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Major Problems in African American History

SECOND EDITION

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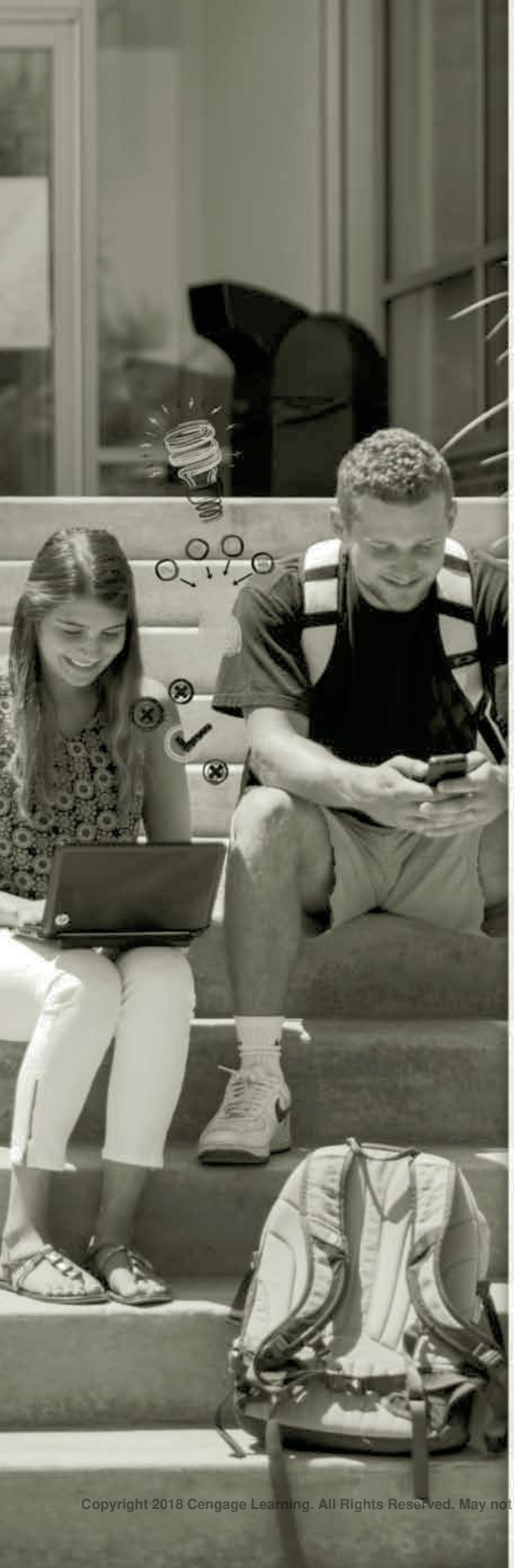

Major Problems in African American History

Documents and Essays

SECOND EDITION

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Preface

African American history is, paradoxically, both a very old and a very new field. It is very old in the sense that some of its pioneering works appeared in the middle and late nineteenth century. Moreover, those works—by William Wells Brown, George Washington Williams, and Gertrude Bustill Mossell, among others—addressed some of the field's principal issues, ones that have animated the subject to this day: the contributions black people have made to building and defending the nation; the role black people have had in its cultural development and progress; how black people laid claim to equal citizenship. African American history is also very new, in the sense that its widespread emergence as a formal subject of study in colleges and universities dates from the 1970s. The field of African American history has expanded and shifted over the past four and half decades, paying ever more attention to the experiences of women and working-class people as well as considering issues of sexuality, intersectional identities, popular culture, migration, and transnational exchanges among people of African descent. In large measure, these new areas of inquiry reflect the changing demography of scholars in the United States and the Diaspora.

Whether old or new, however, scholars in this field have generally recognized its intimate connection to the most fundamental and contentious political issues of its day—like slavery, freedom, racial equality, and social and economic justice. As such, African American history has itself been a politically contested field and provides an alternative perspective on the character, formation, and destiny of the American nation. Of course, some of the subjects of African American history—for example, slavery and emancipation—have long been part of the standard American history curriculum. However, outside of a very few predominantly black institutions, these subjects were not studied from the perspective of black Americans themselves. Since the 1970s, historians have focused on developing an African American historiography that centers on black thought, action, and community, an effort that continues in the twenty-first century.

This second edition of ***Major Problems in African American History*** covers the African American experience from the beginnings of the Atlantic slave trade to the present. It builds on the first edition and the work of Thomas Holt and Elsa Barkley Brown, while accounting for recent historical events as well as conceptual and historiographic developments in the field. As part of the ***Major Problems in American History*** series, this volume is intended to provide students and instructors with a framework for thinking about African American history with essential, readable, and provocative documents and essays on the issues raised by African Americans' historical experience. That experience is both intimately linked to American history as a whole and also distinct from that history in innumerable ways. We wanted to acquaint students with the economic, political, and social circumstances in which African Americans have had to function and at the same time to offer students an opportunity to view U.S. history and the African American experience in the United States through the eyes of African Americans.

As with that of other nonelite groups unable to control the recording of history or the preservation of that record, much of the lived experience of black Americans remains undocumented. In fact, the range and volume of literature and documentation of what has been done to or said about African Americans is much larger than that of the actions and thoughts of African Americans themselves. Even within the records of African Americans, those of men and prominent elites are often more known and available than those of women or of poor and working-class people. This is the reality that has made the choices more difficult for all scholars of the African American experience; it requires innovation in both the search for and the interpretation of primary sources. In some cases, scholars have found letters and eyewitness accounts by African Americans buried in massive government files, especially those generated at moments of crisis like wars and civil unrest. Others have turned to traditional sources, such as plantation records or the testimony of elite whites, but subjected them to a more searching scrutiny, reading "between the lines." In other cases, scholars have sought out unconventional historical materials, such as folktales, music, photographs, and material objects. The essays and documents in this volume reflect many of these approaches.

As a single volume, this text adopts both a thematic and chronological structure in exploring nearly four centuries of African American history. Chapter 1 offers perspective on the meaning of African American history and its evolution as a formal practice and discipline. Chapters 2 and 3 explore the experiences of Africans in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the origins of slavery and racism, and the dynamics of chattel slavery in colonial North America and the West Indies. Chapters 4 covers the formations of early African American culture as expressed through art, music, and oral traditions, and Chapter 5 focuses on the family and community relations among enslaved women, men, and children. Chapter 6 explores the lives of free blacks in a slave society and discusses their political activism, labor, and their cultural and intellectual productions. Chapters 7 and 8 examine how black people, free and enslaved, challenged the institution of slavery and other forms of institutionalized racism through individual and collective

acts of resistance and also political activism and organized protest. Their collective efforts to advance the cause of freedom ultimately helped shape the meaning and outcome of the Civil War, the focus of Chapter 9. Chapter 10 interrogates the meaning of freedom for black people during the Reconstruction era. The struggles of African Americans to stake claim to their citizenship in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are explored in Chapters 11 and 12. Chapter 13 highlights the idea and historical development of the "New Negro" in the 1920s. The years of the Great Depression, World War II, and the onset of the Cold War are the focus of Chapters 14 and 15. Chapters 16 and 17 cover the era of the modern Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. The legacies of this era in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries—and the meaning of racial progress itself—are investigated in Chapters 18 and 19.

Like the other volumes in this series, ***Major Problems in African American History*** is made up of both primary sources (textual and visual documents) and essays interpreting some of the major issues in the field. Every chapter opens with a brief introduction that sets the scene and defines the central issues. The documents and essay that follow suggest the differing perspectives from which historians address those issues, either through posing conflicting interpretations of the same events or offering differing angles of vision on a general theme. Our aim in each chapter is to provide materials that suggest ways of thinking about the African American experience. This will enable readers to develop their own understanding or assessment of the questions scholars have raised and also allow readers to ask their own, perhaps entirely new, questions about the subject. Each chapter closes with a list of books and articles for further reading.

New to the Second Edition

The second edition makes some key changes to the previous edition. We have reorganized the chapters to streamline the chronology. We have also widened the geographic scope of coverage by including documents that address the African American experience in the western United States as well as other parts of the Diaspora. We selected documents that highlight the personal, intellectual, cultural, and political connections among people of African descent throughout the Diaspora. While we have retained selections from pioneering and enduring scholars, we have added many essays written by a younger generation of scholars that reflect the new directions and debates in the field.

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Acknowledgments

We first and foremost thank Elsa Barkley Brown and Thomas Holt for their groundbreaking work on the first edition of *Major Problems in African American History*.

The volumes they masterfully crafted continue to endure and served as the foundation for our editorial efforts. Much of what they wrote and selected for documents and essays remain in the second edition. As two leading and field-defining historians of the black experience, they have inspired us in ways that go well beyond this project.

We would like to thank the librarians and archivists at Brandeis University interlibrary loan and the W. E. B. DuBois Library at the University of Massachusetts Amherst; the Nantucket Historical Society; Bodleian Library, University of Oxford; Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries; Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library; and Louis Round Wilson Library, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

For this edition, we received detailed and extremely helpful outside reviews from Marcia Chatelain of Georgetown University; Shawn Alexander of the University of Kansas; Will Cooley of Walsh University; Claudrena Harold of the University of Virginia; Daniel Dalrymple of Bethel University; Irma Watkins-Owens of Fordham University; Leslie Harris of Northwestern University; Michael Hucles of Old Dominion University; Catherine Clark of Bethel University; and Celia Naylor of Barnard College.

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We are grateful to the editorial and production team at Cengage Learning, most notably Kate MacLean for her guidance, patience, and good cheer.

Last, but certainly not least, we thank our families and loved ones for their support. We hope our children will one day read this volume and be proud of the work we have done in their names.

About the Authors

Barbara Krauthamer is associate professor of history and associate dean of the Graduate School at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She received her bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College and her doctorate from Princeton University. She is the author of two books and many articles on the history of slavery and emancipation. She has written *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South*. She is the coauthor of *Envisioning Emancipation: Black Americans and the End of Slavery*. The latter book was awarded the 2013 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work in Nonfiction and received Honorable Mention from the Black Caucus of the American Library Association. She has received grants and awards from the Association of Black Women Historians; the National Endowment for the Humanities; Stanford University's Research Institute for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity; Yale University's Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition; the Institute for Historical Studies at the University of Texas at Austin; and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Her current research focuses on enslaved women's lives during the era of the American Revolution.

Chad Williams is associate professor and chair of the Department of African and Afro-American Studies at Brandeis University. Chad Williams earned his BA with honors in History and African American Studies and received both his MA and Ph.D. in History from Princeton University. Williams specializes in African American and modern U.S. history, African American military history, the World War I era, and African American intellectual history. His first book, *Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War I*

Era, was published in 2010 by the University of North Carolina Press. *Torchbearers of Democracy* won the 2011 Liberty Legacy Foundation Award from the Organization of American Historians, the 2011 Distinguished Book Award from the Society for Military History, and designation as a 2011 CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title. He is coeditor of *Charleston Syllabus: Readings on Race, Racism and Racial Violence*, published in 2016 by University of Georgia Press. He has published articles and book reviews in numerous leading journals and collections.

Williams has earned fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Ford Foundation, and the Woodrow Wilson Foundation. He is currently completing a study of W. E. B. Du Bois and the history of World War I.

CHAPTER 1

Interpreting African American History

How did the study of African Americans emerge as a distinct field of study in American history? What motivated early generations of scholars to focus on African Americans and what topics were of greatest importance to them? Where does the history of African Americans fit in relation to the history of the United States, the history of the Americas, and the history of the African Diaspora? What motivates today's scholars to continue to explore new avenues of inquiry and revisit older scholarship in this field?

Since the nineteenth century, African American intellectuals and scholars have understood that researching and writing the history of African Americans in the United States is both a political and scholarly endeavor. As early as the sixteenth century, European writers compared African peoples to beasts and argued that they lacked full humanity. By the nineteenth century, social scientists and other scholars in the United States continued to question the depth of African American humanity and intellect and also maintained that black people lacked a history. That is, white historians and scholars claimed that people of African descent had never accomplished anything of cultural, scientific, artistic, political, philosophical, or intellectual value. Likewise, white scholars and others claimed that black people could not produce meaningful scholarly research or writing. Consequently, black people's efforts to document and narrate their individual and collective experiences was a contested issue.

African American men and women appreciated the power of self-determination within the context of education and scholarly work. In the years and decades after slavery ended, black men and women dedicated themselves to academic pursuits with the goals of disproving racist stereotypes and also revealing the richness of African American history. This commitment to revealing the breadth and depth of African American history offered a powerful counterpoint to the dominant narratives of the early twentieth century that depicted black people as ignorant and lazy and also suggested that they had been better off during slavery. Black teachers and scholars turned to history as a means of challenging such racist narratives.

Through much of the twentieth century, black scholars also believed that greater awareness of African American history would provide inspiration, encouragement, and a sense of empowerment to an oppressed and exploited people. Racism and segregation determined where people could live, work, socialize, and travel, and much of the justification for

segregation and discrimination employed old stereotypes and myths about black people's inferiority.

By the middle of the twentieth century, a growing number of scholars, black and white, believed that education and a more sophisticated knowledge of history could help promote social change. The Civil Rights Movement, the women's rights movement, and the labor movement of the mid-twentieth century all aimed to reveal longstanding patterns of discrimination and exploitation in order to claim full citizenship and rights. History and the power to tell one's own story, they argued, were key elements to achieving full equality.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

What are the ways in which you have been introduced to the study of African American history? Have you read histories of African Americans? Have you read history books written by African American scholars? Have you visited museums or historic sites that present African American experiences? How have your ideas about African American history been shaped by the context or venue in which you encountered this material?

DOCUMENTS OVERVIEW

The documents in this section offer you glimpse at the long tradition of African American scholars working to advance the field of African American history. While some of the names may be familiar to today's readers, others may be new despite their pioneering roles in the academy. Documents one, two, three, and four highlight the hopes of many African Americans in the early twentieth century that a more comprehensive understanding of history would help promote equality for black citizens in the United States. Writing in the 1920s, a period marked by segregation, lynching, and brutal exploitation, Annette Brown crafted a poem that spoke to the importance of teaching children about black heroes and accomplishments as a part of American history. This poem, the first document was published in *The Brownie's Book*, a children's publication edited by the renowned black scholar, W. E. B. DuBois. The second document is Carter G. Woodson's November 1921 speech at Hampton Institute. Woodson received his Ph.D. in History from Harvard University in 1912 and went on to found the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History) in 1915; Woodson also initiated Negro history Week in 1926. The third document is by the prominent Afro-Puerto Rican bibliophile Arturo Schomburg, who, writing at the height of the New Negro Movement, discusses the importance of black history for peoples of African descent throughout the diaspora. In the fourth document, Mary McLeod Bethune, an educator and activist who served as the president of Bethune-Cookman College, and one of very few women to be a college

president in the 1920s to 1940s, presents her views on the importance of researching, writing, and teaching black history.

The fifth and sixth documents reveal the ways in which prominent African American scholars have approached their research and profession. John Hope Franklin, certainly the premiere scholar of African American history and a 1995 recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, describes his experiences working in segregated state libraries and even the Library of Congress. In these public facilities, Franklin was denied access to desks and chairs as well as food. In his essay, Vincent Harding, a veteran of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, calls for a new approach to the study of African American history. Rather than focus on black people's contributions to American society, he encourages a deeper interrogation of the events, individuals, values, and myths that have traditionally defined American history. Harding also argues that scholars of Black History should be mindful of other oppressed people's historical presence and experiences, noting that scholars of black Americans should think about the experiences of Native Americans. In the seventh document, the poet Lucille Clifton muses on the radical potential of a history written by and about oppressed people. Finally, in the eighth document, historian James Oliver Horton discusses the importance of public history—history presented in museums and at historic sites, for example. Horton argues that public history sites can reach a wide audience and thus can serve as an important place for teaching well-researched African American history and fostering informed discussions of the history of slavery and racism in the United States.

1. *The Brownies' Book* Encourages Black Children to Know Their History, 1920

We gathered 'round the fire last night,
Jim an' Bess an' me,
And said, "Now let us each in turn
Tell who we'd rather be
Of all the folks that's in our books."
(Of course, we wouldn't want their looks.)
Bess wished that she'd been Betsy Ross,
The first to make the flag.
She said, "I'd like to so some deed
To make the people brag,
And have the papers print my name,—
If colored girls could rise to fame."
An' I stood out for Roosevelt;
I wished to be like him.
Then Bess said, "We both had our say,
Now tell who you'd be, Jim."

Annette Brown, "The Wishing Game," *The Brownies' Book*, 1, no. 1 (January 1920), 7.

Jim never thinks like me or Bess,
He knows more than us both, I guess.
He said, "I'd be a Paul Dunbar
Or Booker Washington.
The folks you named were good, I know,
But you see, Tom, each one
Of these two men I'd wish to be
Were colored boys, like you and me.
Sojourner Truth was colored, Bess,
And Phyllis Wheatley, too;
Their names will live like Betsy Ross,
Though they were dark like you."
Jim's read of 'em somewhere, I guess,
He knows heaps more than me or Bess.

2. Carter G. Woodson on His Goals for Black History, 1922

We have a wonderful history behind us. We of the *Journal of Negro History* shall have going the rounds soon a lecture on the ante-bellum period, setting forth the stories of Negroes who did so much to inspire us. It reads like the history of people in an heroic age. We expect to send out from time to time books written for the express purpose of showing you that you have a history, a record, behind you. If you are unable to demonstrate to the world that you have this record, the world will say to you, "You are not worthy to enjoy the blessings of democracy or anything else." They will say to you, "Who are you, anyway? Your ancestors have never controlled empires or kingdoms and most of your race have contributed little or nothing to science and philosophy and mathematics." So far as you know, they have not; but if you will read the history of Africa, the history of your ancestors—people of whom you should feel proud—you will realize that they have a history that is worth while. They have traditions that have value of which you can boast and upon which you can base a claim for a right to a share in the blessings of democracy.

Let us, then, study this history, and study it with the understanding that we are not, after all, an inferior people, but simply a people who have been set back, a people whose progress has been impeded. We are going back to that beautiful history and it is going to inspire us to greater achievements. It is not going to be long before we can so sing the story to the outside world as to convince it of the value of our history and our traditions, and then we are going to be recognized as men.

Carter G. Woodson, "Some Things Negroes Need to Do," *Southern Workman*, 51 (January 1922), 33–36.

3. Arthur (Arturo) Schomburg Provides a History of Black Achievement, 1925

THE American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future. Though it is orthodox to think of America as the one country where it is unnecessary to have a past, what is a luxury for the nation as a whole becomes a prime social necessity for the Negro. For him, a group tradition must supply compensation for persecution, and pride of race the antidote for prejudice. History must restore what slavery took away, for it is the social damage of slavery that the present generations must repair and offset. So among the rising democratic millions we find the Negro thinking more collectively, more retrospectively than the rest, and apt out of the very pressure of the present to become the most enthusiastic antiquarian of them all.

Vindicating evidences of individual achievement have as a matter of fact been gathered and treasured for over a century: Abbé Gregoire's liberal-minded book on Negro notables in 1808 was the pioneer effort; it has been followed at intervals by less-known and often less discriminating compendiums of exceptional men and women of African stock, But this sort of thing was on the whole pathetically over-corrective, ridiculously over-laudatory; it was apologetics turned into biography. A true historical sense develops slowly and with difficulty under such circumstances. But today, even if for the ultimate purpose of group justification, history has become less a matter of argument and more . a matter of record. There is the definite desire and determination to have a history, well documented, widely known at least within race circles, and administered as a stimulating and inspiring tradition for the coming generations.

Gradually as the study of the Negro's past has come out of the vagaries of rhetoric and propaganda and become systematic and scientific, three outstanding conclusions have been established:

First, that the Negro has been throughout the centuries of controversy an active collaborator, and often a pioneer, in the struggle for his own freedom and advancement. This is true to a degree which makes it the more surprising that it has not been recognized earlier.

Second, that by virtue of their being regarded as something "exceptional," even by friends and well-wishers, Negroes of attainment and genius have been unfairly disassociated from the group, and group credit lost accordingly.

Third, that the remote racial origins of the Negro, far from being what the race and the world have been given to understand, offer a record of creditable group achievement when scientifically viewed, and more important still, that they are of vital general interest because of their bearing upon the beginnings and early development of culture.

With such crucial truths to document and establish, an ounce of fact is worth a pound of controversy. So the Negro historian today digs under the spot where his predecessor stood and argued. Not long ago, the Public Library

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Arturo A. Schomburg, "The Negro Digs Up His Past," *Survey Graphic*, 6, no. 6 (March 1925), 670–672.

of Harlem housed a special exhibition of books, pamphlets, prints and old engravings, that simply said, to sceptic and believer alike, to scholar and schoolchild, to proud black and astonished white, "Here is the evidence." Assembled from the rapidly growing collections of the leading Negro book- collectors and research societies, there were in these cases, materials not only for the first true writing of Negro history, but for the rewriting of many important paragraphs of our common American history. Slow though it be, historical truth is no exception to the proverb.

Here among the rarities of early Negro Americana was Jupiter Hammon's Address to the Negroes of the State of New York, edition of 1787, with the first American Negro poet's famous "If we should ever get to Heaven, we shall find nobody to reproach us for being black, or for being slaves." Here was Phillis Wheatley's Mss. poem of 1767 addressed to the students of Harvard, her spirited encomiums upon George Washington and the Revolutionary Cause, and John Marrant's St. John's Day eulogy to the 'Brothers of African Lodge No. 459' delivered at Boston in 1784. Here too were Lemuel Haynes' Vermont commentaries on the American Revolution and his learned sermons to his white congregation in Rutland, Vermont, and the sermons of the year 1808 by the Rev. Absalom Jones of St. Thomas Church, Philadelphia, and Peter Williams of St. Philip's, New York, pioneer Episcopal rectors who spoke out in daring and influential ways on the Abolition of the Slave Trade. Such things and many others are more than mere items of curiosity: they educate any receptive mind.

Reinforcing these were still rarer items of Africana and foreign Negro interest, the volumes of Juan Latino, the best Latinist of Spain in the reign of Philip V, incumbent of the chair of Poetry at the University of Granada, and author of Poems printed Granatae 1573 and a book on the Escurial published 1576; the Latin and Dutch treatises of Jacobus Eliza Capitein, a native of West Coast Africa and graduate of the University of Leyden, Gustavus Vassa's celebrated autobiography that supplied so much of the evidence in 1796 for Granville Sharpe's attack on slavery in the British colonies, Julien Raymond's Paris exposé of the disabilities of the free people of color in the then (1791) French colony of Hayti, and Baron de Vastey's Cry of the Fatherland, the famous polemic .by the secretary of Christophe that precipitated the Haytian struggle for independence. The cumulative effect of such evidences of scholarship and moral prowess is too weighty to be dismissed as exceptional.

But weightier surely than any evidence of individual talent and scholarship could ever be, is the evidence of important collaboration and significant pioneer initiative in social service and reform, in the efforts toward race emancipation, colonization and race betterment. From neglected and rust-spotted pages comes testimony to the black men and women who stood shoulder to shoulder in courage and zeal, and often on a parity of intelligence and public talent, with their notable white benefactors. There was the already cited work of Vassa that aided so materially the efforts of Granville Sharpe, the record of Paul Cuffee, the Negro colonization pioneer, associated so importantly with the establishment of Sierra Leone as a British colony for the occupancy of free people of color in West Africa; the dramatic and history-making exposé of John Baptist Phillips,

African graduate of Edinburgh, who compelled through Lord Bathhurst in 1824 the enforcement of the articles of capitulation guaranteeing freedom to the blacks of Trinidad. There is the record of the pioneer colonization project of Rev. Daniel Coker in conducting a voyage of ninety expatriates to West Africa in 1820, of the missionary efforts of Samuel Crowther in Sierra Leone, first Anglican bishop of his diocese, and that of the work of John Russwurm, a leader in the work and foundation of the American Colonization Society.

When we consider the facts, certain chapters of American history will have to be reopened. Just as black men were influential factors in the campaign against the slave trade, so they were among the earliest instigators of the abolition movement. Indeed there was a dangerous calm between the agitation for the suppression of the slave trade and the beginning of the campaign for emancipation. During that interval colored men were very influential in arousing the attention of public men who in turn aroused the conscience of the country. Continuously between 1808 and 1845, men like Prince Saunders, Peter Williams, Absalom Jones, Nathaniel Paul, and Bishops Varick and Richard Allen, the founders of the two wings of African Methodism, spoke out with force and initiative, and men like Denmark Vesey (1822), David Walker (1828) and Nat Turner (1831) advocated and organized schemes for direct action. This culminated in the generally ignored but important conventions of Free People of Color in New York, Philadelphia and other centers, whose platforms and efforts are to the Negro of as great significance as the nationally cherished memories of Faneuil and Independence Halls. Then with Abolition comes the better documented and more_ recognized collaboration of Samuel R. Ward, William Wells Brown, Henry Highland Garnett, Martin Delaney, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Frederick Douglass with their great colleagues, Tappan, Phillips, Sumner, Mott, Stowe and Garrison.

But even this latter group who came within the limelight of national and international notice, and thus into open comparison with the best minds of their generation, the public too often regards as a group of inspired illiterates, eloquent echoes of their Abolitionist sponsors. For a true estimate of their ability and scholarship, however, one must go with the antiquarian to the files of the Anglo-African Magazine, where page by page comparisons may be made. Their writings show Douglass, McCune Smith, Wells Brown, Delaney, Wilmot Blyden and Alexander Crummell to have been as scholarly and versatile as any of the noted publicists with whom they were associated. All of them labored internationally in the cause of their fellows; to Scotland, England, France, Germany and Africa, they carried their brilliant offensive of debate and propaganda, and with this came instance upon instance of signal foreign recognition, from academic, scientific, public and official sources. Delaney's Principia of Ethnology won public reception from learned societies, Penington's discourses an honorary doctorate from Heidelberg, Wells Brown's three years mission the entree of the salons of London and Paris, and Douglass' tours receptions second only to Henry Ward Beecher's.

After this great era of public interest and discussion, it was Alexander Crummell, who, with the reaction already setting in, first organized Negro brains

defensively through the founding of the American Negro Academy in 1874 at Washington. A New York boy whose zeal for education had suffered a rude shock when refused admission to the Episcopal Seminary by Bishop Onderdonk, he had been befriended by John Jay and sent to Cambridge University, England, for'his education and ordination. On his return, he was beset with the idea of promoting race scholarship, and the Academy was the final result. It has continued ever since to be one of the bulwarks of our intellectual life, though unfortunately its members have had to spend too much of their energy and effort answering detractors and disproving popular fallacies. Only gradually have the men of this group been able to work toward pure scholarship. Taking a slightly different start, The Negro Society for Historical Research was later organized in New York, and has succeeded in stimulating the collection from all parts of the world of books and documents dealing with the Negro. It has also brought together for the first time cooperatively in a single society African, West Indian and Afro-American scholars. Direct offshoots of this same effort are the extensive private collections of Henry P. Slaughter of Washington, the Rev. Charles D. Martin of Harlem, of Arthur Schomburg of Brooklyn, and of the late John E. Bruce, who was the enthusiastic and far-seeing pioneer of this movement. Finally and more recently, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History has extended these efforts into a scientific research project of great achievement and promise. Under the direction of Dr. Carter G. Woodson, it has continuously maintained for nine years the publication of the learned quarterly, The Journal of Negro History, and with the assistance and recognition of two large educational foundations has maintained research and published valuable monographs in Negro history. Almost keeping pace with the work of scholarship has been the effort to popularize the results, and to place before Negro youth in the schools the true story of race vicissitude, struggle and accomplishment. So that quite largely now the ambition of Negro youth can be nourished on its own milk.

Such work is a far cry from the puerile controversy and petty braggadocio with which the effort for race history first started. But a general as well as a racial lesson has been learned. We seem lately to have come at last to realize what the truly scientific attitude requires, and to see that the race issue has been a plague on both our historical houses, and that history cannot be properly written with either bias or counter-bias. The blatant Caucasian racialist with his theories and assumptions of race superiority and dominance has in turn bred his Ethiopian counterpart—the rash and rabid amateur who has glibly tried to prove half of the world's geniuses to have been Negroes and to trace the pedigree of nineteenth century Americans from the Queen of Sheba. But fortunately today there is on both sides of a really common cause less of the sand of controversy and more of the dust of digging.

Of course, a racial motive remains—legitimately compatible with scientific method and aim. The work our race students now regard as important, they undertake very naturally to overcome in part certain handicaps of disparagement and omission too well-known to particularize. But they do so not merely that we may not wrongfully be deprived of the spiritual nourishment of our cultural past, but also that the full story of human collaboration and interdependence may

be told and realized. Especially is this likely to be the effect of the latest and most fascinating of all of the attempts to open up the closed Negro past, namely the important study of African cultural origins and sources. The bigotry of civilization which is the taproot of intellectual prejudice begins far back and must be corrected at its source. Fundamentally it has come about from that depreciation of Africa which has sprung up from ignorance of her true role and position in human history and the early development of culture. The Negro has been a man without a history because he has been considered a man without a worthy culture. But a new notion of the cultural attainment and potentialities of the African stocks has recently come about, partly through the corrective influence of the more scientific study of African institutions and early cultural history, partly through growing appreciation of the skill and beauty and in many cases the historical priority of the African native crafts, and finally through the signal recognition which first in France and Germany, but now very generally the astonishing art of the African sculptures has received. Into these fascinating new vistas, with limited horizons lifting in all directions, the mind of the Negro has leapt forward faster than the slow clearings of scholarship will yet safely permit. But there is no doubt that here is a field full of the most intriguing and inspiring possibilities. Already the Negro sees himself against a reclaimed background, in a perspective that will give pride and self-respect ample scope, and make history yield for him the same values that the treasured past of any people affords.

4. Mary McLeod Bethune on the Contributions and Objectives of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1935

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen: I count myself greatly privileged to greet you personally on this your Twentieth Anniversary. I stand tonight in the presence of truth seekers, truth seekers not only, but interpreters of truth and disseminators of truth. This, I believe, is the supreme contribution of this Association to our day and generation—the discovery, the interpretation and the dissemination of truth in the field of Negro life—truth, scientifically arrived at, critically interpreted and universally disseminated….

One outcome of scientific research and investigation in the field of Negro life and history is knowledge. A vast portion of social knowledge and information is shrouded in tradition, is not recorded in books and magazines; nevertheless it exists, and extends far back into the hoary past. As a result of the work of this Association we are securing knowledge and information that is characterized by its clarity—information that is objective and precise, information that is relevant in the field of Negro life and history. The life struggles of Negro men and women have been chronicled by the Association, and their achievements emphasized…. The struggles and victories of these men and women under

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Mary McLeod Bethune, "The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History: Its Contribution to Our Modern Life," *The Journal of Negro History*, 20, no. 4 (October 1935), 406–410.

adverse circumstances have stirred us to activity in a way that the exploits of fictitious characters could never have done….

But knowledge or information in and of itself is not power, is not progress. Progress in the knowledge of Negro life and history is in the hands of the interpreter as well as in the hands of the investigator or discoverer. Already we have an ample supply of investigators, but it appears to me that there is a shortage of readable and responsible interpreters, men and women who can effectively play the role of mediator between the trained investigator and the masses….

… It is in this field of interpretation, I think, that the major work of this Association lies for the next few years. The task of interpreting Negro thought, Negro achievement, Negro accomplishment, Negro culture patterns to the great masses of Negroes themselves, first, and ultimately, to their white brethren….

The temptation of the scholar is to keep the new truth he finds stacked in the warehouse. It shocks his sense of scholarly dignity to see his discoveries hawked in the market place by the popularizer. But the social usefulness of scholarship and its findings depends upon its translation into the common tongue…. We must have the popularizer to stand between the masses whose knowledge of things is indefinite and the research worker whose knowledge is authoritative….

… In brief, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History has pioneered in advancing knowledge in field of Negro history accumulating a fund of factual material, useful as a basis for thinking and action, useful as an integrating and synthesizing agency in promoting racial solidarity and cohesiveness, useful in helping to mould viewpoints, wholesome personal and social philosophies—national goodwill.

5. John Hope Franklin Explains the Lonely Dilemma of the American Negro Scholar, 1963

… The dilemmas and problems of the Negro scholar are numerous and complex. He has been forced, first of all, to establish his claim to being a scholar, and he has had somehow to seek recognition in the general world of scholarship. This has not been an easy or simple task, for, at the very time when American scholarship in general was making its claim to recognition, it was denying that Negroes were capable of being scholars. Few Americans, even those who advocated a measure of political equality, subscribed to the view that Negroes—any Negroes—had the ability to think either abstractly or concretely or to assimilate ideas that had been formulated by others. As late as the closing years of the nineteenth century it was difficult to find any white persons in the labor or business community, in the pulpit or on the platform, in the field of letters or in the field of scholarship, who thought it possible that a Negro could join the select company of scholars in America.

John Hope Franklin, "The Dilemma of the American Negro Scholar," in *Race and History: Selected Essays* 1938–1988 (Louisiana State University Press, 1990). Reprinted by permission.

The Negro, then, first of all had to struggle against the forces and personalities in American life that insisted that he could never rise in the intellectual sphere….

… The world of the Negro scholar is indescribably lonely; and he must, somehow, pursue truth down that lonely path while, at the same time, making certain that his conclusions are sanctioned by universal standards developed and maintained by those who frequently do not even recognize him. Imagine the plight of a Negro historian trying to do research in archives in the South operated by people who cannot conceive that a Negro has the capacity to use the materials there. I well recall my first visit to the State Department of Archives and History in North Carolina, which was presided over by a man with a Ph. D. in history from Yale. My arrival created a panic and an emergency among the administrators that was, itself, an incident of historic proportions. The archivist frankly informed me that I was the first Negro who had sought to use the facilities there; and as the architect who designed the building had not anticipated such a situation, my use of the manuscripts and other materials would have to be postponed for several days, during which time one of the exhibition rooms would be converted to a reading room for me….

Many years later, in 1951, while working at the Library of Congress, one of my closest friends, a white historian, came by my study room one Friday afternoon and asked me to lunch with him the following day. I reminded him that since the following day would be a Saturday, the Supreme Court restaurant would be closed, and there was no other place in the vicinity where we could eat together. (This was before the decision in the Thompson restaurant case in April 1953, which opened Washington restaurants to all well-behaved persons.) My friend pointed out that he knew I spent Saturdays at the Library, and he wondered what I did for food on those days. I told him that I seldom missed a Saturday of research and writing at the Library of Congress, by that my program for that day was a bit different from other days. On Saturdays, I told him, I ate a huge late breakfast at home and then brought a piece of fruit or candy to the Library, which I would eat at the lunch hour. Then, when I could bear the hunger no longer during the afternoon, I would leave and go home to an early dinner. His only remark was that he doubted very much whether, if he were a Negro, he would be a scholar, if it required sacrifices such as this and if life was as inconvenient as it appeared. I assured him that for a Negro scholar searching for truth, the search for food in the city of Washington was one of the *minor* inconveniences….

6. Vincent Harding on the Differences between Negro History and Black History, 1971

… [M]uch of the story of Negro History is told [in] its attempt to reveal the "contributions" of blacks to the American saga; its emphasis on black heroism

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Vincent Harding, "Beyond Chaos: Black History and the Search for the New Land."
Reprinted by permission from the Estate of Vincent Harding.

in the wars; its call for racial pride and for continued struggle to enter the mainstream of American life; its claim to be primarily interested in objective truth, while writing history through tears….

Much of Negro History took this tack. It did not intend to threaten the established heroes or the basic values of America…. Rather it sought only to guarantee that the black presence was properly acknowledged, assuming that blackness could be contained within the confines of the American saga. It was an obvious parallel to the efforts to include a special minority of "ready" Negroes into an American society which would not be basically changed by their presence.

… Almost all of [the] proponents [of Black History] have come into their intellectual maturity under the tutelage of the fathers of Negro History, but unlike them we have lived most of our adult lives since 1954. We have lived through the politics of the sixties, through all of the promises and betrayals, through the discomfiting of the West….

We who write Black History cannot track our "bleeding countrymen through the widely scattered documents of American history" and still believe in America…. We cannot—do not wish to—write with detachment from the agonies of our people. We are not satisfied to have our story accepted into the American saga. We deal in redefinitions, in taking over, in moving to set our own vision upon the blindness of American historiography….

Black History does not seek to highlight the outstanding contributions of special black people to the life and times of America. Rather our emphasis is on exposure, disclosure, on reinterpretation of the entire American past…. [I]t is clear even now that the black past cannot be remade and clearly known without America's larger past being shaken at the foundations. While Negro History almost never questioned the basic goodness and greatness of American society, while it assumed its innate potential for improvement (provided it was ready to read additional volumes on Negro History), Black History has peeped a different card.

Black History suggests that the American past upon which so much hope has been built never really existed, and probably never will….

… Black History is clearly more than the study of exclusively black things, for since the days of our slavery we could not be understood in an exclusively black light. So that Black History which seeks to deal with America begins with its European heritage, assesses the "Rise of the West." It asks how much of this ascendancy came at the expense of the death and degradation of our fathers and other nonwhite peoples of the globe. When it is clear that the "greatness" of Europe was built under the shadow of our ancestors' deaths, how shall we view this Western world and its major child—America? Black History … is the exposure of the strange foundations of Western power….

Black History looks upon America with little of the affection and admiration which was obviously carried by our Negro History fathers. We look at the paradox of Black indentured-servitude/slavery being introduced into the colony of Virginia at the same time that the House of Burgesses came into being. So slavery and "representative government" were planted together…. From the

perspective of Black History, the greater freedom which was gained for local government in the English colonies actually turned out to be freedom to embed the slavery of our forefathers deep into freedom's soil. So we are forced to begin to ask whether it was ever freedom's soil.

… [B]lacks must read history with Indian eyes as well, and cannot fail to note that many of the New England "fathers" participated not only in the forced migration and decimation of the original inhabitants, but gave full strength to that trade in men which brought other dark men to these shores. The treatment received by both blacks and Indians cannot fail to shape the black approach to New England history….

Indeed Black History is forced to press on to ask about the meaning of America itself. (This raising of questions did not mark Negro History. Perhaps our fathers lived too close to the brutal experiences of black life to allow such a luxury.) When the spirit and institutions of the nation were so fully formed and defined by the leaders of Massachusetts and the rest of New England—slave traders on the one hand, slaveholders on the other—what indeed is the nation's meaning? Whose founding "fathers" were they, and what does their creation mean for the children of their slaves?

Black History is not satisfied with telling how many black men fought in the Revolutionary War. We are not among those who lift the banner of Crispus Attucks, for we are caught in painful dilemmas. While we recognize their heroism, we recognize too that a revolution which ended with more than 700,000 persons still in slavery was perhaps no revolution at all, but essentially a war among colonialist powers. So the children of the slaves who fought might better mourn rather than rejoice and celebrate, for it is likely that our fathers were no different than the millions of non-white pawns who have been pushed about by the military leaders of the colonizers for centuries. (And we save our energies and our wits for the exposing of this delusion and the encouraging of the heirs of the slaves to refuse to be pawns any longer.) In this way the experiences of our forefathers and the developments of this generation coalesce into a totally different reading of America than is usually known….

Such a reading of America presses us to ask whether it was ever a democracy, demands to know whether it is possible for a democracy to exist where one quarter of the population of the land is either in slavery or being steadily driven off its ancient grounds. Black History is not simply "soul food" and "soul music" as some of its misinterpreters have suggested. Black History is the history of the Black Experience in America, which is the history of black and white—and Indian—inextricably, painfully, rarely joyfully, entwined. So Black History explores Henry Adams concerning the American nation at the beginning of the nineteenth century and hears him say that America in 1800 was a healthy organism. Then in the same work we read that the one major problem in America in 1800 was "the cancer" of slavery. In that set of statements America is diagnosed for black eyes: Healthy—except for cancer.

Black History is the constant demand that the cancerous state of America be seen and known….

Black History cannot help but be politically oriented, for it tends toward the total redefinition of an experience which was highly political. Black History must be political, for it deals with the most political phenomenon of all—the struggle between the master and the slave, between the colonized and the colonizer, between the oppressed and the oppressor. And it recognizes that all histories of peoples participate in politics and are shaped by political and ideological views….

7. Lucille Clifton on the Nurturing of History, c. 1990

i am accused of tending to the past
as if i made it,
as if i sculpted it
with my own hands, i did not.
this past was waiting for me
when i came,
a monstrous unnamed baby,
and i took with my mother's itch
took it to breast
and named it
History.
she is more human now,
learning language everyday,
remembering faces, names and dates.
when she is strong enough to travel
on her own, beware she will.

8. James Oliver Horton, "Slavery in American History: An Uncomfortable National Dialogue"

History must be taught not only in the academy but in the variety of nonacademic settings where Americans go to learn. Here is where the role of the public historian, in charge of telling the complex and contradictory national story in public spaces, becomes crucial.

The history of slavery and its role in the formation of the American experiences is one of the most sensitive and difficult subjects to present in a public setting. At historic plantation sites and historic houses, in museum exhibitions, in film productions, and in historic parks, public historians and historical interpreters are called upon to deal with this unsettling but critical topic, often under less than ideal teaching conditions. Moreover, they are asked to educate a public generally unprepared and reluctant to deal with a history that, at times, can seem

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Excerpt from James Oliver Horton, "Slavery in American History: An Uncomfortable National Dialogue" in *Slavery and Public History*.

very personal. The recent historical scholarship and new interpretations have refocused attention on slavery and its significance for understanding the role of race in American history. As we debate the possibility of broad public discussions about race in contemporary America, historians can play a centrol role in providing historical context for this conversation. Obviously this is not easy, but it is essential. John Hope Franklin said it directly: "We should never forget to remind this country that there's an enormous gap between its practices and its professions."…

Public historians giving presentations on the history and impact of slavery on America and Americans immediately confront a daunting problem: the vast majority of Americans react strongly to the topic, but few know much about it. Generally, Americans believe that slavery was an exclusively southern phenomenon. They date it from the decades immediately preceding the Civil War, and think of it as a relatively minor part of the American story….

[T]he institution of slavery formed our understanding of race and has shaped the historical relationships between races in America. Even for recent immigrants, the history of slavery has relevance. It established a hierarchy of color into which people of varying shades are fitted. And it has defined the social, political and economic meaning of skin color within the American setting. The things Americans take for granted about race, those assumptions for which no explanation is required, those feelings of which they are barely conscious, are the products of a culture that slavery and efforts to justify it have shaped. It is not practical to believe that we can realistically address our society's most vital contemporary concerns about race while ignoring the institution that has been so central to American race relations. If we are to have meaningful conversations on race in contemporary society, we must do so within the context of history…. Difficult as it is, the discussion must start immediately, and historical scholars in the academy, in museums, and in historic parks and houses, wherever they do their work, care critical to the process. Theirs is the public historian's most difficult assignment.

ESSAY OVERVIEW

The academic field of African American history has its own history of creation and change over time. Historian Darlene Clark Hine traces the emergence of the field of African American women's history in the 1980s. Up to that time, most scholars focused on the lives of African American men and presented men's experiences as universal or representative. Of course, Hine notes, black women had a history but their history had not been extensively researched and considered on its own terms. Reflecting on her own family's history, Hine points to the continued social and political relevance of African American history.

What goals and ideals motivated young black scholars in the second half of the twentieth century? How did that generation of scholars change the field of African American history? Do you see connections between Hine's research

interests and the work of pioneering scholars such as W. E. B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, and Mary McLeod Bethune?

Becoming a Black Woman's Historian

DARLENE CLARK HINE

How did I become an African American women's historian? What were the strategies African American women historians deemed essential and effective in the launching of a field of intellectual inquiry that scarcely existed in the late 1960s and early 1970s? What were some of the major impediments to the development of black women's history? In my case, I must confess that I "learned on the job." In other words, never in the course of my undergraduate years at Roosevelt University in Chicago (1964–68) or during graduate training at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio (1968–74), did I have the pleasure or inclination to study black women's history. Did black women have a history? To be sure, a young dynamic cohort of East Coast-based black women graduate students were concentrating on the history of black women Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, Sharon Harley, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, and Bettye Collier-Thomas, to name a few, were quite advanced in their academic study of black women's history. Back then, however, this middle westerner firmly believed that to do—meaning research, write, and teach—African American history meant that I must focus on the more important experiences and exploits of black men. In other words, I did not question the implicit assumption of my teachers, all of whom were men, that whatever was said about black men applied with equal validity to black women, who apparently rarely, if ever, ventured beyond the domestic sphere. With the exception of Phillis Wheatley, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Tubman, black women were voiceless and faceless in history texts. To be sure, the black women's literary renaissance of the 1970s, which catapulted writers Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison into national prominence, and the arrest and trial of Angela Davis and run for presidential nomination of Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm brought black women national attention. Still, my lack of a nuanced and sophisticated feminist consciousness left me ill equipped to connect these contemporary women's creative expressions and political activism with a black past in which significance was gendered and raced black male and all women were considered marginal in intellectual matters.

In 1980, my ignorance of black women's unique and distinct history held little purchase against the fiercely determined Shirley Herd, president of the Indianapolis chapter of the National Council of Negro Women. Herd demanded that I write a history of black women in Indiana, and when I demurred, she, like Deborah Gray White, refused to take "No" for an answer, My work in collaboration with Indianapolis black women schoolteachers Shirley Herd and Virtea

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Downey and the members of the Indianapolis branch of the NCNW signaled the beginning of my transformation into a historian of black women. In 1993, were it not for the intellectual and material support of white male publisher Ralph Carlson, the encyclopedia of black women's history of which I am very proud, *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia* (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1993), would never have been prepared or published. Black women historians Elsa Barkley Brown and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn shared the immense co-editing labors involved in the creation and production of this two-volume reference work. The three-volume second edition published by Oxford University Press in 2005 benefited enormously from the expertise and energy of an advisory board consisting of Deborah Gray White, Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, Wilma King, Brenda Stevenson, Wanda Hendricks, Jacqueline McLeod, and Daina Ramey Berry. My co-author of *A Shining Thread of Hope: A History of Black Women in America* (New York: Random House, 1998), Kathleen Thompson, served on the editorial board while coordinating the work of assigning the biographical entries to hundreds of scholars and writers. Photo researcher Hilary "Mac" Austin did a splendid job of tracking the extraordinary images that adom and enrich the new edition. Each editor wrote numerous articlelength interpretative essays, making this the most definitive and comprehensive compilation in our field. As a student and professor in the American academy, I have been affected personally and professionally by the interconnection of race, class, region, and gender dynamics. Today's generation of young scholars readily employ analyses of these key concepts. They embrace and manipulate the theoretical concepts to construct frames essential to deepening understanding of the historical and present experiences, activities, and belief systems of America's black women. This essay separates easily into two parts: the first chronicles the early phase of my intellectual development and training as a historian, and the second focuses on the scholarly, theoretical, and popular historical writings and the archival and reference works produced to institutionalize the study of black women's history. Born on February 7, 1947, in Morley, Missouri, I spent my formative years living with my grandparents, Robert and Fannie Venerable Thompson, on their farm in villa Ridge, Illinois, an area referred to as Little Egypt. My parents, Levester and Lottie Mae Thompson Clark, had migrated to Chicago, where my father worked as a truck driver and my mother worked at home attending to my brother Orlando and younger sisters Barbara Ann and Alma Jean. The entire family made frequent visits to Villa Ridge to see me and the large extended family until I relocated to Chicago when I was to enter the third grade. It was my good fortune to spend every summer with my grandparents until age seventeen. These summers were such a wonderful gift of quiet time and solitude, full of hours of reading and listening to the stories told by my grandfather.

My grandparents left indelible impressions on my consciousness. A veteran of World War I, my grandfather recounted in vivid detail his exploits in the Great War and, with equal passion and dramatic effect, his encounters with white landowners in Mississippi. Arkansas, and Missouri. Grandfather and Grandmother had worked as sharecroppers for two decades before they were able to

purchase the farm in Villa Ridge. His abiding passion was land. He preached the virtue and necessity of landownership at every opportunity. His self-constructed masculinity and manhood were inextricably connected to landownership and armed resistance to any white encroachment on or threat to the family's land. Grandmother preached a different gospel, fervently espousing the importance of education. While Grandfather's often-repeated stories concerned white encroachment on his land, Grandmother vehemently asserted that education was the only thing that the white man could never take from you.

I was obsessed with my grandmother and shadowed her every move, listened to everything she said, and always tried to be her perfect grandchild. Although she had given birth to fifteen children, eleven of whom had survived, she treated me with special gentleness. I was the one to whom she would read her Bible, and in the evening before I got into bed between her and Grandfather, she would listen to me recite my prayers. I doubt that any of the other family members harbored envy of my "privileged" position in bed between Grandfather and Grandmother, but at least I was never cold.

Two memories, one about praying and the other about reading, linger still. My grandmother silently prayed after reading the Bible. One night, she remained in a kneeling position for such a long time that I thought she had fallen asleep. I made a mistake that I never repeated: I gently shook her shoulder and asked why she was taking so long. To my amazement, she was annoyed with me. She told me that I was never to interrupt her while she was talking to God. When I asked why, she explained that with a family as large as hers, it took a long time to pray for the souls of everyone. The other memory revolves around the Bible-reading sessions. I had enough sense not to ask Grandmother why she read from the Bible every night month after month and yet never seemed to be able to finish it. I was eager to learn how to read, as much for the sheer joy as for the prospect of helping Grandmother finish reading the Bible so we could move on to other books.

Reading, storytelling, hard work, education, family solidarity, religion, obedience, and landownership were the foundations of my belief system and the core values inculcated during a childhood and adolescence spent between rural and urban midwestem homes. My formal intellectual development began in high school (Crane on the West Side of Chicago) and escalated during undergraduate study at Roosevelt University in downtown Chicago. The civil rights and black power movements provided the more vivid and consequential background.

I was the valedictorian of my high school graduating class (1964), and my address was entitled "Education Is the Key to the Door of Opportunity." Roosevelt University granted me a full scholarship, as it did to all valedictorians of the area's high schools. The topic of my address and my choice of biology as a major reflected Grandmother's teachings and the influence of my Uncle Dennis Perry, a professor of microbiology at Northwestern University Medical School. Uncle Dennis and Aunt Fannie (my mother's sister) lived upstairs in the family compound. Throughout my high school years, Uncle Dennis worked with me on various science fair projects and was especially generous with help on algebra, geometry, and trigonometry problems. His interests became my own, and I

was determined to become a biological scientist. I admired the precision, silence, and relentless quest for answers that science and Uncle Dennis represented. Within a year of entering Roosevelt, however, I had abandoned dreams of test tubes and embraced history. The civil rights movement was in full throttle, and I was at a loss to explain, much less understand, why African Americans were angry and white Americans seemed so scared.

My first year in college was full of transitions, the most profound of which was personal. On August 10, 1965, I gave birth to an adorable baby girl, Robbie Davine. My family, especially my mother, was understandably upset with me, all the more so because I refused to marry my baby's father. Unmarried motherhood was not respectable or acceptable. Only the timely and welcome intervention of my grandmother dispelled the tension. She advised my mother to take care of Robbie and suggested to me that I eschew further childbearing and concentrate on completing my education. Now that we all had our respective instructions and since Robbie was such a beautiful and joyful child whose presence enriched our family, I pursued knowledge with a strong motivation that everyone, except my father and grandmother, found difficult to understand. Even with her father's support, I realized that I would have to provide for Robbie and help my family in the years ahead. When I went away to graduate school, I left Robbie in the care of my parents, just as they had left me with my grandparents when they migrated to Chicago in the early 1950s. (Fast forward: A graduate of Indiana University in Bloomington, Robbie earned a master's degree in organizational psychology at Roosevelt University, specializing in human resources. Robbie was promoted to second vice president of Northern Bank and Trust in Chicago, then was quickly recruited to work at People's Energy. I admire her integrity, humor, and impressive skills as a computer systems designer and analyst. She also somehow finds the time to be a caring and generous godmother to three young girls. When her father died in 2000, I delivered the eulogy at his funeral.)

The years between 1965 and 1970 were spent in search of understanding the "multiple dualities" of identity. I embraced an internal agenda to learn who I was and to find a way to fit into the world, especially intellectually. I had to discover the talents and gifts I possessed in order to develop them so as to make a contribution to society and earn a living. There were few role models of public black women who commanded respect in the academy or in most arenas, with the exception of popular music. There was always Aretha Franklin and Mahalia Jackson! My mother and aunts all believed that teaching, nursing, and social work were respectable professions that, when combined with marriage and family, made for a good life and the epitome of personal fulfillment. The larger society stereotyped black women either as welfare queens and matriarchs responsible for the "breakdown" of the family or as superreligious, mindless followers of black ministers. Therefore, it was very important for women in my family to be circumspect. The men in my family seemed to possess a larger array of professional role models and opportunities. While they universally applauded the successful entrepreneur, they also imagined themselves capable of becoming doctors, lawyers, musicians, and, most important, property owners. I wanted to roam in their

dreamscape. Why did men have more of everything than women? I became a close observer of male behavior, of how men are represented in the larger society and how they fashion positive identities for themselves. The civil rights and black power movements framed the 1960s and the 1970s and provided me ample opportunity to study and learn about black men, including, for example, Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, and Eldridge Cleaver. During an era rampant with negative images and caricatures of black men as lazy, clownish, or hypermasculine, these real-life black men were a powerful antidote. These leaders were vibrant, captivating, occasionally perplexing representatives of black manhood.

Articulate, handsome, fiercely self-conscious freedom fighters, these men garnered massive media coverage with their demands for black political rights, education and economic opportunities, and curricular transformation in colleges and universities. The fear they engendered among some white Americans was as palpable as the anger that pulsated in black communities across the continent. The tumultuous sixties with the Watts Riot, the assassinations of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr., and the urban rebellions in Chicago, Detroit, Newark, and Washington, D.C., inflamed my desire for understanding. Why were these things happening?

I decided to become a historian, to study the past to understand the relations between black and white people and the meaning of the strange phenomenon of racism and race. Science had taught me that there was only one race, the human race, and I knew that skin, regardless of color or shade, was a biological organ with a specific function and as such was neither good nor bad. Skin protected the body from disease and injury. Thus, the social, cultural, and political meanings of race and practice of racism must have been constructed in the past. History, therefore, as opposed to biology, seemed most likely to hold the key to understanding this American dilemma.

To be sure, before making the change from biology to history I met with an academic counselor. During the course of our conversation about my major, he asked me what subject I performed well in with minimum effort: "What subject do you receive the highest grades in without trying too hard?" That was easy—history. He speculated that I probably could do even better if I concentrated my effort. So history became my major, with a minor in English. I enrolled in a series of courses, gravitating to those taught by African American professors, including historian Hollis Lynch and linguist Lorenzo Dow Turner. I made a point of taking a wide range of history courses to acquire familiarity with English history, Russian history, and African history. I augmented my formal course work by attending all, or as many as my schedule allowed, the public lectures of sociologist St. Clair Drake, University of Chicago historian John Hope Franklin, editor of *Ebony* Lerone Bennett, and political scientist Charles V. Hamilton. I took careful notes and read the books they authored or mentioned.

One of my great good fortunes was to secure a work-study assignment in the Roosevelt University Library, where I helped to process new books and to return volumes to the stacks. It was white thus employed that I discovered and read the works of many black male scholars, three of whom would make lasting

impressions: Carter G. Woodson, the father of African American history; W. E. B. Du Bois, the founder of modern American sociology; and Booker T. Washington. Woodson once said, and here I am paraphrasing, that every person is entitled to two educations, one that he receives in formal institutional settings and one, even more important than the first, that he gives to himself. It was such a simple declaration, one that I internalized. Woodson's most popular polemic, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933), drove home his message about the necessity for self-education when living in a racist society. I reckoned that I owed it to myself to acquire the best possible self-education and resolved to never stop learning as long as there was a degree to be had.

W. E. B. Du Bois's most often quoted passage about "double consciousness" resonated as much as Woodson's exhortation to self-educate. I committed to memory Du Bois's observation in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903): "It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity." Du Bois insisted that he simply wanted to ensure the possibility that a man could be both a Negro and an American "without being cursed and spit on by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face." At this stage in my development, I recall that what I most appreciated about Du Bois was his language. The final member of my intellectual male trio was Booker T. Washington, whom I admired for his successful development of Tuskegee Institute as a major educational center and community resource during the formative years of Jim Crow racial segregation.

When I wasn't reading history or academic texts, as part of my self-education I read the novels, essays, and autobiographical writings of Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, and James Baldwin. The titles of their books give some indication of the depth of masculine preoccupation: *Native Son* (1940); *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth* (1945); *Invisible Man* (1952); and *Notes of a Native Son* (1963). At the insistence of fellow male students, I read John A. Williams's *The Man Who Cried I Am: A Novel* (1967); Sam Greenlee's *The Spook Who Sat by the Door: A Novel* (1969); Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* (1965); and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965). The artists, musicians, and community activists with whom I became friends introduced me to the music of John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and Pharoah Sanders, and I developed an abiding appreciation for the drawings and paintings of visual artists Murry N. DePillars, Jeff Donaldson, and John Lockart.

Perhaps I am being too hard on myself, but the point is that I was oblivious to the lack of attention that I and others paid to black women's experiences. By the time I left Chicago for Kent, Ohio, my sharpened black masculine consciousness mirrored the academic world. My woefully deficient feminist perspective remained underdeveloped as I studied under the guidance of August Meler *(Negro Thought in America, 1880–1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963]) and the other professors, all white males with the exception of African historian Felix Ekechle, at Kent State. Intense course work left little time for general reading. Meier, a demanding major professor, leaned heavily on me to master the historiography,

to carry my weight in seminar discussions, and to get the facts right and always prepare perfect footnotes. There were only a couple of black male students in the program. Christopher Robert Reed was there with his family until he completed his course work. John Bracey, whom I had met in the library at Roosevelt University, came to Kent occasionally to work with Meier on editing projects. I returned home as often as possible to visit Robbie and my family. I became close friends with one of the white students who, on leave from his teaching position at South Carolina State College, a historically black school in Orangeburg, South Carolina, arrived in 1969 to study with Meier. I did not know that William C. Hine had witnessed the Orangeburg Massacre until we stood next to each other on the grassy hill that fateful day, May 4, 1970, when the Ohio National Guard killed four students just as the South Carolina state troopers had done two years earlier at State College. In August 1970, William and I were married. What happened? I reached the point at which I would never judge another human being on the basis of skin color, hair texture, or facial features. In the aftermath of the South Carolina State College and Kent State University state-sanctioned carriage, I knew that the internal qualities of goodness and commitment to help others live better lives were what mattered. In 1972, I accompanied William back to what was later renamed South Carolina State University, where I was appointed an assistant professor of history and coordinator of African American studies. Teaching five courses that attracted large numbers of students and working on a dissertation was fun but more than a little taxing. In 1974, I accepted an offer to join the history department at Purdue University. It was here that I met and became friends with a colleague, Harold D. Woodman, who became my mentor. Woodman was especially helpful when I was searching for a publisher for my first book.

I recall that selecting a dissertation topic had been a challenge. Through a process of elimination of my suggestions of a biography of T. Thomas Fortune or a history of the Black Populist Party movement in the Middle West, August Meier and I agreed that I would write a history of the NAACP'S legal struggle to persuade the U.S. Supreme Court to declare unconstitutional the Democratic Party's white-primary disfranchisement laws. At the time, Meier and Elliott Rudwick were researching a history of the NAACP, so this topic was of considerable interest to him. In the one-party South, the most important elections were the Democratic Party's primaries. Membership in the Democratic Party was a prerequisite to voting in its primaries, and only white people could become members. General elections merely rubber-stamped the choices that the electorate determined in the primaries. Black men and women excluded from participating in the primaries remained politically powerless. In a series of U.S. Supreme Court cases beginning in the 1920s, black members of local Texas chapters of the NAACP developed test cases later argued by national NAACP attorneys that challenged the constitutionality of this blatant disfranchisement strategy. In 1944, in the case of *Smith v. Allwright*, the Supreme Court declared the while primary unconstitutional. The Democratic Party was not a private organization, like the Masons or Odd Fellows, and it did not have the right to restrict membership, with the attendant privilege of voting in primaries, to

whites. The decision paved the way for millions of African Americans to vote, but it would take a civil rights movement to make suffrage a reality.

The point to underscore here is that in my dissertation I omitted meaningful discussion or black women's involvement in the campaign to overthrow the white primary. I would later revise the dissertation while working toward tenure and promotion in the Department of History at Purdue University, and still leave them in the shadows. I spent a lot of time in Texas researching this study and focused exclusively on the activities of male leaders. When I encountered documents that revealed the massive community mobilization and fund-raising work of black women, I put them aside. Because I possessed no framework or perspective from which to evaluate or interpret the significance of their efforts to the success of the larger objective, I left black women on the periphery. Two decades after *Black Victory: The Rise and Fall of the White Primary in Texas* (New York: Kraus Thomson Publishers, 1979) appeared, a black woman historian at Texas Southern University, Mertine Pitre, would write a splendid biography of Lulu White *(In Struggle against Jim Crow: Lulu B. White and the NAACP, 1900–1957* [College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999]) and thus give voice to this amazing black woman.

Throughout the 1970s, I was consumed by a desire to master the historian's craft. Meier was equally as determined that my dissertation reflect thorough research, logical arguments, and perfect footnotes. While I learned how to do history, it never occurred to me to question him about the absence of black women, and thus I, as is probably the case with most historians-in-training, wrote history that reflected my training. Little did I anticipate the drastic shift that my scholarship would take after my dissertation was published and I achieved tenure at Purdue University.

When I joined the Purdue history department, I was the only black historian and one of only a few black women professors on campus. Thus, when two women graduate students, Thavolia Glymph and Kate Wittenstein, asked me to teach a reading seminar in black women's history in 1978, I agreed only on the condition that they help identify the books to be read and discussed. I fully anticipated that they would not be able to find enough books and was surprised when they selected Anna Julia Cooper's *A Voice from the South* as our first text. From there we read Gerda Lemer's *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Pantheon, 1972); Harriet Jacobs's autobiography. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*, edited by L. Maria Child (1861); and some works of fiction. We also read the first anthology of scholarly essays written by young black women historians. *The Afro-American Woman. Struggles and Images* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1978), edited by Rosalyn Terborg-Penn and Sharon Harley. In short, Kate, Thavolia, and I taught each other Kate (now a professor at Gustavus Adolphus College), who had prepared a research paper on plantation mistresses, submitted a panel proposal that was accepted by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. When it proved impossible for Thavolia (now a professor at Duke University) to present her paper, I was asked to pinch-hit and within an incredibly short period to prepare a paper I had read the contemporary slavery

studies and decided to address the largely omitted experiences of slave women who struggled to control their reproduction through the use of abortion, abstinence, and infanticide. What I intended to be a food-for-thought piece aroused the ire of many black male historians who chastised me for suggesting that black women would ever engage in such behavior. Undaunted, Kate and I revised the essay and published it in Filomina Steady's *Black Woman Cross-Culturally* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1981). Kate went on to Boston University to pursue her doctoral degree.

It was the August 1980 request of Shirley Herd, president of the Indianapolis chapter of the National Council of Negro Women, that I write a history of black women in Indiana that forced me to use my professional training to think seriously about black women as historical subjects. Initially, I had tried to convince Herd that her request exceeded my expertise and that the absence of abundant documentation made it impossible to write a creditable history of black women in any state. Herd and her best friend, Virtea Downey, both teachers in the Indianapolis public schools, overcame my objections by delivering to my house a roomful of boxes containing every conceivable type of primary document that Illuminated the multilayered dimensions of black women's lives in the Hoosier state. Acting under the directive of Dorothy Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women, each group of state officers had been challenged to prepare its own history. Herd, Downey, and other members had begun collecting the paper records of hundreds of black women. By 1980, they had determined that I was the only black woman historian in the state of Indiana, so they had decided to approach me. I spent six months reviewing the materials they had collected and then wrote the pamphlet *When the Truth Is Told: Black Women's Culture and Community in Indiana* (Indianapolis: National Council of Negro Women, 1981). Later in the year, I published an essay entitled "Lifting the Veil, Shattering the Silence: Black Women's History in Slavery and Freedom" in my edited volume *The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986).

It was while working with Herd and Downey on the Indiana black women's history study that I began to fully appreciate the rich legacy of community-building work of black women. I was enthralled by the entrepreneurial genius of Madam C. J. Walker as she made her fortune manufacturing hair and beauty products and training and inspiring thousands of black women to join her sales force and acquire economic autonomy. (I wrote an essay entitled "Booker T. Washington and Madam C. J. Walker" in my book *Speak Truth to Power: Black Professional Class in United States History* [New York: Carlson Publishing, 1996].) When I learned that the materials they had collected had been returned to their owners, I invited Herd and Downey to join me in creating a permanent archive of sources on black women. This collaborative effort became the Black Women in the Middle West Project. With the assistance of white male historian Patrick Biddleman, an adjunct professor at Purdue, we developed a proposal and secured funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities to train black women to identify and facilitate the collection of primary sources in their communities that were deposited with the Indiana Historical Society and the

Chicago Historical Society. The NEH had stipulated that the funds be used to collect the records from black women in two states instead of the five we had proposed, so we decided to concentrate our efforts in Indiana and Illinois. My graduate student, Wanda Hendricks, would become the first to use these materials when she consulted them as the basis for her dissertation on the social and political history of black women in Illinois. Indiana University Press would later publish her book, *Gender, Race, and Politics in the Midwest: Black Club Women in Illinois* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

The need for a network of mentors was one of the impetuses for the creation of the Association of Black Women Historians under the leadership of Rosalyn Terborg-Penn and Eleanor Smith. I became the first editor of the association's publication, *Truth*, and used it to share news about job opportunities, fellowships, research projects, and the publications and activities of women in our field. The ABWH was also committed to recognizing the work of scholars in black women's history inasmuch as we knew that the larger profession still questioned its value. Jacqueline Jones's *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) would receive one of the earliest ABWH awards for the most significant book in black women's history published in a particular year. I was enormously impressed with Deborah Gray White's pioneering monograph on the history of enslaved women in the plantation South, her first book, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985). It was as if my essay on female slave resistance had been on the right track. White's work and that of Jacqueline Jones helped anchor the monographic foundation for this emerging field. My study of black women in the nursing profession further demonstrated the potential for research and study. By the end of the 1980s, there was no turning back. Black women's history was ready to explode.

In the early 1990s, I began thinking about theoretical frameworks. I had been reading the burgeoning production of black women novelists, catching up on all the works they had published while I had been engaged in the Black Women in the Middle West Project. I sought a way to connect the historical scholarship with the literary outpouring. This was the impetus for my writing the essay that has resonated across the years and influenced both black and white women historians. In a piece initially presented at the Southern Association of Women Historians convention at Converse College in Spartanburg, South Carolina, I historicized rape as a fundamental factor in black women's lives and analyzed their reaction to a legacy of sexual abuse, secrecy, and silence as a "culture of dissemblance." The essay has been reprinted several times and has generated a great deal of scholarship in the past two decades ("Rape and the Inner Lives of Southern Black Women: Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance," *Signs* 14, no 4 [Summer 1989]: 912–20).

Influenced by black women I met while working on various projects and lecturing to groups across the country, I became a black women's historian. The decisive moment came when I decided to shelve my project on the history of black men in the legal and medical professions and write instead a history of black women in the nursing profession. A timely fellowship at the National

Humanities Center facilitated the writing of what became *Black Women in White: Racial Conflict and Cooperation in the Nursing Profession, 1890–1950* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989). The book joined a growing list in the Blacks in the Diaspora Series that John McCluskey. Barry Gaspar, and I co-edited for Indiana University Press. Over the course of seventeen years, the series produced over forty titles, many of them tenure books by black women scholars writing on topics in black women's studies. I have always thought of my work on this series as one aspect of the larger objective to institutionalize black women's history. Many women historians and social science and literary scholars, such as Wanda Hendricks, Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, Irma Watkins-Owens, and Lillian Williams, published books in the Blacks in the Diaspora Series. By the time I joined the Department of History at Michigan State University in the fall of 1987 as the John A. Hannah Professor of History, my work in black women's history was attracting considerable attention both inside and outside the academy. The *New York Times* even published a story about the Black Women in the Middle West Project, as did the newsletters of several professional organizations. It would be inaccurate to suggest that there was widespread celebration. Some of my male historian colleagues still questioned the value of black women's history, deeming it a fad, a waste of time. Others may have deflected feelings of threat or fears of displacement with criticism of this new field. That male colleagues believed black women's history was in competition with black men's history deserved more analysis. Clearly any opposition reflected, to a degree, the underlying assumption that the only valid perspective was one that accepted men's rightful privilege to occupy the intellectual center of black life and thought. A white male colleague did suggest to me, as a friend, that I was committing professional suicide to switch from studying the white primary or male professionals to writing the history of the most marginalized people in America. He later apologized and admitted he had been wrong in making these comments.

I remained affiliated with Michigan State University for twenty years. During these two decades, I concentrated on the teaching and training of a generation of young historians, many of whom have published monographs based on their dissertations and all of whom have found positions as assistant professors in the ivory tower. Among the black women historians for whom I have served as major professor are Jacqueline McLeod, Carmen Harris, LaTrice Adkins, Chantalle Vema, Kennetta Hammond Perry, and Marshanda Smith (A.B.D.). The black men include Felix Armfield, Pero Dagbovie, Randal Jelks, Matthew Whitaker, John Grant, and one Japanese student, Yasuhiro Okada. I have served on scores of other committees of students of diverse ethnic backgrounds in history, literature, and the social sciences. Regardless of field of study. I impress upon the students the imperative to do exhaustive and meticulous research; engage the analytical constructions of race, gender, class, and region whenever possible; and, most important, prepare perfect footnotes. As their revised dissertations begin to appear as monographs, I feel vindicated.

Throughout the 1990s, while training graduate students. I had the good fortune of working with a white male publisher, Ralph Carlson, on two

projects that helped to cement the intellectual foundation of African American women's history. The first project was the editing of a sixteen-volume set of articles and dissertations, and the other was the co-editing of *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia.* The sixteen volumes included four dissertations in black women's history and studies by Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Dorothy Salem, Adrienne Lash Jones, and Beverly Johnson. Later in the decade, I co-edited with Duke University historian David Barry Gaspar two anthologies of original essays on enslaved and free black women in the Americas: *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996) and *Beyond Bondage: Free Women of Color in the Americas* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004). Finally, I co-edited with black women historians Wilma King and Linda Reed *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible": A Reader in Black Women's History* (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1995). I emphasize the edited works because I value collaboration and also because so much of what later appeared as monographs in African American women's history was first published in essay form. The anthologies make important developments in the evolution of this field accessible not only to an academic audience but also to a larger general population. Moreover, they are very effective for use in graduate seminars because they help teach students to engage in theoretical discourse and help identify topics that need elaboration.

I could not have imagined a more exciting and rewarding academic odyssey. It has been exhilarating to labor in the creation and development of a field of study that has reclaimed the histories of so many ignored, negatively stereotyped, and marginalized black women. The field of African American history has been invigorated by the questions asked and debated about the intersections of race, class, and gender in the inventions and reinventions of the complex multilayered identities of black women and men across time and place. Today we ask new questions about manhood, masculinity, and femininity and how they are constructed in relation to one another. The vitality of the field and the proliferation of fresh new studies show no signs of subsiding. Black women have moved from the margins to the center of intellectual discourse in the academy and do not intend to relinquish this ground or moment without taking full advantage of the opportunities now available to create new knowledge.

Black women's legacy is one that accords equal weight to service and sacrifice. I have embraced the lessons drawn from the lives of our amazingly resilient foremothers to challenge assumptions about who counts in American society and history and to rewrite the past. There is much more work to be done if we are to truly transform the ivory tower and make it a welcoming place for black women scholars and historians.

FURTHER READINGS

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Pero Dagbovie, *African American History Reconsidered* (2010).

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Michel Rolph-Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (2015).

Deborah Gray White, *Telling Histories: Black Women Historians in the Ivory Tower* (2008).

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CHAPTER 2

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: Africans and the Middle Passage to the Americas

To achieve a fuller understanding of the lives of people of African descent in the Americas, the study of African American history begins on the African continent. Approximately 11 to 14 million African women, men, and children were purchased as slaves at various sites on the West African coast and shipped across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas. Scholars estimate that approximately 2 million people died either in captivity in Africa or at sea. What can we learn from these staggering numbers? Does a focus on numbers obscure the human dimensions of the slave trade and the experiences of enslaved people? Backed by royal authority, European trading companies laid claim to territory along the West African coast, where they constructed massive, armed forts, often called factories. In their respective factories, British, French, Portuguese, Dutch, and other traders warehoused African captives, making them available for inspection and sale to European purchasers. These factories also served as a type of prison, where captives were kept under lock and key until they were loaded onto slave ships. Traders separated captives by sex; inspected men's, women's, and children's bodies to assess their health; and branded their bare flesh with hot irons that marked the symbol of individual trading companies. Once the ship's captain had acquired a full cargo of slaves, usually a few hundred people, the captives were loaded onto the slave ship and transported across the Atlantic Ocean. The journey from Africa to the Americas—the Middle Passage—can be considered as the next phase of this process of transforming people into property, or commodification. The Middle Passage can also be viewed as a period when Africans from diverse regional, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds forged a new, collective identity based on their shared experiences of captivity.

Historians pay close attention to ways in which local and regional conditions within West African societies, such as political leadership, warfare, class differences, gender roles, and labor demands, changed significantly as a consequence of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Serious scholars have dispensed with older, ahistorical debates over culpability and have

instead turned their attention to the complex and shifting power dynamics in the political, economic, and social relationships that took shape among African and European leaders, merchants, sailors, and a host of other figures. Histories of western capitalism have shown how the slave trade and slavery hastened the development of capital expansion in the Americas and the Atlantic. The trans-Atlantic slave trade endured for over three centuries and must be treated as both the cause and result of profound and lasting economic, political, and social shifts on the African continent, in Europe, and in the Americas.

For the duration of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the majority of enslaved people were sent to Brazil (a Portuguese colony), Jamaica (a British colony), and Cuba (a Spanish colony). Enslaved people who were sent to North America—to the British colonies and then the United States—usually disembarked in major port cities, such as Charleston, South Carolina, and New Orleans, Louisiana. While the United States and European countries terminated their involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the early years of the nineteenth century, Brazil, which gained independence from Portugal in 1850, did not abolish the trans-Atlantic trade until 1850. Historians have studied the geographic breadth of the African Diaspora, tracing the development of distinct cultures of African-descended people, and at the same time historians have also noted the similar and familiar histories that connect people throughout the Diaspora.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

What were the conditions that led to the sale and enslavement of women, men, and children at different times and places on the West African coast? How did people create new communities in trading factories, on board slave ships, and in the Americas? What steps did traders take in their efforts to transform people into property and commodities? How did early generations of Africans in the Americas remember the Middle Passage? How did they memorialize those who died along the way and those who remained behind?

DOCUMENTS OVERVIEW

The first and second documents are both from the eighteenth century and describe the slave trade during its peak years, after it had become a more systematic mode for the purchase of millions of laborers for mines and plantations in the Americas. Both accounts describe negotiations between West African rulers and European traders in the business of purchasing and transporting captives from West Africa. In the first document, Willem Bosman, a Dutch trader, explains that the people sold into slavery were prisoners of war. His account also describes the ways in which captives were examined and valued by Dutch traders; he also describes the process of branding captives with the name of the trader who purchased them. The second account is from English trader William Snelgrave, who also describes purchasing captives. This document shows both the authority exerted by the King of Whydah, or Whidaw, and Snelgrave's efforts to ensure

British access to the slave trade. This account also reveals both the treatment of captives on slaving vessels and their repeated attempts to resist and free themselves. The third document is taken from one of the few first-person accounts of an enslaved African who survived the Middle Passage. Olaudah Equiano and his sister were kidnapped from their village and sold into slavery when they were both children. In this excerpt, Equiano describes the terror of captivity on a slaving vessel. The fourth document, an illustration of the British slave ship *Brookes*, shows the infamous practice of "tight-packing," a way to maximize the number of slaves a ship could carry. The fifth document contains the narratives of Ashy and Sibell, two elderly enslaved women in Barbados, which were transcribed in 1799 by John Ford, a British man in Barbados. These two accounts reflect a creolized Afro-Barbadian speech pattern, such as the repetition of certain words for emphasis. The accounts also reveal the women's feelings about being stolen away from their homeland and families. The sixth document is a 1780s newspaper advertisement for the sale of newly arrived African slaves in Charleston, South Carolina.

1. Willem Bosman, a Dutch Trader, Describes the Details of Bargaining for Slaves, 1701

… Till within these two last years the chief factors [merchants or agents] of Mouree and Cormantyn had also the advantage of the slave trade of Fida and Ardra, which turned to some account, and was indeed more advantageous to them than the gold trade; the commerce there being at so low an ebb, that without the mentioned slave-traffick they could not live up to the part which the dignity of their posts required, without suffering by it. But since some ill-meaning men have prepossessed the directors of the company in prejudice of them, by urging that by this means they became too rich; for which reason, they have thought fit to entrust the slave trade to the masters of the ships, which they send thither: the consequence of which time will discover; but for my part I don't expect they will find it conduce much to their interest; for the commanders of ships, though very expert in all sea affairs, yet being unacquainted with the negroes, will not be able to succeed very well: besides that some of them are of such a boorish nature, that they hardly know how to preserve the honour of the company amongst the negroes. I would not here be understood to speak of them all, for there are several men of very good parts amongst them: but the difference occasioned by this new practice will clearly appear with respect to the other Europeans trading hither; and I cannot believe it will turn to the advantage of the company….

The remaining trade of these people consists in slaves; which are also bought up by the mentioned negroes: but most of them are transported thence by the English, French and Portuguese ships. Sometimes the slave trade here proves very advantageous, especially about the village Lay.

A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, Divided Into the Gold, the Slave, and the Ivory Coasts, written originally in Dutch by William Bosman, translated into English. Printed for James Knapton, at the Crown, and Dan. Midwinter, 1705.