

Enter Ladies and Gentlemen of Color: Gender, Sport, and the Ideal of African American Manhood and Womanhood During the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*

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Introduction

During the First State Convention of the Colored Citizens of California, held in Sacramento in 1855, Rev. Darius P. Stokes proclaimed: "While we as a people are striving and endeavoring to obtain recognition in society as men, . . . let us first correct ourselves and become worthy of respect."¹ Addressing the World Congress of Representative Women in Chicago almost forty years later, Fannie Barrier Williams declared:

That the discussion of progressive womanhood . . . is incomplete without some account of the colored woman's status is noteworthy evidence that we have not failed to impress ourselves on the higher sides of American life.²

These words reflect both the aspirations and a sense of accomplishment that many nineteenth century Afro-American³ leaders shared. In the half century following the Civil War, a growing articulate group of leaders of the nation's Black communities labored to foster racial pride and elevate the physical, moral, and intellectual standards of their race. As did many members of the post-Bellum larger society, they sought for their people advanced education, preparation for (and entrance into) the "professions," and improved socio-

* I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation to Professor Roberta J. Park for insisting on using "the right words" to convey ideas and data about the past and for assistance in helping me commit to final form the concepts which emerged as I carried out the research for this paper.

1. *Proceedings of The First State Convention Of The Colored Citizens Of The State Of California*. (Sacramento: Democratic State Journal Print, 1855). p. 12.

2. Fannie Barrier Williams, "The Intellectual Progress Of The Colored Women Of The United States Since The Emancipation Proclamation," in May Wright Sewall, ed., *The World's Congress of Representative Women* (Chicago and New York: Rand, Mc Nally, and Company, 1894), p. 696. (Hereafter cited "The Intellectual Progress Of Colored Women.")

3. The author acknowledges Afro or African American as the current terminology in identifying the race. When historically appropriate, however, the terms colored, Negro, or Black have been used.

economic standards. They also endeavored to improve the over-all health of their young people and establish for them programs of exercise, physical education, and sports.

Their original hopes, raised so high by the words of the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, were repeatedly dashed as they faced persistent stereotypes which characterized them as "the inferior race." Whereas various other ethnic groups were able to merge into mainstream America, Blacks were forced inward to reliance on their own communities just as they were reaching outward in an effort to become fully accepted members of the society in which they lived. Color of skin and physical appearance, *not accomplishments*, have shaped the world of African American men and women in the United States.

This paper examines sport, recreation, exercise and the construction of gender among the African American population of the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with particular attention to concepts of ideal womanhood and manhood as perceived by rising middle-class Blacks. It is especially concerned with questions such as how these replicated or differed from the ideals of mainstream society; and how such concepts were reflected in physical training and athletics.

The decades between 1870 and 1930 were a period of massive demographic, economic, and social alterations in American society. Robert H. Wiebe's *A Search For Order, 1877-1920*, has described the dislocating changes that many people experienced.⁴ This was as much, if not more so in the case for Afro-Americans, for whom it initially appeared that of the stigma of "inferior race" might be replaced by the image of "responsible citizen."⁵ The changes were possibly more intense for newly freed Blacks who had been oppressed by the two century-old institution of slavery. With abolition they were suddenly adrift, alone with no adequate preparation. The Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, ratified in 1865, brought a legal end to slavery but it did not eliminate perceptions which the dominant society held of Blacks, who were repeatedly reminded of their second class status.

Science vs. Pseudo-Science in Victorian Views of Black Males and Females

The nineteenth century placed a great deal of emphasis on measuring, classifying, comparing, and *ranking* human beings on the basis of anatomical size, "mental capacity," "moral rectitude," and similar criteria. Women and African Americans (male as well as female) were assumed to be "inferior" to Anglo-American men in most things, and were often portrayed as childlike.⁶

4. See Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search For Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

5. John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery To Freedom: A History of Negro Americans* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1947), pp. 341-342.

6. See Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex?: Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 206, 209, and Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), p. 105. Also see John S. Haller, Jr.'s "Physicians Versus the Negro: Medical and Anthropological Concepts of Race in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 44, (1970): 156, 158, 160; idem, *Outcasts From Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1971), p. 153; and D. K. Shute, "Racial and Anatomical Peculiarities," *American Anthropologist* 9 (1896): 127. For acknowledgement of nineteenth century social thought regarding

Such concepts were well established by the Civil War. One of many examples was Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon, *Indigenous Races of the Earth; or New Chapters of Ethnological Inquiry* (1868), which used illustrations that attempted to make unflattering analogies by comparing the skulls of Creole Negroes to those of young chimpanzees.⁷ The “inferior” position to which Blacks were relegated in the social order, it was believed, was substantiated by both scientific “fact” and moral and religious imperatives. “Differences” were scrutinized from every perspective; physiognomic characteristics; anatomical structure; physiological function; and pathological anomalies. It was widely believed, for example, that there were significant differences in the nervous, circulatory, reproductive, and respiratory systems of Blacks.⁸

The relatively few scientific and medical investigations that were conducted during the nineteenth century, in fact, did indicate that certain variations could be found between whites and Blacks. It was believed by many members of the medical profession, as well as the lay public, that such “differences” were indicators of racial inferiority. Blacks were more predisposed to certain diseases, and less susceptible to others.⁹ It was reported, for example, that Blacks, enjoyed a greater resistance to malaria and yellow fever,¹⁰ both, diseases of the blood. Diagnoses made prior to the establishment of bacteriology as a science—and without knowledge of the distortion of erythrocytes characteristic of sickle cell anemia—rested more on cultural perceptions than on objective approaches to etiology.¹¹

Earlier rationales used to justify legal slavery were often carried forward into proclamations which sought to dignify themselves with the patina of bio-medical language. In “The Physicians Versus The Negro: Medical And Anthropological Concepts Of Race In The Late Nineteenth Century,” John S. Haller has pointed out that nineteenth century physicians believed that the diminished capacity of the Negro’s “respiratory organs [gave] in to pneumonia, pulmonary tuberculosis, and other associated lung diseases.”¹² The Texas State Medical Association in 1882 asserted: “[The Negro’s] lungs [are] lighter and smaller in

prevailing ideologies concerning “ranking,” but by no means inferring belief; also see W. S. Scarborough, “White vs. Black,” *Voice of the Negro* 1 (1904): 28; and Emma F. G. Merritt, “American Prejudices—It’s Cause, Effect, and Possibilities,” *Voice of the Negro* 1 (1905): 467.

7. Josiah C. Nott, *Indigenous Races of the Earth: or New Chapters of Ethnological Inquiry* (Philadelphia: 1868).

8. For discussions on the anatomical, physiological, and pathological differences between the Black and white races, see for example: John Duffy, “A Note On Ante-Bellum Southern Nationalism and Medical Practices,” *Journal of Southern History* XXXIV, No. 2, (1968): 266-276; A. P. Merrill, “An Essay On Some Of The Distinctive Peculiarities Of The Negro Race,” *Southern Medical and Surgical Journal*, XII, (1856): 21-36; W. G. Ramsay, “The Physiological Differences Between The Europeans (or White Man) And The Negro,” *The Southern Agriculturist*, XII, (1839): 286-294; and William Stanton, *The Leopard’s Spots: Scientific Attitudes Towards Race In America 1815-59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960). pp. 67-68.

9. Haller, “The Physician Versus the Negro,” p. 156.

10. See for example: Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Vantage Books, 1956) pp. 300-301; Julian Lewis, *The Biology of the Negro* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), pp. 210-211; and John B. Boles, *The Black Southerner, 1619-1869* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1984), pp. 96-98.

11. John Duffy, “Medical Practices in the Antebellum South,” *Journal of Southern History* XXV (1959): 53; and David R. Goldfield “The Business of Health Planning: Disease Prevention in the Old South,” *ibid.*, XLII (1976): 559.

12. Haller, “The Physician Versus the Negro,” p. 159.

cubic size than whites.”¹³ Dr. W. J. Burt concluded that “. . . the Negro had little elasticity of temperament, . . . and lacked nervous endurance and moral courage.” This, he believed, was demonstrated by an inability to withstand the rigors of surgical operations.¹⁴ In 1894, Dr. Edward A. Balloch, a member of Howard University’s medical department, wrote: “The dominant physiologic peculiarity of the Negro is the lessened sensibility of his nervous system.”¹⁵

Examples such as these suggest that presumed anatomical and physiological “anomalies” of Blacks were topics of considerable interest and discussion in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. However, according to the Association of American Anatomists in 1894, no systematic comparison of anatomical racial differences between European and African Americans had yet been carried out.¹⁶ Such a comparative study was undertaken by Arthur MacDonald in an attempt to establish standards by which to measure the growth and development of school age children.¹⁷ The 1897-98 *Report of the United States Commissioner of Education* contained a detailed account of comparative anthropometric and related data concerning colored and white children attending the schools of Washington D.C. Among MacDonald’s several findings were that colored girls had shorter bodies than white girls, and that they were shorter and heavier than white females of the same age. Colored boys were found to be shorter than white boys of the same age and to have greater leg in comparison to trunk length. MacDonald also found that white boys of American parentage had larger head circumferences than colored boys from 6-17 years of age, but at all other ages colored boys had larger heads.¹⁸ Whereas MacDonald reported his findings in a straightforward statistical manner, others could-and did-read a variety of interpretations, mostly unflattering, into such differences. One of these was the question of whether Blacks could benefit from education to the same extent as could whites.

Middle-Class Afro-American Experience in America 1865-1900: An Historical Overview

On January 1, 1863 Abraham Lincoln, sixteenth President of the United States, speaking with the “voice of a deliverer,”¹⁹ declared all persons held as slaves “forever free.” The total population of the United States was then 31,443,321,²⁰ of which 4,441,830 were Negro.²¹ (According to 1860 census records, only 488,070 of these “Negroes” were “free” while 3,953,760 were

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

15. Edward A. Balloch, “The Relative Frequency of Fibroid Processes in the Dark-Skinned Race,” *The Medical News* LXIV, No. 2, (1894): 30.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

17. Arthur MacDonald, *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1897-98* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899).

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 1019-1026.

19. *Journal of the Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of African Methodist Episcopal Ministers of San Francisco, 1863* (San Francisco, CA: B. F. Stevett, Printer, 1863), p. 42.

20. United States Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population 1790-1915* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918) p. 25.

21. *Ibid.*

held in bondage.²²) Those within the institution of slavery were at the bottom of the social scale with few-if any-rights afforded them as human beings. The only ameliorating exception was the usually negligible attention afforded some by their owners who had a vested economic interest keeping their slaves healthy. Bondspeople were legally chattel property,²³ hence, not recognized as citizens. They did not have the right to vote or legal protection; their marriages were not sanctioned by law; they were not allowed to own property or become literate.²⁴ Equally as onerous and oppressive were the demeaning terms used when describing Blacks. Men were repeatedly portrayed as “brutish, ignorant, idle, and treacherous.”²⁵ Women were viewed as loose, wanton, immoral, and matriarchs.²⁶ Such social stigmas added to burdens created by the denial of rights and access to civic and economic opportunities.

Of the 4,880,009²⁷ “coloreds” listed on the 1870 census rolls, approximately two percent resided in the Northeast and less than one percent in the Pacific West. The majority were to be found in former Southeastern Atlantic “slave” states, (e.g., Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Virginia).²⁸ Some were the descendants of Blacks who had arrived in the American Colonies during the late 1600s aboard slave ships owned by the Royal African Company; others had arrived as late as 1859 aboard “The Brookes.”²⁹ Some, like James McCune Smith, John Mercer Langston, and Richard Allen, were well-educated by contemporary standards and became physicians, lawyers, and ministers. Many, however, could neither read nor write. Whereas other “ethnic” groups had a cultural heritage (and often language) with which they could identify, the cultural traditions of the African slave had been purposely obliterated by means of a distribution system imposed by owners who feared revolts and insurrections. Additionally, Blacks had either been brought directly from diverse parts of Africa or often by way of the West Indies or the Caribbean Islands. Therefore, they had no common cultural heritage in the same sense that Germans, Italians, Irish or other immigrant groups had. Their *lingua franca*

22. United States Bureau of the Census, *Ninth Census of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1870), pp. 5-6.

23. See for example: Stamp, pp. 23,201; Lydia M. Child, *An Appeal In Favor Of Africans Called Africans* (1836; reprinted., New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1968), pp. 41,45; Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro 1550-1812* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, Inc., 1969), p. 104; and idem, *The White Man's Burden: Origins of Racism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 46.

24. See for example: Winfield S. Montgomery, *Historical Sketch of Education for the Colored Race in the District of Columbia, 1807-1905* (Washington, D.C.: Smith Bothers Printers, 1907), p. 6; Stamp, p. 22; Boles, p. 43; Lydia M. Child, *Brief History of the Condition of Women In Various Ages and Nations* (New York: C. S. Francis and Company, 1854) pp. 220, 262; Williams, “The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Women,” p. 703; and Bert J. Lowenberg and Ruth Bogin, *Black Women in Nineteenth Century American Life: Their Words, Their Thoughts, Their Feelings* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), p. 26.

25. Jordan, *The White Man's Burden*, p. 16. Also see Booker T. Washington, N. B. Woods, and Fannie Barrier Williams, *A New Negro For A New Century* (1900; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969), p. 79.

26. See Lowenberg and Bogin, p. 2 and Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1978), p. 78.

27. *Ninth Census of the United States*, p. 5.

28. *Negro Population, 1790-1915*, p. 46.

29. Boles, p. 18; and Franklin, p. 57.

was English,³⁰ and the one factor which could be used to link all Blacks together was physical appearance. The most salient was color of skin: Bodily appearance, was, and is a dominant hallmark of what it is to be African American.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the percentage of American Blacks who could be identified as occupying an economic "middle class" was quite small. In the northeast there were some professionals (i.e., doctors, lawyers, and businessmen). There was also a small professional and business class in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New Orleans, and a few other cities. It is through the voice of the emerging Afro-American middle class (the educated, articulate spokespeople and community leaders) that expressions of the ideal concepts of gender are most readily found. (The views of those who remained poor, living as sharecroppers, or carrying out menial tasks in cities and towns-important as these are for understanding the Black experience in America-are not addressed in this paper.)

One of those articulate spokespersons was Rosetta Douglass Sprague, daughter of the noted abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who addressed the first Annual Convention of the National Federation of Afro-American Women of Washington D.C., in 1896 declaring that racial progress depended upon the strength of both sexes: "[Neither] the women alone, nor the men alone can do the work."³¹ Similar sentiments had been expressed almost a half a century earlier by men attending the Convention of Colored Freemen in 1848. Although not all Black males would have agreed, the more liberal gentlemen at this convention declared: "Whereas we fully believe in the equality of the sexes, therefore, Resolved, that we invite females hereafter to take part in our deliberations."³² The exceptionally complex and difficult tasks faced by a people looked upon with such disfavor, and typically portrayed as "a nuisance, the scum, filth, and the offal of society,"³³ may help to explain why so many leaders of the Afro-American communities contended that both men and women must share in "elevating the race."

Before turning specifically to exercise and sport, it will be useful to sketch the social condition of Blacks in the last decades of the nineteenth century and ideals regarding how manliness and womanliness were defined by the rising African American middle-class. These, in turn, need to be seen within the context of ideas of the broader society.

Nineteenth Century Notions of Gender and Ideals of Manhood and Womanhood Held by Middle-Class American Blacks

As numerous researchers have now shown, nineteenth century American notions of gender were influenced by scientific and medical theories as well as by cultural values. Recent studies by Ludmilla Jordanova, Carroll Smith-

30. Winthrop D. Jordan, "Race Relations and the History of Blacks in the United States, 1550-1865," *History 125A*. Lecture: 24 February 1989.

31. Quote by Rosetta Douglass Sprague appears in Anna J. Cooper, *Voice from the South* (1892; reprint ed., Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), p. 96.

32. Dorothy Sterling, ed., *We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1984) p. 220.

33. Montgomery, p. 4.

Rosenberg, and Patricia Vertinsky, for example, point out that constructions of designated gender roles have been deeply rooted in, promulgated, and reinforced by medical opinion.³⁴ Men have been portrayed as being virile, vigorous, and morally courageous. Their superior physical and mental capacities, it was believed, destined them for leadership and the public spheres of business and politics. Athletics offered one means for men to demonstrate their prowess. Women, on the other hand have been perceived as being inherently weak, physically and mentally inferior, and destined to occupy the domestic sphere of home and hearth.³⁵

Assessing beliefs about the feeble constitution of women, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has stated: "Physically, [women] were frailer, . . . her muscles more delicate, . . . and the nervous system was finer."³⁶ It was further believed that women were "rendered imperfect, less whole,"³⁷ and "products and prisoners of [their] reproductive systems."³⁸ Such conclusions substantiated and justified the limited roles to which women were relegated. Although these views would be repeatedly challenged in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the basic framework which defined the standard for normative gender roles and behaviors for American men and women remained fairly consistent well into the twentieth century.³⁹

Less attention has been given to analyzing the construction of "male" than to "female" gender. Elizabeth H. Pleck, Joseph H. Pleck and Joe L. Dubbert are among those who have stated that further research is needed to develop comprehensive analytical frameworks for understanding male gender roles. Moreover, most of the historical work to date, whether concerning men or women, has focused upon whites. It is not clear, therefore, whether the same processes and ideologies operated for Afro-Americans. Hopefully, this paper will shed some light on this question. It is to this question that the discussion now turns.

The Civil War marked the historical genesis in the United States of an era when Blacks earnestly began attempts to participate fully as "men" and "women"—not inferior beings—in American society. In the 1860s, the aspirations of many were high. These initial enthusiasms, however, were repeatedly frustrated by the 1870s as they found educational and employment opportunities repeatedly blocked. According to Edward H. Beasley, aspiring Black physi-

34. See for example: Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images Of Gender In Science And Medicine Between The Eighteenth And Twentieth Centuries* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 42; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg, "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Women and Their Role in Nineteenth Century America," in J. A. Mangan and Roberta J. Park, eds., *From Fair Sex to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Post-Industrial Eras* (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1987), p. 14; and Patricia Vertinsky, "Exercise, Physical Capability, and the Eternally Wounded Woman in Late Nineteenth Century North America," *Journal of Sport History* 14:1 (1987): 7-27.

35. Jordanova, p. 29 and Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, pp. 14-17.

36. Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, p. 14.

37. Vertinsky, p. 7.

38. Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, p. 15.

39. Henry I. Bowditch, "The Medical Question of Women," *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* CV, No. 13, (1881): 289. Also see Walters, pp. 102-103 and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions Of Gender In Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 175-178.

cians in both the North and South were excluded from most county medical associations during the post-Bellum era, and “. . . the doors of established hospitals were firmly closed to Black practitioners.”⁴⁰ Although progress was slow and uneven (even small gains were often lost), Afro-American community leaders repeatedly affirmed the need to define and set standards by which the men and women of their race would be judged. These reflect persistent efforts to embrace dominant middle-class values.

In 1866, leaders of The First Convention of Colored Men of Kentucky resolved:

Whereas: Education, wealth, and character are essential to the elevation and prosperity of any people, it is our duty to create, foster, and establish, . . . into the minds of our colored citizens, well ordered characters, and to secure by manly endeavor all honorable industrial pursuits.⁴¹

At an early date the importance of becoming exemplars of American “manhood” and “womanhood” was a theme repeatedly expressed by the nation’s Black leaders. In 1900, an article titled “Negro Leadership” appeared in the *Gazette and Land Bulletin* of Georgia and Florida. This declared, “morality, manhood, loyalty to the race, love of truth, nobleness of purpose” to be the “prime factor[s] that men must possess in the future.”⁴²

Ideal character included the attainment of dignity, self-reliance, self-respect, and self-assertion: Qualities which also defined contemporary American middle-class attitudes regarding masculinity.⁴³ The Afro-American press stressed fortitude and courage, and also (not surprisingly) patience. For a group only recently released from legal servitude, such qualities were particularly valuable. The abolitionist Frederick Douglass was repeatedly referred to as a man who exemplified these attributes, and a constant source of encouragement for other Black Americans. At the turn-of-the century, *The Voice of the Negro* declared that the development of “manly courage,” which allowed one to contend with “difficulties” with a steadfast resoluteness in the midst of humiliation and degradation, was what Mr. Douglass exemplified.⁴⁴

Such values resonated with those of the larger society. Emulation by Blacks, however, frequently brought scorn and ridicule from the white society which set and upheld Victorian standards.⁴⁵ Emerging middle-class African American men, nevertheless, persisted in their quest to be acknowledged as citizens, with the same rights, privileges, and access to lawful protection as those of the

40. Edward H. Beasley, *A History of Neglect: Health Care for Blacks and Mill Workers in the Twentieth Century South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987) p. 79.

41. *The Tennessean*, 18 July 1866, p. 3.

42. *The Gazette and Land Bulletin*, 27 January 1900, p. 3.

43. See E. Anthony Rotundo, “Learning About Manhood: Gender Ideals and the Middle-Class Family in Nineteenth-Century America,” in J. A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), pp. 35-49.

44. See Kelly Miller, “Frederick Douglass,” *Voice of the Negro* 1, (1904): 463-464; and John Henry Adams, “Rough Sketches: The New Negro Man,” *Voice of the Negro* 1, (1904): 450.

45. See for example: Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, From Slavery to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), p. 70; Leon F. Litwack, *Been In The Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 245; and *The Weekly Anglo African*, 30 July 1859, p. 2.

“fairer complected advantaged race.”⁴⁶ To support themselves and their families, they secured jobs as real estate agents, funeral directors, bankers, grocers, butchers, and shoemakers.⁴⁷ Some succeeded in becoming lawyers and doctors. Just as did white males, middle-class Black men desired to be self-reliant and providers. Confronted by discrimination on the basis of color of skin and physical appearance, Afro-American men were in an especially difficult position. They were constantly reminded of their “inferiority” in a society which placed great emphasis on the superiority of the male over the female sex.

The belief that Blacks were inferior also affected female members of the race. During a period when “. . . the mental capacities of [both] Blacks and women were questioned and disparaged,”⁴⁸ how was one to view Black women? Placed at the bottom of the hierarchy-and indicated on the basis of both gender and color-Black women were placed in a particularly disadvantaged position.⁴⁹ They also needed patience, courage, and fortitude. In 1904, *The Voice of the Negro* declared: “True men and women will let nothing stand between them and the sunlight of aspiration and hope.”⁵⁰

Although middle-class Black women also aspired to embrace the values of the dominant society, it was very seldom the case that they had the privilege of being supported solely by the income of their husbands.⁵¹ Traditionally, they-whether slave or free-had been obliged to work.⁵² In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, they found employment as laundresses, cooks, hair dressers and beauticians. Many were also teachers.⁵³ Social proscriptions, however, severely limited opportunities for Black women, even more than Black men, from entering the professions. Additionally, there was a growing desire among Afro-American feminists to express their own abilities and not remain subservient to husbands and other males. Clearly, then, there were role tensions in the middle-class Black community that were not dissimilar to those in the larger culture.

Afro-American Presence within Collegiate, Semi-Professional, and Professional Athletics

Blacks had been boxers and jockeys during the days of slavery, competing at the bidding of their masters. (It is unlikely that such experiences were the same

46. *The Weekly Anglo-African*, 20 August 1859, p. 3; and idem., 9 June 1860, p. 2. Also see Nannie H. Burroughs, “Not Color, But Character,” *Voice of the Negro* 1, (1904): 279.

47. W. C. Burnell, “History of the Business of Colored Richmond,” *Voice of the Negro* 1 (1904): 319 and August Meier, *Negro Thought In America 1880-1915* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1973), chapter 9.

48. Cooper, p. 3. Also see Stephen Jay Gould, *Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), p. 103.

49. See for example: Washington, Woods, and Williams, p. 382; Jones, pp. 138, 196; and Fannie Barrier Williams, “The Woman’s Part in a Man’s Business,” *Voice of the Negro* 1, (1904): 544.

50. Kelly Miller, p. 462.

51. See for example: Harley and Terborg-Penn, p. 12; Leon F. Litwack, p. 246; and Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), p. 59.

52. See Jones, p. 22; and Patricia Hill-Collins, “The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother/Daughter relationships,” *Sage* IV, No. 2, (1987): 4.

53. See for example: Jones, p. 74; Harley and Terborg-Penn, p. 100; Lorenzo J. Greene and Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro Wage Earner* (New York: AMS Press, 1930), p. 31; and Williams, “The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Women,” p. 705.

as those of athletes who entered sports by choice.) It is said that Thomas Molineaux, born a slave in 1784, was able to win his freedom by defeating an opponent in the boxing arena.⁵⁴ And it is possible that a few others earned their freedom by such successes. However, as David Wiggins has stated, additional research will be necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of "the status of the athletically inclined slave."⁵⁵ The Walker brothers, Weldy and Fleetwood, played professional baseball during the 1870s and 1880s. As the game became more lucrative, the Walkers and other Blacks were forced out. Reacting to the exclusion of Blacks from organized athletics, Weldy Walker wrote in 1888: "this law is a disgrace to the present age . . . and casts derision at the laws of the voice of the people-that say all men are created equal."⁵⁶

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, athletics increasingly became an arena for defining masculinity. With few exceptions, Blacks were excluded from the mainstream sporting world. Therefore, they created their own organizations; baseball teams like the Cuban Giants of New York, the Columbia Giants of Chicago, and the Philadelphia Giants.⁵⁷ At the turn-of-the century a small number of Afro-American men who were attending major colleges and universities became members of football and other intercollegiate teams. William Clarence Matthews at Harvard, Matthew W. Bullock at Dartmouth, and All-American Paul Robeson at Rutgers, are examples. In the early 1900s, the *Boston Globe* paid a tribute to Matthews, then a young colored student at Harvard University. A product of Alabama's Tuskegee Institute, Matthews matriculated at the prestigious university in Cambridge, where he completed a four year program in three and undertook work in the Harvard law school. A football player and outstanding shortstop, Matthews is said to have declined all pecuniary inducements to play with semi-professional teams. In 1905, he declared: "The trouble with accepting favors of this kind to help one through college is, that in the end *you* find they have *made you dependent*." Matthews further asserted, "the best help a man can get is an opportunity to help himself."⁵⁸ Jack Berryman has detailed the athletic careers of Bullock, William H. Lewis, and William Craighead, and concludes that "these examples of early Black leadership in collegiate football occurred in a geographical area ahead of its time in [race] relations." And even so, these small advances were only temporary.⁵⁹

Colleges in the Southeast with predominantly Black enrollments established intercollegiate athletic programs similar to those which had developed at

54. Benjamin Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Spectators* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1983), p. 35; and Edwin B. Henderson, *The Negro In Sports* (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1939), p. 15.

55. David K. Wiggins, "From Plantations to Playing Field: Historical Writings on The Black Athlete in American Sport," *Research Quarterly* 57, No. 2, (1986): 109.

56. Robert W. Peterson, *Only The Ball Was White* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 32.

57. Peterson, p. 59; and John B. Holway, *Blackball Stars: Negro League Pioneers* (Westport, CT: Meckler Books, 1988), p. 11.

58. Henry Beach Needham, "The College Athlete," *McClure's Magazine* XXV, No. 2, (1905): 128.

59. Jack W. Berryman, "Early Black Leadership in Collegiate Football: Massachusetts as a Pioneer," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 9, No. 2, (1981): 24.

Harvard, Dartmouth, the University of Michigan and elsewhere. At schools with predominantly Black enrollments, competitive athletics for male students included baseball, football, basketball, and track. In North Carolina, the first Black college football game took place between Biddle University and Livingston College in November 1892.⁶⁰ Schools like Tuskegee Institute, Talledega College, Wilberforce University, Morehouse College, and Hampton Institute gave considerable emphasis to competitive athletics.⁶¹ Fisk University, on the other hand, stressed the benefits to be derived from participation in regular systematic exercise programs, for both male and female students. According to Joe M. Richardson's history of the Tennessee school, "no attempt was made to produce athletes." Physical training at Fisk University was intended to develop "sound, vigorous, evenly balanced, strong, and graceful bodies that they shall be efficient instruments for the use of well-trained minds in the hard work and stern conflicts of life."⁶²

Four outstanding African American athletes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may serve as useful exemplars of the experiences of at least some Blacks in organized athletics. Their careers differed, as did the ways in which they were perceived by their own race and by the larger society. Marshall "Major" Taylor, pioneer Black record-setting bicyclist, typified the type of "manly courage" that by Frederick Douglass had urged his people to develop in themselves and foster in their children. Taylor's bicycling career began in 1892, at the age of thirteen. Originally baited onto a bicycle as a joke and the object of humor by pranksters at a local cycling competition, Taylor became an acknowledged "world" champion. His long career was filled with adversities of the type that affected most Blacks. In spite of monumental accomplishments and numerous world records, his American opponents, refusing to accept defeat from one from a so called "inferior race," denied him opportunities to enter important competitions.⁶³ In 1896 Taylor complained: "The League of American Wheelman. . . draws the color line, and only white men are allowed to compete in professional races."⁶⁴ Throughout his professional career—which spanned the years 1896 to 1910—Taylor "battled under bitter odds against the dreadful monster prejudice"⁶⁵ in the United States.

Taylor was treated considerably better by sporting enthusiasts elsewhere in the world. During 1903, he toured Australia (where he received considerable acclaim), winning twenty-three out of twenty-seven races. In the Antipodes, Major Taylor received what he considered both fair play and consideration from his opponents as well as from the officials. Reflecting back upon his first

60. Henderson, p. 88.

61. See Addie L. Butler, *The Distinctive Black College: Talledega, Tuskegee, and Morehouse* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1977), p. 27 and *The Wilberforce Quarterly* 1, No. 2, (1940): 27.

62. *Fisk University Catalogue, 1889-1890*, pp. 49-50, quoted in Joe M. Richardson, *A History of Fisk University, 1865-1946* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1980), p. 155.

63. C. Grant Williams, "Marshall Walter Taylor: The World Famous Bicycle Rider," *Colored American Magazine* V, No. 5, (1902): 338, 341-342.

64. Marshall W. "Major" Taylor, *The Fastest Bicycle Rider in the World, An Autobiography* (Worcester, MA: Wormley Publishing Co., 1928), p. 21.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 420.

Australian tour, he observed: "I was grateful for the fair treatment accorded me by the race officials, the riders, and the newspaper men."⁶⁶ Notwithstanding the "rigid color line in effect in Australia"⁶⁷ (which was directed at that country's aboriginal population), Taylor's superior athletic performances and gentlemanly sportsmanlike conduct were warmly acknowledged in the Australian press. "Taylor stands head and shoulders above all other competitors, he has wonderful control over his machine and seems to be a true sportsman,"⁶⁸ one Australian daily declared. Other newspapers reported: "Taylor is the personification of grace [H]e is modest, unassuming, and very gentlemanly in deportment."⁶⁹

For the Afro-American youth aspiring to follow his path as a professional athlete, Taylor offered the following words: "As I did, practice clean living, fair play, and good sportsmanship." To do this in the face of so much discrimination, he recognized, would "require great morale and physical courage."⁷⁰ Dedicated to clean living, rigorous about his habits as an athlete, and a devout Christian, Major Taylor portrayed the man of dignity and self-reliance throughout his career.

Another turn-of-the century Black athlete who was known for his dignified character was jockey Isaac Burns Murphy, born in Fayette County, Kentucky in 1861. His first major horse-racing victory was earned at age fourteen.⁷¹ Winner of the 1884, 1890, and 1891 Kentucky Derbies, Murphy was well-known for the competence and honesty with which he executed his riding talents.⁷² In 1891, The *Louisville Times* declared: "The quite, polite [demeanor] of Isaac Murphy [and] his integrity and honor are the pride of the turf."⁷³

The Marquis of Queensbury rules, enacted in 1867 had led to the transformation of the brutal sport of pugilism into the still dangerous but more controlled sport of boxing. Prior to the use of padded gloves, the brutality of bare-knuckle competitions often led to the bludgeoning demise of one's opponent. Although popular with many Britishers, pugilism had "aroused the ire of [other] Victorians."⁷⁴ Many "respectable" Americans—both white and Black—also did not view the boxing arena as a fit place to demonstrate one's manhood, but the sport retained a popular following, especially, but by no means exclusively, among the working classes and the sporting fraternity.⁷⁵ Since both "the manly art of self-defense" and boxing shared the same skills, even if the "intent" of

66. *Ibid.*, p. 270.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 232.

68. *Ibid.*, pp. 259, 297.

69. *Ibid.*, pp. 271, 274.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 427.

71. See Arthur R. Ashe, *A Hard Road To Glory: A History of the African American Athlete, 1619-1918* (New York: Warner Books, 1988), p. 47; and Edwin B. Henderson, "The Black Athlete: Emergence and Arrival," in the *International Library of Afro-American Life and History* (Cornwells Heights, PA: Publishers Agency Inc., 1978), p. 50.

72. See for example: *The Afro-American*, 22 February 1896, p. 1; Roi Otley and William Weatherby, eds., *The Negro In New York* (New York: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1967), p. 146; and *The San Francisco Examiner*, 9 March 1976.

73. Quote appears in Ashe, p. 48.

74. Rader, p. 129.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

each differed, it was convenient for those who saw themselves to be among the upper ranks of society to also express an interest in the sport.

Several Black males entered professional boxing, both for its financial rewards and as a means of asserting their manhood, dignity, and self-worth. The most celebrated was the legendary and controversial Jack Johnson, born at Galveston, Texas in 1878. Throughout his youth, Johnson was an accomplished participant in many Battle Royals. (Organized fist fights among Black youths for the amusements of southern whites, these free-for-all were staged at the expense of the participants' dignity and self-worth).⁷⁶ His professional career did not begin until 1897.⁷⁷ Victories over Tommy Burns on December 25, 1908 and Jim Jeffries on July 4, 1910 sent shock waves across the nation.⁷⁸

By 1908, the Plessy vs. Ferguson decision, establishing segregation as a fact of *law*, had intensified the backlash of Reconstruction. Miscegenation laws were on the books of most states-and in the Southeast, lynchings of Blacks were on the rise. Many whites viewed the elevation of a Black boxer to such prominence as appalling. Riots broke out in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, and New Orleans. Several newspapers reported the deaths of hundreds of Blacks; however, the exact number could not be determined. Johnson was badgered by the authorities for his extravagant living, his flagrant disregard for authority, and most especially for his associations with white women. Although persecuted and hounded much of his life for flaunting the "moral codes and customs" of the country, Johnson's conquests over Burns and Jeffries offered undeniable proof that Black boxers were by no means physically inferior to white boxers. (It was not difficult to extrapolate from this that Black men might not be inferior to white men, and this was anathema to many.)

The Black reaction to Johnson was mixed. His athletic superiority and victories instilled within many of the nation's Afro-American citizens a sense of honor, pride, and dignity.⁷⁹ There were others, however, who considered Johnson's victories more "embarrassing" than heroic.⁸⁰ *The Chicago Defender*, the most widely circulated Afro-American newspaper of the early 1900s, summarized both perspectives when it wrote:

Although pugilism is that end of civilization that is adjacent to barbarism . . . it was a good deal better for Johnson to win than for Johnson to have lost and all Negroes to have been killed in spirit by the preachments of inferiority.⁸¹

Howard Drew, described as the "sensational colored sprinter," was the first Afro-American athlete to win national acclaim as the "world's fastest human." Born at Springfield, Massachusetts in 1890, Drew's athletic career and record-setting performances began while he was in high school. He was the first Afro-

76. Randy Roberts, *Papa Jack-Jack Johnson And The Era Of White Hopes* (New York: The Free Press, 1983), pp. 6-7.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

78. See for example: Roberts, pp. 65-66; Al-Tony Gilmore, *Bad Nigger: The National Impact of Jack Johnson* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), p. 4; and *The Oakland Enquirer*, 5 July 1910, p. 7.

79. Gilmore, p. 19.

80. *Ibid.*

81. *The Chicago Defender*, 30 July 1910, p. 1.

American Amateur Athletic Union championship holder of the 100 yard dash, earned in 1912 while a member of the Springfield High School track team.⁸² During the 1913 season, he captured the title in the 220 yard dash. Drew's consistent athletic accomplishments continued as he proceeded to set world records, while competing for the University of Southern California's track team.⁸³ His reputation for gentlemanly conduct, both on and off the track was acknowledged by the press.⁸⁴

African American Religious 'Men of Words' Personify Manhood

Athletes were by no means the only "exemplars" for other Black males at the turn-of-the century. Nor were they, perhaps, the most important. It will be useful to look at quite a different type of male exemplar of African American manhood. Whereas the athlete demonstrates power and command through the body, physical performance, and deeds, the minister relies heavily upon *words*. The anthropologist Richard Abrahams has discussed the importance of verbal contesting speech among Caribbean Black males.⁸⁵ The minister—a "man of words"—has been an especially important figure in the Black communities of the United States.

The earliest forms of "independent" male leadership among Black communities had surfaced within the church and fraternal orders. In the decades following the Civil War, intellectual attainment, economic accomplishments, and a firm adherence to the Christian faith were qualities by which the Negro press identified its religious leaders. Afro-American ministers repeatedly impressed upon their congregations the necessity of providing upstanding moral Christian leadership and guidance. Richard Allen, ordained Bishop and founder of Philadelphia's Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, stated: "racial progress depend[s] on moral reform and education."⁸⁶ Allen further proclaimed that "much depends on us [the clergy] for the help of our color."⁸⁷ Black ministers repeatedly stressed how important it was for them (as a group) to become erudite men.⁸⁸ Rev. Jacob Mitchell, for example, addressing the Third Annual Convention of African Methodist Episcopalian Ministers in San Francisco in 1863, stated,

the age in which we live [is] eminently one of progression . . . the principles of Christianity are no less progressive than the other sciences. Therefore, it becomes necessary for the minister of today, to be a progressive man, a reading man⁸⁹

The National Negro Baptist Convention, representing the majority of the

82. W. Montague Cobb, "Race and Runners," *Journal of Health and Physical Education* VIII, No. 1, (1936): 45 and Henderson, *The Negro In Sports*, p. 45.

83. Henderson, p. 45.

84. *Western Outlook*, 10 April 1915, p. 3.

85. Roger D. Abrahams, *The Man of Words in the West Indies* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983).

86. Leon F. Litwack and August Meier, *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), p. 14.

87. *Ibid.*

88. *Journal of the Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the Ministers of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church of San Francisco*, pp. 8-9.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Black congregations in the South, was organized in Atlanta, Georgia in 1895. Its key objectives were missionary work and the educational improvement of members of the Negro race. To this end, it established a publishing board and opened its own publishing plant and offices. Between 1900 and 1902, the publishing board circulated over thirteen million periodicals on subjects ranging from bible lessons, to material for teachers, to “childrens gems.”⁹⁰ Believing that it had an obligation to shape the destiny of both the church and the race, the publishing board directed its attention to “literature capable of keeping the identity and increasing the race pride of its rising generation” so that the Negro would not be overshadowed by the dominant race.⁹¹ The Black minister, then, stood in a position that was similar to other ministers in nineteenth century America. He was to be both a spokesperson for his church and a powerful exemplar for his congregation and his community.

The church, however, was not “public” in the ways that athletics could be. As athletics grew to be of more prized value in the late 1800s, they became more attractive to Blacks as well. However, the historic refusal to permit them to participate fully placed a particularly devastating burden on most Black men, who were excluded not only politically, economically, socially, educationally and psychologically, -but also athletically- from participation in society. Their exclusion from realms where they could demonstrate, in socially acceptable ways, their physical prowess probably weighed especially heavily at a time when the belief in separate spheres (with men in the superior position) was widely accepted.⁹² Consequently, such opportunities, when they did come, could be highly prized by Afro-American men, who might see their athletic accomplishments as tangible symbols of masculine achievement.

Afro-American efforts to proclaim and vindicate manhood, in fact, took several forms, ranging from persistent agitation to be permitted to practice their constitutional rights to taking an active role in the army, another pursuit in which physical competence was of particular importance.⁹³ Troop K, an all-Black regiment of the United States Cavalry, participated in regularly scheduled athletic competitions. Marvin E. Fletcher has stated that interracial athletic competitions were common occurrences among United States soldiers during a time in American society when segregated athletics was the rule.⁹⁴ Army athletics for the Black soldier during the late 1890s included baseball, football, and track and field.⁹⁵ Sport, however, confronted the Black man with a paradox.

90. W. E. B. DuBois, ed., *Atlanta University Publications*, Vol. II, No. 8, (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1903), p. 115.

91. *Ibid.*

92. See for example: Giddings, p. 58; Jones, p. 36; Robert Staples, *The Black Woman in America* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1973), pp. 12-13; Addie Hunton, “Negro Womanhood Defended,” *Voice of the Negro* 1, (1904): 282; and Eugene Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), p. 490.

93. Samuel L. Horst *Education For Manhood: The Education of Blacks in Virginia During the Civil War* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), p. 218.

94. Thomas J. Clement, “Athletics in the American Army,” *Colored American Magazine* 8, No. 1, (1905): 21-29; and Marvin E. Fletcher, “The Black Soldier Athlete In The United States Army,” *Canadian Journal of the History of Sports and Physical Education* III, No. 2, (1972): 16-26.

95. Fletcher, pp. 20-21.

On the one hand, here he might demonstrate his virility and prowess; on the other, it was often claimed that Blacks made good boxers because this sport called for "brute force," something which Blacks were supposed to have in abundance. The same argument might have been used with regard to football players, but to become a widely recognized football player in late nineteenth century America, it was necessary to be associated with one of the leading collegiate teams. This association gave to football a status considerably elevated over boxing. Blacks, however, as we have seen had relatively few opportunities for such participation with leading collegiate teams.

Education-Formal and Informal-in Schools, Colleges, Universities, and Other Organizations

Rather than opening to them the hoped for opportunities, Blacks had found that laws enacted during the Reconstruction era withdrew many of the rights that the Emancipation Proclamation had promised. In both the North and South, they were again disfranchised before they had a chance to demonstrate their abilities. The separate but equal doctrine was routinely practiced well before the Plessy vs. Ferguson case of 1896, which reinforced de facto and sanctioned de jure segregation.⁹⁶ Debarred from participating with the dominant society as a result of custom, tradition, and law, Black community leaders who emerged in the late nineteenth century banded together in civic organizations like their own Young Men's and Women's Christian Associations, church groups such as the Negro National Baptist Association, the African Methodist Episcopalians, and the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. Through these and other organizations which they established for their people, they channelled their energies into efforts aimed at "uplifting the masses"-a term which appeared repeatedly in the Afro-American press from the 1860s through the 1920s.

Philip A. Bell, editor of *The Elevator*, the leading San Francisco "Negro" newspaper in the 1860s, had spoken for many of his people when he expressed the deep desire of Afro-Americans to become contributing members of their society. Even though relegated to the end of processions, Blacks took great pride in celebrating the 4th of July. "We have long desired to celebrate our National Anniversary as American citizens," Bell declared in 1865.⁹⁷ Indeed, in many areas, Blacks took what appeared to be as much interest in marching in Independence Day Parades as they did in participating in the Emancipation Day Celebrations. The *Texas Weekly Freeman's Press* in 1868, exemplified such feelings when it asserted: "How the picture brightens as we look cheerfully into the future; free schools, free homes, and a free country, and every man safe."⁹⁸

In *North of Slavery*, Leon Litwack has observed that legal slavery had been abolished in Northern states (with the exception of Illinois, New Jersey, New

96. Franklinp. 342.

97. *San Francisco Elevator*, 30 June 1865, p. 2.

98. *The Weekly Freedman's Press*, 18 July 1868, p. 1.

York, and Ohio) by 1800.⁹⁹ This did not mean, however, that free Blacks were accorded equal rights. Both their educational and employment opportunities were severely limited. They could not vote or hold a political office; therefore they were not recognized as citizens.¹⁰⁰ The harshness of this situation was only slightly ameliorated by the provision of some education, typically in segregated schools, and in those institutions which Blacks established for themselves. Black children had been attending the New York African Free School, established by the Manumission Society, since 1787. In California, the first state funded schools for Blacks were established in San Francisco and Sacramento in 1854.¹⁰¹ A few Black men and women were in attendance at Bowdoin College and Oberlin College as early as 1828 and 1857 respectively.¹⁰²

The need to provide education on a large scale basis for the masses of Blacks, in the South especially, was evident in the establishment of several institutions of higher learning with a predominant Black enrollment by the turn-of-the century. Those like the Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute of Virginia stressed academic achievements, and placed only very modest attention on well-rounded health or physical education programs. This does not mean that Blacks were unconcerned about the health of their children and youth. Writing for the *Journal of Negro Education* in 1937, Dr. Paul B. Comely declared: "Much has been written about the high rate of mortality and morbidity among Negroes. In our Negro Colleges, the health programs are in a very deplorable condition . . ." ¹⁰³ It was Dr. Comely's hope that this would soon be changed. In general, the intense need for immediate action to elevate the race had continued to require that attention be directed to academic, professional, and vocational skills.

Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute, had opened in 1868 with the intent of training teachers.¹⁰⁴ Its curriculum emphasized industrial, agricultural, and domestic training. Among its major goals was to inculcate in prospective teachers the "dignity of hard labor."¹⁰⁵ Atlanta University in Georgia (founded in 1865), and Fisk University of Tennessee (founded in 1866), placed an emphasis on sciences, languages, and mathematics.¹⁰⁶ Washington, D. C. 's

99. Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 3.

100. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

101. See for example: Delilah L. Beasley, *The Negro Trailblazers of California* (Los Angeles, CA: Times Mirror Printing and Binding House, 1919), pp. 173-174; William Ferrier, *Ninety Years of Education in California* (Berkeley, CA: Sather Gate, 1937), p. 99; and Sue Bailey Thurman, *Pioneers of Negro Origin in California* (San Francisco: Acme Publishing Co., 1949), p. 38.

102. According to Carter G. Woodson, *Education for the Negro Prior to 1861* (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publisher's Inc., 1919), p. 265: John B. Russworm, the first Afro-American male to earn a college degree in the United States did so in 1828. See Robert S. Fletcher *A History of Oberlin College*, (Oberlin, OH: Oberlin College, 1943), 234: Mary Jane Patterson was the first Afro-American female to earn a college degree in the United States in 1857.

103. Paul B. Comely, "Health Education Programs in Negro Colleges," *Journal of Negro Education* VI, No. 3, (1937): 535.

104. James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 34.

105. *Ibid.*

106. *Ibid.*, p. 244.

Howard University (founded in 1866), offered a curriculum which included Normal and Agricultural departments as well as Collegiate, Theological, Law, and Medical departments.¹⁰⁷

Tuskegee Institute, like Hampton Institute, did not initially emphasize physical training. At the insistence of the founders, students were to devote themselves to academics.¹⁰⁸ By 1901, however, Booker T. Washington had attended Dudley Allen Sargent's Summer School of Physical Training at Harvard.¹⁰⁹ By the 1920s, the physical education program at Tuskegee Institute had a Woman's Department and a female head. Its offerings included various calisthenic exercises (e.g., wands, wooden dumb bells, and Indian clubs).¹¹⁰ At Howard University, in Washington, D.C., Physical Culture for male students was subsumed under the Military Department. As early as 1870-71, this included infantry and artillery tactics and also gymnastics for the dual purpose of instilling "physical vigor and establish[ing] habits of neatness, punctuality, and order."¹¹¹ Graduates of Howard University such as Kelly Miller, Jesse Moorland, and D. Augusta Straker were among the men who contributed to causes aimed at advancing their race through organizations such as all Negro branches of the Y.M.C.A.¹¹²

During the 1860s and 1870s a small number of Black women had also begun to attend institutions of higher learning. Born a slave in 1837, Fannie Jackson Coppin graduated with honors from Oberlin College in 1865. She taught at Philadelphia's Institute for Colored Youth, and was principal of its Female Department from 1869 to 1902.¹¹³ Anna J. Cooper, a 1884 graduate of Oberlin College, taught at Wilberforce University, Lincoln Institute, and the "M" Street School in Washington, D.C.¹¹⁴ Black women attended Hampton Institute, Tuskegee Institute, Howard University, and Wellesley as early as 1868. By the 1880s then, there had emerged a small but important group of Afro-American women who were quite well-educated. Many made significant contributions to religious, fraternal, and church groups as well as to organizations like the Black Y.W.C.A.s. It was substantially from this group that there emerged a class of Afro-American female community leaders who saw themselves as exemplars of dignified, intelligent, womanly virtues.

107. Walter Dyson, *Howard University, The Capstone of Negro Education: A History, 1867-1940* (Washington, D.C.: 1941), p. 44.

108. A. W. Ellis, "The Status of Health and Physical Education for Women in Negro Colleges and Universities," *Journal of Negro Education* VIII, No. 1, (1939): 58.

109. In the late 1890s, Dudley Allen Sargent listed the name of Booker T. Washington among the educators who had attended his summer training school.

110. *Tuskegee Messenger*, 20 December 1924, p. 1; and *idem.*, 25 April 1925.

111. *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Howard University, District of Columbia, 1870-71* (Washington, D.C.: Judd and Detweiler, Printers, 1871) p. 66.

112. See for example: Jesse E. Morland, "The Young Men's Christian Association Among Negroes," *Journal of Negro History* IX, No. 2, (1924); Elinor Des Verney Sinnette, W. Paul Coates, and Thomas C. Battle, eds., *Black Bibliophiles and Collectors: Preservers of Black History* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1990), pp. 207-208; and Rayford W. Logan and Michael R. Winston, eds., *Dictionary of American Negro Bibliographies* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1982), pp. 448-450, 575.

113. See Gerda Lerner, ed., *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 88; and Sterling, p. 204.

114. Cooper, pp. 40, 81.

Race Elevation and Social Uplift: Role of Afro-American Women and Selected Organizations

Middle-class female leadership within Afro-American communities surfaced in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s, most prominently in the formation of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. The NACWC was established in 1896 as the result of combining the National Federation of Afro-American Women and the National League of Colored Women.¹¹⁵ Under the leadership of its first president, Mary Church Terrell the goals of the NACWC were to provide a source of leadership and guidance among colored women which would enable them to work for the advancement of the "social condition of the entire race."¹¹⁶ Painfully aware of the increasing violence, hostility, and discrimination that had been directed at the nation's Black population in the decades following the Civil War, the NACWC (like other civic and social groups which emerged within the Black community) held that the persistence of such attitudes was caused by widespread ignorance among non-Black citizens regarding the capabilities and aspirations of Blacks. Most Americans, they believed, were unaware of considerable accomplishments which groups like the NACWC had achieved.¹¹⁷

In efforts to defend their moral integrity and uphold their image as virtuous and noble in the face of both racism and sexism, leaders like Fannie Barrier Williams, Mary Church Terrell, and Nannie H. Burroughs considered it their duty to show other Black women how, by dignified deeds and bearing, they might counteract slurs and charges leveled at them and their fellow Blacks.¹¹⁸ In 1895, leaders of the Women's Industrial League of Baltimore proclaimed their intent to "encourage social reform, literary research, and personal improvement"¹¹⁹ as a means to "elevate the standards of Afro-American womanhood."¹²⁰ Their goal was to erase from women of their race lingering stereotypes and accusations of inferiority and immorality, and to demonstrate to the larger society that the virtues of African American womanhood were just as "sacred as [those of] white womanhood."¹²¹ Although repeatedly stung by acts of contempt, leaders such as these encouraged their contemporaries to have courage and "stand tall and develop within themselves the moral strength to raise above and conquer false attitudes." America's Black females, therefore, were confronted with what McDougald has called "The Double Task."¹²² They

115. See for example: Elizabeth L. Davis, *Lifting As They Climb: National Association of Colored Women's Clubs* (Washington, D.C.: 1938), p. 5; Cooper, pp. 100-101; Litwack and Meier, pp. 313-314; and Lerner, p. 441.

116. Washington, Woods, and Williams, p. 382.

117. See Hunton, p. 280; and Williams, "The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Women," p. pp. 704, 705, 708.

118. Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin's address to the First National Conference of Colored Women, July 29-31, 1895; Boston, in Lerner, pp. 442-443.

119. *The Afro-American*, 3 August 1895, p. 1.

120. *Ibid.*

121. Burroughs, p. 279. Also see Giddings, p. 88 and Fannie Barrier Williams, "The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Woman," p. 704.

122. E. Johnson McDougald, "The Double Task: The Struggle of Negro Women for Sex and Race Emancipation," *Survey Graphic* 6, No. 6, March 1926, in Lerner, p. 171. Also see Williams, "The Intellectual Progress of Colored Women," p. 703.

struggled for emancipation of *both* their sex and their race.

Numerous male Afro-American leaders upheld these efforts in the belief that “racial progress” was dependent upon the contributions of educated women, no less than men.¹²³ The powerful nineteenth century emphasis on the “Cult of True Womanhood,” with its intense separation of gender and beliefs that participation in higher education was detrimental to a woman’s reproductive capacities, is less evident in proclamations by Black physicians and clergymen than recent studies have found such proclamations to be among the dominant society. In “The Impact of the ‘Cult of True Womanhood’ on the Education of Black Women,” Linda M. Perkins has asserted: “This concept of ‘true womanhood’ was [a] model designed for the upper and middle-class white women.”¹²⁴ Recounting sentiments toward Black women in American society, especially during the ante-bellum era, she points out: “white society did not acknowledge Black women as female.”¹²⁵

As early as 1837, the Black press of New York had implored Black women to achieve an education. Addressing the “Females of Colour,” *The Weekly Advocate* proclaimed:

In any enterprise for the improvement of our people . . . our hands would be palsied without women’s influence. [Therefore,] let our beloved female friends, rise up and show the world there is virtue among us.¹²⁶

Howard University Medical School accepted women students as early as 1869, graduating its first female Black doctor in 1872.¹²⁷ Since there was substantial agreement among middle-class Blacks that the contributions of women were needed to achieve racial progress, they tended not to discourage their women from entering higher education and specialized training.¹²⁸ This is not to suggest that all Black men perceived Black women to be their peers. As was often the case for white women who attended institutions of higher learning, Black female students at Howard University in the 1870s received jeers from young men in their Anatomy courses.¹²⁹ Additionally, although Black women were admitted, as was Mary Ann Shadd Cary, to some law and medical programs at traditionally predominantly Black institutions, they were not permitted to take degrees because of their sex.¹³⁰ Black women were obliged to find other means to express their interests and talents.

Just as did turn-of-the-century white social reformers and leaders of such organizations as the Playground Association of America, Black community leaders supported the notion that character-building could be inculcated in children and youth through participation in games and sports. Among the most

123. Harley and Terborg-Penn, p. 42. Also see Jeanne L. Noble, *The Negro Woman’s College Education* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Columbia University, 1956), p. 17.

124. Linda M. Perkins, “The Impact of the ‘Cult of True Womanhood’ on the Education of Black Women,” *Journal of Social Issues* 39, No. 3, (1983): 18.

125. *Ibid.*

126. Quote appears in Perkins, p. 19.

127. Harley and Terborg-Penn, p. 38.

128. See for example: Giddings, p. 59; Noble, p. 20; and Perkins, p. 19.

129. Dyson, p. 264.

130. Sterling: p. 406.

significant of the post-bellum social institutions that fostered health, exercise, and character development for members of the Afro-American community were Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations. The nation's first all-Black Y.M.C.A. had been established in Washington D.C. in 1853 by Anthony Bowen, who became its first president.¹³¹ By 1924, there were more than 160 Y.M. and Y. W.C. A.s in the United States that catered to a predominantly Black clientele.¹³² These were located in Northern cities such as New York, Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. and in southern cities such as Atlanta, Nashville, and Richmond. The activities they promoted, designed specifically to foster the intellectual and moral growth of youth and to teach them about health, hygiene, and physical efficiency through games, was an important part of many of the programs. The Phyllis Wheatley Y. W.C.A. in Washington, D.C., founded in 1905, had a membership of more than 2,500 women and girls by 1927.¹³³ Members participated in such activities as fencing, gymnastics, basketball, and tennis.¹³⁴ In the same period, the 12th Street Branch Y.M.C.A. of Washington D.C. was catering to approximately 1,000 men and boys, offering activities such as boxing, wrestling, and competitive basketball.¹³⁵

Aspirations and ideals of African American womanhood in the early twentieth century also may be illustrated through the lives and sporting careers of Lucy Slowe, Anita Gant, and Inez Patterson, noteworthy pioneers on the Black American sporting scene. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was believed that tennis was "too sophisticated and intellectual for Black women [and men]." ¹³⁶ This assertion was successfully challenged by Lucy Slowe's spectacular performances on the tennis courts of Baltimore. These allowed her to capture national championships in 1917 and 1921. Anita Gant emerged victorious as division singles champion for colored women in Washington D.C. in 1925 and 1926. In 1929 and 1930 Gant and her partner, members of the all-Negro American Tennis Association, won the national mixed doubles title. Inez Patterson's illustrious athletic feats allowed her to boast of achievements in several events. While attending high school in Philadelphia between 1925 and 1928, Ms. Patterson was the only Afro-American field hockey player, a record-setting distance swimmer, and a track star. Her post-high school athletic and sporting pursuits included participating on several collegiate teams while attending Temple University. She later organized athletic clubs and provided athletic training for aspiring Black youth in New Jersey and New York.¹³⁷ Each of these three above-mentioned female sporting pioneers was

131. See Moorland, p. 127 and William H. Jones, *Recreation and Amusement Among Negroes in Washington, D.C.* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1927), p. 62.

132. C. Howard Hopkins, *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America* (New York: Association Press, 1951), p. 580.

133. Jones, pp. 55-56.

134. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-57.

135. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-57, 63.

136. Bill Rhoden, "A Fruitful Past, But a Shaky Future," *Ebony* 32, (1977): 32.

137. See for example: Henderson, *The Negro in Sports*, pp. 181, 206, 211, 213, and 215; Jones, p. 34; and Bessie Stockard, "The Black Female Athlete-Past and Present," *Crisis* 90, No. 5, (1983): 16.

considered a noteworthy heroine among her race and a model for emulation by others.

Concluding Observations

In the period between 1850 and 1930, as we have seen, an expanding group of middle-class African American men and women earnestly sought ways to participate in and become accepted as members of American society. With the ratification of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution their hopes and expectations increased. Attempts to embrace middle-class values of the larger population were repeatedly thwarted as avenues for racial advancement were blocked to them. None of these obstacles, however, in the words of Harvard graduate (B.A. in 1890; Ph.D. in 1895) and civil rights leader, W. E. B. Du Bois, was “able to crush all manhood, chasity, and aspirations.”¹³⁸

African Americans turned their energies inward and established their own social, civic, religious, educational, and sporting clubs, organizations, and agencies. In most instances these were patterned along the lines of the dominant society. Moreover, numerous Afro-American men and women took the initiative in setting standards of ideal behavior for members of their race. In so doing, they believed, they became worthy models for emulation by others of their race. As this paper has argued, persistent discrimination created difficult dilemmas for Afro-American males. How were they to assert their manhood—when excluded from the major arena’s of society in which demonstration of masculine achievements was a prized cultural value. This undoubtedly placed enormous psychological encumbrances on Black men, which when added to limited professional, economic, and similar opportunities, may go a long way in helping to explain some of the problems the Afro-American male is currently faced with in American society. African American women, no less, were deeply influenced being both female and Black. Moreover, if as MacCormack and others have argued, the entire notion of gender necessitates at least some attention to binary relationships,¹³⁹ the construction of what it was to be “female” in emerging middle-class Black America was rendered especially complex. Civil Rights legislation passed within the past twenty years has surely had an impact upon several facets of Afro-American life. But to what extent such acts of law helped individuals to overcome the social and psychological barriers of the years between 1850 and 1930 needs much further study.

138. W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth,” in Lester F. Goodchild and Harold S. Wechsler, *Association for the Study of Higher Education Reader on the History of Higher Education* (Needham Heights, MA: Ginn Press, 1989), p. 480.

139. See Carol MacCormack and Marilyn Strathem, eds., *Nature, Culture, and Gender* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), chapter 1.