

Race Women, *Crisis* Maids, and NAACP Sweethearts: Gender and the Visual Culture of the NAACP in the Early Twentieth Century

Susan Bragg

In November 1911, an ad ran in the journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), *The Crisis*, urging readers to order subscriptions for friends and promising to send Christmas cards with an illustration of “one of THE CRISIS girls.” Adorning the ad was the portrait of a light-skinned young woman gazing dreamily outward, her waving hair loosely pulled back to highlight her romantic image. “You know the one—with wistful face and the shadow of songs in her eyes,” the advertisement promised. This was not the first time John Henry Adams’s drawing of a brown-skinned beauty was published in *The Crisis*. First seen as a classic cover girl in August 1911, her image later appeared on the holiday gift cards, as a print for framing, and, by 1913, as a “*Crisis* Maid” selling face powder in the back pages of the journal.¹ Adams’s illustration was joined by dozens of other photographic and illustrated images of young “*Crisis* Maids,” presented on the cover of the journal as many as eight or ten times each year throughout the early twentieth century. (Figure 1) Indeed, the *Crisis* Maid quickly emerged as the NAACP’s central metaphor of both African American womanhood and black racial destiny, a compelling figure through which to imagine the possibilities of race reform in America.

This essay explores the influence and impact of female iconography within *The Crisis* in the 1910s and 1920s, critical years associated traditionally with the leadership of editor W. E. B. Du Bois and the growth of the NAACP.² Sold by subscription to the predominantly African American membership base of the NAACP, the journal was also sent to philanthropists, members of Congress, influential civic leaders, and public libraries to combat popular stereotypes,

encourage interracial engagement, and reimagine black equality in America.³ “Human contact, human acquaintanceship, human sympathy is the great solvent of human problems,” announced Du Bois in his inaugural 1910 editorial in *The Crisis*. Posed often in profile, the serene *Crisis* Maid invited readers to explore her youthful but genteel image.⁴ As the NAACP sought to claim public influence on what the mainstream press referred to as the “Negro problem,” the *Crisis* Maid served as an eye-catching “ambassador” on behalf of the organization and as symbol of black modernity.

In the era of the New Woman, this female imagery both sought to attract readers to the cause of race reform and reflected a critical anxiety about the role of African American women in the campaign for black civil rights. Scholars such as Daylanne K. English, Amy Helene Kirschke, and Anne Stavney have demonstrated how Du Bois repeatedly framed African American men as individualized leaders, seeking to document a generation of “real” men ready to claim manhood rights of voting and civic participation. In contrast, the *Crisis* Maid represented a more fluid iconographic symbol of respectability and “fitness.”⁵ She could alternately represent a symbol of “progress” in her middle-class presentation, a cultural fantasy about “authentic” African American beauty in modern America, and a welcoming figure to draw readers into the journal (and the NAACP).⁶

This essay builds upon existing scholarship to argue that the female imagery of *The Crisis* also served as a catalyst for women’s engagement in the NAACP, allowing African American women to insert themselves into both visions of black modernity and NAACP branch-level politics in these formative years. I explore several types of female imagery within the magazine, including the *Crisis* Maid as she appeared on the cover; the magazine’s sponsorship and coverage of baby contests and beauty pageants; and literary elements of *The Crisis* that resonated with its visual components. As other scholars have noted, much of this imagery celebrated African American family life and, more specifically, women’s familial roles and duties. Yet as art historian Marina Warner reminds us, “a symbolized female presence both gives and takes value and meaning in relation to actual women.”⁷ In fact, African American women responded to the illustrations and photographs of *The Crisis* creatively, developing local NAACP activist traditions that meshed with popular interest in such imagery while highlighting the visibility of women in the organization. It is important to connect these real patterns of female activism in the NAACP to the visual and literary culture of the pioneering journal so that we can better understand both the growth of the organization in these years and emerging visions of the New Negro women’s self-expression.

The Visual Politics of Respectability

Illustrations and photographic imagery played a central role in African American print culture during the era of disfranchisement and segregation. In response to racialized stereotypes in mainstream media and popular culture, African American social activists insisted that their own visible respectability

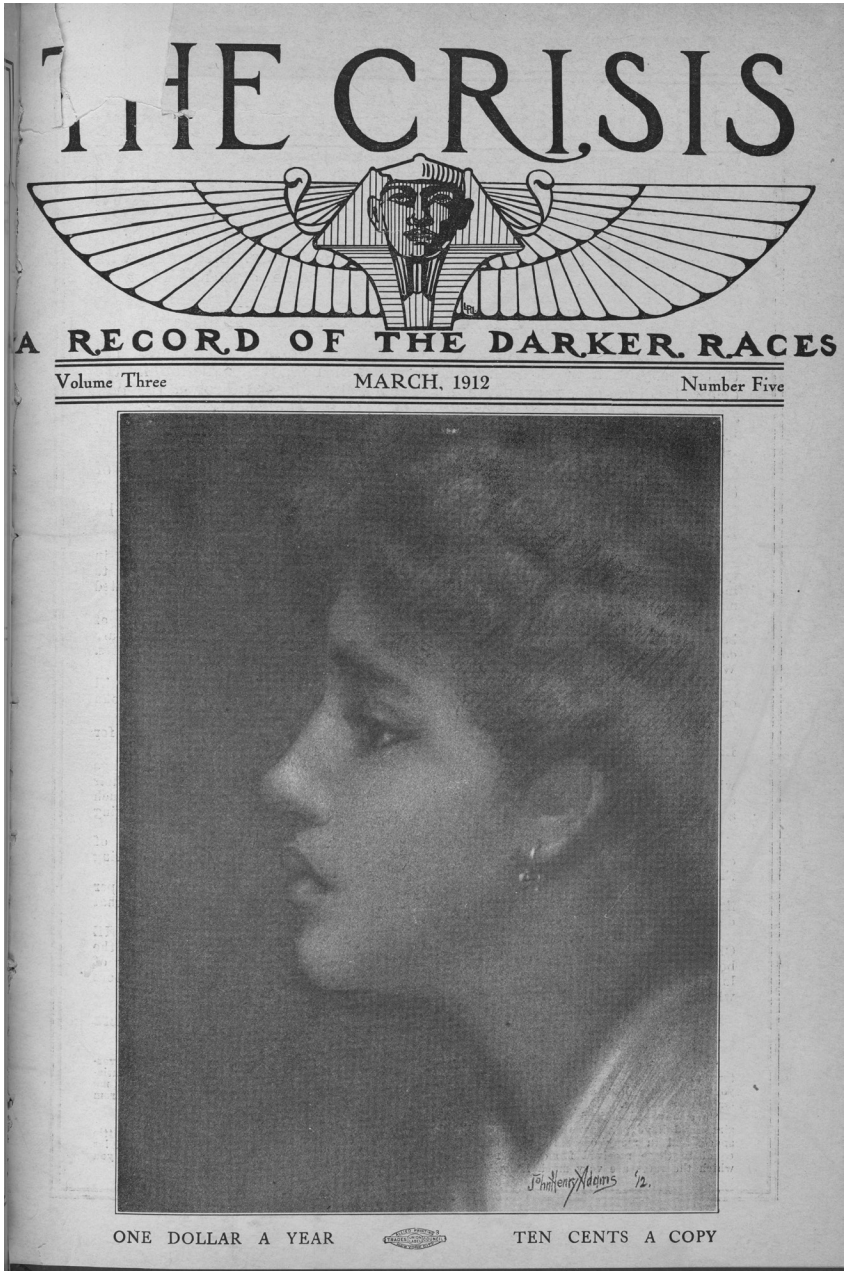


Figure 1: John Henry Adams, Front Cover, *The Crisis* 3, no. 5 (March 1912), Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, From the New York Public Library.

provided evidence of black racial “progress” and modernity. Uplift-oriented books like Booker T. Washington’s *A New Negro for a New Century* (1900) and journals such as *The Colored American* (1900–1907) and *Voice of the Negro* (1904–1907) published photographs of prominent “race men” and “race women,” with Washington’s text inviting readers to visually explore “a most pleasing gallery of intelligent and progressive men, and strong, intellectual and charming women.”⁸ Images of black teachers, club women, business men, and other community leaders went beyond simply offering evidence of black achievement. They also promoted a vision of African American life as essentially urban and middle class, with the photograph itself serving as a register for class status.⁹

African American women participated in the politics of visual imagery in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century black print culture, asserting that their appearances provided evidence of their respectability as well as the momentum of their clubs and social reform networks, especially through the well-known club network of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). Repeated portraits in the black press of mature, genteel “race women” wearing lace-trimmed shirtwaists and sweeping skirts underscored their role in public service and reinforced the importance of bourgeois presentation. The politics of self-presentation emerged as a regular point of concern within African American women’s reform circles as they carefully negotiated the tightrope of consumer culture, seeking to avoid the lure of “Dame Fashion” while presenting themselves within bourgeois Victorian standards. In 1899, for example, Alice L. White advised her fellow club women to choose clothing that was “exquisitely neat, becoming, in fashion enough so as to not attract attention,” arguing that proper attire would bring women greater appreciation from the mainstream public and from black men.¹⁰

W. E. B. Du Bois built upon these visual and cultural politics when he began publishing *The Crisis* in 1910, stocking each issue with reports on national NAACP campaigns and branch activities, as well as black literary and artistic expressions and advertisements for products or services aimed largely at black consumers. In his work as editor, Du Bois was significantly influenced by both the rise of photography as a tool of social reform and the new popularity of the illustrated magazine, arising from the development of a national consumer culture in the early twentieth century.¹¹ Just like mainstream magazines such as *Ladies Home Journal* or *The Saturday Evening Post*, *The Crisis* depended heavily on visual imagery to attract readers’ interest in particular subjects, often mediating social tensions about African American life through both representation and exclusion. The selective visual culture of the pioneering civil rights journal avoided ugly Jim Crow imagery seen in other newspapers and magazines of the era and instead sought to provide evidence of African American respectability and civil rights readiness. Du Bois even encouraged more African Americans to become professional photographers in 1923, noting his frustration with images produced by white photographers. Those interested in the field, he promised, would find “good incomes are possible and excellent social service.”¹²

Throughout the early twentieth century, photography and illustrations in *The Crisis* participated in larger negotiations over gender, race, and “rights” within early NAACP rhetoric. Like many other African American public leaders of the day, Du Bois frequently invoked the language of “manhood rights” both in reference to specific civic privileges denied to black men such as voting rights, but also to signify broader black male political preparation and readiness. Visual and textual images of masculine power drove these messages home in the pages of *The Crisis*, most explicitly embedded in a column that ran from 1911 until 1921 entitled “Men of the Month.”¹³ Photographs of male branch leaders emphasized the NAACP’s growing network of branches and linked the rhetoric of manhood rights with additional images of African American male church, business, and community representatives from around the nation.¹⁴ At the same time, African American women’s prominence in social reform activities, especially through the well-known club network of the NACW, and their regular presence as contributors to *The Crisis* sometimes challenged dominant rhetorical themes of masculine leadership. Perhaps most illustrative of this tension was the frequent appearance of African American women in the “Men of the Month” column, including one 1915 column where all of the “Men of the Month” were black women.¹⁵ By 1921, the column was incorporated into the more universal “Horizon” feature, devoted to celebrating local forms of reform activism.

This is not to suggest that masculine-gendered political language disappeared from *The Crisis* after 1921, but rather to argue that the changes in this column reflected the tricky and sometimes competing strains of gendered leadership discourses within African American civil rights activism. Indeed, the language of “manhood rights” proved remarkably persistent within black protest, surviving well beyond the initial association with specific male political rights of suffrage to serve fluidly as both a generalized articulation of black pride as well as an insistence upon black men’s active leadership and responsibility.

The Crisis sought to alleviate some of the gendered tensions over the race woman’s leadership and public status by offering up the *Crisis* Maid cover girl as a parallel image of African American womanhood. Unlike the Victorian race woman, she did not have a personal history of activism or political allegiance, so she operated as an iconographic symbol of unity, desire, and racial destiny. Her appearance as a “girl” or a “maid” also served as an optimistic counterpoint to more disturbing textual accounts of lynching and Jim Crow oppression carried in the pages of the journal. During winter months, she often appeared as a romantic Madonna figure cradling an infant. In the spring and summer, her delicate attire and fashionable dress echoed the youthful appeal of mainstream cover girls of the day.¹⁶

Du Bois’s repeated use of *Crisis* Maid imagery may well have reflected his efforts to contain or limit established traditions of black female politics, but the prevalence of female imagery also allowed readers to engage with the New Negro woman in more flexible terms. The *Crisis* Maid’s repetition on the cover of the journal established her presence as a subject within the larger civil

rights struggles of the era. Regular special issues of *The Crisis* reinforced this messaging by connecting the idealized cover girl to the social experiences of young African American women. For example, Du Bois published an “Education number” each July to promote the growth of learning and “social progress” among African Americans. In these issues, the *Crisis* Maid often appeared on the cover as a spirited co-ed or proud graduate in cap and gown. (Figure 2) Within the pages, real New Negro women appeared as identified representatives of the Talented Tenth generation that Du Bois celebrated.¹⁷

Other popular forums in *The Crisis* opened up creative space for local female civil rights engagement and activism within the NAACP itself. One such tradition was the annual “Children’s Issue” appearing in October, which carried a variety of commentary on black childhood as well as fictional essays or poetry written for children. A central feature of this regular issue was the publication of African American baby pictures, sent in by families across the nation. This content sought to educate future generations of civil rights participants while also visually symbolizing the health and vitality of black children. As Du Bois explained in a 1917 call to parents to submit family photographs, “the October *Crisis* will be Children’s Number. As always, we want pictures of interesting babies. We do not want merely pretty babies or babies all dressed up, but we want real, living, moving children.”¹⁸ Nude infants on bearskin rugs, little girls holding a favorite toy, and toddlers in sailor suits bordering regular reports on racial oppression in the United States challenged readers to put a sympathetic face on discrimination. In 1916, white social reformer John Lovejoy Elliot wrote to the journal to note, “I have been completely captured by the last number of the *Crisis* dedicated to babies and children. I do not see how anyone can resist the appeal of these little people.”¹⁹ Du Bois himself emphasized the symbolic nature of these images, writing “these are not individual children, they belong to no persons or families; they belong to a great people and in their hands is that people’s future.” But African American readers often responded in more specific terms, expressing parental pride and interest in their children joining the NAACP.²⁰

Although publishing African American baby pictures was not unique to *The Crisis*, the Children’s Issue quickly emerged as a public favorite of readers, and children’s images soon began to also appear on Christmas cards and calendars produced by the journal, in NAACP advertisements, and on the covers of the NAACP’s Annual Reports. To NAACP activists and allies, these baby pictures literally represented the promise of a generation of New Negroes.²¹ As Du Bois explained in a 1914 editorial, “the whole argument of Negro haters has long said that health and physique among colored people was not a matter of nourishment and surroundings but of inescapable hereditary ills. A glance at our pages this month will certainly help show what errant nonsense this thesis is.”²² A year later, an unidentified reader from Chicago similarly celebrated these baby pictures as symbols of African American fitness writing, “Of course, we hope that our children are the finest that appear in THE CRISIS and, therefore, proud for the world to see them for they are as fine as they look.”²³



Figure 2: Front Cover, *The Crisis* 28, no. 3 (July 1924).

African American mothers and fathers eagerly submitted photographs of their children to the journal out of both personal pride and to counter expanding visions of white “racial fitness” embedded within the mainstream “Better Baby” contests sweeping the nation during the early twentieth century. Promoted by the U.S. Children’s Bureau and women’s magazines, these contests quickly became a popular staple of county fairs and community health drives. Better Baby contests measured, weighed, and examined babies in order to assess their physical and mental promise for citizenship, while “Fitter Family” contests similarly assessed family physical health and genealogy. Du Bois boasted in a 1915 “Men of the Month” column that little Elizabeth Neill won a prize in a Washington, D.C. baby contest, noting, “The daily press of the city in reporting the outcome of the contest took pains to say that Elizabeth was the ‘best colored baby’ but the fact is there was only one contest, one standard by which all the babies were judged, and one set of judges.”²⁴ Better Baby contests typically excluded African American families or sought to prioritize white racial heritage in the family questionnaires provided to parents of contest members, so most African Americans sought out alternatives to mainstream baby contests.²⁵

The “Contest Idea”: *Crisis* Imagery and NAACP Activism

The familial context of baby pictures encouraged an overlap between the visual culture of *The Crisis* and branch-level NAACP activism. By the 1920s, popular interest in the Children’s Issue became a critical new tool for raising money for the NAACP with the emergence of branch-level baby contests. New black leadership in the national headquarters facilitated this development. Although the exact origins of these contests are unclear, Field Secretary William Pickens credited the Dayton, Ohio branch for the “contest idea” in organizing a fundraising event in 1923, while acknowledging that rapid spread of baby contests throughout the branches was the result of the publication of photographs of the winning babies in both *The Crisis* and the *Chicago Defender*.²⁶ By the next year, Pickens requested that Secretary James Weldon Johnson purchase regular space in *The Crisis* to publish photographs of contest winners, arguing, “I do not know of anything that might pay the Association better dividends than the devotion of a half page or so to this baby picture business exclusively in every month.”²⁷

NAACP baby contests provided a vehicle for African American women to mobilize public interest in the organization, directly connecting familial and community-based roles with civil rights work. For example, Mrs. M. C. Allen of Lynchburg, Virginia, sent two family baby pictures to Du Bois in 1924, asking the editor to publish them in *The Crisis*. William Pickens wrote back to Allen to encourage her to organize a local baby contest, providing her detailed information on how to organize the event.²⁸ These connections allowed women to gain more individualized experiences of organizational recruitment, fundraising, and social networking within the NAACP. This was because, in contrast to the mainstream baby contests, NAACP baby contests did not judge the measurements or physical

appearance of the babies themselves. Instead, mothers entered their children in the contests and then circulated throughout their neighborhoods, asking friends and family members to donate to the NAACP on behalf of their child. Marking down each contribution in a booklet provided to contestants, families gathered on a final night when prizes were awarded to the babies based on the amount of money their mothers had raised for the organization. Once the cost of the contest had been covered, all remaining funds were sent directly to the national headquarters in New York, credited towards each branch's annual apportionment quota, and the winning children's photographs sent for publication in *The Crisis*.²⁹ If the ultimate reward was the appearance of their children's pictures in the civil rights journal, African American women developed both organizing skills and increasing recognition as grassroots activists in NAACP chapters. Mrs. C. J. Jones of Buffalo, New York reminded Robert W. Bagnall, Director of Branches, of their long relationship in January 1929, noting, "I am the same officer who invited you to come and assist the Buffalo Branch with the Baby Contests, thereby placing our local branch on the map again at the National Office."³⁰

The success of baby contests supported the rise of NAACP women's auxiliaries, which harnessed women's associational networks and often circumvented gendered leadership conflicts within branches. Reflecting the success of such fundraising activities, William Pickens wrote to Elizabeth Diggs of Waycross, Georgia in 1925 to explain that "the committee should consist entirely of women, but the men should do whatever the ladies want them to do towards achieving success."³¹ Similarly, male officials from the Gary, West Virginia branch recommended their secretary and auxiliary leader Memphis T. Garrison for the NAACP's C. J. Walker award for branch activism in 1925, pointing to her successful baby contest that brought in over \$400 and her door-to-door subscription campaign with the slogan: "A *Crisis* in every home, every month."³² Garrison did not win that year, but her efforts selling NAACP Christmas seals brought her the award for 1928. As Garrison's efforts suggest, auxiliary work was linked to the cultural visions of female domestic activism but NAACP auxiliaries brought women recognition and support in both their local communities and within the national networks of the NAACP.

The maternal connotations of baby contests also worked to open up possibilities for NAACP activism in the South during the 1920s, where branch activism had been significantly reduced by racial violence during the World War I years. Because such contests were organized by women and typically held within black churches or schools, local whites may not have fully recognized the relationship between baby contests and the NAACP. Southern readers of *The Crisis* sometimes wrote to the journal to ask how their children might be included in the baby contests and Pickens enthusiastically sent out NAACP pamphlets and provided instructions for carrying out local contests.³³

The popularity of baby contests expanded the visibility of women's activism in both *The Crisis* and the NAACP during these years. Du Bois continued to publish idealized studio portraits of young women and babies as symbols of

the New Negro, but increasingly, family-provided baby pictures appeared as recognition of local contest success. Some of the photographs were captioned simply as “N. A. A. C. P. Prize Babies,” but as the contests developed, the photographs were increasingly identified by branch and later by name. Images of contest winners from branches as diverse as Chickasha, Oklahoma, Jersey City, New Jersey, Los Angeles, California, or Athens, Georgia bordered the journal’s standard editorial and literary content each month, helping establish the perception of the NAACP’s national network of branches and committed participants.³⁴ Such publicity encouraged women to identify their participation in baby contests as not just a matter of pride, but also as a direct form of challenging Jim Crow through their own engagement with both the civil rights vision of *The Crisis* and the NAACP.

Just as with the experience of baby contests, readers’ interest in the visual culture of *The Crisis* flowed over from the journal into NAACP activism, where it was remade and reworked by NAACP women to suit their interests and values. Baby contests continued as a popular fundraising tool, but by the mid-1920s, women’s auxiliaries began to stage contests for teenagers and young adults, helping to recruit a new generation to civil rights activism. Invariably, contest participants were young women. Recognizing this interest, Branch Director William Pickens suggested that local contest organizers reward prize winners with a hope chest, presuming black women’s contest participation as part of their youthful preparation for marriage and family life. But, in fact, most branches attracted young women into NAACP popularity contests with either the promise of scholarships or the publication of the winner’s photograph in *The Crisis*.³⁵

The popularity contests that emerged in NAACP branch activism by the mid-1920s drew from expanded debates about the New Negro woman’s roles in these years. Just as with the idealized baby picture imagery, photographs of contest winners appeared frequently as “Sweethearts of the NAACP”: anonymous beauties for visual display.³⁶ Photographs of beauty queens and popularity contest winners published in *The Crisis* often corroborated the *Crisis* Maid’s presentation of the beautiful New Negro woman as pale-skinned and bourgeois, but they also added to the iconography of womanhood circulating through the journal. And like baby contests, popularity contests allowed women to participate in the NAACP in more individualized and active ways. Candidates in popularity contests publicly advocated for contributions to the NAACP itself on their behalf, emphasizing the importance of recognition from *The Crisis*. A report from a “Miss Mobile” contest held by the Mobile, Alabama branch in 1928 suggests that significant social commitment to civil rights activism underlay such contests:

Pictures of the three winners will appear in the *Crisis* Magazine, the official organ of the N. A. A. C. P. Votes are now on sale 5 c. each, and we earnestly appeal to your race pride and good judgment by asking you to buy them. Don’t buy one or two just to get rid of the individual, but think of the cause

and buy a dollars worth or even five dollars worth if you can; and remember you are not merely helping a worthy young lady win a valuable prize, but you are helping her toward the possible acquisition of a scholarship. Every nickel you spend is that much contributed toward the greatest institution of its kind in America.³⁷

Contests like this one not only supported the NAACP by bringing in financial contributions, but they helped recruit and recognize young female NAACP participants. When the Los Angeles woman's auxiliary staged a "Miss California Popularity Contest" that same year, they presented the award to the winning contestant at the annual NAACP conference held in the city that year. In fact, when the top five "Miss California" contestants' photographs were published in *The Crisis*, the captions listed their names and the amount of money they raised for the NAACP.³⁸ (Figure 3)

Publishing the portraits of popularity contest winners from NAACP branches in places like California, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia supported the organization's claim to represent African Americans at large while also reinforcing positive images of attractive young New Negro women with modern bobbed hair styles and fashionable attire. Young female readers could identify their own images in this national struggle, creating a consistently wholesome but nevertheless modern image of the New Negro woman as a NAACP activist. By 1931, a beauty contest winner even appeared on the cover of *The Crisis*, a "real" *Crisis* Maid whose beauty served the NAACP in both ideological and organizational terms.³⁹

To be sure, baby contests and beauty pageants were part of a larger urban culture of black activism in the 1920s, and organizations including the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, (BSCP) and the Urban League held similar fundraising events. Like women involved in these organizations, NAACP women created female auxiliary groups to promote these contests and encourage separate leadership opportunities. Yet the NAACP did not ritualize the role of the wife or the mother to the same extent as these other groups, instead emphasizing shared goals of civil rights. Popularity contests emphasized membership recruitment, not the direct evaluation of young women's self-presentation. The BSCP's *Messenger*, for example, regularly celebrated African American female beauty through photographic displays and organized "Bobbed Hair" contests but BSCP rhetoric emphasized the New Negro woman's support for male unionism. A 1923 editorial reminded readers, "upon her shoulders rests the big task to create and keep alive, in the breast of black men, a holy and consuming passion to break with the slave traditions of the past."⁴⁰ In contrast, when the young popularity contest winners attended NAACP conferences, they did so as NAACP members and not solely as beauties on display.

To be sure, tensions between male NAACP branch leaders and female auxiliary leaders often surfaced in communications with national leaders, but the response of national leaders also demonstrated the value of women's work within

THE N. A. A. C. P. BATTLE FRONT

COLOR DISCRIMINATION IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE

FOR many years there has been protest and complaint about the treatment of colored Americans in the Civil Service at Washington, D. C. It has always, however, been difficult to make these charges definite. First, because the discrimination itself is indefinite and changes from administration to administration, and from year to year. Secondly, because it is hard to get reliable testimony. Those clerks who are already discriminated against are not anxious to invite further discrimination or even dismissal by making public complaint.

There has always been more or less color discrimination in Government Service. Before Emancipation there were no Negro employees except messengers and laborers. During Reconstruction when Negroes began to enter the Civil Service, they were by common consent or express order, segregated in parts of rooms or in rooms by themselves. Appointments in the Civil Service, even after reformed methods and examinations came in, were difficult to obtain by colored applicants.

Then, as the political influence of Negroes increased and trained colored applicants appeared, a larger number were appointed and it was more difficult to maintain racial discrimination. During the administrations of Cleveland, Harrison and McKinley race discrimination in government departments was at a minimum. The advent of the Wilson Administration in 1913 marked a determined effort to put Negro Civil Service Servants "in their places". It is rumored that the first Mrs. Woodrow Wilson started the effort when she discovered



"Miss California"
Miss Rosalind De Priest, \$511

that white and Negro clerks were eating together in some instances. After the Wilson Administration, in some cases, the Republicans increased the segregation, and in other cases they gave it up. The large number of clerks employed during the war brought in new color contacts and problems.

At present, two separate investigations made by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, give the following situation, which seems to be as near an approximation of the truth as it is possible to get.

As to general color discrimination, there are the following facts:

(1) Applicants for Civil Service positions are required to furnish a photograph. There are many reasons for this but there can be little doubt that the chief consequence is to enable the appointing power to weed out colored applicants. This has been openly acknowledged in many cases, and especially in such cases as those where the applicants did not look "colored" in their photographs.

(2) There is much unfair treatment in matters of rating and promotion. As, for instance, in the Washington City Post Office, white carriers get preferred routes and Negro clerks are never assigned to window duty or promoted beyond the grade of Special Clerk. They are never made Foremen or Assistant Foremen. In the Bureau of Engraving and Printing no colored woman has ever been appointed to the clerical staff, although there is no question but what they could do the work. There are probably other cases of this sort.

Specific cases of open discrimination are not as widespread or as flagrant as they have been in the past or as many people have been led to believe. There is apparently no discrimination in the Departments of Agriculture, Department of Labor, or the State Department. There seems to be little, if any, in the War Department, and although there used to be a whole segregated wing of colored clerks in the Census Bureau, this has been abolished, and no segregation is apparent there today.

In some of these cases there is no segregation because there are either no colored clerks at all or very few. On the other hand, there are cases where white and colored clerks in appreciable (*Will you please turn to page 387*)



Miss Velma White
\$400

Miss Juanita Ellsworth
\$341

California N. A. A. C. P. Popularity Contest

Miss Yolanda Colomb
\$261

Miss Reverdia Woods
\$252

Miss Dorothy Patton
\$223

Figure 3: "The N. A. A. C. P. Battlefront," *The Crisis* 35 (November 1928): 369.

the larger organization. Addie Hunton, long an NACW activist and NAACP recruiter, reported her efforts to “express the appreciation of the National Office” to female members of the St. Louis, Missouri branch in 1924 after male officials interfered in a membership drive. Similarly, Branch Director Robert W. Bagnall praised the work of Mrs. Elizabeth Lytle after criticism from Gary, Indiana’s male branch leaders in 1927. In a letter to Lytle, Bagnall assured her that “everywhere the Woman’s Auxiliary is a help to the branch, and often puts to shame the activity of other units within the branch.”⁴¹ In these examples of direct correspondence with national leaders, NAACP women regularly expressed pride in their organizing abilities, critiqued local male leaders, or sought to claim recognition in *The Crisis*.⁴² Thus while African American women largely worked within female networks at the branch level, they saw their civil rights work as a critical component of a larger mixed-sex political culture.

***Crisis* Maids in Print**

Frequent fiction, poetry, and essays featuring young female heroines created a social context for the visual iconography of the *Crisis* Maid and linked her to the cultural sphere of the NAACP as well. In large part, this was due to the work of Jessie Fauset, the literary editor of the journal from 1919 to 1926. The Urban League’s *Opportunity* and the *Messenger*, published by labor activists A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, also supported the development of African American literary arts during the 1920s, but *The Crisis* maintained a higher circulation rate than these two journals and proved particularly open to women’s creative work during the Harlem Renaissance years.⁴³ Fauset herself published numerous stories and poems in *The Crisis* featuring young women protagonists as well as travelogues exploring exotic or adventurous locations—from the “true West” to “Dark Algiers.” These reports centered on female exploration, just as fictional expressions also encouraged readers to imagine “life along the color line” through women’s eyes.⁴⁴ Marita Bonner’s prize-winning 1925 *Crisis* essay, “On Being Young—A Woman—And Colored,” articulated the difficulties of a generation of young African American women who found the gendered expectations of middle class respectability confining:

Strange longing seizes hold of you. You wish yourself back where you can lay your dollar down and sit in a dollar seat to hear voices, strings, reeds that have lifted the World out, up, beyond things that have bodies and walls.... You hear that up at New York this is to be seen; that, to be heard. You decide the next train will take you there. You decide the next second that that train will not take you, nor the next—nor the next for some time to come. For you know that—being a woman—you cannot twice a month or twice a year, for that matter, break

away to see or hear anything in a city that is supposed to see
and hear too much.⁴⁵

Works like Bonner's and those of many other female writers and artists linked the New Negro woman with specific contemporary struggles with racism and ultimately, the cultural sphere of the NAACP.

Fictional essays published by African American women writers in *The Crisis* further reinforced the significance of the New Negro woman in African American political struggles by identifying women's interests in beauty, fashion, and consumer culture as critical grounds for shaping women's political consciousness as well as protest strategies. Ola Calhoun Morehead portrayed women's experiences of Jim Crow in a 1925 story, "The Bewitched Sword." A young African American woman happily spends an afternoon shopping for a new spring hat that she has been saving for. On her bus ride home, Mary encounters a white woman who calls her a racial epithet, spoiling her joy over her purchase.⁴⁶ For Morehead, individualized consumption and self-fashioning through clothing or adornment did not resolve racial inequalities. Instead, racial inequality forced young women to come to terms with Jim Crow's ability to restrict their personal desires for joy and beauty. Similarly, in Ethel Clark's 1927 short story, "Houses of Glass," a stylish teenage girl, Honey, suddenly learns that she is African American after her mother (who was passing as white) dies. Honey initially panics over this seeming downward shift in her fortunes but eventually comes to terms with her new family and her new sense of identity: "To all outward appearances she was the same. But the inner self! Funny how just thinking a thing could change one so! Maybe that was all that really made things different anyway."⁴⁷ By the conclusion of Clark's story, Honey, initially described as beautiful but lonely, proudly acknowledges that she finally "belonged." However sentimental many of these stories were, they offered a way for African American female readers to identify links between consumer culture, new urban experiences, and race reform activism. In contrast to older models of racial uplift which stressed discipline and modesty, these stories did not demand young women deny individual pleasures, but rather identified alternate means of responsible consumption and self-expression.

In May 1929, *The Crisis* celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the NAACP, publishing on its cover an Aaron Douglas illustration initially produced for a New York women's auxiliary benefit program.⁴⁸ (Figure 4) The subject of this image was the New Negro woman, a stylized woman of clearly African origin simultaneously presented as a beautiful modern woman, complete with bobbed hair and earrings and set in urban landscape. As New York auxiliary chairwoman Inez Richardson Wilson proudly wrote in a letter to Douglas, this figure connected "the progress of Negro womanhood along with the growth of the N. A. A. C. P."⁴⁹ Indeed, with her image centered between the anniversary dates of the NAACP emblazoned at the top of the image, this *Crisis* Maid literally embodied the NAACP.

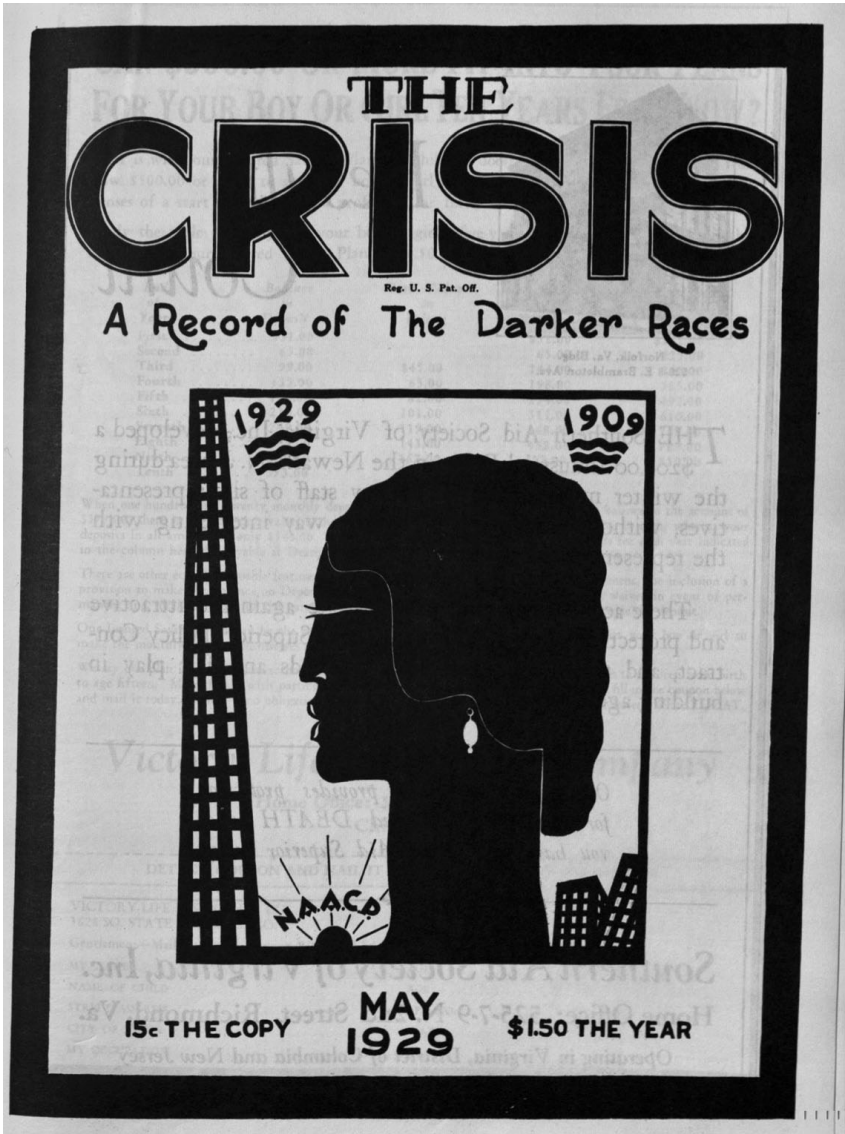


Figure 4: Aaron Douglas, Front Cover, *The Crisis* 36 (May 1929)

“Pretty Girl” Pictures and the Shifting Gender Politics of the NAACP

In 1928, a white reader wrote into *The Crisis* to complain that the visual and literary content of the journal was too “high brow” and did not appeal to most

working-class African Americans. Another reader quickly responded to praise the journal's content, concluding, "yours for more culture, more poetry and oil-wells, pretty girls and bankers."⁵⁰ This debate reflected growing public critiques of *The Crisis* and the NAACP as vehicles of the Talented Tenth, which were often centered around the contested image of the New Negro woman. Women have long served as a symbol of excess or materialism, providing a site for expressing anxieties over consumer culture.⁵¹ In the 1920s, the focus on the energetic and modern New Negro woman in the pages of *The Crisis* and in NAACP auxiliary activities gave women a chance to shine as local leaders and as "celebrities" in *The Crisis*, but it also reinforced older traditions of equating middle-class growth with racial progress and respectability. Within early twentieth-century African American urban culture, middle-class female reformers such as NAACP auxiliary women became targets of this critique. Du Bois himself provided one of the sharpest condemnations of the race woman in his 1928 novel, *Dark Princess*. In a *Crisis* review, black sociologist Allison Davis enthusiastically lauded *Dark Princess* as an example of Du Bois's courageous efforts to "believe in the Negro's spirit and manhood." But it was the character of Sarah Andrews, the bourgeois wife of Du Bois's hero who drew the reviewer's attention. "The class she typifies is killing its dignity and its vision by selfish comfort and detachment," he wrote. "Their compromising and truckling to the white world of power, their exploiting of the common Negro, and more than all else, their lack of vision and confidence in their highest human abilities is degrading, is inner death."⁵²

Such critiques exposed anxieties over women's public influence in the NAACP as well as concerns about intra-racial class tensions.⁵³ *Crisis* headlines such as "N. Y. Women's Auxiliary Plans Swimming Party and Dance for Scottsboro Case," or "'Save the *Crisis*!' National Bridge Tournament" exacerbated tensions over African American class struggles and often linked NAACP women's auxiliary membership with stereotypes of the status-seeking race woman during the expanding crisis of the Great Depression.⁵⁴ In the context of an increasingly powerful masculine discourse of economic and labor reform, auxiliaries did not present the image of the NAACP as a proactive agent of real change. Although many auxiliaries continued to function well into the 1930s, they received less publicity in *The Crisis* in these years.⁵⁵

Another Aaron Douglas illustration demonstrates the complex interchange between female iconography, women's social activism in *The Crisis*, and the larger sphere of the NAACP. In January 1932, W. E. B. Du Bois celebrated Douglas's completion of a new mural by publishing a full-page photograph of the artwork along with the artist's description in *The Crisis*. At the center of the image, a black woman triumphantly holds up the broken chains of slavery. As Douglas explained, "I used Harriet Tubman to idealize a superior type of Negro womanhood. Her pioneer work for the freedom and education of our people is too well known to recount here." Off to the side is a small male character in an urban setting, "the dreamer, who looks out toward higher and nobler vistas, the modern city, for his race."⁵⁶ These figures drew upon the common symbolic rep-

representations of womanhood as a historical figure of unity and modern masculine intellectual development. The sizing complicated Douglas's message of African American progress as a transition from female activism to male creativity and leadership. Douglas used powerful masculine rhetoric in describing the dreamer's symbolism of racial progress but the central visual figure of the mural is the much larger image of Harriet Tubman. Placed on the campus of Bennett College for Women in North Carolina, Douglas's mural may well have been interpreted as a celebration of the African American women's important role in racial struggles, inviting young New Negro women to identify with Tubman.

This image of Tubman also highlights another critical shift in the visual iconography of *The Crisis*. During the 1930s, the illustrated *Crisis* Maid became less prominent on the cover of the journal, gradually replaced by images of specific African American public leaders, most notably, men.⁵⁷ At a time when the NAACP itself was debating leadership strategy and goals and as the nation struggled with the Great Depression, the shift towards celebrating specific male leaders reflected a revitalized discourse of masculinity within the organization. The celebration of the Harriet Tubman mural in *The Crisis* provided a complementary model of powerful female resistance, albeit historical in nature. Rather than just a "pretty girl picture," this image represented a more commanding form of female activism and suggested the potential power of the "black masses" to engage in social justice efforts.

Still, the *Crisis* Maid was not erased from the visual culture of civil rights activism. Cover girl figures continued to appear as symbols of pleasure and beauty in *The Crisis* throughout the twentieth century, demonstrating tensions over African American class values and bodily presentation. The *Crisis* Maid's legacy was particularly apparent through a genre of female "celebrity" images published on the cover during the 1930s. These black actresses and prominent female activists represented "real" New Negro women, but now they were women with a professional grounding in public culture.⁵⁸ Unlike the earlier idealized representations of the *Crisis* Maid, these photographic images often identified their subjects on the cover of the journal, acknowledging their achievements or status as public personalities. For example, in September 1935, Juanita Jackson graced the cover of *The Crisis*. (Figure 5) Her portrait resembled many of the "pretty girl" covers of past years but also carried the caption, "Leader of Young People Joins the N. A. A. C.P. Staff" and directed the reader to a story about Jackson's recent appointment as Youth Branch director.⁵⁹

Gendered tensions over leadership continued to exist within the NAACP, but these developments in the visual culture of *The Crisis* demonstrated the ways that women's early response to the civil rights journal helped build a branch culture of activism and supported new forms of female leadership within the organization. Traditionally, the NAACP's influence has been measured by male leadership changes (as in the case of a shift from white Progressives to black New Negro professionals by the 1920s) or legal victories over Jim Crow.⁶⁰ In fact, if we look at the growth of the female auxiliaries and youth branches in the

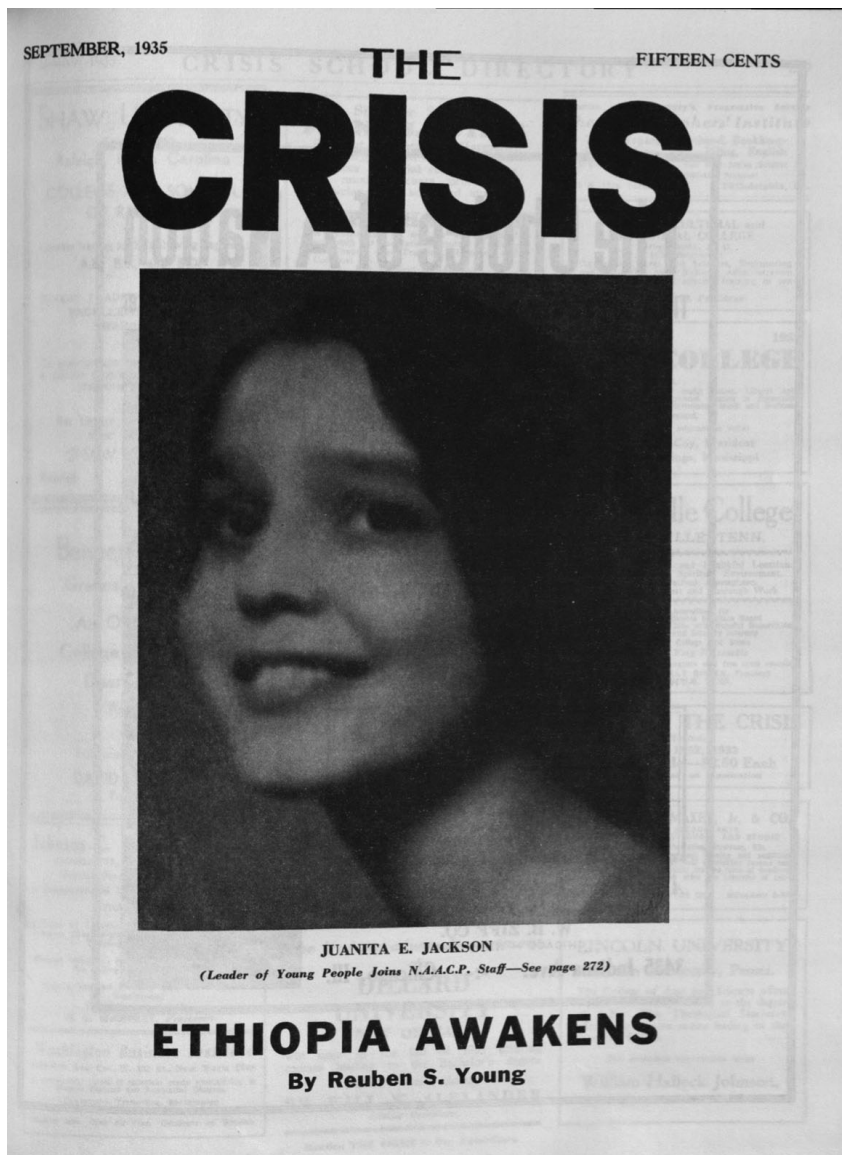


Figure 5: Front Cover, *The Crisis* 42 (September 1935)

1920s, we can identify the sources of fundraising and grassroots activism that propelled such change at the national level of the NAACP. These developments were nurtured by the diverse literary, visual, and political content published in *The Crisis*, revealing it to be a more fluid and dynamic cultural forum than has been previously acknowledged. Ultimately, the iconography of the *Crisis* Maids

illustrates the subtle but pervasive influence of women's leadership and activities within the NAACP, which functioned outside of male-dominated hierarchies but were still vital to the organization and its contributions to the early civil rights movement.

Notes

1. Untitled John Henry Adams illustration, *The Crisis* 2 (August 1911): cover; "Those Xmas Gifts," *The Crisis* 3 (November 1911): back cover; and "Crisis-Maid Face powder" in *The Crisis* 5 (January 1913): 151.

2. On *Crisis* literary politics see George Hutchinson, "The Crisis and the Nation's Conscience," in *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 137–69; Abby Arthur Johnson and Ronald Maberry, *Propaganda and Aesthetics: The Literary Politics of Afro-American Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979); and Charles Flint Kellogg, *NAACP, A History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967), 94–101. David Levering Lewis has provided rich biographies of Du Bois with *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868–1919* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993); and *W. E. B. Du Bois, 1919–1963: The Fight for Equality and the American Century* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000). Patricia Sullivan provides an important updated institutional history of the NAACP more broadly in *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The New Press, 2009).

3. Du Bois estimated that eighty percent of the journal's audience was African American in 1913, and these numbers were mirrored in branch NAACP activism as well. "Publishers' Chat," *The Crisis* 5 (March 1913): 250.

4. [W. E. B. Du Bois], "Editorial—The Crisis—Opening Statement," *The Crisis* 1 (November 1910), 11.

5. See, for example, Daylanne K. English, *Unnatural Selections: Eugenics in American Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Amy Helene Kirschke, *Art in Crisis: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Struggle for African American Identity and Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); Anne Stavney, "Mothers of Tomorrow": The New Negro Renaissance and the Politics of Maternal Representation," *African American Review* 32 (1998): 533–61; and Nina Miller, *Making Love Modern: The Intimate Public Worlds of New York's Literary Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 152–53.

6. Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 92–101.

7. Mariana Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), xx. I am particularly influenced here by scholar Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's argument that cultural forums (like *The Crisis*) can provide a "semi-autonomous 'space of possibilities,'" where new ideas emerge as much from conflict as from consensus. See Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "Women Writers, the 'Southern Front,' and the Dialectical Imagination," *The Journal of Southern History* 69 (February 2003): 9, see 3–38, *passim*.

8. Booker T. Washington, *A New Negro for a New Century*, ed. J. E. McBrady (Chicago: American Publishing House, 1900), 5; and similarly, D. W. Culp, *Twentieth Century Negro Literature or, A Cyclopedic of Thought on the Vital Topics Relating to the American Negro* (Naperville, Ill.: J. L. Nichols, 1902; repr., Miami: Mnemosyne Publishing Co., Inc., 1969). See also Michael Fultz, "'The Morning Cometh': African-American Periodicals, Education, and the Black Middle Class, 1900–1930," in *Print Culture in a Diverse America*, edited by James P. Danky and Wayne A. Wiegand (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 129–48.

9. On the critical role of photography and class identity see Andrea Volpe, "Cartes de Visite Portrait Photographs and the Culture of Class Formation," in *The Middling Sorts: Explorations in the History of the American Middle Class*, eds. Burton J. Bledstein and Robert D. Johnston (New York: Routledge, 2001), 157–69. Many scholars have emphasized how photography sought to discipline and categorize peoples. For example, anthropologists Catherine Lutz and Jane L. Collins suggest that portraits create "readable faces," whose subjects and even character can be simultaneously categorized and universalized in *Reading National Geographic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 97–98; and Laura Wexler explores how photography provided a means for circulating race, gender, and class ideologies in the Victorian era in *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in the Age of U. S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Regarding African American negotiations over the visual image see especially bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992); and Deborah Willis and Carla Williams, *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002).

10. Alice L. White, "Woman's Work—Where Does It Begin," *National Association Notes* (January 1899): 1. Echoing White's concerns several years later, black clubwoman Katherine Williams reported that NACW women "are urging more modesty in dress, especially among our younger women, because the modern bizarre styles attract undue attention." Katherine Williams, "The National Association of Colored Women," *The Half-Century Magazine* 1 (August 1916): 8.

11. Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W. E. B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004). See also Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 92–101.

12. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Opinion of W. E. B. Du Bois," *The Crisis* 26 (October 1923): 249–50.

13. As Hazel Carby notes, Du Bois was a proponent of suffrage and many feminist causes but he remained influenced by masculine conception of leadership. See Carby, *Race Men* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 12–13, 45, but Ch. 1, "The Souls of Black Men," 1–41, passim.

14. For representative images see portraits of seven branch presidents in "National Association for the Advancement of Colored People," *The Crisis* 19 (March 1920): 240–50; "Thirteen Negro American Legislators," *The Crisis* 21 (January 1921): 120–21; and "Twelve Presidents of Branches of the N. A. A. C. P.," *The Crisis* 23 (March 1922): 215. Of course, during the era of World War I, images of black soldiers appeared regularly but similar photographs were popular even in the earliest years of the journal. See, for example, "Photograph of Eighth Regiment Illinois," *The Crisis* 2 (May 1911): 22–23. In assessing the impact of these arrangements, I am influenced by Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1983), 34–36.

15. See Coppin, "Men of the Month," *The Crisis* 5 (March 1913): 223; Cook, "Men of the Month," *The Crisis* 8 (July 1914): 117; Ryan, "Men of the Month," *The Crisis* 9 (February 1915): 170–71; and Tate, "Men of the Month," *The Crisis* 11 (April 1916): 290–91. Singer Anita Patti Brown, socialite Mrs. Euretta Bozeman Matthews and charitable aid worker Musette Gregory were the featured individuals in all-female "Men of the Month," *The Crisis* 10 (August 1915): 169–70.

16. For representative maternal images see W. L. Brockman, "Black Madonna and Child," *The Crisis* 7 (December 1913): cover; C. M. Battey, "Madonna," *The Crisis* 19 (December 1919): cover; and Laura Wheeler Waring, "The Adoration of the Magi," *The Crisis* 36 (December 1929): cover; Examples of fashionable New Negro women include Frank Walts, "Drawing," *The Crisis* 21 (November 1920): cover; Yolande Du Bois, "Spring," *The Crisis* 23 (April 1922): cover; "A Bachelor of Music from Oberlin," *The Crisis* 32 (August 1926): cover.

17. Typical college versions of the *Crisis* Maid are Frank M. Walts, "A Sketch of Nora E. Johnson," *The Crisis* 16 (July 1918): cover; "Sadie Tanner Mossell, Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania," *The Crisis* 22 (July 1921): cover; "A Master of Arts, University of California," *The Crisis* 28 (July 1924): cover; and "A Bachelor of Music from Oberlin," *The Crisis* 32 (August 1926): cover.

18. [W.E.B. Du Bois], "Editorial," *The Crisis* 14 (September 1917): 216.

19. John Lovejoy Elliot, "The Letter Box," *The Crisis* 11 (January 1916): 146.

20. [W.E.B. Du Bois], "Editorial," *The Crisis* 12 (October 1916): 267. See also W. E. B. Du Bois, "Editorial," *The Crisis* 14 (September 1917): 216. In 1914, Du Bois acknowledged reader interest in baby pictures in a special column dedicated to explaining the selection process for publishing these images. See "Our Baby Pictures," *The Crisis* 8 (October 1914): 298–300.

21. For examples, see an advertisement for Christmas cards as "The Double Christmas Gift," *The Crisis* 11 (December 1915): 83; and an advertisement for *The Crisis* in the famed New Negro issue of the *Survey Graphic* in *Survey Graphic* LIII (March 1925): 624.

22. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Our Baby Pictures," *The Crisis* 8 (October 1914): 298.

23. "Chicago" in "Letters," *The Crisis* 10 (June 1915): 94.

24. "Men of the Month," *The Crisis* 10 (May 1915): 14–15.

25. Steven Selden, "Transforming Better Babies into Fitter Families: Archival Resources and the History of the American Eugenics Movement, 1908–1930," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 149 (June 2005): 211–12; and Alexandra Minna Stern, "Making Better Babies: Public Health and Race Betterment in Indiana, 1920–1935," *American Journal of Public Health* 92 (2002): 742–52.

26. William Pickens, "Memorandum," to James Weldon Johnson & The Office, 11 March 1925, Papers of the NAACP, Part 11, Series A, reel 7 [folder: Baby Contests 1925].

27. As Pickens explained, "the same motives which make them put their babies in the contest make them want to see them in *The Crisis*, and about the least we can do for them would be to spend a dollar or two to make these cuts and put them in *The Crisis*." William Pickens to James Weldon Johnson, "Memorandum," 12 September 1924, Papers of the NAACP, Part 11, Series A, reel 7 [folder: Baby Contests 1924]. See similar communications with William Pickens, "Memorandum" to James Weldon Johnson, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Robert W. Bagnall, 26 September 1925; and William Pickens to James Weldon Johnson, 1 October 1925, both in Papers of the NAACP, Part 11, Series A, reel 7. [folder: Baby Contests 1925].

28. Mrs. M. C. Allen to W. E. B. Du Bois, undated; William Pickens to Mrs. M. C. Allen, 13 December 1924, Papers of the NAACP, Part 11, "Special Subject File, 1912–1939," Series A, reel 7 [folder: Baby Contests 1924].
29. William Pickens to James Weldon Johnson, 31 October 1924, Papers of the NAACP, Part 11, Series A, reel 7 [folder: Baby Contests 1924].
30. Mrs. C. J. Jones to Robert Bagnall, 14 January 1929, Papers of the NAACP, Part 12, Series B, reel 1 [file: Buffalo, NY, 1926–1928].
31. William Pickens to Elizabeth Diggs, 17 January 1925, Papers of the NAACP, Part 11, Series A, reel 7 [folder: Baby Contests 1925].
32. J. E. Whittle to William Pickens, 1 January 1924, Papers of the NAACP, Part 11, Series A, reel 6 [folder: Awards, Walker Awards, 1924].
33. William Pickens, "Memorandum," to Publicity Department, 25 March 1925, Papers of the NAACP, Part 11, Series A, reel 7 [folder: Baby Contests 1925].
34. The monthly column "National Association for the Advancement of Colored People" is prefaced by an entire page of contest winners identified by branch in *The Crisis* 32 (June 1926): 74; in contrast, "Our Coming Leaders" presents nine photographs of babies with captions identifying their names and communities. See this photo spread in *The Crisis* 35 (October 1928): 330.
35. See William Pickens, "The Tenth Crusade: N. A. A. C. P. Contests," memo dated "1927," Papers of the NAACP, Part 11, Series A, reel 7 [folder: Baby Contests 1926–1927].
36. "At Indianapolis: N. A. A. C. P. 18th Annual Conference," *The Crisis* 34 (June 1927): 119; "Sweethearts of the N. A. A. C. P.," *The Crisis* 40 (December 1931): 413. See also portraits of beauty contest winners in "The N. A. A. C. P. Battlefront," *The Crisis* 35 (November 1928): 369.
37. Clipping from the Mobile *Weekly Advocate*, 31 March 1928, in Papers of the NAACP, Part 12, Selected branch files, 1913–1939. Series A, The South, reel 3 [Mobile, Alabama].
38. See report of this contest in 14 May 1928, Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of Directors, 1928, Papers of the NAACP, Part 1: Meetings of the Board of Directors, Records of Annual Conferences, Major Speeches, and Special Reports, 1909–1950, Reel 2; and "Color Discrimination in Government Service," *The Crisis* 35 (November 1928): 369.
39. "The Winner of the NAACP Popularity Contest," *The Crisis* 40 (December 1931): cover.
40. "The New Negro Woman," *The Messenger* V (July 1923), 757; See also John W. Baddy, "Negro Womanhood's Greatest Needs," *The Messenger* X (February 1928): 44–45.
41. Addie Hunton, "Report on the St. Louis Drive Situation as Investigated August 27 to 31 [1924]," Papers of the NAACP, Part 12: Selected Branch Files, 1913–1939. Series C: The Midwest, reel 16 [St. Louis], undated; Elizabeth Lytle to Robert W. Bagnall, Papers of the NAACP, Part 12, Selected branch files, 1913–1939. Series C: The Midwest, reel 8 [Gary, Indiana, 1927–1929], 10 February 1927.
42. In addition to the examples above, see also William Pickens to Mrs. Wiley Wilson of Spokane, Washington, in Papers of the NAACP, Part 11: Special Subject Files, 1912–1939. Series B: Harding, Warren G. through YWCA, reel 33 [file: Women's Auxiliary to the NAACP, January 3–May 21, 1928], 10 April 1928. Wilson's letter is not in the files but Pickens responded to support her plan of appointing contest winners to serve as branch delegates to the annual NAACP conference.
43. See especially Cheryl A. Wall, *Women of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), Ch. 2, "Jessie Redmon Fauset: Traveling in Place," 32–84; and Carolyn Wedin Sylvander's biography, *Jessie Redmon Fauset, Black American Writer* (New York: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1981).
44. See representative stories such as Jessie Fauset, "Out of the West," *The Crisis* 27 (November 1923): 11–18; Fauset, "Dark Algiers, The White, Part II," *The Crisis* 30 (May 1925): 16–19; and Fauset, "The Eucalyptus Tree: A Reverie of Rome, the Catacombs, Christianity, and the Moving Beauty of Italy," *The Crisis* 31 (January 1926): 116–17.
45. Marita O. Bonner, "On Being Young—A Woman—And Colored," *The Crisis* 31 (December 1925): 63–65.
46. Ola Calhoun Morehead, "The Bewitched Sword," *The Crisis* 29 (February 1925): 166–67.
47. Ethel R. Clark, "In Houses of Glass," *The Crisis* 34 (June 1927): 115–116, 133.
48. Aaron Douglas, "20th Anniversary of NAACP," *The Crisis* 36 (May 1929): cover.
49. Inez Richardson Wilson to Aaron Douglas, 7 March 1929, Papers of the NAACP, Part 11, Series B, reel 34 [file: Women's Auxiliary to the NAACP, January 3–May 3, 1929].
50. See letter from Anna Porter of San Jose, CA., in W. E. B. Du Bois, "Postscript by W. E. B. Du Bois," *The Crisis* 35 (April 1928): 133–34; and two additional letters debating these "pretty girl" pictures published in "The Outer Pocket," *The Crisis* 35 (September 1928): 302–03. While Harold Goodwin argued that modernist female nudes were simply embarrassing illustrations for a civil rights journal, Helen Dow Peck expressed her love for the visual pleasure of *Crisis* Maid imagery.

51. Emily S. Rosenberg, "Consuming Women: Images of Americanization in the 'American Century,'" in *The Ambiguous Legacy: U. S. Foreign Relations in the "American Century,"* Michael J. Hogan, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 437–62.

52. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dark Princess, A Romance* (1928; repr., Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1974); Allison Davis, review in "The Browsing Reader," *The Crisis* 35 (October 1928): 339.

53. E. Franklin Frazier, "La Bourgeoise Noire," *Modern Quarterly* 5 (November–February 1928–1929): 78–84.

54. Publicity release, 31 July 1931, Papers of the NAACP, Part 11, Series B, reel 33, [file: Women's Auxiliary]; "'Save the Crisis!' Bridge Tournament," *The Crisis* 39 (July 1932): 235–36.

55. Walter White, NAACP Secretary by 1929, terminated the New York women's auxiliary and folded members into the branch's mixed "Entertainment Committee," a move that proved controversial among the women. See Walter F. White to Roy Wilkins, Herbert J. Seligmann, Robert W. Bagnall, and William Pickens, 11 December 1930, Papers of the NAACP, Part 11, Series B, reel 34 [file: Women's Auxiliary to the NAACP, September 1–December 27, 1931]; and White to Inez Richardson Wilson, 27 September 1932, Papers of the NAACP, Part 11, Series B, reel 34 [file: Women's Auxiliary to the NAACP, January 30–October 3, 1932].

56. W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Aaron Douglas Fresco of Harriet Tubman," *The Crisis* 41 (January 1932): 449.

57. See representative masculine imagery such as "Seven Negro Editors on Communism," *The Crisis* 41 (April 1932): cover; "Edward Tolan, Olympic Champion, 100 and 200 metre dashes," *The Crisis* 39 (September 1932): cover; J. E. Dodd, "The Black Miner," *The Crisis* 40 (November 1933): cover; "Ralph Metcalfe and John Brooks," *The Crisis* 41 (April 1934): cover. On broader shifts in the NAACP and civil rights politics in the 1930s, see Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 58–60; and Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice*.

58. Actress images include "Victoria Spivey, Moving Picture Actress," *The Crisis* 37 (April 1930): cover; "Naomi Smith of Cleveland, Hostess Usher in 'Roseanne'," *The Crisis* 37 (June 1930): cover; "Ethel Waters," *The Crisis* 41 (February 1934): cover. For sample images of female professional reformers see "Mrs. Daisy Lampkin, Regional Field Secretary of the N. A. A. C. P.," *The Crisis* 39 (July 1932): cover; "Dr. Inez Beverly Prosser," *The Crisis* 40 (August 1933): cover; and "Lillian A. Alexander," *The Crisis* 40 (December 1933): cover.

59. "Miss Juanita E. Jackson," *The Crisis* 42 (September 1935): cover; "Juanita E. Jackson to Join N. A. A. C. P. National Staff," *The Crisis* 42 (September 1935): 272.

60. For scholarship highlighting the significance of black leadership, see August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, "The Rise of the Black Secretariat in the NAACP, 1909–35," in *Along the Color Line: Explorations in the Black Experience* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 94–127; and Christopher Robert Reed's *The Chicago NAACP and the Rise of Black Professional Leadership, 1910–1966* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). Regarding specific campaign influences, see examples such as Clement E. Vose, *Caucasians Only: The Supreme Court, the NAACP, and the Restrictive Covenant Cases* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959); Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Victory: The Rise and Fall of the White Primary in Texas* (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1979); Robert L. Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade against Lynching, 1909–1950* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980).