However, the orthodox position of Black neoconservatism is one that is strongly opposed to affirmative action and welfare.

Ward Connerly implicates both policies as the core problems of race relations today. He insists that Blacks in the past used to be more than ready to take any job regardless of pay. Connerly states:

In a brief thirty years, programs such as welfare had changed all this, replacing these heroic efforts at self-betterment with a culture of dependency. And affirmative action was the kissing cousin of welfare, a seemingly humane social gesture that was actually quite diabolical in its consequences—not only causing racial conflict because of its inequities, but also validating blacks’ fears of inferiority and reinforcing racial stereotypes.¹⁸

Like Connerly, Black neoconservatives have shaped their opposition to affirmative action as a “moral issue” that violates the founding principles of the nation. Yet, they

¹⁶ Clarence Thomas, “No Room at the Inn: The Loneliness of the Black Conservative” in *Black and Right: The Bold New Voice of Black Conservatives in America*, eds. Stan Faryna, Brad Stetson and Joseph G. Conti (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1997), 9.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ward Connerly, *Creating Equal: My Fight Against Race Preferences* (San Francisco, CA: Encounter Books, 2000), 3.

place culpability of these violations mainly upon Blacks. Connerly continues, “Today, however, it is often blacks—especially the civil rights professionals—who insist on the primacy of group membership and the irrelevance of individual achievement and aspiration.”¹⁹ In addition, Black neoconservatives assert that the notions of “Black entitlement” represent reverse discrimination, which contradicts the goals of the Civil Rights movement. Thus, Black neoconservatives have made it their mission to not only publicly denounce affirmative action and welfare, but to actively work to abolish it. Despite the fact that other groups have benefited from such policies, especially White women as the primary beneficiaries, affirmative action and welfare have been colored as Black policies. Interestingly enough, affirmative action and expanded welfare were moral responses to the nation’s gross inequities and racism, but in the Post-Civil Rights era Black neoconservatives have tainted these policies as morally corrupt.

Affirmative Action

Thomas Sowell is one of the earliest critics of affirmative action. His loyalty to conservatism precedes the “Reagan Revolution.” In 1976, he wrote an article entitled “A Black ‘Conservative’ Dissents,” arguing that affirmative action undercuts the legitimacy of Black achievements. Similarly, in his book *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?*, Sowell contends that the civil rights vision, which includes affirmative action, is based on the premises of discrimination and Black inferiority. He posits a distinction between opportunity and affirmative action. For him, equal opportunity applies to individuals who would be “judged on their qualifications as individuals.” Affirmative action, on the other hand judges people based on group membership who receive preferential treatment to “achieve a more proportional ‘representation’ in

¹⁹ Ibid, 21.

various institutions and occupations.”²¹ Sowell argues that proportional representation is not a valid goal for any institution, especially if it discriminates against Whites. Like Walter Williams, Sowell argues that a lack of representation does not mean that there is racism or discrimination. Williams suggests that a dearth of Black representation may simply be a result of “racial tastes.”²² Even Shelby Steele notes, “This expansion of what constitutes discrimination allowed affirmative action to escalate into the business of social engineering in the name of anti-discrimination, to push society toward statistically proportionate racial representation, without any obligation of proving actual discrimination.”²³ Sowell suggests that age and culture are more realistic determinants of representation. He also insists that an honest conversation about the work habits and culture of African Americans must take place without accusations of using stereotypes or racism. Instead of incorporating historical effects of racism and discrimination in his analysis of affirmative action and the civil rights vision, Sowell maintains:

However much history may be invoked in support of these policies, no policy can apply to history but can only apply to the present or the future. The past may be many things, but it is clearly irrevocable. Its sins can no more be purged than its achievement can be expunged. Those who suffered in centuries past are as much beyond our help as those who sinned are beyond our retribution. To dress up present-day people in the costumes and labels of history and symbolically try to undo the past is to surpass Don Quixote and jeopardize reality in the name of visions.²⁴

Sowell’s critique of affirmative action heavily influenced contemporary Black conservatives including Shelby Steele, John McWhorter, Ward Connerly and Stephen Carter.

²¹ Thomas Sowell, *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?* (New York, NY: William Morrow, 1984), 38.

²² Walter Williams, *The State Against Blacks* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1982), 20.

²³ Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character*, 114.

²⁴ Sowell, *Civil Rights*, 119.

Shelby Steele centers his opposition to affirmative action in relation to White guilt and Black inferiority. He states, "...preferences only impute a certain helplessness to blacks that diminishes our self-esteem. The self-preoccupied form of white guilt that is behind racial preferences always makes us lower so that we can be lifted up."²⁵ Here Steele connects the interdependence of Black inferiority and White guilt, which for him produces a vicious cycle that is perpetuated by affirmative action. In addition, Steele presumes:

Even when the black sees no implication of inferiority in racial preferences, he knows that whites do, so that—consciously or unconsciously—the result is virtually the same. The effect of preferential treatment—the lowering of normal standards to increase black representation—puts blacks at war with an expanded realm of debilitating doubt, so that the doubt itself becomes an unrecognized preoccupation that undermines their ability to perform, especially in integrated situations.²⁶

Steele regards affirmative action as an “escapist policy” that institutionalizes Black entitlement rather than requiring Black people to develop their skills and intellect so that they can compete with Whites and more importantly “develop a faith in their own capacity” to compete.²⁷ Like Sowell, Steele agrees with the summation that no policy should address historical wrongs when he mentions, “Suffering can be endured and overcome, it cannot be repaid. Blacks cannot be repaid for the injustice done to the race, but we can be corrupted by society’s guilty gestures of repayment. Affirmative action is such a gesture.”²⁸ Steele maintains that Blacks are corrupted by a sense of power they incur from making Whites feel guilty. Essentially, both Steele and Sowell minimize the current effects and prevalence of racism. Joe Feagin observes:

²⁵ Steele, *The Content of Our Character*, 90.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 117-118.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

If antiblack discrimination is no longer regarded as a serious problem, then it is not surprising that most whites see less need, or no need, for strong antidiscrimination efforts by governments. From this perspective blacks pressing for continuing or enhancing antidiscrimination programs, such as aggressive affirmative action, are seen as making illegitimate demands.²⁹

Nevertheless, Black neoconservatives insist that Black demands for affirmative action are in fact illegitimate entitlements that are rooted in an exaggerated victim status and Black inferiority. Steele presumes:

I think [Blacks] *choose* to believe in their inferiority, not to fulfill society's prophesy about them, but for the comforts and rationalizations their racial "inferiority" affords them. They hold their race to evade individual responsibility. Their margin of choice scares them, as it does all people. They are naturally intimidated by the eternal tussle between the freedom to act and the responsibility we must take for our actions...Their "inferiority" shields them from having to see that they are afraid of all-out competition with white students.³⁰

According to Steele, African Americans strategically manipulate Black inferiority in order to win entitlements like affirmative action, which rescues them from having to meet the same standards as their White counterparts.

In Ward Connerly's book, *Creating Equal: My Fight Against Race Preferences*, he acknowledges the work of Thomas Sowell and Shelby Steele as playing a critical role in shaping his views. Connerly's crusade against affirmative action was ignited by the empathy he felt for a White family whose son was rejected from all of the University of California (UC) medical schools. Although the young man was admitted to a joint program with Harvard University and MIT, along with gaining admission to Johns Hopkins medical school, Connerly maintains that this student and others like him were victims of affirmative action and that "their chances

²⁹ Joe Feagin, *Racist America: Roots Current Realities, and Future Reparations* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), 125.

³⁰ Steele, *The Content of Our Character*, 28.

of life were radically diminished because they're of the wrong race.”³¹ This was the moment that led Connerly to assume “black guilt” and set out on a mission as a Black man to forcefully oppose affirmative action in the state of California. His crusade owes much of its success to the ambiguous nature of affirmative action, which has not been strictly defined since its inception. Manning Marable explains:

“Affirmative action” per se was never a law, or even a coherently developed set of government policies designed to attack institutional racism and societal discrimination. It was instead a series of presidential executive orders, civil rights laws, and governmental programs regarding the rewarding of federal contracts, fair employment practices and licenses, with the goal of uprooting bigotry.³²

As a product of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, affirmative action has come to represent a variety of policies and programs designed to increase the representation of women and people of color who have been historically excluded from opportunities in employment, contracts, and education. Its nebulous definition allowed Connerly to take the liberty to put forth his own definition of affirmative action as “racial preferences.” His word choice was significant and strategic considering the fact that racial preference was always objectionable to both Whites and Blacks. According to Marable:

The main thrust of the language in the Civil Rights Act of 1964...declared that workplace discrimination on the basis of “race, color, religion, sex or national origin” should be outlawed. However, the inclusionist orientation of Wilkins, Rustin and company is also apparent in the 1964 Act’s assertion that it should not be interpreted as having to require any employers “to grant preferential treatment to any individual or to any group.”³³

³¹ Connerly, 120-123.

³² Manning Marable, *Beyond Black & White* (London: Verso, 1995), 81.

³³ *Ibid.*, 83.

Connerly manipulated the use of “preferential treatment” to strike a nerve among Californians in regards to affirmative action. He defines preference as a “commitment to put a certain number of black and ethnic students into the university, even if their admission meant discriminating against those who were better qualified.”³⁴ Using this definition, Connerly convinced Governor Pete Wilson that affirmative action was only racial preference in disguise. Connerly’s definition is clearly a reflection of his commitment to protect Whites whom he believes are better qualified than Blacks and Hispanics. In fact, Connerly identified his constituency as “students and students-to-be at UC and their parents.”³⁵ From the beginning, his opposition to affirmative action was solidified by his commitment to appease Whites and Asians who he claims are the victims of reverse discrimination.³⁶

In addition to propagating a contentious definition of affirmative action, Connerly also likens racial preference and their supporters to raw bigotry. He suggests:

The proponents of preferences must know that their game is up. But they continue to fight a desperate rear-guard action that makes them the heirs of George Wallace and all the others who stood in those doorways of the past, protecting a corrupt and outmoded way of life. “Preferences today!” these bitter-enders are saying by their actions. “Preferences tomorrow! Preferences forever!”³⁷

Connerly invokes a virulent image of the Jim Crow South whereby Governor George Wallace and other Whites of Alabama resisted school integration. Ironically, Connerly makes a connection between pro-segregation and affirmative action even though the latter is intended to assure racial integration.

³⁴ Connerly, 133.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, *See Footnote*, 241.

Indeed, racial integration decreased at UC schools after the implementation of Proposition 209. Connerly accepts the decline of enrollment of Black and Hispanic students. He states, “Clearly, the students were redistributing themselves within the UC system according to their competitive status, a development Thomas Sowell had predicted in his work on race and education many years earlier.”³⁸ Connerly contends that White students with certain qualifications are entitled to attend the schools that they choose and that affirmative action does not target the roots of racial inequities, which he believes are poor primary and secondary schools.

Connerly also rejects the idea that affirmative action by and large spawned the growth of the Black middle class. Other neoconservatives like Sowell and Carter emphasize Black progress before the 1960s that they believe naturally evolved into a thriving Black middle class. Connerly presumes, “The black middle class had been created not by affirmative action, but by the end of discrimination, the advent of equal opportunity, and simple hard work.”³⁹ Neoconservatives deny that affirmative action is in fact the “advent of equal opportunity.” As such, Connerly insists that ending affirmative action is in fact a natural conservative principle.⁴⁰

In a similar vein as Shelby Steele and Ward Connerly, Stephen Carter, author of *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby*, expounds upon Sowell’s thesis that beneficiaries are dressed up in the “costumes” of history in order to gain racial preferences. Carter suggests that affirmative action has run its course and therefore does not apply to Post-Civil Rights generations. He believes that those who were in high school during the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. were better candidates for affirmative action much more so than the privileged children who have benefited since. He states:

³⁸ Ibid., 235.

³⁹ Ibid., 237.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 262-263.

I look around the classrooms at the Yale Law School, where I have taught for almost a decade, I realize that the bright and diverse students of color I see before me have a shot, and a good one, at being the last members of the affirmative action generation—or, what is better still, the first members of the post-affirmative action generation, the professionals who will say to a doubting world, “Here are my accomplishments; take me or don’t take me on my merits.”⁴¹

Carter admits that he may not have had the opportunity to attend Yale University as a law student if it were not for affirmative action. However, he insists that the policy forces Blacks to carry a stigma that suggests that Black people are afraid to compete intellectually with Whites.⁴² Carter is haunted by what he calls the “psychological pressure” that racial preferences place upon Black students.⁴³

Over the years, Carter has come to the conclusion that racism has subsided tremendously making affirmative action unwarranted and unfair. He believes that affirmative action punishes White males for being the wrong color and sex. Thus, White men are forced to bear the “mantle of oppressor” even though the sins of the past are not the sins of the current generation.⁴⁴ Carter also embraces the myth of merit, insisting that Whites are admitted based on their merits alone and African Americans must address those insecurities that make them doubt their own capabilities. Even though he carefully details his own qualifications, he never accords the same consideration to recent and current beneficiaries who may be *qualified* and were simply given the *opportunity* to compete. It is Carter’s contention that since affirmative action is strongly stigmatized, its dismantling will grant Blacks the chance to prove their worth and their place in the academy, instead of being victims of what he calls “the best black syndrome.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ Stephen Carter, *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1991), 5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 3-5, 47.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

Carter also opposes the justifications of affirmative action based on the promotion of “diversity,” which Steele equates with “social engineering.”⁴⁶ Even John McWhorter claims that Blacks are the main beneficiaries of diversity goals. He professes:

Mormons, paraplegics, people from Alaska, lesbians, and poor whites exert little pull on the heartstrings of admissions committees so committed to making college campuses “look like America.” Instead, the “diversity” of interest is tacitly considered to be brown-skinned minorities, especially African Americans.⁴⁷

Carter also agrees with McWhorter’s belief that the policy is bankrupt because “the benefits of affirmative action fall to those least in the need of them.”⁴⁸ He questions the notion that most Blacks are poor and disadvantaged, and he is sure that Black middle class kids like him are not entitled to such a policy of preference.

In addition to being a crutch that has institutionalized unfair preferences, Black neoconservatives also assert that affirmative action inflames racial tension on college campuses.⁴⁹ They present the policy as having a double-edged sword that cuts into Whites and Blacks alike. On the one hand, Whites become increasingly resentful because they are the victims of affirmative action. On the other hand, Blacks are presumed to battle with an internal conflict that is mired with self-doubt. Black neoconservatives talk of the daunting feeling that many Blacks experience as they ponder whether or not they are truly qualified, thereby claiming that Blacks internalize an inferiority complex. McWhorter insists that racial preference “dumbs” down Blacks and condemns them to mediocrity.⁵⁰ For Steele, this makes affirmative action

⁴⁶ Steele, *The Content of Our Character*, 115.

⁴⁷ McWhorter, *Authentically Black*, 14

⁴⁸ Carter, 72.

⁴⁹ Connerly, 237. Also see Shelby Steele’s *The Content of Our Character*, 126.

⁵⁰ McWhorter, *Authentically Black*, 155.

especially demoralizing.⁵¹ Furthermore, Black neoconservatives argue that affirmative action places too many African Americans in an environment where they are not prepared to compete. The assumption is that African Americans have gained access according to a lower set of standards, and are therefore stealing the place of a “more qualified” White applicant. As a result of the controversy surrounding affirmative action, Black neoconservatives urge African Americans to refuse the helping hand and prove their worthiness. Steele posits, “For the first time in our history we could no longer merely claim to be equal; new freedoms and opportunities meant that we now had to prove it.”⁵² Even more, individuals like Sowell, Steele, Carter, Connerly and Thomas have been invaluable to the anti-affirmative action movement because their skin color protects them against charges of racism. Hence, White opponents of affirmative action can defer to these Black individuals who have become central voices in the affirmative action and welfare debates.

Welfare: The Kissing Cousin

Black neoconservative critiques of affirmative action are coupled with contempt for welfare. They argue that the expansion of welfare policies as a component of Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society programs and the War on Poverty created a vicious dependency among African Americans that has become the primary source of debilitation and a perverse culture in urban ghettos. John McWhorter and Star Parker provide some of the most biting critiques of Black welfare recipients. For one, McWhorter continuously defines welfare as handouts that “pay black women to have illegitimate children.”⁵³ He argues that welfare was expanded in the 1960s specifically to benefit Black people, and before this time period welfare was intended

⁵¹ Steele, *The Content of Our Character*, 116.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 65.

⁵³ McWhorter, *Authentically Black*, 24- 25.

primarily for widows. He maintains that advocates tend to forget that “White leftists” advocated welfare expansion because they believed it would be unfair to expect a formerly oppressed group to rise up the economic ladder on their own efforts.⁵⁴ He states:

Even older blacks could easily have missed the transformation, as it was not treated as a headline event. King’s assassination, urban riots, and the Black Panther’s mau-mauing escapades were more likely to turn one’s head at the time. But it is no accident that welfare lurks only at the margins of depictions and discussions of black life before the late 1960s. Until then, welfare was harder to get and less generous, offering a stopgap but not a lifestyle.⁵⁵

It is this “lifestyle” that has warranted hostile criticism from Black neoconservatives who insist that welfare destroys the incentive for Black mothers to find jobs and encourages Black fathers to abandon their families. McWhorter continues:

Black Americans must be regularly taught that the expansion of welfare in the late 1960s created the unique desolation of today’s inner cities. Many blacks look at the inner cities and assume that “racism” trapped people there. Add to this the common reflex to see inner-city blacks as most of the race, or at least “real” blacks, and the result is a misconception that after the Civil Rights Act, whitey kept his foot on most of our necks.⁵⁶

McWhorter conceptualizes welfare as “charity” from Whites who feel guilty about the nation’s racist past. Yet, he maintains that their charity in the form of welfare and affirmative action has done much more harm than good. According to McWhorter, Blacks have “descended into slovenly dependence” since the advent of welfare and essentially created hell in the streets “that our Tupac Shakurs depict.”⁵⁷ McWhorter is not concerned about the White majority who is on welfare. He argues, “But with

⁵⁴ Ibid., 90.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 91.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 210.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 214.

black people accounting for less than a tenth of the population, obviously mere head counts are not the issue. What matters is the proportion of blacks who have been on welfare, and the extent to which they clustered in communities and drifted into living on the dole as a lifestyle.”⁵⁸ Black neoconservative critiques of affirmative action and welfare never include Whites, especially White women who they either see as victims of affirmative action or legitimate widows who temporarily receive assistance from the government through welfare. Reagan’s administration successfully exacerbated the relationship between race, welfare, corruption and debasement by indicting Black mothers as the infamous “welfare queens.” According to conservatives, both Black and White, the real problem obviously is the “welfare queens,” who are never White; are always Black; and who have children that basically wreak havoc in their communities, schools and eventually prisons.

Essentially, McWhorter considers both affirmative action and welfare as Black reparations,⁵⁹ and insist that the “true story of welfare” must become a staple of Black history as *Plessy v. Ferguson*. He states, “Whitey really done us wrong this time: the expansion of welfare created more black misery than any number of brutal policemen, white thugs yelling ‘nigger,’ real estate agents turning black applicants away, or white teachers not calling on black boys in school.”⁶⁰ McWhorter’s incessant use of the term “whitey” throughout his books is facetious as he marks what he claims are Black ways of talking and thinking. Notwithstanding, he rationalizes his proposition as he contends that racism and classism are wrongly blamed for the predicament of the Black poor and result in “young blacks rejection of the establishment in favor of the street.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 91-92.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 215.

⁶¹ Ibid., 216.

John McWhorter illuminates the example of Star Parker, a self-proclaimed “welfare queen” who achieved what she claims was the most difficult obstacle of her life—giving up welfare. Not only does Parker admit to paying for four abortions through the welfare system, she also confesses abuse of the system in which she sold welfare benefits on “the black market” so that countless other Black women could get abortions through fraudulence. Parker refers to this rampant abortion as the Black “holocaust” and “subsidized murder.”⁶² Since giving up her welfare lifestyle, which she describes as “plush” and “lavish,” Parker has become a staunch conservative, advocating privatization, capitalism and entrepreneurship, rugged individualism, limited government and of course the demise of welfare. Her professed role models and friends include ultra-conservatives Rush Limbaugh and Pat Buchanan.

In her book, *Pimps, Whores and Welfare Brats: The Stunning Conservative Transformation of a Former Welfare Queen*, Parker mentions a conversation between her and Limbaugh in which she insists that liberals are the racists “because they relegated [Blacks] to accepting handouts and government dependency.” Parker continues, “Yet liberals have been getting away with calling Republicans racists for so long that many blacks feel racism is now synonymous with the GOP...It’s our liberal legislators who have sold us into a type of government-dependent slavery and socialism that is almost unbreakable now.”⁶³ Parker submits that capitalism has “no racial boundaries” and that liberals and Black leaders like Jesse Jackson are adamant about keeping alive the racial myth and criticizing conservative African Americans such as Clarence Thomas for resisting the “welfare status quo.”⁶⁴ Parker echoes McWhorter’s sentiment that welfare is a critical moment in Black history. In fact,

⁶² Star Parker, *Pimps, Whores and Welfare Brats: The Stunning Conservative Transformation of a Former Welfare Queen* (New York, NY: Pocket Books, 1997), 138.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 111.

Parker describes it as “a grand political experiment to transform our most troubled urban neighborhoods into a model for government socialism.”⁶⁵ She believes that African Americans have been silent on the issue mainly because they are afraid to abandon the false security of the Democratic Party.

In addition to providing her life as the prime example of the immorality of welfare and the gross abuse of it in Black communities, Parker resorts to provocative name calling in the last section of her book. She refers to Democrats as “political pimps” who are essentially government socialists who do not believe that African Americans have the capabilities to succeed on their own efforts. According to Parker, the Civil Rights movement was a breakthrough for the “pimps” who have since grown in influence. As she puts it, “The pimps showed up on the scene and said, ‘Hey listen, black folks, we’ll help you. We’ll initiate some new laws like the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act.’”⁶⁶ For Parker, the problem with these laws is that they violate the United States Constitution and that the solution should have been the simple enforcement of the nation’s founding document, which she believes already guarantees freedom and equality to African Americans.⁶⁷ Parker argues that the “pimps” implemented a slew of social programs like food stamps, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and public housing with the intent to redistribute the wealth and aid White guilt.⁶⁸ In her summation, Blacks sold their communities to Democrats in order to get from under what they perceived to be the “weight of racism.”⁶⁹

Parker argues that the end result of welfare has been a perverse dependence: a new form of slavery that produced “two generations of welfare dependents and a

⁶⁵ Ibid., 123.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 125.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 126.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

younger generation that doesn't give a darn about anything."⁷⁰ Parker identifies Black leaders (Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, Maxine Waters and the Black Congressional Caucus) as the "whores" who receive "a job in government, a power base in their home district, and plenty of campaign money."⁷¹ Parker insists that the "whores" are the real racists. She explains, "It's not that they hate whites, but they frequently accuse them of hating blacks and judge every issue through race-colored glasses."⁷²

Moreover, the welfare brats are the children of the first generation of welfare recipients.⁷³ This group feels entitled to welfare and has totally abandoned the Black conservative principles of hard work and self-reliance that Parker believes "brought Black Americans up from slavery."⁷⁴ She states that the welfare brats demand government handouts like Social Security, Medicare and aid for college or else they "riot at the ballot box" by threatening to vote doomsayers out of office.⁷⁵ Her discussion of welfare and the "pimps, whores and welfare brats" who are seduced by it, illuminate the policy as one of the nation's most pressing moral issues that has driven a wedge between Whites and African Americans and perpetuates inner-city turmoil. Parker's primary solution is what she believes is the approach of the Republicans that stipulates, "If I can make it, you can too."⁷⁶ Thus, self-sufficiency, personal responsibility and the "opportunity to fend for themselves" are the only solutions to the nation's race problem and in alleviating the debilitating conditions of the Black poor.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 127.

⁷¹ Ibid., 128.

⁷² Ibid., 143.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 128.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 128-129.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 130.

The Problem of the “Black Underclass”

Many of the Black neoconservative critiques target the Black underclass and its presumed culture. According to conservatives Joseph Conti and Brad Stetson, authors of *Challenging the Civil Rights Establishment: Profiles of a New Black Vanguard*, “ghetto culture” is the downfall of the Black urban poor. They espouse the Black neoconservative view that has revived the “culture of poverty” thesis, which has been negated by sociologists, anthropologists and other scholars since the late 1960s. Yet, Black neoconservatives have sustained the culture of poverty thesis in popular racial discourse as they contend that ignoring the realities of cultural problems only leads to solutions that are destined to fail. Stetson and Conti maintain this point when they state, “...a chilling silence has been spread around a ghetto-specific culture by black advocates who fear that discussions about it will play into the hands of enemies of the black community. Such taboo...at best conduce to ineffective social policy—at worst, to social engineering fiascoes.”⁷⁷ Ultimately, Black neoconservatives believe that the traditional Black leaders evade the issue of “ghetto culture” in order to maintain “victim status” in American society. Conti and Stetson submit:

For the civil rights establishment to admit the existence of an injurious “culture of poverty” would be to falsify its own claim that the black underclass is essentially a victim-class, blocked at every turn by “structural racism.” As such, recognition of a ghetto-specific culture would make the civil rights establishment’s trademark “external victim” appear misdirected.⁷⁸

Even more, Black neoconservatives maintain that the denial of Black cultural decadence absolves the real issue, which is personal responsibility.

⁷⁷ Conti Joseph and Brad Stetson, *Challenging the Civil Rights Establishment: Profiles of a New Black Vanguard* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 25.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

Personal Responsibility vs. Structural Racism

According to Black neoconservatives, taking personal responsibility means divorcing the Black underclass and African American underachievement from notions of structural or institutional racism. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton defined institutional racism as distinct from the individual acts of racists. Institutionalized racism describes the systematic racism that has resulted in the adverse conditions of Blacks in addition to systematic exclusion from certain opportunities, including employment and housing. As such, society can ignore the situation or claim that nothing can be done to alleviate it.⁷⁹ Other scholars and activists have continued Carmichael and Hamilton's work by acknowledging systemic and structural discrimination in a racialized society. Joe R. Feagin in his book, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations*, uses a framework that centers systemic racism as the foundation of the United States. He suggests:

Systemic racism includes the complex array of antiblack practices, the unjustly gained political-economic power of whites, the continuing economic and other resource inequalities along racial lines, and the white racist ideologies and attitudes created to maintain and rationalize white privilege and power. *Systemic* here means that the core racist realities are manifested in each of society's major parts...the economy, politics, education, religion, the family—reflect[ing] the fundamental reality of systemic racism.⁸⁰

Even as Feagin and others have written extensively to define and elucidate systemic and institutional racism, Black neoconservatives are quick to dismiss these intellectuals who they believe are invested in the “victimhood” of Black people. Much of Black neoconservative energy is expended on criticizing liberals and the “civil rights establishment” for emphasizing the role that institutions, Whites and

⁷⁹ Stokely Carmichael with Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael {Kwame Ture}* (New York, NY: Scribner, 2003), 533.

⁸⁰ Feagin, 6.

society have in maintaining disparities between races. Black neoconservatives insist that African Americans refuse the helping hand of the government, shed their victim identity and take responsibility for their own cultural behavior, values and morals. While they do not put forth a detailed program for personal responsibility, their advocacy basically implores African Americans to stop blaming Whites for their own deficiencies and downfalls. Rather than joining in with the dissenting voices against the grave inequalities of institutional racism and capitalism, Black neoconservatives dance to their own tune by blaming the Black urban poor for their own demise. In fact, they misappropriate Booker T. Washington's legacy of self-reliance as a means of advancing African Americans.

Black neoconservatives believe that many Blacks are so entangled in a culture of dependency that the only way out of the cycle is through self-help. Since Black neoconservatives espouse the belief that equal opportunity is readily available to all Americans, they ultimately believe that any underachievement is due to Blacks own lack of motivation and initiative. Black neoconservatives categorically deny the fluency of racism in the development and creation of the Black underclass. Discrimination, unemployment, poor education, segregation are not to be used as excuses. They maintain that despite desolate resources, all individuals in America can "pull themselves up by their bootstraps," and people in the ghetto are not exceptions. For them, racism is no longer the evil that keeps the "Black man" down. Violence, crime, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and single motherhood are the new culprits responsible for the Black underclass.

Even if Black neoconservatives acknowledge the influences of racism, they easily dismiss the idea that racism is an impenetrable barrier. The belief is that individuals can still choose their destiny. Here the Black neoconservatives employ morality as a measure. They believe if "these people" had any morals, they would

avoid a life of crime, drug abuse, and even joblessness. Even if they can only find jobs that pay the bare minimum wage, it's the moral road to travel. Again, if "these people" are suffering, Black neoconservatives believe it's because they *choose* to live under those conditions. For Black neoconservatives, it is clear that Americans are free to climb the economic and social ladder, and the free market allows for anyone to succeed if only they work hard. According to Larry Elder, African Americans need to "get off your ass and work hard, stop blaming the white man, stop bitching and moaning."⁸¹

Essentially, Black neoconservatives feel little empathy for the Black underclass. They paint such a terrible picture of "trifling Negroes" that it is no wonder that many people are jumping on the band-wagon of blaming poor Blacks for their own predicament. The ongoing Black neoconservative refrain is that the Black underclass needs to stop having babies; stop committing all the crime; stop depending on the government; get a job; and more importantly, stop complaining! The Black underclass must accept the fact of having to do for themselves—of having to make a way out of no way. Black neoconservatives claim that this type of struggle is the essence of the American Dream, and it makes success that much sweeter if one struggles on his or her own to attain it.⁸²

Victimology, Victimhood, and Victim Status Identity

An analysis of Black neoconservative ideology demonstrates that their dissent is principally targeted towards what they refer to as a debilitating victim-identity. They maintain that victimization has become central to Black identity and culture

⁸¹ Brad Stetson, "The Sage of South Central: An Interview with Larry Elder" in *Black and Right: The Bold New Voice of Black Conservatives in America*, eds. Stan Faryna, Brad Stetson and Joseph Conti (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 159.

⁸² McWhorter, *Authentically Black*, 35.

since the Black Power era. As such, they identify Black Power as the source of White antagonism and racism, instead of acknowledging the racist attitudes of many Whites, which have been a staple of the nation's history. Black neoconservatives often use the terms "victimology" and "victimhood" to describe what they believe is a preoccupation with racism, which African Americans cling to in order to exert power and provoke White guilt or White resentment.

John McWhorter has written extensively about victimology among African Americans. While he acknowledges that bringing attention to victimhood is necessary and healthy, as in the case of the Jews, he argues that Black people profess victimhood in cases where racism barely exists.⁸³ In addition, McWhorter suggests that African Americans' claims to victimhood are only used to nurture resentment and alienation from the mainstream instead of fostering solutions.⁸⁴ In *Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America*, McWhorter defines victimology as "the tendency to exaggerate the degree of black oppression regardless of progress..."⁸⁵ He easily dismisses the examples that many Black people give of racism by calling these "exaggerations" occasional inconvenience.⁸⁶ McWhorter states, "Victimology is part of the very fabric of black identity, there is no better way to signal your allegiance with 'black folk' than to couch a story in it."⁸⁷ He then goes on to relay a series of stories about Black people crying racism, and he emphatically implies that these people are lying and mythologizing their experiences in order to represent their "blackness."⁸⁸ He contends that victimology encourages separatism and anti-intellectualism, which makes it difficult for a White person to consider an African

⁸³ McWhorter, *Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America*, (New York, NY: Free Press, 2000), 27.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 4-6.

American as a fellow American because victimology makes African Americans appear paranoid, parochial and dumb.⁸⁹

The seminal texts of Black neoconservatives all refer to the psychological need for African Americans to exaggerate racism and totally ignore racial progress. Stephen Carter, Star Parker, Glenn Loury, Shelby Steele and John McWhorter all mention that victimhood “feels good,” and that there is a certain glory in being the underdog. More importantly, Black neoconservatives argue that victimology masks a deep sense of Black inferiority, inadequacy or insecurity. In addition to masquerading Black inferiority, Black neoconservatives claim that African Americans use victimology to justify criminal, destructive behavior and anti-intellectualism as many successful Blacks are chastised for “acting white.” McWhorter submits, “Victimology seduces young black people just like the crack trade seduces inner-city blacks, virtually irresistible in its offer of an easy road to self-esteem and some cheap thrills on the way.”⁹⁰ In this passage, McWhorter compares young people who speak out against racism to drug dealers. In both instances, he identifies Black inferiority or low self-esteem as the foundation for both “hustles,” rather than structural forces in a White supremacist and capitalist society.

McWhorter insulates neoconservatism from criticism by claiming that anyone who denies his premise is operating from a sense of inadequacy. In his opinion, the Black poor and Black youth are not the only ones who are seduced by victimology as it prevails among the educated and across class lines. In fact, he considers Black Studies programs as the pinnacle of victimhood. African American Studies, Black organizations, scholars and intellectuals compose the caldron he refers to as “Blackademia,” which he believes perpetuates separatism and anti-intellectualism.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 212.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 39.

McWhorter argues, "...a considerable amount of black academic work downplays logical argument and factual evidence in the service of filling in an idealized vision of the black past and present, which is founded not upon intellectual curiosity but upon raising in-group self-esteem."⁹¹ McWhorter provides anecdotes to support his claims whereby he describes Black Studies as the "ghettoization of academic work."⁹² For example, he provides stories to prove black conferences are less rigorous and void of "scholarly assessment and debate."⁹³ Among the "ghetto" scholars are Molefi Asante, Derrick Bell, June Jordan, Hazel Carby, Lani Guinier, and Cornell West, all of whom receive a fair share of McWhorter's biting critiques. McWhorter, along with other Black neoconservatives, claim that Black scholars, particularly those in African American Studies programs, immortalize victimhood and therefore are incapable of providing factual assessments of racism in America. As aforementioned, the truth, according to Black neoconservatives, is protected by the assertion that those who deviate from their "truth" by indicting institutional racism and "society" are suffering from feelings of inadequacy and a deep-seated fear of competing with Whites.

While Black neoconservatives vehemently lament victimhood as the self-defeating core of Black identity and the foundation of entitlement; their core premises, affiliation and propositions offer an alternative that is hard to swallow for many African Americans. Even more, the craftiness of Black neoconservative language can easily confuse and deceive as they appropriate the language of the Civil Rights movement and Dr. Martin Luther King's legacy. Essentially, the alternatives that Black neoconservatives propose, when they propose anything at all, seem to viciously work against Black progress, countering generations of resistance to racism and oppression.

⁹¹ Ibid., 54.

⁹² Ibid., 54-59.

⁹³ Ibid., 59.

CHAPTER FOUR
A CLOSER LOOK: ILLUMINATING THE PERSONAL SCRIPTS OF BLACK
NEOCONSERVATIVES

Black neoconservatives often legitimize their presumptions by drawing from their personal stories and life experiences. Their skin color exempts them from having to provide empirical data to support their arguments, such as affirmative action causes Black people to internalize Black inferiority, and Black people have been taught to present themselves as victims in the presence of Whites in order to be authentically Black.¹ Such claims are considered factual because the messengers are in fact Black, and they offer their readers some insight into the Black world by telling stories and repeating conversations that supposedly take place among Black people. Most of the books that Black neoconservatives publish on race are overwhelmingly dependent on these “stories.” The autobiographical sketches legitimize the racial and political overtures, but they also provide some commonalities among the authors that partly inform their identity as neoconservatives. Their stories often fit well into a “script” whether deliberate or incidental.

Similarly, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva identifies “storylines” as one of the key elements of colorblind racism. He explains storylines are “narratives that appear over and over in the justifications (or criticisms) used to maintain (or challenge) racial privilege...They are storylines because the words, phrases, and ideas used in these stories are very similar and seem scripted.”² Accordingly, Bonilla-Silva posits that there are four premiere storylines among Whites in the Post-Civil Rights era that follow the tradition of the racist storylines of the Black rapist during Jim Crow. The

¹ McWhorter, *Authentically Black*, xv.

² Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 70.

current storylines include: “The past is the past,” “I didn’t own any slaves,” “My [friend or relative] didn’t get a [job or promotion] because a black [usually ‘man’] got it,” and “If [Jews, Irish, Asians] have made it, how come blacks have not?”³ Likewise, the personal scripts of Black neoconservatives serve a role and function in the Post-Civil Rights era.

Essentially, the personal scripts center Black Power in the “authenticity” debacle. Most of the scripts and seminal works are often embellished with images of clenched fists in the air and phrases like “the man,” “whitey,” and “the brothers.” The personal scripts usually contain most of the following elements: Black militants; anti-White hostility; contempt for honest work; anti-intellectualism; forced racial conformity; White benefactors, mentors or saviors; rejection of Black social space, organizations, and Black Studies; and a towering conservative family member. Black neoconservatives describe the “turbulent 1960s” as a time of confusion and immense pressure by which some of them were forced to conform to various forms of militancy in order to be a “real Black.” They also include mention of a White teacher, coach or employer who played a significant role in their development. In addition, Black neoconservatives attempt to identify their conservatism as the silent, nameless system of values that was exemplified sometimes through parents, but more often through grandparents. The personal scripts often incorporate anecdotes that raise the question of Black authenticity and includes references to victim-status identity; internalization of Black inferiority; admiration of Ronald Reagan; dissociation from poor Blacks; and of course condemnation of Black leaders, especially Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, Louis Farrakhan, Molefi Asante, Maxine Waters and the Congressional Black Caucus.

This chapter explores the personal scripts of Ward Connerly, Star Parker, Shelby Steele and Glenn Loury all of whom provide important insights to what makes

³ Ibid.

a Black neoconservative. Ward Connerly and Star Parker each wrote a book about their personal journeys as political activists. Shelby Steele's collection of essays, perhaps inadvertently, reflects the way in which his upbringing influenced his political views and racial identity. Furthermore, Glenn Loury's story brings complexity to Black neoconservative identity as he has since renounced his neoconservative posturing and revised his analysis of race, identity and the Black underclass. The life stories that are depicted by Black neoconservatives are referred to as "personal scripts" because the tales are concurrent with the political debates of the day. In essence, the personal scripts do more than simply narrate self-portrayals; they also attempt to validate political stances on contemporary issues.

Ward Connerly

Ward Connerly authored *Creating Equal: My Fight Against Race Preferences* in the year 2000 to relay the events that led to Proposition 209, including his upbringing. Connerly was born to parents of mixed ancestry that includes French Canadian, Choctaw, African, and Irish American.⁴ He contends that he is Black "only according to the 'one-drop' rule used by yesterday's segregationists and today's racial ideologues."⁵ Being familiar with only his mother's side of the family, Connerly knows that his maternal grandfather was Cajun from Louisiana and his grandmother, whom he refers to as "Mom," was Irish and Indian. According to family folklore, his Irish great grandmother "didn't like dark-skinned people and treated her darker children differently from the lighter-skinned children."⁶ Connerly explains that even though Mom's children varied in skin complexion, each of their birth certificates

⁴ Ward Connerly, *Creating Equal: My Fight Against Race Preferences* (San Francisco, CA: Encounter Books, 2000), 24.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 25.

categorized them as colored. He states, “In Louisiana in those days, being “colored” was not just a matter of blood; it was also a question of what neighborhood you lived in and what people you associated with. The word “colored” is on my own birth certificate.”⁷ In a sense, Connerly’s ruminations highlight the oppressive nature of racial categories, which foreshadow his mission to eradicate racial categories on job and college applications in the 1990s.

Connerly remembers that Mom often spoke of the animosity other Blacks hurled at her family for being “high yellors.” In fact, he suggests that the “racial hostility” from Blacks was so raw, school officials advised Mom to transfer the kids to another school. Connerly recalls:

This experience left some of my relatives with hard feelings that never really went away. During the campaign for California’s Proposition 209, for instance, when I was being accused of selling out “my people,” my Aunt Bert got annoyed one day and said, “When we lived back in Leesville, they didn’t want to be our ‘brothers and sisters’ then. They didn’t own us as ‘their people’ then, so why do they think we owe them something now because of skin color?”⁸

Obviously, Connerly’s family has a history of both marginality and disconnection from Black people.

Connerly may have felt compelled to reveal some of the color complexities and tensions within his family since a few of his distant relatives spoke about his identity in a *New York Times* article written by Barry Berak. In that article, Connerly’s paternal aunt accused Mom of being a racist who hated his father’s complexion. Other family members concurred, claiming Connerly inherited “Mom’s bigotry and self loathing.”⁹ Nevertheless, Connerly maintains that his memory of his

⁷ Ibid., 26.

⁸ Ibid., 27.

⁹ Ibid., 34

grandmother was very different than those of his “distant relatives.” He recalls Mom’s “house was always filled with dark-skinned black people from her church” and she “never in life graded anybody by their melanin content.”¹⁰ While this may be true, his family stories do admit that Mom and her siblings were treated differently according to their skin tone and that Blacks in Louisiana resented Mom’s children for being light-skinned. Interestingly enough, Connerly later concedes that he does not look for racism and often may not recognize it when others find it obvious.¹¹

Like other personal narratives of Black neoconservatives, Connerly identifies the towing conservative idol of his family as proof of his conservative underpinnings, which challenges the label “neoconservative.” Black neoconservatives often contend that they were always conservatives at heart and in the way they were raised, even though a few of them may have flirted with liberalism and Black radicalism in the late 1960s. Connerly’s conservative role model was his Uncle James who instilled in him “the importance of pride, hard work, and personal responsibility.”¹² Connerly suggests, “He is a figure of power and confidence and he embodies...the belief that a combination of work, endurance, and the ultimate goodness of this country would bring him—and all of us—through.”¹³ Connerly also notes that Uncle James never complained. He recalls a time when a group of Black men “degraded” and “devalued” honest work as “slavin for the man.” But for Uncle James, “work meant empowerment and independence, not subservience; he regarded it as an exercise of his freedom.”¹⁴ Connerly claims that Uncle James was excited about his involvement in Proposition 209. Connerly writes:

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 58.

¹² Ibid., 40

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 41.

I'm not sure he understood all the intricate details of 209, but I know he was clear on its core issues because they were also at the core of his life: the importance of earning respect and not taking handouts; of being a [man] and taking care of yourself and your family; and knowing that your achievements are really yours because you've earned them.¹⁵

Again, Connerly's narrative is essentially a "personal script" because it is inextricably linked to politics and conservative political stances.

The anecdotes of Connerly's *Creating Equal* are even more revealing. In one instance, he offers a story about fighting a Black girl for assaulting his White childhood friend, Mildred. When he and Mildred would walk to school, White boys "would taunt her as a 'nigger lover,'" but she would simply brush it off and implore Connerly to ignore them. Yet, the story turns violent when it came to Black objectors. Connerly remembers walking past a group of Black girls, and one of the girls pulled Mildred's pigtails.¹⁶ Even though the Black girl did not verbalize a racial epithet, it was obvious to Connerly that her attack was provoked by racism. In retaliation, Connerly pushed the Black girl to the ground, and was later confronted by her father who complained to Mom that Connerly sided with the White girl. Mom had made it clear to Connerly that "hurting a girl was forbidden."¹⁷ He expected a whipping, but instead of a tree branch, Mom rewarded his retaliation with a dollar bill. He remembers Mom saying, "You did the right thing...You should stand up for what's right, and what's right isn't a matter of color."¹⁸ In this instance, Mom did not stand by her rules regarding violence and gender. In addition, Connerly did not feel compelled to confront the White boys for their racist taunts in the same manner as the Black girl.

¹⁵ Ibid., 43.

¹⁶ Ibid., 48.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 49.

Connerly's personal script also includes the usual White mentors and "black firsts." He highlights the influence of Whites who were kind, gracious and inspiring throughout his life. He particularly notes a favorite English teacher, stating, "Although this white woman certainly didn't 'look like me,' as they say about the need for color-coded role models in higher education these days, she gave me something to shoot for."¹⁹ His reference to the English teacher has an overt political connotation that challenges the idea that there is value or benefit in African American professors as models to students, particularly African American students.

Connerly also discusses the impact of his college mentor, Dr. Thompson, a professor of Western Political Theory. When Connerly doubted that he was indeed created equal to other affluent students, Dr. Thompson states, "Mr. Connerly...life is imperfect, and the ideal of all men being created equal is as important as the reality. What we want is for our government to *believe* you and I are equal and treat us accordingly in its transactions. Then in the most basic sense we are, indeed, created equal."²⁰ Herein lays Connerly's inspiration to challenge affirmative action and other government policies that attempt to treat affluent and poor or Black and White as different. Connerly is also proud of the fact that Mr. Thompson only mentioned his race on only one occasion. He remembers dining at Mr. Thompson's house when his mentor concludes, "Mr. Connerly, when the day comes that I can call you a son of a bitch without you thinking that I am a racist, or thinking about my color in relation to yours, that will be the day when true equality will have been achieved."²¹ Mr. Thompson's statement places the burden of equality on Blacks and their thought patterns and racial assumptions rather than the way in which power and injustice also inhibit true equality. In this sense, Connerly has continued in Mr. Thompson's

¹⁹ Ibid., 61.

²⁰ Ibid., 64.

²¹ Ibid., 65.

footsteps in absolving Whites of their role and responsibility in the nation's racial structure.

In addition to the White benefactors, Connerly includes "black firsts" that are also common features of personal scripts. In college, Connerly was the first and only Black member of Delta Phi Omega (DPO) fraternity. Somehow, Connerly was not aware there were no Black members of DPO until his sponsor "casually mentioned" that they were "going to break a racial barrier." Connerly notes, "That was the first and only time during the nearly three years I lived in the DPO house that my color was ever mentioned."²² Like Connerly's recollections of Mr. Thompson, he seems to delight in the fact that Whites ignore his race or that he is able to become invisible in a sense in their presence. At the initiation, Connerly remembers doubting the commitment of the fraternity since his sponsor hesitated to speak up on his behalf. After significant hesitation, someone spoke up at the ceremony to sponsor Connerly and placed his hand on Connerly's shoulder. Connerly attests, "From that moment forward, I felt that I belonged."²³ Connerly's statement alludes to the way in which he prefers to identify with Whites and disassociate from Blacks. Connerly insists that the members of DPO "had become 'brothers' by choice, not some accident of color." He continues, "I believe that there was far more real 'diversity' in that fraternity house than in the voluntarily segregated living arrangements that one finds on many college campuses today."²⁴ Ironically, Connerly dismisses the segregation of the DPO house and believes his initiation only "casually" broke a racial barrier. Connerly, like other Black neoconservatives, identifies predominantly Black social spaces and organizations as segregated, yet at the same time he is able to identify marginal traces

²² Ibid., 62.

²³ Ibid., 63.

²⁴ Ibid.

of diversity in White spaces. Connerly is not the best source to compare the diversity level of Black fraternities or residence halls since he refused to frequent these spaces.

Even though Connerly notes another “black first” in his script, he continues to dismiss the idea of breaking racial barriers. He maintains, “...At the end of my junior year I was elected student body president of Sac State. As the first black to hold this position, I was sometimes referred to as a “trailblazer.” I didn’t think of myself in these terms...I didn’t see my color; if others did, that was their problem.”²⁵ Even if Connerly refused to self-identify in relation to color or race, he obviously chose to consider himself according to other terms, which are aligned with Whites and White social spaces throughout his entire life. In essence, Connerly also attempts to identify with the invisibility of whiteness.

Connerly’s anecdotes are also forgiving of White racism. In a similar fashion as George S. Schuyler, Connerly exhibits a fascination, not with Schuyler’s octoroons, but with “blondes,” which he mentions on a couple of occasions in his memoir.²⁶ Connerly married a White woman in 1962 when interracial marriages were still illegal in some states. He surmises, “It was decidedly more difficult for a white woman in these intermarriages than for a black man. The stereotypical assumptions about why a white woman would seek such a union were vile but widely accepted.”²⁷ While White women may be ostracized for marrying a Black man, Connerly neglects to mention that the consequences for Black men could be fatal, as the nation harbors a dreadful history of lynching Black men and often falsely accusing these men of raping White women. Nonetheless, Connerly mirrors Schuyler’s situation in that his in-laws were racists and wholeheartedly disapproved of his marriage to Ilene. He notes:

²⁵ Ibid., 67.

²⁶ Ibid., 69 and 91.

²⁷ Ibid., 74.

Today, people would rush to hold Ilene's parents guilty of racism. But even when I was smoldering with resentment. I knew it wasn't that simple. These were good people—hard working, serious, upstanding. They were people, moreover, who had produced my wife, a person without a racist bone in her body. In a sense, I could sympathize with my new in-laws: there were no blacks in their daily life, and they lived in a small town of coffee shops, bowling alleys, and cloying gossip, where everyone knew everything about everyone else.²⁸

Ilene's parents refused her visits and eventually only agreed to see her without Connerly. He recalls a time that he sat outside of his in-laws' home for hours during one of Ilene's visits. Just as Schuyler excused his in-laws' behavior as benevolent ignorance, a consequence of simply being unaware and unexposed, Connerly also pardons his in-laws. Ironically, Connerly acknowledges the lack of racial diversity in his in-laws' lily-white world to rationalize their prejudice. Even though he admits that his in-laws are probably racist because of their self-segregated lifestyle, he remained impervious to the value of diversity in higher education. As a regent, Connerly purports:

...It wasn't long before I was responding to bureaucrats who told me that we needed an even more diverse faculty at UC. I told them that I'd acknowledge the importance of this concept when I heard that they wanted to hire an evangelical Christian, say, or a woman who is pro-life, or, for that matter, a Republican.²⁹

In this passage, Connerly recognizes anything but race, failing to draw the connections between the diversity argument and the painful memories of his in-laws' hate.

Black neoconservatives often protect Whites and explain away their prejudice with little haste. At the same time, they are unforgiving of African Americans who embrace their culture and racial identity, reject White cultural norms or who are

²⁸ Ibid., 75.

²⁹ Ibid., 117.

hostile towards Whites. The hostility and frustration are never considered reactions to racism, and are simply deemed as irrational complaining and whining. Furthermore, Connerly's reflections on his interracial marriage are similar to Schuyler's embrace of interracial unions as catalysts for the "amalgamation of the races."³⁰ In Connerly's emotional narrative of his grandchild's birth, he avows, "When I held my new granddaughter, the tiny hand grasping my brown fingers was white as snow, yet she was blood of my blood, life of my life—living proof that the categories that are supposed to separate us in this world are an illusion."³¹ Connerly concludes his memoir with a note in which he asks "librarians and bookstore owners not to put *Creating Equal* in the African American section."³² His life story has been a race against race; a relentless objection to Black identity.

Connerly's fight against affirmative action has made him feel genuinely American. He states, "I feel more fully a citizen now—more a part of this nation—than ever before in my life."³³ Connerly becomes "American" by rejecting blackness and targeting African Americans as a problem people. Note that his fight against race preferences inherently whitewashes gender preferences as he never speaks of White women as beneficiaries of affirmative action. Nor, does he recognize the way in which his wife and other White women may have benefited. Women are not usually charged with dividing the nation, perpetuating sexism on college campuses and within the work place, or internalizing gender inferiority and incompetence. In fact, Schuyler, Connerly and Shelby Steele all note how immensely intelligent their wives are—thus, the assumption is that White women are certainly qualified and have

³⁰ Ibid., 272-273.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 279.

³³ Ibid., 265.

nothing to prove. Connerly's personal script illuminates and—in many ways—justifies his crusade against affirmative action for Blacks only.

Star Parker

Star Parker's book, *Pimps, Whores, and Welfare Brats*, is the ultimate personal script that infuses autobiographical sketches with conservative politics. The first part of her book is a generalized autobiography followed by parts two and three, which are short political remarks on a litany of hot-button issues. The title is the most provocative and a little misleading as the pimps, whores and welfare brats are defined on merely three pages of part two. Nevertheless, the book presents Parker's life story as she transformed herself from an immoral welfare queen to a successful Christian entrepreneur.

Parker's personal script has all of the elements of a classic conservative manifesto. As previously stated Parker was a former gang member who abused the welfare system to get four abortions and allowed countless other Black women to kill their unborn children illegally and at the expense of taxpayers. She indulged in what she calls a "buffet table of exotic drugs, casual sex, and all night parties."³⁴ Parker was first attracted to welfare at the age of 21 when she carelessly got pregnant and informed her friends while partying at a club. She recalls, "As I sipped on my rum and Coke, they told me not to worry and said, 'Oh darlin', don't you know welfare will take care of you?'"³⁵ The welfare lifestyle grew to be extremely attractive and addictive because it was "free money" and an "easy hustle." According to Parker, she became one of the "queenpins" who sold Medi-Cal stickers on the "blackmarket" to a readily available and growing clientele that was comprised of "lazy," unemployed

³⁴ Parker, 16.

³⁵ Ibid.

recipients and low-wage workers who were ineligible for benefits.³⁶ Apparently, Parker's family was disgraced by her welfare dependency much more so than her rambunctious lifestyle, which seemed too licentious to fully hide from her relatives.

Parker was born into a modest military family who lived in Japan until she was twelve. When her family returned to the United States, they lived in the "ghetto" in Greenville, South Carolina, and Parker soon became a rebellious teen.³⁷ Parker describes being enthralled in the whirlwind of the late 1960s. It was during this time that she learned about "militant black culture in the ghetto" and commenced to join other Black youths in rebelling against education and business by vandalizing schools and storefronts.³⁸ A Black "militant" gang taught Parker "Whites were to blame for poverty and crime."³⁹ Thus, her affiliation with Black culture amassed a strong, hostile and anti-White sentiment.

Parker mentions the year 1969 on two occasions to set the backdrop for Black violence and White innocence that are common themes throughout her script. During this tumultuous year, Parker bombed a White teacher's car, simply for being White. She also admits to robbing White military men for fun.⁴⁰ After a White man forced Parker to have sex with him, which she loosely calls statutory rape, Parker recalls taking out her frustration on other Whites at school by beating them up and robbing them for lunch money.⁴¹ She presents the political climate at the time as her validation. Actually, Parker refers to herself during this time period as "a little Black racist," whose violent, racist behavior was condoned and excused by Black radicals and White liberals. Parker states:

³⁶ Ibid., 19-20.

³⁷ Ibid., 54.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 55-57.

⁴¹ Ibid., 60.

All through high school, and even prior to that, my white counselors and teachers expressed what they called compassion and understanding. Instead of identifying a single factor at the root of my anger, the school psychologists said my ancestral past, filled with persecution and discrimination were at the core of my rebellious behavior. My attitude to that line of garbage was “That’s cool,” and I went about my business. It was payback time.⁴²

Throughout her childhood recollections, Parker dwells on her hatred of Whites, which she presents as unprovoked, irrational, and as an outgrowth of a victim-focused Black identity. She acknowledges, “For years, I used racism as an excuse to break the law and justify my rude and immature behavior. I was angry with the world and shouldn’t have been.”⁴³ In fact, she also blames her parents’ liberalism for her delinquent behavior. When she bombed a White teacher’s car for the first time, the school called her home but her parents never confronted her about it.⁴⁴ Parker states, “They were living by that liberal code—‘I’m okay, you’re okay,’ so whatever she wants to do is okay by us.”⁴⁵ Parker was only thirteen years old in 1969, and she insists that her parents allowed her to stay in the streets all night long and dress provocatively without any recourse.

Parker does in fact note a White benefactor during her childhood, but she was presumably too racist to appreciate his interest in her. She remembers that her White track coach was different than the other White teachers because he did not allow Parker to use excuses for her poor performance and shallow efforts. After the coach paid a visit to her parents at their home to talk about Parker’s decisions, she retorted, “The nerve of that white man,” and blew up his car just three years after her first car

⁴² Ibid., 60-61.

⁴³ Ibid., 71.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 56.

bombing.⁴⁶ It was not until Parker was “born again” that she was admittedly cured of racism. She confers:

Truth be told, I only began trusting whites because Pastor Price said it was the right thing to do. He preached against racism and reverse racism. From his pulpit, he would say that white people weren't the enemy—the devil was the enemy. And somehow—from that day on, I didn't hate white people anymore. I decided they deserved the benefit of the doubt.⁴⁷

Parker took Pastor Price's words to heart and was able to later grant men like Rush Limbaugh the benefit of doubt, rejecting any claims that he is racist and instead embraces him as a friend and mentor.

Without a doubt, Parker's delinquency is partially tied to the issue of Black authenticity throughout her autobiographical sketch. As one of the common features of personal scripts, Parker remembers the peer pressure from other African Americans who called her ethnicity into question when she decided to work and did well on her job. She declares, “I discovered being a good employee and playing it by the book qualified me as a ‘house nigger’—someone who kissed a white man's butt to get a cushy job...So I stopped being polite to customers and started looking down on management.”⁴⁸ Even though her “jealous friends” were not present at her place of employment, she sharply changed her demeanor and work ethic, which resulted in her losing a promotion. In this case, her ethnic authenticity was much more important than her job. Parker felt pressure from Blacks again later on in life when she began to date her husband Peter, who is White. She notes that many of her Black friends were suspicious of Peter because of his race. Parker also states that some Blacks feel a

⁴⁶ Ibid., 61.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 71.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 24-25.

Black person should only marry a rich White person, and for this reason Parker believes some of her friends and relatives disapproved of their marriage.⁴⁹

In addition to delinquency and Black authenticity, Parker's personal script cites her grandmother as the towering conservative in her life whose values Parker learned to model. Her grandmother was "dirt poor," but embodied traditional conservative values that Parker believes enriched her grandmother's life. Like any good personal script, Parker's tales of grandmother includes references to individualism, government intervention and privatization. For example, Parker details the way in which the government forced her grandmother to install an indoor toilet, which was upsetting because "she was proud of her independence and didn't like anyone telling her what to do."⁵⁰ Parker even recalls feeling uneasy as a child about her visits to her grandmother's house in the South. Parker reflects, "I didn't like people always saying hello to me. I was very private, even as a little girl. When people said, 'Hi,' I thought they were getting in my way and I would say, 'Get out of my business.'" ⁵¹

Parker also makes reference to Lyndon B. Johnson who in her summation "obliterated" self-initiative and individual incentives among the poor. In her opinion, Johnson was responsible for making the poor totally dependent on welfare. Parker contends, "Then there are other poor folks like my grandmother who had no need for handouts in the first place, despite being told otherwise by supposedly well-intentioned Democrats. She has gotten by on hard work, frugality, faith and virtues that I believe make a society great."⁵² This is reminiscent of Ward Connerly's description of Uncle James who believed in the ultimate good of the country and embodied the values that presumably make success possible for anyone in the nation.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 88.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 47.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 49.

Parker's political references are consistent throughout her conservative innuendos about her grandmother. Parker explains:

What mattered to her was that she didn't owe anyone and nobody owed her—and that included the government. She respected people who worked hard, whether or not they made a lot of money. If you were poor, she felt you should be content. She never believed she was impoverished because she always had her health. That made her feel rich. She never preached this to me—she said it by setting an example.⁵³

While Parker admits that her grandmother never said these things directly to her, she maintains that her grandmother's life exemplifies conservatism and legitimizes her political positions just as Connerly assumed Uncle James' approval of Proposition 209. Parker's interpretation of her grandmother's life seems to have left her with little sympathy for the poor whom she believes do not necessarily need money or material possessions to live a good life. Taking this position is presented as a moral one, which counters those who demand equality or social programs. Not surprisingly, Parker describes social programs for the poor in parts two and three, as liberal experiments in socialism—the enemy of capitalism and democracy.⁵⁴

In part two of her book, entitled “The Destruction of Black America,” Parker defines “pimps” as Democrats; Black civil rights leaders are the “whores;” and the children of first generation welfare recipients as the “welfare brats.” In this section, she writes brief opinions regarding the following topics: “The Breakdown of the Black Family,” “Lewd Leftists: Liberals I Have No Use For,” “The Media Elites: Flag Bearers of the Lewd Left,” “Drug Dealers—Mow My Lawn,” and “The Whores Rallying Cry: Racism.” In these short commentaries, Parker writes provocative stances on the Nation of Islam, O.J. Simpson, the infamous “race card,” crime and

⁵³ Ibid., 50.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 126.

abortion. Her briefings serve as sound bites that demonstrate her “stunning conservative transformation.” Between parts two and three, she does not overlook any of the debates, noting her position on school vouchers, minimum wage, street monitors, the death penalty, condoms in school, among many others. Parker even includes a section entitled “Star’s Guide to the Players: Republicans I Love,” in which she names Jack Kemp, Pat Buchanan, Newt Gingrich, Alan Keyes and J.C. Watts as conservatives who exemplify high moral standards, principles and brilliance that she aspires to model. Her section, “Democrats We Can Do Without” names Bill Clinton as “King Pimp” and Hillary Clinton as “Queen Pimp.” Jesse Jackson, of course, gets a fair share of Parker’s name-calling and condemnations. She informs Rush Limbaugh in an interview when she states, “The word on the street...is that Jesse and all the other black politicians on the left make their money by doing three things: keep Blacks voting Democrat; keep them ignorant so they don’t step out of the Democratic line; and make liberal Democrats look good in public.”⁵⁵ Parker makes it clear throughout her book that her audience is principally conservatives, especially White conservatives as she gives them “shot outs,” and from time to time talks to them directly in the middle of a passage.

Parker’s personal script is probably one of the most significant among conservative circles because she maintains much of her identity as a stereotypical Black woman from the “ghetto,” unlike some of her colleagues who would prefer to “transcend” blackness. Parker, on the other hand, is almost amusing as she uses Black dialect and slang with her White counterparts. Obviously, authenticity has always been important to her, and it continues to be of significance among the conservative ranks. Parker represents the possibility that Black ghetto mothers can be transformed into an archconservative of the Christian right. Both Connerly and Parker are

⁵⁵ Ibid., 110.

committed to espousing certain political positions that are racially charged, thereby protecting White conservatives from accusations of racism.

Shelby Steele

While Connerly and Parker wrote memoirs of their political journeys, Shelby Steele's books do not provide autobiographical sketches in the same capacity. Nevertheless, Steele's books reveal a personal script as he attempts to explain Black identity and culture. During the late 1980s, Steele wrote a series of articles on Black identity and race relations that were later compiled in his first book, *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America*. In 1994, he published *A Dream Deferred: The Second Betrayal of Black Freedom in America* to explain the stigma and loneliness he experiences as a result of being a Black conservative. This book also indicts liberalism as a betrayal of America's core principles, which Steele believes has resulted in greater disparities between Blacks and Whites. In the preface, Steele thanks the Hoover Institution for the support it granted him while writing his second book.⁵⁶ Both publications provide insight to Steele's own inner turmoil regarding racial identity and assimilation. He persistently draws from his personal life as the primary source for his assumptions. Yet, *The Content of Our Character* is the most informative regarding Steele's upbringing and it elucidates a few of the commonalities that thread Black neoconservatives.

Steele was born on the South Side of Chicago in the 1940s and experienced the indignities of segregation. His father only received a third-grade education and earned a living as a truck driver who earned no more than \$90 per week his entire life.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Shelby Steele, *A Dream Deferred: The Second Betrayal of Black Freedom in America* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), xiv.

⁵⁷ Steele, *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 113.

Although his father, who was from the South, quit school at an early age to be a sharecropper, he taught himself to read “with almost professorial authority.”⁵⁸ In this regard, Steele’s father was not an exception. Since enslavement, many African Americans dropped out of formal schools and were still able to learn to read proficiently and provide for their families.

Steele’s experience, stemming from a segregated background and achieving a modest living has led him to consider class as the most significant factor in shaping his identity. His essay, “On Being Black and Middle Class,” highlights the contending forces between race and class. He begins the essay by inviting the audience to listen in on a debate he has with a childhood friend about the contradiction of being Black and middle class. The conversation sets the stage, providing an example of how Black people talk about race and more significantly how they obsess over it despite financial success.

Steele admits that he once believed that race “took almost a religious significance” in his life throughout high school and college. As Steele grew older and more affluent his ideology transformed. He states:

What had sustained me in the sixties sounded monotonous and off-the-mark in the eighties. For me, race has lost much of its juju, its singular capacity to conjure meaning. And today, when I honestly look at my life and the lives of many other middle-class blacks I know, I can see that race never fully explained our situation in American society. Black though I may be, it is impossible for me to sit in my single-family house with two cars in the driveway and a swing set in the backyard and not see the role class has played in my life.⁵⁹

Although Steele claims to believe fully in his assertion he admits that he felt guilty. His close friend responded as if Steele’s comments were “elitist” or even “anti-

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 94.

black.”⁶⁰ Steele believes his friend’s position was characteristic of what he suggests are the opposing forces between middle-class values and Black identity. He identifies these values as “raceless” and “assimilationist.” According to Steele, he and his friend were raised to appreciate “the work ethic, the importance of education, the value of property ownership, of respectability, of ‘getting ahead,’ stable family life, of initiative, of self-reliance...”⁶¹ Steele insists that these values facilitate integration, encourage individualism and embrace a strong national identity. In addition, Steele argues that middle-class values are “almost rules for how to prosper in a democratic, free enterprise society that admires and rewards individual effort.”⁶² His father is his best example; a man Steele claims achieved middle class standing through these values despite the fact that he was poor. For Steele, money has very little to do with class. Apparently, poor Blacks can be middle class if they embrace the right value system. However, Steele believes that the prevailing Black identity actually urges African Americans of all classes in the “opposite direction” by viewing all Black people as victims, taking an adversarial stance toward the mainstream and emphasizing group consciousness over individualism.⁶³

Interestingly enough, Steele admits that the Black middle class has taken its cue from middle- and upper-class Whites who have projected negative images of poor Blacks and positive images of Whites since enslavement. Steele notes the way in which “house slaves” looked down upon “field slaves” in their imitation of Whites. In fact, Steele seems to justify this elitism and disdain for poor Blacks in noting that Black power “suddenly called for the celebration of this same black lower class.”⁶⁴ Steele goes back to his father who also held negative images of the Blacks he left

⁶⁰ Ibid., 95.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 96.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 97.

behind in the South. This disdain personified itself in the mythical “Sam” who represented all of the things Steele and his siblings should avoid. Sam was a lower-class Black whose values and behavior were unacceptable and debilitating. Steele remembers:

In our family lore he was a trickster, sometimes a boob, but always possessed of a catalogue of sly faults that gave up graphic images of everything we should not be. On sacrifice: “Sam never thinks about tomorrow. He wants it now or he doesn’t care about it.” On work: “Sam doesn’t favor it too much.” On children: “Sam likes to have them but not to raise them.” On money: “Sam drinks it up and pisses it out.” On fidelity: “Sam has to have two or three women.” On clothes: “Sam features loud clothes. He likes to see and be seen.” And so on. Sam’s persona amounted to a negative instruction manual in class identity.⁶⁵

While Steele insists that his family did not really believe Sam’s character was indicative of all lower-class Blacks, he admits that his family did not realize the obvious connections between Sam and “white racist stereotypes of blacks.” Nor did Steele consider it a reflection of his family’s own “racial self-hatred.” Steele surmises, “If self-hatred was a factor, it was not, for us, a matter of hating lower-class blacks but of hating what we did not want to be.”⁶⁶ Ironically, his comments are never apologetic, for he simply does not see anything wrong with maintaining negative images of poor Blacks because such images provided a foundation for his own self-definition, and consequently all of his siblings earned advanced degrees.⁶⁷ Steele resents what he calls a “celebration” of lower-class Blacks that he insists proliferated since the late 1960s. Instead of recognizing Dr. Martin Luther King’s mission to uplift the poor, Steele suggests that the identification with poor Blacks is a celebration of Sams—of people who are lazy, irresponsible, hedonistic and passive.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 98.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 99.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 98-99.

Even if Steele does not recognize it, his family's antipathy for poor Blacks explains his disconnection from Black identity in general. He suggests, "It is fundamentally true that my middle-class identity involved dissociation from images of lower-class black life."⁶⁸ Steele discusses the way in which he believes his class identity was always in odds with a racial identity. As a graduate student, Steele felt embarrassed about his class even in an elitist atmosphere. He says that his "desperate need to be Black" was fueled by what he believes were transforming identities from 1960-1969 that "presented blacks as a racial monolith, a singular people with a common experience of oppression."⁶⁹ This conception of Black people was unfamiliar to Steele who believed, "Race-as-identity was lifted from the relative slumber it knew in the fifties and pressed into service in a social and political war against oppression."⁷⁰ He seems totally oblivious to the fact that race-as-identity was always a force in America since enslavement and was always central in Black resistance to racism and oppression. Indeed, it was Steele who woke from slumber during this time and found himself ill equipped to adjust. He explains, "The discomfort I felt in 1969, the vague but relentless sense of duplicity, was the result of a historical necessity that put my class and race at odds, that was asking me to cast aside the distinction of my class and identify with a monolithic view of my race."⁷¹ What Steele fails to realize is that he and his family already harbored a monolithic view of Black people. If this were not true, Steele would have known that identifying as Black does not negate the values of hard work, strong family, education and morality, none of which the middle class has a monopoly over. Steele's discomfort with his Black identity stems from the fact that he thinks Blacks are a bunch of Sams. Furthermore,

⁶⁸ Ibid., 99.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 99-100.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 100.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Steele never discloses any information regarding his mother, who is White.⁷² His estrangement is glaring when he states:

To put it still more personally, the Sam figure I had been raised to define myself against had now become the “real” black I was expected to identify with. The fact that the poor black’s new status was only passively earned by the condition of his victimization, not by assertive, positive action, made little difference.⁷³

Steele’s comments are ahistorical, as poor Blacks have also engaged in resistance and positive action since they were field slaves on the plantation. Never does Steele identify his father as one of these poor Blacks. Not for one moment does Steele entertain the possibility that many poor Blacks are like his father in that they work hard, make the best of their situation, sacrifice for their families and want more for their children. Undoubtedly, he believes his father is an exception and is therefore middle class rather than poor and lower class. Steele’s disparagement of poor Blacks is brazen when he admits:

It has always annoyed me to hear from the mouths of certain arbiters of blackness that middle-class blacks should “reach back” and pull up those blacks less fortunate than they—as though middle-class status was an unearned and essentially passive condition in which one needed a large measure of noblesse oblige to occupy one’s time. My own image is of reaching back from a moving train to lift on board those who have no tickets...⁷⁴

Arguably, Steele’s middle-class identity has estranged him from Black people all together and any sense of responsibility to help others, which makes it easier for him to also dissociate from Black social spaces later on in his life. He believes that his

⁷² HistoryMakers’ Web Site, *Biography* on Shelby Steele, <<http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/biography.asp?bioindex=172>> (16 April 2006).

⁷³ Steele, *The Content of Our Character*, 101.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.

life's example is enough, and is one that illustrates both possibility and method. He does not believe that his success is connected to the struggles of Black people before him or through any efforts on the part of government like affirmative action. He concedes, "So yes, it is crucial to my sense of citizenship, to my ability to identify with the spirit and the interests of America, to know that this country, however imperfectly, recognizes its past sins and wishes to correct them."⁷⁵ His faith in the nation's principles of individualism and free enterprise is his guide that blinds him to the social realities of discrimination and limited opportunities. Actually, his rejection of Black identity and his impulse to negate claims of racism are essential to his national identity.

Although Steele reveals his personal struggles with Black identity in *The Content of Our Character*, he uses his own personal journey to theorize about race relations, or more specifically Black identity, throughout the rest of the book. Steele's Black psychology theory proposes a dialectical relationship between power and Black inferiority. He believes that races are essentially "competing power groups."⁷⁶ While he neglects to fully interrogate the way in which Whites were able to develop hegemonic power for themselves by creating concepts of race in the first place, Steele advances the notion that Black power is a victim's power.⁷⁷ In his summation, Black power is further protected and sanctioned by the history of racial victimization through enslavement and Jim Crow segregation and the guilt that Whites have over that history.⁷⁸

Steele believes since the late 1960s, African Americans have adhered to a "choreographed" depiction of racism in America in order to mask their self-doubt.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 113.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 14.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

For Steele, African Americans' insistence on clinging to a victim identity has had serious implications. His analysis of these issues reads as a psychological one in which Steele diagnoses the disease that plagues the majority of African Americans. Steele insists that African Americans' preoccupation with racism and cultural identity are symptoms of an internalized Black inferiority complex that is infested with low self-esteem.⁷⁹ He even coins terminology to analyze the psychosis he believes consumes African Americans. The terms *seeing-for-innocence*, *race fatigue*, *race-holding*, *integration shock*, and *anti-self* are all psychological strategies for masking real feelings of inferiority, which apparently only afflicts African Americans. He uses anecdotes from his own life to give credence to his terminology and ultimately to his diagnosis.

In Steele's anecdote for race fatigue, he defines the term as "a deep weariness with things racial, which comes from the fact that our lives are more integrated than they have been before."⁸⁰ To illustrate his point, Steele describes the awkwardness he feels when running into an African American woman in the grocery store. He states, "When we first meet, we experience a trapped feeling, as if we had walked into a cage of racial expectations that would rob us of our individuality by reducing us to an exclusively racial dimension. We are a threat, at first, to one another's uniqueness."⁸¹ For over a year, Steele repeatedly runs into this woman and assumes that she feels the same "threat" or "trap" by their blackness. He admits that the two of them never speak and pretend not to see each other. Strangely enough, their constant encounters invoke a sense of self-awareness that Steele is obviously not comfortable with in his less than fully integrated neighborhood. The woman serves as a reminder of something that Steele would prefer not to deal with at all, particularly since his racial

⁷⁹ Ibid., 24-26.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 23.

⁸¹ Ibid., 22-23.

identity is invisible at his home as he refers to his marriage to a White wife and their kids as an “integrated family.” Steele projects his internal dilemma on others, especially the African American woman whom he assumes suffers from the same fatigue in a middle class, predominantly White neighborhood. Steele states, “I believe she is insisting that both of us be more than black—that we interact only when we have a reason other than the mere fact of our race. Her chilliness enforces a priority I agree with—individuality over group identity.”⁸² Yet, Steele does not accord individuality to poor Blacks who are often judged as a group regardless of how they choose to identify themselves individually. Moreover, the “awkwardness” he once felt in high school and college obviously follows him throughout his adult life, whereby he has difficulty identifying with a fellow middle-class Black woman.

In addition to race fatigue, Steele also proposes a definition of the anti-self as “an internalized racist, our own subconscious bigot that conspires with society to diminish us.”⁸³ Again, Steele believes that self-doubt is the notorious culprit, the bigot that causes African Americans to feel shameful and inferior. He states, “To be a member of such a group in a society where all others gain an impunity by merely standing in relation to us is to live with a relentless openness to diminishment and shame...One cannot be open to such diminishment without in fact being inferior and therefore deserving of diminishment.”⁸⁴ Steele’s presumptions question whether he is speaking for himself or for all Blacks, especially since he fails to realize that many Blacks do not feel shame at all, but rather anger because they *know* that they are not inferior but are often treated as if they are regardless of their deeds, efforts or intellect.

Clearly, Steele’s diagnosis is a projection of his own inner turmoil. Throughout the book, he often refers to “us” and “we” to include himself, but in

⁸² Ibid., 23.

⁸³ Ibid., 45.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 44.

speaking about his own experiences he validates his claims as empirical fact for the vast majority of African Americans who may argue otherwise. Steele protects his assertions by discussing the “denial” of African Americans who are either afraid to admit what he presents as truth or are so blinded by the fantasy of their victimization that they do not see reality. Steele clearly submits a warped understanding of Black identity when he states:

Nowhere in the current black identity is there a strong theme of responsibility for our own fate, nor are there positive themes that define our character as a people or highlight our many strengths. It is an identity formed in the caldron of racial politics, and its primary assumptions accuse others and defend ourselves.⁸⁵

Even though Steele believes that the new Black identity was born in the late 1960s with the advent of Black power, he fails to acknowledge “self-determination,” which is precisely the theme of responsibility that has always been a major feature of African Americans who have obviously taken personal responsibility for themselves and their families despite racism.

Furthermore, Steele ridicules the “Black pride” that has flourished since the Black Power era. According to Steele, the “Black pride campaign” is a part of the psychosis by which African Americans engage in what he refers to as “race-holding.” He insists that Black pride is a manifestation of the “pressure to intensify denial” in integrated settings. Steele presumes:

The symbiosis of [integration shock and denial] is, I believe, one of the reasons black Americans have become preoccupied with racial pride, almost to the point of obsession over the past twenty-five or so years. With more exposure to the mainstream, we have endured more integration shock, more jolts of inferiority anxiety. And, I think, we have often responded with rather hyperbolic claims of black pride by which we deny that anxiety. In this sense,

⁸⁵ Ibid., 73.

our self-consciousness around pride, our need to make a point of it, is, to a degree a form of denial.⁸⁶

Ironically, Steele admits that African Americans are maligned in the United States and describes them, perhaps sarcastically, as “the most despised race in the human community of races.”⁸⁷ Even as he acknowledges this, he fails to recognize the desire for the most despised group to simply learn the truth about themselves. Black pride may not simply be a way of denying feelings of Black inferiority, but may possibly serve as a means of combating both White supremacy and Black inferiority. Instead of rejecting Black identity altogether as Steele does, Black pride often challenges society’s notion that there is something wrong with being Black in the first place. Rather than understanding Black pride as a means of resistance to Black inferiority, Steele adopts Anne Wortham’s assertion that Black pride really helps to mask low self-esteem among African Americans.⁸⁸ Steele also condemns the self-determination of Black Nationalism and has very little respect for the likes of Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam. Steele contends:

I don’t think black nationalism will help us much in this challenge because it is too infused with defensive grandiosity, too given to bombast and posturing. It is more a hedge against reality than an embrace of it. And wherever one hears its themes today—whether from Louis Farrakhan, black student union leaders, or people in the street—it has that unmistakable ring of compensation, of an illusory black specialness that offers haven from inner doubt...We are only predisposed to the glamour of black nationalism when the reservoir of self-doubt is deep and the need to recompense powerful.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Ibid., 46.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁸ Anne Wortham, *The Other Side of Racism: A Philosophical Study of Black Race Consciousness* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1977), x.

⁸⁹ Steele, *The Content of Our Character*, 66.

Here, Steele is unable to locate a space between Black inferiority and what he believes is “grandiose mythologizing” of Black people. Steele insists that the challenge now is to “reclaim ourselves from the exaggerations of our own memory and to go forward as the free American citizens that we are.”⁹⁰ He believes development is the greatest barrier for African Americans rather than racism, and as long as African Americans retain a victim identity, the problem will remain unnoticed.⁹¹ Steele argues, “The barriers to black progress in America today are clearly as much psychological as they are social or economic...The psychological realm is murky, frightening, and just plain embarrassing.”⁹² This statement contains Steele’s second reference to embarrassment, which alludes to his own personal issues with identity, integration shock and his own anti-self. Steele concludes, “It is actually a repressive identity that generates a victimized self-image, curbs individualism and initiative, diminishes our sense of possibility, and contributes to our demoralization and inertia. It is a skin that needs shedding.”⁹³

Inevitably, Steele uses his own life and his personal assumptions to ground other Black neoconservatives in their identity, which claims to be individualistic, conservative and raceless. John McWhorter insists, “Shelby Steele’s *The Content of Our Character* was a formative experience for me on the level that *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* has been for so many other blacks, articulately and bravely expressing feelings of mine that had been pent up since childhood.”⁹⁴ Here, McWhorter also presents a departure or disconnection from Malcolm X, a central figure of the Black Power era.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 165.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 34.

⁹³ Ibid., 172.

⁹⁴ McWhorter, *Losing the Race: Self Sabotage in Black America* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2000), 32.

Glenn Loury

Glenn Loury provides a compelling personal narrative as he ultimately changed the course of his script. Once considered a “darling” of Ronald Reagan’s administration and White conservatives, Loury has since renounced his neoconservatism. His stellar career began in 1982 when he became Harvard University’s first Black tenured professor in the Economics Department at the age of thirty-three. His fierce attacks on affirmative action and the Black underclass prompted White conservatives to ensure his success. While other Black neoconservatives claim to genuinely believe in their politics, Loury’s change of heart moved him to admit his role in pandering to influential White conservatives. By his own admission, Reaganites seduced him with opportunities, money, fame and prestige. Loury reflects:

Currying favor, ambition, the sense of exhilaration and excitement about what I’m doing now, who I’m talking to, where I’m invited, how important I seem to be, not wanting to get the disapproval of people, and therefore maybe tempering doubt or critical thoughts that come up in my own mind...So I know that I was censoring myself to a certain degree.”⁹⁵

As long as Loury renounced racial solidarity and civil rights leaders, the conservatives bestowed privileges and rewards upon him. He acknowledges that his access to people of power and status was in fact attractive to him.

Loury’s personal script before his political transformation is most noted in his book, *One by One from the Inside Out: Essays and Reviews on Race and Responsibility in America*. The prologue offers a window into Loury’s life story in the late 1960s. A native of Chicago’s South Side, Loury recalls his own quest to be seen as “Black enough” during a time of Black militancy and racial solidarity. He prefaces

⁹⁵ Jenny Attiyeh, “Black Scholar Renounces Conservative ‘Crown,’ ” in *The Christian Science Monitor*, 05 September 2002, <<http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0905/p18s01-ussc.html>> (20 March 2006).

the controversial claims in the book by acknowledging that his current views do not square very well with many African Americans who subsequently question his loyalty and authenticity. In his recollections, he relays the common theme of oppressive conformity that Black identity presses upon individuals in which “people with insufficiently militant views were berated as self-hating, shuffle-along, ‘house nigger’ types, complicit with Whites in the perpetuation of racial oppression.”⁹⁶ Loury insists:

I now understand how this desire to be regarded as genuinely black, to be seen as a “regular brother,” has dramatically altered my life. It narrowed the range of my earliest intellectual pursuits, distorted my relationships with other people, censored my political thought and expression, informed the way I dressed and spoke, and shaped my cultural interests. Some of this was inevitable, and not all of it was bad, but in my experience the need to be affirmed by one’s racial peers can take on a pathological dimension. Growing into intellectual maturity has been, for me, largely a process of becoming free of the need to have my choices validated by “the brothers.”⁹⁷

Loury’s script illuminates neoconservative rhetoric as he describes blackness as a prison that narrows his experience and restricts his individuality. Instead of conforming to the “prevailing party line,” Loury decides to be “truthful,” and rejects Black identity and race unity. He suggests that Black authenticity is rooted in victimization, “of seeing oneself as the object of mistreatment by white people.”⁹⁸ Essentially, Loury only sees Black identity as negative. He maintains that he is so much more than “the one wronged, misunderstood, underestimated, derided, or ignored by whites.”⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Glenn Loury, *One by One From the Inside Out: Essays and Reviews on Race and Responsibility in America* (New York and London: The Free Press, 1995), 5.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

For Loury, self-identifying as Black is dehumanizing and prohibits true freedom. He contends “mythic authentic blackness” is the barrier that prevents African Americans from transcending racism. According to Loury, success for African Americans will only come as a result of an “in-dwelling spirit,” not through expanded opportunities.¹⁰⁰ His ambivalence is glaring as he later notes the efforts of him and his wife to consciously provide their children with Black peers in a predominantly White neighborhood by attending Black churches and teaching their children about Black history and culture.¹⁰¹ Loury assumes that he is different than most Blacks in this regard, or perhaps poor Blacks, who are presumed to hold onto a victim-identity like the Black Power militants of the 1960s. This dubious consciousness manifested itself throughout Loury’s career. Nevertheless, he admits that the arguments outlined in *One By One* garnered him accolades, prestige and celebrity among White conservatives.

Up until the publication of *One By One* in 1995, Loury made a career of being a staunch critic of civil rights leaders, affirmative action and the Black urban poor. His book blames Black people, particularly the Black underclass for their own social and economic standing. He maintains that government is incapable of competing with debased Black culture and behavior. Amidst Loury’s on-going criticism, he had been engaging in his own history of lewd behavior. The hypocrisy of Loury’s marriage to neoconservatism abounds in a few interviews since 2002 in which Loury reveals his double-consciousness.

In an interview with *The New York Times*, Loury discloses a few of the secrets of his career, which eventually became public scandals. According to writer Adam Shatz, Loury was exposed in two major scandals by the late 1980s; one was a love

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 10.

affair with a graduate student and the other was an arrest for cocaine possession.¹⁰² Loury is careful to cover his tracks in *One By One* by alluding to his “drug and alcohol abuse” and “adultery” in the epilogue. He even mentions the two children he fathered out of wedlock as a teenager, although he writes they were “children from an earlier marriage.”¹⁰³ His revelations, however, were firmly cushioned in a narrative of spiritual transformation as Loury describes his experience as a born-again Christian. The epilogue’s spiritual underpinnings may shield Loury, to some degree, from charges of hypocrisy. Yet, he details the major changes in his life that transpired as a result of his spiritual awakening. Loury’s “transformation” was not simply confirmed through his behavior by which he gave up drugs and alcohol and grew faithful to his wife. His readmission to the church also reconnected Loury to Black people and eventually he evolved politically.

The transformed Loury was tested in 1995 when his publisher, Free Press, released Dinesh D’Souza’s *The End of Racism*. According to the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, the book “slanders black people like no other work published in recent years.”¹⁰⁴ Both Robert Woodson Sr. and Glenn Loury resigned from the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) because of the support the AEI granted D’Souza, who was also a fellow. Loury asserts:

I don’t disagree with everything D’Souza has to say, but the insulting way in which the book is written so offends me. We have stuck our necks out saying what we believe is important for black people to hear, and we have paid a price. We’ve been called Uncle Toms, which we are not. But to be silent in the face of this book would make us Uncle Toms.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Adam Shatz, “Glenn Loury’s About Face,” in *The New York Times on the Web*, 20 January 2002, <<http://phuakl.tripod.com/eTHOUGHT/Loury.html>> (18 March 2006).

¹⁰³ Loury, *One by One*, 312 and 320.

¹⁰⁴ “Professor Glenn C. Loury Berates the Abolitionist Crusade Against Racial Preferences,” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 23 (Spring, 1996): 41-42.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Loury's protest of *The End of Racism* was his second objection to Free Press, which also published Charles Murray and Richard Heinstein's *The Bell Curve*, a national best seller that purported Blacks were intellectually inferior. In fact, Shatz's interview describes how conservatives attempted to "muzzle" Loury by refusing to publish his critiques of *The Bell Curve*.¹⁰⁶ Yet, the AEI's support for D'Souza was the final test for Loury who could not with good conscience comply with the conservative mainstream.

The following year, Loury also resigned from the Center for New Black Leadership for its support of Proposition 209 in California. Although Loury founded the organization, his contention with Ward Connerly's Civil Rights Initiative and Proposition 209 alienated him from the board. After his resignation, Loury recalls that Shelby Steele, a close friend at the time, accused him of acting like a "racial loyalist."¹⁰⁷ In comparison to Steele, Loury divulges:

I was always aware that, whatever I thought about race, I'm still black. Shelby's position...was that we had to completely transcend race, though I can imagine saying those words, too. But my heart wasn't in them, whereas he really meant it. How could it have been otherwise? His mother was a white woman. His wife is a white woman. When he looked at his own children's racial identity and wondered about an oppressive world that would say to those children, 'Choose sides'—a dilemma I'd never faced—Shelby's angle of vision was really quite different from my own. So in all honesty, it was I who betrayed him, not he who betrayed me.¹⁰⁸

Loury also distinguishes himself from Steele in that he was still connected to a Black community during the height of his neoconservatism in the 1980s. Loury maintained connections with Dudley Square, an African American community in Boston, where

¹⁰⁶ Adam Shatz, "Glenn Loury's About Face," in *The New York Times on the Web*, 20 January 2002, <<http://phuakl.tripod.com/eTHOUGHT/Loury.html>> (18 March 2006).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

his status was unknown to the people who reminded him of home.¹⁰⁹ Loury may have betrayed Shelby Steele, but he could not accept betraying his family and his roots. His Uncle Alfred, whom he considers a “race man,” reminded Loury that he was not raised to harbor such anti-Black sentiments. Loury admits:

Everyone else had a place to go. Some would go to Jerusalem. Others would go to Dublin. You see the metaphor. Where would I go? I came back to Chicago and talked to my uncle about what I was doing. There was a reproachful look in his eyes, a sadness. He said to me, “We could only send one, and we sent you, and I don’t see us in anything you do.” Eventually I realized I couldn’t live like that.¹¹⁰

So, Loury was a “race loyalist” after all, a label that would never taint the identity or loyalty of his White colleagues. Ironically, Loury built his career on becoming a public dissenter against conventional African American politics and a rebel against racial identity. In fact, Loury admits he used to relish the scorn he received from African Americans who marked him as an Uncle Tom and a sellout. Yet, the derision was taking its toll and the conservatives were growing belligerent.

In 2000, Loury published *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality*, a clear marker of his political transformation. In this book, Loury acknowledges the social networks that Whites use to exclude African Americans and the stigma and stereotypes Whites perpetuate of Black people, all of which contribute to persistent and grave inequality.¹¹¹ Loury implicates both Whites and some successful Blacks in their anti-Black sentiments and antipathy for the Black underclass.¹¹² Without a doubt, Loury’s

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Glenn Loury, *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality: The W.E.B. DuBois Lectures* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 9-10.

¹¹² Adam Shatz, “Glenn Loury’s About Face,” in *The New York Times on the Web*, 20 January 2002, <<http://phuakl.tripod.com/eTHOUGHT/Loury.html>> (18 March 2006).

book warranted condemnation from conservatives but also the benefit of doubt from some Blacks who have embraced his change of heart with a tinge of suspicion.

The Ties that Bind

The commonality that Connerly, Parker, Steele and Loury share is their uneasiness with the racial politics, culture and identity that grew out of the late 1960s, namely the Black Power movement. Their personal scripts all mark this historical moment as one of the most significant in the nation's history. Their anecdotes attempt to illustrate that the expansion of the welfare state and affirmative action amounted to a debilitating and even pathological dependency among African Americans that is just as devastating as slavery and segregation.

From Clarence Thomas to Thomas Sowell, John McWhorter and Stephen Carter, Black neoconservatives more than likely have also benefited from welfare or affirmative action, but their personal scripts provide a platform to either explain or deny their benefits. For instance, Sowell and Carter offer various rationalizations for their positions. Sowell submits:

A common charge against me is that my own career is due to the very affirmative action I criticize. In all the places where this charge has been repeated, not one bit of evidence has yet been offered. It so happens that I have not achieved anything in my career that was not achieved by other blacks before me—therefore long before affirmative action...My graduation from Harvard came more than 80 years after the first black student graduated from Harvard.¹¹³

Here, Sowell makes reference to W.E.B. DuBois, but fails to acknowledge that DuBois was denied the opportunity to teach at Harvard despite his accomplishments as a student and his skills as a scholar and sociologist. Even if Sowell insists that

¹¹³ Sowell, *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?* (New York, NY: William Morrow, 1984), 136-137.

African Americans had access to institutions “long before affirmative action,” the admission of a few token Blacks in any institution is hardly equal access.

Contrarily, Stephen Carter claims to be proud of his benefits from affirmative action, although throughout the book he admits to feeling oppressed by what he believes are double standards. First, Carter justifies his benefit according to the times. He insists that his generation, fresh out of the Civil Rights movement, was entitled to some form of retribution for the brutal injustice and systematic exclusion from learning institutions and the work force. However, he spends an incredible amount of time “proving” that his academic intelligence and achievements were qualified to meet any standard, specifically the same standards as Whites.¹¹⁴ Hence, affirmative action robbed Carter from the chance to compete on an equal footing, forcing him to only measure up as the “best black” for the “black spot.” He affirms that his race automatically forced him into a separate pool even though he was more than qualified to compete within the general pool of Whites. As a result, Carter maintains that he is not able to genuinely take pride of all of his accomplishments because of the stigma of affirmative action and the presumed separate standards it creates.¹¹⁵

John McWhorter’s rebuke of affirmative action is laughable as he uses the last portion of his book, *Losing the Race: Self Sabotage in Black America*, to confess the way in which he has benefited throughout his entire career as a student, post-doctoral student and professor at Cornell, Berkeley and Stanford Universities. McWhorter does not deny his benefits like Sowell. Nor does he echo Carter’s contention that he was clearly qualified to compete without it. Instead, McWhorter’s treatise simply acknowledges that his career was built on affirmative action; yet, he maintains,

¹¹⁴ Stephen Carter, *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1991), 53-54.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 54-57.

¹¹⁶ McWhorter, *Losing the Race*, 248.

“Affirmative action is almost impossible for an upwardly mobile black person to avoid, whatever their life circumstances have been.”¹¹⁶ He considers the minority fellowships he won at Stanford and Berkeley as an inherent “demotion,” and attempts to elicit pity for not being able to be proud of his accomplishments—as his classmates could be.¹¹⁷ He also admits that affirmative action got him a “plum position” at Cornell University as a faculty member.¹¹⁸ Even though he recognizes the likelihood that he would not have received these prestigious opportunities without affirmative action, he still believes the policy admits unqualified applicants based on skin color alone. He also acknowledges that he never turned down any of the benefits, noting, “At the time my opposition to affirmative action was not principled enough to lead me to weigh my discomfort so heavily as to turn me away from such a valuable opportunity.”¹¹⁹ Instead, McWhorter wants his readers to believe that he earned his degrees, his post-doc and his jobs in the academy with his head held low. He also wants his readers to view him as exceptional, as qualified, as different from the average Black beneficiary.

No matter how tenuous the arguments, the personal scripts bail the Black neoconservatives out every time. Even Ward Connerly includes a dramatized narrative in his personal script that paints him as the hero, who at 15 years old stood up to be a “man” and got a job so that Mom could get off the dole.¹²⁰ This dramatized scene paints Mom as the weakened welfare mother and his Uncle James as the man who would not stand for it. Connerly mustered the courage to become the “man” of the house in order to salvage their dignity and independence. Moreover, he insists that

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 249.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 248.

¹²⁰ Connerly, 51.

welfare was a “better program” back then when it was “seen as ‘assistance’ rather than a ‘right.’ ”¹²¹ Again, his personal script justifies his benefit.

In addition to railing the Black Power movement, the personal scripts insist that African Americans must prove their worth in order to earn the respect of Whites. Loury once professed, “Groups of people who seek to improve their status in the social hierarchy also need to earn the genuine respect of their fellows—not their condescension, their acquiescence in certain demands, their pity or their guilt. Blacks will not be equal in American society until they are able to command the respect of their fellow Americans.”¹²² Even as Black neoconservatives insist that African Americans must earn the respect of Whites, they consistently chastise African Americans as children, therefore unworthy of respect.

In the seminal texts of Black neoconservatism is a reoccurring theme of imaging Black people as pathological and childlike. For instance, Star Parker refers to welfare beneficiaries as children who are slavishly dependent on the government. During an interview on the Oprah Winfrey show, Parker retorts:

Our current welfare system is like a sick baby. Now babies don’t like medicine because it tastes nasty, but adults know what is best for their kids—they’ve got to swallow that medicine. But let me tell you, the American welfare system is so ill, the sickness is out of control, and it’s highly contagious too. The welfare system’s got to take a large dose of medicine, even though it tastes bad.¹²³

Her analogy alludes to historical racist references to African Americans as children. Even though she refers to the “system” in this particular quote, the core of her

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Mark Cooray, “Race and Affirmative Action: An Interview with Professor Glenn Loury of Harvard University (1985),” in *Human Rights in Australia*, <www.ourcivilisation.com/cooray/rights/chap17.htm> (18 March 2006).

¹²³ Parker, 13.

criticism is directed toward African Americans primarily. Her statement assumes that conservatives are the “adults” that know what is best for Blacks, and that is to get off the dole and take personal responsibility for their lives. Larry Elder argues that African Americans need to stop whining, and even Stephen Carter refers to affirmative action beneficiaries as babies. John McWhorter presumes:

...that ideology in the air—the leftist conviction that ‘black people can only achieve when society is perfect and until then they are all heroes for just getting out of bed’—is equally unsuitable. This ideology describes children, not a race of strong people living in, warts and all, the most glorious country on the planet.¹²⁴

Essentially, Black neoconservatives describe African Americans’ loyalty to the Democratic Party as childish. Clarence Thomas captures this when he praises Black dissidents for “refusing to give in to the cult mentality and childish obedience that hypnotize black Americans into a mindless trance.”¹²⁵ The literature basically depicts African Americans as pathological and implores them to “grow up” and become responsible, independent adults.

In addition to referring to African Americans as “childish” and “tattle tales,” John McWhorter suggests that African Americans have immature “temper tantrums” when they take issue with racism, which he describes as moments of “inconvenience” or “isolated racial incidents.” In *Losing the Race*, McWhorter portrays African Americans as psychotic members of cults. He believes African Americans “fixate upon remnants of racism and resolutely downplay all signs of its demise.”¹²⁶ McWhorter insists that African Americans suffer from a “cognitive dissonance with

¹²⁴ McWhorter, *Authentically Black: Essays for the Black Silent Majority* (New York, NY: Gotham Books, 2003), xix.

¹²⁵ Clarence Thomas, “No Room at the Inn: The Loneliness of the Black Conservative,” in *Black and Right: The Bold New Voice of Black Conservatives in America*, eds., Stan Faryna, et al. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 3.

¹²⁶ McWhorter, *Losing the Race*, xi.

reality” and their separatism is “a culture-internal infection nurtured by a distrust of the former oppressor.”¹²⁷ His book presents victimology as a “disease” that has become a “subconscious psychological gangrene” that has infected African Americans since the Black Power era.¹²⁸ Yet, he takes the psychological and diseased metaphors to another level when he compares African Americans to animals. He states:

Like the dogs growling, Victimologist rancor is too deeply conditioned to reach or reason with. Some dogs can be trained not to growl when you pat them while they’re eating, but the training only masks underlying reality; you can always tell the dog still wants to growl as it stops eating and tenses its shoulders. In the same way, there are some black people who make their best effort not to “go off” in discussions with someone who questions the going wisdom. However, there is always the glint in the eye, the tightened posture, the scornful facial tics, and finally the fact that after this conversation the person is closed to any further exchange beyond civil acknowledgement.¹²⁹

McWhorter uses this metaphor to dismiss his critics as irrational and infantile, but expected, since African Americans are invested so deeply in their victim status. As such, he repeatedly suggests that dialogue with African Americans is of no use. He states, “This frame of mind is so deeply rooted in these people’s very souls that to let it go would entail a massive sociopsychological dislocation few human beings are capable of or willing to endure.”¹³⁰

Obviously, Black neoconservatives have earned the respect of their White counterparts by “proving” their race disloyalty. Clarence Thomas reveals that Blacks in the Reagan administration were required to “prove themselves daily” to their White conservative colleagues. He admits, “It often seemed to be accepted within the conservative ranks and to be treated with some degree of acceptance, a black was

¹²⁷ Ibid., xii-2.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 32.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 33-34.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 214.

required to become a caricature of sorts, providing sideshows of anti-black quips and attacks.”¹³¹ While a few Black Republicans acknowledge their invisibility among White conservatives, many of them follow George S. Schuyler by seeming to exult their role as “race traitors” in order to offer what they profess as the truth about Black America. As Clarence Thomas states, Black neoconservatives like McWhorter, Steele, Connerly and Parker have become caricatures of anti-Black derisions.

In the tradition of Booker T. Washington, Black neoconservatives are well compensated through grants, fame, speaking engagements and book deals. Despite the fact that Shelby Steele’s postulates rely solely on his personal opinion, the Hoover Institution appointed him as a senior fellow to support his “research” on race relations, multiculturalism and affirmative action. Both John McWhorter and Shelby Steele hold research fellowships despite the fact that McWhorter insists that the purpose of his writings is simply to provoke discussion.

The undeniable fact is Whites are the target audience of Black neoconservatism, especially through the personal scripts. Parker may allude to this point in her book, but McWhorter admits in *Authentically Black* that since the publication of *Losing the Race*, his writings have focused on both the White left and White right, and seemingly ignores Blacks altogether. He remarks, “*Losing the Race* was occasionally called a ‘black-bashing’ book, of course. But many white readers have gleaned that one of my main intents was simply to explain what looks so counterintuitive and self-defeating to them, and I have continued in this goal in my subsequent writings.”¹³² McWhorter dismisses the claim that his writings are aimed at White conservatives because he would rather not waste time telling “a certain contingent of whites what they already believe.”¹³³ While he assures the reader that

¹³¹ Thomas, “No Room at the Inn,” 8-9.

¹³² McWhorter, *Authentically Black*, xvii.

¹³³ Ibid.

he has his “eye on the white left as much as the white right,”¹³⁴ his discussion of his audience totally obscures the stated audience that is reflected in the subtitle, “*Essays for the Black Silent Majority.*” Ultimately, White conservatives are the constituency who patronize these scripts as hard evidence to support their own agendas. Even though Black neoconservatives profess to transcend race, their legitimacy rests squarely on the fact that they are Black people who espouse anti-Black rhetoric.

¹³⁴ Ibid., xviii.

CONCLUSION

African American political thought has oscillated between radical and conservative methods of securing freedom and equality. The historical dialectics of African American political thought are reflected in the dichotomies between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois; Marcus Garvey and the NAACP; and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. The relationship between these leaders and organizations exemplifies the contentious and diverse positions in Black political culture. The goal for each of the political figures and philosophies was to improve the social, political and economic status of African Americans. However, African American leaders have used variant approaches in their pursuit of freedom, self-determination and social justice.

Although racial integration is considered a liberal project, there have been African American leaders and institutions that favored conservative approaches to integration. Their political orientations have relied more on patient and accommodating stances concerning civil rights and race relations. The key tenets of traditional Black conservatism include the promotion of self-help; individualism; entrepreneurship; patriotism; free market economics; traditional gender roles and opposition to homosexuality and gay rights. In addition, traditional Black conservatism favors slow political change, integration and congenial relationships with Whites.

Booker T. Washington's leadership provides a classic example of traditional Black conservatism. Washington's vision of racial uplift was to be facilitated through conservative integration, which advanced self-reliance, gradualism toward social equality and the temporary abandon of political rights for African Americans. Washington opposed the more militant strategies of Monroe Trotter, W.E.B. DuBois

and Ida B. Wells-Barnett who used active protest and demonstrations to combat racism. Instead, Washington believed that self-reliance and economic development would gradually facilitate integration and win the respect and admiration of Whites.

The Black church as the main institution in African American life also contends with conservative and militant approaches to civil rights and integration. Black churches have played a major role in progressive social change; nevertheless there are conservative aspects that encourage patience and forgiveness as central strategies in dealing with racism. This contention is represented by the contrasting approaches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the conservatism of the National Baptist Convention, who opposed the protests and direct-action tactics of the Civil Rights movement. Many African American activists regarded Dr. King's leadership as ultimately moderate in comparison to radical Black Nationalism of the late 1960s.

Civil Rights Movement

The politics of race and racism during the latter half of the twentieth century was characterized by the struggle against segregation in America. Given the history of enslavement and subordination in the United States, African Americans have centered the issue of civil rights at the core of freedom struggles. In the aftermath of the abolition of slavery, the White backlash to African American freedom first manifested itself through Black Codes, legalized segregation and virulent racial terrorism during the era of Reconstruction. Over generations, the fight for civil rights continued to be a political quest for democratic rights and non-racist democracy. In this struggle are currents of accommodation and moderation, and currents of opposition and resistance. Civil rights are central to African Americans' philosophy of social justice and social equality. In fact, African Americans have used civil rights as measures of freedom.

The Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s was a struggle for democratic rights aimed at transforming the role of government. The 1964 Civil Rights Act dramatically changed the role of government from sanctioning segregation to guarantor of civil rights before the law. The legislation outlawed segregation in public accommodations and monitored discrimination in employment practices. Moreover, it required adequate representation of women and people of color in federal agencies, contracts, and educational institutions. The 1964 Act also established the Civil Rights Commission, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and various committees to oversee the implementation of civil rights and equal protection of the law. In addition, President Lyndon B. Johnson responded to the civil rights vision with a series of programs and legislation meant to achieve the “Great Society.” The government sponsored programs intended to provide greater protection for African American voter rights; eradicate poverty; and expand access to healthcare, housing and education. Although African Americans led the Civil Rights movement, its legacy provided the foundation for the promotion of the rights of women, the elderly, disabled, and other marginalized groups. In effect, all sectors of the American citizenry benefited from civil rights legislation, including millions of Whites.

Resistance

The Civil Rights movement undoubtedly won societal gains for African Americans in particular. However, the victories juxtaposed growing reactionary opposition among the White populace in the Post-Civil Rights era. White resistance to the Civil Rights movement did not necessarily take the form of vigilante racism, i.e. skinheads or the Ku Klux Klan. Instead, oppositional politics to civil rights gestated in universities, foundations and conservative think tanks as conservative public

intellectuals from various disciplines gained influence in the media and in the formulation of public policy.

Political scientist Ronald Walters compares the reactionary politics of the Post-Civil Rights era to the White backlash during the late nineteenth century in which many Whites repealed civil rights and equality for African Americans.¹⁸ During the 1880s, the Republican Party—which had advocated for the abolition of slavery—retreated from its promise to secure equal protection and civil rights for newly freed Black men and women. Ultimately, the Republican Party began to mirror the racist politics of the Democrats by excluding Blacks from the presidential administration in 1888.¹⁹ Walters contends that the 1896 decision of *Plessy vs. Ferguson* “was the icing on the cake.”²⁰ By legalizing “separate but equal” as the law of the land, *Plessy* legitimized the treatment of African Americans as second-class citizens and sanctioned White supremacy. The interest-convergence among Whites blurred the distinctions between the Republican and Democratic Parties as it pertained to the subordinate status of African Americans. In this sense, the White backlash to the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s paralleled the political climate of Reconstruction, so much so that many scholars refer to the Civil Rights movement as the Second Reconstruction. Walters explains, “The Second Reconstruction has replicated this convergence through a political movement led and joined by radical Conservatives.”²¹ The radical Conservatives of the Post-Civil Rights era comprise the “New Right,” which includes the Christian Right, neoconservatism, and neoliberalism. The First and Second Reconstructions ignited a White backlash, but they were also characterized by Black alternative politics that acquiesced to the prevailing status quo.

¹⁸ Ronald Walters, *White Nationalism, Black Interests: Conservative Public Policy and the Black Community* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 3-4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

The high-profile dissent of Booker T. Washington in the late nineteenth century and the prominence of Black neoconservatives in the late twentieth century aided the political agenda of radical conservative Whites. Interestingly enough, Black conservatives have a history as strange bedfellows with White supremacy and White racist politics.

The “New Right”

The organizing principle of the New Right is its opposition to liberalism and the legacy of the Civil Rights movement, including affirmative action, expanded welfare policies and other programs that target African Americans and the poor. White intellectuals like Irving Kristol, Nathan Glazer, and Norman Podhoretz among many others, are disillusioned liberals who have become harsh critics of the policies and practices of the Civil Rights movement. In addition, conservative publications surfaced during the 1970s, including *Commentary* and *The New Republic*, giving these new conservatives, or “neoconservatives” a forum to spread their ideas and garner support. The core of their ideology is their opposition to programs and policies that act to enforce civil rights legislation. They also emphasize personal responsibility and the problem of the Black underclass. Neoconservatives suggest that new freedoms and opportunities of the Civil Rights legacy unraveled the moral order of the nation, as many African Americans engaged in crime, welfare dependency, drug abuse, single motherhood, and lacked personal accountability. According to Walters, “In this conflict, Blacks have also been targeted as the progenitors of the dangerous underclass culture of drugs, gangs, openly promiscuous sexual behavior and stylistic expressions in speech, dress and social mannerisms.”²² Neoconservatism challenges liberalism, government intervention and welfare, but it also tries to de-legitimize the quest for

²² Ibid., 43.

racial justice and equality by defaming Black culture. By the mid to late 1970s, the establishment of conservative institutions and think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute, Cato Institute, Manhattan Institute, the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and the Heritage Foundation to name the most prominent, created an infrastructure for the cultivation of neoconservative ideology.²³ These institutions provided the financial support for conservative journals and public intellectuals to vehemently counter the civil rights legacy.

As the Radical Right began to take shape in the mid to late 1970s, Ronald Reagan's presidential election in 1980 firmly placed the Radical Right in power. Reagan appealed to his constituency by employing oppositional politics to civil rights, gay rights and the quest for racial justice and equality. His administration diminished government funding for civil rights agencies and programs targeting African Americans and the poor. Arguably, his most potent strategy to undermine the civil rights legacy was to sponsor Black conservatives as new Black leaders and appoint many of them to key positions in government agencies. Reagan affectively used Black conservatives to attack liberal politics in the face of persistent inequalities and deteriorating social conditions among the Black poor.

Black Neoconservatism

The rise of new Black conservatives began to take shape at the Fairmont "Black Alternatives" Conference of 1980. This conference attracted conservatives such as Thomas Sowell, Clarence Thomas, Clarence Pendleton, Jr., and Walter Williams, all of who would soon play key roles in the politics of the New Right. The Fairmont Conference—supported by Ronald Reagan's administration—spawned a movement among conservative Blacks who organized themselves as a collective

²³ Ibid., 42.

through various organizations and publications. Furthermore, the Black conservatives were courted by White conservative think tanks, foundations and journals to give voice to these Black “dissenters” who opposed liberalism and civil rights leadership. Essentially, the Black naysayers developed an important role in terms of the White backlash against the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. Their prominence in public discourse came to represent Black “neoconservative” ideology.

In this thesis, I use the term “neoconservative” to denote a particular ideology that represents an extremity of traditional Black conservatism. Black neoconservatives represent a strand of ultra-conservatism in African American political thought that has symbiotic connection to the “New Right” (White) conservative movement. The Fairmont Conference in 1980 represented a major launching point for Black neoconservatives. They have since become “dissidents” whose primary role in the public square is to defame civil rights leaders and civil rights policies. Moreover, they play a significant ideological role in the Republican Party as the counter point to liberalism and the civil rights legacy. By the 1990s, a second generation of Black neoconservatives secured prominent positions in universities and conservative think tanks to shape and marshal a war of ideas concerning race and racism in the Post-Civil Rights period.

Black neoconservatives advocate an alternative analysis of the significance of race and racism that places the burden of inequality on African Americans. They oppose emphasis on the role of racism in perpetuating racial disparities, and they argue that the forces of dependency, victim-status identity, and degenerate cultural behavior and values are now responsible for inequality and the Black underclass. In the tradition of Booker T. Washington and George S. Schuyler, Black neoconservatives oppose civil rights legislation and defer to White cultural norms and hegemony. However, Black neoconservatives depart from traditional Black

conservatism in that most of them have very few connections to Black institutions or influence among the vast majority of African American people. Their influence rests primarily among Whites who resent civil rights legislation and issues of racial justice and equality. Ultimately, Black neoconservatives espouse rhetoric that shields Whites from charges of racism.

Many of the Black neoconservatives refer to themselves as “dissenters.” Actually, most of them do not identify with the term “neoconservative” because of its stigma as a discourse that stands outside of and in opposition to mainstream African American political thought. This thesis argues that “neoconservative” is in fact a more appropriate term to describe the ideology and politics that are characteristic of Black dissenters who have gained notoriety in the media since the 1980s. In 1976, Thomas Sowell published an article, “A Black ‘Conservative’ Dissents,” which probably inspired the use of the term “dissenter” among other Black conservatives, especially the Black neoconservatives who have gained prominence since Ronald Reagan’s presidency. Sowell predates the “Reagan Revolution,” but his writings are often regarded as the founding texts of contemporary Black conservatives. Their dissent is in opposition to the civil rights leadership and even more so to the Black Power and the Black consciousness movements of the late 1960s, which sought to promote Black identity and African American history and culture. Both Thomas Sowell and Anne Wortham were “Black dissenters” as early as the 1970s. Their work primarily opposes affirmative action and promotes individualism. They argue that racism has greatly diminished since the Civil Rights movement and is therefore no longer responsible for racial disparities. Furthermore, Wortham maintains that Black Power politics of the 1960s and early 1970s were racist, and racial pride masks low self-esteem among African Americans.

In the 1980s, the Fairmont Conference provided a mechanism to organize contemporary Black conservatives as a direct challenge to the civil rights leadership. Prominent among those who benefited from Reagan's ultra-conservative movement are Glenn Loury, Clarence Thomas, Clarence Pendleton, Jr. and Jay Parker. These individuals helped to legitimize campaigns for the nullification of civil rights policies. The second generation of Black neoconservatives who maintained the momentum in the 1990s includes a cadre of public intellectuals such as Shelby Steele, John McWhorter, Carol Swain, Armstrong Williams, Stanley Crouch, Ward Connerly, and Stephen Carter. This group published numerous articles and books on the problems of Black victimization, welfare, affirmative action and the Black underclass. Their principle message is that a victim-focused identity has been far more dangerous and debilitating for African Americans than White racism. As the 1964 Civil Rights Act outlawed racial discrimination and segregation, the Black neoconservatives argue that deteriorating conditions, particularly among the Black poor, are due to a lack of values, hard work and individual effort. They insist that blaming the cause of these conditions on racism is obscuring responsibility.

This thesis focused on the work of Thomas Sowell, Stephen Carter, Star Parker, Shelby Steele, Ward Connerly, Glenn Loury and John McWhorter in order to define Black neoconservatism and identify its core principles and politics. These individuals were chosen because of the centrality of their work to the canon of Black neoconservatism. Sowell's *Race and Economics* is regarded as the seminal work that influenced other contemporary Black neoconservatives. He is the author of numerous articles and books including *The Economics and Politics of Race*, *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?*, *Race and Culture*, *Affirmative Action Around the World*, and *Black Rednecks and White Liberals*. A graduate of Harvard University and senior research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, Sowell has been the

premiere Black conservative since the 1980s. Although his dissent began in the 1970s, Sowell has played a critical role in organizing and inspiring Black neoconservatism. His influence extends over both periods of earlier Black conservatives and contemporary Black neoconservatives who have gained prominence in the media since Reagan's administration.

Stephen Carter, Shelby Steele and John McWhorter follow in Sowell's footsteps as public intellectuals located in the academy. Carter is a law professor at his alma mater, Yale University. The author of *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby*, Carter argues that affirmative action is outdated and that African Americans must prove their qualifications by competing with Whites without the benefit of special consideration or programs. According to Carter, affirmative action robs African Americans from being judged by their merits, and it stigmatizes African Americans as simply the "best black" for the "black spot."

Shelby Steele wrote a series of essays in the 1980s that describe his experiences with racial identity, which were published as his first book in 1990, *The Content of Our Character*. Like Carter, Steele's books are based on his personal narratives and interpretations of the racial order. Steele is biracial, and shares his own personal turmoil with racial identity as a product of a middle class community of Chicago's Southside. His work on race, affirmative action and multiculturalism is more autobiographical than scholarly research. Nevertheless, Steele is a research fellow at the Hoover Institute. Before the publication of his first book, Steele was an English professor at San Jose State University. He is also the author of *A Dream Deferred* and *White Guilt: How Blacks and Whites Together Destroyed the Promise of the Civil Rights Era*. Steele's primary presumption is that African Americans adhere to a choreographed depiction of racism that masks their fear of competing on an equal

footing with Whites. He suggests that “victimhood” is the new Black power that invokes White guilt and is more stifling than racism.

John McWhorter is another public intellectual who is known for his discourteous critiques of Black culture, affirmative action, welfare and Black Power. He is a research fellow at the conservative Manhattan Institute and a professor of Linguistics at UC Berkeley. The author of *Losing the Race: Self Sabotage in Black America*, *Authentically Black*, and *Winning the Race: Beyond the Crisis in Black America*, McWhorter has written extensively on the issue of Black victim-focused identity. He maintains that “victimology” has created a pathological dependency among African Americans. His works argues that Black Power endorsed victimization, anti-intellectualism and separatism, and won entitlements such as welfare and affirmative action. For McWhorter, these are the true culprits responsible for unrest in urban ghettos and underachievement among African Americans.

In addition to Carter, Steele and McWhorter, this thesis also explored the political views of Glenn Loury. One of the preeminent public intellectuals during the 1980s, Loury was heavily courted by Ronald Reagan and other White conservatives who admired his intellect and his willingness to attack civil rights leaders, organizations and legislation. Loury insisted that degenerate cultural behavior and values created and perpetuate the Black underclass. In his book, *One by One From the Inside Out*, Loury ridicules “racial solidarity” or “race loyalty” among African Americans as oppressive and monolithic. According to Loury, Black authenticity is rooted in victimization and imposes a dehumanizing conformity that represses individualism. By the mid-1990s, Loury began to change his position as he became increasingly disappointed with the racism of many White conservatives. His book, *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality*, firmly represents Loury’s analysis as he recognizes the major impact of racial stigma and stereotypes on Black advancement, in addition

to the social networks that Whites create to exclude African Americans from various opportunities. Loury is from humbled beginnings, growing up on the Southside of Chicago. He is currently a professor of Economics at Boston University and director of the Institute on Race and Social Division.

Finally, the thesis also interrogated the memoirs of civic activists Ward Connerly and Star Parker. Connerly's book, *Creating Equal: My Fight Against Race Preferences* details his mission to eradicate affirmative action, beginning with California's Proposition 209. As a member of the University of California's Board of Regents, Connerly used his relationship with Governor Pete Wilson to start a movement to end affirmative action. He is the co-founder of the American Civil Rights Coalition and the American Civil Rights Initiative, both of which are anti-affirmative action organizations. Connerly is a fervent supporter of colorblindness and individualism. In fact, he resents Black as a racial category and prefers to self-identify as simply American.

In a similar vein, Star Parker wrote *Pimps, Whores and Welfare Brats: The Stunning Conservative Transformation of a Former Welfare Queen* to promulgate her opposition to welfare. She relays the disturbing lifestyle she led as a welfare recipient, and argues that conservative values are the only solutions to unemployment and urban decay. Parker turned her rambunctious lifestyle around when she became a born-again Christian. In 1992, Parker condemned the Los Angeles riots and became a staunch conservative and harsh critic of civil rights leaders who blamed the riots on racism. She is the founder of the Coalition on Urban Renewal and Education and is also the author of two other books entitled *Uncle Sam's Plantation: How Big Government Enslaves America's Poor and What We Can Do About It* and *White Ghetto: How Middle Class America Reflects Inner City Decay*.

The works of Thomas Sowell, Stephen Carter, Ward Connerly, Shelby Steele, John McWhorter, Star Parker, and the early works of Glenn Loury affirm the dominant racial views among Whites who resent civil rights legislation and profess a colorblind and just society. Black neoconservatives are essential in the ideological war that has been waged in universities and think tanks regarding racism and the validity of African American claims to justice and equality. Though they have a limited following among the vast majority of African Americans, the success and effectiveness of Black neoconservatives is measured by their relationship to White patrons. As marginal voices among African Americans, Black neoconservatives still have major influence in terms of shaping public opinion and ultimately public policy.

The Deficiencies and Contradictions of Black Neoconservative Ideology

If it were not for the strong antipathy that Black neoconservatives have toward African American leaders, institutions and culture, various aspects of Black neoconservatism would probably garner more support among African Americans. Social issues like crime, high incarceration rates, poor school performance, health disparities, and the breakdown of families and values are all of great concern in African American communities. Yet, Black neoconservatives see these issues as exclusively problems deriving from social behavior rather than problems also rooted in debilitated social conditions. Their argument obscures the fact that African Americans have always asserted the essential importance of personal responsibility in spite of discrimination that causes disparities in qualities of life in such matters as substandard housing, racism in employment, unequal education and healthcare, and limited material resources. Furthermore, Black neoconservatives often dismiss the lived racial/racist experiences of African Americans as exaggerated or displaced

complaints, which in their view is characteristic of a victim syndrome fixated on past history.

Another deficiency of Black neoconservatism is that it is often based on doctrinal claims without empirical substantiation. Black neoconservatives raise issues that are grounded in reality, but they often make sweeping generalizations regarding Black inferiority and victimization without producing evidence to support their precepts. Black neoconservatives such as John McWhorter, Armstrong Williams, and Stanley Crouch are heavily sought after for public appearances as race experts and social and cultural critics and are given more latitude in the public square precisely because as Black intellectuals they are also lambasting Black liberals of the civil rights tradition. The dominance of Republicans in national politics has given Black neoconservatives a platform to challenge Black liberals and their currency among African Americans who are largely Democrats.

In addition, Black neoconservatives presume that racial affinity compromises their humanity and individuality, and impedes their assimilation into the dominant culture. Their position assumes that only Black people are conscious of race and therefore speak in a language that polarizes race relations. Whites are not presumed to behave overtly in ways that are race conscious, although collectively, they enjoy racial privileges because of their dominance over most of the nation's wealth, capital resources and institutions. It comes as no surprise that Black neoconservatives contend with the question of racial authenticity. To deny the historical legacy, current realities, and viability of African American culture and identity is objectively an anti-Black position. Black neoconservatives contend that "Black" is a social abstract not to be taken too seriously. They fail to acknowledge "Black" as a marker of shared history and shared culture. Racial solidarity, based on shared experiences has been crucial to Black liberation struggles domestically and internationally. As a group

whose race was used to facilitate oppression, it is only natural that African Americans create alliances among themselves as a means of resistance, empowerment and self-definition. Obviously, Black neoconservatives have used race as the basis of their own oppositional propositions. Sherri Smith notes:

Although black conservatives argue that we should transcend race, they have gained much of their notoriety because of the particular ways in which they talk about race. They are called on mainly to speak as black experts on black issues such as minorities in politics, the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of the Congressional Black Caucus and the civil rights establishment, economics in the African American community, and the dangers of black racial pride and black criminal behavior.²⁴

Smith raises an essential point that illuminates another contradiction of Black neoconservatism. Even though many Black neoconservatives reject racial identity and deny the saliency of racism, their work is heavily centered on racial politics. In fact, they function primarily as “Black” neoconservatives. They would have no purpose aside from their racial identity. Their political currency derives directly from the fact that they are Black intellectuals instigating a political assault on Black liberals. In addition, Black neoconservatives have organized themselves along racial lines as “Black” dissenters who cite and support each other’s work and associate with the same conservative institutions.

Generally, Black neoconservatives oppose programs that are designed to ameliorate historical conditions of discrimination. Although Black neoconservatives consider themselves as dissenters from civil rights policy, they do not oppose the legislation as much as they oppose the typical implementation of civil rights that focuses on race and racism. Black neoconservatives advocate a strict interpretation of

²⁴ Sherri Smith, “The Individual Ethos: A Defining Characteristic of Contemporary Black Conservatism,” in *Dimensions of Black Conservatism in the United States: Made in America*, eds. Gayle T. Tate and Lewis A. Randolph (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2002), 133.

the 1964 Civil Rights Act that bans discrimination based on a person's race, color, religion or national origin. They often argue that programs that target African Americans such as affirmative action, scholarships or grants inherently discriminate against Whites. It is no accident that conservatives like Clarence Thomas and Clarence Pendleton, Jr. were appointed to lead civil rights agencies. Black neoconservatives have played an important role in undermining these agencies by changing their original intent. Instead of protecting the rights of African Americans that were denied for generations, Black neoconservatives are committed to protecting the rights of Whites who feel aggrieved by civil rights legislation and programs.

Black neoconservatives are personally and intellectually preoccupied with attacking civil rights positions. Curiously, they have made lucrative careers for themselves by vilifying civil rights leaders and organizations who have risked a great deal so that Black people could achieve access to the public square. Black neoconservatives do not concede that Black liberals are honorable in pursuit of their political objectives. Instead, their contention is that Black liberals are self-serving and corrupt. Ironically, the most popular Black neoconservative voices like Sowell, Steele, McWhorter, Loury, and Connerly are African Americans of the civil rights generation. They argue against civil rights protection for African Americans, but they have benefited from the very policies that afforded them access to institutions like Yale, Harvard, Berkeley, Stanford and others. Black neoconservatives contend that the traditional strategy of civil rights is outmoded; racism is largely residual; and that continued focus on racial victimization only fuels White resentment and impedes assimilation. They offer no analysis of continuing discrimination and racial inequality as consequences of institutional practices. Other than to deny the saliency of racism, Black neoconservatives fail to model a strategy for development and empowerment.

Their “alternative vision” of personal responsibility is void of a programmatic agenda and solutions.

The irony of Black neoconservatism is glaring, especially since many of their critiques can be used inversely to undermine their own arguments. For instance, Black neoconservatives are extremely *race conscious* although they claim to be colorblind and individualistic. Their personal stories are also *victim-oriented* as they depict themselves as perpetual victims of marginalization and conformity among African Americans. Likewise, Black neoconservatives promote Whites as victims of Black entitlement and racial guilt. While Black neoconservatives ridicule African Americans for their *dependency* on the government, Black neoconservatives are also dependent on government sources as well as the financial backing of conservative institutions. In fact, their careers in race scholarship are heavily dependent upon White patronage. In addition, their presumptions are not sufficiently substantiated by empirical data, but are drawn largely from narratives, which can also fall under the category of *anti-intellectualism*. Black neoconservatives chastise African Americans for their loyalty to the Democratic Party, yet they walk their own *party line* that is decidedly loyal to the Republican Party. Moreover, Black neoconservatives berate African Americans and Black identity for what they consider to be *oppressive-conformity*, but they often resort to name calling in their own censures. Their work also reveals their own *psychological turmoil* in a society that perpetuates White superiority and *Black inferiority*. Ultimately, Black neoconservative critiques provide a classic example of “the pot calling the kettle black.” This phrase is useful in highlighting the contradictions of Black neoconservatism, because it also alludes to the way in which Black neoconservatives presume that there is something wrong with being “Black” in the first place.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. provides a compelling observation that is useful in assessing the complex role of Black neoconservatives. With eloquence, King posits:

The white establishment is skilled in flattering and cultivating emerging leaders. It presses its own image on them and finally, from imitation of manners, dress and style of living, a deeper strain of corruption develops. This kind of Negro leader acquires the white man's contempt for the ordinary Negro. He is often more at home with the middle-class white than he is among his own people. His language changes, his location changes, his income changes, and ultimately he changes from the representative of the Negro to the white man into the white man's representative to the Negro.⁶

King's observation captures the role of Black neoconservatives in the Post-Civil Rights era. There have always been attempts by White politicians to manipulate Black leadership so that it is compliant and complicit with the racial status quo and the privileged position of Whites in the social order. The very existence of Black neoconservatives depends fundamentally on White patronage. Conservative think tanks patronize Black neoconservatives specifically because they often hold an anti-Black disposition, and their message of individualism and colorblindness is more palpable to Whites. Black neoconservatives do not initiate dialogue on legitimate issues in Black communities. Rather, they stand outside of and in opposition to Black organizations, institutions and Black leaders. As Black neoconservatives heavily criticize African American political culture and the Black underclass, they uphold the cultural norms and values of an unequal racial social order. Consistent with King's observation, Black neoconservatives are rewarded for their dissociation from Black identity and Black political and cultural institutions.

⁶ James M. Washington, ed., *Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 307, quoted in Ronald Walters, *White Nationalism, Black Interests: Conservative Public Policy and the Black Community* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 234.

It is inarguable that the racial etiquette of the United States has undergone significant transformations in law and society since the 1940s, '50s and '60s. However, instead of fully dissipating, racism has in fact become more subtle and sophisticated in the Post-Civil Rights era; using, for instance, colorblindness, individualism and the prominence of Black neoconservatives to fundamentally maintain racial inequality. Whether or not Black neoconservatives actually pander to White conservatives or sincerely believe in the positions that they propagate, their voices are still heard within a context that is intractable in its hostility to civil rights and full equality for African Americans.

Future Research

I chose to base this thesis on the works of Thomas Sowell, Ward Connerly, Stephen Carter, Glenn Loury, Star Parker, Shelby Steele and John McWhorter in order to glean from their personal narratives and social analysis a conceptual framework to define and analyze Black neoconservatism. Further research on this topic should test the currency of neoconservatives and their political base in Black communities, particularly as African Americans continue to elect Black “liberal” Democrats more so than Black “conservative” Republicans. Future study may assess the credibility of Black neoconservatives beyond White conservative think tanks, foundations and right-wing power brokers.

In addition, future research should explore the relationship between Black ministers who have joined the neoconservative ranks and the Republican Party, especially as it relates to the growth of Black mega-churches. Potential research questions may include the following: What is the role of Black church entrepreneurs? How do Black ministers incorporate conservative politics in their ministry? How do

their conservative positions compare to the progressive leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.?

It is important to engage Black neoconservatism as a topic of serious study because of its potential to influence public policy and undermine the gains of the Civil Rights movement. The Post-Civil Rights generations are susceptible to the ideology of Black neoconservatism as they are the first generations born after the demise of segregation and legalized discrimination. As a result, the Post-Civil Rights generations often lack historical memory. More importantly, Black neoconservatives have effectively manipulated and co-opted the language of the Civil Rights movement in order to reconfigure the political discourse on the legal course of civil rights and social justice.

REFERENCES

- Attiyeh, Jenny. "Black Scholar Renounces Conservative Crown." *The Christian Monitor* (05 September 2005). (Accessed 20 March 2006).
- Bolden, Tonya. "Josephine 'Jody' Cogdell." In *African American Writer: A Dictionary*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2000.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001.
- Bromery, Randolph W. "What Can Be Done?" In *The Fairmont Papers: Black Alternatives Conference San Francisco December 1980*. San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1981.
- Carmichael, Stokely with Ekwueme Michael Thelwell. *Ready for the Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael {Kwame Ture}*. New York, NY: Scribner, 2003.
- Carter, Stephen. *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1991.
- Cooray, Mark. "Race and Affirmative Action: An Interview with Professor Glenn Loury of Harvard University (1985)." In *Human Rights in Australia*, <www.ourcivilisation.com/cooray/rights/chap17.htm> (accessed 18 March 2006).
- Connerly, Ward. *Creating Equal: My Fight Against Race Preferences*. San Francisco, CA: Encounter Books, 2000.
- Conti, Joseph and Brad Stetson. *Challenging the Civil Rights Establishment: Profiles of a New Black Vanguard*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993.
- Dawson, Michael. *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- DeVeaux, Stuart. "Young, Black, and Republican." In *Black and Right: The Bold New Voice of Black Conservatives in America*, edited by Stan Faryna, et al. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997.
- Dillard, Angela D. *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner Now? Multicultural Conservatism in America*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001.
- DuBois, W.E.B. "My Early Relations with Booker T. Washington." In *Booker T.*

- Washington and His Critics, The Problem of Negro Leadership*, edited by Hugh Hawkins. Lexington, KY: D.C. Heath and Company, 1962.
- _____. "The Browsing Reader," *The Crisis* 38 (January 1931): 16. Quoted in Michael Peplow, *George S. Schuyler* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 31.
- _____. *The Souls of Black Folk*. In *Three Negro Classics*. New York: Avon Books, 1965.
- Stan Faryna, Brad Stetson and Joseph G. Conti, eds. *Black and Right: The Bold New Voice of Black Conservatives in America*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997.
- Feagin, Joe. *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2000.
- Ferguson, Jeffrey B. *The Sage of Sugar Hill: George S. Schuyler and the Harlem Renaissance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005.
- Franklin, John Hope. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*. 3rd ed. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1969.
- Friedman, Milton S. "Government is the Problem." In *The Fairmont Papers: Black Alternatives Conference San Francisco December 1980*. San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1981.
- Goode, Stephanie. "Making Headway with the Masses: Headway Magazine Covering Conservative Black Opinion." *Insight on the News Internet Magazine*, (17 September 1997). <www.insightmag.com> (accessed 10 March 2006).
- Gunn, Wendell Wilkie. "Economic Freedom, Economic Gains." In *The Fairmont Papers: Black Alternatives Conference San Francisco December 1980*. San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1981.
- Hamilton, Charles V. *The Black Experience in American Politics*. New York, NY: Capricorn Books, 1973.
- Hill, Robert. "Introduction." In *Ethiopian Stories: George S. Schuyler*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1994.
- HistoryMakers' Web Site, *Biography* on Shelby Steele, <<http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/biography.asp?bioindex=172>> (accessed 16 April 2006).

- Jones, Brian. "Two Visions of Black Leadership." In *Black and Right: The Bold New Voice of Black Conservatives in America*, edited by Stan Faryna, et al. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997.
- The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education. Review of *Rac[e]jing to the Right: Selected Essays of George S. Schuyler*, by Jeffrey B. Leak. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 34 (Winter 2001/2002): 133-134.
- Kilson, Martin. "Anatomy of Black Conservatism." *Transition Magazine* 59 (1992): 4-19.
- _____. "Widening Our Reach." In *The Fairmont Papers: Black Alternatives Conference San Francisco December 1980*. San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1981.
- King Jr., Martin Luther. "I Have a Dream Speech 1963." In *The Civil Rights Reader* edited by Leon Friedman. New York, NY: Walker and Company, 1967.
- Klinkner, Philip A. "Bill Clinton and the Politics of the New Liberalism." In *Without Justice for All*, edited by Adolph Reed, Jr. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999.
- Leak, Jeffrey B. *Rac[e]jing to the Right: Selected Essays of George S. Schuyler*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2001.
- Lewis, Randolph. "*Black Neoconservatives in the United States: Responding with Progressive Coalitions*. In *Race and Politics*, edited by James Jennings. London: Verso, 1997.
- The Lincoln Institute for Research and Education Home Page, <www.lincolnreview.com> (accessed 3 March 2006).
- Loury, Glenn. *One by One From the Inside Out: Essays and Reviews on Race and Responsibility in America*. New York, NY: The Free Press, 1995.
- _____. *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Lucas Jr., Henry. *The Fairmont Papers: Black Alternatives Conference San Francisco December 1980*. San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1981.
- Marable, Manning. *Beyond Black & White*. London: Verso, 1995.
- _____. *Black Liberation in Conservative America*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1997.

- _____. *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990*. 2nd ed. Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 1991.
- McWhorter, John. *Authentically Black: Essays for the Black Silent Majority*. New York, NY: Gotham Books, 2003.
- _____. *Losing the Race: Self Sabotage in Black America*. New York, NY: The Free Press, 2000.
- Miller, James A. "Forward." In *Black No More* by George S. Schuyler. First Published 1931. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press edition, 1989.
- Miller, Kelly. "Washington's Policy." In *Booker T. Washington and His Critics: The Problem of Negro Leadership*, edited by Hugh Hawkins. Lexington, KT: D.C. Heath and Company, 1962.
- Onadaatje, Michael L. "Counterfeit Heroes or Colour-Blind Visionaries? The Black Conservative Challenge to Affirmative Action in Modern America." *Australian Journal of Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (December 2004): 32. <www.anzasa.arts.usyd.edu.au/a.j.a.s/docs/contents_2004.htm> (accessed 30 April 2006).
- Parker, Star. *Pimps, Whores and Welfare Brats: The Stunning Conservative Transformation of a Former Welfare Queen*. New York, NY: Pocket Books, 1997.
- Peplow, Michael. *George S. Schuyler*. Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1980.
- Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537, 552 (1896). Quoted in Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Project 21 Home Page. <<http://www.nationalcenter.org/P21Index.html>> (accessed 3 March 2006).
- _____. *Our History*. <<http://www.nationalcenter.org/P21History.html>> (accessed 3 March 2006).
- Rayson, Ann. "George Schuyler: Paradox Among 'Assimilationist' Writers." *Black American Literature Forum* Vol. 12, No. 3 (1978): 102-106.
- Reed, Jr., Adolph, ed. *Without Justice for All: The New Liberalism and Our Retreat from Racial Equality*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999.
- Schuyler, George S. *Black and Conservative: The Autobiography of George S.*

- Schuyler*. New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House Publishers, 1966.
- _____. “King: No Help to Peace (1964).” In *Rac[e]ing to the Right: Selected Essays of George S. Schuyler*, edited by Jeffrey B. Leak. Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001.
- _____. “Malcolm X Better to Memorialize Benedict Arnold.” In *Rac[e]ing to the Right: Selected Essays of George S. Schuyler*, edited by Jeffrey B. Leak. Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001.
- _____. “The Case Against the Civil Rights Bill (1963).” In *Rac[e]ing to the Right: Selected Essays of George S. Schuyler*, edited by Jeffrey B. Leak. Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001.
- _____. “Views and Reviews,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, (23 February, 1935). Quoted in *Ethiopian Stories: George S. Schuyler*, edited by Robert Hill. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1994.
- Shatz, Adam. “Glenn Loury’s About Fact.” *The New York Times* on-line (20 January 2002). <<http://phuakl.tripod.com/eTHOUGHT/Loury.html>> (accessed 18 March 2006).
- Smith, Robert C. and Hanes Walton, Jr. “U-TURN: Martin Kilson and Black Conservatism.” *Transition* 62 (1993): 209.
- Sowell, Thomas. *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?* New York, NY: William Morrow Inc., 1984.
- _____. *Race and Culture: A World View*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1994.
- _____. “False Assumptions about Black Education.” In *The Fairmont Papers: Black Alternatives Conference San Francisco December 1980*. San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1981.
- Steele, Shelby. *A Dream Deferred: The Second Betrayal of Black Freedom in America*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998.
- _____. *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America*. New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1990.
- Steinberg, Stephen. *Turning Back: The Retreat from Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995.
- Stetson, Brad. “The Sage of South Central: An Interview with Larry Elder.” In *Black*

- and Right: The Bold New Voice of Black Conservatives in America*, edited by Stan Faryna, et. al. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997.
- Talalay, Kathryn. *Composition in Black and White: The Life of Philippa Schuyler*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Tate, Gayle T. and Lewis A. Randolph, eds. *Dimensions of Black Conservatism in The United States: Made in America*. New York, NY: Palgrave, 2002.
- Thrasher, Max Bennett. *Tuskegee: Its Story and Its Work*. First published, 1900. Reprint, North Stratford, NH: Ayer Company Publishers, Inc., 2000.
- Thomas, Clarence. "Being Educated Black." In *The Fairmont Papers: Black Alternatives Conference San Francisco December 1980*. San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1981.
- _____. "No Room at the Inn: The Loneliness of the Black Conservative." In *Black and Right: The Bold New Voice of Black Conservatives in America*, edited by Stan Faryna, et. al. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997.
- Walker, Lee. "What 'Black Conservative' Means to Me." In *Black and Right: The Bold New Voice of Black Conservatives in America*, edited by Stan Faryna, et al. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997.
- Walters, Ronald. *White Nationalism, Black Interests: Conservative Public Policy and the Black Community*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003.
- Washington, Booker T. "The Educational Outlook in the South." In *Booker T. Washington and His Critics: The Problem of Negro Leadership*, edited by Hugh Hawkins. Lexington, KY: D.C. Heath and Company, 1962.
- _____. *Up From Slavery*. In *Three Negro Classics*. New York, NY: Avon Books, 1965.
- Williams, Walter. "Reply to Dan Smith." In *The Fairmont Papers: Black Alternatives Conference San Francisco December 1980*. San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1981.
- _____. "Legal Barriers to Black Economic Gains: Employment and Transportation." In *The Fairmont Papers: Black Alternatives Conference San Francisco December 1980*. San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1981.
- Wortham, Anne. *The Other Side of Racism: A Philosophical Study of Black Race Consciousness*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1977.

Wright, Oscar . “Politics and Opportunity: The Background.” In *The Fairmont Papers: Black Alternatives Conference San Francisco December 1980*. San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1981.

Young, James. *Black Writers of the Thirties*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1973.