

the social foundations of the black community: the fraternities

the california masons as a test case

william muraskin

Fraternal organizations, after the family and the church, have been traditionally the most important institutions in Black society.¹ Despite their significance, most White and Black observers have dismissed them as ludicrous affairs where Negroes waste time and money on pointless ostentation, competing endlessly for absurd and long-winded titles while doing little of constructive value. Even “friendly” observers, who felt the fraternities represented the “savings, banking spirit among Negroes and are the germ of commercial enterprise of a purer type . . .,” could not help condemning fraternity members for their “extravagance and wasteful expenditure, on outlay for regalia and tinsel.”² And the complimentary part of the observation sees fraternities only as a means to something else rather than intrinsically valuable. Perhaps of more significance than whether observers have been favorable or hostile is the fact that very little study has been devoted to fraternities, and what research has been done has been of poor quality.

Edward N. Palmer, in a memorandum for the original Gunnar Myrdal study, *The Negro in America*, wrote that Negro lodges and fraternities were major Black institutions that had been severely neglected as a source of study. Unfortunately, the published work which came out of the research, *An American Dilemma*,³ did little to rectify the situation. While Myrdal did include a discussion of fraternal organizations, he did so only to dismiss them as almost totally worthless. Myrdal observes “Typical of the *highest* [italics mine] sort of evaluation of the lodges heard today is the one expressed by the secretary of a local Urban League in a Northern city:

‘Not much practical value to the community . . . but vastly important to the individual. . . . There are a few visionary optimists . . . but the rest are there because they

like to have a good time . . . who like the pomp and ceremony and mumbo-jumbo . . . which is as good a reason for joining as any.’⁴

More complete in his treatment of fraternities than Myrdal, E. Franklin Frazier, in *The Negro In the United States*,⁵ examines the history of various Negro societies from the eighteenth century to the present. Some of the positive psychological and social functions that lodges and fraternities have played for their membership are favorably reviewed. Frazier’s treatment proves insufficient, however, because he generalizes about too many types of organizations with too little substantive material over too extensive a time span. In addition, Frazier, as do other historians and sociologists who have dealt with Black fraternal organizations, groups (with only minor qualifications), “secret societies,” mutual aid societies, and middle class, lower class, urban and rural varieties of each. More importantly, since detailed studies of very few individual fraternal organizations exist, generalizations about any or all of them are of dubious value. Because of these problems, generalizations about the strength or weakness, decline or rise, appeal or lack of appeal of fraternities leave the reader unsure as to which groups the remarks refer to. The sweeping nature of the commentators’ arguments force one to accept the conclusions equally for all fraternal groups.

Even when the mutual aid societies are excluded from the discussion of fraternities, no differentiation is made between various types of secret societies. Frazier, who is not the worst offender by any means, does just this in his discussion of the supposed “decline” of secret societies in cities during the twentieth century when he exempts only the Black Order of Elks from his sweeping generalization:

The fraternal organizations [in the cities] continue to attract the less sophisticated urban Negro. . . . Moreover, as the Negro acquires an education and a more secular outlook, these societies with their religious outlook have become less congenial. . . . The only national secret society which has increased its membership since the mass migration to cities has been . . . the Elks. . . .⁶

Frazier forces us to assume that every fraternal organization except the Order of Elks is primarily “religious in outlook,” was unable to adjust to the changed outlook and interests of the urbanized Negro and only attracts the less sophisticated Blacks. This view is echoed in many other studies. Allan Spear, in his book *Black Chicago, The Making of a Negro Ghetto 1890-1920*, maintains that in urban centers like Chicago the lodges declined by the first decade of the twentieth century. “Geared primarily for small, relatively homogeneous communities, the lodges found it difficult to compete for membership and prestige in a city. . . .”⁷ Such statements have tended to discourage research in so “obviously” an unrewarding field.

Where does the Prince Hall Masonic fraternity fit into this picture? Frazier simply assumes it is a typical secret society since he does not specifically exempt it. Spear, on the other hand, does discuss Masonry directly, and clearly includes it in his "eulogy" to fraternities. We cannot say how correct observers like Frazier and Spear are in their general view of fraternal organizations. However, research on Black Masons in California, New York, Alabama, Georgia, Texas and Illinois indicates that their views are inaccurate for Masonry. Since this is a preliminary study of Prince Hall Masonry, and concerned with only a few key aspects of the Order, this is not the place for a detailed discussion of why men like Frazier, Myrdal, Spear, St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton are wrong about the supposed decline of the Masonic fraternity.⁸ We emphasize, however, that the Order grew nationally from 46,000 members in 1904 to 400,000 in 1960.⁹ Masonry neither died nor was mortally wounded in the urbanizing twentieth century. A full discussion of Prince Hall Masonry's influence in the Black community, both urban and rural, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is planned for a future article. However, we can say here that Masons are and have been throughout their history a significant force in the Black community.

Our purpose in this article is to use the Black Masons of California, a branch of "the oldest and most respected secret society among Negroes in the United States" to begin to give fraternities the closer look they deserve.¹⁰

Since this article was completed further research by the author in New York, Georgia, Texas, Alabama and Illinois confirms the findings presented here for California. California differs from many of the other states in that it is one of the smaller Masonic "jurisdictions" in membership. It had 157 members in 1900, 2,400 in 1929 and 7,300 in 1960. As in other Northern states, membership has been concentrated in cities (especially Los Angeles and Oakland) because of the lack of significant Black rural populations. The Southern states have large Masonic memberships in both urban and rural areas.

In this article on California Masonry we hope not only to illumine the role of this organization but to encourage other historians to start inquiries into many other prominent, and neglected, national Black fraternal orders. Since the Masons are representative of middle class rather than lower class secret societies, one of the major functions that the Negro Masonic fraternity performs for that part of the population that comes under its influence is the integration of its membership into the larger American society through acculturation to the values of the White middle class. Insofar as the institution helps create or strengthen a culturally Black bourgeoisie which shares the assumptions, perspective and aspirations of the White middle class, it serves to bind the two racial communities closer together. It is with this acculturation process that we will concern ourselves in this article.

Since the values Masonry emphasizes are first presented to the membership in their families and churches, the work of acculturation to middle class values is already advanced before they join the order. Thus the institution actually functions as a major secondary acculturative agency rather than a primary one. It works to reinforce and strengthen among adults a commitment to middle class mores and helps prevent their exchanging those values for those of the Black lower class with which they are in constant contact.

The Masonic fraternity does not start with completely raw material; the organization prides itself on its highly selective character. It carefully selects its potential members from men who are already comparatively middle class in their outlook. In the 1909 *Proceedings*, the Grand Master said “(W)e should closely guard the inner portals of our Fraternity. See that none enter whose character will not bear [the] closest scrutiny.” One of the means by which this was accomplished is revealed in the 1923 *Proceedings* where a sample questionnaire, filled out by the local lodge investigating committee reviewing applicants to the fraternity is exhibited:

2. Do you believe him to be of sufficient mental capacity to understand and appreciate the lessons of Masonry?
3. Is he a clean, right-living man, sober and industrious?
4. Has he any habits which tend to degrade his morals?
7. Does he live with and support his family as a husband should?
9. Is he likely to become a charge upon the Lodges?

These types of questions reflect the fraternity's demand that only *culturally* middle class people be admitted into it. By using the term *culturally* (as opposed to *economically*) middle class we are employing the insights that Jesse Bernard provides in her book, *Marriage and Family Among Negroes* (New Jersey, 1966), chapter 2. In that work she says that there is a major cleavage in Black society, one that is usually considered in class terms: lower vs. middle. Class differences are usually based upon income levels, and the cleavage cuts across, not along, that division and is based not on income but on ethos—on the acceptance or rejection of “conventional (i.e., White) standards of behavior, especially in relation to sex and work.” The cleavage is therefore a cultural one, with many people who are lower class economically holding White middle class values.

The Masons receive their members not only from a culturally middle class group, but from an economically middle class one as well. It is, and always has been, fairly expensive to become a Mason. A man must pay for initiation into each of the three separate steps that create a “Master” Mason. As long ago as 1927 and before, the fees were \$75 in some California lodges. On occasion Grand Masters have been forced to temporarily lower the fees in order to obtain needed members for small local

lodges. However, as one Grand Master said in 1906: "I am opposed to cheap Masonry and want none of it." The general feeling among Masons has long been that to lower the fees is to lower the quality of their membership. When one considers that a Mason must pay not only these initial fees but dues to his local lodge, Grand Lodge, Relief (Burial and/or Charity) Fund, Building Fund, and any other special cause that may be approved (e.g., The N.A.A.C.P.), one realizes that the majority of Negroes were, and are, incapable of meeting the financial requirements of the Order.

Other impressionistic data, besides the high fees and dues, lends support to the idea that the Masons draw upon an economically, as well as culturally, middle class group for its initiates. In the book, *Negro Who's Who in California* (1948 edition), out of 150 men listed, 43 or over 26% were members of the Masonic fraternity. At that time the percentage of Black Masons in the general Negro population of California was only a small fraction of that. Similar results come from *Thompson's East Bay Directory* (dealing with Oakland and Berkeley) published in 1930.¹¹ At least 26% of the men listed in that volume were also identifiable as Masons. When we take the 40 Masonic businessmen listed in the directory and compare them to the membership rolls of the East Bay lodges, we find about 10% of the lodges made up of Black businessmen.¹² The actual percentage is probably considerably higher, because the directory appears to be quite incomplete. A similar list, compiled two years earlier than the Thompson Directory by a graduate student at the University of California, included eleven additional names of Masonic businessmen. And even that list was certainly not exhaustive.¹³

The most striking middle class value that receives attention in the *Proceedings* of the California Grand Lodge is the need for Masons as individuals, and the Masonic Order as an institution, to obtain property. An excellent summary of this idea is found in the *Proceedings* for 1914 in which the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence said:

It is a fact worthy of note that Masonry is teaching more than signs, grips, and passwords. That it is teaching men the practical lessons, how to live, how to economize and the worth of a dollar . . . it is . . . laudable, and a . . . duty for husbands and fathers to build a home for the comforts of loved ones. . . . Let the habit of acquiring great responsibilities be carried through the Lodges, grand and subordinate, to the individual members, till it results in the Negro acquiring large land holdings and managing great businesses for himself, and then the leopard will have done much to change his spots and the Ethiopian his skin.¹⁴

In 1915, the same basic idea was again argued when the Grand Master said, ". . . Brothers, let us be up and doing, and be not content to remain

a floating part of the population; get homes, get business, and give Race men . . ." your patronage if they equal in quality their white competitors. Over the years Grand Masters have attempted to inspire, impress and motivate the membership to acquire property by collecting information which showed how financially successful the brethren already were. In 1915 the Grand Master received reports from most local lodges and proudly announced that of 760 Masons in the California Jurisdiction, fully 50% were property owners.

The Grand Masters were more than just interested in the individual obtaining property. They wanted the Order, as an institution, to grow and prosper and by so doing prove to the larger White community that the Negro had "arrived." The Grand Master in 1927 put the issue to the Grand Lodge very succinctly: "Owning your own lodge homes insures respect and takes us out of the pauper class." We can see that the Masons were very active in transmitting the idea that obtaining property is a virtue and from that virtue many, if not most, benefits flow. One of the most important benefits, at least in theory, is that "the Ethiopian" can change his skin since property ultimately will speak louder than race. One Grand Master said that when anything is done for Negro rights it is not done out of love or humanitarianism but because "We have acquired property rights that *could not be ignored*" [italics mine]. And it was this belief—that ultimately middle class values would pay off—that made adherence to them so psychologically compelling.

Another "virtue" that the Masonic Order instills into its members is faith in the importance, honor and dignity of work:

[Masonry] . . . teaches those who frequent its Temples, that the nobility of human nature is displayed in WORK. . . . Work alone enobles (sic); work, not meant by us to benefit ourselves alone; for that does not enoble (sic). [We must] help the less favored of our race—not alone our Children, or neighbors, but those remote from us. . . .

The emphasis on the dignity of work directly contradicts the Negro's heritage from slavery and the quasi-peonage he experienced after emancipation, a heritage which emphasized the degrading nature of labor. The extent to which the Negro Masons of California have gone in praising work can be seen in the words of the 1932 Grand Master:

Of deeper signilcance (sic) if possible, than equality before the law . . . is equality of industry. . . . He who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow is, in our teachings, as much entitled to respect and honor as he . . . who rules an empire and enjoys with him an equality of fraternity, friendship and recognition.

Our first quotation on the dignity of work also contains a statement that has relevance for a third White middle class value that Masonry is desirous of spreading in the Black community. "[We must help] the less

avored of our race—not alone our Children, or neighbors, but *those remote from us*” [italics mine]. The whole question of charity and communal cooperation is one that has long plagued the Black community. Negroes have often been attacked by others, as well as by members of their own group, for the lack of cooperation that they have given to each other. The Masons have been very important in instilling the virtue of charity into their membership, though perhaps not as successfully when dealing with the need to aid the mass of lower class Negroes as in aiding fellow Masons and their families. There is not a year when the Grand Lodge *Proceedings* do not stress the duty of Masons to provide charity:

. . . we find true solace in conceiving the idea that the welfare of man, our brother, God’s highest creation, and the cry of the destitute, the widow and the orphan, should be our chief concern, by doing deeds of charity. . .

prompted by the spirit of brotherly love.¹⁵ The continuous lauding of charity has been implemented over the years in many ways. The Grand Lodge, very early in its history, attempted to set up some type of Burial Relief Fund which by paying for a Mason’s funeral would free his wife from the burden of debt. Often the local lodges give additional aid and comfort to widows and orphans in need.

Very closely related to the ideas of property ownership and charity is the idea of thrift. Thrift is one of the most basic of all White middle class values and one consistently transmitted to the Negro membership via the Masonic fraternity. In 1911, the future Grand Master, J. H. Wilson, presented a resolution to the Grand Lodge in which he asked that money be put aside to purchase land for an Old Age Home and a Masonic farm, the profits from which would be used for charity. Such an action was completely in keeping with “the duty of our Fraternity to teach the practical lessons of thrift, industry and self reliance. . . .” As early as 1900 a Grand Master said that the local lodges should “open . . . a savings bank . . . account in the name of the Lodge, and quarterly make a deposit no matter how small it may be—it will grow.” Such thrift was the obvious foundation for many of the “virtues” that the Masons preached. Without it, very little of a practical nature was possible.

The Masonic fraternity in its exhortations to its membership leaves very few of the classic “petty bourgeois” mores unattended. In 1915, the Grand Master proudly pointed out that Masonry shows “how to avoid intemperance in drinking, eating and speaking.” At least part of the way that temperance was to be assured was for the Grand Lodge to pass a law declaring “Any Mason in good and regular standing . . . who may hereafter enter upon or engage in the saloon or liquor business, either as an agent, owner or manager, shall be deemed guilty of unMasonic

conduct.” Earlier, the Grand Lodge had forbidden the initiation into Masonry of any applicant engaged in the liquor trade.

The *Proceedings* show that the Grand Lodge officials never miss a chance to extol the importance of cleanliness as a way of allowing a Mason to demonstrate his acceptance of middle class standards:

The encouraging thing about the Lodges . . . is the great amount of interest being displayed by the young men in their endeavor to elevate themselves and their Lodges by their clean, gentlemanly deportment, both in and out of the Lodge.

The Masons feel that when a member lives up to the requirements of the fraternity the effect will be far reaching and operate for the benefit of many besides himself:

I have personal knowledge that by reason of the dignified, clean cut position maintained by this craft, [said a Grand Master in 1919] men have in many instances changed their mode and manner of living that they might continue the association that the fraternity affords.

The value of a good model for Negroes to follow in general, and Masons in particular, was never forgotten by the Grand Masters. One was quick to point out, for example, that Joe Lewis, the hero of countless Black Americans, was “A real champion, a clean liver, and a gentleman who deserves the title.” What Lewis accomplished in the ring was to sublimate his natural human tendency to brutal violence into good channels, just as Masons generally channel their destructive tendencies into constructive competition to build a better fraternity and a better world.¹⁶

One major value that the Masons were scrupulous not to overlook was that of Patriotism, and the duty of participation in the obligations of government and society generally. In 1929 the Committee on the State of the Country said:

The kind of citizenship which Masonry recommends is not the kind which regards the government as none of one’s business and as a consequence leaves it entirely to someone else.

Rather

We must learn that every right has its corresponding responsibility. If we are to enjoy our civic and economic rights, then we should bear our civic and economic responsibilities. Every Mason should be a tax-payer, that means he should have something upon which to pay taxes, and thus contribute to the public good.

When it came to the political duties of Masons this same committee, in 1932, said “That any effort to evade the use of the ballot is un-American.” And the Masons, especially in times of anti-radical sentiment in the country, e.g., 1953, always took the opportunity to point out that “We

must be diligent in our determination to keep our ranks free from those whose activities may in any manner be classed as unAmerican.”

If we take all these ideas together we have an inclusive list of attributes that White middle class America would consider its “Ethic.”¹⁷ The Masonic fraternity does its best to transmit these ideas to the Negro people in its attempt to aid in the “bourgeoisification” of Black society along White guidelines. To the extent that they succeed they aid in the creation of a Black middle class in the image of the great American bourgeoisie. These concepts, once absorbed and accepted by the Negro membership, play a number of important socio-psychological functions: 1) They help create an integrated self-image for the individual Black Mason as an upstanding American citizen; 2) they help bind the individual to the White society by enabling him to identify with the White middle class; 3) they help create a cohesion among middle class Negroes—a “we-feeling”; and 4) they help divide the Negro middle class from the lower class—creating a “they-feeling.”¹⁸

As can be seen, only points 1 and 3 aid in the construction of a viable Negro community. Point 2, however, is partially offset by the White community’s continued rejection of the Negro middle class, though the “poison” of “hoped-for-acceptance” is never really eliminated as we shall see later in the paper. It is important to notice, however, that while point 4 (alienation from the lower class) largely destroys the Masonic fraternity’s ability to help create a *total* Negro community, it does at least help create cohesion among part of such a community.

If we turn aside from the acculturative functions of Masonry and concentrate instead on the psychological effects of the Order, we discover another key role the Masonic fraternity plays for its Negro membership. Aside from the middle class values that Masonry provides for the Black American, it also presents him with a world view that aids in the creation of individual self-respect. Masonry supplies the Negro with a history, a vision of the past, *his past*, that is radically different from the normal White conception of it. The Negro Masons of America trace their ancestry back to Prince Hall, a free Massachusetts Negro who became a Mason during the Revolutionary War. It is through him, and the Masonic Charter he received directly from the Grand Lodge of England, that they claim descent for Masonry through the ages.

The importance of this historical lineage cannot be overemphasized. What occurs is the erasure in the mind of the Black Mason of his actual descent from slaves; in fact, the whole history of Negro slavery in America is dispelled and substituted instead is an ancestry of Freedom, from the days of the pyramids—which according to Masonic legend is the earliest beginnings of the Order—down through Prince Hall, a free man, to the present. In other words, Masonry gives the Negro a glorious heritage of liberty in place of a degraded one of servitude. In the *Proceedings* of the Grand Lodge the history of Masonry, into antiquity, is a constant,

greatly elaborated theme that receives countless pages of exposition. Of course, such discussion helps support the institution's claim to unsurpassed greatness, but it also allows the individual Negro Mason to claim that same greatness.

The need for the Black Masons to see Masonic history as their own, rightful heritage is most obvious in the way that part of general (White) Masonic history is changed by them. Usually Negro Masonry scrupulously adheres to White Masonic ritual, ideas and practices. This is a necessity if the Negro fraternity is to fight against claims that it is a bogus and illegitimate order. But in the recitation of the early, legendary history of the Order, the Negro Masons differ from the Whites. When discussing the most distant origins of the fraternity, the Masons—White and Black—claim descent from the ancient Egyptians. But the Black Masons see this origin a little differently than their White brethren:

We learn from science that the first man was the black man found in Africa, hence we concede the beginning of man was the black man.¹⁹

And it is also known:

(T)he ancient Egyptians were the original man—the black man. So out of Egypt and through the black man, the world gains its first knowledge of the worship of the diety and the cultivation of science. . . . When our white brother comes to realize God is the Father, and all mankind are brothers . . . He may then say the greatest gift to man, the operative and speculative [i.e., types of Masonry] . . . which puts us in the image of our Creator, came down through Egypt as the first Man—the black man.²⁰

A number of years later another Masonic committee report said, after claiming the Egyptians as the first builder race, “This is true of the Black Race unto this day. . . . Masonry . . . the principles of which originated by our ancestors along the banks of the Nile . . .” is still carried on by the Negroes of America.²¹ By this interpretation the Black Masons can claim general Masonic history as their own, not just by a tenuous thread, but boldly and completely, since the first Masons were Black like themselves.

It is within this framework (the psychological importance of Masonic history) that one can more easily understand the heat of the endless debate between Negro and White Masons over the former's “legitimacy.” White Masonic lodges, as a whole, have refused to accept their Black brethren as orthodox members of the Order. The Black Masons have fought the charge of illegitimacy throughout their entire history, and one writer has gone so far as to say that “Negro Masonic literature deals almost entirely with arguments against the white Mason's charge that Prince Hall Masonry is clandestine [bogus].”²² One continuously finds in the *Proceedings* of the Grand Lodge of California such remarks as

“Our forefathers were made Masons from the same shrine as theirs; our Mother Lodge received her warrant from the same fountainhead . . .” or “The doors of Freemasonry were open to the Sons of Africa and they were practicing the same in America when some of the ancestors of our Southern friends were feudal slaves and vassals to the lords of Europe.”²³ In this last remark we see the tables turned, the Negro is not a descendant of slaves, the White man is! For most of their history, California Negro Masons have printed on the front of each Grand Lodge *Proceedings* a copy of the original charter from the 1850's that the California Black Masons received, in order to continually prove their legitimacy.

Masonry not only supplies a non-slave heritage for the Black man, it also provides a glorious history; a past full of great ideals and great deeds. But it does more. It supplies him with a magnificent present and future as well. The Negro ceases to be a poor, insignificant member of an oppressed group; he becomes a member of the most important idealistic and powerful institution the world has ever seen—an institution with the ability to remake the world. Indeed, the Black Mason is not even a member of the “profane” world since “In the strict ancient and technical sense of the word Masons are a ‘peculiar’ people—a people dedicated and set apart.” And this chosen people is given a special knowledge and has a special mission to lead the world. As a Grand Master said in 1914, the Bible tells of things to come but the Revelations are hidden from normal men. “But these Revelations are not meant for the world in general now, but merely the elect [Masons]. To you it is given to know the mystery. To the profane these things are spoken in parables and dark sayings.” Most of these ideas are not peculiar to the Negro Mason; they are shared by the White Masons as well. The important thing however is that they play a special role for the Black man, that is either not necessary, or more likely, less necessary for his White brethren.

The institution of Masonry does for the Black middle class, in a moderate way, what the heterodox religious cults do for the Black lower class—cults like the Black Muslims, Black Jews of Harlem, or Father Divine's Movement. These cults perform the important role of stripping their adherents of their slave past and giving them a new identity, a sense of self respect (even to the extent of a new name) and a philosophy-history that explains their past (which is glorious), their present (which is meaningful and pregnant with great things) and their future (which tends to be apocalyptic and millennial, and which foresees the Black man inheriting the earth).²⁴

In building the Negro Mason's self respect, Masonry supplies another major ingredient besides a new view of history and a new concept of the Mason's place in the march of time. It also supplies a new sense of equality with the White race, through the concept of “the Brotherhood of Man.” This concept is certainly not an idea that is exclusively

Masonic—the Church is the most notable exponent of this philosophy. But while the Church may also emphasize it, this concept plays a special role in Masonry. The Masonic fraternity prides itself on its universality. “It breaks down the barriers of birth, race, creed, and tends to make all nations one great nation.”²⁵ And the fact that Masonry “detracts from no man’s faith, seeks to interfere with no man’s creed . . . holds in reverence every man’s temple; desecrates no man’s altar . . .” tends to actually make it more catholic than any religion.²⁶ This claim to Brotherhood is maintained by all Masons everywhere. But for Negroes, especially in America, it has more than rhetorical significance. It is the means by which they can claim equality with Whites and the means by which they actually have received part of the recognition they desire. While the White American Masons have refused to accept them as legitimate and exchange fraternal greetings with them, many European White nations have done so. The prominence in Masonry of the claim that all men are brothers—and it is the bedrock of the Order—and are accepted as equals is definitely one of the major attractions of the fraternity for Blacks.

The desire for racial equality and integration through the medium of Masonry at a crucial point in Black history can be found in the pages of the San Francisco *Pacific Appeal* in the early 1870’s. The editor, Peter Anderson, was also Grand Master of the Masons of California, and he used his paper not only as the local Masonic organ but as a forum for Black Masons throughout the United States. At this time, when Black Masonry was spreading rapidly through the newly liberated South, the demand for White “recognition” was explicitly seen as a prelude to integration. The paper also gives much space to the fight for European recognition.

The words of a Grand Master of Alabama in 1925 demonstrate how Masonry has been able to aid its Black adherents to transcend their status as members of an oppressed race:

Ours is the fraternity which binds together two worlds while it annoints every ramification of universal citizenship. The Masonic Fraternity, and he [sic] alone marches down the feudal halls of Great Britain, grasps the stalwart Englishmen by the hand and feels the warm response of fraternal greeting. He hails the German among his vine clad hills, or in royal garb at the imperial palace. . . . Ah, my brethren, the influence of the Gold Links [of Masonry] has done much to soften the condition of our people.²⁷

The result of White American Masonry’s refusal to recognize Prince Hall Masonry as legitimate has had momentous results for the Black Order. We have already referred to the psychological significance of winning the on-going battle between Black and White Masons over the former’s demand for “recognition” as a Masonic body. But that fight

has had other, more concrete results. While Black fraternal organizations as a group have long had the reputation of being escapist in nature, a place where their members could temporarily forget the realities of a racist, segregated society, Prince Hall Masons have not been permitted that luxury. The simple erection of lodges which they have called Masonic and the espousal of the doctrine of Masonic Brotherhood and Equality have *ipso facto* constituted a form of rebellion against caste, a refusal to accept the racial status quo; and has forced Masonic members into a continuous awareness of American racism.

Even if Prince Hall Masonry's claim to fraternal equality had not in itself precluded its being escapist, the character of its leadership would have. The leaders of the Order have always been deeply concerned with the problems of civil rights as it effects not only Masonry but the entire Black community. In 1907 Grand Master Tinsley of California spoke to this point when he addressed his constituents on "The Race Question." He bitterly pointed out that while the gravest problem before the public was that of race, the American people refused to solve it in the only way it could be solved, by treating "the Negro as a man." Rather, while the Black man had fought in every war for American freedom, the only justice the government provided was "to allow him to be lynched, burned at the stake or sacrificed in some way to appease the savage appetite of the dominant race."

Tinsley's lament was not meant for an audience that saw Masonry as a refuge from the realities of American life, and his brethren responded as he expected they would. His outcry struck a chord in Masons throughout the United States. The Chairmen of the Committees of Foreign Correspondence (CCFC) of Georgia and Texas reprinted verbatim a large portion of the address for the benefit of their jurisdictions. The CCFC of New Jersey felt compelled, not simply to approve Tinsley's sentiments, but to expand upon them and suggest a solution. He told his Grand Lodge that "The allusions of the Grand Master [of California] on the race question were not only right, but deserve high commendation, for the time is come when a great and highly important organization like this of ours should step to the very forefront of the battle to both defend and direct a defenseless people."²⁸ The CCFC's belief that Masonry had a major role to play in defense of Black liberties was not unique but represented a widespread sentiment in the Order.

While the deteriorating racial situation in America during the early twentieth century continually forced individual Masonic leaders to speak out against injustice, the event that brought a universal reaction among the brethren was American entrance into World War I. For Black Masons the immediate effect of the Great War was rising hopes and expectations that reached a peak when the Grand Master of Texas announced in 1918, "We believe that our second emancipation will be the outcome of this war. If the world is to be made 'safe for democracy,'

that will mean us also.” If White Texans had any doubts about what constituted a “Second Emancipation” for a Black Mason, the Grand Master resolved them by saying “we are expecting to be free—free from segregation, free from ostracism, free from . . . mob violence. . . .” Neither the Texas Grand Master, nor Black Masons from Mississippi to California accepted “their place” in the American caste system. The fact that they were adherents of Freemasonry was not irrelevant to their stand, because, as the Grand Master was quick to point out, “Masonry has contended, from the beginning . . . [for] equal rights to all; special privileges to none.”²⁹

By 1919 when the Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Correspondence of the Grand Lodge of California commented upon the Grand Master of Texas’ speech the situation had changed radically. The expectations that the war created were not only left unfulfilled but race conditions had degenerated. As a result, when J. H. Wilson of California reviewed the speech he felt impelled to reinterpret it. When the Grand Master of Texas said the Black man has much to fight for in this war he was right:

But, not in Germany . . . but right here in Texas and the rest of these United States, is the bloody or bloodless battlefield where the Negro has the most for which to fight. If the Negro could afford to . . . die . . . to liberate the serfs of Europe, and to make permanent the rule of the Anglo [-] Saxon, can he afford to do less to protect his own home and loved ones from the insults and ravages of the brute force of the degenerates of America . . . we have been fighting the wrong fellow. The low American and not the German, is the brute who has ravished our women, lynched, flayed, burned and massacred our men and women.

The militancy of J. H. Wilson and his Masonic brethren did not abate with the end of the war. During the 1920’s and 1930’s Masonic Grand Lodges all over the country continually spoke out in the harshest terms against American hypocrisy and cruelty. The action of the Grand Lodge of California in the mid-1930’s in sending telegrams to all their state Representatives and Senators in Congress in support of anti-lynch legislation was quite typical. The Grand Lodge, like many of its sisters, hoped that the bill to end the “un-American and barbarous practice” of lynching would be passed with the active support of all law abiding citizens dedicated to maintaining America’s reputation as a Christian country.³⁰

During the years between the two World Wars Masonic jurisdictions throughout the United States were concerned with the promotion of civil rights, voting, education and general racial uplift.³¹ But, since Black Masonry as a “secret” society refused as a matter of principle to align itself formally with any non-Masonic groups, these activities were severely restricted. It was not until after the Second World War that

Prince Hall Masonry changed its position and, in 1951, established a major link between itself and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.³² Before the war many Masonic Grand Lodges had looked favorably upon that organization and contributed to its local and national branches. As early as 1922 the Grand Master of California told his brethren that “the spirit of the abolitionists” was not dead because the NAACP carried on its ideals and thus it deserved the financial support of the fraternity. Nevertheless relations between Masonry as an institution, rather than its constituent members as individuals, were meagre. In 1951 however, the International Conference of Grand Masters, a national advisory body of Masonic Grand Masters, working with Thurgood Marshall (a Mason), created the Prince Hall Masons Legal Research Fund under the control of the NAACP.

The establishment of the Fund made a deep impression on many Masonic leaders. The President of the Grand Masters Conference summed it up well when he proudly announced that by their action “we have assumed a place of leadership unequalled by any other organization. We have moved out of the seclusion of our halls . . . into the community to serve the country, the race, the community and God.”³³ This high opinion of their achievement soon received confirmation from outside sources. A few years after the inception of the Fund, the *Chicago Defender* presented the Conference with an award for service to humanity by setting up the Legal Research Bureau.³⁴ At the same time Thurgood Marshall announced that Prince Hall Masons had every right to be proud of their financial contribution to the NAACP since the only organization to surpass them was the mammoth labor federation, the Congress of Industrial Organizations. In 1958 Marshall gave the Masons the highest possible praise for their efforts by publicly saying that without their financial support many of the cases won before the Supreme Court could not have been fought. “Whenever and wherever I needed money and did not know of any other place to get it, the Prince Hall Masons never let me down.” By the year Marshall spoke the Fund had received \$142,000 from the Masons!³⁵

While the Prince Hall fraternity was working on the national level to become more effectively involved in the problems of the larger community, individual states like California were also busy. Throughout the post-World War II period, the Grand Lodge of California worked to free itself from some of the restrictions that its “secret” status placed upon its ability to cooperate with non-Masonic organizations. During the 1960’s this work reached fruition. In the first year of that decade a committee of the Grand Lodge recommended that local lodges, or combinations of local lodges, establish “service” organizations attached to the lodges which would work for Masonic representation on policy-making and managing boards of such organizations as the NAACP, YMCA, Boys Clubs, etc.³⁶ On the Grand Lodge level a new committee

was set up dealing with Civic Affairs as the means for involving Masonry in the community. The new committee's aims were exceptionally ambitious; through it the Grand Lodge took a position on numerous controversial community issues. The main goal of the new committee was to provide a "vehicle whereby all Master Masons may realize their desire to contribute, in a manner befitting Masons, to our long sought goal of first class citizenship for all Americans."³⁷ Its program called for the bulk of its efforts to be devoted to issues Masonry had been concerned with for decades, but had tried to handle by itself without cooperating with non-Masonic organizations. It placed support of voter registration and civil rights organizations, education in Negro history and recognition of progressive Negro business and professional men at the head of its list of aims.³⁸

As we have seen, the Negro Masonic fraternity plays many roles, some of which affect the psychology of the individual and some the larger society. An additional function of importance has been the fraternity's contribution to the building of a local and national Negro community. For there to be a Negro community, binding together the disparate individuals a White society designated "Negroes," the institutions and ideas that made for a community had to be created. The Negro fraternal organizations—and the Masons are only an example—were, and are, one of the institutions that helped create a positive Black society.

Rowland Berthoff, in "The American Social Order: A Conservative Hypothesis," which appeared in the *American Historical Review*, April, 1960, gives support to this idea of the community-building role of fraternal societies in his discussion of such organizations in the general White community. After presenting his thesis that American society in the nineteenth century was in a state of social chaos and disintegration—compared to the relative stability of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—and that "the forces of social reintegration were feeble indeed," he goes on to say:

Symptomatic of the need for a new sense of community was the fraternal order. It is customary for historians to dismiss the lodges of Masons or Odd Fellows which sprang up everywhere as an unimportant eccentricity of a 'nation of joiners,' and yet they were highly significant of the lack of other forms of community in American society in their day . . . the invention and maintenance of any kind of social community was in itself as sufficient cultural achievement for their time.

While Berthoff is talking of American White fraternities and the function they serve, the general social disintegration and confusion that made them necessary for the dominant race were nothing compared to the chaos among the Blacks. The Whites at least had a stable society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (according to Berthoff) as a starting point and model for their attempt to reintegrate society. But the Negro,

because of the eradication of his African heritage and the social confusion at the end of slavery, had far less. The Blacks suffered from a severe dearth of institutions to bind them together. The fraternities and lodges were one means of filling the void and building a common society. And what better place to get the materials for community building than from the most important Euro-American fraternal Orders.

In dealing with the Masons, we are dealing with an institution which is primarily middle class in culture. Since Masonry is an upward striving bourgeois organization, it does not encourage to any great extent a feeling of responsibility toward the masses of lower class Blacks—its official credo notwithstanding. Therefore, it does little to bind together or create a general Negro community. Rather, the integrative function of the Order is primarily in its role as builder of a cohesive middle class community within the confines of the larger Black society.

Black Masonry has traditionally played the same role for the Black bourgeoisie that Berthoff assigns the White fraternal organizations. It allows large numbers of Black men to come together, identify with each other, interact socially, exchange ideas and receive the same indoctrination in and support for middle class values and social roles. It meshes institutionally with the culturally middle class family and its churches by providing a place where their members can come and continue to find support for bourgeois values despite their forced daily contact with lower class Black culture. Masonry also helps bind together a whole set of other middle class institutions by interacting with the Negro colleges, business organizations and other fraternal groups.

Masonry has traditionally interacted with most other groups not as an institution per se but through its members. Most Masons are regular churchgoers and often prominent lay officials or ministers. They are frequently members of other fraternal orders like the Odd Fellows, Elks, Knights of Pythias and, not infrequently, high officials in them. Through individual Masons who are college presidents (not uncommon at all), business leaders, civil rights activists or newspaper editors, links are maintained with most centers of middle class power in the Black community.

Masonry also fosters a feeling of group consciousness and cohesion by emphasizing the common oppression of the Black group by White Americans and the power of the Negro to rise as a group if each member works diligently for himself and cooperates with his brother. One of the race heroes who is most frequently praised by the Masons is, not surprisingly, Prince Hall, the founder of black masonry in America. In 1959 one of the Grand Lodge officials said of him that he was a "man of God, defender of the oppressed, spokesman for the downtrodden. . . . Prince Hall ranks among our founding fathers with Washington, [and] Jefferson . . . as one of the most outstanding . . . advocates of the cause of freedom."

In honor of Prince Hall the California Masons celebrate his birthday as an official occasion. A Grand Master in 1926, commenting on a patriotic speech given by a White Mason visiting the Grand Lodge, said:

He has told us of his Washington, Warren and Revere and others, and they are outs too. But I want to tell him of our Crispus Attucks, Prince Hall, and others who shed their blood. . . . I challenge the Judge [the white speaker] to search the pages of history and find one Black Traitor.

The Masons also foster feelings of race solidarity by pointing out the common oppression that all Negroes share at the hands of the White race. One example comes from the speech of a Deputy Grand Master in 1907: "One of the hardest things for the American people to do is to treat the Negro as a man." Despite everything the Negro does, he has received no reward:

He has aided in fighting the Nation's battles. He has never proved a traitor to the grand old flag . . . the apparent justice which the government can give is to allow him to be lynched.

The airing of such truths could not help but create a greater feeling of race solidarity among the Black Masons.

The fraternity also helps create a feeling of *esprit de corps* by continually emphasizing the ability of the Negro, through the agency of Masonry, to rise up and achieve equality and material success in America. For example in 1916, J. H. Wilson said:

We . . . believe . . . that the [white] public conscience must be reached, aroused and educated. . . . We have . . . faith in the power and influence of the American eagle [on money] to accomplish this feat. . . . We need . . . that business sense, that business stamina that can blaze the way and enlist the cents and dollars of the race and unite them under one banner. . . . [this will] do more than all else in molding and educating public sentiment favorable to the race.

And Wilson was optimistic about this actually coming to pass. Both the unhappy comments on common oppression and hopeful prescriptions for the future have the power to strengthen feelings of community among the Negro middle class, and Masonry employed both.

So far we have emphasized the role that Black Masonry plays in creating a Black middle class consciousness. But it also creates counter-trends, centrifugal pressures that come very close to destroying the very cohesive feelings it tries to build. The Masons are very ambivalent about the larger White community and that ambivalence is a destructive force. On the one hand, the Negro bourgeoisie identifies with the White middle class whose values they have accepted. To this extent they retard their race consciousness. On the other hand, they also hate these same people

when they discover themselves rejected by Whites, even when they live up to all the standards required of them. To the extent that they react to this rejection they again feel race consciousness and group solidarity, often turning inward toward their own people (the lower class included) for solace. But since they are still middle class culturally, they are repelled by many of the members of their own racial group. The result is confusion; a confusion manifested in the inability of the Negro middle class to decide who is ultimately at fault for their problems. They suffer from an incurable love-hate relationship with both the White community and the Black lower class. Some of the best examples of the mental chaos that results from this confusion can be seen in a number of speeches appearing in the 1920 *Proceedings* of the Grand Lodge:

In this country it is the white against the black . . . the soul of the black man is crying out for justice. . . . He has been . . . long suffering patient and submissive . . . but he is waking up; the lessons of war [World War I] and his experiences abroad is (sic) causing him to think and act as he has not heretofore done. . . .

In another place the following appeared:

If the darker races of the earth are to ever check the encroachment of this proud, arrogant, intolerant, white race, and force them to see and acknowledge the Brotherhood of Man, it will come only when . . . the dark races . . . become united. . . . It is because the white race sees far into the future, that he has as part of his program in his world conquest for mastery, the keeping apart of the darker races of the world.

These two statements, especially the latter, sound modern, radical and nationalistic. But, instead of contributing to the creation of Black solidarity or “Third World” ideology, they only tended to create division because of the counter, pro-White, unrealistically optimistic hopes that acculturation to White values had forced upon the speakers, and which they could not discard. For example, the first speaker, the Grand Master in 1920, ends his radical critique of the race situation in America—in which he has demonstrated that no amount of effort will force the Whites to allow the Negro to rise—by saying the only solution to oppression is:

Let’s be men; do right; trust in God; be respectful to others; pay our honest debts, continue to be loyal, law-abiding citizens; get some wealth . . . ; beautify our homes; establish businesses as others do.

Ultimately the reward will come!

The second speaker, despite his even more radical tone, ultimately came to the same sort of conclusions—claiming that when the Negro got property, the Whites would definitely accept him as an equal—

despite his knowledge to the contrary. In 1922, after the second speaker, J. H. Wilson, became Grand Master he said:

To a great extent we are largely responsible for our condition today. To agitate and complain . . . will never solve our problem. . . . When we learn to fight conditions and obstacles with dollars and not with tongues, the seeming impregnable barriers that confront us will melt as the morning mists before the rising sun.

In a similar vein, years before, it was he who had promised that the acquisition of property by Blacks would mean equality since “the leopard will have done much to change his spots and the Ethiopian his skin.”

In countless other speeches by Grand Master Wilson we find both a radical rejection of White hypocrisy and either a naive pleading for acceptance or an overly optimistic view of the future. His position is unexplainable unless we realize that the acculturated Negro Mason is unable to reject the faith in tomorrow and the promise of reward for virtue without rejecting White middle class values too. The religious faith in hard work, thrift, cleanliness-next-to-Godliness, chastity and all the others cannot be given up. As a result we find, even in a radical speech such as the one quoted before, where Wilson calls on all the colored races to unite against the White oppressor:

Today, the more than twelve millions of American citizens, loyal to the core, among whom are no Reds, are battling for a man’s chance, a man’s place in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

He said that despite his own critique of American society which showed it was not the home of the brave or the land of the free; and one wonders if being a “Red” under the circumstances was all that unreasonable. A few years later, in 1926, when an American flag was presented to the Grand Lodge, he went so far as to say:

No token could be more appropriate. . . . You will assure . . . [the donors of the flag] that no heart beats beneath the folds of that grand old flag will (sic) ever hesitate in its defense or be not moved to the highest patriotism by its presence.

The destructive ambivalence of the Negro middle class, toward the Whites was only matched by the ambivalence of the Black bourgeoisie to the lower class Negro. On the one hand, the Negro Mason cries out for racial solidarity and cooperation as the only way up and out of the ghetto, but these fine sentiments break against the siren’s call of White middle class values. The extent of divisiveness that these values create is nowhere better illustrated than in the speech of the Grand Master in 1960:

One of the growing problems in our cities is the irresponsible element who does not want progress . . . it is most

regretable that the law-abiding, decent members of the group are judged by the worst element by and large. . . . Our fight is not for the undesirable, irresponsible element who does not contribute to the social and economic welfare of the community. . . .

What greater poison can exist in a community; what greater retardant to community growth can there be than the sentiment expressed above? But such ideas flow logically and inevitably from the ideals that the Masons stand for, ideals that make the Masons desirous of, and capable of, building a Black middle class group consciousness. And the most deadly idea of all is the belief upon which the above quote is based—that White Americans value economic achievement and social manners more than anything else. Thus anti-Negro discrimination must of necessity be class prejudice—occasioned by the predominant lower-class economic and social position of Blacks—and not real racial prejudice. This pernicious belief, despite all the evidence to the contrary, is something the Masons have never been able to overcome. To do so would be dangerous for their whole value system.

In summing up, we must reiterate that the Masonic fraternity has played a very important role in Black history. For many centuries Freemasonry has been the leading Euro-American fraternal organization. Its acceptance by American Negroes has been part of an attempt by them to further the process of assimilation into, and acceptance by, American society. Because of Masonry's role in helping to support and organize White society, the fraternity, along with the Black church and the patriarchal family, appeared to Blacks in the nineteenth century as a perfect foundation upon which to build their own community. At the same time it formed a crucial link between that community and the larger White society with which they hoped to ultimately merge.

The Prince Hall Order which they established has functioned as one of the pillars, not of a total Black community as many of its leaders hoped, but rather a Black "anglo-saxon" sub-division of it. Within its halls, those of its "higher degree" auxiliary orders (i.e., Shriners, Royal Arch Masons, Knights Templar, Scottish Rite Masons), the middle class churches and its brother fraternities (i.e., Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, Elks), it has enabled its adherents to spend much of their social lives separated from the Black masses among whom they have lived. Masonry has allowed the "assimilated" (to use Jesse Bernard's term) Black population to exercise, enlarge and strengthen its commitment to and understanding of White middle class mores and social roles. By accepting and mastering the cultural and economic values of bourgeois White America, the Black Masons have hoped to prove themselves worthy of acceptance by the White world.

The fact that Prince Hall Masons have been concerned with winning White approval has not meant that they have been passive or accommo-

Because of space limitations we have had to omit material dealing with Masonry's function in teaching a whole series of social roles to its adherents—roles dealing with self-government, administration of law, management of businesses, development of leadership capacities, etc. Among other things the Masons have maintained printing plants, newspapers, banks, old age homes, farms, vacation spas and insurance companies. Its members have learned how to operate and organize not only these enterprises but to handle the involved tasks of internal Masonic "home" rule.

dating in the face of continued racial discrimination. Rather, the very fact that they have accepted the American Promise at face value has led them to vociferously demand "payment in full" as the reward for their faithfulness to American moral and social mores. Nevertheless, their refusal, or inability, to give up their loyalty to middle class values, or reject the American Promise as false for Black men, has placed very severe limits on their militancy and their ability to mobilize the Black masses.

Prince Hall Masonry has accomplished a great deal for its members. It has helped to provide security, friendship and unity to a sizable minority of the Black population. It has aided its adherents to organize their lives and maintain middle class life styles in a congenial atmosphere. It has helped create a tradition of charity, self-help and self-reliance among its members. While its role in creating and maintaining a Black "anglo-saxon" community within Negro society has not been an unmixed blessing for the race, to a large extent it has been a necessity for the Negro's survival as a group in America.

University of California, Berkeley

footnotes

1. See, for example, E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro in the United States* (New York, 1961).
2. Quoted in an unpublished research memorandum by E. N. Palmer done for Gunnar Myrdal's *The Negro in America*. All the Myrdal research memoranda are located at the Schomburg Library of the New York Public Library.
3. Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma* (New York, 1944).
4. *Ibid.*, 955.
5. In his famous work *Black Bourgeoisie*, E. Franklin Frazier mentions secret societies like Masonry though in a quite neutral and benign manner. He does hostilely discuss college fraternities, but they are different organizations entirely.
6. Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, 378-379.
7. Allan Spear, *Black Chicago, The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago, 1967), 108.
8. Cayton and Drake in *Black Metropolis* (New York, 1962) and Myrdal in *American Dilemma* were writing at the end of the Depression, which hit Masonry hard, and were positive the Order was dead and buried. But, despite their view, Chicago Masonry, representative of Masonry everywhere, regained its pre-Depression membership level shortly after World War II.
9. *Prince Hall Sentinel*, May, 1944. This is the official magazine of the Grand Lodge of New York.
10. Palmer memorandum. The material utilized for this article can be found in *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons, of California and Jurisdiction* (hereafter cited as *Proceedings*) which later changed its name to *Proceedings of the Prince Hall Grand*

Lodge. . . . These records exist in printed form from 1893 to the present. The Grand Lodge is the name given the general assembly of all the local lodges of the state; it meets once a year and is the highest Masonic authority in the state. The elected head of the Grand Lodge is called the Grand Master. In this paper we will use the term "Black Mason" or just "Mason" to represent Prince Hall Masons of California.

11. *Thompson's East Bay Directory* is a small business directory that can be found in the Bancroft Library, University of California.

12. The term "businessmen" is used very loosely by the compiler, who includes some clergymen (not, however, most of them) and some professional men, like dentists and doctors.

13. Robert Coleman Francis, "A Survey of Negro Business in the San Francisco Bay Region," unpublished M.A. thesis, 1928, University of California. The number of men who went into and out of business quickly would also swell the percentage of "businessmen" types who were Masons. For example, ten Masonic businessmen who advertised in the 1922 Grand Lodge *Proceedings* do not appear in either the 1928 or 1930 listings. The years 1923, 1924, 1925, etc., probably all had their share of ill-fated Black Masons venturing into and out of business quickly. What makes statistical evidence even more difficult to compile and use in trying to raise our figure of 10% for 1930 is that we do not know how many of the 1922, or 1928, "businessmen" not only left business but Masonry as well. Nevertheless, the available material is a strong indicator of the type of men who made up the membership of the local lodges.

14. Statement by J. H. Wilson who later became Grand Master.

15. Statement of the Grand Master in 1932.

16. *Proceedings* of California, 1937.

17. These ideas are very much in the so-called Booker T. Washington tradition and the California Masons, in the early years of the twentieth century, frequently mention the Black leader favorably. Nevertheless, the Black Masons' commitment to the petty bourgeois ethic exists from the beginning in 1776 and owes little to the rise of Washington's influence. He simply expressed what men like the Masons already felt. Our discussion of these values and their espousal by Black Masons during the twentieth century may have a static, ahistorical appearance. This is because the acceptance of the bourgeois ethic by the Masons has been a constant throughout the entire time span. What changes have occurred in the Order over the decades have been concerned with its attitudes toward action—involvement versus non-involvement in community affairs, support or rejection of schemes to promote racial equality or Black businesses—a topic we hope to pursue in later work.

18. Points two (i.e., Blacks facing toward the White community) and four (i.e., Blacks turning their back on the masses of lower class Negroes) have been the major ways the racist system has "co-opted" Black leadership and left the Black community handicapped in its ability to fight its oppressors. Institutions like Masonry have been very important in the process of co-optation through their activities in spreading and supporting White middle class values. The very system that oppresses Blacks co-opts Black leaders "from the inside" by capturing their minds.

19. *Proceedings* of California, 1919.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*, 1933.

22. Palmer memorandum.

23. *Proceedings* of California, 1909.

24. See, for example, E. U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism* (New York, 1964).

25. Statement by Grand Lecturer, 1913.

26. *Proceedings* of California, 1914.

27. *Proceedings* of Alabama, 1925.

28. *Proceedings* of Georgia, 1908, and California, 1908.

29. *Proceedings* of Texas, 1918.

30. *Proceedings* of California, 1934-1935. During the inter-war period many of the most outspoken and active leaders in the quest for civil equality were Southern Grand Masters. Especially noteworthy were Grand Masters H. R. Butler (in the 1920's) and John Wesley Dobbs (in the 1930's) of Georgia, Charles Hendley of Alabama, and W. W. Allen of Maryland, among others.

31. The most impressive actions in these areas were not taken by California Masons but by the Southern Grand Lodges. The larger and older Black segregated communities in the South gave them an immediate focus for their activities. They were busy trying to upgrade the Black school systems, increase Black voter registration, and so forth. The Illinois Masons were also more active, which was in keeping with the political activism of the Chicago Black community.

32. The problem of Masonry's involvement or lack of involvement with non-Masonic institutions and how this affected her activities in the larger Black community is quite complicated. Suffice it to say that certain groups in the Order interpreted the rules of Masonry so as to inhibit Masonic action-oriented programs. This led to a fight between pro-and-anti-action groups that has been going on for decades.

33. *Proceedings* of California, 1952.

34. *Prince Hall Masonic Digest*, Fourth Quarter, 1953-1954. This is the official magazine of the Grand Lodge of California.

35. *Proceedings of California*, 1958.

36. *Ibid.*, 1960. Since the meetings of the “service” organization would not be “Masonically” convened, their activities would not be bound by Masonic laws.

37. *Prince Hall Masonic Digest*, Vol. 2, no. 1, 1963.

38. *Ibid.*