

the negro press and the image of success: 1920-1939¹

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For all the talk of a "New Negro," that period between the first two world wars of this century produced many different Negroes, just some of them "new." Neither in life nor in art was there a single figure in whose image the whole race stood or fell; only in the minds of most Whites could all Blacks be lumped together. Chasms separated W. E. B. DuBois, icy, intellectual and increasingly radical, from Jesse Binga, prosperous banker, philanthropist and Roman Catholic. Both of these had little enough in common with the sharecropper, illiterate and burdened with debt, perhaps dreaming of a North where—rumor had it—a man could make a better living and gain a margin of respect. There was Marcus Garvey, costumes and oratory fantastic, wooing the Black masses with visions of Africa and race glory while Father Divine promised them a bi-racial heaven presided over by a Black god. Yet no history of the time should leave out that apostle of occupational training and booster of business, Robert Russa Moton. And perhaps a place should be made for William S. Braithwaite, an aesthete so anonymously genteel that few of his White readers realized he was Black. These were men very different from Langston Hughes and the other Harlem poets who were finding music in their heritage while rejecting capitalistic America (whose children and refugees they were). And, in this confusion of voices, who was there to speak for the broken and degraded like the pitiful old man, born in slavery ninety-two years before, paraded by a Mississippi chapter of the American Legion in front of the national convention of 1923 with a sign identifying him as the "Champeen Chicken Thief of the Confederate Army"?²

In this cacaphony, and through these decades of alternate boom and bust, one particular voice retained a consistent message, though conditions might prove the message itself to be inconsistent. This was the Negro press characterized by E. Franklin Frazier as "the chief medium of communication which creates and perpetuates the world of make-believe

for the black bourgeoisie.”³ The charge is true but quite misleading, especially for the Twenties and Thirties, because, as Frazier did not clearly see, the contradictions were not only between White reality and the pretensions of the Black middle-class (actual and aspiring), but they were also within those ideas about the nature of success developed in White America and accepted all too uncritically by the Black press. This is a different matter from accusing the Black bourgeoisie of accommodating themselves to a system of oppression in order to secure their own gain. Certainly many of them profited from the ghetto—owed their very existence to it. But in line with their own standards of dignity and pride in personal accomplishment, they were capable of as strident denunciations of White America’s hypocrisy and her lynch justice as Frazier might have wished. The Black press, for the most part, vigorously campaigned for political and economic power, as did many of the Negro middle-class upon whom it focused. Yet all this was subtly, in unseen ways, compromised by values for which the Negro bore little responsibility; the middle-class was trapped not by its silence but rather by the implications of what it said.

To be sure, it was impossible to be Black in America and not to live in some sort of contradiction, a point made cruelly apparent at the beginning of the period as thousands of Negro soldiers returned from democracy’s war doubly disillusioned by circumscribed democracy in the United States. Nothing absolutely unique began in the Twenties and on the surface amazingly few things were changed by the end of ten years of economic crisis. This is itself striking—as striking as the irony of the idea of “race pride” becoming a vehicle of contempt and the idea of success condemning its believers as failures.

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At first it appears as if many articulate Blacks in the Twenties and Thirties were throwing off the shackles of White thought and control. There was, of course, Marcus Garvey, his generally unacknowledged influence permeating almost all discussions of racial goals and accomplishments. While he was more successful than any other leader in staying independent of White domination, Garvey’s economics remained firmly traditional and his standards of aesthetic achievement quite European.⁴ The literary Harlem Renaissance, however, did produce some calls for the Black writer to find his art in the experience of his race and for the Negro to resist assimilation into the majority culture of America.⁵ But its artists did not create new forms—Countee Cullen did imitations of Keats as late as 1929—and their manifold ties to White intellectuals are well known.⁶

Their political ties, in fact, compromised whatever Black nationalism Langston Hughes, Claude McKay and a few other of the most radical Harlem writers may have possessed. In attempting to reject White Amer-

ica, they found themselves by the Thirties to be captives of a Marxist rhetoric binding them in tandem to White radicals and to a class alliance of the oppressed, a union making the idea of a distinct Black culture difficult to maintain. In 1937 Langston Hughes actually entitled an essay "Too Much of Race," asserting that he and other Negro artists "represent the great longing that is in the hearts of the darker peoples of the world to reach out their hands in friendship and brotherhood to all the white races of the earth."⁷

The Communists did make friends among Negroes—their advocacy of a separate Black state in America, their spirited defense of nine Blacks from Scottsboro, Alabama, accused of raping two White girls and their nomination of a Black man as their 1932 vice-presidential candidate could not help but gain support. Yet Negro Communists found themselves at the mercy of twistings in Russian foreign policy and of absurd assertions that lynch mobs consisted of "southern gentlemen" (not White class brothers), and that "It is not colour [sic] that counts, but class," a belief not consistent with conditions in America.⁸

Not only were the Garvey movement, the Harlem Renaissance and Negro participation in the Communist Party ineffective as means for breaking with White standards and White control, but also they failed to impinge greatly on the consciousness of the Black press, which remained thoroughly American in its basic anti-intellectualism and in its opposition to radicalism. On one point, however, the Black bourgeoisie and radicals could join hands. Both agreed that salvation was economic and could not be achieved without "race pride," a slogan that went back before the Twenties and which, like so much else in those decades, owed much of its popularity to Marcus Garvey, from whom the Black press frequently borrowed without acknowledgment, and to Booker T. Washington.⁹

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"Race pride" appeared in hundreds of different—often mundane—guises, ranging from editorial endorsement of "the growing popularity of black dolls" for children (an idea of Garvey's) to a national campaign against a skin lightener which had used the word "darker" in an advertisement.¹⁰ "Race pride" also dictated a turning to history for support, a task facilitated by the efforts of Carter G. Woodson and *The Journal of Negro History*, founded in 1916 as "Birth of a Nation" made painfully apparent to Black editors the urgency of knowing about the real past. By 1920 Negro history was a course of study at Wendell Phillips High School in Chicago and in 1924 the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* could assume that "as a matter of course, Race History should be taught in all our race schools, thru the grammar and university courses."¹¹ Near the beginning of the decade the Associated Negro Press carried a Negro history question and answer feature. By 1926 the Association for the

Study of Negro Life and History began to set aside the second week in February as Negro History Week, an event duly celebrated in the press while editors throughout the period plundered the work of Carter Woodson and others to present their readers with an incredible variety of heroes available for encouragement and emulation.

Although "race pride" meant confidence in the ability of Negroes whether revealed in the past or the present, the efforts of the middle-class to promote and capitalize this confidence exposed the unfortunate degree to which their concept of it was tied to White standards. Wealthy H. H. Pace founded Black Swan Records believing firmly in the ability of his fellow Negroes to excel in music, but at the same time he felt "it behooves some of us to undertake the job of elevating the musical taste of the race." Pace's strategy after four months of operation demonstrated his critical standards:

We have issued twelve records, six of them standard high class numbers [classical and semi-classical], three of the popular type and three Blues. We have had to give the people what they wanted in order to get them to buy what we wanted them to want . . . our sales have naturally been larger for the last two kinds of records.¹²

In this age of blues greats and of White imitations of jazz, Pace was not alone in his refusal to find "race pride" in genuinely Black creations. Benjamin Brawley likewise thought it objectionable that prose and poetry looked for inspiration in "a perverted form of music originating in the Negro slums and known as jazz"; W. E. B. DuBois, as editor of *Crisis*, ignored jazz and blues and managed to exhume a number of Black men who had known Mozart or Beethoven or who had received recognition in the world of classical music. There were, of course, exceptions, but at least one of these seems to prove the rule. The Baltimore *Afro-American* in 1921 expressed pleasure at "the hold jazz music has on the popular fancy"; its editor, however, cited Mamie Smith rather than more purely ethnic entertainers and judged the success of "syncopated music" largely by its reception among Whites, including Queen Mary of England, who gave in to the urgings of Princess Mary and the Prince of Wales and "ordered that the latest jazz numbers be played by the Buckingham Palace Jazz Band."¹³ Only in the Thirties, after the "Jazz Age" and with the broader commercial success of men like Duke Ellington, would jazz (in its most refined state) become a respectable item in the Negro press.

Similarly, Negro history was a vehicle to show that Blacks could do things White men value and that they had participated in all great American historical events. The past was not a lamp to illuminate Black uniqueness: this would have seemed perilously near an admission of inferiority in a society lacking a sense of cultural relativism. The Chicago *Defender*, almost tireless in its efforts to promote "race pride"

through appreciation of the heritage of the Black man, nevertheless ridiculed Garvey's emphasis on Africa, lamenting that the "dark continent" was not "civilized." And it showed that even the most distant past was not immune to being misread by analogy to present experience when it joyfully discovered Negro influence at the courts of ancient Egypt and ran a headline proclaiming "King Tut-Ankh-Amen Known as First Real Booker T."¹⁴

But the clearest, most tragic, example of how far removed the idea of "race pride" was from a real concept of a distinct Black identity appeared not in the exhortations of newspapermen but in the advertisements they carried so near to their pleas for confidence and self-assurance. "Pride in Our Race demands we look Light, Bright, and Attractive" was the pitch of Golden Brown Skin Preparations, which also assured its readers that "We do not wish to be white, but we must try to lighten and brighten our swarthy, darker, sallow complexions. . . ." Beauty Skin Bleach and Beautifier counseled the reader not to try to be a White person but to "Be Proud of Your Race—Look Your Best," which meant as light as possible. Dr. Fred Palmer's Skin Whitener (available in powder or soap) urged Negro women to "Have the Charm of your Fair Sisters."¹⁵ "Race pride" sold cosmetics designed to deny race.

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However, in America in the decade of Babbit, "race pride" could not simply be tied to achievement in the arts or in the past; it demanded "race progress" and that meant success in the present, success made visible by the consumption or the production and promotion of the good things in America. Only rarely did the Black press make any attempt to distinguish between success won within the Negro community and acclaim by Whites, looking more to the economic results and apparently accepting the argument that both ways advanced the race since the latter proved "that the accident of blood or descent has nothing to do with one's value as a citizen and a man."¹⁶ Such a conclusion was perfectly consistent with the way "race pride" was framed because the crucial thing was the acquisition of material symbols of success by Negroes. Despite the press's commitment to one path in particular, it regarded possession as more important than the process of acquisition. This material base even supported two of the most intense and seemingly not directly economic concerns of Black editors.

Certainly the Black press, run by men who often had political aspirations and a measure of political influence, rarely forgot to stress the ballot as a means of protest; yet editors generally related politics to protection and consolidation of economic gain. And, to be sure, newspapers cited one ostensibly immaterial thing—education—as both a key to success and a mark of it. They were militant in pointing out inequities in local school systems, with one paper going so far as to campaign for

Black representation on the Baltimore school board and to file suit asking comparable salaries for teachers in Negro and White schools.¹⁷ Neither was college neglected. Such ardent promoters of Black business as Sol C. Johnson, publisher of the *Savannah Tribune* and hardly an aesthete, argued that “Our people have placed too little emphasis on higher education. They have allowed wild theorists to preach trade and industrial training.”¹⁸ Few went to the extreme of branding the followers of Booker T. Washington “wild theorists” but many echoed Johnson’s insistence on higher education. Even after the stock market crash one commentator, while admitting a “saturation” of educated Negroes, affirmed that “education provides a certain sustaining assurance, a justifiable pride, a cultural loftiness, a sort of hopeful trust that tomorrow may bring reward”—all of which apparently were needed by Black people in 1932.¹⁹ However, no one was willing to argue that education could absolutely be divorced from some sort of practical assistance in the struggle for race progress, a tying of education to economic uplift which took extreme form when history, of all disciplines, was justified by its relation to work and to material achievement. “In many cases the masses of this race,” the *Savannah Tribune* lamented, “because we have not told them the truth about their ancestry, have lost ambition and are only marking time.”²⁰ Such a faith managed to survive the Depression and in 1939 an editor could still believe that “The future of race business depends on the respect the black youth has for his own people. This is conditioned by his knowledge of his own history.”²¹

While the Black press did not fail to pay ritual homage to educators and the educated, the most inspiring success stories revolved around a rather different sort of hero, less intellectual and sometimes leading a painfully dual life which revealed a great deal about American reality. Harry B. Wright, whose death was front page news in Savannah’s Black press, was a church deacon, “active fraternal man” and a member of the directors of the Wage Earner’s Bank. Yet to the end he depended on menial work as a porter and part-time salesman for a White-owned shoe company.²² More typical were those who made their way across the economic color line to a place in the White man’s world by means of grit, determination and luck worthy of a Horatio Alger creation. Oscar J. Ramey, “by his close attention to business . . . gradually worked himself up” to where he served as a photographic printer in the back room of a White-owned shop. Bert Williams, the famous comedian, “was a living example of the theory that any person of talent and persistence can make good against the longest odds.”²³

Appropriately enough, to *Opportunity*, the magazine of the Urban League (an organization devoted to social work and uplift), belonged the honor of presenting the fullest gallery of successful Negroes. In the early Thirties *Opportunity* began a series dedicated to the question “To what may Negro youth aspire in America?” If the stories at present read like

fiction they must have begun to seem a little unreal by the second year of the Depression, for they quietly ceased in 1932, when the initial question may have become too painful to ask. But in the meantime there was E. Simms Campbell who quit a good job in St. Louis to try his luck as a cartoonist in New York. His opening conversation with an editor of *Opportunity* was prophetic as well as inspiring:

. . . the editor merely said, "It won't be easy here. But I believe you will make it if you have the heart."
"I'll make it," came the reply [from Campbell] and he was gone.

He did make it, drawing for Negro magazines, the old *Life*, *Esquire* and for *Playboy* in the Sixties. More difficult was the climb of Archer B. Owens to his eminence as vice president and office manager of the White-owned Val O'Farrell Detective Agency. Persevering, saving his money as a clothing salesman, he at last pluckily set out on his own. He went broke. Undaunted, sharpened by adversity, he worked faithfully as a page in a Florida gambling house until his thrift earned him a bit of capital. Once again he set out on his own in the big city; once again he went broke. His resolve still firm, he joined the Burns Detective Agency and his virtue began to receive its reward after he helped convict the McNamara brothers of dynamiting the Los Angeles Times Building. His determination was nearly matched by Billy Pierce, "Dance Master of Broadway," who, to make ends meet in the years of his struggle, had worked nights as a janitor in the building where his offices were located, a building in which he rented two whole floors by May, 1930. What was said of two other of *Opportunity's* success heroes might have been said of them all: he had "by sheer grit and courage pried open the closed door of opportunity. He had smashed the color line. If his picture had been omitted one would not have suspected that he was a Negro."²⁴ "Race pride" again meant appearing White.

Inspiring as these highly varied individual achievements were, the growth of a ghetto economy, the mood of America in the Twenties (which held that the nation's business was business) and the lingering influence of Booker T. Washington's and Marcus Garvey's insistence on self-help, all conspired with the bourgeoisie tendencies of the Black editors to make them particularly bent upon connecting "race pride" with success in business. One editor put it bluntly: "Negro business [is] the bulwark of our racial progress" and another changed the simile only slightly to the "backbone of progress."²⁵ Even W. E. B. DuBois urged support of Black enterprise. Another Black man, who felt that business growth "is the only way to make ourselves the place in American life to which we are justly entitled," went on to add that "Wealth properly accumulated and wisely used for living and developing purposes, is the greatest power in modern life."²⁶ There might seem to be a bit of difference between capital accumulation spent for "living" and that utilized

for “developing,” but the assumption behind this was a familiar one—that in a free market economy the individual pursuing his own goals will benefit the whole society. In this case (since the press could envision no essential conflict between the best interest of White society and of the Negro) he would also benefit his race.

There was a measure of validity here. The Negro businessman could offer types of employment largely unavailable to Blacks and he could claim to eliminate much of the rudeness the Negro consumer so often found in White stores. In addition, following the delicious possibilities pointed to by Marcus Garvey’s Black Star Line promotions, he could offer stock sales in the name both of inevitable profit and inevitable race progress, thereby giving Blacks an unusually satisfying chance to share in the speculative mania of the Twenties. When appeals to “race pride” alone failed, the Black entrepreneur could play upon its more intimate components, although few approached the psychological sophistication of the Negro realtor who assured his race that “Buying a home is a test of manhood.”²⁷

It would seem that the failure of the economy, the disaster of Depression, would shake the middle-class alliance between business and “race pride.” Even in the relatively good year of 1927 it was estimated that only 10% of Negro savings were in Black-owned banks.²⁸ While there were 70 of them in 1919 there were only 15 left in 1938. In the latter year the average Negro-owned food store had a gross income of \$2,000, which one observer claimed provided a standard of living not much better than that of the sharecropper once the merchant subtracted his expenses. In 1935, 23,498 Negro-owned retail stores grossed \$48,987,000, or less than half what 25,701 had six years earlier.²⁹ In 1931, the largest race enterprise, National Benefit Life Insurance Company, went into receivership.³⁰

Statistics probably made less of an impact than did the falling of individuals such as Jesse Binga, a man whose early projects had been heralded as the turning point in the history of the race. In 1927 his Binga State Bank of Chicago stood at the top of Negro banking with assets of \$1,827,025 and a reputation of 19 years honest service. His real estate company had proven “an opening wedge” for Negroes to secure modern quarters in Chicago. Binga had “wrung success out of opposition, almost single-handed and alone.”³¹ He had risen from a Southern Pacific porter to where Robert Russa Moton could cite him as one of four Black bankers who “carry with them a suggestion of efficiency and integrity whose credit is accepted in business circles by a number much larger than their own race.” Four years later, in 1933, “Bereft of Wife and Fortune,” Binga went to jail, remaining there until Clarence Darrow, making one of his last appearances as a lawyer, secured a pardon from the state of Illinois.³²

Reality, however, seemed unable to destroy faith in business. It was mildly shaken, naturally, and there were recriminations against the businessman. There were also suggestions that Blacks should try coop-

erative enterprises or return to rural areas, neither of which evoked much enthusiasm among urban editors. Even in 1931, the press could ask the reader to help “CONFIDENCE as he DEFENDS THE TEMPLE” of business because business, in that trying time, would lead to “the grandest work in the history of the struggle: SUCCESS.”³³ T. Arnold Hill of the Urban League felt in 1932 that “The trend toward business training comes at a time when the race needs it the most.”³⁴ Edgar T. Rozeu gave a favorable report on the one remaining Negro company dealing in securities on Wall Street in 1935, only tempering his optimism with a mild word of caution: “The price of profit is the price of foresight, study, and patience.” He seems not to have doubted that profit could be won. V. V. Oak urged the expansion of Negro business in 1938, professing to find opportunities in banking. When business failed, the solution, it seemed, was more business—which was, in fact, precisely the point of a cartoon in the *New York Age* in mid-1933.³⁵

The persistence of this faith despite economic disaster ultimately led to unforeseen, even tragic results; but there were reasons for its survival under such seemingly fatal conditions. A faith fervently held by Whites, it was also of long standing among Blacks and bore with it the blessings of Booker T. Washington, still a hero to even the most militant segments of the press; and Washington had institutionalized it in the National Negro Business League, in which editors played prominent roles. Long before the Twenties there were local organizations similar to the one the *St. Louis Argus* reported in 1919 as having for twelve years promoted “race uplift” by practicing “Race Reciprocity”—patronizing Negro business.³⁶ The Twenties and urbanization only increased the emphasis while the ghetto itself produced some notable examples of Black business success and made economic independence from the White man seem more plausible. Also, tied to “race pride,” the boosting of self-help and business need not be at all accommodationist. As one paper noted, “it is said ‘Money Talks’ and ours will have a ‘whole heap’ to say on ‘HUMAN JUSTICE’ ”; and this paper approved the action of 16,000 Blacks who (it claimed) cancelled their policies with an insurance company whose agents led a lynch mob. Even the staunchly conservative *California Voice* could make the connection between finance and protest. “The race will never be able to assert itself,” the editor argued, “so long as we surrender our economic strength into the keeping of other hands.” Robert L. Vann put it more bluntly. “The pressure of money power,” he wrote, “will stop lynchings quicker than all our oratory and protest meetings combined.”³⁷

In addition, there were enough individual successes during the Depression to maintain the hope that any Black man of talent and persistence could make it in America. Ironically, the examples cited—most often the athletes and entertainers who began to cross the color lines in increasing numbers—generally did not achieve their triumphs in business or within the ghetto. When the *Pittsburgh Courier* compiled its list of men and

women to watch in 1939 it presented a rather miscellaneous group, yet one whose prestige could not have been matched during the boom years of the Twenties. Besides the usual run of educators, leaders of fraternal orders and ministers, it chose Duke Ellington, Marian Anderson and Louis Armstrong (rather quaintly described as a “creator of musical forms”). Rounding out this interesting assortment were a surgeon, a life insurance company executive, W. E. B. DuBois, the leader of the National Negro Business League, an architect, a federal judge, a congressman and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. (“leader in labor and religion”).³⁸

While there was some empirical verification of the idea that Black men could succeed by White standards in America, the Black press had other reasons for maintaining the connection between “race pride” and success, particularly business success. In part simply adding its own minor variations on themes appearing in the White press, it was also serving emotional and economic interests of the Black editors themselves. Virtually by definition, these men were considered successful, persons of influence and (generally) of some wealth. Additionally, many of them were self-made men, a type not notably sympathetic to failures. They had capitalized on the growth of the ghetto and were examples of the possibility of success in America who, in marking out the virtues one needed to succeed, were both pointing out their own good qualities and separating themselves from the masses.³⁹ Robert Abbott’s oracle-like maxims for Negro youth were the signs of his own status as much as they were guidelines for racial uplift.

There were still more material benefits to be reaped by editors and their friends from the identification of “race pride” with success in individual enterprises. These could be promoted shamelessly in feature stories and editorials, sometimes at the expense of black-owned competition. In May, 1930, the California *Voice* noted that “The story of insurance is the story of civilization.” Later in the year its allegiance became more specific as it gave news coverage to the Negro-owned Golden State Life Insurance Company. By 1938, when the Depression had largely taken its toll of Black businesses, the *Voice* ran article after article on Golden State. Stories—favorable, of course—continued into 1939 when there were at least two desperate sounding editorials, one going so far as to advise the reader to see Golden State’s manager to “get rid of guess work” about insurance.⁴⁰

One might think that Sol C. Johnson, Savannah editor, would have deplored a policy of endorsement of private enterprises. He wrote:

The underlying high purpose of the Tribune, its reason for being, is that it shall serve the worthy interests of the people, and not out of any hope for reward but, unselfishly, because those interests are suffering and because upon those who are able vests the obligation and the responsibility to do so. Wherefore, we preach.

But Johnson's morality seems as convoluted as his syntax unless we keep in mind that the press insisted that any race enterprise served the "worthy interests of the people." "This shows the proper kind of initiation [sic]," his paper said of the newly formed Great Southern Fire Insurance Company, of which he was a vice president and director. Still claiming that the *Tribune* was "not a personal organ," he nevertheless gave more than adequate news coverage to Consolidated Realty Corporation, of which he also was vice president. But Johnson's pet must have been the Wage Earner's Bank, which he served in his familiar capacity of vice president. Although Wage Earner's was not the only Negro-owned bank in Savannah, Johnson gave it editorial endorsement, praising its courtesy and honesty when it reached a million dollars in assets.⁴¹ While approving of Negro business in general, Johnson usually refrained from mentioning by name his direct local Black competition. Such was the confusion of "race pride" with business success that it was consistent with both Johnson, the leader of opinion, and Johnson, the bank executive, when he so frequently used the columns of the *Tribune* to counsel thrift as a prime virtue, badly needed by the race, and then later pointed out where best to deposit the results of one's thrift.⁴²

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While in the long run the Northern urban ghetto may have led a large number of Black men to evaluate achievement in terms far different from those of Whites and of Negroes like Johnson, in the short run its effect was to promote hope and to create individuals whose success appeared in the Black press of the Twenties and Thirties as nearly a mirror image of White. In the women's pages this image almost became a parody. Mrs. Earl B. Dickerson briefed one reporter on the life-style of wealthy Negroes in 1927:

We [Negroes who are advancing] take many of our ideas from the best class of white people. We also get many ideas from the movies, for in the movies we see lavish homes, fine manners and the best of taste in decorations, etc. We are also being broadened by travel and observation. On the whole, this generation is far, far ahead of the last, both socially and culturally.⁴³

There was, it seems, at least one group of Black people able to find positive identification in American films between "Birth of a Nation" and "Gone with the Wind."

While Black headlines lengthened during the Depression the society pages of Negro newspapers conversely grew more glittering, as if to reassure readers that there were truly glamorous and successful members of the race. The Baltimore *Afro-American* displayed a fairly typical sense of values by using its Photo News section far more to chronicle the comings and goings of Negro society than to capture the misery of the

crisis. By 1938 the usually militant Chicago *Defender* had even acquired a gossip columnist with the appropriate sounding name of Consuelo Young-Megahy who . . . in the style of her trade . . . habitually used elipses to set off items. Also writing in this genre was Eric (Von) Wilkinson, whose “Gallivanting About Brooklyn” column in the New York *Age* contained such flashes from the midst of disaster as: “Wonder what happened to the Aristocratic Girls’ affair two Sabbaths ago. . . . Did the monicker keep the crowd away? . . .” and “The Star Dust Girls have gone in for male members. . . .” Michigan reported that “The A.K.A.s and Kappas have set Detroit socially at a violent rate,” and “Beautiful Weddings Feature Fall Activities”—this was 1939, a year some people found bleak.⁴⁴

A. Philip Randolph might well tell the same reporter who interviewed Mrs. Dickerson that “The distinguishing character of the New Negro is in his spirit of revolt . . . his militant insistence upon the application of the principle of equality.”⁴⁵ But, casting success in material terms and measuring it by individual achievement, most middle-class New Negroes seem to have defined this equality of status and consumption with Whites of a corresponding class. Calls for Black unity and the Depression barely affected this interpretation. As one disappointed Black radical noted in 1933:

The Negro in college is a middle-class American and that as a respectable bourgeoisie he is infected with the characteristic hope of becoming a petty capitalist . . . students aspire to be like their [middle-class] parents but with a finer car and a whiter collar. This deep-set faith persists though the present crisis has stripped the parents clean and plucked most of them to the bone.⁴⁶

Robert Abbott drew out the implication of all this, making clear that “race pride” based on individual achievement was not the same thing as regarding all members of the race as equals. “Will we never learn that the hod-carrier is no associate of the banker. . . . [?]” he asked, going on to add that “The fact of the matter is, the majority of us are underdeveloped and crude.” Abbott acted on his principles: after (with some difficulty) obtaining a Rolls Royce, he “employed a liveried chauffeur lest he himself be taken for a white millionaire’s flunky.”⁴⁷

Abbott’s attitude was nevertheless a logical extension of the impulse toward racial uplift because “race pride” tied to success and success judged by traditional American standards could only be thoroughly divisive. The formula involved was a familiar one, dating back some centuries and having Benjamin Franklin as the Moses of its paper commandments; this very familiarity made it difficult to question: to have done so would have been unAmerican in several senses. But since the program for achievement had been developed by White people, for whom “race pride” was an assumption (not a goal) and who faced fewer social

barriers, it operated against the Negro when he accepted its terms uncritically.

"Industry," ("Lose no time. Be always employed in something useful," Franklin wrote) received its exegesis in the Black press. "It is up to us, as the saying goes, 'to do our derndest' every minute of the time we are on the job," one editor wrote. Another, more pragmatic, pointed out that "It is as old as Christian civilization that he who does not work shall not eat." And, naturally, a doctrine which had survived the centuries could withstand the Great Crash. More than one Black man, in fact, felt that the Depression only confirmed the idea that the problem remained a matter of individual discipline, for "now the people realize that the road to normalcy lies only in the direction of hard work and self-denial."⁴⁸

"Frugality"—"Make no expence but to do good to others or yourself, i.e. waste nothing," to Franklin—found its Black boosters, not all of them disinterested. C. C. Spaulding counted it as the greatest achievement of his building and loan company that "We are training boys and young people how to save." W. E. B. DuBois, at the time a Socialist, likewise wrote: "Thrift, saving, care and fore-sight are the watchwords for black folk as never before. We are not going to be saved by high-powered automobiles and sables but rather by the canny saving balance, the wise investment, and the wide surplus of income over expense."⁴⁹ This doctrine, preached through the Depression, came as literary men were discovering art in the supposed exotic extravagances of poor Black folk and as Negro society began to produce bigger and better debutante balls. The irony was double for prophets of thrift like Robert Abbott and even DuBois (whose daughter's wedding was a gala affair) because their own success implied conspicuous consumption.

"Resolve to perform what you ought," ran Franklin's stern advice. Speaking to the inmates of the Jenkins Orphanage in Georgia, a Negro executive translated the imperative to read "punctuality, loyalty and efficiency on the part of those who are engaged in business." After five years of the Depression another Negro united patience to resolution. "In this age of specialization," he wrote, "there are no short cuts to success and those imprudent ones who attempt to scale victory's heights at a single jump show haste but no reflection and are thereby doomed to failure." The same paper earlier cited as inspiration a Negro who had toiled sixty years before success came.⁵⁰

Not even lynchings, federal inaction and the Depression could shake the view that if the Negro practiced these and the other virtues he would succeed as had Jews and other ethnic groups so often held up for emulation. This faith came in itself to be a virtue. "Stop Knocking Yourself," Reverend J. P. Hubbard implored, "we are all enroute to the goal of better things." One newspaper carried a morality play between "Mr. Morose Gloom" and "Mr. B. Jubilant." Jubilant refuted the other's fatalism with:

I know that I am black. I know that I am oppressed. Other oppressed people have climbed to the top and I can do it. I shall spend every minute of my time working and fighting for advancement.

At the beginning of a gray decade, one which would deprive a large number of the Black bourgeoisie of the fruits of their virtuous labors, the *Afro-American* asserted that “THERE CAN BE NO PROSPERITY WITHOUT CONFIDENCE,” and nine years later, still undaunted, a writer proclaimed that “Faith allied with knowledge is IRRESISTABLE.”⁵¹

There was a potentially troublesome assumption behind the American success formula—the assumption that the individual is responsible for his own success or failure. So powerful was this that it would not admit even prejudice as an excuse for failure. “Remember,” a St. Louis paper reminded its readers, “you are the masters of your own fortunes and the architects of your fate.”⁵² This, of course, made “race pride” hinge upon the accomplishments of individuals rather than collective effort—but still the race would be judged by the sum of these efforts. Negro business, for instance, while a measure of “race progress,” was presented as depending on the skills and initiative of individuals. And here the Black entrepreneur quickly found himself trapped by his rhetoric: he was an individualist who at crucial moments demanded that members of the community not always seek their own highest profit. On one hand “race pride” dictated that Negroes should support race-owned businesses, but on the other it meant that the businessman would have to make it on his merits, which, in turn meant competing directly with Whites who possessed considerable advantages in purchasing and merchandising. Robert Russa Moton, Booker T. Washington’s successor as head of both Tuskegee and the National Negro Business League, though himself a promoter of Black business and of “race pride,” made it abundantly clear these would have to survive in the American tradition of open competition. “I would not pay six dollars to a colored man for a shirt,” said Moton, “if I could get it from a white man for five dollars and get a better fit.” The fastidious Moton went on to add, “the colored man’s business place in most instances is not quite as clean as that of the white man’s business place.”⁵³ William Scott, of Oakland, California, painted an even more vivid picture of the inexperienced Black entrepreneur. The customer would be greeted with a “drawling voice” and refused those “little acts of extra service” which so please shoppers. Scott further explained that “colored people of taste and refinement resent the familiarity that a few colored businessmen sometimes insist on as their right.” Besides, there were too many loiterers around Negro establishments, some of them “careless types” who “are not good mixers.”⁵⁴ This apparently did not occur at White competitors. During the Depression a poll showed that despite years of exposure to the idea that “race pride” advanced through support of Negro business, 73%

of professional class Negroes questioned said they did not buy from Black establishments, 43% giving the excuse that the stores "are not clean enough."⁵⁵ While one paper reprinted the opinion of a man who felt such attitudes were "a serious indictment of Negro education," the problem went more deeply into American values. Possibly for some middle-class Negroes the utilization of White services was a sign of status, but as a Black commentator noted, "The Negro with money in his pocket is like any other man, he is looking for the best and most advantageous purchase, and he doesn't care a hang who is doing the selling and sentiment and racial preference is out when there is money to be spent." This same line of reasoning justified another writer blaming Depression failures among Negro restaurants on the unwillingness of their proprietors to adopt competitive practices. This very paper had earlier placed responsibility squarely on the businessman, remarking "it seems that we are acutely aware of our major business handicaps as set by external factors, but indolent toward those which would yield to internal action."⁵⁶ In acrimonious dialogue the entrepreneur blamed his ungrateful race; the consumer blamed the entrepreneur. The result neither reflected nor produced "race pride."

Businessmen were not the only ones to discover that the egotism inherent in the success-formula actually led to behavior which hit at "race pride." George S. Schuyler was forced to ask "Do We Really Want Equality?" when he confronted the Negro's apparent preference for personal gains. "For every colored member of the N.A.A.C.P.," he wrote, "there are about six colored automobile owners and perhaps twenty radio owners." Only \$2,000 went to the 1936 anti-lynching bill campaign. Negroes contributed \$100,000 to the N.A.A.C.P. yet spent (he claimed) \$100,000,000 "getting ready to die."⁵⁷ This conduct, nevertheless, was totally consistent with the faith so prevalent in Negro newspapers that by serving one's self (especially by the production and accumulation of worldly goods) one was advancing the race.

Yet after a decade of Depression the Black press, though occasionally capable of great bitterness, generally echoed the sentiments of one editor who, far from being weaned from this way of life, assured his weary readers: "America and the American industrial system have brought us a long way, with all its faults." The moral he drew was that Black people in 1939 should not follow wild demagogues who would make radical changes and thus "kill the goose that has laid so many golden eggs on our march to progress."⁵⁸ Acceptance of the system and its assumptions helps explain the extremely slender volume of social and economic analyses of the Depression for, if the formula were correct, one need only follow its prescriptions; there were no other variables of any significance.

After all, had not the press taken pains to show how Blacks had conquered the odds, even the highest hurdle of all, the color barrier? These twenty years began with the St. Louis *Argus* insisting that "RACE TEN-

SIONS FAILED TO HALT OUR ADVANCE DURING 1919.”—this following a period of considerable violence directed against Negroes. “There never will come a time when all opportunities for human betterment are monopolized,” came the word from Virginia four years later. On the very edge of disaster newspapers reported that a committee of the National Business League had found “ample evidence that equipped with a thorough knowledge of their business, with adequate capital, members of the race can successfully meet competition in the open market regardless of racial factors.” Early in the Thirties Georgia Douglass Johnson continued this line of thought, giving it as “Homely Philosophy” that of all the obstacles facing the race the “most formidable are doubt and fear—conquer these and you conquer failure.” The sentiment would, of course, be repeated by Franklin Roosevelt, likewise neglecting to note how economic forces could over-ride the strength of individual initiative and nullify the traditional virtues. In the case of the Negro the “Homely Philosophy” left out even more, yet as late as 1939 one Black paper proclaimed “All doors open EASILY to those who SEEM to belong inside.” Members of the race only lacked confidence. To succeed, “Examine yourself closely, find out the right direction in which to go, and have the Will to do so.” Another paper chastized its readers in 1937 by pointing to the achievement of a Negro youth operating a short wave radio and by arguing that “Not only in the field of the radio, but in chemistry, astronomy, mechanics, biology and physics, there is a vast unexplored world open alike to every youth, and where results cannot be affected by racial barriers.”⁵⁹

And here, of course, the image of success—when it proved a mirage—led inevitably not to “race pride” but to self-contempt. If the formula did not allow for external forces, if it explained success in terms of individual effort, then it had to explain failure by blaming it on the people who had failed. And by White American standards there were few Negroes who had not failed. A. L. Jackson, confronted with the small number of Black enterprises, could only cite as a reason “a predisposition to whine and lie down in front of obstacles because we lack the courage and the willingness to sacrifice leisure and pleasure.” Another Black man, interested in promoting new businesses after the Depression, implied that hard times had improved the companies which had survived by rewarding “sound conservative policy” and that failures had been the fault of “The get-rich-quick mania and social ambition of the untrained investor. . . .” Later the same year his paper put the message even more cruelly. “Though we are confronted with many obstacles in our struggle upward,” it argued, “all our handicaps are not imposed on us by our white neighbors as one would be led to think by the nature of some complaints.” Although Whites “are guilty of discrimination, segregation, and disfranchisement,” the economic and moral laxities of the Negro “are just as bad.”⁶⁰

Utterly incapable of extricating itself from even those American values which led to self-persecution, the middle-class Black press struggled through twenty years of alternate boom and Depression painfully ambivalent and virtually unable to explain the crisis about it. Success damned those who failed; failures damned themselves and their race. So much of this came from hope inspired by the early growth of the ghettos and the businesses thus created (newspapers among them) and from the impulse toward "race pride," a concept which should have unified but which proved divisive and guilt-producing when tied to an ethic emphasizing the efforts of individuals, while generalizing from their achievements to the capabilities of a whole people. Although the Black bourgeoisie suffered more from this than critics allow, the grounds they accepted for proving "race pride" were far more ill-chosen for the mass of Negroes, who lacked the skills, capital and freedom from White prejudice necessary to compete economically, even in the urban ghetto and in the speculative atmosphere of California, where the idea of business success found logical homes. For them reality constantly impinged on the utterly simple formula that with individual diligence came inevitable success. Although seeming not to realize it, few of the articulate Negroes of the Twenties and Thirties were really speaking to the condition of the Black poor who—in ignorance, pain and alienation—may possibly have been the only group in American society genuinely at work forging a different set of values out of the hard materials of the urban North. We know very little of the textures of their lives, except what survives, indirectly and covertly, from the real blues of the Twenties and Thirties, one of which presented in counterpoint another view of the path to success in America:

If you're white, you're right,
If you're brown, hang around,
But if you're black, Oh brother, get back.

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footnotes

1. There are several immediate methodological problems, the first being discovery of a workable definition of "Negro Press." I have reluctantly omitted publications representing the views of A. Philip Randolph and Marcus Garvey, each a special case and at times out of step with other Black editors and publishers. However, the next few pages are intended to make clear that Garvey and the radicals nevertheless shared many of the cultural values under discussion. Since it was impossible to read every line of each of the hundreds of Negro newspapers published in these two decades, I chose to study intensively several selected from various regions, those with the largest circulation as well as some of the most obscure. I paid special attention to the magazines, *Crisis* and *Opportunity*, both because of their national distribution and their roles as spokesmen for the N.A.A.C.P. and the Urban League. Checking my major sources against other newspapers and documents convinced me that a greater sample would only be redundant. The national circulation of papers like the Chicago *Defender*, and the influence of the Associated Negro Press and of syndicated columns such as those of Kelly Miller and Carter G. Woodson, tended to help minimize local variations and to keep all papers in touch with ideas and events in other regions. It should be remembered, of course, that newspapers are primarily urban, adding another bias to the class bias this essay is partially concerned with.

2. Chicago *Defender*, October 3, 1923.

3. E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (New York, 1962), 146. Frazier, perceptive but extremely bitter, attacked the middle-class for "rejecting any genuine identification with the black race" when the point should be that they could see no conflict between pride in blackness and cultural values which ultimately eroded the security of that pride. The problem here is to discover the values stressed in the press, the only media really controlled by Blacks, and how these values affected the way different Black men saw themselves, their race, and events around them, especially when the hopefulness of the first years of the ghetto dissolved. There is a certain unavoidable circularity in Frazier's (and my own) use of the concept of a "middle-class" press. This is not primarily an economic or sociological judgment but rather largely assumes that "bourgeoisie values" define the bourgeoisie. The assumption is a common one and, unlike some more rigorous models of class based upon European social structure, it does help explain Blacks who hold occupations not considered middle-class in White society but who maintain the conventional verities and regard themselves as a middle-class within the ghetto—the people Malcolm X (among others) has portrayed so fiercely. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, with the assistance of Alex Haley (New York, 1966), 40-41.

4. Edmund David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1962) is the standard scholarly account of Garvey's career. Harold Cruse, *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: From its Origins to the Present* (New York, 1967), 539, perceives Garvey's failure to develop a "cultural nationalism."

5. Robert A. Bone, *The Negro Novel in America* (New Haven, 1958), 75, 71.

6. *Crisis*, XXVI (November, 1929), 373. In the manifesto to the Negro Renaissance, Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (New York, 1925), 11-12, Locke argued that the radicalism of the New Negro was simply a reaching out for traditional American ideals, an attempt to restore democracy to its proper functioning. See also Cruse's suggestive interpretation, *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, 20-38, and Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto, Negro New York, 1890-1930* (New York, 1968), 181-184.

7. *Crisis*, XLIV (September, 1937), 272. For other examples from Hughes and Claude McKay see *The Negro Worker*, II (July, 1932), 32. Cruse, *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, 44-63, is trenchant on the effects of Marxism upon Black writers. Not all Black writers and artists who were part of the Harlem Renaissance were Marxists.

8. *The Negro Worker*, I (October-November, 1931), 3. See also Wilson Record, *The Negro and the Communist Party* (Chapel Hill, 1951), and Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (New York, 1960), ch. XV.

9. August Meier, *Negro Thought in America: 1880-1915* (Ann Arbor, 1963), has extensive discussions of the idea of "race pride" through self-help and Cronon, *Black Moses*, devotes several pages to Garvey's many efforts to increase "race pride." See also St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Life in a Northern City* (rev. ed., 2 vols., New York, 1962), II, 391.

10. Pittsburgh Courier, January 15, 1927; Los Angeles Western Dispatch, October 27, 1921; Monroe Work, ed., *Negro Year Book: An Annual Encyclopedia for the Negro, 1931-1932* (Tuskegee, 1932), 21-25.

11. Chicago Defender, February 12, 1916; Norfolk Journal and Guide, February 16, 1924.

12. Minutes of the National Negro Business League, XXII (1921), 66. There was a measure of ambiguity here; Pace's partner was W. C. Handy, whose composed "blues" records received more than adequate promotion in company advertisements. The Los Angeles Citizen Advocate, March 12, 1921, praised Pace and Handy for their well orchestrated numbers, calling them "the first to lend dignity to the blues."

13. Bone, *The Negro Novel in America*, 96; *Crisis*, XXIV (June, 1927), 122; (July, 1927), 153; XXII (October, 1921), 248; Baltimore Afro-American, May 20, 1921. See also Chadwick Hansen, "Social Influences on Jazz Style: Chicago, 1920-1930," in Hennig Cohen, ed., *The American Culture: Approaches to the Study of the United States* (New York, 1968), 381-397.

14. Chicago Defender, March 10, 1923.

15. Chicago Defender, May 26, 1923; St. Louis Argus, January 9, 1920; Savannah Tribune, July 17, 1920; Baltimore Afro-American, April 2, 1920, April 31, 1920; Cleveland Gazette, February 21, 1920. These same advertisements and others with this type of appeal persist throughout the decade, even finding their way into the pages of *Crisis*. At least one of the most ferocious boosters of "race pride," Robert Abbott of the Chicago Defender, revealed in his private life signs of ambivalence about his skin color. Richard Bardolph, *The Negro Vanguard* (New York, 1959), 194, 284.

16. "Men of the Month," *Crisis*, XXII (June, 1921), 72. In later years, with development of pride in cultural uniqueness and among different strata of Black society, such a distinction would be made and would become important.

17. Baltimore Afro-American, especially April 7, 1920, and June 4, 1920.

18. Savannah Tribune, February 21, 1920.

19. T. Arnold Hill, "The College Graduate Looks for New Fields," *Opportunity*, X (July, 1932), 222. In typically American fashion, a belief in the virtues of education co-existed with a jealousy of the educated man and a strong current of anti-intellectualism. (Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland) *Western Outlook*, May 26, 1928, warned the graduate to "discard that air of superior complex toward your fellows who do not happen to have diplomas."

20. *Savannah Tribune*, August 21, 1920.
21. *Chicago Defender*, November 18, 1939. Of course the Tuskegee ideal still had its advocates and, in addition, found its urban counterpart in pleas for "practical" courses of study. Business was considered one of these, despite some evidence to the contrary after 1929.
22. *Savannah Tribune*, February 14, 1920.
23. (Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland), *Western Outlook*, January 1, 1927; *Chicago Defender*, March 11, 1922. The parallel to Horatio Alger did not escape one Black editor. "Life Story of Local Hotel Man Reads Like Horatio Alger Tale," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, July 23, 1932.
24. Articles by Elmer A. Carter, *Opportunity*, X (March, 1932), 82; (February, 1932), 46-48; VIII (May, 1930), 149; X (January, 1932), 12; VIII (April, 1930), 119.
25. *National Negro Business League*, XXV (1924), 191 (the speaker was the editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier*); *Chicago Whip*, quoted in the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, July 19, 1924. Drake and Cayton noted the general acceptance by Chicago Negroes of the connection between race business and race progress during the Twenties and Thirties; they show the church as well as the press encouraging the belief. Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, II, 726, 431. The tie between Booker T. Washington's influence and calls for economic independence—"race pride" though business success—is especially clear in the *New York Age* and the (Los Angeles) *California Eagle*. See also August Meier's excellent *Negro Thought in America*. It is ironic that Washington's ideas, developed in the rural South, found their fruition in the urban North and among men who usually turned them to purposes far more aggressive than he publicly counseled. There was an unevenness in the stridency with which various papers pushed the idea of success through business, the *Baltimore Afro-American* being far more subdued than the *Chicago Defender* or several California papers, perhaps reflecting the greater age and security of the Baltimore and Washington Black bourgeoisie.
26. "Opinion," *Crisis*, XXI (November, 1920), 6; *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, August 30, 1924. Even commentators who argued that the Negro's economic plight was more that of labor than capital still generally assumed that opportunities for Black workers, and parity with White workers, depended in large part on the development of Negro-owned business. Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, *The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement* (New York, 1968), 400, believed in 1931 that Blacks assumed "Negro material welfare rests on the establishment of business enterprise as the basis of a sort of self-contained economy furnishing jobs to Negroes and erecting a Negro middle-class. . . ."
27. *National Negro Business League*, XXV (1924), 213.
28. H. H. Pace, "The Business of Banking Among Negroes," *Crisis*, XXXIII (February, 1927), 185.
29. A. L. Halsey, "Seventy-five Years of Negro Business," *Crisis*, XLV (July, 1938), 342. See also V. V. Oak, *The Negro Entrepreneur* (2 vols., Yellow Springs, Ohio, 1949), II, 48; Abram L. Harris, *The Negro as Capitalist: A Study of Banking and Business Among American Negroes* (Philadelphia, 1936), particularly 50-51; and Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, II, 437-439.
30. This event was covered extensively in most of the Black press; see especially the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, and the *Cleveland Gazette*, October 3, 1931.
31. H. H. Pace, "The Business of Banking Among Negroes," *Crisis*, XXXIII (February, 1927), 184-188; Inez V. Cantey, "Jesse Binga," *Crisis*, XXXIII (December, 1927), 350. Also, Harris, *The Negro as Capitalist*, 153-164.
32. Robert Russa Moton, *What the Negro Thinks* (Garden City, N.Y., 1929), 244; *Crisis*, XLV (April, 1938), 115; Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, II, 465-468.
33. *Chicago Defender*, September 12, 1931.
34. "The College Graduate Looks for New Fields," *Opportunity*, X (July, 1932), 222.
35. *Chicago Defender*, February 2, 1935; V. V. Oak, "Business Opportunities for Negroes," *Opportunity*, XVI (April, 1938), 108-109, 126; *New York Age*, June 10, 1933.
36. *St. Louis Argus*, November 21, 1919. Ray Stannard Baker, *Following the Color Line* (New York, 1964), 39, noted in 1906 that Negroes were setting up and patronizing their own businesses and that "the struggle of the races is becoming more and more rapidly economic."
37. *Baltimore Afro-American*, August 20, 1920, January 9, 1920; *Oakland California Voice*, January 7, 1922; *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 15, 1927.
38. *Ibid.*, January 7, 1939.
39. For examples of editors whose lives fit the Horatio Alger pattern see the comments on Robert L. Vann in Bardolph, *Negro Vanguard*, 193, 196, and those on Robert Abbott in Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, II, 400.
40. *California Voice*, May 23, 1930; January 27, 1939; February 3, 1939. Also November 4, 1938; October 14, 1938; July 23, 1938; and July 4, 1930. The story has a happy ending. Golden State survived the Depression to become the largest Negro insurance company west of the Mississippi in 1950. Robert H. Kinzer and Edward Sagarin, *The Negro in American Business: The Conflict Between Separatism and Integration* (New York, 1950), 176-177.
41. *Savannah Tribune*, February 28, 1920; September 4, 1920; August 7, 1920.

42. December 18, 1920, for example, the *Tribune* advised the race not to waste Christmas money, but to tuck it away in a bank for hard times. Not every editor, of course, blatantly used his paper to boost his own enterprises.

43. *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 22, 1927. Mrs. Dickerson's husband's success story was equal to any other. Born in the South, son of a washer-woman, his luck, hard work and talent carried him through an impressive education, a legal career, participation in various companies and the Chicago City Council. Bardolph, *Negro Vanguard*, 436, 444, 434.

44. See the Washington, D.C. *Afro-American's* (April 10, 1937) picture story on the horse racing season for a good example. *New York Age*, January 28, 1933; *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 7, 1939, September 30, 1939.

45. *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 22, 1927. The interviews were printed only a few pages apart.

46. Lawrence D. Reddick, "What Does the Younger Negro Think?" *Opportunity*, XI (October, 1933), 312.

47. *Chicago Defender*, June 10, 1920.

48. *Chicago Defender*, October 9, 1920; *Savannah Tribune*, February 28, 1920; *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 7, 1933. See also the *Baltimore Afro-American*, "The Shirker," March 15, 1930; and the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, "What Have We to be Thankful for?" November 18, 1939.

49. *National Negro Business League*, XXII (1921), 70; DuBois, "Opinion," *Crisis*, XXI (January, 1921), 102.

50. *Savannah Tribune*, March 6, 1920; *Chicago Defender*, March 23, 1935, December 9, 1922.

51. *Oakland California Voice*, May 6, 1927; *Chicago Defender*, May 27, 1922; *Baltimore Afro-American*, January 18, 1930; *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 7, 1939. Blacks were not alone in seeing optimism as a cure for the economic crisis.

52. *St. Louis Argus*, December 31, 1920.

53. *National Negro Business League*, XXII (1921), 132-133.

54. *Oakland California Voice*, August 6, 1926.

55. Albion L. Holsey, "Seventy-five Years of Negro Business," *Crisis*, XLV (July, 1938), 241. The figures were from Charles E. Hall, a Negro statistician with the U.S. Census Bureau. Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, II, 443-445, quote Chicago Negroes on why they did not patronize Black businesses. The reasons given duplicate those most often mentioned in the press: high prices and lack of credit, as well as poor service—usual features of under-capitalized enterprises. William N. Jones, "Day by Day," *Baltimore Afro-American*, September 6, 1930, noted that several years before, when he advocated support of Negro business even if prices were higher, he was greeted with a "flood of letters setting forth the opinion that Negro businessmen should not expect trade from Negroes unless they were able to meet the competition of whites."

56. Washington, D.C. *Afro-American*, April 17, 1937; Vere E. Johns, "Through My Spectacles," *New York Age*, March 10, 1934; *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, December 10, 1932, April 21, 1928.

57. *Crisis*, XLV (April, 1937), 103.

58. *Cleveland Gazette*, January 7, 1939. Few White papers could match the free enterprise rhetoric of the *Oakland California Voice* (January 30, 1939; September 2, 1938) which persisted in seeing Depression business failures as a well-deserved pruning away of the inefficient, branded T.V.A. "socialistic," and when discussing the New Deal murmured darkly about the "rapacity of politicians" and the threats they posed to private property.

59. *St. Louis Argus*, January 2, 1920; *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, April 2, 1924; *New York Age*, January 5, 1929; *Chicago Defender*, August 15, 1931; *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 17, 1939, June 10, 1939; Washington, D. C. *Afro-American*, July 17, 1937 (note also the poem "Let's Not Complain" in the same issue).

60. *Chicago Defender*, July 14, 1923, September 22, 1923; *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, April 22, 1939, November 11, 1939. Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill, 1968) calls into serious question the assumption, shared by the most conservative as well as the most radical of Black editors, that America's racial animosity, rooted as it is in the psyche of the White man, can be solved by economic change alone. Note the statement by William H. Jones in the *Washington, D.C. Afro-American*, August 14, 1937, that "When once the colored American can get the same kind of job with the same kind of pay that other Americans get, there will be no race problem."