"NOT FREE, MERELY LICENSED:" THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS AS POLITICAL LANGUAGE

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

The Black middle class has been a subject of intense debate in the last twenty years. Much of the debate has centered on the existence of the Black middle class and whether their status is permanent. Using J.G.A. Pocock's concept of "political language," I plan to examine the Black middle class as part of a political discourse. The discourse concerning the Black middle class, which has its roots in Emancipation period, has changed since the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. This thesis attempts to examine this change in discourse.

By examining the pre-civil rights era and the post-civil rights era, one can point to specific political language, such as the Moynihan Report, that begin to mark the Black middle class as different from the rest of the Black population. Through the process of political and intellectual isolation of the Black middle class in the period from 1965-1980, and partial and symbolic incorporation of this class from 1980-1998, there has been a rearticulation of "race" and the "Racial Contract." The rearticulation has shifted from the Black/White variant, exemplified by Jim Crow, to the multicultural middle classes and its negation of the Post-Industrial poor/jobless Black. It is because of this new articulation of the Racial Contract, that there is a need for a new version of uplift, one that mediates the day-to-day realities of the Post-Industrial poor/jobless and that address the cultural systemic causes of these realities.
Dedicated to my family
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Black middle class has become a subject of intense debate over the last twenty years, and several scholars have studied the relevance or irrelevance of this group. Much of the scholarship has been from a sociological perspective, attempting to classify the composition of this class - behaviorally and economically. These studies have attempted to discuss the Black middle class as an purely “objective” category. While not denying the fact that the phenomenon of the Black middle class exists objectively based on sociological data such as income, I plan to expand the examination of this class by also looking at it primarily as a political idea and using “objective” markers, such as occupation and income, of the Black middle class as points of reference. Specifically, this project is looking at how the political language by and about the Black middle class has organized public policy in relation to the total Black population. In trying to understand the changing relationship between the state and Blacks since the 1960s, scholars have analyzed race and class as well as their intersections to explain the transformation that has occurred since the 1960s. However, as Stedman Jones notes, “historians have looked everywhere except at the changes in the
political discourse itself to explain changes in political behavior."\textsuperscript{1} It is the political discourse surrounding the Black middle class, which I believe, can begin to explain the post 1960s relationship between the state and Blacks.

**Defining the Black Middle Class**

Stuart Blumin, in his historiography of middle class society in the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries, recognized that the term middle class has been used with "remarkable imprecision" but the term seems to "represent something very important about our culture and society..."\textsuperscript{2} I would add that the term "Black middle class" is used with even more imprecision and yet, in the post 1960s, this term also symbolizes something very important. The importance of the Black middle class has been best represented by the intensity of the debates on the reality or illusion, success or failure of the Black middle class. The intensity and confusion is easily seen by examining the various definitions of the Black Middle Class. There are definitions based on occupation, income, education, wealth and other variables. For example, in three major works on the Black middle class there are three different definitions of the Black middle class.

E. Franklin Frazier's definition of the Black bourgeoisie were Blacks "who derive their incomes principally from the services which they render as white-collar workers."\textsuperscript{3} Although he used the general population group of white-collar workers, his analysis focused

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\textsuperscript{2} Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2.

primarily the behaviors, attitudes and values of the elites within the class of white-collar workers (doctors, lawyers, and businessmen). He found their actions problematic because they were incompatible with uplift ideology. He felt the behaviors of the Black middle class were not used to promote the growth and improvement of the Black race, but to improve their personal status. Frazier argued the Black bourgeoisie had begun to live in a “world of make-believe” in order to escape its inferior position in America. According to Frazier, the Black bourgeoisie’s world of make-believe demonstrated they had broken away from the Black cultural traditions in order to behave along the lines of white standards and that their middle class status would allow acceptance in American life.4

More contemporarily, William Julius Wilson’s The Declining Significance of Race marked a substantial shift in the understanding of the Black middle class. Although he defined the Black middle class, similarly to Frazier, as Blacks “who are employed in the white-collar jobs and in the craftsmen and foremen positions.”5 He argued the structural changes in the job market, specifically the elimination of urban blue-collar jobs, meant economic class position and not racial status was more significant in determining the life chances of Blacks. The foundation of his argument relied on the concept of a economically stable Black middle class. This is different from Frazier’s analysis because Wilson does not question the behaviors, attitudes, or values of the Black middle class. In addition, Wilson did not argue for uplift on the part of the Black middle class. Wilson’s work attempts to differentiate, theoretically, between the black middle class and the black “underclass.” His analysis also

4 Ibid. 24 - 25.

differed because it sought to move away from the racial discourse, which he believe did not, and could not accurately describe or explain the “life chances” of many Blacks. Wilson believed that these “structural shifts in the economy” are a greater obstacle for many lower class Blacks. By focusing on the structural shifts in the economy, Wilson failed to call into question the behaviors, and status of the middle class, while questioning the “underclass,” thus marking a substantial break from Frazier and other intellectual antecedents such as W.E.B. DuBois and Langston Hughes. Wilson takes the stability and unquestionable behaviors of the middle class as a given in attempting to prove that the governments inability to help lower class Blacks is due to structural changes within the economy.

In contrast to both Frazier and Wilson, scholars Melvin Oliver and Robert Shapiro in *Black Wealth/White Wealth* have argued against the use of occupational and income data in determining middle class position. They argue that Black middle class status should depend on assets not on income because it is the assets, not the income, that support the white middle class. They argue because of the lack of assets or wealth, the Black middle class is in a highly unstable position in comparison to the white middle class.7

My project will rely on a definition of the Black middle class that differs from Frazier, Wilson, and Oliver and Shapiro. My definition hinges on the social perception of the Black middle class. William Muraskin’s work on Prince Hall Freemasonry, believed in defining the Black middle class according to “social perception not objective reality.” He continued, “If those blacks who think of themselves as middle class believe their value

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6 Ibid. 1.

system is not shared by members of the lower class – who are lazy, drunk, and dirty – and if those middle class blacks act in line with that perception, this is enough to build a definition.8 In addition, for the nature of this project, if Whites perceive middle class Blacks as having a different value system from lower class Blacks, this too is an important component of the definition. This project is not debating the existence or size of the Black middle class, but the idea of a Black middle class and how the idea functions in the public discourse.

Andrew Hacker’s Money discusses the formation of middle class status. He asks, why people who make $14,000, $15,000, or $16,000 do not see themselves as poor. He argues the success of the American economic system is that it allows most people to see themselves as “haves” as opposed to “have nots” no matter if they earn an income barely above minimum wage. Hacker believes American symbolism, such a welfare, allow for the poor to be dysselectedly marked (Katz’s undeserving poor). However, the most important function of these symbols is to define who are not poor. By examining the political languages based on the perception of the Black middle class, I can begin to understand how the political languages and perception have influenced public policy towards the entire Black population.9

Political Language

This project is predicated on a model of analysis that understands the symbiotic relation between ideas, such as political languages, and social realities. My use of political

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languages is borrowed from J.G.A. Pocock’s essay “Languages and Their Implications,” where he argued that the historian could understand political situations by identifying “the language” or “vocabulary” with and within the author operated and to show how it functioned paradigmatically to prescribe what he might say and how he might say it.”\(^{10}\) In addition, political languages “will present information selectively as relevant to the conduct and character of politics, and it will encourage the definition of political problems and values in certain ways and not in others.”\(^{11}\) The political languages such as “bettering one’s condition,” “social mobility,” “integration” or “separation” function within paradigms that prescribe and proscribe what may and may not be advocated. Thomas Kuhn’s work on scientific revolutions suggests paradigms “insulate the community from those socially important problems” that are outside the parameters of the paradigm because those conceivably unsolvable problems “cannot be stated in terms of the conceptual and instrumental tools the paradigm provides.”\(^{12}\) The political languages advocated for and by Black’s function within parameters that are part of our contemporary paradigms. The effectiveness of the methodology of political languages is that it can be applied to the politics of language and the language of politics by and about African Americans.

Rather than being focused on the sociological existence of the Black middle class, this thesis will emphasize the relation between the political language on the Black middle


class and public policy initiatives, such as affirmative action. Pocock's methodology allows for the examination of the political claims of "uplift," "isolation," and Black middle class "incorporation" to be understood as a paradigm instituted by political languages. Thus, the transformation of the political language from Frazier's uplift ideology to Wilson's Black middle class incorporation also signals a paradigmatic shift.

Political language in this thesis is regarded as a historical phenomenon such that the language creates an context which defines the type and importance of an event. Moreover, Pocock suggests that "[m]en think by communicating language systems; these systems help constitute both their conceptual worlds and the authority-structures, or social worlds, related to these..."13 Such that an "individual's thinking may now be viewed as a social event, and act of communication and of response within a paradigm-system, and as a historical event, a moment in a process of transformation of that system and of interacting worlds which both systems and act help to constitute and are constituted by."14 Therefore, the belief system about the Black middle class cannot be separated from the political behavior towards Blacks as a population group. Thus, we as scholars must understand the shift in political discourse, in which all Blacks were categorized homogeneously by the state (and by the system of knowledge) before the 1960s and why after the 1960s two Black groups emerged, the Black middle class and the Black lower classes. As Stedman Jones states, "political languages do become inapposite in new situations. How and why this occurs involves the discovery of the precise point at which shifts occur as well as an investigation of the specific political

13 Pocock, Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, 11.

14 Ibid. 15.
circumstances in which they shift.”

This thesis attempts to locate the “precise point in which shifts occur” and investigate the “political circumstances in which they shift.” Finally, this research attempts to link the shift in political language to the epistemological and ontological construction of American (and Western) culture.

Chapter two examines the pre-civil rights and the civil rights era. I will study the political language of sacrifice, specifically the internal (within the Black community) discourse on the responsibility of the Black middle class. In analyzing the political language of sacrifice, I will concentrate on three topics. The first topic is uplift ideology in the Black community, particularly the historical belief in uplift ideology. Moreover, this chapter will examine the implicit contradictions within uplift ideology and its simultaneous liberating potential. Secondly, I will discuss the disappointment in the Black middle class to live up to the standards of uplift ideology, specifically focusing on E. Franklin Frazier’s treatise *Black Bourgeoisie*. Lastly, I will investigate the success of the Civil Rights Movement and how through uplift ideology the Black middle class concerns of integration were fused with the Black lower class concerns with discrimination, which produced the dynamism of the 1960s.

Chapter three covers the post-civil rights era through the 1970s and focuses on three major points in the political language of isolation. First, in the post-civil rights period the nation and the state began to acknowledge the heterogeneous nature of the Black community exemplified the confusion and internal conflict over Black Power. Secondly, in recognizing the heterogeneous Black community, the government began to create public policy that recognized these distinctions. After the urban riots of the late 1960s and early

\[15\] Jones, 22.
1970s, the government realized that the nonviolent racial rhetoric used in the South, was not successful in the Northern urban centers. Thus, the Black middle class became a mechanism to slow the rebellions in the inner cities. Lastly, there was a theoretical shift away from race analysis towards class analysis. These new analyses, exemplified by William Julius Wilson's *Declining Significance of Race* (1978), relied on the concept of racial advancement without explicit racial discourse, because it was believed racial analysis was ineffective in explaining the challenges facing many Blacks. These three points demonstrate the beginnings of the isolation of the Black middle class from the rest of the mostly working and lower class Black population.

Chapter four is on the symbolic and partial incorporation of the Black middle class, from the 1980s through the 1990s. In this period that we begin to see the consolidation of the Black middle class as different from the Black lower class. Moreover, we begin to see the expansion and partial incorporation of the Black middle class into the American structure. The partial incorporation of the Black middle class will be examined through President Ronald Reagan's attack on civil rights policies, such as affirmative action. The courts began to believe in the perception of the stable Black middle class and moved towards a "meritocracy," by challenging the necessity of affirmative action. This shift towards "meritocracy" and "egalitarianism" began in the 1970's recession but gained steam in the 1980's as Black conservatives and white conservatives began to cooperate. Consequently, by the 1990s the government passed welfare reform and The Crime Bill (three strikes legislation), which disproportionately hurt a large sector of the Black population.
In the epilogue, I will discuss the implications of the shift from the political language of Black middle class sacrifice to Black middle class incorporation, using the philosophical constructs proposed by Sylvia Wynter and Charles Mills. The major implication is that despite economic analysis, "Race" in a less rigidly defined variant is still the dominating factor concerning the Black poor, and Black people in general. This new less rigid definition of race is what I will call "metaphysical" (non-phenotypical/non-biological) in nature. While the pre-1960s variant of race discourse was a construct of the European imaginary, it was rigidly defined phenotypically/biologically, best represented by the "one drop rule." After the Civil Rights Movement, the new metaphysical Blackness is most extremely embodied by a symbolic group of lower class Blacks best represented by Los Angeles Police Department acronym, N.H.I., "no humans involved" and welfare "queens" and not encompassing of the entire Black population as in the pre-1960s variant.\textsuperscript{16} The conclusion will also attempt to explain why under the metaphysical construct of race the policies initiated by the government will not/cannot work to improve the lives of the Post-Industrial poor/jobless.

This project represents an endeavor to interpret two concurrent events in the post-civil rights era. Using a methodology the employs a political language conceptual framework, there is an attempt to identify the shift in governmental representation of Black middle class as different from the rest of the Black population. Secondly, because the political languages used by and about the Black middle class function paradigmatically within the cultural system, this project will propose an understanding of both the (somewhat) positively marked status of the Black middle class and the negatively marked status of the Black lower class.

within Post-Industrial America. Moreover, this project will discuss how both of these classes function to shape and maintain our present cultural system. Thus, we must begin with the process of comprehending the political language on the Black middle class immediately before and during the Civil Rights movement.
CHAPTER 2:

“PH.D’S AND NO D’S:” UPLIFT, SACRIFICE AND CIVIL RIGHTS

“The Negro race, like all races will be saved by its exceptional men.”¹ Such was W.E.B. DuBois’s belief in 1903 concerning the improvement of the social conditions of the Black race. His concept of the “talented tenth” exemplified the role of the Black middle class in uplift ideology. Many Black intellectuals before the Civil Rights Movement, such as Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, and Anna Julia Cooper believed that uplift was the solution to the “Negro problem.” Thus, uplift ideology is a useful starting point in understanding the Black middle class, specifically in understanding E. Franklin Frazier’s critique of the Black bourgeoisie and the success and disintegration of the Civil Rights Movement. These three topics will elucidate the importance of the Black middle class in relationship to the larger Black population.

Uplift: The Mission of the Black Middle Class

The concept of uplift has been in the Black community since slavery, in which free Blacks attempted to uplift their brethren out of slavery. During the antebellum period, uplift

"stressed the importance of group education, and based black claims for suffrage, leadership, and jury service on natural-rights arguments." Uplift in the antebellum period focused on two major beliefs. First, Africa had to be civilized. The belief was that uplifting Africa would have ended slavery. Moreover, "[t]he humanity of the Negro would be vindicated and the link between blackness and slavery would be destroyed, once an African civilization had been established." Secondly, the freedmen undertook the task of uplift in order to demonstrate the humanity of Blacks to Whites in a hope to end slavery. "The building of an Afro-American culture would demonstrate to all the world that blacks were able and willing to make a contribution to American life, and... fit to be United States citizens." The civilizing of Africa and uplifting of Blacks was an attempt to use the discourse of the Enlightenment to prove the humanity of Blacks.

However, it was in the post-Reconstruction era in which uplift ideology began to take on its full intellectual and cultural vigor and took its place within the discourse of the nineteenth century humanitarianism. During the post-Reconstruction era, the espousal of uplift ideology became the marker of difference between the Black middle class and the Black lower classes. Uplift ideology has been defined as:

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4 Ibid. 71.

Reflecting both their desire for social mobility and the economic and racial barriers to it, African Americans have described themselves since the post-Reconstruction era as middle class through their ideals and racial uplift, espousing a vision of racial solidarity uniting black elites with the masses. For many black elites, uplift came to mean an emphasis on self-help, racial solidarity, temperance, thrift, chastity, social purity, patriarchal authority, and the accumulation of wealth.\(^6\)

The definition of the Black middle class is the group of Blacks who were, as the folk saying goes, “teachers and preachers,” as well as the few Black entrepreneurs and professionals. Bart Landry, calls this group the “old Black middle class.”\(^7\) The duties of this class were to improve the values of the Black lower class population. Education became the chief mechanism of uplift ideology. This education came from various sources and in various forms. Churches, “Negro” conferences, the embryonic “Negro” academies (both Booker T. Washington’s industrial education model and W.E.B. Du Bois’s classical education model), and Black clubwomen spread the word of uplift in order to counter the brutal reality of racism and discrimination that all blacks faced daily.\(^8\) They believed, as most Blacks since Emancipation, that education was the first step in the liberation of Blacks. As the ex-slave Harry McMillian stated, “the colored people are fond of sending their children

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\(^6\) Gaines, 2.


\(^8\) Ibid. 2-3.
to school... Because the children... will be able to tell us ignorant ones how to do for ourselves.  

Uplift ideology provided a counter culture to the perpetual racism and discrimination that Blacks faced. The focus on cultural attributes attempted to alter the conceptions of ostensible Black biological inferiority. More importantly, the supposition of biological inferiority represented permanent inferiority and supplied “scientific” evidence for the maintenance of the social hierarchy. In attempting to demonstrate that Blacks were deserving to American citizenship, the Black middle class countered the assertions of biological inferiority with the cultural politics of uplift, which on one level, challenged the theories of racial hierarchy, and on another, affirmed them. Uplift ideology posited a counter claim based on cultural differences within the Black community, a claim that by no means was based on the biological inferiority of Blacks. In terms of uplift, “[c]ultural differences... rather than biological notions of racial inferiority, were said to be more salient in explaining the lower social status of African Americans.” Idealistically, the elimination of these cultural differences provided a window of opportunity for Blacks to assimilate into the American body politic that the discourse of biological inferiority inhibited.

Despite the noble goals espoused by the Black middle class, uplift ideology was full of contradictions. First, the construction of class differences was not necessarily based on

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10 Gaines, 4.

11 Ibid. 3-4, 34-36.
material conditions but rather on perceived cultural difference. For example in Philadelphia Negro (1899), W.E.B. Du Bois made one of the first published demarcations of the class divisions within Black communities. Du Bois separated the respective classes according to income, and he also separated them along moral standards. The first group was “families of undoubted respectability earning sufficient income to live well....”12 This group formed the aristocracy of the Blacks in Philadelphia and as Du Bois states, “[t]he highest class of any group represents its possibilities rather than its exceptions, as is so often assumed in regard to the Negro.”13 The second group was “the respectable working class,” a group who was honest, faithful and with improving morals, where “[t]he best expression of the life of this group is the Negro church...”14 The third group was the poor who were honest “although not always energetic or thrifty.”15 The fourth group was the criminals, prostitutes and loafers, the “submerged tenth.” This group was represented by “shrewd laziness, shameless lewdness, [and] cunning crime.”16 Thus, the focus on family, chastity, and social purity demonstrated the cultural rather than economic basis upon which class privilege was established.

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13 Ibid. 316.

14 Ibid. 311, 316

15 Ibid. 311.

16 Ibid. 311, 312.
Secondly, the discourse of uplift focused on behaviors of Blacks, which removed the necessary emphasis from the institutionally created racism and discrimination. This contradiction was best exemplified by Booker T. Washington. In his Atlanta exposition speech (1895) he stated:

The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest [sic] folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing. No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is long in any degree ostracized. It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercises of these privileges.17

This speech propelled Washington to the position of lead spokesman for the Black populace (in the eyes of influential Whites because of his conciliatory position, and for many Blacks because of his focus on employment). In a sense, this strain of uplift ideology reduced the pressure, placed by Blacks, on America to end systemic racism and discrimination. Once the Black middle class had enlightened the masses, then and only then would Blacks “be accorded all the political rights which his ability, character, and material possessions entitle him to.”18

Lastly, uplift ideology relied on the same cultural system in order to legitimate the humanity of Blacks. Alexander Crummell represented this contradictory position. In his essay “Civilization: The Primal Need of the Race,” he argued that Anglophone culture

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18 Ibid. 106.
represented high culture and Blacks could achieve this lofty goal under the tutelage of an elite group of "scholars and philanthropists." He stated:

But, it seems to manifest to me that, as a race in this land, we have no art; we have no science; we have no philosophy; we have no scholarship. Individuals we have in each of these lines; but mere individuality cannot be recognized as the aggregation of a family, a nation, or a race; or as the interpretation of any of them. And until we attain the role of civilization, we cannot stand up and hold our place in the world of culture and enlightenment... The greatness of peoples springs from their ability to grasp the grand conceptions of being. It is the absorption of a people, of a nation, of a race, in large majestic and abiding things which lifts them up to the skies.\textsuperscript{19}

Crummell's position denied on the "political importance of moral suasion, agitation, and propaganda" and it relied the acceptance of the idea that Blacks "should be more concerned with mastering the culture of the Anglo-American gentry than with protesting political and educational injustices..."\textsuperscript{20}

The contradictions represented in DuBois, Washington, and Crummell's ideas of uplift rested on the dual supposition that Blacks were oppressed because of a moral defect in Whites and because of an internal defect within Blacks. Therefore, the goal was to eliminate this internal defect through the various methods of uplift proposed (the talented tenth, industrial/classical education or emigration) and thereby eliminate the cause of white's moral defect. Thus, the contradictions within Black middle class uplift were fractionally complicit in mutating the racial order, from the biological classification to a cultural classification. It


\textsuperscript{20} Moses, 71.
was the hybridly biological and cultural racial order that was the conclusion of the early twentieth century uplift efforts. However, these conscious and unconscious contradictions did not hide the liberating potential uplift ideology possessed because it challenged the biological notions of Black inferiority and provided a mechanism of control for Black liberation. It was this potential that led to strong critiques of the Black middle class to uphold their responsibility and sacrifice to the masses, and led to the incredible success of the Civil Rights Movement.\(^{21}\)

E. Franklin Frazier: The Black Bourgeoisie and the Sacrifice of the Black Middle Class

E. Franklin Frazier’s *Black Bourgeoisie* represents one of the most stringent critiques of the Black middle class. While *Black Bourgeoisie* has received both positive and negative critiques, most of the critiques have focused on his severe criticisms of the Black middle class and whether or not they are true. For example, August Meier’s 1957 *Crisis* review states that in *Black Bourgeoisie*:

Frazier has etched in acid his portrait of the American Negro middle class.... [T]he Negro business, professional and white collar groups... occupy an anomalous and insecure position in American society.... [T]hey are rejected by the white middle class, and so they are, says Frazier, culturally rootless, and beset by feelings of inferiority, insecurity and even hatred of the race and of themselves.\(^{22}\)

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\(^{21}\) Moses, 71. Gaines, 3-17.

\(^{22}\) August Meier, “Some Observations on the Negro Middle Class,” *The Crisis*, (October 1957), 461.
In another critique of *Black Bourgeoisie*, which attempts to defend the Black middle class, the author believed “that Frazier holds things bourgeois, including the Negro middle class, in contempt.” In both the positive and negative critiques most of the discussion pertained to the accuracy of Frazier’s scathing thesis.

Frazier’s commentary on the Black middle class was indeed severe, but the reviews often missed or reduced a key point of Frazier’s work: to highlight the failure of this class of professional and white collar workers to live up to its responsibility. At the end of Earl Thorpe’s review, after he argued that Frazier’s analysis was inaccurate and his disdain was due to intellectual isolationism. He states:

Still, like the contempt for their own race held by so many Afro-Americans, Frazier’s contempt appears to be that paradoxical type which is mingled with love. The present observer received the impression that Professor Frazier sincerely wants to see his race elevated in the political, economic, and social life of the nation, and that he has conceived of *Black Bourgeoisie* as a weapon for the uplifting of his race. In at least one way he follows the traditions... in feeling that *self-help is the path along which the Negro’s salvation lies*. While Booker Washington and others urged the Negro to rid himself of bad qualities which were most pronounced in the lowest stratum of his group, Frazier directs the same type of argument at the highest stratum. But the *racial uplift goal seems to be the same*.24

This statement suggests an alternative interpretation of *Black Bourgeoisie*, which attempts to understand Frazier’s scathing criticism of the Black middle class as part of uplift ideology.

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24 Ibid. 86. Emphasis mine.
However, it must be remembered that Frazier was not the first to call into question the responsibility of the Black middle class. Many Black intellectuals prior to Frazier’s *Black Bourgeoisie* had questioned the role of the Black elite. In 1926, Langston Hughes realized that the “word white comes to be unconsciously a symbol of all virtues...” thus the Black middle class began to devalue its own Black culture.\(^{25}\) Even, W.E.B. Du Bois reconsidered the efficacy of the “talented tenth.” In “The Talented Tenth Memorial Address” (1948), W.E.B. Du Bois acknowledged his fallacy in believing that the talented tenth would provide the necessary leadership for the Black race. He idealistically believed that with education, sacrifice would follow, but recognized he risked putting “in control and power, a group of selfish, self-indulgent, well-to-do-men, whose basic interest in solving the Negro Problem was personal; personal freedom and unhurped enjoyment and use of the world without any real care, or certainly no arousing care, as to what became of the mass of American Negroes, or the mass of any people.”\(^{26}\)

Moreover, *Black Bourgeoisie* was not Frazier’s first analysis of the Black middle class. In his earlier work such as his essays, “Some aspects of Negro Business,” (1924) “Durham: Capital of the Black Middle Class,” (1925) and in his book, *The Negro Family in the United States* the chapter entitled “The Brown Middle Class,” Frazier mentioned his high expectations for this emerging social group. In the 1924 essay, Frazier argues that the


development of a Black middle class must have social ends as well as personal ones. He states:

For rich Negroes to inaugurate an era of competitive consumption and conspicuous waste is an anachronism. When they as well as any other people become the legal owners of large fortunes they are responsible to society. An era of business should mean the employment of wealth productively. The fruits of such use of wealth should be applied to cultural and other socially approved ends.27

Frazier's early works are based on uplift ideology and provide insight into understanding his criticism of the Black bourgeoisie.28

In Black Bourgeoisie as well as his other works on the Black middle class Frazier relied on the political language of the uplift. The essential concept in the political language of uplift is the concept of sacrifice. In Frazier's earlier work, he stated "The fruits of such use of wealth should be applied to cultural and other socially approved ends."29 In understanding Black Bourgeoisie, one must begin with an understanding of the political language of the uplift paradigm, specifically, the theme of sacrifice. Thus, we can begin to understand Frazier's critiques of the Black middle class in terms of their failure to sacrifice for the improvement of the race. He states, "the present teachers have little interest in 'making men,' but are concerned primarily with teaching as a source of income which will enable them to maintain

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middle-class standards and participate in Negro ‘society.’” In addition, he argues that doctors are opposed to socialized medicine to the detriment of the Black community. The failure of the Black middle class to uplift the Black community stems from their “world of make believe” behind the illusions of Black business and pervasive importance of “society.”

It is the failure to focus on the theme of sacrifice that the reviews of *Black Bourgeoisie* have minimized or completely missed. In their reviews of his work, most scholars forgot or ignored Frazier’s fundamental conclusion: “Because of the struggle to gain acceptance by Whites, the black bourgeoisie has failed to play the role of a responsible elite in the Negro community.” This meant that the Black elite must have a “sense of responsibility toward the Negro masses” and identify “themselves with the struggles of the masses to overcome the handicaps of ignorance and poverty.” Thus, he saw a Black bourgeoisie that was obsessed with “their leisure in frivolities and in activities designed to win a place in Negro ‘society’” not social uplift.

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31 Ibid. 104.

32 Ibid. 235. Emphasis mine.

33 Ibid. 235.

34 Ibid. 235-236.
Theoretically, in order for uplift ideology to be effective the Black middle class must sacrifice for the masses in order for the "Negro problem" to be solved. René Girard's analysis of religious sacrifice is instructive for uplift ideology as well, he states:

There is a common denominator that determines the efficacy of all sacrifices.... This common denominator is internal violence - all the dissensions, rivalries, jealousies, and quarrels within the community that the sacrifices are designed to suppress. The purpose of sacrifice is to restore harmony to the community, to reinforce the social fabric.  

The internal violence that Frazier recognizes is the dissension between the emerging Black middle class and the stagnant lower classes. The sacrifice of the Black middle class is necessary because of their emerging class status, they are "incapable of establishing or sharing the social bonds"  that link them with the Black lower classes. The Black middle class, according to Frazier, must lift the rest of the Black community, eliminate the differences within the Black community, quell internal conflict, and demonstrate the worthiness of Black life to the white world. In the end, Black Bourgeoisie can been seen as the "'conscience' of the Black middle class, chiding it for its failing, ridiculing it for its frivolities, and urging it to carry out its mission."  

The Civil Rights Movement: The Black Middle Class Fulfilling Their Mission

Despite the harsh criticisms of Frazier's work, many critics realized there was an element of truth within his statements. Martin Luther King, Jr. noted there were many

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36 Ibid. 12.

37 Bart Landry, “A Reinterpretation of the Writings of Frazier on the Black Middle Class,” 220.
middle class Blacks who were “more concerned about ‘conspicuous consumption’ than about the cause of justice, and are probably not prepared for the ordeals and sacrifices involved in nonviolent action.” The Black middle class mimesis of white values, often in an exaggerated manner, was due to, according to both Frazier and King, a profound sense of inferiority, and this led to their disassociation from lower class Blacks. It was this division between the Black middle class and the Black lower classes, among others, that King realized he had to overcome in order to create a successful civil rights movement.  

Thus, the Civil Rights Movement can be seen as the Black middle class carrying out its mission of uplift, for both themselves and the Black lower classes. The Civil Rights movement partially fulfilled its goals because it succeeded in uniting the various aspects of the Black community. An examination of the political language in this movement will demonstrate the accomplishments of the Black middle class, and of the uplift ideology.

The Civil Rights Movement had an extremely cogent Black middle class structure. First, although all classes participated in the movement much the leadership of the Civil Rights Movement was Black middle class in origin. The leaders represented a small group of the Black middle class, which was economically independent from Whites. This sub-class of economically independent preachers, teachers, and small businessmen were guarded from immediate economic and political reprisal. Men such as Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., E.D. Nixon, and women such as Jo Ann Gibson Robinson were insulated because they


received economic support from Black institutions, such as Black churches and the Black colleges. Economic independence allowed the Black middle class to be partially protected from white economic and political repression, which provided space for political insurgency. Moreover, the government (federal, state, and local) responded better to the political claims of the Black middle class.  

Secondly, this stratum of economically independent members of the Black middle class was often active in the community before the civil rights movement of the 1960's. The activism of this group centered on “uplifting the race.” For example in Montgomery, Alabama, Jo Ann Gibson Robinson was the president of the Women’s Political Council (WPC) of Montgomery. This organization was founded in 1946 to improved Black youths’ educational opportunities and by 1950 with Robinson as the president, the council was oriented “toward bringing decency to Black people in Montgomery.” Thus, the prior uplift organizations facilitated the transition to the Civil Rights Movement.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott exemplified the effectiveness of the middle class structure. The boycott was sustained by Montgomery’s Black working class, due to the large percentage of working class Blacks who rode the buses. Despite the large proportion of working class Blacks, all Blacks faced the daily discrimination on the buses. Jo Ann Robinson, a professor at Alabama State College and president of the WPC, “suffered the


41 Giddings, 264. Robinson, 22-25.

most humiliating experience" of her life when a bus driver ordered her off the fifth row of seats and the driver threatened to hit her because she did not move fast enough. Since the Black working class bore the majority of the discrimination on the buses, they were slowly moving towards challenging the unjust system, but they needed the organizational structure of the Black middle class to be effective. Fifteen-year-old, Claudette Clovin challenged the segregated busing system when she refused to give her seat to a white person, however the uplift organizations did not initiate a boycott. A planned boycott organized by Women's Political Council was canceled because Ms. Clovin's out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Her unplanned pregnancy did project the image of middle-class virtue, thus the uplift organizations waited for a more politically safe situation that projected a positive image of Blacks to Whites and which would allow the organizations to mobilize⁴⁴.

Rosa Parks was the person, who exhibited the moral requirements that enabled the Black middle class organizations to mobilize. After her arrest, the Black community waited for somebody to do something. In this air of anticipation, Black organizations such as The Women's Political Council, and the Black ministers organized to create an effective boycott plan. Aldon Morris notes:

Clearly, then, Mrs. Parks's arrest triggered the mass movement not only because she was a quiet, dignified woman of high morals but also because she was an integral member of those organizational forces capable of mobilizing a social movement. Importantly, Mrs. Parks was also anchored

⁴³ Robinson, 24-25.

in the church community of Montgomery, where she belonged to St. Paul AME Church and served as a stewardess.\textsuperscript{45} Mrs. Parks's association with middle class uplift organizations such as the NAACP and her AME church provided the leadership for a sustained bus boycott. "It was then that the ministers decided that it was time for them, the leaders, to catch up with the masses."\textsuperscript{46} In addition to Rosa Parks's middle class associations, the Black community could mobilize around her because she explained the necessary morality to be worthy of redemption through activism, a position that that Claudette Clovin could not attain. It was then and perhaps only then that the preachers could have begun to catch up with the masses.

The mobilization of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the entire movement in the South relied on the uniting of the Black community under the auspices of uplift ideology. The fractions that existed between competing leaders and the different classes were curtailed, in part, because of the victories won in the South, such as the boycott. These divisions were reduced due to the successful use of the different political languages of uplift.

The political language of nonviolence served as an impetus for Blacks to resist the system of segregation. The nonviolent resistance was built on uplift ideology\textsuperscript{47}, in the sense that it improved both the Black middle and lower class, and created a moral superiority over segregationist. King stated: "The nonviolent approach does not immediately change the heart of the oppressor. It first does something to the hearts and souls of those committed

\textsuperscript{45} Moris, 52.

\textsuperscript{46} Robinson, 53.

\textsuperscript{47} As was violent resistance, as we will see later.
to it. It gives them new self-respect; it calls up resources of strength and courage that they did not know they had. Finally it reaches the opponent and so stirs his conscience that reconciliation becomes a reality." In other words, nonviolent resistance was a form of self-help that restored the dignity to the Black community, as well as a challenge to the Jim Crow structure of the South.

The reliance of nonviolent resistance on the ethos of Black middle class uplift was explicitly displayed throughout the Civil Rights Movement. During the movement, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) created nonviolent commitment cards with the movement “Ten Commandments.” While the cards displayed the firm Christian background, they also pointed to the reliance on uplift ideology. For example, Point 5 was “Sacrifice personal wishes in order that all men might be free...” and point 7 was “Seek to perform regular service for others and for the world.” These two points highlighted the inextricable connectedness of nonviolence resistance to the paradigms of uplift ideology and Christianity. Consequently, nonviolent resistance was the vehicle that began a unified movement because it represented the liberating potential of the uplift ideology, which had kept the uplift a vital part of the African American intellectual tradition, despite its inherent contradictions. It was this potential that the Civil Rights Movement was able to extract.

One of the major successes of nonviolent resistance in the Civil Rights Movement was the incorporation of all classes of Blacks in the struggle against segregation. Prior to the

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48 King, Stride Toward Freedom, 219.

49 Martin Luther King Jr., Why We Can't Wait, (New York: Mentor Books, 1964), 64.
accomplishments in Montgomery, King noted that upon his arrival, the Black middle class was quiescent with the level of discrimination that Blacks faced. He stated that Montgomery was

crippled by the indifference of the educated group. This indifference expressed itself in a lack of participation in any move toward better racial conditions, and a sort of tacit acceptance of things as they were. To be sure, there were always some educated people who stood in the forefront of the struggle for racial justice- but they were the exception. The vast majority were indifferent and complacent.\(^{50}\)

King’s recognition of the paucity in the level of responsibility on the part of the Black middle class, along with the general sense of inferiority among Blacks made the movement against segregation difficult from the beginning.

For example in the Montgomery Bus Boycott, not only did working class Blacks stay off the buses, but middle class Blacks who never rode buses became increasingly involved in the boycott by initiating a car pool. The carpool was just as important as the boycott in creating a Black community unified toward ending discrimination on the buses. After the instituting of the car pool, the mass meeting in Montgomery came to symbolize this newly politically unified community.

The mass meetings... cut across class lines. The vast majority present were working people; yet there was always an appreciable number of professionals in the audience. Physicians, teachers, and lawyers sat or stood beside domestic workers and unskilled laborers. The Ph. D’s and the no “D’s” were bound together in a common venture. The so-called “big Negroes” who owned cars and had never ridden the buses came to know the maids and the laborers who rode the buses everyday. Men and women who had been

\(^{50}\) King, Stride Toward Freedom, 35.
separated from each other by false standards of class were now singing and praying together in a common struggle for freedom and human dignity.\textsuperscript{31}

This Black community, unified in its fights against segregated buses, was able to respond to various challenges presented in the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The crisis of the boycott, according to Harold Bloom, created a level of “solidarity that transcended class and status lines and helped to forge a black consciousness.” In the end, the success in Montgomery and the entire movement was a product of the entire Black community.\textsuperscript{52}

The affect of the uplift paradigm on the Civil Rights Movement was readily seen in the issues undertaken by the movement. The initial goal of the movement was to destroy segregation and its psychological burden of Black inferiority. From the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement the goal was integration, “which [was] genuine intergroup and interpersonal living.”\textsuperscript{53} The political claim of integration challenged the permanent inferiority of Blacks. King stated:

A considerable part of the Negro’s efforts of the past decades has been devoted, particularly in the South, to attaining a sense of dignity. For us, enduring the sacrifices of beatings, jailings and even death was acceptable merely to have access to public accommodations. To sit at a lunch counter or occupy the front seat of a bus had no effect on our material standard of living, but in removing the caste stigma it revolutionized our psychology and elevated the spiritual content of our being. Instinctively we struck out for dignity first because personal degradation as an inferior human being was even more keenly felt than material privation.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{51} King, \textit{Stride Toward Freedom}, 86.

\textsuperscript{52} Bloom, 145-146.

\textsuperscript{53} King, \textit{Why We Can’t Wait}, 220.

\textsuperscript{54} King, \textit{Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?}, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 87.
The attack on segregation was an attempt by Blacks to affirm their humanity. However, as King stated, personal degradation took precedence over “material privation.”

In the first decade of the King led Civil Rights Movement (approximately 1955-1965), the battles to gain access to public accommodations were very much middle class demands. While the Black non-middle classes did not disagree with the battles for equal access to lunch counters, department stores, and to housing, these new amenities were primarily taken advantage of by middle class Blacks who had the financial ability to patronize these newly integrated facilities. This focus on public accommodations was not a conscious attempt to avoid economic issues. King noted that Blacks “live within two concentric circles of segregation. One imprisons them on the basis of color, while the other confines them with a separate culture of poverty.” However, the initial focus on integration and not on economic equality was, in part, an outgrowth of the uplift paradigm. A major belief of civil rights proponents was, what Harold Cruse has described as, “noneconomic liberalism.” The major tenet of noneconomic liberalism was that the struggle for political rights must come before the any program of economic advancement. This was one of the founding philosophies of the NAACP, which in turn influenced the King led Civil Rights Movement in the South. Despite the secondary nature of economic issues, the success of the Civil Rights Movement was due the popular support generated by the battles to integrate public

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55 King, Why We Can't Wait, 23

accommodation. In the end, it was human dignity, not economic redistribution, which was the common variable in the first decade of civil rights struggles.

The political language of "freedom" and "equality" highlight the shift in emphasis from integration to economics. In 1962 King had defined freedom as "the capacity to deliberate or weigh alternatives," to make decisions, and in terms of responsibility. However, with the ever-broadening civil rights coalition, freedom began to mean different things to various people. For some, it was equal opportunity while for others it was the absence of poverty. By 1968, King recognized the different political languages and the new goals of the movement. He argued for the shift from personal dignity to "programs that impinge upon the basic system of social and economic control."

The political claim of integration, through the language of "freedom" and "equality" and the strategy of nonviolence were broad enough to create a civil rights coalition. This coalition succeeded because the political claims of integration attacked the agreeable goal of eliminating state-sanctioned discrimination in the South. The broadening of the movement forced the coalition and its leaders to address the economic issues they had circumvented, consciously or unconsciously, with the focus on integration. With the passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965), economic issues were placed at the top of the agenda. This broad coalition dissolved with the introduction of a new goal: economic equality. As King states: "We deceive ourselves if we envision the same combination [civil


58 King, Where..., 17.
rights coalition] backing structural changes in the society. It did not come together for such a program and will not reassemble for it.”

In addition to the disintegration of the civil rights coalition as result of the shift to economic concerns, was the inability to transcend class within the Black community. The Black middle class was able to step into the political, economic and social space created by the movement. However, civil rights leaders noted that the behavior of Black middle class had returned (or perhaps never changed) to what Frazier castigated in *Black Bourgeoisie*, which was a class unconcerned about the lives of the Black non-middle classes. King expressed his concern about the advancing Black middle class and their irresponsibility to uphold the ideals of the uplift ideology. “It is disappointment with the Negro middle class that has sailed out of the muddy ponds into the relatively fresh-flowing waters of the mainstream, and in the process has forgotten the stench of the back-waters where their brothers are still drowning.”

It is this increasing separation between the Black middle class and the Black lower classes that will become more prevalent after King’s death.

In conclusion, uplift ideology was the dominant Black intellectual tradition in the post-Reconstruction era. Within the schema of uplift ideology, the sacrifice of the Black middle class is essential. Specifically, the Black middle class was expected to forgo their personal well being for the “good of the race.” Their importance and, as some intellectuals felt, responsibility led to their castigation, explained by E. Franklin Frazier’s *Black Bourgeoisie*.

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60 King, *Where..., 36.*
However, the Civil Rights Movement represented the successes of uplift ideology and of the Black middle class.
CHAPTER 3:

“MOST WHITES OUT HERE SEE US AS ATYPICAL BLACKS:” BLACK MIDDLE CLASS ISOLATION IN THE POST-CIVIL RIGHTS ERA

The Post-civil rights era (post 1965) was a time in which many Blacks witnessed unprecedented growth and freedom in their personal and professional lives. Moreover, it was the development of the what scholars have called the “new Black middle class.” Simultaneously, the numbers of lower class Blacks, especially those below the poverty line, continued to grow at an equally unprecedented rate despite the successes of this new Black middle class. The goal of my analysis of this period is to understand the reasons for the failure to solve the problems of the Black poor, despite the success of the Black middle class. At the heart of these contrasting ideas lies the symbolic and increasingly social isolation of the Black middle class from the Black lower classes.

To understand the dialectical relationship between the Black middle class and the Black poor we must begin with the disintegration of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. The post-civil rights era “new Black middle class” differs from the middle class of the Civil Rights Era, because the new Black middle class had an enlarged opportunity for

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employment, improved life chances and a greater diversity of jobs. No longer was the Black middle class composed of "teachers and preachers," this class was now composed of substantial numbers of engineers, doctors, and lawyers.³

After the apex of the Civil Rights Movement, which concluded with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, there was confusion over whether the traditional political language of integration or the emerging political language of "Black Power" represented the best political strategy. In addition, the systematic pressure the urban riots put on both the movement and the federal government revealed intellectual vulnerabilities and internal class dynamics. Consequently, the government attempted to slow the movement by exploiting these vulnerabilities in their public policies. The policies and policy initiatives from approximately 1965-1980 were able to emphasize the differences between the Black middle class and the black poor. Thus, to begin to post-civil rights era we must begin with the disintegration of the movement of the 1960s.

Black Power and The Disintegration of the Civil Rights Movement

The civil rights organizations have always consistently pursued the "dual agenda" of civil rights and social welfare.⁴ However, as stated earlier the primary emphasis of the movement for the decade of 1955-1965 was civil rights, that is to end the overt discrimination against Blacks. It was assumed that the attack of civil rights was isomorphic with an attack on the economic inequalities that many Blacks faced. After the passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965), the civil rights organizations had

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³ Bart Landry, The New Black Middle Class, 67-93.

gained the legal support for civil rights, yet the economic disparities remained and the organizations shifted their focus to economic concerns.

This shift to economic concerns was best symbolized by the move of civil rights protest to the northern urban industrial centers. In 1966, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference created a proposal for nonviolent direct action in the Chicago. This plan, known as the Chicago Plan, recognized that the victories won in the South, such as the integration of buses and lunch counters were irrelevant. "The Chicago Problem [was] simply a matter of economic exploitation."5

The change in focus to economic concerns reduced the feasibility and reliability of the broad civil rights coalition, in part, because of the shift in political language from integration to economic redistribution. In addition to the evaporation of the civil rights coalition, the shift to focusing on economic inequality was not able to produce the multi-class support that integration generated. The upward mobility of the Black middle class in the post-civil rights era made their concerns very different from the Black poor. In fact, many members of the Black middle class signaled their indifference with the new goal of economic restructuring, which challenged their new class status, by reducing their participation in the movement. The lack of civil rights participation by the Black middle class was in part because economic restructuring opposed their newfound class status.

Besides the shift from civil rights to social welfare, the Civil Rights Movement was riddled with the conflict over Black Power and the young "militants" that espoused this political language. This political language effectively pitted the old civil rights organizations

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(NAACP, National Urban League, and SCLC) and their political language of integration against the younger civil rights organizations (SNCC, CORE, and the Black Panther Party).

At the center of the Black Power controversy was Stokely Carmichael. Carmichael jumped onto the national scene in the summer of the 1966. First, he achieved a coup d'état in which he and his supporters removed John Lewis from his three-year tenure as chairman of SNCC. Secondly, the “Memphis to Jackson March,” in which James Meridith attempted to demonstrate against the daily fear that Mississippi Blacks faced and where Meridith was subsequently shot, provided an opportunity for Carmichael to display is philosophy of Black Power. In the second march, Carmichael was arrested and upon his release, he declared “This is the 27th time I have been arrested – I ain't going to jail no more.” He continued by shouting “Black Power” in which the crowd responded with “Black Power.” The crowd filled with Carmichael adherents rallied around the slogan; moreover, the national press was sent into a frenzy by the apparent abstention of nonviolence in the ever-changing civil rights movement.

Carmichael was not the first to use the phrase “Black Power,” Adam Clayton Powell used it in his Howard University commencement speech in Spring 1966, but Carmichael gave the slogan its perception of militancy. As Carmichael and others attempted to define what “Black Power” actually was, the phrase became increasingly elusive. Carmichael believed Black Power was about “black people taking care of business – the business of and

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7 Ibid. 125-148.
for black people." This rested on a central premise: "Before a group can enter the open
society, it must first close ranks." In other words, Blacks had to improve their internal
organization before they can be incorporated into the American body politic. More
specifically, the "goal of black self-determination and black self-identity – Black Power – is
full participation in the decision-making processes affecting the lives of black people, and
recognition of the virtues in the themselves as Black people."10

The challenge of Black Power to the liberal philosophy of the civil rights
organization was played out in two important areas. First, was the question of violence. As
stated earlier, Martin Luther King Jr., and his espousal of nonviolence was able to create a
large multi-racial civil rights coalition to fight the battles of discrimination in the South. As
the movement began to move to the North the coalition began to dissolve because of the
shift in emphasis to economic issues. In addition, Black Power further eroded the civil
rights coalition because organizations such as SNCC and CORE began to question the
effectiveness of nonviolence in creating lasting results outside of the South.

The phrase "Black Power" gave the perception of violence to the American public
especially when juxtaposed to King's political language of nonviolence. Dr. King noted,
"[t]he words 'black' and 'power' together give the impression that we are talking about black
domination rather that black equality."11 He continued, "[p]robably the most destructive
feature of Black Power is its unconscious and often conscious call for retaliatory violence....

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9 Ibid. 44.
11 King, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community*, 31.
[T]he slogan is mainly used by persons who have lost faith in the method and philosophy of nonviolence.\textsuperscript{12}

Stokely Carmichael countered with the belief that political language of nonviolence and integration had failed to soothe the ailments that the Black community faced. He believed that the political language of nonviolence came from white liberals and the middle class, and constantly preached patience and progress. Whereas "[f]or the masses of black people, this language resulted in virtually nothing. In fact, their objective day-to-day condition worsened."\textsuperscript{13} The violent perception exuded by Black Power stemmed from the belief that white society did not deserve the luxury of nonviolence. Carmichael stated: "It is crystal clear to us – and it must become so with the white society – that there can be no social order without social justice."\textsuperscript{14} To Carmichael and others, violent self-defense provided a basis in which social justice can be accomplished.

Both the advocates of nonviolence and violence pointed to the riots as examples of the need for their ideology. King thought that the riots demonstrated the "futility of violence in the struggle for racial justice.... At best the riots have produced a little additional antipoverty money, allotted [sic] by frightened government officials, and a few water sprinklers to cool the children of the ghettos."\textsuperscript{15} Carmichael countered that the "dynamite in the ghettos" was created by America "with its pervasive institutional racism, [which] has created socially undesirable conditions; it merely perpetuates those conditions when it lays

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid. 54.

\textsuperscript{13} Carmichael & Hamilton, 51.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. 53. Emphasis in original.

\textsuperscript{15} King, \textit{Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos Or Community?}, 57-58.
the blame on the people who, through whatever means at their disposal, seek to strike out at their conditions."\(^{16}\) Thus, there was a need for a "search for new forms," and it was his belief that that new form was Black Power.\(^{17}\)

The second major issue that the ideologues of Black Power challenged was the question of integration versus segregation. The goal of the old civil rights guard from the beginning of the movement was integration. "Integration [was] the positive acceptance of desegregation and the welcomed participation of Negroes into the total range of human activities." Integration was "genuine intergroup, interpersonal doing."\(^{18}\) Martin Luther King, Jr., believed that liberation was going to be achieved through integration because Blacks could not be "totally liberated from the crushing weight of poor education, squalid housing and economic strangulation until he [was] integrated, with power, into every level of American life."\(^{19}\)

However, the advocates of Black Power challenged the traditional civil rights goal of integration. They "rejected the old slogans and meaningless rhetoric of previous years of the civil rights struggle."\(^{20}\) Stokely Carmichael argued against integration into white middle-class society, because that class was "without a viable conscience as regards to humanity."\(^{21}\) In addition, "[t]hat class mouth[ed] its preference for a free, competitive society, while at the

\(^{16}\) Carmichael & Hamilton, 161.

\(^{17}\) Ibid. chapter 8, "The Search for New Forms" 164-177.

\(^{18}\) King, "The Ethical Demands For Integration," A Testament of Hope, 118.

\(^{19}\) King, Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?, 62.

\(^{20}\) Carmichael & Hamilton, 50.

\(^{21}\) Ibid. 40.
same time forcefully and even viciously denying to black people as a group the opportunity
to compete.”

Carmichael felt the white middle class was “the backbone of institutional racism in
this country.”

Black Power proponents countered the call for integration with a call for the
development of separate Black institutions. Carmichael contended:

Existing structures and established ways of doing things have a way of
perpetuating themselves and for this reason, that modernizing process will be
difficult. Therefore, timidity in calling into questions the boards of education
or the police departments will not do. They must be challenged forcefully
and clearly. If this means the creation of parallel community institutions,
then that must be the solution.

The supporters of Black Power believed the development of “community institutions” was
revolutionary, because it demonstrated the “revolutionary idea – that black people [were]
able to do for themselves.” Harold Cruse noted that “instead of radical integrationism the
theme became economic and political control by blacks in the black ghettos and in geographical areas of
black majority in the South.” In doing for themselves, politically and economically, Black
people, according to the Black Power political language, were implicitly rejecting the white
racist institutions of America.

Consequently, Carmichael’s definition of “Black Power” relied on the improvement
of the Black community, in order to weld political power as a group. His definition was tied

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22 Ibid. 40. Emphasis in original.

23 Ibid. 41. Emphasis in original.

24 Ibid. 43.

25 Ibid. 46.

to the tried and true ideology of uplift. The strand of uplift espoused by Black Power was in essence seen as militant because many of its tenets ran counter to the uplift ideas that dominated the civil rights movement until that period. Just as the racial uplift called for self-help, racial solidarity, and thrift, Black Power echoed these themes in such a manner that it seemed “militant” and “revolutionary.” Carmichael stated:

The adoption of the concept of Black Power is one of the most legitimate and healthy developments in American politics and race relations in our time. . . . It is a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call for black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and to support those organizations. It is a call to reject the racist institutions and values of this society. 27

The political language of Black Power created the perception that it was “militant” and “revolutionary,” but it was the 1960s version of nineteenth century racial uplift. Underneath the “militant” rhetoric “Black Power [was] nothing but the economic and political philosophy of Booker T. Washington given a 1960s militant shot in the arm and brought up to date.” 28 It was this strain of uplift ideology obfuscated by the perception of militancy that challenged the uplift ideology of the traditional civil rights organization and their political languages of integration and non-violence.

One of the reasons for the militant perception of Black Power ideology was because it seemed to represent the non-middle classes, as opposed to the traditional civil rights organizations – NAACP and SCLC. Stokely Carmichael was able to develop this concept. He stated Black Power...

27 Ibid. 44.

does not mean merely putting black faces into office. Black visibility is not Black Power. Most of the black politicians around the country today are not examples of Black Power. The power must be that of a community, and emanate from there. The black politicians must stop being representatives of “downtown” machines, whatever the cost might be in the terms of lost patronage and holiday handouts.\textsuperscript{29}

Moreover, he felt that many Black elites were being co-opted, which widened the gap between them and the masses. However, many of the Black elites were the “people with certain technical and administrative skills who could provide useful leadership role in the black communities but do not because they have become beholden to the white power structure.”\textsuperscript{30} The political language Black Power was woven around the perception of a non-middle class base of support and control, yet it still relied on middle class skills and ability in improving the lives of Black people.

Despite the political language of Black community control, many Black Power advocates realized that leadership had to be provided by the Black middle class. Carmichael’s call for Black power relied on the sacrifice of the Black middle class for all Black people, just as Martin Luther King, Jr., had relied on the sacrifice of the Black middle class. Carmichael stated:

Those who would assume the responsibility of representing black people in this country must be able to throw off the notion that they can effectively do so and still maintain a maximum amount of job security. Jobs will have to be sacrificed, positions of prestige and status given up, favors forfeited. It may well be - and we think it is that leadership and security are basically incompatible.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{29} Carmichael & Hamilton, 46-47.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid. 13.

\textsuperscript{31} Carmichael & Hamilton, 15.
Just as King and Frazier needed the sacrifice of the Black middle class to suppress the internal violence – dissensions, rivalries, and jealousies – Carmichael required the same form of sacrifice (suppression of personal goals and achievement for the betterment of the “race”) within the political language of Black Power.\(^\text{32}\)

The reliance of Black Power ideology on the sacrifice of the Black middle class left it vulnerable to the same critique that Martin Luther King, Jr. and the traditional civil rights organizations faced – the primary beneficiaries will be the Black Middle class. Bayard Rustin recognized that the “demand for ‘Black Power’” was often “a demand for ‘Black Middle-Class Power.’”\(^\text{33}\) In addition, he felt that if Black Power advocates “achieve their goal it will not enhance the economic and political power of lower and working-class blacks.”\(^\text{34}\) In part Rustin acknowledged the pro-capitalist impulse within Black Power. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was a leader in the call for Black Power, but they also aided the transformation of Black Power into Black Capitalism.\(^\text{35}\)

The confusion created by militant self-help was evident in the first Black Power Conference in July 1967. The conference was organized by a Black Republican, Nathan Wright, and attracted mostly Black middle class professionals. The conference connected the call for Black Power with obtaining their rightful position within the structures of

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\(^\text{34}\) Ibid. 241.

\(^\text{35}\) The critique of Black Power benefiting primarily the Black middle class only holds for some organizations. For example The Black Panther Party’s Ten Point Program explicitly focuses on aiding working class Blacks. However, for organizations such as CORE whose Black Power plan was clearly focused on material gains the shift to Black Capitalism was effective.
American capitalism. The second Black Power conference in June 1968 represented its pro-
capitalist impulse with the corporate sponsorship of Clairol. In the end, Black Power
became increasingly equated with Black capitalism. Even Richard Nixon recognized the
confusion over the definition of Black Power. He stated:

I speak not of black power as some of the extremist would interpret it - not the power of hate and division, not the power of cynical racism, but the power the people should have over their own destinies, the power to affect their own communities, the power that comes from participation in the political and economic processes of society...What most of the militants are asking is not separation, but to be included in - not as supplicants, but as owners, as entrepreneurs - to have a share of the wealth and a piece of the action.\textsuperscript{36}

The connection between Black Power and Black Capitalism was an example of
"semantic infiltration"\textsuperscript{37} that is, as defined by sociologist Stephen Steinberg, an
"appropriation of the language of one's political opponents for the purpose of blurring the
distinctions and molding it to one's own political position."\textsuperscript{38} The effect of the Black Power
conferences and the eventual use of the connection between capitalism and Black Power was
able to alter the transformative thrust initially found within in Black Power. However, this is
not to minimize the effectiveness of Black Power, or the various strains of the ideology.
However, the response of the federal government was structured by the equation of Black
Power as Black Capitalism. The shift to Black Capitalism was a strategic recoding of Black
Power that defused the original political thrust. This equation was able to filter off much of
the mass base of the movement and allowed for the characterization of groups such as the

\textsuperscript{36} Robert Allen, 191,193.

Black Panthers as radicals that were a threat to the safety of America, and provided a justification for the violent repression of these mass based organizations. Moreover, the connection between Black Power and Black Capitalism obfuscated the transformative ability of Black Power ideology. As Emma Jones Lapsansky, a student activist during “Freedom Summer,” observed: “The Movement fell short of social and political liberation, but it did move us, as black people, a long way toward psychological liberation. Can we call that a failure?” Despite the perception of militancy and the psychological liberation achieved, the major theoretical thrust of Black Power was racial uplift – with a focus on Black capitalism, Black institutions and Black cultural heritage.

In conclusion, Black Power proposed “to change, not the white world outside, but the black world inside, by reforming it into something else politically and economically.” The turmoil created by Black Power was twofold, first, it aided white resistance, apathy, and the limitations of neo-liberalism in the disintegration of the Civil Rights Movement. Secondly, Black Power exposed the class dynamics of the Black community; moreover, the reliance on the Black middle class. With the slowing of the Civil Rights Movement by the mid 1960s, the recognition of the Black middle class dynamics allowed the government to structure policies that exacerbated this source of contention within the Black community.

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38 Ibid. 116.


Public Policy Concerns: Race or Class?

The disintegration of the Civil Rights Movement, brought to the forefront the once internal discourse on the class dynamics of the Black community. The effect of this revelation was that the federal government initiated public policy that exacerbated the differences between the Black middle class and the Black lower classes. Starting with President Lyndon B. Johnson’s 1965 speech, “To Fulfill These Rights” at Howard University, the government began to tailor policy (and policy initiatives) towards a specific class of Blacks, the Black middle class. Through the examination of President Johnson’s speech, the Moynihan Report (1965), and the Kerner Commission Report (1968) we will see how the Black middle class became the paradigm in which the structures of policy were formulated, often to the detriment of a large sector of the Black community.

“To Fulfill These Rights” and the Moynihan Report

On June 4, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson made the most radical statements by a President in terms of race relations than any President before him and perhaps since. In his commencement speech at Howard University, entitled “To Fulfill These Rights,” President Johnson spoke of “equality of results.” The idea of “equality of results” seemed more radical than anything articulated by a President, since it symbolized a break with the American ethic of individualism and implied a level of responsibility to a particular population group – Black Americans. However, under further examination the idea of equality of results was contradicted by the idea of saving the Black family.
President Johnson had several major themes within the speech. First, he argued that freedom was not enough, and that lasting ramifications were needed. He called for equality of results and not just equality in opportunity.

Thus it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates. This is the next and more profound stage of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity - not just legal equity but human ability - not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and as a result.32

This call for equality of results was arguably much more progressive than any other President before or since.

Secondly, President Johnson recognized the growing Black middle class. He used the statistics of the growing number of Black college students and graduates as achievements of a “growing middle class minority, steadily narrowing the gap between them and their white counterparts.”33 He noted that for a large sector of the Black community, there was “a much grimmer story” and the gap between this population of Blacks and white America (including the Black middle class) was growing.34

Lastly, he identified the problem that was creating the gap between most Black and white Americans: “the breakdown of the Negro family structure.”35 The breakdown of the family was due to the “centuries of oppression and persecution of the Negro man.”36

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33 Ibid. 127.

34 Ibid. 127.

35 Ibid. 130.

36 Ibid. 130.
discrimination that the Black man faced “attacked his dignity and assaulted his ability to provide for his family.” 47 President Johnson believed that the improvement of the Black family would be the steppingstone to providing equality of results. However he did not propose any policy solutions, instead he called for a conference in which these ideas could be tailored into public policy.

President Johnson’s speech was highly acclaimed by the civil rights community, because it invoked the political language of equality of results. However, President Johnson’s speech was another example of “semantic infiltration.” 48 In “To Fulfill These Rights,” President Johnson’s used the political language of equality of results and reformulated it to the political safe position of the Black family, just as Black Power had earlier been semantically infiltrated into the politically safe position of Black Capitalism. Consequently, with this keen rhetorical shift, the emphasis of the future policy was moved from the structures of white America, to Blacks themselves and their inadequate skills upon which they were unable to take advantage of the expanding opportunities presented to Blacks. “Thus, what was most flagrantly Machiavellian about Johnson’s speech [was] that it camouflaged ‘self-help’ behind a rhetorical façade of ‘equal results.” 49 The “benign Machiavellianism” of the Johnson Administration, embraced the Civil Rights Movement figuratively, while maximizing their own options and minimizing the options of the

47 Ibid. 130.

48 Stephen Steinberg, ), 116. Moynihan uses this phrase in reference to diplomacy. See Wall Street Journal’s Notable and Quotable section: April 18, 1985. (Steinberg 242 n23.)

49 Ibid. 118.
movement. In this co-optation strategy President Johnson’s speech and the subsequent Moynihan Report were the intellectual weapons of choice.\textsuperscript{50}

\textit{The Moynihan Report}

The Moynihan Report was the conclusion of the ideas first propagated in President Johnson’s speech. First, the report argued that the fundamental weakness of the Black community was the deterioration of the Negro family. The family structure of lower class Blacks was “highly unstable, and in many urban centers is approaching complete breakdown.”\textsuperscript{51} The instability of the family structure resulted from the precarious position of the Black male, which stemmed from slavery, urbanization, and systematic unemployment.

Secondly, the deterioration of the Black family had created a culture pathology within the ghetto. This tangle of pathology included crime, poverty, and delinquency and “at the center ... [was] the weakness of the family structure.”\textsuperscript{52} This tangle of pathology was “capable of perpetuating itself without assistance from the white world.” Moynihan concluded:

\begin{quote}
The policy of the United States is to bring the Negro American to full and equal sharing in the responsibilities and rewards of citizenship. To this end, the programs of the Federal government bearing on this objective shall be designed to have the effect, directly or indirectly, of enhancing the stability and resources of the Negro American family.\textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. 76.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid. 94.
Thus, the semantic shift was complete from equality of results to improving the Black family.

Lastly, the Moynihan Report identified the class structure within the Black community. Moynihan recognized the Black middle class was different from the majority of the Black community, specifically in terms of family structure. The general implication of identifying the Black middle class was this class represented the traits that had, until that point, been associated with Whites.

That being the case, it has to be said that there is a considerable body of evidence to support the conclusion that Negro social structure, in particular the Negro family, battered and harassed by discrimination, injustice, and uprooting, is in the deepest trouble. While many young Negroes are moving ahead to unprecedented levels of achievement, many more are falling further behind.\(^{54}\)

The marker of difference was not based on income but between the stability of Black middle class families and those families of Black lower classes. Moynihan stated: “There is considerable evidence that the Negro community is in fact dividing between a stable middle-class group that is steadily growing stronger and more successful, and an increasingly disorganized and disadvantaged lower-class group.”\(^{55}\) The Black middle class was stable because its family structure mirrored that of white of America; it was “more patriarchal and protective of its children than the general run of such families.”\(^{56}\) In the end, the report suggested the extreme isolationism of the Black lower classes, from white America and the Black middle class, was due to the pathological nature of Black lower class families.

\(^{54}\) Ibid. 50.

\(^{55}\) Ibid. 51-52.

\(^{56}\) Ibid. 75.
Consequently, any federal policy created had to address the issue of the Black family. The government believed that “unless we work to strengthen the family, to create conditions under which most parents will stay together – all the rest: schools and playgrounds, public assistance and private concern, will never be enough to cut completely the circle of despair and deprivation.”

Part of the controversy surrounding the Moynihan Report was its belief in the failure of the Black family and that it was the source of the ghetto pathologies but also part of the controversy was Moynihan’s use of Black intellectuals to support his argument. Michael Katz states “the major intellectual influences of his [Moynihan’s] work were early black sociologists, especially E. Franklin Frazier, and the recently completed Dark Ghetto by black social psychologist Kenneth Clark.” The Moynihan report applied the “damage imagery” of the Black family used by Black intellectuals such as E. Franklin Frazier and Kenneth Clark.

While it was true that Moynihan used the intellectual foundation of Frazier and Clark, he did not have a similar level of complexity in his argument as they possessed. Frazier did believe that Blacks had a “cultural backwardness” that led to the unmarried mothers, poverty, and youth delinquency. However, Moynihan’s interpretation was too simplistic and ignored Frazier continued belief in the systemic origins of the problems. For

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59 Daryl Michael Scott, Contempt & Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche 1880-1996, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). Scott defined the use of damage imagery as the liberal focus on of the psychological damage of Blacks created by white America, and that they should be granted special status as victims. (xii)

example, Moynihan believed that pathology was the cause of matriarchy within the Black community.

In essence, the Negro community has been forced into a matriarchal structure which, because it is so out of line with the rest of the American society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes a crushing burden on the Negro male and in consequence, on a great many Negro women as well.\(^6^1\)

In addition, Moynihan believed education reinforced this matriarchal structure. Frazier, on the other hand, argued that the feudal economy of slavery created a strong attachment between mother and child, such that women became a strong presence within Black families. Thus, for Frazier Black matriarchy was due to the social structure of slavery, not pathology, as suggested by Moynihan. "The maternal family is not held together solely by the cooperative activities incident to farming; it is also a natural organization for response."\(^6^2\) This was just one area of Moynihan’s oversimplification of Frazier.\(^6^3\)

Another area in which Moynihan did not convey Frazier’s complexity was in his understanding of the Black middle class. Moynihan argued that the Black middle class “managed to break out of the tangle of pathology and to establish themselves as stable, effective units, living according to patterns, of American society in general.”\(^6^4\) He used Frazier’s *Black Bourgeoisie* to support this claim, however, Frazier argued that the Black middle class lived in a world of make-believe and failed to be a responsible middle class. Moynihan


\(^6^4\) Moynihan, 75.
does not address this inadequacy, and gives the perception of a stable and effective unit within American society, not of class that is problematic in its mimesis of white culture.\(^{65}\)

Moynihan’s report used part of the analysis of men such as E. Franklin Frazier and Kenneth Clark without providing their level of sophistication. In establishing public policy this representation was essential because in his use misappropriation of Frazier work on the Black middle class allowed for the belief in a stable Black middle class that needed “no help from anyone, and ask none.”\(^{66}\) Moreover, the Black middle class became an unproblematic goal for all Black people. The goal of the government’s policy initiatives was to improve lower class Blacks who were caught in the web of pathology. Unlike Frazier, and other Black intellectuals, Moynihan did not challenge the role, values and responsibilities of the Black middle class.

President Johnson’s speech “To Fulfill These Rights” and the Moynihan report exploited the intellectual vulnerabilities within the civil rights movement. The federal government, through semantic infiltration was able to redirect the movement onto a path in which they had greater control. The ability to isolate the Black middle class (policy wise and narratively) from the Black lower class had profound results. In addition, the government through the speech and the report were able to illustrate to world the internal class dynamics of the Black community. The effects of these dynamics were used to placate the Black middle class and to isolate the Black lower classes. The Kerner Commission report continued this process of intellectually and politically isolating the Black middle class.

\(^{65}\) Ibid. 75. Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, 233-238.

\(^{66}\) Moynihan, 75.
The Kerner Commission Report

In the summer of 1967 President Johnson appointed the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (called the Kerner Commission after the chairman Otto Kerner). This committee was assigned the task of determining the causes of the "riots" that swept the ghettos of America from approximately 1965 to 1967. The committee examined the historic influences of slavery, urbanization and discrimination upon Blacks to locate the causes of the urban unrest. They concluded, "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal." 67

In its search for the various causes of the urban disorders, the committee examined the intellectual foundations and dynamics of the urban community. The Kerner report analyzed two subjects within the Black community. First, they examined the intellectual history of Black Power and its influence on the urban disorders. Secondly, they investigated the role of the Black middle class and their effect on the riots. Further examination of these two subjects will reflect the intellectual vulnerabilities within the fledgling Civil Rights Movement of the late 1960's. Furthermore, it will demonstrate that the effects of the vulnerabilities were that the federal government used the information to continue the isolation of the Black middle class, often at the expense of the Black lower classes, who were the point of emphasis in the understanding the urban uprisings.

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The Kerner report acknowledged the intellectual history of Black Power. The report described Black Power as “old wine in new bottles” because it resembled the nineteenth century intellectual tradition of uplift.68 The report stated:

What is new about “Black Power” is phraseology rather than substance. Black Consciousness has roots in the organization of Negro churches and mutual benefit societies in the early days of the republic, the antebellum Negro convention movement, the Negro colonization schemes of the 19th century, DuBois’ concept of Pan-Africanism, Booker T. Washington’s advocacy of race pride, self-help, and racial solidarity, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Garvey movement.69

Moreover, it described the economic program associated with Black Power “reminiscent of Booker T. Washington.”70 The report also recognized that Black Power was perceived as militant because of its association with the lower classes. They noted that white liberals had increasingly left the movement and the “Negro protest movement became more of a mass movement, with increasing participation from the working class.”71 However, despite the presence of the working class, the report noted that Black Power wanted inclusion on an equal basis “rather than … a fundamental transformation of American institutions.”72

The report’s understanding of Black Power was important because it continued the government’s use semantic infiltration on Black Power. The government used the fact that most Black Power advocates wanted to be included within the American system and used the political language of Black Power to exploit this belief. It was this co-optation of the

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68 Ibid. 234.
69 Ibid. 234.
70 Ibid. 235.
71 Ibid. 236.
72 Ibid. 236.
political language, which aided the transformation of Black Power into Black Capitalism (as stated earlier).

A second major function of the Kerner report was it identified the class structure of the Black community. While it concluded America was two nations, separate and unequal, the report still recognized the substratum of the Black middle class. The report continued the work that President Johnson and Patrick Moynihan started in identifying the Black middle class as different from the Black lower classes. The report concluded “the development of a small but steadily increasing Negro middle class while the greater part of the Negro population [was] stagnating economically [was] creating a growing gap between the Negro haves and have-nots.”73 More importantly, they furthered the equation of the growth of the Black middle class equal to progress. This was the continuation, albeit not in the strong terminology of pathology used by Moynihan, that the Black middle class represented normalcy, while the Black lower classes represented a deviation. Thus, the goal of any improvement of Black life must attempt to transmit middle class values to the Black urban residents. The government espoused the themes of uplift as a method of improving the qualities of Black life. They realized that “Negro protest, for the most part, has been firmly rooted in the basic values of American society, seeking not their destruction but their fulfillment.”74

President Johnson’s speech, the Moynihan report, and the Kerner Commission report, fulfilled three major functions. First, the federal government was able to get in front

73 Ibid. 282.
74 Ibid. 236.
of the Civil Rights Movement and control the terms of the debate. The government, using the three public communications, was able to redirect the political language of the movement into a politically safe position. Secondly, they identified the class structure within the Black community. They introduced to the white world the Black middle class as distinct group within the Black community (only to white America, Du Bois had mentioned it in 1899). Lastly, they isolated the newly discovered Black middle class from the Black lower class. They stated the Black middle class was a picture of normalcy and progress, contrary to what Black intellectuals such as E. Franklin Frazier, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Martin Luther King, Jr. had suggested. The corollary to the government's belief in Black middle class success as Black progress was the Black lower class was dysfunctional and pathological. By the 1970s the government (and its intellectuals) controlled the political language of the movement and opened the door for the benign neglect argument.

Benign Neglect: Affirmative Action and the Declining Significance of Race

The Moynihan report was the center of controversy in the late 1960s, and as the country entered the 1970s Patrick Moynihan was again at the center of controversy. This time black leadership was disturbed by his concept of "benign neglect." He stated:

The time may have come when the issue of race could benefit from a period of "benign neglect." The subject of has been too much talked about. The forum has been too much taken over by hysterics, paranoids, and boodlers on all sides. We may need a period in which Negro progress continues and racial rhetoric fades.75

Moynihan expressed this concern of racial rhetoric being controlled by “hysterics, paranoids, and boodlers” to President Nixon. He continued by suggesting controlling the Black middle class was in effect a way of control all Blacks.

[S]ocial alienation among the black lower classes is matched, and probably enhanced, by a virulent form of anti-white feeling among portions of the large and prospering black middle class. It would be difficult to overestimate the degree to which young, well-educated blacks detest white America.76

Although Moynihan suggested controlling racial rhetoric, he did not have a plan of action. Yet, further examination shows that the seeds had already been planted by the President Johnson’s speech “To Fulfill These Rights,” the Moynihan report, and the Kerner Commission report. All three began to isolate intellectually and politically the Black middle class from the Black lower classes as implicit in Moynihan’s benign neglect memo. In addition, two ideas continued this isolation in the 1970s. First was the presidential initiative of affirmative action and the counter claim of reverse discrimination to the policy of affirmative action. Second was William Julius Wilson’s work The Declining Significance of Race, finished the isolation of the Black middle class in the 1970s. The examination of these two topics will demonstrate how the 1970s continued the work of the Moynihan report of the 1960s and in effect created the “benign neglect” that Moynihan suggested as a plan of action towards Blacks.

Affirmative Action

Executive Order 11246, or Affirmative Action, came into being without much fanfare in 1965. Perhaps overshadowed by the Moynihan report controversy, affirmative action was enacted, by President Johnson, to force government contractors into non-
discriminatory hiring. However, there was tension within the government over the newly enacted executive order. Both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations did not believe in preferential treatment for Blacks and other minorities, but in order for businesses to receive federal funding they had to comply with the law.\textsuperscript{77}

It was under the Republican Nixon administration that the empirical conception of affirmative action took hold. During his administration, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Department of Labor issued regulations that refined the meaning of affirmative action. These empirical "hiring goals and timetables" were used by contractors to "improve performance in the areas in which their utilization of minority personnel was deficient."\textsuperscript{78} After this transformation, affirmative action became equated with quotas and timetables.\textsuperscript{75}

In addition to affirmative action being increasingly equated with quotas and timetables, its effectiveness, by the late 1970s, was readily apparent for the Black middle class. Theoretically, such should not have been the case because of the universal claims of improvement for all Blacks, however, affirmative action and its attempts to rectify employment discrimination was out-of-step with the changing economy in the United States. The new Black poor was changing due to one major factor: with the increasing automation of technology, capital has been liberated from its dependence on labor. This systemic shift

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid. 334.


\textsuperscript{78} Ibid. 13.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid. 12-16.
moved many poor outside of the mainstream labor market to the margins in the Post-Industrial economic system. Thus, affirmative action’s attempt to rectify employment discrimination ran counter to the economic transformation that was taking place in America’s cities. The middle class bias within affirmative action, due to its reliance on education and the private sector, was expanded by the disappearance of low-skilled jobs in the transformation to automation in the post-Industrial society. With this systemic transformation, the Black middle class was positioned to take greater advantage of affirmative action.80

Reverse Discrimination

The policy of affirmative action was challenged in the 1970s by the claim of reverse discrimination. This conservative claim was important in continuing the isolation of the Black middle class that begun in the 1960s. Reverse discrimination argued that affirmative action violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, because it created racial quotas instead of the principle of colorblindness. The perceived success of the Black middle class played an important role in furthering this claim.81

Nathan Glazer’s book, Affirmative Discrimination, was one of the first to promulgate this argument. First, Glazer locates the shift in the meaning of affirmative action, from the uplift and ideal of equal opportunity to quotas and ideal of equal results. He stated: “Until then [pre-1970s], affirmative action meant to seek out and prepare members of minority


81 Drake and Holsworth, 16.
groups for better jobs and educational opportunities.... But in the early 1970s affirmative action came to mean much more than advertising opportunities actively, seeking out those who might not know of them, and preparing those who might not yet be qualified. It came to mean the setting of statistical requirements based on race, color, and national origin for employers and educational institutions.\(^\text{82}\) This shift to the political language of results coincided with the EEOC and Civil Rights Commission analyzing the results as proof of nondiscrimination as opposed to analyzing the process of hiring, and promotion.\(^\text{83}\)

The shift to equality of results defined along racial lines was, to Glazer, a subversion of American principles. Affirmative action "threatens the abandonment of our concern for individual claims to consideration on the basis of justice and equity, now to be replaced with a concern for the rights for publicly determined and delimited racial and ethnic groups."\(^\text{84}\) In addition, the abandonment of "individual claims" ignored the success of the Black middle class. They, who Glazer felt were the main beneficiaries of affirmative action, were gaining individual opportunities under the guise of group claims. Consequently, Glazer believed the policy was ineffective because of the perceived success of the Black middle class, who had or could succeed without it, and he considered the policy "questionable" because it failed to "reach in any significant way the remaining and indeed most severe problems involved in the black condition."\(^\text{85}\)


\(^\text{83}\) Ibid. 53.

\(^\text{84}\) Ibid. 197.

\(^\text{85}\) Ibid. 69-70.
The perceived success of the Black middle class allowed for the claim of reverse discrimination. This claim attacked what Bernard Boxill has described as the “backward-looking argument,” which was/is “Black people have been and are being harmed by racists attitudes and practices.”86 The major assumption in the claim of reverse discrimination was/is the Black middle class does not deserve compensation, in the form of affirmative action, because they are already qualified, and are not of the population most in need of compensation, the Black lower classes. Although this belief in the success of the Black middle class has shifted from the Black middle class being the “least harmed and wronged blacks to the unsubstantiated claim that qualified blacks are not harmed or wronged at all”87 the assumption rested on the conjecture that perceived Black middle class success was equal to progress for all Black people.88 Conservatives rallied behind the claim of reverse discrimination, however, William Julius Wilson’s book The Declining Significance of Race, removed the idea Black middle class progress solely from the conservative camp.

The Declining Significance of Race: Isolation on Both Ends of the Political Spectrum

Reverse discrimination was the conservative critique against affirmative action, built on the belief that the policy was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. This argument was legitimated by the Regents of the University of California v. Bakke case, which ruled racial quotas were illegal, but still allowed race to be considered a variable in higher education

87 Ibid. 150.
88 Black middle class success was perceived because of the dramatic increase in high profile positions, such as Black elected officials, Black college students, and Black professionals.
 admissions. However, conservatives were not the only people criticizing affirmative action, progressives' challenged the effectiveness of affirmative action.

The “progressive critique” of affirmative action centered on whether affirmative action was the correct form of government intervention in the improvement of Black life. At the center of the progressive critique was William Julius Wilson. His work The Declining Significance of Race, initiated a firestorm of controversy. His thesis that class was more important than race had important implications for the isolation of the Black middle class.

Wilson’s major thesis, as his title suggests, was that race is no longer the dominant factor in determining the progress of Black life. At least in economic terms, “class has become more important than race in determining black access to privilege and power.” The importance of class had outdistanced race, according Wilson, because of the changing economic structure in America. The “urban crisis” and the shift to the Post-Industrial Age, had moved many poor –mostly Black- people of the margins of the economy. The economic shift to Post-Industrial America had created what Wilson termed the “underclass.” Wilson defined underclass as “that massive population at the very bottom of the social class ladder plagued by poor education and lower-paying and unstable jobs...” This heterogeneous group of “lower-class workers whose income fall below the poverty level but also the more or less permanent welfare recipients, the long-term unemployed, and those

89 Drake & Holsworth, 21.


91 Sugrue, 259-268.

92 Wilson, Declining Significance of Race, 1.
who have dropped out of the labor market" had been adversely affected by the class position opposed to their racial status.

Wilson argued that the underclass could not be aided by established governmental policies, such as affirmative action. The government was “not organized to deal with the new barriers imposed by structural changes in the economy...” namely the shift the Post-Industrial era. Consequently, affirmative action could not eliminate “barriers that [had] nothing to do with color and that result from labor-saving innovations, relocation of industry, labor-market segmentation, and the shift from goods-producing to service producing industries.” Wilson argued, policies such as affirmative action did not improve the lives of the Black “underclass” and although “patterns of racial oppression... created the huge black underclass... the technological and economic revolution of advanced industrial society combined to insure it a permanent status.”

While affirmative action did not improve the lives of the Black “underclass,” it did stabilize the Black middle class. The Black middle class had “the requisite education and training, to enter the mainstream of American occupations.” Wilson argued that this expanding class had articulated and defined issues in such a manner to improve their own class position. Unlike his intellectual antecedents – Frazier, Du Bois, and King – Wilson never questions the responsibility or stability of the Black middle class. He believed that

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93 Ibid. 156.
94 Ibid. 19.
95 Ibid. 100.
96 Ibid. 120.
97 Ibid. 19.
“the political system” had begun “to promote racial equality,”98 which reinforced the stability of the Black middle class. In disclosing the class structure in the Black community and arguing for an increased focus on the “underclass,” Wilson has added to the perception that the Black middle class is socially and politically isolated from the rest of the Black community. Moreover, he reinforced the notion that the Black middle class was a picture of progress, a similar argument that conservatives used in their attempt to eliminate affirmative action. Wilson’s position in support of the Black “underclass” must be commended, however the corollary was the belief that the Black middle class was much closer to white America, because the free market system functioned fairly and without racial bias.

Conclusion

The period 1965-1980 represented a unique shift in Black history. This period was one in which there was widespread Black integration into the America. For example, schools, both secondary and post-secondary were becoming increasingly more integrated, as well as there were increasing numbers of integrated neighborhoods in the North and the South. More importantly, the Civil Rights Movement partially removed the stigma of Black inferiority. Therefore, the opportunities created by the Civil Rights Movement allowed the Black middle class, at least in part, to move into the mainstream of America. As a repercussion of the disintegration of the Civil Rights Movement, caused in part by the limitation within the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power ideology, the success of the Black middle class became the objective. In an attempt to cool the racial rhetoric the government co-opted the political language of equality of results and moved into a safe

98 Ibid. 17.
position of the pathology of the Black family. Consequently, the Black middle class became the optimal representation of Black life, and the government exploited this, at the detriment of the Black lower classes, through the philosophy of “benign neglect” and the policy of affirmative action. Lastly, progressive Black intellectuals, too, began to sing the optimal status of the Black middle class, marking a decided break from their intellectual antecedents. Thus, on both sides of the political spectrum, “conservative” and “progressive,” the Black middle class, became the optimal status for all Black to aspire, because its “success” in Post-Industrial America.

By the early 1970s, we begin to see the isolation of the Black middle class espoused in the public press. In April 1973, Commentary ran an article entitled “Black Progress and Liberal Rhetoric,” which argued that a slim majority of “somewhat more than half” of Blacks was in the middle class. Despite the acknowledged gap between White and Black America, the article stated, “‘middle class’ has now become an accurate term to describe the social and economic condition of somewhat more than half of black Americans.”99 Moreover, the authors believed that many liberals had “insisted that condition for American blacks [were] not improving at all, but actually deteriorating...”100 This liberal claim was counter to their evidence of a Black middle class majority. Their main point was “the fact that some blacks have been ‘left behind’ does not in itself negate the fact of massive black success.”101


100 Ibid. 36.

101 Ibid. 41.
Not only did liberal journals begin trumpet the success of the Black middle class, so did mainstream press. In 1974, *Time* magazine's cover story was about the rise in the Black middle class. It began by stating:

*Black militancy. Black rage. Black separation. Black crime.* For years, these have been the catchwords that have discomfited and even chilled white America, for they imply an alien and hostile race scarcely at home in a land where it has lived for some 350 years. But another phrase may well become more familiar in the 1970s: *Black middle class.*

This publicized growth in the Black middle class countered the image of the Kerner Report: “two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal.” In fact, *Time* magazine promoted a counter assertion: “To be black in the U.S. is no longer to be subordinate – not necessarily.”

By 1978, the media, as well as William Julius Wilson, was extolling the declining significance of race. William Brashler, in *The New York Times Magazine*, contended that the Black middle class was making it. Consequently, it was asserted that race had reduced in significance – for the Black middle class at least. “Put simply, blacks who've made it, who have it, are saying today that they have more in common than ever before with their white counterparts – sometimes more in common with them than with their black street brothers.” Even the valued “collective Black identity” of the 1960s was “largely a myth.” Just as Black Power became equated with Black Capitalism, Brashler noted “Black

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103 *The Kerner Report*, 1.

104 “America’s Rising Black Middle Class,” 19.


106 Ibid. 148.
Power’ has come to mean ‘Green Power.’ ‘Get Whitey’ has become ‘Do for Self.’ ‘Soul Brother’ has come to mean nothing."107 The intellectual work of Moynihan, and the Johnson administration had reaped the benefits of their ideas, planted in the mid-1960s.108

The cumulative effect of Black Power, the Moynihan report, affirmative action, and *The Declining Significance of Race*, was the isolation of the Black middle class from the rest of the Black community in the political language of Black politics. More importantly, these events revealed the secret of Black advancement to the public.109 This resulted in the idea of Black progress being measured only in terms of the Black middle class, not the entire Black community created a Black middle class paradigm. The success of the Black middle class often resulted from the fact that the government recognized and was more responsive to the claims of this class. Therefore, the failure to solve the problems of the Black poor was a result political language that exemplified their situation but unable to garner the support from the government. In addition, the theoretical isolation of the Black middle class strained the ability of uplift ideology to be successful within the Black community because of the inability to unify under the political language of race. In the end, this period represents the beginning of the theoretical disassociation, in terms of political language, of the Black middle class from a large sector of the Black community, the Black lower class and the public recognition of this disassociation. This symbolic isolation and potential disassociation of the Black middle class represents a new post-Civil Rights Movement arrangement, in which the

107 Ibid. 148.


109 Wattenberg & Scammon, "Black Progress and Liberal Rhetoric," 43
Black community is no longer represented completely by the political language of race. Moreover, the Black middle class becomes within the American imagination an example of "success," thus redefining the historic link between Blacks and inferiority. The only question that remains: is whether the isolation of the Black middle class is permanent or temporary? We must turn to the period of 1980-1998, to see if this newfound Black middle class and its newly acquired status in the American imagination is maintained.
CHAPTER 4

"BLACKS WHO HAD NOT THEMSELVES PERSONALLY SUFFERED ILLEGAL DISCRIMINATION:” THE SYMBOLIC INCORPORATION OF THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS

The 1980s ushered in the resurrection of conservative ideology in American politics. The "revolution" was led by Ronald Reagan and his landslide presidential victory over incumbent Jimmy Carter. Reagan’s victory signaled the end of the dominance of the liberal ideals of the Democratic Party, which began with Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal. As governor of California, Reagan was a staunch opponent of civil rights policy and he carried this philosophy directly into the White House.

The 1980s and 1990s represented an era of civil rights retrenchment and for most Black people this meant their economic and social situation worsened. However, the Black middle class maintained their relatively fragile position and in fact demonstrated some growth.1 An examination of Reagan’s attack on civil rights policies, will demonstrate how he built upon the isolation of the Black middle class, created during the 1960s and 1970s and incorporated, at least symbolically, the Black middle class into American society.

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1 Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991), 233-234. (Table 11.3)
The Attack on Civil Rights Policy and Ideology

Reagan's ultra-conservative stance was best explained by his attack on civil rights policies and ideology. Manning Marable noted, "Reaganism represented a break with the half-century-old notion among both Democrats and Republicans that the state had a political and ethical obligation to reduce the vast chasm separating the society's wealthiest classes from the poor and unemployed." Whether this obligation was real or rhetorical, an examination of Reagan's political history in regards to civil rights and an analysis of the political maneuvers made in his attack on civil rights is necessary in understanding the uses of the concept Black middle class during his presidential administration.

Reagan's opposition to civil rights policies began in the 1960s. He stood opposed to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned discrimination in public accommodations, public education and employment; stating it was "a bad piece of legislation." Furthermore, he opposed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which banned literacy tests and other voting tests that were used to stop Blacks from voting. Reagan believed that both pieces of legislation were unconstitutional. In fact, Reagan argued that the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was "humiliating to the South."

As governor of California (elected in 1966), Reagan attacked civil rights ideology. After Martin Luther King's death, in April 1968, Reagan stated that his death "was a great tragedy that began when we began compromising with the law and order and people started

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4 Ibid. 198.
choosing which laws they’d break.”

He continued his attack on civil disobedience, stating “we cannot afford to overlook the fact that mass criminal violations and mob violence are increasingly endangering our communities. Some euphemistically call this ‘civil disobedience.’ It is nothing more nor less than deliberate and premeditated violation of the law by groups of people.”

Not only did traditional civil rights ideology become a target of Reagan’s conservatism, but also radical ideology. Reagan fired Angela Y. Davis from her position at University of California – Los Angeles because of her association with the United States Communist Party. The Black Panther Party was extremely repressed by Reagan’s law and order programs. David Hilliard remembered that “[g]etting Eldridge [Cleaver] off the streets [had] become an obsession with the administration of Governor Ronald Reagan.”

Consequently, Reagan’s history of opposition and attack of civil rights policy and ideology were carried into the White House with his 1980 presidential election.

With his new position as President of the United States, Ronald Reagan began to implement change towards civil rights policy along conservative ideological lines. He employed three main methods. The first method was the political language of conservative egalitarianism. The second was the attack on affirmative action. The final method used was the creative use of code words. These three methods brought to a halt the role of the

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5 Ibid. 200.


7 Marable, 128-129.

government in improving the lives of many Blacks and in effect began to reverse the civil rights policies of the 1960s.

Thomas Edsall and Mary Edsall describe “conservative egalitarianism” as the ideology that allowed Reagan to build a broad-based white coalition, that included the traditionally Democratic White-working class and the traditionally Republican wealthy Whites.9 Conservative egalitarianism exploited the intellectual space created by the differing perception of the political language of equal opportunity versus equal results.

The power of conservative egalitarianism – based on an idealized concept of “equal opportunity” and reinforced by free-market economic theory – is that it affirms basic American principals of equality while protecting, and in some cases reinforcing, the very unequal distribution of racial and economic benefits challenged by liberalism. Conservative egalitarianism provides the ideological framework for the protection of their own interests to those who are challenged by insurgent groups – an ideological framework generally consonant with American ethical traditions.10

To support this position, Reagan began to designate federal judges that could enforce the ideology of conservative egalitarianism. The Justice Department became the “heart and mind” of the Reagan counter-revolution and the principle target of conservative egalitarianism was affirmative action.11

The elimination of affirmative action became a top goal of the Reagan administration. The attack on affirmative action under the ideology of conservative egalitarianism was couched in the specific terms of individual rights versus group rights. Reagan and the conservative egalitarian ideology attempted to recognize only individual

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9 Edsall & Edsall, 14.
10 Ibid. 147.
11 Ibid. 185.
rights. The focus on individual rights relied on the logic of classic liberalism, in which “the individual – and not the family, community, or the state – is the singular unit of society, and that the purpose of societal arrangements is to allow the individual the freedom to fulfill his own purposes – by his labor to gain property, by exchange to satisfy his wants, by upward mobility to achieve a place commensurate with his talents.”

From the beginning of his Presidency, Reagan made the individual the focus of social policy. In his inaugural address, Reagan stated: “Freedom and the dignity of the individual have been more available and assured here [United States] than in any other place on earth.” Affirmative action was seen as a quota system that violated the presumed individual nature of America society. Reagan believed that “the quota can be used, actually, as an instrument of discrimination, not to cure it.” With the firm belief in individual rights, the Reagan administration began to see equal opportunity as the only method to realizing the “American creed” of individualism. Reagan’s Attorney General William French Smith stated “that the civil rights laws were intended to guarantee individual rights, not group results.”

A result of redefining rights in individual terms was the coinciding redefinition of victims that this process created. The Reagan administration argued that affirmative action and its necessary goals and timetables forced out white employees who did not commit any acts of discrimination. “White firefighters and police officers – some with more than ten

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15 Dugger, 203.
years of service — were furloughed while black and Hispanic employees with as little as two
years’ seniority were retained,” said U.S. solicitor general, Rex E. Lee.\textsuperscript{16} This idea of reverse
discrimination, which was the focus of intellectuals such as Nathan Glazer and the Bakke
case,\textsuperscript{17} now had the concrete support of a conservative presidency and the Justice
Department.

One of the major effects of the Civil Rights Movement was the brief elimination of
blame on Blacks for their condition. The dynamism of the period began to critique the
systemic nature of racism in America.\textsuperscript{18} However, in several Supreme Court Cases during
the 1980’s, the high court legally reinforced the status of the individual and redefined a new
set of victims, Whites.\textsuperscript{19} Unlike the Bakke case, which eliminated quotas but maintained
affirmative action, the cases in the 1980s tried to eliminate affirmative action altogether. The
main line of attack was to shift the burden of proof of discrimination. This shift went from
the effects of discrimination, like in the Bakke case, to the intent to discriminate. This shift
made it much more difficult to prove discrimination.\textsuperscript{20}

The 1984 Supreme Court case, Wygant v. Jackson Board of Education represents all the
elements of conservative egalitarianism that the Reagan administration used in the attack on
affirmative action. In 1972, the Jackson, Michigan School Board signed a pact that stated

\textsuperscript{16} Quoted in Dugger, 210.

\textsuperscript{17} See Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{18} For example see Stokely Carmichael & Charles V. Hamilton, \textit{Black Power} (New York: Vintage Books, 1967) and their
discussion of institutionalized racism (p. 2-33).

\textsuperscript{19} See \textit{Firefighters Local Union No. 1784 v. Stotts} (June 12, 1984, \textit{United Steelworkers v. Weber} (1979), \textit{ Regents of the University of

\textsuperscript{20} Dugger, 210.
that layoffs were to be made based on seniority. Yet in a new pact, also in 1972, the Board
stated, "at no time will there be a greater percentage of minority personnel laid off than the
current percentage of minority personnel employed at the time of the layoff."\textsuperscript{21} This was
done so minority personnel would be in proportion to minority student population.

The lower court ruled against the plaintiff Wygant, based on the idea of the effect of
discrimination. The lower court held that "there is a sound basis for the concluding that
minority underrepresentation is substantial and chronic and that the handicap of past
discrimination is impeding access [and promotion] of minorities..."\textsuperscript{22} Moreover, the lower
court believed the minority teachers were role models to minority students.\textsuperscript{23}

The Supreme Court reversed this claim by focusing on the individual, intent to
discriminate, and redefining Whites as victims. In the \textit{Wygant} case, the individual superceded
the group rights of minorities. The Justices argued that "one hundred and twenty years after
the end of slavery government may still advance some and suppress others not as individuals
but because of the color of their skin."\textsuperscript{24} The Justices continued, "[I]t is clear that granting
preferences to members of enumerated minority groups are also far from benign in practical
effects. Such preferences inevitably harm innocent \textit{individuals}."\textsuperscript{25} In fact, the Court
suggested that discrimination against minorities was coincidental. "When government


\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. 2.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid. 3.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid. 6.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid. 21. Emphasis mine.
provides compensation to individual victims, government is not itself making or implementing a racial classification. The victims compensated may all be members of the same racial or ethnic group, but this is merely because the guilty party’s unlawful behavior was defined by race.” The Court concluded that “past discrimination against some individuals would not support a categorical racial and ethnic preference such as that contained in the Jackson agreement.” Thus, the court ruled that only the individual matters.

In focusing on the individual instead of the group, the Supreme Court also shifted the burden of proof, from effects of discrimination to intent. In overruling the lower court’s decision, the Supreme Court made the intent to discriminate the standard upon which discrimination was measured. The Wygant case provides several examples. The Justices argued the Fourteenth Amendment “was intended to assure the equality before the law of all persons, of whatever race or group...therefore any governmental action based on race or national origin bears the heaviest possible burden of justice....”

As Kathleen Sullivan noted:

The Justices sparred about just what evidence would suffice to support an informal conclusion that one had discriminated in the past. The plurality opinion suggested “sufficient,” “convincing,” and “strong” evidence as the benchmarks...while Justice O’Connor called a “firm basis” enough.... None of the Justices would require those who would implement affirmative action voluntarily to make “formal findings” that they had discriminated in the past.29

28 Ibid. 28.

27 Ibid. 30. Emphasis in original.

24 Ibid. 6.

Therefore, by eliminating the use of discriminatory effects and not requiring “formal findings,” the Court drastically reduced affirmative action initiatives and the ability to prosecute cases of discrimination against Blacks (except for extreme cases such as the 1996 Texaco case).

In shifting the burden of proof from effects of discrimination to intent to discriminate, the Court believed that compensation should be “directed to those who have actually suffered discrimination.”30 Consequently, Whites became the primary victims of discrimination because of affirmative action policies. The Justices argued “the Equal Protection Clause protects personal not group rights, a measure cannot be fairly characterized as a remedy for a violation of equal protection unless it provides relief to an individual who was personally victimized by discrimination.”31

The corollary to this argument was that Blacks had to become non-victims. “The core issue of race-based affirmative action, the issue of compensation for historic discrimination, was reformulated; those blacks who had not themselves personally suffered illegal discrimination were to be considered by government as uninjured by the legacy of discrimination, and were to be redefined as ‘non-victims.’”32 In attempting to promote this change in the discourse of affirmative action, the Reagan administration employed the services of Black conservatives and their “independent brilliance.”33

Black conservatives propagated the idea of Blacks as non-victims and not deserving

30 Wygant v. Jackson, 6.
31 Ibid. 26.
32 Edsall & Edsall, 187.
33 Reagan, Speaking My Mind, 163.
of remedy of affirmative action. Moreover, the Black conservatives argued that the remedies actually harmed Blacks. William Bradford Reynolds, head of the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department (1981-1989), believed that Black conservatives “were able (far better than the administration) to speak to sad the reality that race-based preference programs in fact benefited but relatively few of the individuals they were designed to serve.”  

Shelby Steele supported the position that affirmative action “has shown itself to be more bad than good and that blacks ... now stand to lose more from it than they gain.” Steele continued that affirmative action distorted “our understanding of racial discrimination in a way that allowed us to offer the remediation of preference on the basis of mere color rather than actual injury.”

The main support for this position of Blacks as non-victims was the perceived success of the Black middle class. The perceived success of this class dissolved the equation of Black equated with victim. The Wygant case used the perceived success of the Black middle class as a reason to make Blacks non-victims. The Justices asserted “it is one of the ironies of racial preferences that those who benefit are the most disadvantaged. Many minority group members and some minority groups as a whole have now surpassed the residual category of “Whites” in income, education, and other measure of success.” Thus,


36 Ibid. 115. Emphasis mine.

37 Shelby Steele, “On Being Black and Middle Class,” The Content of Our Character, 93-110.

38 Wygant v. Jackson, 27.
affirmative action was providing “preferential benefits for individuals not shown to have suffered from any past discrimination; preferential medical school admissions for members of minority groups that were already overrepresented in the student body; and preferential treatment for minority businessmen whose economic resources and opportunities clearly exceeded those of the average citizen.”39 Consequently, in the attack on affirmative action, the Black middle class was represented as the main beneficiaries of affirmative action and thus Blacks, as a population group could now be redefined as victimizers and not victims. With the redefinition, the perceived growth in Black middle class, allowed Blacks as a population group to be judged on an individual basis and therefore subject to the American Dream.

While the Justice Department whittled away at affirmative action, the use of “code words” begun a new type of redefinition. Code words are “phrases and symbols which refer indirectly to racial themes, but do not directly challenge popular democratic or egalitarian ideals.”40 At the heart of the use of code words was the rise of what William Julius Wilson defined as the underclass – the section of the Black urban population “at the very bottom of the social class ladder plagued by poor education and low-paying, unstable jobs...”41

Before the underclass became the center of attention in the American public,42 the concept was first used by Gunnar Myrdal’s Challenge to Influence, to refer to groups who did

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39 Ibid. 19. Emphasis in original.


42 For example see the cover story in US News and World Report, March 17, 1986.
not experience the affluence of the nation. However, Wilson brought the word back into vogue in the *Declining Significance of Race*. The term underclass went through a transformation from Myrdal’s original use and subsequent uses, especially those of the 1980s and 1990s. Myrdal used underclass “to define and objective condition – one that was rooted in the class system and labor market processes, and that manifested itself in the existence of a group so removed from the regular economy that it was unaffected even by surges in the economy...” Subsequently, the phrase “underclass” came to represent not only low income citizens but in addition, the “socially dysfunctional behavior of the poor themselves.” Ken Auletta represented this prevailing viewpoint:

Whatever the cause – whether it is the fault of the people themselves or of society, whether poverty is a cause or an effect – most students of poverty believe that the underclass suffers from *behavioral* as well as income deficiencies. The underclass usually operates outside of the generally accepted boundaries of society. They are often set apart ... by their “deviant” or antisocial behavior, by their bad habits, not just their poverty.

The Reagan administration assured its constituency of its opposition to the underclass and their deviant (non-middle class) behaviors through simple assertions of “middle-class values and goals.” These assertions were able to divide the electorate along racial lines. Two categories, crime and welfare, represented the use of code words to cast perceived behavioral/moral failings in specifically racial terms.

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43 Stephen Steinberg, *Taming Back*, 137.
44 Ibid. 138.
45 Ibid. 139.
47 Edsall & Edsall, 177.
Ronald Reagan understood the racial implications and political capital of focusing on crime. Early in his political career he stated: "With all our science and sophistication, our culture and our pride in intellectual accomplishment, the jungle is still waiting to take over. The man with the badge holds it back."\(^{48}\) He carried this political discourse on crime to the White House, behind the campaign of law and order.

The rhetoric of law and order has its origins in the 1960s. George Wallace and Barry Goldwater exemplified this blatantly racist rhetoric. Wallace ran on a law and order platform in the 1968 presidential election, and represented the first substantial third party showing in over fifty years garnering 13.5 percent of the popular vote. His anti-Black, anti-Communist stand resonated with Southern and Northern working class Whites. Wallace’s success encouraged the Republican Party to alter their strategy, focusing solely on Whites that believed that racial progress had gone far enough. The commutation of this strategy was the election of Reagan.\(^{49}\)

Barry Goldwater made crime a national issue in the 1964 presidential election. His campaign hinged on the rhetoric of law and order. In his acceptance speech of the GOP nomination for president he stated:

> Security from domestic violence, no less than from foreign aggression, is the most elementary form and fundamental purpose of any government, and a government that cannot fulfill this purpose is one that cannot command the loyalty of its citizens.... We Republicans seek a government that attends to its fiscal climate, encouraging a free and competitive economy and enforcing law and order.\(^{50}\)

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\(^{49}\) Edsall & Edsall, 77-79.

The increase in crime that spurred the call for law and order was, according to Goldwater, the civil rights legislation. These pieces of legislation acquiesced to the demands of civil rights activist, whom conservatives defined as criminals. The successes of the Civil Rights Movement discredited overt racial discrimination, but led to the implicit racist messages coded in calls for law and order.\textsuperscript{51}

Reagan revived the rhetoric of law and order by focusing on drugs and the criminalization of drug use. The “war on drugs” campaign evolved out of anti-street crime rhetoric espoused by Goldwater, Wallace, and Nixon. Reagan increased the budgets of internal police organizations, such as the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Customs Department, and the Department of Defense, while cutting the budgets of rehabilitative organizations such as National Institute on Drug Abuse. These internal police organizations began to enforce the anti-drug rhetoric aimed at drug dealers and after 1986, casual drug users. With the proliferation of crack cocaine, the perception that the drug epidemic occurred only in America’s inner cities was aided by the media’s focus on the young Black dealers and users that had become news under the rhetoric of the “war on drugs.” The race-neutral language used by the government did not replace the media’s visual images of Blacks as the enemy in the “war on drugs.”\textsuperscript{52}

The call for law and order in an era of decreasing crime rates was based on the


\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. 53 – 59.
perception of who criminals were. David Garland concludes, "[I]t is clear enough that
criminal conduct does not determine the kind of penal action that a society adopts.... [I]t is
not 'crime' or even criminological knowledge about crime which most affects policy
decisions, but rather the ways in which 'the crime problem' is officially perceived and the
political positions to which these perceptions give rise."53 The perceived culprit of the high
rates of crime were young inner city Blacks. Thus, the "crimes of the poor were... used as
evocative symbols of their undeserving and dangerous nature."54 George Bush's use of Willie
Horton in the 1992 presidential campaign presented the Black face on the race neutral
language of crime. In the end, the "ideologically produced fear of crime" served "to render
racism simultaneously more invisible and more virulent..." and the war on inner city Blacks
resonated firmly with white voters.55

The second major use of code words was welfare. In 1986, Nicholas Lemann
observed, "President Reagan has commissioned a study of welfare reform, which is a polite
way of asking what we should do about the black underclass."56 While, in the 1960s poverty
was attacked under the rubric of the "war on poverty," the Reagan administration in its
reduction of civil rights legislation (discussed earlier) redefined the role of government
towards the poor. The underclass, specifically the Black inner city poor, was redefined as
undeserving. Reagan's exploitation of the welfare queen story - the woman with "80 names,


addresses, 12 Social Security cards” and whose “tax-free income is over $150,000...”57 — exemplifies this redefinition.

The result of the redefinition was the long-term poverty of the underclass, and the associated problems became identified as a Black condition and a condition that was not institutionally produced by capitalism nor by the epistemological limitations of the colorblind ideology. The conditions of the underclass were seen as a condition of race not class. More importantly,

The emergence of the underclass and of an expanding body of the black urban poor has created a growing perception of a society in which the poor are no longer linked to the larger social network; for many Americans, the bottom rung on a ladder no longer leads up — to middle-class well-being, status, or security. The black urban poor have increasingly come to constitute a divergent and threatening segment of society from which ties to the mainstream through work, neighborhood, and shared communal values have severed.58

The redefinition of the role of government towards the Black poor, and the racial undertones of crime in America, defined Black life purely in these underclass themes. The defining of Black life in underclass themes of welfare and crime have obscured the social mobility made by the Black middle class. However, Reagan’s (and later Bush’s) coding of underclass in racial terms, represented a continuation of the isolation of the Black middle class that began in the 1960s (as discussed in chapter 2). The fact that the Black poor represented the “divergent and threatening segment of society” and the increasing numbers of Blacks in high positions within government and corporate America represent how the political language has represented the dialectical process of the Black middle class and the

57 Edsall & Edsall, Chain Reaction, 148.

58 Ibid. 244. Emphasis mine.
Post-industrial poor/jobless Black. This dialectical process, the highly visible success of the Black middle class and the repression of the Black lower classes, completed the isolation of the Black middle class and began the symbolic incorporation of the Black middle class, even if on only partial and symbolic terms.

Conclusion: Clinton and Change?

In 1992, Bill Clinton’s campaign for the presidency was built upon the theme of change. The goal was to take America in a new direction after 12 years of Republican leadership. However, Clinton’s version of change meant eliminating the old “liberal” image of the Democratic Party, and becoming a moderate on many issues – in a sense becoming more like the Republican Party. Consequently, the question should be asked: was there a change, or just a change in personnel?

Clinton replicated many of the same issues proposed by Reagan in the 1980s. In signing, the Republican balanced budget agreement, Clinton, agreed to cut Medicare and Medicaid, and tax cuts for the upper classes. Clinton wanted to “end welfare as we know it” and implemented an excessively punitive version of welfare reform. He, too, wanted to appear tough on crime. Like Bush, Clinton put a Black face on crime, by returning to Arkansas, during the presidential campaign, to witness the execution of Rickey Ray Rector, a mentally incapacitated Black man. Moreover, the 1994 Crime Bill funded the construction of new prisons, and “expanded the death penalty without providing a mechanism to make sure that it would not be used in a racially discriminatory fashion.”

defended affirmative action with his “mend it don’t end it” philosophy and did not have a strong stance on California’s Proposition 209, which ended affirmative action in California.

In the end, Clinton presented a political position similar to the previous Republican administrations, yet he still received the Black vote.

Clinton inability to enact change stems from Ronald Reagan transformation of the political discourse on race in this country. Through his attack on civil rights, Reagan transformed the discourse, forcing the Democratic Party to take similar stances on controversial issues such as crime and affirmative action. More importantly, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton completed the shift from the isolation of the Black middle class in the 1960s and 1970s to their partial symbolic incorporation in the 1980s and 1990s. The Post-Industrial jobless/inner city young Black male and the welfare queen became the scapegoats for all the country’s ills. While, the Black middle class and their “traditional values” came to represent the American Dream, if only partially.

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EPILOGUE

"SAME SONG, JUST REMIXED" – THE CONTINUATION OF THE RACIAL CONTRACT

The question still remains: what does the Black middle class as political language mean for our present cultural system in the Post-Industrial society? The answer is that it represents a continuation of the Racial Contract, in which the terms of the contract have been altered. The political language of the Black middle class symbolizes the current evolution of the governing code of symbolic life and death, the binary opposition between the optimal conception of Man and its negation – the non-valued conception, that represent the organizing principle found in all cultures. For example in feudal Europe, symbolic life was represented by the clergy, because of their closeness to God in part due to their celibacy – the avoidance of the "sinful flesh." Whereas the laity was associated with symbolic death in part because of their relationship to the "sinful flesh."¹ Jacques Le Goff identified the schism between the pure and the impure stating, "The church became a society of bachelors which imprisoned lay society in marriage."² Within the cultural system of America, the categories of Free/Slave and White/Black have served to form the parameters of symbolic

¹ Mos Def, "Thieves in the Night," _Mos Def and Talib Kweli are BlackStar_, Rawkus Records, 1998


life and death. It has only been in the post-civil rights era that White/Black absolutes have been modified that has allowed for the modest incorporation of the Black middle class. The philosophical positions of Charles Mills and Sylvia Wynter provide insight into the importance of the symbolic and partial incorporation of the Black middle class into the American cultural system.

Charles Mills’ *The Racial Contract* proposes an alternative philosophical ground, apart from the tradition of social contract theorists such as Kant, Locke, Hobbes and Rousseau. The Racial Contract has moral, political, and epistemological dimensions, which explain “how society was created or crucially transformed....”4 The initial terms of the Racial Contract represented the cultural system that W.E.B. DuBois termed the “color line.” The policies of slavery, and segregation served as “icon[s] of an ostensibly pre-selected genetic value differential between human heredity variations, the representation of eugenic descent on whose basis the global middle classes legitimate their ontological hegemonic social status.”5 Through the coalescing of other status markers, European/Non-European (geography), civilized/barbarian (culture), and Christian/Non-Christian (religion), the idea of race (white/non-white) manifested itself within the Western cultural system. Thus, the problem since the 15th century has been the problem of the color line.6

However, the terms of the Racial Contract is constantly evolving, and ascension of the political discourse on the Black middle class represents a contemporary shift. A shift

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that has ended the formal existence of the Racial Contract based on “eugenic descent”, best represented by Jim Crow, lynching, and slavery. “The scope and terms of the social contract has been formally extended to apply to everyone, so that ‘persons’ is no longer exclusively coextensive with ‘Whites.’” 7 There has been an expansion of, what Helen Fein calls, the “sanctified universe of obligation” that “circle of people with reciprocal obligations to protect each other whose bonds arose from their relation to a deity or other sacred source of authority.” 8 This sacred universe has shifted from terms in which Being Human and American were solely determined along the White/Black variant to the transracially middle-classes and its negation, the Post-Industrial jobless of the inner cities primarily of Black descent.

The discourse of “individualism,” and “equal opportunity” as espoused by state authorities has led to the inclusion of the Black middle classes within this realm of obligation – even if only secondarily behind White women and other minorities. 9 This represents a transformation from the White/Black cultural system to one between the jobholders, including the Black middle class and the Black non-jobholders. The new “multicultural” 10 cultural system of jobholders and jobless is, in part, a result of the political language of the Black middle class. A discourse, as we have seen in the previous chapters, that has shifted from an internal Black community discourse, which addressed the responsibility of the Black

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7 Ibid. 73.


middle class, to a discourse that was used in the justification of the claims of reverse discrimination, such as in the *Wygant* case. Race, in this new form has allowed the Black middle class to represent a trend “toward a limited expansion of the privileged human population through the ‘whitening’ of the previously excluded group in question.” The cultural belief is “the Black middle class exists, but it is not a threat. It’s more like you [Whites] than you think and wants the same things you want (i.e. you need not fear the Other; he is you).” However, it must be remembered that this shift to the jobholder/jobless variant of the cultural system has not replaced the White/Black cultural system, just added a new dimension. The incorporation of the Black middle class into the sanctified realm is only partial, because as the OJ Simpson case exemplified, the realm can at any moment revert to the rigidly defined contours of “race.”

The new dimension created by the shift to ostensibly middle class terms has transformed the idea of race. The idea of race, prior to the dynamism of the 1960s was based on biological terms. Thus, the Western cultural system was built upon the terms of the perceived inferiority of *all* Blacks and the superiority of *all* Whites. However, since the revolution of the 1960s, a by-product of which was the growth of the Black middle class, the cultural organizing principle of race has been reshaped from the rigid biological definition to a less rigid “metaphysical” (non-biological/non-phenotypical) definition of race. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s represented a crisis to the eugenic model or, in Kuhnian

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11 Charles Mills, 78.

terms, paradigm, in which the shift to the multicultural variant was a coping mechanism to save and maintain the Racial Contract. Consequently, the "category of owners/jobholders are, of whatever race, assimilated to the category of "Whites," the opposed category of non-owners, and the non-jobholders are assimilated to the category of the 'young Black males.'"

As Jeremy Rifkin notes, the idea of being a jobholder is a measure of self-worth to the point that being jobless represents a symbolic death. As self-worth is defined in these terms so too is human worth. Therefore, the fact that capitalism's economic ethic can not been maintain by everyone, and is dependent upon poverty and joblessness is never seen as institutionally, nor culturally produced, but the Post-Industrial poor/jobless are seen as, what Michael Katz calls "the undeserving poor." People who have the dual outcast status as being poor/jobless and Black now serve the function that all Blacks served before the 1960s – the Conceptual Other, the position in which the order knows itself.

The shift from phenotypical definitions of race to a metaphysical one does not change the fact that the Racial Contract still best describes our present cultural system. The Black middle class' values have been equated with those of the dominant white community, while the Black lower class' values are seen as the cultural artifacts of all Black people an inherently racist position. For example, the Moynihan Report argued that Black lower class

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13 Wynter, "No Humans Involved," 55.


16 Wynter, "No Humans Involved," 60-68. As Wynter suggests in "A Black Studies Manifesto" all cultures are organized according to the governing codes of life and death, in which we are socialized human beings. Symbolic death represents the Conceptual Other within each cultural system, while, symbolic life represents the Conceptual Self. "A Black Studies Manifesto," Forum N.H.I. Knowledge for the 21st Century, Vol. 1, No 1 (Fall 1994), 3-11.
family structure was highly unstable, whereas the Black middle class family, similar to the white family, was very structured and stable.¹⁷ In addition, the discrimination that many members of the Black middle class face and the resultant anger,¹⁸ stem from the contradiction between the rhetoric of Black middle class incorporation into the previously denied realm of obligation and the perception of Black life being solely defined by the dysselected values associated to the Black lower classes. The Black middle class is perceived as an exception in comparison to most of the Black population, in fact, the political language concerning the Black middle class is one of normalcy – “just like Whites.” As one of Joe Feagin and Melvin Sikes’ respondents stated:

They [white coworkers] don’t see you or me and say this is a talented human being.... No, they say “He’s black, but” or “She’s black but.” There’s an exception. So to be black and be [a] successful contributor is to be an exception to what white folks see in other black folks.¹⁹

The “other black folks” are the Post-Industrial poor in our ghettos, shantytowns, and “Third Worlds.” It is this group that has the Black faces of Rodney King, Latasha Harlins, Abner Louima, and Amadou Diallo. Therefore, while the state’s racial rhetoric does not include the Black middle class, it does assign a Black face to the “underclass” and this has become necessary in order to advance the philosophical constructs of the Racial Contract. Because “it is now pretended that non-Whites [multicultural middle classes] are equal abstract persons who can be fully included in the polity merely by extending the scope of the moral operator,


¹⁹ Feagin and Sikes, Living with Racism, 163-164.
without any fundamental change in the arrangements that have resulted from the previous
system of explicit de jure racial privilege. 20

The Racial Contract, both past and contemporary versions, are maintained through
force and ideology. The force has been supplied by the slave catchers, lynch mobs and
police departments. The state sanctioned and supplied force is the most obvious sign of the
Racial Contract; however it is the ideological coercion that directly relates to the political
language of the Black middle class. 21

In 1933, Carter G. Woodson recognized the ideological dimensions needed to
preserve the Racial Contract. He stated: “The problem of holding the Negro down is
...easily solved. When you control a man’s thinking you do not have to worry about his
actions.” 22 Moreover, the Racial Contract is an epistemological contract, one that structures
behavior. Woodson queried: “Why not exploit, enslave, or exterminate a class that
everybody is taught to regard as inferior?” 23 We as a culture have not answered this
question. The Black middle class has been incorporated through the political language of
“equal opportunity” and “color-blind society,” yet their inclusion is reflexive of the exclusion
of the Post-Industrial poor/jobless Black. This cultural exclusion of the Post-Industrial
poor/jobless Black has led to the Rodney Kings, Amadou Diallos, and Abner Louimas and
the categorization of young Black males as “NHI” – No Humans Involved, and young Black
females as “welfare queens.”

20 Mills, 75. Emphasis in original.
21 Ibid. 83-89.
23 Ibid. 3.
This shift in the Racial Contract has created such confusion that we do not know if race is declining in significance, or that we live two nations – white and Black or Black middle class and Black underclass. Many Black intellectuals have failed to understand this nuance within the cultural system. Moreover, there is an uneasy silence, which James Baldwin declared as “not only criminal but suicidal,”\textsuperscript{24} in understanding the linkages between the incidents of police brutality (Rodney King and Abner Loumia), the prison-industrial complex, and Post-Industrial society and the dominance of the economic ethic. It is within the logic the cultural specific goal of “Material Redemption” that Post-industrial poor/jobless Black is seen as less than Human; thus exploitable and expendable. So much so, that political cry to control crime; functions as a command to eliminate Blacks of this undeserving category.\textsuperscript{25}

**The Responsibility of the Black Middle Class**

So, why should the Black middle class care? The answer is because they, who in many cases represent the definition of American success, still face racism and, according to Ellis Cose, are becoming increasingly angry.\textsuperscript{26} Part of this anger stems from the still real belief of Black inferiority. Another aspect of the anger of middle class Blacks is with the stereotype of Blackness and its association with the impoverished “underclass.” As sociologist Joe Feagin and Melvin Sikes state “no amount of hard work, money, and success can protect a black person from the destructive impact of racial stereotyping and


\textsuperscript{25} Wynter, “No Humans Involved,” 60-68.

discrimination.”27 However, the discrimination that is faced by the Black middle class is in no way co-classifiable with the horrors by many lower class Blacks in Post-Industrial America. One cannot say the lack of service in a restaurant is analogous with starvation. Despite the inability to co-classify, the discrimination faced by the Black middle class and the Black lower class are inextricably linked to the cultural representation of metaphysical Blackness, and the representation of Blacks within the American (Western) cultural system. Sylvia Wynter notes that representation and “its role in the processes of socialization [Fanon’s *Black Skin/White Masks*], and therefore, in the regulation both at the individual and collective levels of the ensemble of behaviors – affective, actional, and perceptual-cognitive – is central.”28 Because of the interconnected representations of the Black middle class and the Black lower class, and because the horrors faced by many lower class Blacks under the rubrics of “welfare reform,” “educational excellence,” and “law and order,” there is a need for a new version of uplift.

Uplift, since Emancipation, has been a staple of the Black intellectual tradition. It also had its internal contradictions, explained by the creation of a hierarchy based on cultural attributes to eliminate the hierarchy based on biological inferiority.29 Despite the contradictions, uplift had, and still has, a liberating potential. This new version of uplift must recognize the liberating potential of uplift, while beginning from a different point of departure than the previous version of uplift. The new point of departure must be cultural,

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29 See chapter one.
not focusing on cultural attributes or assimilation, but in terms of representation. Specifically, how cultural representation affect behavior. In the new version of uplift, the Black middle class must intervene in improving the day-to-day realities of poverty, which is faced by a disproportionate number of the Black lower class. Moreover, this new plan of uplift must refrain from examining the cultural attributes of lower class Blacks; they must mediate the effects of the cultural system. This means providing educational and economic opportunities for the Black lower class, while, not “blaming the victim” for their circumstance. In addition, there must be some critique of the cultural system and its represenatations that has produced poverty, and mis-education, and Black intellectuals can provide this analysis.

In the Post-Industrial society, in which capital has freed itself from labor, the poor of all races are expendable because non-reliance on their labor. However, we as Black intellectuals must begin to, in the words of Zygmunt Bauman, “marry our thought"³⁰ to the conditions of the Post-Industrial poor if we are to continue the transformation of society in which Human life is more valuable than the economic bottom line. The political language on the Black middle class represents the state's attempt to co-opt the cultural transformation began by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Consequently, the focus on a colorblind society, and the debate on affirmative action has rendered the Post-Industrial poor/jobless and the cultural system, which produced them “invisible.”³¹ According to Zygmunt Bauman,


³¹ As Ralph Ellison stated in *Invisible Man*, "That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality." Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, (New York: Signet Books, 1947), 7.
"the present day poor, who are not embourgeoisied, privatized or incorporated, are not trusted with the inheritance of historical agency; indeed they have not been offered one...."\textsuperscript{32}

Because the Post Industrial poor has been rendered silent, all Blacks, as Toni Morrison indicates, are "not free, merely licensed."\textsuperscript{33}

The Racial Contract is the defining structure for Western (now global) culture. Although, the Black/White variant of eugenic descent was altered through the dynamism of the 1960s, the hybridly eugenic and multicultural version of the Racial Contract needs a similar movement in order to complete the cultural transformation begun in the 1960s. The first step must be to understand the affects of systems of classification, in which the political language on the Black middle class is a part.

Carter G. Woodson made an epistemological break in recognizing the link between the misrepresentation of Blacks and Whites and the subsequent effect on their behaviors. The political language on the Black middle class represents the metaphysical variant of race, such that the destructive behaviors aimed at all Blacks are now focused (primarily) on the Post Industrial poor/jobless, explified by the Rodney King, Abner Louima, and Natasha Harlins incidents. A potential starting point for any substantial cultural transformation must be the recognition that under the founding premise of the Racial Contract, Man (the cultural construction of the Western episteme) has been equated with the universal (and therefore not culturally bound) determinants of symbolic life (Whites and the multicultural middle classes). However, as Sylvia Wynter notes, at no time, has Man been isomorphic with the Human.

\textsuperscript{32} Bauman, 179.

The potential system of classification of Man as coterminous with Humankind represents an alternative paradigm. This alternative paradigm could transform the Racial Contract, but it the transformation must begin from the perspective of the Post Industrial poor/jobless, not the partially incorporated Black middle class, because those outside the normative prescriptions have the potential to change. It is the perspective of the NHI that can begin the transformation of the Post-Industrial society, just as the perspective of Blacks transformed society in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{34} The first step in the transformation is a new version of uplift that begins from the perspective of the Post-Industrial poor/jobless Black, and attempts to mediate the effects of the cultural system. Moreover, a new version of uplift would "have to engage both in a redefinition of the relation between the concrete individual men and women and the socializing process of the systems of symbolic representations generated from the codes that govern all human purposes and behaviors...."\textsuperscript{35} This is the new responsibility of the Black middle class.


\textsuperscript{35} Wynter, "1492: A New World View," 47.
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