"To Be a Man and Not a Lackey": Black Men, Work, and the Construction of Manhood in Gilded Age New York City

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A young Frederick Challenor left his home in Barbados at the turn of the twentieth century, bound for New York City. Like most immigrants, he expected to find greater opportunities in his adopted home than in the one he left behind. In 1907, he married Aletha Dowridge, a fellow Barbadian whom he had met in America, and the newlyweds set out to establish a life together in Brooklyn. They welcomed the birth of a daughter, Elise, in 1908. Just about a year later, however, mother and daughter returned to Barbados as Frederick struggled to find a steady job to support his family. The couple's separation lasted until late in 1910, but Elise remained on the island permanently, to be raised by her grandmother. Finding themselves in dire financial straits once more, exacerbated by Aletha's failing health and inability to work the long, hard hours required of domestic servants, the Challenors decided to separate once more. Aletha returned to her mother's home in Barbados at the end of 1911. She did not join Fred again until 1913 as he tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to make ends meet and bring his wife back to Brooklyn. "I am kept without any money but hope for better days," he wrote in one of his earliest letters. They were a long time coming.

The nearly fifty letters Fred sent to Aletha during their periods apart reveal his constant, overwhelming concerns about money. He recorded his apologies for sending so few "greenbacks" to her and Elise, his tales of ever-changing

jobs that always proved disappointing, and his struggles to get himself out of debt. "I just want to pay all who I owe then I will feel better to myself and be a little independent," he admitted nearly a year into their first separation. In the months since his wife and daughter had left, Fred worked in one apartment building earning $12.00 a month, then as an elevator operator for $4.00 a week. He quit both. He subsequently took a job at a shoe factory, but explaining he was "weary with it," he continued searching for a good janitor's position. Unsuccessful, he reluctantly left the factory during the summer to work on leisure boats. Frederick found boat work demeaning and unpleasant but he could not pass up the chance to make enough money in tips to bring Aletha back to him.

During their second separation, Fred worked for a time as a domestic servant with a family in the city, though he finally gave up that job in February 1912. "I just couldn't stand the worry any more," he apologized in his letter to Aletha. "I have been gaining nothing by the house so what's the difference." Instead, Fred made plans to go back to the shoe factory. But slow times there forced Fred to continue searching for better work, and for once his prospects seemed relatively promising. "The old man at the factory wants me to stay with him altogether and he will pay $12.00 a week," he wrote Aletha optimistically. He also had another offer to work as a janitor for $55.00 a month. Fred chose the janitorial position and quickly regretted his decision. "[A]fter going to work on the 1st of April I saw where it would not suit me to keep the place . . . somebody has to be in all the time and the houses were not together." He quit. Having "lost out" on both opportunities, Fred decided to return to the boats for the summer. "I shall beg you not to feel any discontented," he pleaded with his wife. He wrote his last letter to Aletha on May 4, 1913.[1]

Fred Challenor's work experience illustrates the precarious circumstances confronted by black men in New York City in the decades prior to World War I as they sought to establish economic stability and achieve full equality in a nation still grappling with the residue of the Civil War. The "Gilded Age" marked a time of dramatic industrial and demographic change in the United States that contributed to a growing anxiety among white, middle-class men about their identity and place within society. Big Business profoundly altered the nature of work, moving the middle class increasingly out of the autonomous and creative world of craftsmen and into a new role as salaried employees within expanding bureaucracies. For many men whose masculine identity had been linked to their work experience, this shift created a significant challenge to the manly ideals of independence and strenuous living required of the old labor order.[2]

Adding to the pressure on white men's identity was the transformation of the nation's racial landscape during the second half of the nineteenth century. The conferral of citizenship on four million former slaves, combined with the influx of southern- and eastern-European immigrants and the small but steady stream of Chinese immigrants searching for "Gold Mountain," threatened whites' assertion of their racial superiority. In the midst of so many newcomers whose

ability to assimilate to American values and, more importantly, to the "American race," remained questionable, Anglo Americans sought to solidify their own preeminence. Yet the explicit emphasis on racial difference seemed untenable in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War as the nation claimed a new egalitarian position reflected in the three Reconstruction amendments to the U.S. Constitution.[3]

As white men experienced increasing anxiety over their gender and racial identities, the workplace—long a source of masculine affirmation—once again provided a mechanism by which they could validate their privileged status. The nascent office culture became a demarcation of difference, if not explicitly manhood itself. By the late nineteenth century, the non-manual labor performed by growing numbers of middle-class men came to represent the ability to execute intellectual tasks requiring attention to detail, as distinguished from the activities of the growing ranks of unskilled workers who labored mindlessly in jobs that demanded and permitted little independent thought. In this way, groups could be classified not by race but by the presumption of innate characteristics that qualified certain national groups for particular occupations. For example, according to a factory supervisor in Pittsburgh, immigrant Slavs' "habit of silent submission, their amenability to discipline, and their willingness to work long hours and overtime without a murmur" made them ideally suited for the monotonous, treacherous work of the steel mills. Within this eugenicist ordering of the world's nationalities and races, black people repeatedly found themselves relegated to the bottom. While Slavs might have been viewed as mere cogs in the industrial wheel, blacks were excluded from it altogether. The same factory supervisor who championed the labor potential of eastern European immigrants scorned black men for being "inefficient, unsuitable, and unstable" for the heavy pace and highly disciplined nature of millwork. He disparaged black men as "idle loafers" who sought "easy money," and therefore he refused to hire them at all.[4]

While the workplace then identified and reflected the hierarchy of civilization, white middle-class men asserted their masculinity through engaging in intentionally vigorous and competitive activities during their expanded leisure time. The very existence of leisure time differentiated the middle and working classes; the latter rarely enjoyed much opportunity to participate in recreational activities. It also promoted the development of business connections among members of the same class, furthering men's social status as they facilitated one another's ambitions. But an emerging belief in the symbiotic relationship between corporal strength and a strong character shaped the activities undertaken during men's time away from the workplace, directly contributing to the development of organized sports and causing a near obsession with physical prowess. Yet even as middle-class men celebrated their ferocious primitivism exhibited through brutal athletic "combat," they did so only with the comfortable knowledge that other aspects of their lives—notably their occupations—proved their ability to

control their innate savagery. What distinguished civilized men from mere brutes was the discipline that men could exercise over their own passions.[5]

Into this dynamic environment the early vanguard of black migrants from the South and Caribbean-born black immigrants began arriving in New York City "hoping for better days." White New Yorkers, however, terrorized by the perceived "invasion" of their city, quickly set the wheels in motion to nearly guarantee black men's failure in the urban setting. A growing body of "evidence" suggested that black people were incapable of making the transition to an industrialized, urban setting.[6] John Clyde, a Columbia University sociologist, explained in 1898 that "the Negro may be lazy and in more he is ineficient [*sic*]." The relative autonomy of the city, he averred, amplified these traits, breeding "both sloth and inefficiency" and eventually leading to blacks' devolution to savagery.[7] These beliefs rationalized the implementation of housing restrictions, police harassment, and most importantly, occupational exclusion, converting New York City from a promised land into a daunting impediment to blacks' quest for genuine freedom in America. These circumstances have had long-term and often devastating consequences for black men. As sociologists and policy makers continue to grapple with multiple problems of inner-city blight and black men's conflicted relationship with the criminal justice system, an understanding of the earliest roots of these conditions offers one of the few legitimate chances for dismantling persistent iniquities.

Ironically, many southern black men looked to New York City as an escape from the emasculation they encountered under the South's Jim Crow system. Southern blacks experienced innumerable hardships and affronts as whites created a web of virtually incontrovertible controls over blacks' freedoms. The image of lawless black men and women reverting to their "natural" state of savagery and moral deficiency formed the justification and the strategy for white supremacy. Black women faced the constant threat of sexual exploitation and rape, acts frequently committed by male employers of live-in domestic servants. "The sad, but undeniable fact," mourned the editor of *Alexander's Magazine*, a black monthly published in the beginning of the twentieth century, is "that in far too many southern homes the Colored waitress or cook is not morally safe."[8] White men's attacks on black women affected black men as well, undermining their sense of masculine prerogative and responsibility. Unable to protect their wives, sisters, mothers, or daughters, black men at times admitted to feeling helpless. "[A]fter thinking of my three little girls who might grow to virtuous womanhood, but whose virtue had no protection in public sentiment," a father from South Carolina explained, "I decided to take my chances in a freer, though harder climate." Richard Wright described the powerlessness he felt after witnessing a white night watchman slap a black co-worker on her buttocks. "I could not move or speak," he recalled. "My immobility must have seemed a challenge to him, for he pulled his gun. 'Don't you like it, nigger?'" the watchman

demanded. "Oh, yes, sir!" Wright managed to respond, as he walked away with the watchman's gun trained on his back. Catching up to the woman, he confessed that he wanted to confront the white man for his audacity. "It don't matter," she replied. "They do it all the time." Wright walked away feeling helpless. The violence perpetrated against black men who might try to stop the assaults stripped them of an important symbol of their manhood—the ability to protect their loved ones, especially women.[9]

The South's demonization of black men became centered on the specter of black males lusting after white women. The prevalence of this image reached pathological proportions and served as justification for hundreds of lynchings during the Jim Crow era. Though the rapes were more imagined than real, black men typically paid with their lives for the mere suspicion of impropriety.[10] As lynchings became increasingly sadistic with the passing decades, the victims frequently paid with their manhood as well; the summary execution of black men often included their castration. Through this act southern whites symbolically and literally stripped black men of their masculine identity.[11]

Devastated by the constant assaults on their self-respect, many southern black men sought escape. "How could I walk the earth with dignity and pride," asked one man. "How could I aspire to achieve, to accomplish, to 'be somebody' where there were for Negroes no established goals?"[12] Regularly referred to as "boys" by white southerners, black men looked to the North to ease their feelings of emasculation. "It all gets back to a question of manhood," explained a black preacher when questioned about the causes of migration. "[T]hey're treated more like men up here." A southern transplant in New York City confirmed this assessment. "[W]hen I ceased to be a boy," he explained, "[my father] advised me to live in the North where my manhood would be respected. He himself cannot continually endure the position in which he is placed, and in the summer he comes North to be a man."[13]

Prejudice in the North, however, made New York City's initial attraction little more than a cruel hoax. Like European immigrants, most black men arrived in the city eagerly anticipating success through hard work. "When I came here," explained Frances Thomas, "money wasn't on my mind. The only thing on my mind was work." But once in New York, the workplace became a source of emasculation rather than a way of demonstrating and asserting manhood. A Caribbean-born black man in New York City, known simply as Panama, immigrated to the United States with aspirations of upward mobility. Hearing that a company was looking to hire an engineer, Panama quickly applied at the posted address. "We don't want no porter here," the superintendent immediately told him, revealing his assumptions about black men. Insisting on the chance to prove his skill, Panama impressed the man with his effective handling of the engine. The supervisor then came to talk with Panama. "I will tell you," the man admitted frankly, "if you wasn't a black fellow, if you was a white fellow, then you would have a job all your life here. But since you're a black fellow, I can't

keep you here." Finally, impending poverty forced Panama to accept work as a handyman. Denouncing the hypocrisy he encountered, Panama railed, "No, no, if you were a black man you couldn't get a job as an engineer in this place here. You want them to kill you? . . . That was a white man's job. Do you think that you could go near an electrician's shop? Do you think that you could go near a bricklayer's job? They kill you. Those were white man's jobs."[14]

Though black New Yorkers had long experienced economic challenges, in the post-Civil War era black men became increasingly excluded from all of the city's industrial endeavors. Evolving perceptions of urban black men in the late-nineteenth century vested them with characteristics explicitly antithetical to those required by the rigorous demands of the factory. As the nation embarked on its journey towards industrialization, black men remained on the periphery of America's progress. Confronting structural obstacles to success, compounded and rigidified by their race, black men found themselves unable to fulfill the patriarchal role of provider enjoined by white middle-class ideals. Failure to do so struck at the heart of masculine identity in America, leaving black men to struggle to find alternative markers of their manhood.[15]

The growing economic hardships facing black men at the turn of the twentieth century were linked to the changing racial stereotypes emerging on the New York scene. Caricatures of black "coons" that prevailed on Broadway and in Tin Pan Alley became accepted generalizations among white New Yorkers. The "coon song," created in New York City in the 1890s, presented dangerous and titillating images of urban blacks to white audiences nationwide. Black performer Ernest Hogan, known in artistic circles as "The Unbleached American," claimed the dubious honor of giving the coon song its unusual nickname, probably deriving from the antebellum minstrel character of "Zip Coon." Hogan composed a syncopated ditty called "All Coons Look Alike to Me" in 1890, and it succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. Although the tune is actually a love song of a "dusky maiden" forced to choose between two handsome young men, the public ignored the lyrics and remembered only the title. It soon became a catchphrase, and the latest ragtime numbers adapted to the name of coon songs. Both black and white composers outdid themselves with tales of the "gastronomical delights of chicken, pork chops, and watermelon,...with jamborees of various sorts and the play of razors...and with the experiences of red-hot 'mammas' and their never too faithful 'papas.'" James Weldon Johnson described coon songs as crude, raucous, bawdy, and often obscene, and they took the nation by storm.[16] The nation's newspapers, engaging in circulation wars, began offering coon songs as part of their special features. Printed as sheet music in the Sunday supplements to the *New York Journal and Advertiser*, the *New York World*, and William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* (along with his newspapers in San Francisco and Chicago), by 1902 coon songs were being seen and possibly played in more than one million homes.[17]

Coon songs dealt specifically with urban black men and women, marking a dramatic shift from antebellum minstrel shows that emphasized images of blacks

in rural, agricultural settings. Whereas pre-war productions portrayed black people as "lazy, pretentious, frivolous, improvident, irresponsible, and immature," coon songs suggested something far more brutish. The turn-of-the-century "impudent coon," having left the South in favor of northern city life, succumbed to a life of crime and violence. Removed from whites' watchful eye and steady control, blacks gave vent to all of their proclivities, particularly their uncontrolled passions. This transformation suggested that black people, absent the guidance of whites, threatened the republic with their violence and moral bankruptcy. As white Americans began to celebrate the universal superiority of their "manly American race," they viewed "coons" as the antithesis of everything virile and civilized.[18]

The flashing steel straight razor became the dominant symbol of black men in coon songs, fostering an overwhelming image of dangerous and frightening black savages.[19] "Leave Your Razors at the Door," published in the *New York World* in 1900, offered a typical portrayal of razor-toting black men:

> Oh a big burly nigger by de name of Brown
> Gave a rag-time reception in des yere town
> All his friends and relations with their blades came down...
> When they reached the hall an awful sight they saw
> 'Twas a sign a hangin' on de big front door[:]
> Leave your razors at the door
> Don't yer start no rag-time war
> Better put on some air and leave your blades downstairs
> Cause they aint in style no more
> If you want some black man's gore
> Don't carve him to the core
> But take a good sized brick and do the job up quick
> Leave your razors at the door.[20]

Black men's reputed penchant for—and aptitude with—the straight razor not only threatened physical harm to the white population, but also reflected blacks' lack of self-discipline and restraint. While true men were expected to control their emotions, quick tempered "coons" regularly succumbed to their momentary passions.

Coons' relationships with women also demonstrated their inadequacy as men. Coon songs portrayed weak black men who were regularly duped by ambitious, acquisitive women. Coons regularly failed to assert their patriarchal authority in their own households and were often the victims of desertion. An 1898 song printed in the *New York Journal and Advertiser* ridiculed black men for their emotional subordination to women:

> My gal Tildy...skipped out wif a low down nigger, Aint got
>   half mah stack,
> She kin go whar she's a mind to, fer I don't care whar she
>   guine ter,
> But I want my presents back. O!
> Ise a coon what does t'ings pretty, so I says ter Til'
> Buy de best in all de city. An' I'll blow myself I will,
> Got a flat in de upper condom, Reckless dat's a fac',
> So I squandered all my money. On de furniture but Honey,
> Now I want dem presents back. O!
> Saw her once wid dat low nigger, in a bran new suit o' clothes
> She pawned de stove to buy dat ring and dat aint all my woes,
> Hocked de carpet to buy him shoes, clean shirt for his back.[21]

This song also suggests a sinister subversion of gender conventions by depicting black men who lived "lives of idleness supported by the earnings of...women." Worse still, "coons" regularly compromised black women's virtue (albeit already suspect by white America) by luring them into prostitution. New York City police commissioner William McAdoo likened these "mashers" to "snakes coming out of their holes." They "generally have one or more women in their train," he declared, "whose earnings from a life of shame they appropriate." The stereotype of black "pimps" who preferred to appropriate women's wages rather than fulfill their masculine prerogative represented the most insidious manifestation of black men's defective masculinity.[22]

The presumed immorality of women, whether encouraged by men or the result of their own natural weaknesses, further diminished black men's ability to achieve respectable manhood. Throughout the nineteenth century, the canon of domesticity vested women with the responsibility of providing a civilizing influence for society through their creation of a morally redemptive home. This belief was premised on the notion that innately virtuous women, by nurturing their husbands and children, imparted the principled integrity required of republican citizens. In that context, the image of immoral black women amplified the belief in black men's debasement.[23]

Coons repudiated all legal forms of work, relying instead on gambling, theft, and pimping for the accumulation of wealth. Their unwillingness to work suggested that "coons" lacked the aspiration or ability to fulfill the American Dream. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the myth of upward mobility—the conviction that through hard work and good character any man might rise out of poverty and dependency to achieve economic security and self-determination—tantalized men's ambitions. Popular novelist Horatio Alger wrote hundreds of stories in the decade following the Civil War that held out the promise of the American dream to white boys. Through the proper combination of "pluck and luck," enterprising rural youth might move to the city and achieve

middle-class respectability as loyal, efficient, and hard working employees. Coon songs, however, inverted Alger's success stories, cautioning against the migration of black people to the cities. Black men's failure in New York was proof positive of their poor character; where "achievement measured manhood," black men served as the antithesis of appropriate men. Immoral, passionate, selfish, and untrustworthy, black "coons" had no place in American industry, or indeed, civilization. White men, experiencing insecurity in a rapidly changing world, helped to affirm their own status by viewing themselves in opposition to "coons."[24]

The image of uncontrollable, dangerous and lazy black men had profound consequences on their work experience in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. With the influx of so many immigrants into New York City, employers took advantage of the opportunity to replace blacks in fields such as long-shoring, paving, shoe shining, and barbering. The impact of the widespread acceptance of the coon stereotype was acute: between 1900 and 1910, for example, the number of black hostlers in New York City decreased 18 percent—from 633 to 518—as immigrant white men filled the demand. Black porters faced greater restrictions as their numbers declined from 2,143 to 1,645 during the first decade of the twentieth century while the numbers of white male immigrants in these positions rose from 5,020 to 6,202.[25] Though many immigrants faced racial antipathy from whites, this never excluded them from the nation's burgeoning industries. Black men, however, were relegated to the fringes of the city's industrial economy.

The most devastating form of occupational eviction and competition came in unskilled positions, especially domestic service, which had proven to be the cornerstone of black men's economic survival in the city. The number of black male servants and waiters failed to keep pace with the dramatic growth of the black population in the city, remaining virtually unchanged between 1900 and 1910 as the black population grew by nearly one half. At the same time, the number of white male immigrants engaged in service work almost doubled during that decade, from 18,178 in 1900 to 32,825 in 1910. To hire black servants as chambermaids, coachmen, waiters, chefs, footmen, or valets had been a mark of stature in nineteenth-century New York, harkening back to the city's slave era. But by the last decade of the century, the white elite's custom of using black servants had given way to the practice of employing white foreigners or Asians to work in their homes. Consequently, by 1900 black men found themselves virtually driven out of the first-class hotels, restaurants, and elite homes, supplanted by whites and Japanese who had "poache[d] defiantly upon the black man's industrial preserves." Black men were then consigned to lower-paying, less desirable domestic positions in poorer homes and hotels. A black southern migrant in New York City discovered to his surprise that economic opportunities for blacks were scarcer in his new home than they had been down South. "For the black, it was more friendly in Georgia than here, because of the competition

for jobs here," he explained. Whites there left unskilled work to black men. "But here in New York the white man put you up against the wall."[26]

As a result, black men, far more often than members of any other group in the city, worked in menial occupations. Between 1890 and 1910, over half of employed black men above the age of ten toiled in domestic and personal service, as opposed to less than one-fifth of white men. And black men were virtually absent from the manufacturing sector that employed close to half of all foreign-born white men throughout this period. Even within the unskilled and service sector, black men held the least skilled positions. In 1900, for example, of 11,843 black men employed in Manhattan as domestic and service workers, 6,280 (53 percent) worked as servants and waiters. Another 3,719 (31 percent) were employed as common laborers, including elevator tenders, laborers in coal yards, longshoremen, and stevedores. Only 613 (5 percent) worked in the more lucrative and independent positions of barbers, hairdressers, nurses, boarding housekeepers, hotel keepers, restaurant keepers, saloon keepers and bartenders, watchmen, firemen, or policemen. (See Table 1)

Table 1

Occupational Categories of the Male Aggregate, Foreign-Born, and Black Population of New York City, 1890-1910[27]

	1890		1900		1910	
	number	% of total employed	number	% of total employed	number	% of total employed
AGGREGATE						
Professional	21,367	3.2	60,853	5.5	75,122	5.4
Domestic	132,995	20.1	206,215	18.7	141,843	9.9
Trade and Transportation	259,829	39.2	406,675	36.8	612,351	43.2
Manufacturing	248,779	37.5	419,594	38.2	580,880	40.9
FOREIGN-BORN						
Professional	6,841	1.9	19,069	3.4	41,439	5.1
Domestic	88,026	25.4	127,900	22.9	92,111	11.4
Trade and Transportation	102,642	29.6	155,033	27.8	267,487	33.1
Manufacturing	149,008	43.1	249,599	44.8	402,431	49.8
BLACK						
Professional	112	.9	729	3.6	1,526	4.7
Domestic	8,118	69.5	11,843	58.8	16,244	50.3
Trade and Transportation	2,695	23.1	5,798	28.8	9,797	30.3
Manufacturing	755	6.5	1,774	8.8	4,504	13.9

Source: *Eleventh Census of the United States: 1890. Population*, II (Washington, D.C., 1897), 640, 704; *Twelfth Census of the United States: 1900. Special Reports: Occupations* (Washington, D.C., 1904), 634-40; *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910. Population*, IV (Washington, D. C., 1914), 571-74; Seth M. Scheiner *Negro Mecca: A History of the Negro in New York City, 1865-1920* (New York: NYU Press, 1965), 224.

In 1916 the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, an organization founded in New York City in 1911, conducted a study of one hundred black apartment house workers. Despite the variety of positions available in apartment buildings, 98 percent of black men who worked at these jobs were employed as elevator men, switchboard men, or firemen. Only 2 percent obtained the better-paid position of superintendent. The study noted the "unreasonably long hours and low pay" offered for the unskilled jobs, explaining why 9 percent of gainfully employed black men in the city ran elevators while only .2 percent of whites were similarly engaged. One apartment house superintendent detailed the problem: "We can't keep a decent white fellow when we get one," he explained. Hard-working white men often received assistance from the building's tenants in finding better positions and soon quit their lower-paying apartment jobs. "This wouldn't happen once in a dozen years to one of my colored men," the superintendent continued. "Consequently we can keep our decent colored boys," he noted, lapsing into the customary usage of the term "boy" in reference to black men.[28]

In fact, black men struggled throughout their working lives to be viewed as adults. New York City's Police Department acknowledged this problem when it requested that the position of cabin boy on the boat used for harbor patrol be placed in the non-competitive municipal civil service class. Mr. Blot, a representative of the department, explained the rationale. "The position is a very menial one," he testified before the committee evaluating the request. "It is simply waiting on the crew, washing dishes, and doing odd jobs around of that sort." The job title itself discouraged would-be job seekers. "[I]t is very doubtful if you could get a white man...who would take the job," he admitted. With a salary of just twenty dollars per month for the performance of service work, Blot concluded, "It is a pretty hard job to get anybody to take it." The committee granted the request and a black man, already accustomed to living life as a "boy," was hired to fill the position.[29]

William L. Bulkley, the principal of a nearly all-black public school in New York City, described the conversations he frequently had with black boys who came to him seeking authorization of their working papers. "What kind of work will you do," Bulkley would ask. "I am going to be a door-boy, sir," came the typical reply. "Well, you will get $2.50 or $3 a week, but after a while that will not be enough; what then?" The job-seeker often expected to become an office boy next, then probably a bell-boy. When prodded to see the pinnacle of their careers, many expressed their desire to achieve the position of head bell-boy. "He has now arrived at the top," Bulkley concluded bitterly, "further than this he sees no hope. He must face the bald fact that he must enter business as a boy and wind up as a boy."[30] One man indignantly declared that because of racial prejudice in New York City he could only legitimately be considered "half a man." Black men, like Frederick Challenor, struggled to provide for their families, the cornerstone of masculine identity, and to become, as Challenor succinctly

explained, "independent." Low wages precluded most from doing so. Frederick Challenor's best job prospect only paid $55 dollars per month, for example, and many of the positions he took paid well below that figure. Unable to act as the sole—or even primary—breadwinner, few black men in New York gained respect or status as a result of their labor.[31]

A number of studies conducted in turn-of-the-century New York City confirmed that blacks received wages that forced many into a life of poverty. The study of apartment house workers found that the average pay of elevator and switch-board men was $27.50 per month. Door men earned an average of $32.50, though few blacks held this marginally more lucrative job. Typically, apartment house employees also received in the vicinity of $3.00 per month in tips, bringing the majority of these workers to a monthly salary of just under $31.00. The average income, then, for one of the largest groups of black working men was two dollars a week lower than the recommended minimum wage of $9.00 per week advocated for single women in New York City by the New York State Factory Investigating Committee.[32] While longshoremen earned a slightly more livable $11.00 per week, the inconsistency of available work left them in at least as precarious a position as that of elevator operators. And even this wage remained well below the $60.00 per month deemed the minimum necessary for a family living in New York City.[33]

Across the board, over 75 percent of men working in twenty-four different occupations received wages under $6.00 per week. A further 20 percent earned between $6.00 and $8.99. Few of these wage earners worked in positions that allowed them to supplement their incomes with tips. A study of forty black families found their average weekly earnings, including the wages of all workers in the family, to be between $12.00 and $15.00. With that income, an investigator found that after regular expenditures a family had only $11.00 remaining per month to provide for clothing and food. "Such people must be all the time in debt," he concluded tersely.[34] Forced to buy clothes and other necessities on installment at high interest rates, many black families found themselves in a cycle of indebtedness from which they could not easily escape.[35]

White employers, taking advantage of the dire economic situation experienced by many black laborers, offered lower salaries to their black employees than their white employees. The contractors for the Catskill aqueduct reported that they hired black laborers at $1.75 per day, though they had tried to entice native-born whites with higher pay. "We have paid [white men] as high as $2 and $2.50 to set up forms and at laboring work of that kind," they admitted.[36] In another instance, the owners of several apartment houses in the vicinity of West 84th Street decided to replace their black workers with white employees. In each building, the wages were raised from $30.00 per month, which blacks had been receiving, to $40.00. When the switch proved unsatisfactory (the owners complained that they could not find reliable white workers) and the black men returned to their jobs, the wages returned to the original $30.00.[37] Black men,

severely constrained in their job opportunities, either had to accept the lower wages or face unemployment.

Members of other ethnic groups in New York also experienced many of the occupational and economic hardships faced by black men. Italian men, for example, suffered from low wages, chronic unemployment, and poor working conditions as well. But unlike black men, their positions in skilled trades, factories, or retail trade offered them the future promise of moving up the economic ladder through promotions, better pay, and on-the-job-training, and the diverse job options open to Italian men gave them a certain degree of control over their work experience. Furthermore, immigrant men typically found themselves in occupations conducive to contact hiring. Migrants often secured job opportunities through the intercession of family members already at work. Employers' willingness to hire their workers' relatives and friends gave immigrant men power and esteem within their kin and ethnic groups.[38]

Black men, on the other hand, more than any other group of men in the city, worked in dead-end, demeaning jobs that offered little promise of upward mobility. Positions as elevator men, waiters, cooks, and servants offered few avenues for advancement. They also gave black men little chance to assist others in finding work. While in some service industries, such as hotels or restaurants, the concentration of black employees may have been high enough to allow for interpersonal recruitment, most service jobs for black men were found in the non-service sector and formed a relatively inconsequential proportion of the workforce. When these ranks were filled, no other black employees were wanted. Black men, therefore, in dramatic contrast with the experience of immigrant men, found jobs as individuals, often going from workplace to workplace in search of opportunities. Their inability to help others in the search for employment denied black men an important source of power and status within their communities.[39]

Black men often worked as individuals as well, preventing them from developing bonds of friendship with co-workers. Servants, elevator operators, and doormen worked alone. They spent hours in solitude, broken only by the presence of white people demanding that they fulfill a service. Many black men, working in these types of jobs, spent their working hours in isolation, forging no emotional connections with workers sharing their same experiences. The talking, singing, joking, smoking, and "merry makings" that were an integral and crucial element in the creation of social cohesion within the city's factories and offices were non-existent for black men. Neither could black men work at home, as many Jewish and Italian immigrants did, where family units stayed together and men were able to assert their patriarchal authority. Excluded from factories and even from performing outwork within the confines of the tenements, black men remained on the fringes of America's industrial culture and economy. [40]

With such limited economic opportunities, few traditional symbols of manhood were available to black men. The camaraderie and kinship ties that

linked so many immigrant and native-born white men on the job did not exist for most black workers. And in a world in which work in large part defined manhood, black men could not be considered "manly" if they labored in service positions. Service jobs, by their very nature, contradicted white masculine ideals of manly independence and responsibility. These jobs were the antithesis of masculinity; the ideal servant, after all, had to be submissive, deferential, and passive. Above all, he had to demonstrate obedience to others' commands. "Men are not valued in this country . . . for what they are," declared Frederick Douglass. "They are valued for what they can do. It is vain if we talk about being men, if we do not do the work of men." Yet in New York City, black men were unwelcome in occupations that gave them independence, responsibility, power, or prestige. It was a profound struggle to be, as W. E. B. Du Bois described his own experiences, "a man and not a lackey."[41]

In his collection of essays, *Darkwater*, Du Bois wrote about the psychological toll that service work took on black men. He struggled as a youth to avoid menial labor that he hated "instinctively." Instead he performed odd jobs and chores, "that left me my own man." He clung to his independence, making it central to his sense of dignity and self-respect. Once, however, he needed money and took a waiter's job at a large hotel. "Our work was easy, but insipid," he recalled. The absence of mental challenge was compounded by the recognition that whites encouraged black servants to behave submissively.

> I saw that it paid to amuse and to cringe. One particular black man set me crazy. He was intelligent and deft, but one day I caught sight of his face as he served a crowd of men; he was playing the clown,—crouching, grinning, assuming a broad dialect when he usually spoke good English—ah! it was a heartbreaking sight, and he made more money than any waiter in the dining-room. I did not mind the actual work or the kind of work, but it was the dishonesty and deception, the flattery and cajolery, the unnatural assumption that worker and diner had no common humanity. It was uncanny, It was inherently and fundamentally wrong. . . . Then and there I disowned menial service for me and my people.[42]

Both the nature of black men's work and their inability to act as providers proscribed the chance to achieve the white middle-class ideal of masculinity. Combined, these conditions undermined black male authority within the home and wider community as black women took over the role of primary breadwinner. Though black women complained about domestic jobs, throughout the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the demand for domestic servants in New York City far exceeded the supply of women willing to take these positions. This situation provided something of a safety net to black women and

conferred on them a degree of authority and influence within their social and kin networks that was rare for women of other groups. The shortage of servants in the city enabled black women to assist friends and relatives in finding jobs. Although a woman's employer may not have required other servants, she often knew of someone else who did. Black women could offer personal recommendations to fill available openings, thereby securing positions for others. At a time in which black men suffered in esteem and respect because of their labor, black women gained status as a result of their ability to assist others in finding jobs. Informal recruitment remained the preferred hiring method among white employers of domestic workers at least until World War I. [43]

Many white observers interpreted the presence of black women in the workplace as proof of black men's failures. Social commentators blamed "lazy" black men who preferred to rely on women for their material comfort for the high proportion of working wives. One condemned male loafers who "stand on the street corner while their wives go out to wash and scrub." The *New York Tribune* alleged in 1895 that most Negro men "do nothing but lounge about street corners" while women slaved over washtubs "making their apartments perpetual 'steam rooms.'" These observers fostered the perception that black men could not function effectively in an industrial environment. In truth, although some black men intentionally shunned work, many either held night-time jobs or found themselves unwillingly shut out of the labor force altogether. But the inversion of traditional gender roles permitted critics to perpetuate stereotypes about inappropriate black male behavior.[44]

The availability of jobs for black women in New York City contributed to a marked demographic imbalance in the black population. In 1900, for example, 124 black females lived in the city to every one hundred black males as far more southern black women migrated North than black men. Mary White Ovington reported on "the boats from Charleston and Norfolk and the British West Indies bringing scores and hundreds of Negro women from country districts, from cities . . . , all seeking better wages in a new land."[45] This demographic imbalance lent itself, according to contemporary students of the migration to New York, to immoral behavior. "These left-over, or to-be-left-over, Negro women, falling as they do in large part in the lower stratum of society miss the inhibitive restraint of culture and social pride, and, especially if they be comely of appearance, become the easy prey of the evil designs of both races," warned sociologist Kelly Miller in 1905. Not just victims of foul play, sociologists warned, the "surplus women" were known "to play havoc with their neighbors' sons, even with their neighbors' husbands, for since lack of men makes marriage impossible for about a fifth of New York's colored girls, social disorder results."[46]

The demographic imbalance combined with black women's ability to find jobs more easily than black men did put pressure on the black family and further challenged black masculine authority. Frequent male absences from the home additionally diluted black men's influence within the home. Because job

prospects for black men in New York remained slim, some endured long stretches at work outside of the city. In response, black women in the tenements created support networks among themselves, diminishing their emotional reliance on often-absent men. In 1903, the widowed Sarah Larson Armstrong befriended a neighbor, Mrs. Rodette, who lived in the same building and whose husband worked as a chef on board a ship. Over Mr. Rodette's objections, the two women, both alone much of the time, decided to secure a four-room apartment together and divide the expenses. Pooling their resources, they shared food and rent costs, and Mrs. Rodette acquired a deep fondness for Sarah's children, offering to take the youngest Larsen son with her when she visited her sick father down South. The women developed a mutual affection that helped to fulfill pragmatic financial needs and allowed each to feel less socially isolated in the anonymity of the city.[47]

One man, originally from Richmond, Virginia, spent part of the year working as a porter at Grand Central Station. During the summer, however, he left for the Bahamas, where he acted as manager of the wineroom at one of the hotels on the island.[48] Mary White Ovington surveyed 716 black men in 1911 and found that many left the city during the summer in favor of work at "country hotels." She also discovered that some left New York in the winter months as well, hoping for work in Palm Beach or other warm spots in the country. A second study in 1913 confirmed that the situation had not improved, determining that the job competition with immigrants that forced blacks out of New York's better hotels also compelled many black men to spend two or three summer months employed as waiters outside of the city. A European traveler on a tour through America marveled at the resulting scene in Saratoga during the height of the summer tourist season: "To see one of these negro waiters in a white apron, a tin tray, covered with small bird-seed dishes, poised upon the upraised palm of his right hand, steering his way through the maze of chairs, tables, and other waiters down the long dining-room, was to see a rare sight," he wrote in his travel account. "These black servants, and the dress and ornamentation of the [white] women, made one feel as though one were wandering about in a mammoth aviary, peopled by birds of paradise attended by Africans."[49]

While the practice of leaving in summer helped add money to the coffers, it often caused tremendous suffering for the people left behind. A woman who ran a boarding house in Brooklyn wrote to a friend in the West Indies in May 1910, "you know my hardest times are coming now, boys going off and big rent, but I trust God to get as many as will pay it." A month later, one of the lodgers confirmed that the house was still not full. "Since Will left his bed has been vacant & I suppose Mr. Best will be going to the country in a week or so," she explained. "Howie has come to be with us today. I dont know if he means to stay. You know the boys are birds of passage in summer."[50]

Black men's need to move in and out of the city to secure a paycheck often came at the cost of family stability; many black men had to choose between

their role as provider and being physically present in the lives of their loved ones. While many men did not like working on the boats or leaving to take jobs elsewhere, the women and children who remained behind often had a more difficult time. Left without husbands and fathers, they faced loneliness and the uncertainty of whether or not money would arrive in the mail when it was needed. Frederick Challenor wrote to his wife, Aletha, in 1912 admitting that "things have not been bright at all" in recent months. He found himself "much straitened up for money" and deeply in debt to friends and creditors. He felt his failings profoundly, repeatedly pleading with his wife to understand that "I am doing the best I can for you." Frederick desperately sought to fulfill his responsibilities to his wife and child; his failure to do so not only kept the family apart, it undermined his wife's esteem for him. Aletha confided to a friend that the separation and Frederick's inability to buy the food and clothes they needed put tremendous strain on their relationship. She admitted that she was losing confidence in her husband and worried that he would never have the money to reunite the family in New York City.[51]

Mary Rock wrote to her sister about her husband's need to leave for the summer. Neither she nor her husband could find steady jobs and Harry would be forced to leave New York and go to work on a passenger ship if conditions failed to improve. "I dont want him to go," she admitted in 1904, "as I will be alone so much then but times are dull now and they cut his wages down at the place he is working so if he cant do better he will go to sea again."[52] Even worse, for some the temporary separations became permanent. After experiencing the exhausting and demeaning work as porters, waiters, and cooks on passenger railroads and ships, not all men returned to their families.

The problem of black male separation from the city was exacerbated by the increasing presence of black men ensnared in the criminal justice system. As the stereotypes embodied in coon songs became widespread in New York, they impacted every aspect of black men's struggle with the city's bureaucratic and economic infrastructure. The highest-ranking city officials integrated the stereotype into municipal policies and the treatment of the city's black residents. Police Commissioner William McAdoo, for example, openly disparaged New York's black population. "One of the most troublesome and dangerous characters with which the police have to deal is the Tenderloin type of negro," he wrote. McAdoo revealed his unmitigated prejudices in a lengthy diatribe against "coons" in the city:

> In the male species this is the over-dressed, flashy-bejewelled loafer, gambler, and, in many instances, general criminal. . . . They never work, and they go heavily armed, generally carrying, in addition to the indispensable revolver, a razor. When in pursuit of plunder, or out for revenge, or actuated by jealousy, they use both weapons with deadly effect.

> In one case, one of these desperadoes almost literally cut a
> man in two with a razor, and in several instances they have
> inflicted fearful wounds on policemen.
>
> If they sleep at all, it is in the daytime, for they are out at
> all hours of the night. In the afternoon they can be seen sunning
> themselves in front of their favorite saloons and gambling-
> houses. . . . They swindle by all forms of gaming and every
> other way, those honest members of their own race who work
> hard and honestly. One of these fellows will get hold of an
> honest negro coachman or waiter, as soon as he gets to New
> York, and not only will he rob him, but before he is through
> with him he will probably make him as bad as himself. They
> are impudent and arrogant in their manner, and will block the
> sidewalks until white women have to go around to get past
> them, running the risk at the same time of being insulted. . . .
> The negro loafer . . . is subject to violent fits of jealousy, and,
> when filled up with the raw alcohol which is dispensed in the
> neighborhood, murder comes naturally and easily to him.[53]

According to McAdoo, in the open urban setting black men's native indolence
and immorality emerged, characteristics that had only been controlled in the
South by the watchful discipline of white plantation owners.

Convinced of black people's natural criminal tendencies, white juries
required little proof in order to convict black men accused of crimes.
Unsympathetic white judges, some of whom regularly referred to black men as
"niggers" and "pimps," rarely showed leniency towards black male defendants.[54]
Instead, they imposed long sentences and hefty fines, keeping black men away
from their families. "I want to beg your Pardon for my mistake," Emanuel Travis
wrote desperately from his jail cell to Judge Dike of Brooklyn. "For the sake of
your [my] family I would like to be forgiven as I have a wife & three little
children whom I would not like to leave in distress. I again beg your pardon
promising you that it will never happen again So help my god Hoping you will
help me to get out and work for my little ones." Dike denied his request.[55]

Complaints from scores of incarcerated black convicts revealed a pattern
of prejudice within the criminal justice system. Walter Saunders challenged the
decision brought against him, questioning the reliability of the prosecution
witnesses. He asked the judge to explain how two women who could not
determine either the color or sex of the person he was accused of assaulting,
claimed to identify him as the attacker. "I have not been treated fair and honest
in my case," Saunders complained. "[A]lso my jury were prejudiced and did
not render a fair and impartail [sic] verdict." Violet Jones's appeal was denied
when the judge charged her "pimp" with bringing drugs to the jail for her. John
Place, a twenty-five-year-old black man convicted of assault and sentenced to

one year in jail and a $500 fine, insisted that the case against him had been based on the testimony of a "bad woman...whose evidence sent me away." He begged the court to reconsider his case "and to intercede in behalf of one who is deserving a little consideration." The judge, in his review of Place's case and prior record, determined that "the 'nigger' is in the right place and ought to remain there." Unable to afford an appeal (had he been able to do so, he would simply have paid the fine and secured his release from prison), Place had no further recourse.[56]

Like John Place, many black people convicted of crimes found the monetary punishment they received more daunting than the prison time they faced. Judges repeatedly added fines, typically $500, to jail sentences. Failure to pay the fine meant remaining incarcerated even after the term had expired. This became an effective method of extending prison sentences when the legal system restricted the length of jail time that could be imposed for particular crimes. Isaac Glasper began an eleven month and twenty-nine day prison term for assault on January 15, 1912. In January of the following year he began a series of letters to the judge pleading for forbearance from the $500 fine that forced him to remain in prison. Six months after his term had terminated he remained imprisoned, unable to pay the fee. Intractable, the judge disparaged the prisoner's failure to meet the demands expected of men. "Glasper is a loafer," the judge declared, "and does not deserve much consideration. A couple of years in prison might teach him to work." Unable to impose a long prison sentence for a minor assault charge, by forcing a black person to procure a sum equal to nearly the entire annual income of the average black family, the judge guaranteed him a long stay in jail.[57]

Black men's frequent absences from the home strained marital relationships and led to the proliferation of alternative lifestyles. William Ogburn found numerous instances of common-law marriages in San Juan Hill, "easily made and easily broken" with "no interferences on the part of the law, church, or society." While the overwhelming majority of black families remained intact (in 1905 over 80 percent of black families claimed a male head), the frequent separations nevertheless caused instability. William Cash, whose job sent him to New Jersey, arrived at home in Brooklyn after three weeks to find a white man living in his apartment. Cash assaulted the man with a razor, under the impression that the man had interfered with his family's affairs. He only discovered later that his sister-in-law was living with the man. When Harry Rock left New York to work on cruise ships, his wife, Mary, became despondent. She feared that he might never return to her. Though the Rocks remained married, the bonds of their relationships were tested because of the absences imposed by New York's harsh economic environment.[58]

The frequent—though usually temporary—separations of black families allowed outsiders to cultivate an image of weak familial bonds among blacks. John Clyde, in his study of black New York in 1898, believed that blacks'

"looseness about sexual relations, frequent swapping of wives, desertion of family, and general lack of feeling of responsibility in the home, are all sources of great social weakness. There is little family love. The children grow up with out restraint but are furiously beaten at times." Another sociologist noted that, "the economic situation of the New York Negro does not lead to a strengthening of the home life and of the marriage tie." Many blamed the instability on black women's presence in the workforce. "Home life can mean very little to a people whose mothers are wage earners," Clyde argued.[59] In an era when middle-class values eschewed paid labor for women, black women's economic activities seemed to breed a variety of social ills.

Black women did demonstrate a degree of assertiveness and self-reliance less common among other New York women. When they encountered abusive partners, some fought back, less frightened of being left alone than women without any income might be. Mary Vails testified in court that her partner, Robert Allen, struck her "several times." She had him arrested for assault though she later withdrew the charge. After spending two years with Allen, she finally left him "because of his bad treatment of her." When Walter Halliburton abused his common-law wife, Maggie Hunt, he felt her wrath in the form of a manicure knife to the arm and chest.[60] Some black men also responded to their economic situation in New York by inverting gender expectations and relinquishing the customary patriarchal authority afforded most men in turn-of-the-century America. Unable to claim their responsibility as sole—or even primary—breadwinner, black males found themselves deprived of an essential symbol of full manhood. Traditional authority relationships within white families, between husbands and wives and between parents and children, did not exist in the same way for black families in New York City. Where most white men were secure in the knowledge of their families' dependence on them, black men were often economically dependent upon the women in their lives. This had consequences for black men's assertion of parental control. Theodore Marsh's complaint about his son's disrespectful behavior was indicative of the assaults waged against black male authority in the urban environment. Marsh claimed that his son brandished a knife in the house, threatening to "cut" and "kill" his father. Court, reformatory, and orphan asylum records suggest that some black men in New York City had difficulty disciplining their children. Decades later, the Great Depression would cause similar hardships for white families as white men lost status within their families when they ceased to be the chief breadwinner. For black families, however, the ramifications of black men's inability to find adequately paying jobs began with the initial thrust of urban migration in the 1880s. No other group, even those new to the city and country, faced such dramatic changes in the nature of traditional relationships.[61]

The search for masculine authority through alternative symbols led some black men to express their manhood through visible demonstrations of dominance. Spousal abuse occurred within white and black families of all classes

and circumstances. But as the black domestic economy changed in the industrializing north, excluding black men from productive endeavors while encouraging black women's participation in the workforce, black men at times turned to violence against women in an effort to subdue independent spirits and assert a male prerogative.[62] Others, particularly young men, opted out of the nearly-impossible struggle to achieve economic independence rather than confront almost certain failure. Instead, they chose to define their masculinity by their ability to rely on women for their own material comfort. The demographic imbalance in New York's black population meant that not all black women would find male partners. This situation permitted some black men to bargain for lucrative relationships. Critical white reformers noted (and a handful of black women admitted), that some black men preferred to be "kept" by their wives and girlfriends rather than face the humiliating prospect of unsuccessfully searching for work. "The lounger at the street corner, the dandy in the parlor thrumming on his banjo, means a Malindy of the hour at the kitchen washboard," noted one critic. Young black women could do little to change their husband's behavior. "[I]t don't do fer me ter complain," explained one black woman about her role as the family's breadwinner, "else [my husband] gits 'high' an' goes off fer good." When Jennie O'Neil accused her partner, Charles Graves, of "wasting the money she had earned," he stabbed her to death.[63]

The "sweet men" who appropriated women's wages proudly displayed their status. "Colored men in New York command their 'mark,' and girls are found who keep them in polished boots, fashionable coats, and well-creased trousers," wrote Mary White Ovington. White and black elites both criticized the "showiness of dress" exhibited by men with little money to spare. Bold, flashy clothing allowed young black men the opportunity to repudiate their economic subordination and the physical portrayal of the black body as an "instrument of menial labor." It helped instill a sense of dignity in a world that rejected black men's claims to self-respect. Naomi Washington recalled seeing a black man across the street from her San Juan Hill apartment when she was a little girl. His appearance and especially his clothing struck her. He was "dressed to kill," she remembered. She asked her father why he only dressed that way on Sundays. "Today I worked hard," he told her. "I can't afford to go to work dressed like that. . . . I work every day to feed you, and I come home and bring my money to your mother. That man dresses up every day and takes his wife's money. He don't give her anything." Black men who chose to wear fancy clothing in a public display of their economic dependency on women subverted traditional gender roles. Rejecting society's contempt for their failure to act as "proper" men, they instead appropriated women's money and wore the results as physical symbols of their power and their refusal to submit to a standard of behavior set by the same people who ensured black men's inability to achieve it.[64]

Although some found strategies for overcoming the obstacles imposed by the urban environment, New York City's treatment of black men took a heavy

psychological toll that had long-lasting effects. In the immediate moment of despair, some became despondent and chose to abandon the struggle against poverty, unemployment, and powerlessness altogether. During the especially harsh winter of 1893-94, the New York Colored Mission, one of the few organizations in the city to aid black residents, reported various cases of suicide committed by black men who could not bear to watch their wives and children starve. Similar acts of despondency occurred among white men during the Great Depression.[65] The long-term consequences, however, continue to haunt urban black populations. The enduring negative stereotypes held by white America about black men have substantially contributed to the persistent contemporary perception of black urban pathology. The rationale provided by white judges at the turn of the twentieth century to justify harsh penalties for black criminal offenders has been replicated in the twenty-first with racial profiling and the disparate treatment of black criminal suspects. Until that legacy has been acknowledged and addressed, policy makers will continue to struggle to create a genuinely egalitarian society.

Notes

1. Dowridge-Challenor Family Letters, Sept. 9, 1909 through Nov. 30, 1910 and Jan. 19, 1912 through May 4, 1913, Schomburg Library for Research in Black Culture, New York.
2. Numerous studies address the transformation of middle-class, Anglo-American masculine ideals in the industrializing era. These include (but certainly are not limited to): Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Elliott J. Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Steven A. Riess, "Sport and the Redefinition of American Middle-Class Masculinity," *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 8 (May 1991): 5-22; Roger Horowitz, ed. *Boys and their Toys? Masculinity, Class, and Technology in America* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Matthew Basso, Laura McCall, Dee Garceau, eds. *Across the Great Divide: Cultures of Manhood in the American West* (New York: Routledge, 2001).
3. Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 6-7; for a greater discussion of the attempt to subsume racial difference under other categories of hierarchy, see Karen J. Leong, "'A Distinct and Antagonistic Race': Constructions of Chinese Manhood in the Exclusionist Debates, 1869-1878," in Basso, McCall, and Garceau, eds., *Across the Great Divide*, especially 134.
4. Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 311; John Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael P. Weber *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 59, 60.
5. E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 202-203, 224, 229.
6. William Fielding Ogburn, "The Richmond Negro in New York City: His Social Mind as Seen in His Pleasures," M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1909; Robert Zachariah Johnstone, "The Negro in New York: His Social Attainments and Prospects," M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1911; Ernest Jasper Hopper, "A Northern Negro Group," M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1912; Seymour Paul, "A Group of Virginia Negroes in New York City," M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1912; Carrie Ward Moore, "A Study of a Group of West Indian Negroes in New York City," M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1913; Benjamin H. Locke, "The Community Life of a Harlem Group of Negroes," M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1913.
7. John P. Clyde, "The Negro in New York City," M.A. Thesis (Columbia University, 1898), 15.
8. Untitled editorial, *Alexander's Magazine*, 1 (Nov. 1905), 7.
9. Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance," *Signs* 14 (Summer 1989), 914; Richard R. Wright, Jr., "The Migration of Negroes to the North," *The Annals of the American Academy of*

Political and Social Science 27 (May 1906), 104, 109; Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (1944; repr. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 233-34.

10.   Anti-lynching crusader Ida B. Wells demonstrated that during the 1880s rape was alleged—much less proved—in only one-third of the country's lynchings. Neil R. McMillan, *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 235.

11.   McMillan, *Dark Journey*, 233-35.

12.   Benjamin E. Mays, *Born to Rebel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 35.

13.   Mary White Ovington, *Half a Man: The Status of the Negro in New York* (1911; repr. New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), 1; Ray Stannard Baker, *Following the Color Line: An Account of Negro Citizenship in the American Democracy* (1904; repr. Williamstown, Mass: Corner House Publishers, 1973), 133.

14.   Interview in Dean W. Morse, *Pride Against Prejudice: Work in the Lives of Older Blacks and Young Puerto Ricans* (Montclair, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), 49-50.

15.   Louise Bolard More, *Wage-Earners' Budgets: A Study of Standards and Cost of Living in New York City* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1907), 269-70.

16.   Tom Fletcher, *100 Years of the Negro in Show Business* (1954; repr. New York: Da Capo Press 1984), 139; Richard M. Sudhalter, "Don't Give the Name a Bad Place: Types and Stereotypes in American Musical Theater, 1870-1900," compact disc insert, (New York, 1978), 6-7; James Weldon Johnson, *Along This Way: The Autobiography of James Weldon Johnson* (New York: Viking Press, 1933), 52-53.

17.   John Graziano, "Music in William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal*," *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 48 (Dec. 1991), 394.

18.   Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1981), 73; Sam Dennison, *Scandalize My Name: Black Imagery in American Popular Music* (New York: Garland Publisher, 1981), 357; Robert Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 71; Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 180, 182.

19.   James H. Dorman, "Shaping the Popular Image of Post-Reconstruction American Blacks: The 'Coon Song' Phenomenon of the Gilded Age," *American Quarterly* 40 (Dec. 1988), 455.

20.   *New York World*, February 18, 1900, supplement. Minstrel Song Collection, New York State Archives.

21.   *New York Journal and Advertiser*, December 11, 1898, Musical Supplement. Minstrel Song Collection, New York State Archives.

22.   Frances Blascoer, *Colored School Children in New York* (1915; repr. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1970), 59; William McAdoo *Guarding a Great City* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1906), 96-97.

23.   Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (1977; 2nd ed., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 98; Leong, "A Distinct and Antagonistic Race," 134; Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 54.

24.   Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 179.

25.   *Twelfth Census of the United States: 1900. Special Reports: Occupations*, 634-40; *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910. Population*, IV, 571-74.

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