

## INTRODUCTION

By the end of the nineteenth century, Chicago had captured the imagination of the world. It epitomized the American miracle, rising within two generations from a frontier outpost in the swamps of northern Illinois to the second city in the nation, the fifth in the world. Almost destroyed by the Great Fire of 1871, Chicago rebuilt within a few years on a grander and more ambitious scale than before. Visitors saw in Chicago the very essence of American civilization and indeed the civilization of the industrial age. "I would not want to live there for anything in the world," wrote a prominent Italian playwright after visiting the city, "[but] I think that whoever ignores it is not entirely acquainted with our century and of what it is the ultimate expression."<sup>1</sup>

In 1893, Chicago won out, over many rivals, as the most suitable site for the World's Columbian Exposition commemorating the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America. On an unpromising lakefront tract, seven miles south of the business district, an energetic group of promoters, planners, and architects, headed by the indefatigable Daniel Burnham, erected a White City, a grandiose cluster of stuccoed temples set amidst landscaped lawns, placid lagoons, and wooded islands. The Columbian Exposition was a paean to American industrial progress. The Machinery, Electricity, Mining, and Transportation Buildings displayed the technical innovations that were pushing the United States to the economic forefront of the world. Visitors could speak

<sup>1</sup> Giuseppe Giacosa, "A City of Smoke," in *As Others See Chicago*, ed. Bessie Louise Pierce (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), p. 276. Chicago's growth is chronicled in detail in Bessie Louise Pierce's comprehensive *History of Chicago*, 3 vols. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937, 1940, 1957), which deals with the city's history until 1893. A good short account of the rise of Chicago appears in Constance McLaughlin Green, *American Cities in the Growth of the Nation*, paperback ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 100-128. Additional material can be found in Lloyd Lewis and Henry J. Smith, *Chicago: The History of Its Reputation* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1929), and Emmett Dedmon, *Fabulous Chicago* (New York: Random House, 1953). A revealing portrait of Chicago in the 1890's appears in Louise C. Wade, *Graham Taylor: Pioneer for Social Justice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 51-82.

CHAPTER 1  

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THE PHYSICAL GHETTO

Between 1890 and 1915, the Negro population of Chicago grew from less than fifteen thousand to over fifty thousand. Although this growth was overshadowed by the massive influx of Negroes during and after World War I, this was nevertheless a significant increase. By the eve of World War I, although Negroes were still a minor element in the city's population, they were far more conspicuous than they had been a generation earlier. The population increase was accompanied by the concentration of Negroes into ever more constricted sections of the city. In the late nineteenth century, while most Negroes lived in certain sections of the South Side, they lived interspersed among whites; there were few all-Negro blocks. By 1915, on the other hand, the physical ghetto had taken shape; a large, almost all-Negro enclave on the South Side, with a similar offshoot on the West Side, housed most of Chicago's Negroes.

Migration was the major factor in the growth of the Negro community, and most migrants were coming from outside of the state. Over 80 per cent of Chicago's Negro population in 1900 was born in states other than Illinois. The largest portion of these migrants originated in the border states and in the Upper South: Kentucky, and Missouri, in particular, had sent large groups of Negroes to Chicago. The states of the Deep South were, as yet, a secondary source of Chicago's Negro population; only 17 per cent had come from these states as opposed to 43 per cent from the Upper South. The states located directly south of Chicago supplied a larger segment of the population than the southeastern states, but there were sizable groups born in Virginia and Georgia.<sup>1</sup>

From the beginning of Chicago's history, most Negroes had lived on the South Side. As early as 1850, 82 per cent of the Negro population lived in an area bounded by the Chicago River on the

<sup>1</sup> See Table 2.

north, Sixteenth Street on the south, the South Branch of the river on the west, and Lake Michigan on the east.<sup>2</sup> The famous South Side black belt was emerging—a narrow finger of land, wedged between the railroad yards and industrial plants just west of Wentworth Avenue and the fashionable homes east of Wabash Avenue. By 1900, the black belt stretched from the downtown business district as far south as Thirty-ninth Street. But there were also sizable Negro enclaves, usually of a few square blocks each, in several other sections of the city.<sup>3</sup> The Thirteenth Ward Negro

TABLE 1  
NEGRO POPULATION OF CHICAGO  
1850-1930

DATE	TOTAL POPULATION	NEGRO POPULATION	PER CENT NEGRO	PER CENT INCREASE	
				Total Population	Negro Population
1850.....	29,963	323	1.1		
1860.....	109,260	955	0.9	265	196
1870.....	298,977	3,691	1.2	174	286
1880.....	503,185	6,480	1.1	68	75
1890.....	1,099,850	14,271	1.3	119	120
1900.....	1,698,575	30,150	1.9	54	111
1910.....	2,185,283	44,103	2.0	29	46
1920.....	2,701,705	109,458	4.1	24	148
1930.....	3,376,438	233,903	6.9	25	114

SOURCE: U.S. Census Reports, 1850-1930.

community stretched along West Lake Street from Ashland to Western. The Eighteenth Ward Negroes lived in the old immigrant neighborhood on the Near West Side near Hull House. On the Near North Side, Negroes had begun to settle in the Italian Seventeenth Ward. And on the South Side, beyond the black belt,

<sup>2</sup> Pierce, *History of Chicago*, 2: 11.

<sup>3</sup> Census figures for 1900 are available only on a ward basis. Because of the size of the subdivisions, these statistics must be used with caution. In Wards 31 and 34, for instance (see Map 1), the Negro population is concentrated in the extreme northern parts of the wards; thus, despite the appearance of the map, there are, with the exception of small communities in Roseland and Morgan Park, few Negroes south of Sixty-ninth Street.

TABLE 2  
STATE OF BIRTH OF NATIVE NON-WHITES  
CHICAGO, 1900

Area of Birth	Number Per State	Totals	Per Cent
Illinois.....	5,875	5,875	19.8
<i>Middle West (except Illinois)<sup>a</sup></i>			
Ohio.....	1,808		
Indiana.....	1,052		
Iowa.....	280		
Michigan.....	605		
Kansas.....	331		
Wisconsin.....	204		
Minnesota.....	56		
Nebraska.....	54		
North Dakota.....	4		
South Dakota.....	7		
Region.....		4,401	14.8
<i>Northeast</i>			
Pennsylvania.....	442		
New York.....	427		
Massachusetts.....	98		
New Jersey.....	54		
Connecticut.....	28		
Rhode Island.....	10		
Maine.....	13		
New Hampshire.....	4		
Vermont.....	8		
Region.....		1,084	3.6
<i>Upper South and Border</i>			
Tennessee.....	3,216		
Kentucky.....	4,411		
Missouri.....	2,222		
Virginia.....	1,701		
North Carolina.....	431		
Maryland.....	425		
District of Columbia.....	232		
West Virginia.....	105		
Oklahoma.....	3		
Delaware.....	6		
Indian Territory.....	9		
Region.....		12,761	42.9
<i>Lower South</i>			
Mississippi.....	1,148		
Alabama.....	1,181		
Georgia.....	1,092		
Louisiana.....	618		
Arkansas.....	291		
South Carolina.....	276		
Texas.....	282		
Florida.....	98		
Region.....		4,986	16.8

SOURCE: U.S. Twelfth Census, 1900, vol. 1, *Population*, part 1, pp. 706-25. Derived by adding figures in Tables 31 and 32 and subtracting from figures in Table 30.

<sup>a</sup> Middle West totals (including Illinois): 10, 276 and 34.5 per cent.

TABLE 2—Continued

Area of Birth	Number Per State	Totals	Per Cent
<i>West</i>			
Colorado.....	35		
California.....	69		
Washington.....	19		
New Mexico.....	6		
Montana.....	8		
Idaho.....	1		
Arizona.....	2		
Oregon.....	7		
Nevada.....	1		
Wyoming.....	2		
Utah.....	11		
Region.....		161	0.5
Not specified and born abroad.....		475	.....
Total native non-white.....		29,743	.....
Summary			
Born in Illinois.....		5,875	19.8
Born outside Illinois.....		23,393	78.7
Total native non-white.....		29,743	.....

## MAPS

communities of upper- and middle-class Negroes had emerged in Hyde Park, Woodlawn, Englewood, and Morgan Park.<sup>4</sup>

Despite this concentration of Negroes in enclaves, the Negro population of the city was still relatively well distributed in 1900. Nineteen of the city's thirty-five wards had a Negro population of at least .5 per cent of the total population of the ward and fourteen wards were at least 1 per cent Negro. Only two wards had a Negro population of more than 10 per cent. In 1898, just over a quarter of Chicago's Negroes lived in precincts that were more than 50 per cent Negro, and over 30 per cent lived in precincts

<sup>4</sup> Richard R. Wright, Jr., "The Industrial Condition of Negroes in Chicago," unpublished B.D. thesis, University of Chicago Divinity School, 1901, pp. 7-8; on the West Side, see *Defender*, March 22, 1913, p. 4; on Morgan Park, see E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), p. 94, and Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), pp. 137-38.

that were at least 95 per cent white.<sup>5</sup> As late as 1910, Negroes were less highly segregated from native whites than were Italian immigrants.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Paul Cressy, who compiled these figures, used a school census of uncertain accuracy for his 1898 tabulations. But in the absence of statistics for subdivisions smaller than wards in any federal census prior to 1910, these data are the best available. Cressy, "The Succession of Cultural Groups in the City of Chicago," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1930, p. 93.

<sup>6</sup> Stanley Lieberson, "Comparative Segregation and Assimilation of Ethnic Groups," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1960, pp. 176-79.

TABLE 3  
NEGRO POPULATION BY WARD  
CHICAGO, 1900 AND 1910

WARD NUMBER <sup>a</sup>	1900			1910		
	Total Population	Negro Population	Per Cent Negro	Total Population	Negro Population	Per Cent Negro
1.....	24,274	1,528	6.3	29,528	2,603	8.8
2.....	28,547	4,752	16.6	42,801	10,709	25.0
3.....	32,989	7,518	22.8	46,131	11,081	24.0
4.....	37,029	3,370	9.0	.....	.....	.....
5.....	43,315	339	0.8	.....	.....	.....
6 <sup>b</sup> .....	.....	.....	.....	75,121	1,962	2.6
7.....	.....	.....	.....	90,423	1,903	2.1
11.....	37,533	410	1.1	.....	.....	.....
12.....	75,507	396	0.5	.....	.....	.....
13.....	47,327	1,250	2.6	.....	.....	.....
14.....	.....	.....	.....	52,770	2,409	4.6
17.....	20,713	288	1.4	.....	.....	.....
18.....	20,503	483	2.4	26,137	798	3.1
20.....	.....	.....	.....	61,708	369	0.6
21.....	.....	.....	.....	47,906	721	1.5
22.....	32,767	286	0.9	49,324	524	1.1
23.....	33,424	267	0.8	.....	.....	.....
24.....	35,830	550	1.5	.....	.....	.....
29.....	41,214	868	2.1	.....	.....	.....
30.....	106,124	3,246	3.1	51,308	6,431	12.5
31.....	56,576	596	1.1	78,571	1,806	2.3
32.....	69,202	1,439	2.1	70,408	514	0.7
34.....	91,145	1,176	1.3	.....	.....	.....
35.....	11,795	88	0.7	.....	.....	.....

SOURCES: U.S. Twelfth Census, 1900, Bulletin no. 72, July 13, 1901, p. 8; U.S. Thirteenth Census, 1910, *Statistics for Illinois*, pp. 644-46.

<sup>a</sup> Figures for 1900 and for 1910 are not comparable on a one-to-one basis because of changes in the ward boundaries (see Maps 1 and 2).

<sup>b</sup> Table includes data only for those wards with at least 0.5 per cent Negro population. Blank spaces indicate wards with under 0.5 per cent Negro population.

The decade 1900 to 1910 saw several significant changes in the population pattern of Negroes in Chicago. The growth rate, which had far outpaced the white growth rate in the 1890's, declined from 111 per cent to 46 per cent, and the proportion of Negroes in the population increased from 1.9 per cent to only 2 per cent. Yet despite this stabilization, the Negro population was still composed largely of migrants. Over 77 per cent of Chicago's Negroes were born outside of Illinois. This represents only a slight drop from 1900 and was almost five times as great as the corresponding

TABLE 4  
CONCENTRATION OF NEGROES IN CHICAGO  
1898-1920

PERCENTAGE OF NEGRO POPULATION IN THE RESIDENCE AREA <sup>a</sup>	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL NEGRO POPULATION		
	1898 <sup>b</sup>	1910	1920
Less than 5 . . . . .	31.3	24.1	7.4
5- 9 . . . . .	9.7	8.2	2.6
10- 19 . . . . .	7.8	4.4	6.9
20- 49 . . . . .	23.3	32.5	32.6
50- 74 . . . . .	17.1	30.8	14.8
75-100 . . . . .	10.8	.....	35.7

SOURCES: Paul Cressy, "The Succession of Cultural Groups in the City of Chicago," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1930, p. 93; unpublished census data for the city of Chicago, 1910, compiled by Otis and Beverly Duncan, Population Studies Center, University of Michigan; Ernest W. Burgess and Charles Newcomb, editors, *Census Data of the City of Chicago, 1920*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1931.

<sup>a</sup> Residence areas in 1898 refer to precincts; in 1910 and 1920 to census tracts.

<sup>b</sup> 1898 figures are based on a school census.

figure for white Chicagoans.<sup>7</sup> Only three major Negro communities in the country—Los Angeles, Denver, and Oklahoma City, all young Western cities with highly mobile populations—had higher proportions of out-of-state migrants than Chicago. Even such burgeoning industrial centers as Detroit, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland had a lower percentage of Negroes born in other states.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See Table 5.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), p. 74. The 1910 census tabulations do not permit a breakdown of the Chicago Negro population by state of birth. The only materials available are state of birth

The concentration of Negroes in enclaves was clearly increasing throughout this period. By 1910, over 30 per cent lived in predominantly Negro sections of the city and over 60 per cent in areas that were more than 20 per cent Negro. Whereas in 1900 nineteen of thirty-five wards had been over .5 per cent Negro, this figure was reduced to thirteen in 1910. Furthermore, the second and third wards, which included the heart of the black belt, were now 25 per cent Negro, while in 1900 only one ward had even approached that figure.<sup>9</sup>

Negro residential patterns for 1910 can be seen most clearly through the use of census tract data.<sup>10</sup> Of 431 census tracts in the city, Negroes could be found in all but ninety-four; eighty-eight were at least 1 per cent Negro. Four tracts were over 50 per cent Negro, but no tract was more than 61 per cent Negro. Despite greater concentration, therefore, there were still few all-Negro neighborhoods in Chicago.

The eight or nine neighborhoods that had been distinguishable as areas of Negro settlement in 1900 remained the core of the Chicago Negro community in 1910. The principal South Side black belt was slowly expanding to accommodate the growing population. Not only did Negroes push steadily southward, but the narrow strip of land that made up the black belt began to widen as Negroes moved into the comfortable neighborhood east of State Street. By the end of the decade, Negroes could be found as far east as Cottage Grove Avenue.<sup>11</sup>

Statistical data, then, reveal several definite trends in the pattern of Negro population in Chicago in the early twentieth century. The growth rate between 1900 and 1910 had decreased from the previous decade, but was still 50 per cent greater than that of whites. Most of the population increase was the result of migration, particularly from the nearby border states. Negroes could be

data for the Illinois Negro population (see Table 5). A considerably higher percentage of Chicago Negroes was born outside of Illinois than was true of Negroes in the state at large: 77.1 per cent for Chicago, 64.9 per cent for Illinois. But, in all probability, data on the origins of out-of-state Negroes in Chicago would closely resemble the statewide figures.

<sup>9</sup> Statistics for 1900 and 1910 are, however, difficult to compare because ward lines were altered during this decade.

<sup>10</sup> See Map 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Chicago Defender*, May 30, 1914.

TABLE 5  
STATE OF BIRTH OF ILLINOIS NEGROES  
1900-1910

AREA OF BIRTH	1900			1910		
	Number Per State	Totals	Per Cent	Number Per State	Totals	Per Cent
Illinois.....	30,022	30,022	35.5	35,917	35,917	33.2
<i>Middle West (except Illinois)<sup>a</sup></i>						
Ohio.....	2,284			2,766		
Indiana.....	1,958			2,731		
Iowa.....	580			797		
Michigan.....	712			750		
Kansas.....	497			728		
Wisconsin.....	369			285		
Minnesota.....	75			120		
Nebraska.....	96			105		
North Dakota.....	7			12		
South Dakota.....	12			5		
Region.....		6,509	7.8		8,299	7.7
<i>Northeast</i>						
Pennsylvania.....	589			765		
New York.....	527			524		
Massachusetts.....	117			140		
New Jersey.....	76			82		
Connecticut.....	36			45		
Rhode Island.....	14			24		
Maine.....	19			20		
New Hampshire.....	5			5		
Vermont.....	177			5		
Region.....		1,560	1.8		1,610	1.5
<i>Upper South and Border</i>						
Tennessee.....	10,232			15,303		
Kentucky.....	10,587			13,314		
Missouri.....	8,185			9,732		
Virginia.....	3,473			3,326		
North Carolina.....	1,073			1,175		
Maryland.....	693			643		
District of Columbia.....	308			268		
West Virginia.....	190			229		
Oklahoma.....	34 <sup>b</sup>			126		
Delaware.....	8			24		
Region.....		34,738	41.2		44,140	40.8

SOURCES: U.S. Twelfth Census, 1900, vol. 1, *Population*, part 1, pp. 702-705; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population in the United States*, Washington, Government Printing Office, 1918, pp. 75-79.

<sup>a</sup> Middle West totals (including Illinois): 1900—36,612 and 43.3 per cent; 1910—44,216 and 40.9 per cent.

<sup>b</sup> Includes Indian Territory.

TABLE 5—Continued

AREA OF BIRTH	1900			1910		
	Number Per State	Totals	Per Cent	Number Per State	Totals	Per Cent
<i>Lower South</i>						
Mississippi.....	3,116			4,612		
Alabama.....	2,387			3,208		
Georgia.....	1,674			2,874		
Louisiana.....	1,073			1,609		
Arkansas.....	902			1,354		
South Carolina.....	649			1,217		
Texas.....	430			789		
Florida.....	147			243		
Region.....		10,378	12.3		15,906	14.7
<i>West</i>						
Colorado.....	51			89		
California.....	57			77		
Washington.....	23			32		
New Mexico.....	9			18		
Montana.....	13			13		
Idaho.....	1			8		
Arizona.....	3			8		
Oregon.....	4			6		
Nevada.....	5			6		
Wyoming.....	3			4		
Utah.....	12			8		
Region.....		181	0.2		269	0.2
Not specified and born abroad.....		154	1.1		1,980	1.8
Total Negro.....		85,078			109,049	
Summary						
Born in Illinois.....		30,022	35.5		35,917	33.2
Born outside Illinois.....		53,493	63.4		70,224	64.9
Total Negro.....		85,078			109,049	

found throughout much of the city and the Negro neighborhoods were by no means exclusively black. But the concentration of Negroes in two enclaves on the South and West Sides was increasing. As the population grew, Negroes were not spreading throughout the city but were becoming confined to a clearly delineated area of Negro settlement.

The increasing physical separation of Chicago's Negroes was but one reflection of a growing pattern of segregation and discrimination in early twentieth-century Chicago. As the Negro community grew and opportunities for interracial conflict increased, so a pattern of discrimination and segregation became ever more pervasive. And perhaps the most critical aspect of interracial conflict came as the result of Negro attempts to secure adequate housing.

The South Side black belt could expand in only two directions in the early twentieth century—south and east. To the north lay the business district, which was moving south; in fact, commercial and light industrial concerns were pushing Negroes out of the area between Twelfth and Twenty-second Streets. West of Wentworth Avenue was a district of low-income immigrant homes, interspersed with railroad yards and light industry; the lack of adequate housing made this area undesirable for Negro expansion. East of State Street, on the other hand, was a neighborhood suitable for Negro residential requirements. This area, bounded by Twelfth and Thirty-ninth Streets, State Street and Lake Michigan, had, in the 1880's and early 1890's, included the most fashionable streets in the city—Prairie and Calumet Avenues. But by 1900, the wealthy residents were moving to the North Side, leaving behind them comfortable, if aging, homes. South of Thirty-ninth Street was an even more desirable residential area—Kenwood and Hyde Park—and across Washington Park from the southern extremity of the black belt were the new and attractive communities of Woodlawn and Englewood. In these areas, between 1900 and 1915, the lines were drawn in the struggle for housing that would subsequently lead to full-scale racial war. If no major battle was fought before 1915, there were at least several preliminary skirmishes that set the pattern for future, and more serious, confrontations.<sup>12</sup>

Negro expansion did not always mean conflict, nor did it mean that a neighborhood would shortly become exclusively black. In 1910, not more than a dozen blocks on the South Side were entirely Negro,<sup>13</sup> and in many mixed areas Negroes and whites lived

<sup>12</sup> On the character of the neighborhoods surrounding the black belt, see Chicago Commission on Race Relations, pp. 108-11, 113-17, 205-9, 212-13.

<sup>13</sup> Otis D. Duncan and Beverly Duncan, *The Negro Population of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 89.

together harmoniously.<sup>14</sup> But as Negroes became more numerous east of State and south of Fifty-first, friction increased and white hostility grew. When a Negro family moved into a previously all-white neighborhood, the neighbors frequently protested, tried to buy the property, and then, if unsuccessful, resorted to violence to drive out the interlopers. In many cases, the residents organized to urge real estate agents and property owners to sell and rent to whites only. The whites often succeeded in keeping Negroes out, at least temporarily. When their efforts failed, they gradually moved out, leaving the neighborhood predominantly, although rarely exclusively, Negro.

Such incidents occurred with only minor variations throughout the prewar period. In 1900, three Negro families brought about "a nervous prostration epidemic" on Vernon Avenue.<sup>15</sup> Five years later, an attempt to oust Negroes from a Forrestville Avenue building landed in court.<sup>16</sup> In 1911, a committee of Champlain Avenue residents dealt with a Negro family in the neighborhood by the "judicious use of a wagon load of bricks"; the *Record-Herald* described the affair as "something as nearly approaching the operations of the Ku Klux Klan as Chicago has seen in many years."<sup>17</sup> Englewood residents, two years later, did not have to go quite so far; the objectionable party, this time a white man with a Negro wife, agreed to sell his property to a hastily organized "neighborhood improvement association."<sup>18</sup> A Negro who moved into a home on Forrestville Avenue in 1915, on the other hand, termed an offer of this type "blackmail," but after several days of intimidation, he too submitted and sold his property.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps the most serious incident, and the one which provides the most insight into the nature of the housing conflict, occurred in Hyde Park—Chicago's most persistent racial trouble spot—in 1909. A separate town until 1892, Hyde Park was still an area of pleasant, tree-shaded streets, large, comfortable homes, and a vigorous cultural life centered on the campus of the new but thriving University of Chicago. Negroes were no strangers to the

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Chicago Commission on Race Relations, pp. 108-13.

<sup>15</sup> *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, August 19, 1900.

<sup>16</sup> *Chicago Record-Herald*, March 9, 1905.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, February 7, 1911.

<sup>18</sup> *Defender*, May 10, 1913.

<sup>19</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, May 3, May 4, May 5, 1915; *Defender*, May 8, 1915.



community: for many years a few families, mostly house servants and hotel employees who worked in the neighborhood, had clustered on Lake Avenue<sup>20</sup> near Fifty-fifth Street, on the eastern edge of Hyde Park. Now this community began to expand and Negroes occupied homes in nearby white blocks.<sup>21</sup>

White Hyde Parkers responded to the Negro "invasion" with a concerted drive to keep Negroes out of white areas. The Hyde Park Improvement Protective Club was organized in the autumn of 1908; headed by a prominent attorney, Francis Harper, it soon boasted 350 members, "including some of the wealthiest dwellers on the South Side."<sup>22</sup> In the summer of 1909, the Club issued a manifesto: Negro residents of Hyde Park must confine themselves to the "so-called Districts," real estate agents must refuse to sell property in white blocks to Negroes, and landlords must hire only white janitors. To implement this policy, the Club appointed a committee to purchase property owned by Negroes in white blocks and to offer bonuses to Negro renters who would surrender their leases. Moreover, the Club threatened to blacklist any real estate firm that defied its edict. "The districts which are now white," said Harper, "must remain white. There will be no compromise."<sup>23</sup>

Despite the efforts of the Negro residents of Hyde Park to counter the activities with indignation meetings and boycotts, the white campaign continued. The neighborhood newspaper supported the Improvement Club, and Harper maintained that he had "received hosts of letters commending the course of the organization."<sup>24</sup> When the Club was unable to persuade a Negro family to move voluntarily, the neighbors used more direct tactics: vandals broke into a Negro home on Greenwood Avenue one night and broke all the windows; the family left the next day.<sup>25</sup> In September, the Club announced a boycott of merchants who sold goods to Negroes living in white neighborhoods. It urged separate playgrounds and tennis courts for Negroes in Washington Park,

<sup>20</sup> Lake Avenue was the former name for the present Lake Park Avenue.

<sup>21</sup> *Record-Herald*, August 22, 1909; Chicago Commission on Race Relations, p. 114.

<sup>22</sup> *Record-Herald*, August 21, 1909.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*; *Broad Ax* (Chicago), August 28, 1909.

<sup>24</sup> *Record-Herald*, August 22, August 23, 1909.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, August 22, 1909; *Broad Ax*, August 28, 1909.

and, in its annual report, advocated segregation of the public schools. "It is only a question of time," a Club spokesman predicted, "when there will be separate schools for Negroes throughout Illinois."<sup>26</sup> The group operated more quietly after 1909, but it had achieved its major goal. The little Negro community on Lake Avenue dwindled in size and the rest of Hyde Park remained white for forty years.<sup>27</sup>

The Hyde Park episode well illustrates the intensification of anti-Negro feeling in the early twentieth century. This feeling could even create strong sentiment among whites for a return to formalized segregation—separate schools and recreation facilities. Some white Chicagoans spoke of the necessity for a residential segregation ordinance.<sup>28</sup> The incident also provided an early example of techniques that were to become increasingly important as whites continually tried to stem the tide of Negro residential "invasion": the neighborhood improvement association, the community newspaper, the boycott, and in the last resort, violence. Furthermore, the episode was significant because it occurred in a middle- and upper-class community, and its victims were middle- and upper-class Negroes attempting to find comfortable homes among people of their own economic status.<sup>29</sup> The housing problem for Negroes was not restricted to the poor; even the affluent were blocked in their quest for a decent place to live.

The unwillingness of whites to tolerate Negroes as neighbors had far-reaching results. ~~Because Negroes were so limited in their choice of housing, they were forced to pay higher rents in those buildings that were open to them.~~ Real estate agents frequently converted buildings in marginal neighborhoods from white to Negro and demanded rents 10 to 15 per cent higher than they had previously received.<sup>30</sup> Sophonisba Breckinridge of Hull House es-

<sup>26</sup> *Broad Ax*, September 18, 1909; *Record-Herald*, October 10, 1909.

<sup>27</sup> Chicago Commission on Race Relations, p. 114.

<sup>28</sup> *Record-Herald*, April 5, 1911.

<sup>29</sup> The Negro class structure, however, does not always correspond with the white class structure. The Negro upper class, for instance, includes professional people, whose white counterparts are usually considered middle class. At the same time, postal clerks, Pullman porters, waiters and other occupational groups that would belong to the upper lower class among whites have traditionally formed the core of the Negro middle class.

<sup>30</sup> Louise De Koven Bowen, *The Colored Population of Chicago* (Chicago: Juvenile Protective Association, 1913), [n. p.].

over a long-distance telephone to New York, watch demonstrations of high-tension currents, and inspect the most advanced telescope in the world. When sated by the fair's educational attractions, they could stroll a half mile west to the gaudy Midway Plaisance, to be entertained by the gyrations of the Ferris Wheel and the undulations of Little Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

Few visitors in 1893, however, saw the other Chicago—the workers' city of tenements and cottages which housed those who manned Chicago's thriving industries. While tourists walked the clean, paved streets of the White City, hundreds of thousands returned each night to crowded, filthy, airless rooms. Underpaid, overworked, and subject to periodic layoffs and slowdowns, Chicago's working class testified to the social cost of Chicago's phenomenal economic and material growth. Since the depression of the 1870's, the city had been a focal point of industrial conflict in America. The railroad strike of 1877 had brought Chicago to the brink of open warfare and left a bitterness among the working people that provided fertile soil for socialist and anarchist organizers. The Haymarket episode nine years later symbolized an era in American history; it dramatized the determination of the business interests to maintain the status quo. Chicago was not, of course, the only battleground in the industrial war that gripped the United States in the late nineteenth century. But as its achievements had seemed the very consummation of the American success story, its traumas seemed to provide the supreme test for industrial relations in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

The lights had barely dimmed on the Midway Plaisance when Chicago found itself in the grips of industrial strife even grimmer than the conflicts of 1877 and 1886. The depression that had come in the wake of the financial panic of 1893 left thousands of Chicagoans jobless. As winter approached, unemployed men lined up at soup kitchens, and hundreds sought shelter each night in

<sup>2</sup> Pierce, *History of Chicago*, 3: 501-12; Pierce, *As Others See Chicago*, pp. 324-50; Lewis and Smith, *Chicago: The History of Its Reputation*, pp. 202-16; Ray Ginger, *Altgeld's America* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1958), pp. 15-22.

<sup>3</sup> Green, *American Cities*, p. 124; Ginger, *Altgeld's America*, pp. 35-60; Pierce, *History of Chicago*, 3: 234-99. The standard account of the Haymarket affair is Henry David, *History of the Haymarket Affair*, paperback ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1964).

the corridors of City Hall.<sup>4</sup> In the spring, open warfare erupted at George Pullman's model company town ten miles south of the city. Pullman's paternalistic benevolence did not prevent him from cutting wages without reducing rents, and the workers, receiving no satisfaction from their protests, walked out. The strike precipitated a nationwide railroad shutdown and placed Chicago in the midst of a crisis that ended only when federal troops entered the city and the union leaders were arrested for defying a federal court injunction.<sup>5</sup>

The turmoil of 1893-94 ushered in a decade of feverish concern over social reform. William T. Stead, an English editor and Christian socialist, issued a challenge to Chicagoans in a speech in 1893, followed a year later by his sensational exposé of social conditions in the city, *If Christ Came to Chicago*. Stead described graphically the plight of the workers, the savage brutality with which their aspirations were crushed, and the corruption and indifference of Chicago's leaders. "If Chicago is to be the Capital of Civilization," he wrote, "it is indispensable that she should at least be able to show that every resident within her limits enjoyed every advantage which intelligent and public-spirited administration has secured for the people elsewhere."<sup>6</sup>

In response to the conditions that Stead revealed, Chicagoans launched a series of reform ventures designed to refurbish the city's tarnished image. The Civic Federation, headed by many of Chicago's most prominent businessmen and their wives, dabbled in genteel reform. Though committed to the city's current economic structure and to the idea of class conciliation, the Federation made noteworthy efforts to provide systematic relief for the needy, improve housing and sanitary conditions, and drive the grafters and boodlers from City Hall. Among the supporters of the Federation were a group of professional reformers more closely attuned to the plight of Chicago's masses than the Palmers, Fields, and Gages who occupied the organization's top echelons. Jane Addams, for instance, and the remarkable women she en-

<sup>4</sup> Green, *American Cities*, p. 122; William T. Stead, *If Christ Came to Chicago* (Chicago: Laird & Lee, 1894), pp. 31-38; Ginger, *Altgeld's America*, pp. 91-93.

<sup>5</sup> A full account appears in Almont Lindsey, *The Pullman Strike* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942).

<sup>6</sup> Stead, *If Christ Came to Chicago*, p. 336.

estimated that a Negro family "pays \$12.50 for the same accommodations the Jew in the Ghetto received for \$9 and the immigrant for \$8."<sup>31</sup> One realty company inserted two advertisements for the same apartment in a daily newspaper: one read, "seven rooms, \$25"; the other, "seven rooms for colored people, \$37.50."<sup>32</sup> High rents often forced Negro families to take in lodgers. A 1912 survey of 1,775 South Side Negroes reported that 542, or 31 per cent, lived as lodgers in the homes of others.<sup>33</sup>

Living conditions in much of the black belt closely resembled conditions in the West Side ghetto or in the Stockyards district. Although Negroes could find some decent homes on the fringes of the Negro section, the core of the black belt was a festering slum. Here was an area of one- and two-story frame houses (unlike the older Eastern cities Chicago had, as yet, few large tenements), usually dilapidated with boarded-up porches and rickety wooden walks. Most of the buildings contained two flats and, although less crowded than houses in the Jewish, Polish, and Bohemian slums, they were usually in worse repair. The 1912 survey revealed that in a four-block area in the black belt, only 26 per cent of the dwellings were in good repair—as compared to 71 per cent in a similar sampling in a Polish neighborhood, 57 per cent among Bohemians, and 54 per cent in the ethnically mixed Stockyards district.<sup>34</sup> "Colored tenants," the survey reported, "found it impossible to persuade their landlords either to make the necessary repairs or to release them from their contracts; . . . it was so hard to find better places in which to live that they were forced to make the repairs themselves, which they could rarely afford to do, or to endure the conditions as best they might."<sup>35</sup>

White real estate agents, insensitive to class differences among Negroes, made no attempt to uphold standards in middle-class Negro neighborhoods as they did in comparable white districts. They persistently rented flats in "respectable" Negro neighborhoods to members of the "sporting element," thus forcing middle-

<sup>31</sup> Sophonisba P. Breckinridge, "The Color Line in the Housing Problem," *Survey* (New York), 40 (February 1, 1913): 575-76.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in *Defender*, February 3, 1912.

<sup>33</sup> Alzada P. Comstock, "Chicago Housing Conditions; VI: The Problem of the Negro," *American Journal of Sociology* (Chicago), 18 (September, 1912):244-45.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 246-55.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

class Negroes to move continually in search of decent areas to live and rear families. As a result, neighborhood stability was at best temporary. The streets east of State, which had become the mecca of the Negro middle class in the late 1890's, began to decline by 1905. A few years later the district was characterized by "men and women half clothed hanging out of a window," "rag-time piano playing . . . far into the night," and "shooting and cutting scrapes."<sup>36</sup>

Municipal policy regarding vice further complicated the situation. City authorities, holding that the suppression of prostitution was impossible, tried to confine it to certain well-defined areas where it could be closely watched. The police frequently moved the vice district so as to keep it away from commercial and white residential areas. Invariably they located it in or near the black belt, often in Negro residential neighborhoods. The chief of police declared that so long as prostitutes confined their activities to the district between Wentworth and Wabash, they would not be apprehended.<sup>37</sup> Neighborhood stability, then, was threatened not only by the influx of Negro "shadies," but by the presence of an officially sanctioned vice district catering primarily to whites.

Periodic attempts to clean up the red-light district received little support from Negro leaders who believed that such campaigns would merely drive the undesirables deeper into Negro residential neighborhoods. When legal prostitution was finally abolished in 1912, these fears were fully realized; vice in Chicago continued to be centered in the black belt.<sup>38</sup> Fannie Barrier Williams, a prominent Negro civic leader, summed up the plight of the middle- and upper-class Negro: "The huddling together of the good and the bad, compelling the decent element of the colored people to witness the brazen display of vice of all kinds in front of their homes and in the faces of their children, are trying conditions under which to remain socially clean and respectable."<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> *Defender*, May 30, 1914, p. 8.

<sup>37</sup> Vice Commission of Chicago, *The Social Evil in Chicago: A Study of Existing Conditions with Recommendations* (Chicago: Gunthorp-Warren, 1911), pp. 38-39.

<sup>38</sup> *Defender*, October 12, 1912; Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, p. 56.

<sup>39</sup> Fannie Barrier Williams, "Social Bonds in the Black Belt of Chicago," *Charities* (New York), 15 (October 7, 1905):40-41.

The pattern of Negro housing, then, was shaped by white hostility and indifference: limited in their choice of homes, Negroes were forced to pay higher rents for inferior dwellings and were frequently surrounded by prostitutes, panders, and other undesirable elements. This, together with the poverty of the majority of Chicago Negroes, produced in the black belt the conditions of slum-living characteristic of American cities by the end of the nineteenth century.

The most striking feature of Negro housing, however, was not the existence of slum conditions, but the difficulty of escaping the slum. European immigrants needed only to prosper to be able to move to a more desirable neighborhood. Negroes, on the other hand, suffered from both economic deprivation and systematic racial discrimination. "The problem of the Chicago Negro," wrote Sophonisba Breckinridge,

is quite different from the white man and even that of the immigrants. With the Negro the housing dilemma was found to be an acute problem, not only among the poor, as in the case of the Polish, Jewish, or Italian immigrants, but also among the well-to-do. . . . Thus, even in the North, where the city administration does not recognize a "Ghetto" or "pale", the real estate agents who register and commercialize what they suppose to be a universal race prejudice are able to enforce one in practice.<sup>40</sup>

The development of a physical ghetto in Chicago, then, was not the result chiefly of poverty; nor did Negroes cluster out of choice. The ghetto was primarily the product of white hostility. Attempts on the part of Negroes to seek housing in predominantly white sections of the city met with resistance from the residents and from real estate dealers. Some Negroes, in fact, who had formerly lived in white neighborhoods, were pushed back into the black districts. As the Chicago Negro population grew, Negroes had no alternative but to settle in well-delineated Negro areas. And with increasing pressure for Negro housing, property owners in the black belt found it profitable to force out white tenants and convert previously mixed blocks into all-Negro blocks. The geographical dimensions of Black Chicago in the early twentieth century underwent no dramatic shift similar, for instance, to Negro New

<sup>40</sup> Breckinridge, "The Color Line," pp. 575-76.

York, where the center of Negro life moved to previously all-white Harlem in less than a decade.<sup>41</sup> Negroes in Chicago were not establishing new communities. But to meet the needs of a growing population, in the face of mounting white resistance, Negro neighborhoods were becoming more exclusively Negro as they slowly expanded their boundaries.

<sup>41</sup> Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 105-23.

CHAPTER 2  

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JIM CROW'S TRIUMPH

As white hostility almost closed the housing market to Negroes and created a physical ghetto, it also limited the opportunities for Negroes to secure desirable jobs and gain access to public facilities. Chicago Negroes in the early twentieth century were confined to the domestic and personal service trades and were unable to gain even a foothold in industry and commerce. In 1900, almost 65 per cent of the Negro men and over 80 per cent of the Negro women worked as domestic and personal servants, while only 8.3 per cent of the men and 11.9 per cent of the women were engaged in manufacturing (and most of the women so employed worked in their own homes as dressmakers and seamstresses). In 1910 the basic pattern remained the same. Over 45 per cent of the employed Negro men worked in just four occupations—as porters, servants, waiters, and janitors—and over 63 per cent of the women were domestic servants or laundresses. In both 1900 and 1910, more Negroes were engaged in the professions than their numbers would warrant, but these were concentrated in professions that required relatively little formal training—music, the theater, and the clergy. Relatively few Negroes could be found in the legal, medical, and teaching professions. A large portion of those Negroes employed in manufacturing, trade, and transportation were unskilled laborers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Tables 6 and 7. Because of major changes in occupational classifications, these tables cannot always be directly compared. In 1900, for instance, all unclassified laborers were included as domestic and personal servants while porters were classified under trade and transportation. In 1910, on the other hand, laborers were divided among the various subdivisions with which they were associated—e.g., transportation laborers, manufacturing laborers, and so forth—and porters were listed under domestic and personal service. These changes may account partially for the increase, between 1900 and 1910, of the percentage of Negro men listed under manufacturing.

TABLE 6

MALES AND FEMALES OVER TEN ENGAGED IN SELECTED OCCUPATIONS  
CHICAGO, 1900

Selected Occupations	Total Number of Jobs	Number of Jobs Held by Negroes	Percentage of Total Jobs Held by Negroes	Percentage of Negro Labor Force in Particular Occupations
Males				
<i>Manufacturing</i>				
All categories.....	204,867	1,079	0.5	8.3
Occupational total.....	204,867	1,079	0.5	8.3
<i>Trade and Transportation</i>				
Teamsters.....	23,203	557	2.4	4.3
Retail dealers.....	23,240	145	0.6	1.1
Clerks.....	39,006	271	0.7	2.1
Porters and helpers <sup>a</sup> .....	2,733	1,360	49.8	10.0
Salesmen.....	22,012	39	0.2	0.3
Occupational total.....	196,163	2,965	1.5	22.8
<i>Professional</i>				
Lawyers.....	4,241	46	1.1	0.4
Physicians.....	3,646	45	1.2	0.3
Clergymen.....	1,549	63	4.1	0.5
Teachers.....	1,591	20	1.3	0.2
Actors.....	1,599	150	9.4	1.2
Musicians.....	2,692	207	7.7	1.6
Occupational total.....	30,301	602	1.9	4.6
<i>Domestic and Personal</i>				
Barbers and hairdressers...	4,628	362	7.8	2.8
Bartenders.....	4,414	116	2.7	0.9
Janitors.....	4,023	686	17.1	5.3
Laborers, unspecified <sup>b</sup> .....	73,597	2,251	3.1	17.3
Servants and waiters.....	11,674	4,514	38.8	34.6
Occupational total.....	117,853	8,381	7.0	64.4
Total employed.....	555,515	13,065	2.3	100.0

SOURCE: U.S. Twelfth Census, 1900, *Special Reports: Occupations*, pp. 516-23.

<sup>a</sup> Includes porters in stores.

<sup>b</sup> Includes elevator operators, longshoremen, and unskilled workers.

TABLE 6—Continued

Selected Occupations	Total Number of Jobs	Number of Jobs Held by Negroes	Percentage of Total Jobs Held by Negroes	Percentage of Negro Labor Force in Particular Occupations
Females				
<i>Manufacturing</i>				
Dressmakers and seamstresses.....	21,083	547	2.6	11.3
Occupational total.....	46,719	585	1.3	11.9
<i>Trade and Transportation</i>				
All categories.....	36,371	143	0.4	2.9
Occupational total.....	36,371	143	0.4	2.9
<i>Professional</i>				
Actresses.....	621	51	8.2	1.0
Musicians.....	2,035	49	2.4	1.0
Teachers.....	7,200	38	0.5	0.8
Occupational total.....	12,340	194	1.6	3.9
<i>Domestic and Personal</i>				
Barbers and hairdressers...	475	76	16.0	1.6
Boardinghouse keepers...	2,151	104	4.8	2.1
Housekeepers.....	2,963	152	5.1	3.1
Laundresses.....	6,636	918	13.8	18.7
Servants and waitresses...	35,340	2,541	7.2	51.6
Occupational total.....	54,045	3,998	7.4	81.2
Total employed.....	149,867	4,921	3.3	100.0

Negroes entered occupations that were not desirable enough to be contested by whites. When white workers sought jobs in trades dominated by Negroes, they were usually able to drive the Negroes out. In the nineteenth century, for instance, many Negroes had worked as barbers and coachmen, but by the early twentieth century, whites had replaced most of them in these capacities.<sup>2</sup> Hence Negroes "were constantly driven to lower kinds of occupa-

<sup>2</sup> Richard R. Wright, Jr., "The Industrial Condition of Negroes in Chicago," unpublished B.D. thesis, University of Chicago Divinity School, 1901, p. 24; *Chicago Tribune*, September 25, 1900.

TABLE 7

MALES AND FEMALES OVER TEN ENGAGED IN SELECTED OCCUPATIONS  
CHICAGO, 1910

Selected Occupations	Total Number of Jobs	Number of Jobs Held by Negroes	Percentage of Total Jobs Held by Negroes	Percentage of Negro Labor Force in Particular Occupations
<b>Males</b>				
<i>Manufacturing</i>				
41 specified trades <sup>a</sup> .....	201,974	1,467	0.7	7.9
Semi-skilled, unspecified....	39,833	148	0.3	0.8
Laborers, unspecified.....	55,091	1,458	2.2	7.9
<i>Transportation</i>				
Chauffeurs.....	2,215	220	9.9	1.2
Teamsters.....	20,201	566	2.8	3.1
Laborers <sup>b</sup> .....	26,780	603	2.2	3.3
Longshoremen.....	598	149	24.9	0.8
Mail carriers.....	2,248	99	4.4	0.5
Engineers, firemen, motor- men, switchmen.....	14,726	20	0.1	0.1
<i>Trade</i>				
Store clerks <sup>c</sup> .....	15,779	58	0.4	0.3
Deliverymen.....	11,813	266	2.3	1.4
Laborers <sup>d</sup> .....	8,934	586	6.6	3.2
Laborers, stockyards.....	3,041	179	5.9	1.0
Retail dealers.....	34,493	218	0.6	1.2
Salesmen in stores <sup>e</sup> .....	29,820	52	0.2	0.3
<i>Professional</i>				
Lawyers.....	3,866	44	1.1	0.2
Physicians.....	4,032	109	2.7	0.6
Clergymen.....	1,693	76	4.5	0.4
Teachers.....	1,867	11	0.6	0.1
Actors.....	1,375	78	5.7	0.4
Musicians.....	3,442	216	6.3	1.2
<i>Public Service<sup>f</sup></i>				
All categories.....	15,173	224	1.5	1.2
<i>Domestic and Personal Service</i>				
Barbers and hairdressers...	5,681	319	5.6	1.7
Bartenders.....	5,489	137	2.5	0.7
Elevator operators.....	2,373	306	12.9	1.7
Janitors.....	6,792	1,358	20.0	7.4
Domestic laborers.....	1,264	136	10.8	0.7
Laundry operatives.....	1,754	103	5.9	0.6
Porters <sup>g</sup> .....	5,608	3,828	68.3	20.8
Servants.....	6,787	1,488	21.6	8.1
Waiters.....	5,334	1,648	30.9	8.9

SOURCE: U.S. Thirteenth Census, 1910, vol. 4, *Population: Occupation Statistics*, pp. 544-47.

NOTE: The 1910 census report does not provide subtotals for Negro workers. The table accounts for 92.3 per cent of Negro male employees and 92.4 per cent of Negro female employees.

<sup>a</sup> Includes officials, foremen, apprentices.

<sup>b</sup> Includes road building, steam and street railway laborers.

<sup>c</sup> These classifications undoubtedly overlap.

<sup>d</sup> Includes laborers in coal and lumber yards, stores; includes porters in stores.

<sup>e</sup> Policemen, firemen, guards, watchmen, officials, public service laborers.

<sup>f</sup> Not including porters in stores.

TABLE 7—Continued

Selected Occupations	Total Number of Jobs	Number of Jobs Held by Negroes	Percentage of Total Jobs Held by Negroes	Percentage of Negro Labor Force in Particular Occupations
<b>Males</b>				
<i>Clerical</i>				
Bookkeepers, cashiers, ac- countants, stenographers..	18,561	53	0.3	0.3
Office clerks.....	43,978	572	1.3	3.1
Messengers.....	8,425	131	1.6	0.7
Total employed.....	759,778	.....	2.4	100.0
<b>Females</b>				
<i>Manufacturing</i>				
Dressmakers and seam- stresses <sup>a</sup> .....	15,099	867	5.7	9.9
Milliners.....	5,461	62	1.1	0.7
<i>Trade</i>				
Store clerks <sup>c</sup> .....	10,925	43	0.4	0.5
Saleswomen <sup>e</sup> .....	11,632	21	0.2	0.2
<i>Professional</i>				
Actresses.....	1,147	54	4.7	0.6
Musicians.....	3,241	136	4.2	1.5
Teachers.....	8,573	53	0.6	0.6
Nurses.....	2,488	42	1.7	0.5
<i>Domestic and Personal Service</i>				
Barbers and hairdressers...	1,789	316	17.7	3.6
Boardinghouse keepers....	5,000	267	5.3	3.0
Charwomen.....	1,152	98	8.5	1.1
Housekeepers.....	3,594	191	5.3	2.2
Laundresses <sup>b</sup> .....	7,122	2,115	29.7	23.8
Laundry operatives.....	4,466	184	4.1	2.1
Servants.....	34,437	3,512	10.2	39.5
Waitresses.....	3,319	141	4.2	1.6
<i>Clerical</i>				
Bookkeepers, cashiers, ac- countants, stenographers..	31,646	110	0.3	1.2
Office clerks.....	11,072	45	0.4	0.5
Total employed.....	236,811	.....	3.7	100.0

<sup>a</sup> Not in factories.

<sup>b</sup> Not in laundries.

tions which are gradually being discarded by the white man."<sup>3</sup> These jobs were generally low-paying, carried the stigma of servility, and offered few opportunities for advancement. Porters in hotels, stores, and railroads, and janitors in apartment buildings and business houses had no chance to move up to better positions because these concerns hired Negroes in no other capacities. Among the service trade employees, only waiters could look forward to promotions; the job of headwaiter, which paid as much as one hundred dollars a month, was perhaps the most lucrative to which Negroes could aspire.<sup>4</sup> Negro women were particularly limited in their search for desirable positions. Clerical work was practically closed to them and only a few could qualify as school teachers. Negro domestics often received less than white women for the same work, and they could rarely rise to the position of head servant in large households—a place traditionally held by a Swedish woman.<sup>5</sup>

Several factors combined to keep Negroes out of industry and trade—especially the skilled and semiskilled jobs. First, most employers were simply disposed against hiring Negroes so long as an adequate supply of white labor was available—and with open immigration from Europe there was seldom a labor shortage. These employers feared that their white employees would object to working with Negroes, and many believed that Negro workers were less efficient.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, many Negroes with skills had acquired them in the South and were often unable to meet Northern standards. Moreover, they were seldom able to acquire skills in the North: apprentice programs were usually open to whites only, and Negroes had little desire to learn a trade so long as its job prospects remained uncertain.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the refusal of most trade unions to admit black workers on an equal basis kept Negroes out

<sup>3</sup> Louise De Koven Bowen, *The Colored Population of Chicago* (Chicago: Juvenile Protective Association, 1913) [n. p.].

<sup>4</sup> Wright, "The Industrial Condition of Negroes in Chicago," pp. 21-23.

<sup>5</sup> "Employment of Colored Women in Chicago," *Crisis* (New York), 1 (January, 1911):24-25; Wright, "The Industrial Condition of Negroes in Chicago," p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> See the results of surveys by Wright, "The Industrial Condition of Negroes in Chicago," pp. 27-31, and Bowen, *The Colored Population of Chicago*.

<sup>7</sup> *Chicago Defender*, January 20, 1910; Bowen, *The Colored Population of Chicago*.

of many trades. Some unions completely excluded Negroes through clauses in their constitutions; others admitted Negroes, but then either segregated them in separate, subordinate locals, excluded them from specific projects, or simply made no effort to find jobs for them.<sup>8</sup>

Civil service jobs were theoretically open to all without discrimination. State law required competitive examinations and appointment on the basis of merit for a wide range of municipal jobs.<sup>9</sup> Yet, in 1910, only 224 or 1.5 per cent of the public service jobs were held by Negroes; by 1913, Negroes held 1.9 per cent of these positions, but this figure was still lower than the proportion of Negroes in the total work force.<sup>10</sup> The inability of many Negroes, especially recent migrants from the South, to compete successfully on the examinations partially explains this lag. But, despite the law, personal prejudice also played a part. Appointing officers found numerous devices to circumvent legal regulations: they held examinations infrequently, filled vacancies with temporary appointments that were repeatedly renewed, and showed favoritism in the examining process. As one Negro employee explained, "Civil Service is run by friendship . . . and under that sort of arrangement, Negroes won't come out on top."<sup>11</sup> One Negro, certified for a civil service job in 1906, told how a head clerk exerted pressure and coercion to persuade him that the job would not satisfy him.<sup>12</sup> Once appointed, Negroes often faced segregated working conditions and discrimination in promotion. This was most flagrant in the fire department, which openly maintained Jim Crow units until the 1930's.<sup>13</sup> In other departments, Negroes rarely advanced beyond menial positions. An exception was the police department where, at the onset of World War I, there were about fifty Negro officers. But most Negro policemen were assigned only

<sup>8</sup> Erie W. Hardy, "Relation of the Negro to Trade Unionism," unpublished master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1911, *passim*; Oscar D. Hutton, "The Negro Worker and the Labor Unions in Chicago," unpublished master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1939, pp. 3-10.

<sup>9</sup> Harold Gosnell, *Negro Politicians: The Rise of Negro Politics in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), p. 219.

<sup>10</sup> Bowen, *The Colored Population of Chicago*; and see Table 7.

<sup>11</sup> Gosnell, *Negro Politicians*, p. 220. <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 226-27.

<sup>13</sup> *Defender*, January 26, 1929, October 11, 1930; Gosnell, *Negro Politicians*, pp. 229-30.



to Negro neighborhoods and few could aspire to become sergeants, lieutenants, or detectives.<sup>14</sup>

In the postal service, where similar civil service regulations applied, Negroes fared better. By 1910, over five hundred Negroes worked in the Chicago Post Office.<sup>15</sup> Negroes rarely complained of discrimination in securing postal jobs. This was primarily the result of Congressman Martin Madden's position on the House of Representatives Post Office Committee. Even during the Wilson administration, when the federal government sought to reduce the number of Negroes in the postal service, Madden, who represented a predominantly Negro district on Chicago's South Side, protected his Negro constituents.<sup>16</sup> Promotions, however, which depended only upon the discretion of the postmaster, came slowly; only two Negroes held supervisory positions before the War.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the postal service provided Negroes with almost their only opportunity for clerical work and carried considerable prestige among Chicago Negroes. Several post office clerks became community leaders, and an organization of Negro postal employees, the Phalanx Forum, was a major political and social force in prewar Black Chicago.<sup>18</sup>

The only opportunity Negroes had to enter basic trades in early twentieth-century Chicago was as strikebreakers. The use of Negro scab labor heightened anti-Negro feeling in the city and left a legacy of bitterness and distrust between white and black workers. In the 1904 stockyards strike and the 1905 teamsters strike, the importation of non-union Negro labor set off the most serious racial conflicts of the prewar period.

The use of scabs to break strikes was nothing new in the meat-packing industry, but the 1904 strike was the first in which Negroes played a major role in crushing the union. From the packers' point of view, Negroes were ideal strikebreakers. They generally had no scruples about working as scabs: those brought in from

the South were almost totally ignorant of the principles of trade unionism, while those who had had experience with unions had generally found them discriminatory. Moreover, the importation of Negroes in large numbers created panic and fear within union ranks.<sup>19</sup>

Throughout the summer of 1904, as the strike wore on, the strikers focused their hostility upon the most visible symbol of their frustration—the Negro scabs. During the first weeks, as the packers announced the gradual resumption of operations with non-union men, the strikers began attacking the scabs as they entered the plants. Almost all of the victims were Negroes.<sup>20</sup> The most serious incident occurred when a mob, estimated at between two and five thousand, stoned two hundred Negroes who, with police protection, were attempting to leave the Hammond Company packing plant.<sup>21</sup> The packers then set up makeshift housing for the workers within the plants, and trainloads of Negro laborers poured in from the South. Relatively few local Negroes were employed; the companies instead sent agents south to lure workers to Chicago with the prospect of \$2.25-a-day wages plus room and board. The strikers and their sympathizers characterized the Southern workers as “big, ignorant, vicious Negroes, picked up from the criminal elements of the black belts of the country.”<sup>22</sup> The antipathy toward the importation of Southern Negroes helped create support for the union cause. The Ashland Avenue Business Men's Association, for instance, protested to the mayor about the strikebreakers: “These men and women,” the group stated, “are a menace to the city of Chicago; for to any responsible man it is plain that such people cannot permanently be retained by the trust and hence must be poured out upon the city at the beginning of the winter season; they are a menace as future paupers.”<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, the strikebreakers proved to be an effective weap-

<sup>19</sup> Alma Herbst, *The Negro in the Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry in Chicago* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1932), pp. 19-20, 24-25.

<sup>20</sup> *Tribune*, July 11, July 12, July 15, July 17, July 18, July 24, 1904.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, July 22, 1904; *Chicago Record-Herald*, July 22, 1904.

<sup>22</sup> “Harry Rosenberg on Packing Industry and Stockyards,” unpublished memorandum in Mary McDowell papers (Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois), cited hereafter as McDowell Papers.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Gosnell, *Negro Politicians*, pp. 247-50, 253, 258, 263.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302. The census did not include postal workers under public service employees, but classified them according to the nature of their work.

<sup>16</sup> Henry W. McGee, “The Negro in the Chicago Post Office,” unpublished master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1961, pp. 9-10; Gosnell, *Negro Politicians*, p. 307.

<sup>17</sup> Gosnell, *Negro Politicians*, p. 314.

<sup>18</sup> McGee, “The Negro in the Chicago Post Office,” pp. 16-17, 70-71.

on. The industry was sufficiently mechanized to allow the packers to increase their operations to nearly full capacity while using unskilled scab labor. A few Negroes, to be sure, deserted the packers. A union man, for example, who boarded a labor train as it entered the city, persuaded a hundred Negroes from Cincinnati to leave their jobs before they had even begun work.<sup>24</sup> And two days later, three hundred Negroes left the Armour and Morris plants, protesting they could not cash their paychecks because of the tense conditions.<sup>25</sup> But most of the strikebreakers remained loyal and provided the packers with the tool that they needed to defeat the union.<sup>26</sup>

Negroes made few permanent gains as a result of the strike. While the Poles, who had first entered the stockyards as strikebreakers in 1886, remained to form an important segment of the labor force, most of the Negro workers were discharged once the strike was settled.<sup>27</sup> Although an estimated two thousand Negroes were hired by the packers during the strike, by 1910 only 365 of the 16,367 workers classified by the census as stockyards and packinghouse operatives were Negroes.<sup>28</sup> The strike did, however, induce the union to take greater cognizance of Negro workers. The Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen admitted those Negroes who remained in the yards, and by the time the packers began to employ large numbers of black workers, it had become one of the few large unions to welcome Negroes as members.<sup>29</sup> But the major legacy of the strike was an intensified anti-Negro

<sup>24</sup> *Tribune*, July 29, 1904. Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy describe a similar incident during a strike at the Latrobe Steel and Coupler Company in 1901. Then, company efforts to use Negro strikebreakers were completely thwarted by a group of union men who persuaded the Negroes to return to Birmingham. *They Seek a City* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1945), pp. 110-12.

<sup>25</sup> *Tribune*, July 31, 1904.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, August 17, August 26, 1904; Herbst, *The Negro in the Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry in Chicago*, p. 23; "Harry Rosenberg on Packing Industry and Stockyards," in McDowell Papers.

<sup>27</sup> Herbst, *The Negro in the Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry in Chicago*, pp. xviii-xix, 24-25.

<sup>28</sup> *Appeal* (St. Paul), August 20, 1904; and see Table 9.

<sup>29</sup> Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), pp. 412-13.

sentiment on the part of white Chicagoans. Ben Tillman, speaking in Chicago shortly after the end of the strike, reminded a stockyards district audience of something they would not soon forget. "It was the niggers," he said, "that whipped you in line. They were the club with which your brains were beaten out."<sup>30</sup>

Eight months after the stockyards union surrendered, Chicago found itself in the grips of the most violent labor disturbance since the Pullman strike of 1894. In April, 1905, the Teamsters Union called a sympathy strike at Montgomery Ward's—in support of a group of striking garment workers. The owners of the major downtown department stores charged the union with breach of contract, announced that they would not renew their union contracts when they expired, and vowed a war of extermination against the teamsters. By the end of the month, the strike had spread to every leading employer in Chicago. Business came to a virtual standstill and pitched battles, claiming as many as a hundred casualties in a single day, raged throughout the city.<sup>31</sup>

On the first of May, the merchants brought in a trainload of Negro teamsters under the leadership of a professional strikebreaker. As in the case of the stockyards strike, the importation of Negroes created widespread alarm. The appearance of a Negro driver on the streets of Chicago signaled violent attacks and rioting.<sup>32</sup> The city council asked the corporation counsel for an opinion "as to whether the importation of hundreds of Negro laborers is not a menace to the community and should not be restricted."<sup>33</sup> Local Negroes, too, objected to the importation of strikebreakers. The *Broad Ax*, a Negro weekly, said that the employers

are not justified in bringing hundreds and hundreds of colored men here from the remote parts of the South—many of them representing the lowest and toughest element of the race . . . to temporarily serve as strikebreakers for such Negro-hating concerns as Marshall Field and Company, Mandel Brothers and Montgomery Ward and Company, who have no use for Negroes in general except to use them as brutish clubs to beat their white help over the head. . . . The presence of

<sup>30</sup> *Broad Ax* (Chicago), October 15, 1904.

<sup>31</sup> *Tribune*, April 7-May 3, 1905.

<sup>32</sup> For typical incidents, see *Ibid.*, May 1-May 5, 1905.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, May 2, 1905.

this class of Negro in Chicago at the present time makes it much more difficult for the respectable colored people in this community to get along.<sup>34</sup>

The employers' association finally agreed to stop bringing in Negro teamsters from outside the city, but refused to discharge strikebreakers and continued to hire local Negroes.<sup>35</sup>

Unlike the stockyards strike, when anti-Negro violence was generally confined to attacks on actual strikebreakers, the teamsters strike brought Chicago to the brink of a race riot. Hostility toward Negro scabs was easily translated into general antipathy toward Negroes. Several Negro leaders, alarmed by the rising tide of anti-Negro feeling, protested police brutality toward Negroes and condemned the daily newspapers for "the hostile attitude they have assumed against all Afro-Americans" during the strike.<sup>36</sup> Nowhere in the city was hostility toward Negroes more intense than in the working-class neighborhood just west of the black belt. Every day, the residents—many of them striking teamsters—saw Negroes driving the wagons of the nearby Peabody Coal Company. Then, on May 16, a Negro shot and killed an eight-year-old boy who had shouted insults at him as he passed through the streets. During the following week, hysteria gripped the neighborhood. Negroes were dragged from streetcars and beaten, and even heavy police guards, posted throughout the area, could not protect Negroes from white attacks. The climax came on May 21 when a white bartender shot a Negro to death in a saloon brawl. Negroes retaliated and in the course of the day, two people were killed and twelve were injured. It was the bloodiest racial conflict in the city before the riot of 1919.<sup>37</sup>

The merchants, like the packers, used Negro workers to serve their purposes and then discharged them. The census reported fewer Negro teamsters in 1910 than in 1900.<sup>38</sup> Not until Chicago's major employers found themselves confronted with a real labor shortage were Negroes able to gain a foothold in the basic industries and trades.

The Negro's status in the job market, then, differed widely from

<sup>34</sup> *Broad Ax*, May 6, 1905.

<sup>35</sup> *Tribune*, May 6, 1905.

<sup>36</sup> *Broad Ax*, May 13, 1905.

<sup>37</sup> *Tribune*, May 17–May 22, 1905; *Broad Ax*, May 20, May 27, 1905.

<sup>38</sup> See Tables 6 and 7.

that of most white ethnic minorities. Excluded from the major industries where the possibility of decent wages and advancement was greatest, Negroes had little chance to escape poverty. European immigrants secured steady jobs in the stockyards or steel mills and could advance to skilled or supervisory capacities; their sons entered clerical and managerial occupations. But as porters and servants and janitors who entered industry only to serve as the unwitting tools of beleaguered employers, Negroes had few such opportunities.

The law prohibited racial discrimination in public accommodations, municipal services, and schools in Chicago and prescribed punishments for violators. The Illinois Civil Rights Law, enacted in 1885, provided "that all persons . . . shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges of inns, restaurants, eating houses, barber shops, theatres, and public conveyances on land and water . . . and all other public accommodations."<sup>39</sup> When the state supreme court held in 1896 that the last clause was too vague to be enforced,<sup>40</sup> the legislature promptly amended the law to cover explicitly hotels, soda fountains, saloons, bathrooms, skating rinks, concerts, cafés, bicycle rinks, elevators, ice cream parlors, railroads, omnibuses, stages, streetcars, and boats.<sup>41</sup> Violation of the law could result in forfeiture of from \$25 to \$500 to be paid to the aggrieved party, plus a fine of up to \$500 and imprisonment of up to one year.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the law and the city's official color blindness in providing municipal services, numerous incidents testified to a persistent, although not rigid, pattern of discrimination in these areas. A Negro could never be certain of what awaited him when he entered a store, restaurant, saloon, or hotel outside of the black belt. Most

<sup>39</sup> Illinois, *Laws* (1885), p. 64; discussed in *Smith-Hurd Illinois Annotated Statutes* (Chicago: Burdette-Smith, 1935), chap. 38, "Criminal Code," no. 125, p. 163.

<sup>40</sup> *Cecil v. Green*, 60 Ill. App. 61, 161 Ill. 265, 43 Northeast 1105 (1896); Gilbert T. Stephenson, *Race Distinctions in American Law* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1910), pp. 133–34.

<sup>41</sup> Illinois, *Laws* (1897), p. 137; *Smith-Hurd Illinois Annotated Statutes*, chap. 38, no. 125, p. 164.

<sup>42</sup> *Smith-Hurd Illinois Annotated Statutes*, chap. 3, no. 125, p. 164.

proprietors would accommodate a Negro if they thought refusal would create a major controversy; Booker T. Washington, for instance, stayed regularly at the plush Palmer House when he visited Chicago.<sup>43</sup> But less prominent Negroes were often harassed or simply refused service in downtown establishments. The La Salle Hotel turned away a luncheon meeting of one thousand clubwomen because their number included several Negro members.<sup>44</sup> Many theaters seated Negroes only in the balcony, and bartenders frequently refused to serve Negro patrons.<sup>45</sup> In 1913, a theater opened on the very edge of the black belt and announced that Negroes would not be seated on the main floor.<sup>46</sup> Leading department stores were also wont to discriminate, but their policy was erratic. Negroes frequently complained of discourteous treatment at Marshall Field's, but in one incident when a prominent Negro woman spoke to the manager about such treatment, the salesperson involved was immediately discharged.<sup>47</sup>

Although the state civil rights law seemed explicitly to forbid discriminatory practices, it was difficult to obtain a conviction under it. In 1905, a jury refused to award damages to a Negro politician who was denied service at a bar, and a 1910 jury decided in favor of a theater that had turned down a Negro who was trying to buy tickets for the main floor.<sup>48</sup> Even when Negroes won such suits, the punishment was often minimal: one bartender found guilty of violating the civil rights law was fined \$5 and costs.<sup>49</sup>

Businessmen not covered by the civil rights law could discriminate more openly. An osteopath on the edge of the black belt displayed a sign reading "white patients only," and a cemetery ran a display advertisement announcing that their grounds "are exclusively for the white race."<sup>50</sup> Another form of discrimination—anal-

<sup>43</sup> Emmett J. Scott to S. Laing Williams, March 29, 1904, and J. A. Hertel to Booker T. Washington, January 19, 1905, in Booker T. Washington Papers (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.).

<sup>44</sup> *Defender*, April 5, 1913; *Crisis*, 6 (May 11, 1913): 15.

<sup>45</sup> For typical incidents, see *Record-Herald*, July 14, 1905, June 10, 1910, February 8, February 10, 1911; *Broad Ax*, May 28, 1910; *Defender*, June 11, 1910.

<sup>46</sup> *Defender*, September 16, 1913.      <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, June 20, 1914.

<sup>48</sup> *Record-Herald*, July 14, 1905; *Broad Ax*, May 28, 1910.

<sup>49</sup> *Record-Herald*, February 11, 1911.

<sup>50</sup> *Defender*, March 4, 1910.

ogous to that found in the housing field—was the practice of charging Negroes higher prices. This was widespread in the insurance business. While some companies refused to sell life insurance policies to Negroes, others offered policies to Negroes at higher premiums, arguing that this was necessary because of their higher death rate.<sup>51</sup> Price differentials were so common in the cemetery business that, in 1911, Edward Green, a Negro member of the state legislature, secured passage of an amendment to the civil rights law forbidding discriminatory rates in the sale of cemetery plots.<sup>52</sup>

Official city agencies never, of course, openly admitted discriminatory practices. There were, however, persistent charges that a "color line" was drawn in the Cook County Jail. The *Broad Ax* maintained that "white and black prisoners are kept apart as much as possible," and the *Defender* insisted that Negro inmates were allowed to exercise in the bullpen only when whites were not there and that meal service was segregated.<sup>53</sup> Publicly supported hospitals were also charged with discrimination. The Cook County Hospital, while admitting Negro patients, refused to hire Negro nurses, arguing that "white nurses refuse to work with colored."<sup>54</sup> The director of the Hospital for Contagious Diseases, a branch of the county hospital, maintained privately that white patients would walk out if placed in the same room with Negroes and that the idea of having Negro nurses for white patients was "absolutely impossible."<sup>55</sup> "You see," said Celia Parker Woolley, a prominent white progressive, "how far it is from being true that segregation could never be practiced in institutions supported by public money."<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *Broad Ax*, February 17, 1912. This was a major factor in the rise of Negro insurance companies. See below, chaps. 6 and 9.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, April 29, 1911; *Smith-Hurd Illinois Annotated Statutes*, chap. 38, no. 125, p. 164.

<sup>53</sup> *Broad Ax*, April 23, October 18, 1902; *Defender*, July 6, 1912.

<sup>54</sup> Celia Parker Woolley to Charlotte Johnson, November 27, 1912, copy in Julius Rosenwald Papers (University of Chicago Library), cited hereafter as Rosenwald Papers.

<sup>55</sup> William C. Graves to Julius Rosenwald, December 13, 1912, Rosenwald Papers.

<sup>56</sup> Celia Parker Woolley to Julius Rosenwald, November 27, 1912, Rosenwald Papers.

The police and the courts were also charged with hostility toward Negroes. The strike disturbances of 1904 and 1905 gave rise to numerous charges of discrimination. A decade later, Louise De Koven Bowen, a white reform leader, stated that Negroes were frequently arrested "on charges too flimsy to hold a white man" and were often "convicted on inadequate evidence." She cited the case of one George W., a nineteen-year-old Negro arrested for rape in 1912. The police, she said, beat and kicked George until he confessed, and his lawyer advised him to plead guilty even when he insisted on his innocence. Although the judge referred to the evidence as flimsy in his instructions to the jury, the youth was found guilty and sentenced to fourteen years in prison. One witness, asked why he had not been more explicit in his testimony in the defendant's behalf, reportedly answered, "Oh well, he's only a nigger anyway."<sup>57</sup> The police were also criticized for their attitude toward prostitutes and saloons. Not only was the segregated vice district always located in the black belt, but, according to the *Tribune*, the police raided so-called "black and tan resorts" because they were frequented by an interracial clientele. The police chief allegedly ordered that "colored saloonkeepers must keep white men out of their saloons and that white saloonkeepers are to prevent colored men from entering their places of business."<sup>58</sup>

The public school system had been legally integrated since 1874, but here, too, there were frequent instances of discrimination and interracial friction after 1890. Much of it came from white students and their parents rather than from school officials. Changes in school boundary lines or pupil transfers, resulting in newly integrated schools, often led to white protests. In 1905, a group of white children rioted when they were transferred to a predominantly Negro school, and in 1908, over one hundred and fifty students stayed home when they were transferred to a school attended by Negroes. A year later, two Negro children, enrolling in a previously all-white school, were insulted and beaten by their classmates.<sup>59</sup> Wendell Phillips High School, the city's first predom-

<sup>57</sup> Bowen, *The Colored Population of Chicago*.

<sup>58</sup> *Tribune*, November 11, 1905; *Broad Ax*, September 30, 1905.

<sup>59</sup> *Record-Herald*, September 26, 1908, November 11, 1909; report on Negro education in "The Negro in Illinois," a file of reports and interviews compiled by the Illinois Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration (George Cleveland Hall Branch of the Chicago Public Library), cited hereafter as Illinois Writers Project Files.

inantly Negro high school, was the scene of frequent racial conflicts. In 1912, for instance, several white students attacked a Negro boy who had allegedly insulted a white girl: the resulting melee was described by the *Tribune* as a "miniature race war."<sup>60</sup> School officials frowned upon these manifestations of white hostility. After the 1908 "school strike," the president of the board of education commented, "a clean colored boy is, in my opinion, far better than a dirty white boy. . . . The parents of some of the colored children who attend the Keith School are far above parents of some of the white children there."<sup>61</sup> But the board was forced to acknowledge that the "color line is a source of continual strife."<sup>62</sup>

White groups asked periodically for formal segregation of the Chicago school system. Between 1900 and 1915, such proposals were discussed openly in the press and at school board meetings, causing sufficient alarm to induce Negro leaders to lodge formal protests against any possible public school segregation. In 1906, reports that whites would attempt to insert a clause in the new city charter, permitting segregated schools, aroused Negro leaders to conduct a successful campaign to place a Negro on the charter commission.<sup>63</sup> Four years later, the Southern Society of Chicago urged Negroes to join them in supporting separate schools, emphasizing the greater opportunity this would provide for Negro teachers.<sup>64</sup> The Hyde Park Improvement Protective Club, which had suggested the desirability of separate schools during the 1909 housing quarrel, continued to campaign for this policy. In 1912, it petitioned the mayor in favor of segregation and held a meeting to discuss the proposal.<sup>65</sup> But few responsible Chicagoans seriously entertained these suggestions. School superintendent Ella Flagg Young, a friend of John Dewey and Jane Addams and a prominent member of Chicago's progressive intellectual circle, persistently quashed any attempt at discrimination. When, for instance, Wendell Phillips High School set up separate social activities for white and Negro students in 1915, Mrs. Young declared that

<sup>60</sup> *Tribune*, November 1, 1912.

<sup>61</sup> *Record-Herald*, September 26, 1908.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, October 14, 1908.

<sup>63</sup> *Appeal*, June 30, 1906; and see also October 24, 1903.

<sup>64</sup> *Defender*, November 12, 1910.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, February 24, June 22, 1912.

listed at Hull House knew through personal experience the problems of alienation and exploitation faced by Italian and Slavic immigrants who huddled in Chicago's West Side tenements. Graham Taylor of the Chicago Commons settlement house combined practical knowledge of the plight of the poor with a strong belief in the social gospel. Clarence Darrow, already known nationally as the "people's lawyer," brought to the reform movement a searching critique of the American industrial system. And at the vital, young University of Chicago Thorstein Veblen sought to revise classical economic theory and John Dewey formulated a philosophy of education designed for the new industrial age.<sup>7</sup>

The problems of class conflict, industrial strife, and corrupt politics that confronted Chicago's reformers at the turn of the century were complicated by the city's great ethnic diversity. Since the Civil War, the emerging metropolis had attracted peoples from every part of the world. By 1890, 77.9 per cent of its population was foreign born or of foreign parentage.<sup>8</sup> The Germans, Irish, and Scandinavians were still the largest ethnic groups in the city, but after 1880, increasing numbers of Poles, Lithuanians, Czechs, Italians, and Eastern European Jews entered the city, concentrating in Chicago's perennial area of first settlement—the near West Side. There, cultural alienation complicated the problems of poverty. Facing the baffling complexities of urban life and an alien culture, these new groups strove against difficult odds to maintain their own ethnic integrity. Although various immigrant groups met the problems of American life in diverse ways, all attempted, through the creation of community institutions or the preservation of a traditional family structure, to maintain enough of their heritage to provide identity and a sense of belonging.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ginger, *Altgeld's America*, pp. 113–42, 193–208, 234–56. See also Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, paperback ed. (New York: New American Library, 1961), pp. 133–47; Wade, *Graham Taylor*, pp. 83–116.

<sup>8</sup> Pierce, *History of Chicago*, 3: 22.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 22–47. See also Paul Cressy, "The Succession of Cultural Groups in the City of Chicago," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1930; Andrew J. Townsend, "The Germans of Chicago," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1927; Philip P. Bregstone, *Chicago and Its Jews* (Chicago: privately printed, 1933); Rudolph Vecoli, "Chicago's Italians Prior to World War I: A Study of Their Social and Economic Adjustment," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1963.

There were, then, many Chicagos by the end of the century. The reformers faced not merely the problem of an exploited working class, but of numerous worker enclaves, each clinging proudly to its own traditions. The newcomers' ignorance of American economic and political life made them particularly susceptible to the blandishments of unscrupulous employers and political bosses. A few of the reformers, such as Jane Addams and Graham Taylor, attempted to bring the immigrants into the mainstream of the city's life while at the same time respecting and even encouraging their cultural diversity. But many old-stock Chicagoans—and this included many of the sons and daughters of the earlier immigrants—were hostile, or at best patronizing, toward the ways of the newcomers.

Of Chicago's many ethnic groups, none had a longer local history than the Negroes. According to tradition, the first permanent settler on the site of Chicago was a black trader from Santo Domingo, Jean Baptiste Pointe de Saible, who built a cabin on the mouth of the Chicago River in about 1790.<sup>10</sup> The beginning of Negro community life in the city can be traced to the late 1840's, when a small stream of fugitive slaves from the South and free Negroes from the East formed the core of a small Negro settlement. Soon there were enough Negroes in Chicago to organize an African Methodist Episcopal church, and within a decade several more churches and a number of social and civic clubs were flourishing. By 1860, almost a thousand Negroes lived in Chicago. A small leadership group, headed by a well-to-do tailor, John Jones, participated in antislavery activities and articulated the grievances of a people who already found themselves the victims of segregation and discrimination.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the presence of an active antislavery movement, Negroes in antebellum Chicago were severely circumscribed. Residents of downstate Illinois frequently characterized Chicago as a "sink-hole of abolition" and a "nigger-loving town"; yet the sympathy that many white Chicagoans expressed for the Southern slaves

<sup>10</sup> Milo M. Quaife, *Checagou* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), pp. 44–46.

<sup>11</sup> St. Clair Drake, "Churches and Voluntary Associations in the Chicago Negro Community," Report of Official Project 465-54-3-386, Works Progress Administration, mimeographed (Chicago, 1940), pp. 34–49; St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1945), pp. 32–45.

if the school continued this policy, all social affairs would be canceled.<sup>66</sup>

Private educational and social welfare institutions developed widely varying policies, but few were completely free of discrimination. The University of Chicago and Northwestern University admitted Negroes without apparent discrimination, but both institutions experienced minor disturbances when Negro students entered the dormitories.<sup>67</sup> Catholic parochial schools, on the other hand, were openly segregated: all Negro students attended St. Monica's School.<sup>68</sup> Most private welfare institutions were closed to Negroes. Only after vigorous protest from Negro leaders did the Juvenile Protective Association admit Negroes to its Hyde Park center.<sup>69</sup> When a small Negro orphanage closed its doors in 1913, the officials of the white Park Ridge School helped transfer them to another Negro home, but strongly resisted the suggestion that they be admitted to Park Ridge. "These girls," wrote a Park Ridge official privately, "when put with or even *near* the same class of white girls . . . exercise a very deleterious influence on each other."<sup>70</sup>

Although Negroes had participated in the activities of the Young Men's Christian Association in the late nineteenth century, they met mounting discrimination after 1900. By 1910, they found themselves completely shut out of the white YMCA, and as a result, the all-Negro Wabash Avenue YMCA was opened in 1913.<sup>71</sup> Ida Wells-Barnett, a prominent Negro civic leader, described the plight of Negroes, barred from white social agencies:

While every other class is welcome in the Y.M.C.A. dormitories, Y.W.C.A. homes, the Salvation Army and the Mills

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, January 23, April 17, 1915; *Crisis*, 9 (March, 1915): 220. On Mrs. Young, see J. T. McManis, *Ella Flagg Young and a Half-Century of the Chicago Public Schools* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1916), and Charles H. Judd, "Ella Flagg Young," *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 20:126-27.

<sup>67</sup> *Tribune*, September 6, November 5, 1902; report on Negro education in Illinois Writers Project Files.

<sup>68</sup> *Defender*, March 18, April 5, 1913.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, June 25, 1910.

<sup>70</sup> Esther W. S. Brophy to Julius Rosenwald, December 7, 1913, Rosenwald Papers; *Broad Ax*, December 20, 1913.

<sup>71</sup> See chap. 5.

hotels, not one of these will give a negro a bed to sleep in or permit him to use their reading rooms and gymnasiums. Even the Women's Model Lodging House announces that it will give all women accommodations who need a place to sleep except drunkards, immoral women and negro women. What, then, is the negro to do? Those of us who realize the condition of this great, idle, proscribed class and view with pain and shame this increasing criminal record have absolutely no money to use in helping to change these conditions.<sup>72</sup>

Although race relations before World War I were peaceful by 1919 standards, an ominous, if muted, current of racial violence was manifest. The stockyards and teamsters strikes and the disputes over housing occasioned the most serious outbreaks, but they were not the only ones. Negro criminals—or suspected criminals—were frequently threatened by lynch mobs. In 1900, a crowd of angry whites stoned a Clark Street building in an attempt to capture a Negro who had been arrested for attacking a seven-year-old white girl.<sup>73</sup> On another occasion, five thousand whites left a sandlot baseball game to chase six Negroes who were fighting with white men. Four of the Negroes were arrested, and the mob, shouting "lynch them," then tried unsuccessfully to wrest them from the police.<sup>74</sup>

More serious was the wave of violence that came in the wake of the 1908 Springfield race riot. News of racial warfare in the state capital inspired many Chicago whites to attack Negroes. A mob attempted to lynch two Negro murder suspects, even though the victims, in both cases, were also Negroes.<sup>75</sup> Violence erupted on a Chicago River dock, where several white laborers declared that they would leave their jobs unless their Negro co-workers were fired.<sup>76</sup> For several weeks, armed posses hunted Negroes who were supposed fugitives from Springfield and, in at least two cases, planned lynchings.<sup>77</sup> The police, however, took special measures to prevent a general outbreak. The authorities mobilized special mounted forces and drill squads, and police

<sup>72</sup> Letter to the editor, *Record-Herald*, January 26, 1912.

<sup>73</sup> *Tribune*, November 21, 1900.

<sup>74</sup> *Record-Herald*, June 13, 1910.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, August 21, 1908.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, August 17, 1908.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, September 2, 1908.

officers were ordered to intervene quickly in any quarrels between Negroes and whites. With the cooperation of Negro leaders, who organized a law and order league on the South Side, a major riot was averted.<sup>78</sup>

Most observers—both Negro and white—agreed that the status of Negroes in Chicago was deteriorating, and some saw parallels between developments in Chicago and the hardening of Jim Crow patterns in the South. Two white commentators noted that “in the face of increasing manifestations of race prejudice, the Negro has come to acquiesce silently as various civil rights are withheld him in the old ‘free North.’”<sup>79</sup> A Negro columnist, in 1914, took an even more pessimistic position. He noted that “Afro-American people in increasing numbers are refused the accommodations of public places . . . in . . . violation of the laws of the state of Illinois,” that “discrimination is manifesting itself more and more in the courts of Chicago,” and that “the police department is especially filled with the wicked and unlawful determination to degrade Afro-Americans and fix upon them the badge of inferiority.” He concluded that Negroes “are more and more being reduced to a fixed status of social and political inferiority.”<sup>80</sup>

To compare the evolution of the Negro’s status in Chicago with the crystallization of the caste system in the South during the same period was an exaggeration. Discrimination in Chicago remained unofficial, informal, and uncertain; the Negro’s status did not become fixed. Nevertheless, as Negroes became more numerous and conspicuous, white hostility increased and Negroes encountered an ever more pervasive pattern of exclusion. Edward E. Wilson, a Negro attorney, noted that the growth of the Negro community “brought [Negroes] into contact with whites who hardly knew that there were a thousand Colored people in Chicago.” Moreover, “Colored children have appeared in numbers in many schools,” and “Colored men have pushed their way into many employments.” “All these things,” he concluded, “have a tendency to cause the whites to resort to jim crow tactics.”<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, August 17, August 19, 1908.

<sup>79</sup> Sophonisba Breckinridge and Edith Abbott, “Editors’ Notes; Chicago Housing Conditions,” reprinted from *American Journal of Sociology*.

<sup>80</sup> *Defender*, October 3, 1914.

<sup>81</sup> *Broad Ax*, December 31, 1910.

By 1915, Negroes had become a special group in the social structure of prewar Chicago. They could not be classified as merely another of Chicago’s many ethnic groups. The systematic proscription they suffered in housing and jobs, the discrimination they often—although not always—experienced in public accommodations and even municipal services, the violence of which they were frequently victims, set them apart from the mainstream of Chicago life in significant ways. They were forced to work out their destiny within the context of an increasingly biracial society.



### CHAPTER 3

#### CHICAGO'S NEGRO ELITE

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were unhappy years for American Negroes. In the South, state after state wrote disfranchisement provisions into their constitutions and established formal and rigid systems of segregation. In the northern cities, as the Negro population grew, discrimination became ever more prevalent. The deterioration in the Negro's status forced Negro leaders to reassess their assumptions about their goals and the means by which these goals could be attained.<sup>1</sup>

The traditional approach of Negro leaders in the North called for a relentless crusade against the biracial system itself. As the abolitionists had fought slavery without compromise, so post-Civil War Negro leaders leveled a broadside attack against all forms of segregation and discrimination. The ultimate goal was unquestioned: the integration of Negroes into the mainstream of American life. The means of attack, too, were well-established: a continual barrage of law suits against the vestiges of formal segregation, political pressure to secure broader civil rights legislation, and frequent protests and indignation meetings to voice the Negro's discontent over any violation of his rights. To the integrationists, any type of separate Negro institution smacked of segregation and represented a compromise of principle. At times, a Negro institution might be necessary as a temporary expedient, but it could never be regarded as a substitute for the ultimate goal of integration.

<sup>1</sup> The best account of Negro leadership and conflicting racial ideologies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is in August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963). For my appraisal of Chicago Negro leadership, I am heavily indebted to the ideas developed by Meier in his book, in his doctoral dissertation, "Negro Racial Thought in the Age of Booker T. Washington," Columbia University, 1957, and in his article, "Negro Class Structure and Ideology in the Age of Booker T. Washington," *Phylon* (Atlanta) 23 (Fall, 1963): 258-66.

Before 1900, most Chicago Negro leaders accepted these doctrines as articles of faith. Their major civic undertakings were designed to secure equal rights for Negroes. Between 1865 and 1900, Negro leaders were absorbed in campaigns to secure the ballot, assure an integrated school system, pass and then broaden the Civil Rights Act, and finally bring suits under the Act. The typical nineteenth-century organization was the Vigilance Committee, which flourished in the 1870's for the purpose of seeking redress when Negro rights were violated.<sup>2</sup> If a lynching occurred in the South, or if a Negro suffered a slight in Chicago, the community leaders responded with an indignation meeting to draft a petition laying their grievances at the foot of the President or the governor or the mayor.

Any attempt to organize a separate Negro institution met with stiff opposition from those who regarded it as a form of self-segregation. Ida Wells-Barnett, who came to Chicago at the time of the Columbian Exposition, "was very much surprised to find fear of the color line hampering an attempt to supply the need of the Negro community." She tried to organize a kindergarten for Negro children, but "there seemed to be a united front against the establishment of a kindergarten on the ground that it would be drawing the color line and thus make it impossible for Negro children to be accepted at Armour Institute kindergarten."<sup>3</sup> A proposal to establish a Negro YMCA in 1889 met with loud cries of protest and after a spirited indignation meeting the idea was shelved.<sup>4</sup> Some Negro organizations refused to support Colored American Day at the Columbian Exposition; they regarded it as a form of segregation, although other ethnic groups also had special "days" at the fair.<sup>5</sup> Even Provident Hospital, an avowedly interracial enterprise, aroused the hostility of several Chicagoans

<sup>2</sup> St. Clair Drake, "Churches and Voluntary Associations in the Chicago Negro Community," Report of Official Project 465-54-3-386, Works Progress Administration, mimeographed (Chicago, 1940), p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Alfreda Barnett Duster, untitled and unpublished manuscript on the life of Ida Wells-Barnett, in the possession of Mrs. Duster, Chicago, Illinois, chap. 8, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Appeal* (St. Paul), November 30, December 7, December 22, 1889.

<sup>5</sup> Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, *They Seek a City* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1945), p. 69.

who opposed the establishment of any institution under specifically Negro auspices.<sup>6</sup>

Even in this period, however, when the ideal of integration was ascendant, Chicago Negroes found some separate institutions necessary. This was most apparent in church life, where Negroes had had their own institutions since before the Civil War. In some cases, Negroes even expressed preference for churches of their own. Both Negro Episcopalians and Roman Catholics broke away from white churches to form separate congregations.<sup>7</sup> For the most part, though, Negro leaders were reluctant to encourage any form of separate institutional development. Frequently compelled to act as a group apart, they still regarded such actions as mere expedients, and they never raised the idea of separate development to the level of a racial ideology. Ferdinand L. Barnett, editor of the *Conservator*, Chicago's first Negro newspaper, probably spoke for most Chicago Negroes when he wrote in the late 1880's: "As a race let us forget the past so far as we can, and unite with other men upon issues liberal, essential, and not dependent upon color of skin or texture of hair for its [sic] gravamen."<sup>8</sup>

After 1900, however, Chicago Negro leaders increasingly gave voice to a new ideology that challenged the assumptions of the old civil rights creed. Their new approach was a northern variation of the philosophy of racial solidarity and self-help that had emerged in the post-Reconstruction South and had found its greatest vogue in the teachings of Booker T. Washington.<sup>9</sup> As

<sup>6</sup> Helen Buckler, *Doctor Dan* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1954), p. 71.

<sup>7</sup> See chap. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1945), p. 51.

<sup>9</sup> This philosophy has been a continual theme in the history of Negro racial thought, one that has come to the fore in periods of discouragement. Meier writes: "On the one hand white hostility has led Negroes to regard the creation of their own institutions as either necessary or wise; on the other hand these institutions reinforce and perpetuate thinking favorable to group separatism. Segregated institutions, of course, have appeared most desirable in the periods of greatest oppression and discouragement, and it has been in such periods that this desirability was most often expounded overtly and became the core of a dominant ideological orientation" (*Negro Thought in*

Washington and other southern Negro leaders responded to segregation and disfranchisement by urging Negroes to develop skills and organize their own economic and civic institutions, Chicago leaders responded to growing white hostility, not with direct counterattack, but by trying to build a Negro community that would itself provide all of the advantages of white Chicago. While the ultimate goal of complete integration was never abandoned in Chicago, it was temporarily relegated to the background. Negro leaders now showed a willingness to work within the framework of a biracial institutional structure and encourage the semiautonomous development of the Negro community. They emphasized self-reliance and racial cooperation rather than protests against mounting injustices.

The exponents of the old creed did not give up without a fight; frequently, they reminded the new leaders that parallel development was not a permanent solution and that it could often lead to a sacrifice of basic rights. The lines between the two ideological camps were not always clearly drawn; alliances shifted on different issues and often strong currents of integrationism and radical solidarity combined in the same man. At times, the issues were clearly spelled out; at other times, they were only implicit. But regardless of the many variations and complexities, Chicago's Negro leaders were engaged in a significant debate over the future course of Negro development in Chicago. Its most important expression was found in the very pattern of Negro community life in the early twentieth century—in civic institutions, politics, and business.

The ideological debate reflected a gradual but profound change in the social makeup of Chicago's Negro leadership. Before 1900, the community was dominated by a small group of upper-class Negroes, usually descendants of free Negroes and often of mixed stock, who had direct links with the abolitionist movement. Concentrated in the service trades and the professions, they usually had economic ties with the white community and numbered among their associates white men of comparable social position.

*America*, pp. 13-14). Thus, Negro thought had been primarily integrationist during the Reconstruction era, when Negro hopes were high, but began to turn toward separatism in the disheartening days after 1876.

The unchallenged leader of Chicago's Negroes from the 1850's until his death in 1879 was John Jones. Of mixed free Negro and white parentage, Jones came to Chicago in 1845, opened a downtown tailoring shop, and soon built up a thriving business making clothes for wealthy white Chicagoans. He worked actively with the abolitionist movement and frequently played host to Frederick Douglass, when the eminent Negro leader visited Chicago. After the war, Jones entered politics and was elected, with white support, to the Cook County Board of Commissioners.<sup>10</sup> Jones saw no conflict between the fight for equal rights and Negro racial solidarity. Chicago's Negro community was too small to support separate institutions and businesses, and Jones depended upon the white community for his economic and political success. He stressed the importance of economic advance as the keystone of Negro progress, but did not envisage it within the context of a separate Negro community. In his civic activities, such as the Vigilance Committee, he worked to secure equal rights for Negroes. "All that we ask is to be paid the regular price for our work," he said in 1874, eschewing special pleading, but "we must also have our civil rights, . . . they are essential to our complete freedom."<sup>11</sup>

After Jones's death, no single man assumed his mantle; Chicago's Negro community was already too diversified to recognize one man as its leader. Instead, a group of younger men emerged to carry on the type of leadership that Jones had exemplified. The majority of these leaders were long-time Chicago residents or had been born elsewhere in the North, although a few were of southern origin. Most of them worked in professions that brought them into close contact with whites. Some devoted themselves primarily to their professional careers while others were noted principally as civic or social leaders. Almost all of them

<sup>10</sup> For biographical data on Jones, see *Chicago Tribune*, March 12, 1875, May 22, 1879 (obituary); Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, pp. 41, 49; Harold Gosnell, *Negro Politicians: The Rise of Negro Politics in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), pp. 81-82; Bessie Louise Pierce, *A History of Chicago* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), 3:48; Bon-temps and Conroy, *They Seek a City*, pp. 28-36; Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written By Himself* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 454.

<sup>11</sup> *Tribune*, January 2, 1874.

were well-educated and had usually attended predominantly white institutions. Proud of their cultural attainments, they maintained high standards of respectability in their personal and civic lives. Until after the turn of the century, they formed a coherent elite group and set the tone of the social, intellectual, and civic life of the Negro community.

This social and cultural elite was, by and large, antagonistic to the ideology of self-help and racial solidarity popularized by Booker T. Washington and his followers. As direct heirs of the abolitionist tradition, they held fast to the old creed of militant protest for the attainment of equal rights. As educated, cultured men and women who enjoyed close relationships with their white counterparts, they leaned toward assimilationist views and envisioned an integrated society as their ultimate goal. Many of them identified with the Niagara movement, an organization of Negro militants, led by W. E. B. Du Bois, which first met in Niagara Falls, Ontario, in 1905, and for the next five years vigorously opposed Washington's accommodationism. After 1910, many of the old elite became active in the militant National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Yet the problems they faced were more complex than those confronted by John Jones, and they were often aware of the contradictions inherent in a philosophy that espoused both integration and Negro economic and cultural advancement. To achieve the latter, Negro leaders were forced to make concessions to the ideology of separate development. Moreover, as accommodationism and self-help became the dominant national ideology among Negroes, the Chicago leaders, like it or not, were often forced to go along. Then, too, the Chicago Negro community was growing rapidly and could now support separate institutions that would have been inconceivable in John Jones's day. The old elite, then, fought to maintain the militant tradition, but between 1900 and 1915, it frequently found itself out of step with the times.

The most eminent member of Chicago's Negro elite was Daniel Hale Williams, the best-known Negro physician in the country and one of the outstanding surgeons of his day. Born in Pennsylvania of a family that had been free for generations, Williams came to Chicago in 1880 from Janesville, Wisconsin. After graduating from Chicago Medical College, where he received the best training available to a prospective physician in the late nineteenth

century, he rose rapidly in his profession and developed close and lasting associations with the leading medical men in the city. The high regard in which he was held by his colleagues was amply justified by a distinguished medical career that included the first successful suture of the human heart. In 1891, he headed the group that founded Provident Hospital, and he insisted that the hospital—although established under Negro auspices—have an interracial staff chosen solely on the basis of ability.<sup>12</sup>

Williams devoted most of his energy and talent to his medical career and rarely articulated his views on racial matters. His publications were limited exclusively to articles in the medical journals. But a man of his prominence could hardly avoid the maelstrom of conflicting ideologies that troubled the Negro leaders of the day. For several years, Williams was a warm supporter of Booker T. Washington. He sent money to Tuskegee, offered to help Washington establish a hospital and training school, and used his influence to persuade the editor of the *Conservator* to cease his attacks on Washington's leadership. In 1904, he worked with Washington in founding the National Medical Association, an organization of Negro physicians, who, excluded from white medical societies and hospitals, banded together for mutual support and cooperation. But in 1907, Williams went over to the opposition when Washington refused to press for the reorganization of the Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C., under a competent medical staff. After that, Williams regarded Washington as a political manipulator who failed to appreciate the importance of professional training. He identified with the Niagara group not because of their protest ideology, but because he found in the idea of the "talented tenth," espoused by Du Bois and his followers, an echo of his own strong beliefs in the necessity for an educated Negro leadership.<sup>13</sup>

Williams' closest associate on the Provident staff was Charles E. Bentley, a Negro dentist, whose background and interests led him into an alliance with Williams in civic as well as professional affairs. Bentley was born in Ohio and educated at the Chicago College of Dental Surgery. Like Williams, he was well-known in his profession: he was the founder and first president of the

<sup>12</sup> Buckler, *Doctor Dan*, pp. 67-68 and *passim*. On Provident Hospital, see chap. 5.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 191-94, 231-51.

Odontographic Society, held a professorship in oral surgery at Harvey Medical College, and headed the dental clinics at the 1903 St. Louis World's Fair.<sup>14</sup>

Bentley played a more active role in Negro affairs than Williams. From the first, he allied himself with the militants. In 1903, he helped organize the Equal Opportunity League and then brought W. E. B. Du Bois to Chicago to speak to the group. Two years later, he was one of two Chicagoans to attend the first Niagara Conference, and according to Du Bois "planned the method of organization" of the conference.<sup>15</sup> Returning to local affairs, Bentley organized a Chicago chapter of the Niagara movement and appeared before the Charter Convention in 1906 to advocate a clause in the new city charter prohibiting segregation in the public schools.<sup>16</sup> In 1912, he helped organize the Chicago branch of the NAACP and served on its first board of directors.<sup>17</sup>

The only other Chicagoan to journey to Niagara Falls in 1905 was James B. Madden, another of the city's Negro elite who became an outspoken militant. Madden had been active in social and civic affairs since the 1880's. He was a charter member of the Prudence Crandall Club, an exclusive literary society, and one of the original trustees of Provident Hospital. Like many members of the old elite, Madden had economic ties with the white community: he was the first Negro to work as a bookkeeper for a white firm in Chicago.<sup>18</sup>

Ferdinand and Ida Barnett were leaders of a somewhat different order. Publicists by trade, they were not torn between professional and civic duties as were Williams and Bentley; in this

<sup>14</sup> "Some Chicagoans of Note," *Crisis* (New York), 10 (September, 1915): 239-40; *Appeal*, April 2, 1892; Buckler, *Doctor Dan*, pp. 55, 76, 232.

<sup>15</sup> *Broad Ax* (Chicago), December 19, 1903, January 21, 1905; Meier, "Negro Racial Thought," p. 529; Buckler, *Doctor Dan*, pp. 69, 256; S. Laing Williams to Booker T. Washington, July 21, 1905, in Booker T. Washington Papers (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.), cited hereafter as Washington Papers.

<sup>16</sup> *Appeal*, June 30, 1906.

<sup>17</sup> *Chicago Defender*, January 20, 1912; William C. Graves to Julius Rosenwald, April 18, 1914, in Julius Rosenwald Papers (University of Chicago Library), cited hereafter as Rosenwald Papers.

<sup>18</sup> Buckler, *Doctor Dan*, pp. 69, 256; S. Laing Williams to Booker T. Washington, July 21, 1905, Washington Papers; *Appeal*, January 7, 1888.

sense, they foreshadowed the professional Negro leaders who were to emerge in the World War I period. Ida Wells-Barnett was born in Mississippi and went to Memphis at the age of fourteen. There she taught school and edited a militant Negro weekly, *Free Speech*. Her uncompromising opposition to lynching aroused the ire of her white neighbors, who attacked and burned the *Free Speech* print shop and forced the young editor to flee for her life. In the tradition of the Negro abolitionists, Miss Wells embarked on a speaking tour to present the Negro's case before audiences in the North and in England. Visiting Chicago for an appearance at the Columbian Exposition, she decided to settle in the city and, in 1895, married Ferdinand L. Barnett.<sup>19</sup>

A militant long before militancy found a national spokesman in W. E. B. Du Bois, Mrs. Barnett was a natural leader of the anti-Tuskegee group on both the national and local levels. By the turn of the century, she had emerged as the leading militant in the Afro-American Council. The Council was the successor to the Afro-American League, which had been organized in Chicago in 1890 as a national protest organization. The League was defunct by 1893, but was revived as the Afro-American Council five years later. At its first convention in 1898, it tried to maintain a precarious balance between militant northern Negroes and more cautious southerners.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, Mrs. Barnett, uncompromising by nature, attacked Booker T. Washington's accommodationism in a sharply worded and coolly received address. Washington, she declared, was seriously mistaken in his notion that Negroes could gain their rights merely by economic advancement. "We must educate the white people out of their 250 years of slave history," she declared.<sup>21</sup> Washington, still basking in the

<sup>19</sup> Duster, manuscript on the life of Ida Wells-Barnett, *passim*; interview with Alfreda Barnett Duster, July 3, 1962; report on Ida Wells-Barnett in "The Negro in Illinois," a file of reports and interviews compiled by the Illinois Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration (George Cleveland Hall Branch of the Chicago Public Library), cited hereafter as Illinois Writers Project Files; *Defender*, April 28, 1931 (obituary); Bontemps and Conroy, *They Seek a City*, pp. 77-82.

<sup>20</sup> Emma Lou Thornbrough, "The National Afro-American League, 1887-1908," *Journal of Southern History* (Houston), 27 (November, 1961): 494-512; Meier, *Negro Thought in America*, pp. 172-74.

<sup>21</sup> *Colored American* (Washington), January 7, 1899,

glory of his famous Atlanta address three years earlier, enjoyed the confidence of most Negro leaders. But Mrs. Barnett had enough support within the Council to be elected secretary and later chairman of the Council's Anti-Lynching Bureau. She remained active until 1903, when the organization fell under the complete control of the Tuskegee machine.<sup>22</sup>

After 1903, Ida Barnett increasingly devoted her energy to local affairs. When a Negro was lynched in southern Illinois in 1909, she journeyed to Springfield to urge Governor Charles Deneen to reinstate the sheriff who had tried unsuccessfully to prevent the lynching. The governor complied and Illinois experienced no more lynchings. Mrs. Barnett's interests also led her into the woman's suffrage movement, women's club activities, social settlement work, and progressive politics. In these activities she developed close relations with white reformers, particularly Jane Addams. Mrs. Barnett was the only Chicago Negro to sign the call for the conference that led to the establishment of the NAACP in 1909.<sup>23</sup>

Ferdinand L. Barnett had been a prominent figure in Chicago for twenty years when he married Ida Wells. He founded the city's first Negro newspaper, the *Conservator*, in 1878. Continually in the vanguard of militant protest leaders, Barnett encouraged racial solidarity not as a basis for accommodation but as the means by which Negroes could combine in the struggle for equal rights. "Race elevation can be attained only through race unity," he told the National Conference of Colored Men in 1879. "White people will grant us few privileges voluntarily. We must wage continued warfare for our rights."<sup>24</sup> After leaving the *Conservator*, Barnett went into private law practice and entered politics. He served as assistant state's attorney for a decade, and in 1906 was almost elected to the municipal court. A member of the Equal Opportunity League and a firm opponent of Booker T. Washing-

<sup>22</sup> Meier, "Negro Racial Thought," pp. 180, 462, 472.

<sup>23</sup> Illinois Writers Project Files; Mary White Ovington, *How the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Began* (New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1914); for Mrs. Barnett's civic and philanthropic work, see chap. 5.

<sup>24</sup> National Conference of Colored Men of the United States, *Proceedings*, Nashville, Tennessee, May 6-9, 1879 (Washington: Rufus H. Darby, 1879), p. 85.

ton, he nevertheless maintained political contacts sufficient to secure his appointment, over Washington's opposition, as head of the Chicago branch of the Negro Bureau in the 1904 Republican presidential campaign.<sup>25</sup>

Another member of the Chicago elite who achieved national prominence as a militant was attorney Edward H. Morris. Born in Kentucky, Morris came to Chicago at an early age, studied law, and was elected to the state legislature. A successful corporation lawyer and attorney for Cook County, he maintained professional and social relations with white attorneys. Morris allied himself with the Negro militants both in Chicago and nationally. In 1903, he played a leading role at the organizational meeting of the Equal Rights League of Illinois at Springfield. After speaking strongly in favor of a report censuring Washington, he was elected chairman of the executive committee.<sup>26</sup> That same year, he told the Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, a white daily, that Washington was "largely responsible for the lynching in this country," and that "he teaches that Negroes are fit only for menial positions." "As far as the good of the colored race is concerned," he continued, "I prefer a radical like Senator Tillman of South Carolina to Booker T. Washington. . . . The colored people think it doesn't matter so much what he says . . . [but they] believe and do what [Washington] tells them. Then they don't insist upon being treated the equals of whites."<sup>27</sup> Morris repeated his attack a year later in Washington, D.C., in a speech that became a rallying point in the growing opposition to the Tuskegee brand of leadership.<sup>28</sup>

Edward E. Wilson, another attorney and politician, was not as well-known nationally as Morris, but locally he was one of the most articulate and perceptive critics of accommodationism

<sup>25</sup> Gosnell, *Negro Politicians*, pp. 85, 155; *Chicago Bee*, May 22, 1936 (obituary); interview with Mrs. Duster; Booker T. Washington to S. Laing Williams, August 9, 1904, and Williams to Washington, November 16, 1906, Washington Papers.

<sup>26</sup> *Appeal*, October 17, 1903.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in *Cleveland Gazette*, August 8, 1903.

<sup>28</sup> For biographical data on Morris, see Gosnell, *Negro Politicians*, pp. 66, 111; Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), p. 652; Meier, *Negro Thought in America*, pp. 154, 178; Meier, "Negro Racial Thought," p. 766; Bontemps and Conroy, *They Seek a City*, p. 83.

and separate development. Wilson came to Chicago after studying at Oberlin and Williams Colleges and succeeded Barnett as assistant state's attorney. He wrote in 1910:

Separation, where it does not bring a lessening of one's rights and privileges, is not to be frowned upon; but this so seldom happens that it is a dangerous experiment; and wherever there is a tendency to the curtailment of civic rights, or where such separation is an entering wedge for further discriminations, it should be fought without apology and without truce.<sup>29</sup>

Wilson vigorously attacked those local Negroes who argued that separate schools would provide more work for Negro teachers: "For a few jobs, some Negroes are willing to be cooped off by themselves with inferior advantages and with a door left open for further invasions of their rights." He was one of the few Chicago Negroes to oppose the plan of Julius Rosenwald, the white philanthropist, for the construction of a Negro YMCA. Wilson characterized the project as a means "for travelling to heaven by a back alley." "One could not be sure," he added, "that after a long and weary journey along a jim-crow route to glory, that he would not find a jim-crow Paradise awaiting him beyond."<sup>30</sup>

Probably the most uncompromising integrationist in Chicago was still another attorney and politician, John G. Jones,<sup>31</sup> whose long record of militant protest activities earned him the nickname, "Indignation" Jones. An "old settler," he never deviated from his faith in the equal rights creed. From the 1880's, when he shared a law office with Ferdinand Barnett, until the early twentieth century, when he was elected to the state legislature, he fought every infringement on Negro rights and every move toward separatism. Jones led the protests against the establishment of a Negro YMCA in 1889 and against Provident Hospital in 1891. When a coroner's jury handed down a verdict critical of integrated employment in a Chicago firm, Jones called an indignation meeting and declared that the jury and the coroner should be tarred and feathered. Dan Williams felt the lash of the impetuous Jones when he remarked in an interview that Negroes were fond of secret societies and bright regalia. Jones called a meeting to censure

<sup>29</sup> *Broad Ax*, December 31, 1910.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*; see also Gosnell, *Negro Politicians*, pp. 206-7.

<sup>31</sup> Not to be confused with the pioneer Negro leader, John Jones.

Williams for slandering the Negro people, but he could muster no support against the prestigious doctor. Naturally, Jones became a vitriolic critic of Booker T. Washington. As chairman of the Equal Rights League convention in Springfield in 1903, he called Washington's methods detrimental to the race and urged the assembly to censure him. Two years later, he and Edward Morris used their influence to block a federal appointment for Washington's friend, S. Laing Williams.<sup>32</sup>

Three clergymen, with widely differing outlooks, were also prominent members of the Chicago elite. Reverdy Ransom was an active proponent of the social gospel, an ardent reformer and an articulate spokesman for the Negro militants. Born in a Quaker settlement in Ohio and educated at Wilberforce and Oberlin, Ransom came to Chicago in 1896 to become minister of Bethel A.M.E. Church. He expanded the program of the church to include a Men's Sunday Club, the first of the Sunday forums that were to become popular in Negro churches, and he worked actively in politics to secure needed public improvements for the burgeoning black belt. Immersing himself in reform activities, even dabbling at times with socialism, Ransom met such prominent white reformers as Jane Addams, Mary McDowell, Clarence Darrow, and Graham Taylor and, with their help, established the Institutional Church and Social Settlement in 1900. The first attempt to provide a full program of social services among Chicago Negroes, Institutional attracted not only the poor who were to benefit from its activities, but sophisticated, upper-class Negroes who found Ransom's social gospel more attractive than the traditional type of Negro religion. Ransom continued to play an active role in civic reform. In 1903, he denounced the policy racket in a series of sermons that led to the dynamiting of his church, and during the 1904 stockyards strike he attempted to mediate between the Negro strikebreakers and the angry white strikers. Ransom left Chicago in 1904 for a long career as orator, writer, reformer, and leader in the Niagara movement.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Appeal*, February 11, March 10, 1888, December 7, 1889, April 18, 1891, October 17, 1903; Buckler, *Doctor Dan*, pp. 71-72; John G. Jones to Senator A. J. Hopkins, December 9, 1905, Washington Papers; I. C. Harris, *Colored Men's Professional and Business Directory of Chicago* (Chicago: I. C. Harris, 1885), p. 22.

<sup>33</sup> Reverdy Ransom, *The Pilgrimage of Harriet Ransom's Son* (Nashville, Tenn.: Sunday School Union [1950?]), pp. 15-17, 33, 81-135; Buckler, *Doctor*

In 1909, Ransom's Institutional Church called to its pulpit Archibald J. Carey. Born in Georgia in 1868 of a "household slave" family, Carey received a liberal education at Atlanta University and came to Chicago in 1896 to become pastor of Quinn Chapel A.M.E. Church, the oldest in the city. Like Ransom, Carey was deeply concerned with civic and political matters and both at Quinn Chapel and Institutional he used his pulpit as a forum for matters of community concern. He carried on Ransom's social welfare program, brought in prominent white and Negro leaders to speak to the Sunday Forum, and gathered around him a qualified staff of trained social workers.<sup>34</sup>

Carey participated in partisan politics more fully than Ransom and successfully used his congregation as a base for personal political power. Although a Republican, he frequently supported Democrats on the state and local level. Governor Edward Dunne, a Democrat, named him chairman of the organizing committee of the Emancipation Golden Jubilee in 1913, a position that gave him considerable patronage. A year later, Democratic Mayor Carter Harrison II appointed Carey to the motion-picture censorship board where he successfully led the fight to suppress the anti-Negro film, *The Birth of a Nation*, in 1915. When his longtime friend, William Hale Thompson, was elected mayor of Chicago as a Republican in 1915, Carey was among the most powerful Negro political figures in the city.<sup>35</sup>

Unlike Ransom, Carey remained nominally neutral in the debate over Negro racial ideology, but his views more closely coincided with the militants' than with Washington's. For a brief period, just after 1900, he edited the *Conservator* and followed a policy described as "more or less hostile" to Washington.<sup>36</sup> When a white speaker at a Lincoln centennial celebration in 1909 told a Negro audience not to "trouble yourselves too much about politics," but

*Dan*, pp. 223-25; *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, July 29, 1900; *Broad Ax*, May 9, 1903; *Appeal*, May 9, 1903; for a discussion of Institutional Church, see chap. 5.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Logsdon, "Reverend A. J. Carey and the Negro in Chicago Politics," unpublished master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1961, pp. 5-18; *Defender*, March 7, March 14, 1914, April 28, 1931 (obituary).

<sup>35</sup> Logsdon, "Reverend A. J. Carey," pp. 23-50; Gosnell, *Negro Politicians*, pp. 49-51.

<sup>36</sup> S. Laing Williams to Booker T. Washington, July 6, 1909, Washington Papers.

to "try to get ahead in the material things of life," Carey, who was chairing the meeting, immediately arose to reply and called the ballot the Negro's "only weapon of defense."<sup>37</sup> In 1913, Carey secured an appointment as orator at the Centennial of the Battle of Lake Erie at Put-In-Bay, and he used the occasion to deliver an impassioned plea for Negro rights.<sup>38</sup>

J. B. Massiah, rector of the fashionable St. Thomas Episcopal Church, also ministered to Chicago's Negro elite. Born in Barbados, he received his training at Oxford University and at the General Theological Seminary in New York. He served in Chicago from 1906 until his death in 1916. Unlike Ransom and Carey, Massiah generally eschewed racial and political affairs, but in 1912, while the Tuskegee-dominated National Negro Business League was meeting in Chicago, he delivered a ringing denunciation of the accommodationist approach:

I cannot refrain from deploring the failure of the race, in the north especially, to continue to agitate against infringement of the constitutional rights of our people in the south. We should not cease to agitate, even for the sake of trying the policy of conciliation, which is proving too plainly, even in the north, that bank accounts and property are not changing the black man's skin or the white man's spotted prejudice.<sup>39</sup>

Although most of Chicago's old established leaders retained their commitment to the equal rights ideology and rejected compromise, there were some exceptions. A few members of the Negro elite completely avoided involvement in racial affairs. Charles J. Smiley, for instance, perhaps the wealthiest Negro in Chicago after the death of John Jones, devoted his energies exclusively to his successful catering business that served affluent white Chicagoans.<sup>40</sup> Julius Avendorph, the "Ward McAllister of the South

<sup>37</sup> Nathan W. MacChesney, ed., *Abraham Lincoln, The Tribute of a Century* (Chicago: A. C. MacClurg, 1910), pp. 102-12.

<sup>38</sup> Logsdon, "Reverend A. J. Carey," pp. 18-23; Gosnell, *Negro Politicians*, p. 50; *Defender*, September 20, 1913.

<sup>39</sup> *Defender*, August 13, 1912; for biographical data on Massiah, see "A Preacher of the Word," *Crisis*, 11 (April, 1916):290; and *Defender*, January 15, 1916 (obituary).

<sup>40</sup> Richard R. Wright, Jr., "The Industrial Condition of Negroes in Chicago," unpublished B. D. thesis, University of Chicago Divinity School, 1901, pp. 16-18, 19; Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, p. 49; Buckler, *Doctor Dan*, pp. 75, 156, 256.



Side," limited his activities to social affairs. As assistant to the president of the Pullman Company, he became "personally acquainted with more millionaires than any other Colored man in Chicago." He served as master of ceremonies at every major Negro social event and was considered "Chicago's undisputed social leader from 1886 up until 1910."<sup>41</sup> If Avendorph never participated in protest activities, he clearly articulated the elitist social views of many who considered themselves the cream of Negro society in Chicago. Writing in 1917, he deplored the blurring of class lines that had occurred since the turn of the century. "22 years ago," he said, "Chicago could rightfully claim a social set that stood for high ideals and did not hesitate to draw a line of demarcation. . . . Society must stand for something and its cardinal principle ought to be class distinction."<sup>42</sup>

Several members of the old elite went beyond neutrality and actually joined the Tuskegee camp. One of these was Lloyd Wheeler, a friend of Dan Williams and one of the founders of Provident Hospital. Wheeler married John Jones's adopted daughter and became manager of Jones's tailoring establishment. Socially prominent, he was known as a "good dresser" and "an elegant Mixer"; but he differed from most of his friends on racial matters. Wheeler helped to establish a Chicago branch of the National Negro Business League, and after suffering business misfortunes in Chicago, he moved to Tuskegee to take a job at the Institute.<sup>43</sup>

S. Laing Williams and his wife, Fannie Barrier Williams, were more important exceptions to the thesis that the old elite remained racial militants. Born in Georgia, S. Laing Williams came to Chicago in the mid-1880's after graduating from the University of Michigan and the Columbian Law School in Washington, D.C. He was admitted to the Illinois bar and for a short time shared a law office with Ferdinand Barnett.<sup>44</sup> Williams immediately became a leader in Chicago Negro society. In 1887, he organized the

<sup>41</sup> *Defender*, August 10, 1918, May 12, 1923 (obituary); *Appeal*, December 4, 1897, October 6, 1900.

<sup>42</sup> *Defender*, October 6, 1917.

<sup>43</sup> Buckler, *Doctor Dan*, pp. 69-70, 232, 256; I. C. Harris, *Colored Men's Professional and Business Directory*, pp. 25-26, 28; *Appeal*, April 27, 1901.

<sup>44</sup> George W. Ellis, "The Chicago Negro in Law and Politics," *Champion Magazine* (Chicago), 1 (March, 1917): 349; report on Williams in Illinois Writers Project Files; Meier, *Negro Thought in America*, p. 238.

Prudence Crandall Club, a literary society, and attracted to it a membership that included nearly every socially prominent Negro in the city.<sup>45</sup> Yet from an early date, Williams was a warm supporter and personal friend of Booker T. Washington. He delivered the commencement address at Tuskegee in 1895 and, by the turn of the century, was Washington's closest aide in Chicago. He arranged for Washington's periodic visits to the city, kept him advised of political maneuvers in Chicago, and acted as a liaison between Tuskegee and the Chicago Negro press. In 1904, Washington hired him to ghostwrite his biography of Frederick Douglass.<sup>46</sup>

Williams dutifully informed Washington of the activities of the Niagara group in Chicago and faithfully echoed the Tuskegee line. Edward Morris and Ferdinand Barnett, he told Washington in 1904, were aspiring to gain control of the Negro Bureau of the Republican presidential campaign and "would certainly use the position for personal gains and for revenging their spleen or spite."<sup>47</sup> The next year, he kept Washington advised of the movement of Chicago Negroes in relation to the Niagara conference and commented that the Niagara proclamation "contains nothing new or constructive" but "is a mere harking back to old methods of protest and complaint."<sup>48</sup> When the NAACP began to organize in 1910, he wrote to Emmett Scott, Washington's secretary, that despite several meetings in Chicago, "I cannot see any evidence of paramount interest in the thing." The NAACP leaders, he said, were "at heart . . . hostile [to Washington] but they are menaced by the overwhelming sentiment of the country that Dr. Washington is everlastingly right in his views and work."<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> *Appeal*, January 7, 1888; and see chap. 5.

<sup>46</sup> *Appeal*, June 1, 1895; Emmett J. Scott to S. Laing Williams, July 20, 1904; E. P. Oberholzer to Booker T. Washington, July 14, 1904; Williams to Washington, June 7, 1904; Washington to Williams, June 12, 1904; Williams to Scott, July 26, 1904—Washington Papers.

<sup>47</sup> S. Laing Williams to Emmett J. Scott, July 8, 1904; Williams to Booker T. Washington, July 14, 1904; Williams to Charles Anderson, July 8, 1904—Washington Papers.

<sup>48</sup> S. Laing Williams to Booker T. Washington, July 21, 1904, and Williams to Emmett J. Scott, July 10, 1905, Washington Papers.

<sup>49</sup> S. Laing Williams to Emmett J. Scott, October 25, 1910, Washington Papers.

was not often extended to the local Negroes. To be sure, the anti-slavery press, on occasion, noted approvingly the orderliness and respectability of the city's Negro community, but little was done to improve the status of the group. Chicago's Negroes could not vote, nor could they testify in court against whites. State law forbade intermarriage between the races. Segregation was maintained in the schools, places of public accommodation, and transportation. Chicago's abolitionists regarded these conditions as side issues and manifested little interest in them.<sup>12</sup>

Between 1870 and 1890, the Chicago Negro community grew from less than four thousand to almost fifteen thousand and developed a well delineated class structure and numerous religious and secular organizations. After the fire of 1871, the community became more concentrated geographically. Most Negroes lived on the South Side, but were still well interspersed with whites. Although a majority of the city's Negroes worked as domestic and personal servants, a small business and professional class provided community leadership. St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton described the Chicago Negro community of this period as

a small, compact, but rapidly growing community divided into three broad social groups. The "respectables"—church-going, poor or moderately prosperous, and often unrestrained in their worship—were looked down upon somewhat by the "refined" people, who, because of their education and breeding, could not sanction the less decorous behavior of their racial brothers. Both of these groups were censorious of the "riffraff," the "sinners"—unchurched and undisciplined.<sup>13</sup>

During the postwar years, the formal pattern of segregation that had characterized race relations in antebellum Chicago broke down. By 1870, Negroes could vote. In 1874, the school system was desegregated. A decade later, after the federal civil rights bill was nullified by the United States Supreme Court, the Illinois legislature enacted a law prohibiting discrimination in public places.<sup>14</sup> Despite these advances, however, the status of Negroes in Chicago remained ambiguous. They continued to face dis-

<sup>12</sup> Pierce, *History of Chicago*, 2: 12; Drake and Cayton, p. 41; for a general discussion of the status of Negroes in the antebellum North, see Leon Litwack, *North of Slavery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

<sup>13</sup> Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, p. 48.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50; Pierce, *History of Chicago*, 3: 49-50.

crimination in housing, employment, and, even in the face of the civil rights law, public accommodations. But they were not confined to a ghetto. Most Negroes, although concentrated in certain sections of the city, lived in mixed neighborhoods. Negro businessmen and professional men frequently catered to a white market and enjoyed social, as well as economic, contacts with the white community. And although Negro churches and social clubs proliferated, there were still few separate civic institutions. Local Negro leaders were firmly committed to the ideal of an integrated community in which hospitals, social agencies, and public accommodations would be open to all without discrimination.<sup>15</sup>

From the beginning, the experience of Chicago's Negroes had been, in significant ways, separate from the mainstream of the city's history. No other ethnic group had been legally circumscribed; no white minority had been forced to fight for legal recognition of citizenship rights. In 1890, despite the improvement in the Negroes' status since 1865, many of their problems were still unique. In a chiefly industrial city, they worked principally in domestic and service trades, almost untouched by labor organization and industrial strife. The political and economic turmoil of the late nineteenth century seemed to have little effect on the city's Negroes. No Jane Addams or Graham Taylor sought to bring them within the reform coalition that was attempting to change the life of the city. Generally ignored by white Chicagoans, Negroes were viewed neither as a threat to the city's well-being nor as an integral part of the city's social structure. Most responsible whites probably held the view quoted by Ray Stannard Baker: "We have helped the Negro to liberty; we have helped to educate him to stand on his own feet. Now let's see what he can do for himself. After all, he must survive or perish by his own efforts."<sup>16</sup>

Still, the story of Chicago's Negroes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is interwoven with the general history of the city. As their numbers increased between 1890 and 1910, Negroes became ever more conspicuous, and the indifference with which they had been regarded in the nineteenth century changed

<sup>15</sup> The ambiguity of the Negro's status in late nineteenth-century Chicago is discussed in detail in chapters 1, 2, and 3.

<sup>16</sup> Ray Stannard Baker, "The Color Line in the North," *American Magazine*, 65 (February, 1908): 349.

As a reward for his loyalty to Washington, Williams sought a federal appointment, but his activities as a spy for Tuskegee had earned him the enmity of many Chicagoans. In 1904, he expected to be appointed head of the Chicago branch of the Republican Party's Negro Bureau, but even Washington's intervention could not prevent the job from going to Ferdinand Barnett, Williams' old law partner and now a bitter ideological foe.<sup>50</sup> Williams, nevertheless, worked diligently for the party and after the Republican victory confidently awaited a federal appointment, perhaps even the Haitian ministry or the Registry of the Treasury, the highest positions to which a Negro could aspire. But now Edward Morris and John G. Jones used their influence against him.<sup>51</sup> Finally, Washington secured for Williams an appointment in 1908 as Assistant U.S. District Attorney for Illinois and Eastern Wisconsin. He was discharged a year later, but Washington arranged for his reappointment. In 1912, he lost the job permanently because he was "short on energy and practicability."<sup>52</sup>

Despite Williams' close involvement with Washington and his continual reiteration of the Tuskegee ideology, there remained a certain ambiguity in his position. From time to time it seemed that his natural instincts were with his former friends, Morris, the Barnetts, and Madden. When the militant Equal Opportunity League brought Du Bois to Chicago in 1903, Williams appeared on the program. A decade later, he was vice-president of the Chicago branch of the NAACP which he had previously dismissed as

<sup>50</sup> Booker T. Washington to S. Laing Williams, July 14, 1904; Washington to Williams, July 21, 1905; Williams to Washington, July 27, 1904; Williams to Washington, August 6, 1904; Williams to Washington, August 8, 1904; Washington to Williams, August 9, 1904; Washington to Williams, August 14, 1904; Williams to Washington, August 17, 1904; Washington to Williams, September 7, 1904—Washington Papers.

<sup>51</sup> S. Laing Williams to Booker T. Washington, December 31, 1904; Washington to Williams, May 20, 1905; Williams to Washington, May 17, 1905; Williams to Washington, May 25, 1905; Williams to Theodore Roosevelt, November 20, 1905; John G. Jones to Senator A. J. Hopkins, December 9, 1905; Edward Morris to Hopkins, December 9, 1905; Washington to Williams, January 13, 1906—Washington Papers; *Broad Ax*, January 13, 1906; *Chicago Record-Herald*, December 10, 1905.

<sup>52</sup> Booker T. Washington to S. Laing Williams, March 30, 1908; Williams to Washington, June 30, 1909; Williams to Washington, October 1, 1909; P. W. Tyler to Washington, December 12, 1912; Tyler to Washington, December 16, 1912—Washington Papers.

being unconstructive.<sup>53</sup> By 1914, Williams was devoting a portion of his practice to civil rights cases and giving legal assistance to the NAACP grievances committee.<sup>54</sup> As early as 1895, while speaking at Tuskegee, he could not accept the Washington ideology without reservations. He praised industrial education for Negroes, but added that "I would be equally as earnest in my wish to shorten the way for every superior man or woman that leads to the classic halls of Harvard, Yale or Ann Arbor."<sup>55</sup> Like many other Negro leaders during the era of Washington's preeminence, Williams found it personally advantageous to associate himself with Tuskegee and undoubtedly he agreed with many of Washington's ideas. But he never became an accommodationist, and when he no longer depended upon Tuskegee for his job, he participated fully in the activities of the militants.

Fannie Barrier Williams occupied an even more ambiguous position than her husband. Born in Brockport, New York, of a prominent free Negro family, she came to Chicago in the 1880's. Married in 1887, she soon won a reputation as an able speaker, writer, and organizer. She worked with Dan Williams in establishing Provident Hospital and was chosen to deliver two addresses at the Columbian Exposition—one before the World's Congress of Representative Women, the other at the World's Parliament of Religions.<sup>56</sup> Fannie Williams' speeches in 1893 reflected the traditional views of the Negro elite. While favoring union and organization among Negroes for purposes of race advancement, she reminded her white audience that slavery was responsible for "every moral imperfection that mars the character of the colored American" and that by continuing to deny equal opportunity to Negroes, "the American people are but repeating the common folly of history in thus attempting to repress the yearnings of common humanity." She expressed indignation that "colored women can find no employment in this free America" and she saw as the only solution to the Negro's plight "opportunities untrammelled by prejudice" and "the right of the individual to be judged, not by tradition and race

<sup>53</sup> *Broad Ax*, December 19, 1903; *Crisis*, 5 (April, 1913): 297; *Crisis*, 6 (May, 1913): 38-39.

<sup>54</sup> William C. Graves to Julius Rosenwald, April 18, 1914, Rosenwald Papers.

<sup>55</sup> *Appeal*, June 1, 1895.

<sup>56</sup> *Defender*, July 26, 1914; Buckler, *Doctor Dan*, pp. 71, 73, 83.

estimate, but by the present evidence of individual worth."<sup>57</sup> After Mrs. Williams finished one address, Frederick Douglass, the venerable champion of Negro militancy, stepped forward and, overcome with emotion, hailed the dawn of a "new earth . . . in which all discriminations . . . is passing away."<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps Fannie Williams never completely lost her faith in equal rights and equal opportunity; but by 1900, she had become a leading exponent of the doctrine of self-help and racial solidarity, actively writing and speaking in behalf of Booker T. Washington. In 1904, she attacked "the man who is always complaining and [who] fails to cultivate strength against adversity and wrongdoing." Disfranchising the Negro in the South, she continued, "has been a great blessing in disguise; since he is not permitted to vote, he is acquiring land and money."<sup>59</sup> In another article, she lauded the Negro's faith "that emancipation from the ills of poverty and ignorance and race prejudice is through co-operation."<sup>60</sup> It is, of course, possible that Mrs. Williams simply changed her mind. Yet, it can hardly be coincidental that her most active work for the Tuskegee cause came at the very time her husband was seeking a federal job. Contemporaries credited her with playing a major role in winning favor for her husband.<sup>61</sup> Even more than S. Laing Williams, perhaps, Fannie Williams' background, instincts, and general inclinations disposed her toward the equal rights school of racial thought, but the Negro power structure of the day forced her into the Tuskegee camp.

<sup>57</sup> Fannie B. Williams, "The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Women of the United States since the Emancipation Proclamation," *The World Congress of Representative Women*, ed. May Wright Sewall (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Company, 1894), pp. 703, 705, 707. See also Mrs. Williams' "Religious Duty to the Negro," *The World's Congress of Religions*, ed. J. W. Hanson (Chicago: W. B. Conkey, 1894), pp. 893-97.

<sup>58</sup> Williams, "The Intellectual Progress," p. 717.

<sup>59</sup> Fannie B. Williams, "The New Negro," *Record-Herald*, October 9, 1904; see also Mrs. Williams' "The Club Movement among Colored Women in America," *A New Negro for a New Century*, ed. J. E. MacBrady (Chicago: American Publishing House, [1900?]), p. 417; and S. Laing Williams to Booker T. Washington, February 24, 1908, Washington Papers.

<sup>60</sup> Fannie B. Williams, "Social Bonds in the Black Belt of Chicago," *Charities* (New York), 15 (October 7, 1905): 40-41.

<sup>61</sup> *Broad Ax*, January 13, 1906.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE NEW LEADERSHIP

The old elite dominated Negro community life until the first decade of the twentieth century. They ran the social affairs, organized the civic ventures, and acted as spokesmen for Chicago's Negroes in matters of group concern. But between 1900 and 1910, new names became increasingly prominent—the names of men who were not accepted socially by the old elite but whose economic or political attainments gave them status in the community. Prominent among the new leadership group were South Side businessmen, professional men with business interests, and a new breed of professional politician. All of these leaders were dependent upon the Negro community for support—whether economic or political—and did not maintain close ties with white colleagues, as had the old elite. In background, these men were a varied lot: most of them were relative newcomers to Chicago, but like their predecessors they came from both northern and southern communities. The majority of them lacked the educational and cultural attainments of the older group. Most were self-made men with no more than rudimentary formal educations—even the professional men among them often had sub-standard training. And while the old elite had scrupulously maintained high standards of respectability and gentility, the new leaders often associated with the "shady" elements of both Negro and white society.

The new leaders were less wont to articulate a racial ideology than the old elite, and many of them shunned racial activities altogether. These were self-styled men of affairs, who left their mark not by writing or speaking but in business ventures, institutions, and organizational politics. Yet, implicit in their activities were a view of racial affairs and a vision of the Negro's future in Chicago that differed markedly from the militant integrationism of their predecessors. As men who had their primary economic and social ties in the black belt, they contributed to the development of a

to hostility. Labor strife, ethnic tension, political corruption, and inefficiency—the problems of greatest concern to white Chicagoans—all helped determine the status of the city's Negroes. So too did the rise of racist doctrines that many old-stock Chicagoans applied indiscriminately to Negroes and the “new” immigrants. The virulently anti-Negro works of Thomas Dixon, the Chautauqua addresses of South Carolina's Senator Benjamin Tillman, as well as the anti-immigrant propaganda of Prescott Hall, Henry Pratt Fairchild, and Madison Grant epitomized an age of race chauvinism in which Anglo-Americans strove to preserve a mythical racial purity.<sup>17</sup>

The profound changes that took place in the Chicago Negro community between the 1890's and 1920 had both internal and external dimensions. On the one hand, they were the result of the mounting hostility of white Chicagoans. Whites grew anxious as a growing Negro population sought more and better housing; they feared job competition in an era of industrial strife when employers frequently used Negroes as strikebreakers; and they viewed Negro voters as pawns of a corrupt political machine. All of these fears were accentuated by the rise of a racist ideology that reinforced traditional anti-Negro prejudices. On the other hand, Negroes were not passive objects in the developments of the early twentieth century. Their response to discrimination and segregation, the decisions their leaders made, and the community activities in which they engaged all helped to shape the emerging Negro ghetto. The rise of Chicago's black ghetto belongs to both urban history and Negro history; it was the result of the interplay between certain trends in the development of the city and major currents in Negro life and thought.

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed discussion of anti-Negro propaganda in the early twentieth century, see I. A. Newby, *Jim Crow's Defense* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965); the best treatment of the anti-immigrant campaign is in John Higham, *Strangers in the Land* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1955).

PART I  


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 THE RISE OF THE GHETTO, 1890-1915

The analysis pursued in this study necessarily relies heavily upon the public record. No important Negro leader left private papers; no diaries or memoirs reveal the effect of community life upon individuals. Unlike the sociologist, the historian cannot conduct surveys that shed light upon personal adjustment. Therefore, the story uncovered here is one-sided; it is primarily a discussion of institutional developments, of the external structure of the Negro ghetto. The novelists, the social psychologists, and, at their best, the sociologists have demonstrated that the ghetto has another and perhaps more important side. They have described the psychology of the ghetto, the crippling impact of ghetto constrictions upon the mind and spirit of its inhabitants. Historical materials are ill-suited for a systematic treatment of the warped personalities, thwarted ambitions, and unbearable frustrations that the ghetto has produced. The historian cannot explain Bigger Thomas, John Grimes, or the Invisible Man; he can, it may be hoped, contribute to an understanding of the community that spawned them.

Many people have assisted me, both concretely and inspirationally, in this study, and I can single out only a few for special mention. Mr. Alfred H. Jones has read the manuscript at every stage of development and has continually offered candid and searching criticism. Professor August Meier has saved me from innumerable errors by sharing with me his unrivaled knowledge of Negro history. Dr. Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., first aroused my interest in Negro history and has continued to provide me with ideas and encouragement. Professors John Morton Blum and Robin W. Winks supervised this study in its original form as a doctoral dissertation and gave generously of time and advice. I have further profited from the valuable suggestions of Professors John Hope Franklin, Clarke A. Chambers, and David M. Potter. The Social Science Research Council and Yale University provided financial assistance at crucial stages in the research, and Mr. Floyd J. Miller and Mrs. Elizabeth Katz aided me in the final preparation of the manuscript. Finally, I am grateful to the numerous people in Chicago who graciously granted me interviews and in many cases led me to important documentary material.

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**BLACK CHICAGO**  
**THE MAKING OF A NEGRO GHETTO**  
1890-1920

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Allan H. Spear



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