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Political Accommodation: The Effects of Booker T. Washington's Leadership and  
Legacy on Tuskegee University and The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment

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A thesis  
presented to  
the faculty of the Department of History  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Masters of Arts in History

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by  
Dominique DuBois Gilliard  
May 2010

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Dr. Elwood Watson, Committee Chair  
Dr. Dorothy Drinkard-Hawkshawe  
Dr. Tom D. Lee II

Keywords: American History, American South, African American History

## ABSTRACT

Political Accommodation: The Effects of Booker T. Washington's Leadership and  
Legacy on Tuskegee University and The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment

by

Dominique DuBois Gilliard

In this re-evaluation of the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, I identify the original causes that made the Study emerge, examine why the intent of this research shifted over time, reveal the manner in which the Study was conducted, expose the role the government played in the manipulation of the Experiment, and, finally, investigate the ways, as well as the reasons, for the selection of the participants involved in the Study. After exploring the Experiment itself, I investigate the lasting effects of it on the community in which it occurred and the ways in which it further affected the relationship between African Americans and the United States Government. I explore the reasons for the involvement of Tuskegee Institute. Also, the philosophies of its founder, Booker T. Washington, are examined to discover the rationale behind the Institution's participation in an Experiment, which eventually became harmful. Finally, I hope to reveal why Tuskegee has been historically omitted from any blame in the Study.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to start by thanking my entire thesis committee, beginning with the chair of my committee Dr. Watson. Dr. Watson guided me through this experience of thesis writing, provided invaluable service by keeping me on track, informing me of all deadlines, assisting in the refinement of my writing, and facilitating the development of the crux of my thesis. Dr. Drinkard-Hawkshawe was also helpful to this project. Her comprehensive knowledge of history, especially African American history, was pertinent to the fruition of this thesis. Additionally, Dr. Lee's expertise in southern history aided me tremendously in setting the stage for the subject matter and allowed me to contextualize southern culture as well as practice during the time period covered in this thesis.

I would also like to credit and thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ because without him none of this would have been possible. Additionally, I want to express my thankfulness and love to my family who has supported me in every avenue of my life, especially educationally. Their support made this academic milestone in my life possible. Next, I want to thank my closest friends and loved ones whose prayers, financial support, encouraging words, and gifts of love assisted in carrying me across this academic finish line. When I doubted myself, became stagnant, or simply became frustrated and weary, they picked me up.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my loving grandmother Deloris Williams. Her emphasis on higher education has been a driving force for hundreds of people, including my entire family; and although she is no longer here with me to witness the fulfillment of one of our collaborative educational dreams, I know that she is looking down from above and cherishing this moment.

## EPIGRAPH

“The United States government did something that was wrong – deeply, profoundly, morally wrong. It was an outrage to our commitment to integrity and equality for all our citizens ... clearly racist.”

-Bill Clinton’s comments from the steps of the White House, in his 1997 apology to the surviving participants of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study and their families.

“Nothing learned will prevent, find, or cure a single case of infectious syphilis or bring us closer to our basic mission of controlling venereal disease in the United States.”

-Dr. James B. Lucas: assistant chief of the Venereal Disease Branch of the U.S. Public Health Service.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis derives from a lifetime of interest in African American studies, with a particular emphasis on the history on black politics, education, and social inclusion within the southern United States. As an undergraduate, I double majored in U.S. history and African American studies; and it became evident to me that it is impractical as well as academically irresponsible for someone to study one subject without the other because the reality of it is that the two disciplines are so intertwined that it is virtually impossible to come to a comprehensive understanding of either subject without consulting and essentially intermarrying the two disciplines.

I remember that this particular study began when I was sitting in my living room watching the film *Miss Evers' Boys* during the last year of my undergraduate education. This was the first time that I was actually exposed to information regarding the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, and I just remember sitting there on the couch numb after the movie was over. I could not believe what happened in the Study, the deceitfulness behind it, and all of the lives that were unnecessarily lost during this meaningless Study. I began contemplating several questions after finding out the horrific details of this tragic event in American history. Moreover, I remember how the longer I sat there, the more questions began to formulate in my mind, digging deeper under the surface of the Study, until I mentally began to scratch at what I believed to be the foundational questions that needed to be asked and answered when trying to evaluate a historical tragedy of such proportions.



The first question that I sought to answer was: how such a significant event in the history of this country could be omitted from the history books of the nation's educational curriculum? This question fueled a burning desire inside me and led me to try to find out how many people this historical omission had affected over time as well as how many people, despite a conscious attempt to conceal this event, actually knew that this Experiment had taken place, the details of it, and the expansive time span it covered.

The next question I wanted to investigate was: of the people who were actually aware of the Study, how many of them truly were aware of the gruesome details concerning the medical procedures and physical torment to which the subjects of this Study were subjected? Additionally, how many people knew the extent to which the conductors of the Study were willing to go in order to keep their "Study" alive and concealed from the American public?

So I began to ask around, I made inquiries among family members, peers, teachers, and a number of other people throughout my surrounding community and received discouraging responses. Most did not know what the Tuskegee Syphilis Study was, others asserted that they had heard of it, but when I probed deeper into their factual knowledge concerning the subject almost collectively no one was able to produce any substantial information concerning the events that occurred. This both disturbed and inspired me.

I now knew what it was that had to be done and I also realized that it was something that had needed to be done well before I came along, but for some reason or another it seemed to me that it never was. I was convinced that I was not the first person to have heard about the Experiment and consequently began to struggle with these sorts

of questions. Despite my certainty in this regard, it was obvious that if I were not the first person to ask these questions, there seemed to be a lack of people who were concerned enough to try to correct the problems that existed in the historical records. In regards to the dissemination of this pertinent information I refused to be another person who fell into the category of uninterested historians. So I sought to shed some light on this dark event in our history's past as well as bring awareness to those who have been left in the dark concerning the details of how, why, and when this medical disaster occurred.

So as my inspiration for the subject matter grew, I began exploring the existing literature to find out what kinds of research had been conducted on this event, and I was relieved to find that there had been some substantial research done on the subject matter. So I began delving into the existing research, yearning to learn all that I could about the Study and how such a Study ever came into existence. During this time, I was entering the second semester of my fourth year of my undergraduate education. That spring, I enrolled in a course within my African American studies major, entitled *African American Political Thought*. This course changed the way I understood politics and the power, ideologies, and methodologies associated with it. This course also fundamentally altered the way I understood the Tuskegee Syphilis Study and how it has been historically recorded.

Amongst many other things, the primary focus of the course was to investigate and focus on the political ideologies of African American leaders who emerged during the course of United States history. One of the leaders studied in the course was Booker T. Washington, who was the founder of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute

(now known as Tuskegee University).<sup>1</sup> We learned that Washington is considered one of the greatest leaders and one of the most respected African Americans ever to emerge. As a class, we explored his political and social ascension into his role as a racial leader at the turn of the twentieth century. Upon learning about Washington, I was intrigued to learn how he, as the founder of the University, would have felt about the Study that would eventually take place on the campus that he founded. So I independently began to dig a little deeper into Washington's story. Upon my investigation of Washington's life, I was dismayed by his personal politics of accommodation and his willingness to work both with as well as within the white power structure that existed in the South during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I read the pro-Washington historians who endorsed him as a political genius who "wore the mask" for his white philanthropist, only to become a figure similar to Robin Hood; a man who took from the rich giving back to the poor, in this case his own race.<sup>2</sup> However, as my research became more extensive, this analysis did not match the existing evidence.

There is no doubt that Washington aided the race by bringing about some tangible advancements for his people as a racial leader. There were also elements of Washington's leadership that proved to be detrimental and severely crippled African American strivings towards socioeconomic advances. Washington's worldview and political policies promoted an inferiority complex within African Americans, endorsed a submissive attitude towards whites, and advocated for the race's compliance with the unjust Jim Crow laws of the land. Washington's model of accommodating illustrated to African

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<sup>1</sup> Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography* (New Jersey: Carol Publishing Company, 1997), 107.

<sup>2</sup> Adolph L. Reed Jr. *W.E.B. DuBois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 59.

Americans that the best way to advance in society was to simply acquiesce to racial injustice and accept treatment that relegated members of the race to inferior statuses. These social attitudes were designed to keep African Americans submissive and to retard the development of an emerging race after emancipation from slavery, and Washington didn't mind championing these detrimental ideologies and methodologies because it simultaneously meant the advancement of his own personal, political, and economical career.<sup>3</sup>

Upon coming to this realization, I began to re-evaluate the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment. I now wanted to know: Why was it that the university was willing to participate in the Experiment with the Federal Government? Why would a university founded by an African American legend, cultivated to foster racial uplift, participate in an Experiment that was so disastrous for the race? How did Washington's example and model of political and social accommodation to the white power structure, philanthropists, and entities that did not have the best interest or intentions for the African American masses, but were willing to endorse him personally affect the University's willingness to participate in the Tuskegee Syphilis Study? What were the incentives that the University and its leaders received for participating in the Study? These are all questions that began to flood my mind, questions that have never been asked before, or at least not asked and answered adequately, and also questions that I will attempt to answer throughout the research of this study.

The purpose of my research is to reassess Booker T. Washington's politics of accommodation, and to explore the effects that his model of submission had on the way that Tuskegee was run after his death and throughout the duration of the Tuskegee

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<sup>3</sup> Reed Jr., *W.E.B. DuBois and American Political Thought*, 68.

Syphilis Experiment. These issues are key to understanding the Study, because without Tuskegee's involvement, the Study would have been impossible to carry out. Tuskegee served as a facility for the Study, provided materials used in the Study, nurses, and most importantly, a reputable name within the African American community that served as a key to convincing members of the Study that the Experiment was a legitimate one to participate in. Tuskegee's significance as a recruiter for this Study cannot be separated from their intrinsic association with Washington. Washington and Tuskegee were virtually synonymous and both were renowned for working on behalf of African American interest, especially within Macon County, Alabama where Tuskegee is located. Consequently, Washington, his politics, his philanthropic affiliations, and submission to the status quo for blacks in the South are all essential elements to understanding the possible implications which his leadership had on the Tuskegee Syphilis Study.

Chapter 2 briefly explores the tumultuous history of African Americans in the South. It also lays the groundwork for the Study by exploring some the inequalities that existed throughout society. This chapter investigates areas such as healthcare, finances, access to resources, and social inclusion that all caused African Americans to disproportionately suffer from diseases. This was particularly true in the case of venereal diseases, especially when it came to syphilis and the epidemic that struck the country during the early 1900s.

Chapter 3 introduces the rationale behind the Tuskegee Syphilis Study and illustrates some of the initial efforts to get the Study started. It also provides an overview of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study itself, illustrating how the Study was formulated, how the initial intent of the Study shifted over time, and how the Study was ultimately

implemented. This chapter investigates the federal government's role in the Study and the various levels of deceit that it sunk to in order to keep the Study concealed from the public. It also illustrates the essential role that the Tuskegee Institute played in the Study as well as in the recruitment of participants from the various communities throughout Macon County, Alabama.

Chapter 4 places a particular emphasis on the life, education, mentorship, and ascension to power of Booker T. Washington. This chapter takes a microscopic look into his formational relationship with General Samuel Armstrong, briefly looks into the connection and establishment of many of Washington's most notable philanthropists, and explores the path that he chose to advocate for African Americans in their quest for sociopolitical uplift as a race at the turn of the twentieth century. This chapter also discusses the founding of the Tuskegee Institute as well as how and why Washington was selected as its president.

Chapter 5 looks into the framework of what became known as industrial education. Looking particularly at how industrial education correlated with the white supremacist's agenda of relegating African Americans to statuses amongst the lower levels of society and how it was formulated as an educational methodology with the intent of keeping the African American race submissive, apolitical, and stagnant. It also explores how the politics of accommodation, especially of Washington, played an essential role in masking the correlation between the two groups and their common interest. This chapter looks into some of the lives and political agendas of some of the creators of the pedagogy of industrial education. This chapter also compares and

contrasts Washington's political, social, and educational ideologies and plans for the race against his leading opponent W.E.B. DuBois.

Chapter 6 introduces Washington's successor at Tuskegee and examines his relationship with Washington, his ideological influences, academic training, and political philosophy.

Chapter 7 looks at the way the Tuskegee Syphilis Study has been historically remembered and recorded. This chapter concludes by looking at what this Study has meant to African Americans, their perception of the federal government, federal agencies such as the Public Health Service (PHS), and their willingness to participate in medical research. Finally, I discuss the effects of these three issues on African Americans as a whole, with an emphasis on the effect that their stained relationship with the federal government has on their health and social status within the country.

## CHAPTER 2

### RETRACING THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE DOWNTRODDEN: RECAPPING THE TURMULTUOUS HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES

In order to fully understand the significance of the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment and its location, there must be a thorough understanding of the tumultuous past that African Americans have endured in the United States, particularly in the South. While most people know about the inhumane treatment that the race was subjected to while being enslaved for over two hundred fifty years, unfortunately this is the extent of most peoples' understanding and knowledge about African American history in this country prior to the 1930s when this Study begins. Therefore, it is imperative to consider a number of other events that relegated blacks to positions of subordination throughout their existence in America and to realize how these factors fundamentally contributed to the detrimental social situations that ultimately paved the way for the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment.

African Americans in the South have an extended and historic record of oppression. Blacks were brought to the southern states from Africa for the purpose of enslavement. Two laws distinguished slavery in the South from any other form of slavery in the world. The first was legislation regarding what came to be known as chattel slavery and the second was legislation that deemed slaves as property instead of human beings. In chattel slavery, all children birthed by female slaves were forced to take on the race of their mothers as well as their mother's status as slave. This was to be the case regardless of the race or status of the child's father; this law gave masters the dual benefit of using



female slaves for their sexual satisfaction and producing more hands to work their fields through reproduction with their female slaves. Additionally, it was ruled that slaves were to be classified as the property of their master. This ruling meant that slaves were not considered people or citizens, which effectively said that they had no rights. These two distinctions regarding slavery in the American South enabled the cultivation of an exclusively African American laboring pool upon which the foundations of the southern economy were built. Consequently, as a result of legislation passed there was a significant expansion of the institution of slavery within the South. Many blacks who originally came to North America as indentured servants were not granted their release after working their contracted time. Additionally, other blacks were brought into the country to replace white indentured servants, other ethnic immigrants, and prisoners of war, who had all previously served as agricultural workers prior to this point in the region's labor history.

Similarly, the ruling defining all slaves as property made it legally possible for slaves to be owned by their masters, transported across state lines, passed down from generation to generation, and be sexually exploited by masters who could produce children with any slave woman whom they desired, whenever they desired, and for as long as they desired because she was legally considered their property. Legislation of this nature prompted masters to participate in sexual liaisons with their female slaves because it above all else benefited them financially. It did so by cutting the cost of acquiring laborers by alleviating masters of the financial burden of having to purchase another slave, because now all they had to do to acquire another field hand is to reproduce one through a sexual act, be it consensual or forced. This was the case because the law stated

that upon the birth of the child, it would automatically inherit the status of a slave from its mother.

After the abolition of slavery, with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, African Americans went from being an enslaved race to a marginalized people. They still were not considered or counted as full citizens, were not allowed to vote, and were seen and treated as an inferior racial group. Dr. R.W. Williams of the Yazoo County Health Department summed up these feelings articulating the view of racial inferiority to which blacks within the South were subjected. “I have one criticism to make about the treatment of the Negro in the South” Wrote Williams, “he is babied too much . . . . It is my firm belief that if the Negro at this time was cut off from the White race, the majority would starve to death. His sense of responsibility is practically nil.”<sup>4</sup> Due to this common perception, at this time African Americans were seen as a subordinate group. Moreover, the African American race was released from slavery into the free world with absolutely no resources and without the benefit of being equipped with even the most basic academic education as a result of years of enslavement, where it was illegal to teach a slave to read or write.

After slavery, the next significant event that occurred in the history of African Americans transpired during the eighteenth century with the evolution of what is now known as scientific racism. Scientific racism derived from the period of time known as the Enlightenment and it served as a foundational rationale for stripping African Americans of their claims of humanity and quest for equality. The Enlightenment is a term used to describe a phase in Western philosophy and cultural life centered upon the

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<sup>4</sup>Allan M. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 158.

eighteenth century, where scientific reasoning was elevated and advocated as the primary source and basis of authority within society. This movement ultimately aspired to replace the church and religion with scientific reasoning as the rationalization of God's laws in the natural order of things. The origins of the development can be traced to Paris, France and Authur de Gobineau.<sup>5</sup> While this movement originated in France, it quickly spread through much of Europe and eventually migrated over into the United States, where it played a paramount role in the composition of the Declaration of Independence and the rise of scientific racism.

From within the theorists and teachers of the Enlightenment emerged a group of social scientists who began to turn to scientific quantification and statistics in an attempt to construct law-like assumptions about societal and human development. When this shift in scientific rationale occurred, racial issues began to receive the greatest attention and the findings from these "scientific studies" were produced and published widely in medical journals across the country. In 1735 Carolus Linnaeus, who was a biological taxonomist, documented in his essay "Systema Nature" that human beings should be classified by race, stating that there were four racial classifications: white, black, red, and yellow. Linnaeus concluded his theory of racial classification by ascribing traits to each racial group saying, "whites [have proven] to be innovative and of keen mind, [while] blacks were lazy and careless."<sup>6</sup> While this was one of the first studies to do so, the concept of each race encompassing and exhibiting different mental and moral traits became a central part of this new scientific discourse.

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<sup>5</sup> William H. Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865-1954* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001), 25.

<sup>6</sup> Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 25.

Some of the earliest evidence of the implementation of these theories in the United States comes from the writings of Benjamin Rush, who was one of the founding fathers as well as signers of the Declaration of Independence in addition to being an acclaimed medical doctor. Rush also served as a surgeon general in the Revolutionary Army and a professor of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. He often spoke out on the question of racial morality, and in an article written in 1799 entitled “Observations Intended to Favor a Supposition That the Black Color of the Negroes Is Derived from the Leprosy” he articulated his views on “black pathology” suggesting that “the big lip, flat nose, woolly hair, and black skin [of African Americans & African descendents as a whole] were the characteristics of lepers. He also wrote about insensitive nerves, uncommon strength, and venereal diseases.”<sup>7</sup> As a an esteemed medical doctor, Rush’s words were very influential throughout society and his belief that blacks needed to be civilized and restored to morality through righteous living would go a long way in helping to justify paternal relations between whites and blacks through systems of oppression such as slavery and eventually Jim Crow.

While Rush was one of the first American scientists to offer “scientific” justifications for what was seen as the inferiority of African Americans, he was far from the last. Other physicians were involved in similar racial studies that enabled and emboldened the white power structure; these physicians included Dr. John H. Van Evrie, Dr, Samuel Cartwright, Dr, Edward Jarvis and Dr. Louis Agassiz. Furthermore, In 1853 Van Evrie wrote that his research revealed that black people were diseased, unnatural, and possessed impeded locomotion, weakened vocal organs, coarse hands, hypersensitive skin, narrow longitudinal heads, narrow foreheads, and underdeveloped brains and

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<sup>7</sup> Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 27.

nervous systems.<sup>8</sup> Van Erie concluded that the combination of these traits constituted racial differences and proved inferiority.

Similarly, in 1851 Samuel Cartwright in his “Report on the Disease and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race” diagnosed blacks as having insignificant supplies of red blood cells, smaller brains, and excessive nerves, which lead to what he called the “debasement of minds in blacks.” Furthermore, Cartwright asserted that “the physical exercise provided by slavery would help increase the lung capacity and blood functions [of African Americans]. He believed that “slaves, sometimes were afflicted with ‘drapetomania,’ a disease [which he created and claimed mentally disabled them] making them want to run away. The prescription for ‘drapetomania’ he argued, was care and kindness, [from whites, who were to supervise them through paternalism, but he also asserted that] the whip should not be spared should kindness fail.”<sup>9</sup> Overtly racist studies and theories such as these continued to be produced and published by physicians into the early 1920s when the Tuskegee Syphilis Study began. These studies provided a basis and foundation for racism, lynching, and Jim Crow. These studies dehumanized African Americans deeming members of the race as abnormal, inferior, and scientifically as well as medically inferior to white Americans. Consequently, these studies served as justification for excluding African Americans from statuses of free citizens. Therefore, the pseudo medical diagnosis of racist doctors emboldened the white power structure by providing what was seen and accepted as factual evidence of African Americans inability to be treated as freedmen. The inaccurate diagnosis played a key role in keeping the power and control of resources exclusively in the hands of whites by ensuring that

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<sup>8</sup> Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 28.

<sup>9</sup> Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 28.

African Americans would remain excluded from politics, economic advancement, educational achievement, and vocational progress.

Moreover, when reviewing the history of African Americans in the South, there must also be a comprehensive consideration of two additional factors, the first of which is the effect that Reconstruction had on southern society. The second is the change in the value placed on black lives after they were released from slavery. Grasping the racial history of African Americans in the South is imperative in order to comprehend the reasons lynching became so prevalent in the region and to understand the impact that this fatal practice had on the black population and race. The Reconstruction period turned the South and its traditional political practices upside down. This brief period of time from 1865 to 1877 was a time of African American empowerment and consequently a time of retention for the pre-existing white power structure which had ruled the South. This infuriated white southerners who were politically displaced and socially silenced. Once Reconstruction ended, the white population of the South regained control of the government and southern society holistically. After federal troops left the South in 1877, white southerners, who did not appreciate the federal government's intervention in their region of the country, retaliated.

Consequently, southern white rulers did not extend legal protections and privileges that were supposed to be available to all of the region's populace. Instead they chose to alienate African Americans and restrict these privileges solely to whites. The author and historian Jacqueline Royster says in her anthology entitled *Southern Horrors*, that: "the post-Reconstruction period is defined largely by the ways that social and political practices began to shift and settle after Reconstruction, when federal troops were

withdrawn from the South and local governments began to Institute, or in many cases reinstitute, laws and practices that took away liberties that had been achieved for African Americans by means of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments.”<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, after the end of the Civil War and the legal end of slavery in 1865, the class and position of African Americans in southern society were in flux. Blacks still were not citizens, yet they were no longer slaves. This undefined status within society left blacks in the South in a peculiar situation. They were now stuck in a region of the country where they were no longer valued because they could no longer be exploited by white southerners for unpaid labor.

According to Ida B. Wells, they would find this new system of control in the 1870s through the terrorist practice of lynching: “In slave times the Negro was kept subservient and submissive by the frequent and severity of scourging, but, with freedom, a new system of intimidation came into vogue; the Negro [now] was not only whipped and scourged; he was killed.”<sup>11</sup> In an attempt to legitimize and enforce this new system of terror and intimidation, southern whites developed new forms of enforcement to patrol and control the region. Royster tells how several new organizations were developed in the South to enforce the new system of control which white southerners created saying: “the South in the 1870s gave rise to secret terrorist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan (first organized in 1866), the Knights of the White Camelia, the Red Shirts, and the White Line gained momentum. These groups specialized in mutilating, intimidating, and even murdering African Americans and anyone else whom they perceived to be in opposition

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<sup>10</sup> Jacqueline Jones Royster. *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1997), 4.

<sup>11</sup> Ida B. Wells. “Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases,” in [Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900.] ed. Jacqueline Jones Royster (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1997),1.

in any way to their beliefs and desires. During this period, lynching and other forms of mob violence began to escalate.”<sup>12</sup> Lynching had not been a problem for blacks prior to emancipation because blacks were still enslaved and as the following quote from Royster indicates, slaves were simply too valuable and profitable to kill.

The lynching of slaves was rare, first and foremost because it would result in a loss of property and profit. Obviously, it was more profitable to sell slaves than to kill them. Second, there was more advantages to planters when slaves were executed within the law, as planters were compensated for their lost “property.” Third, the lynching of slaves served to under-mind the power base of the South’s wealthy, white, landowning aristocracy. In effect, mob violence against slaves would have transferred the power of life and death from the hands of planters to the hands of the mob, whose numbers were quite likely to include non-elite whites as well. Such a transfer of power would have loosened the systems of control, the general stronghold of the landed aristocrat over both economic and political life. The lynching of African Americans before the Civil War, therefore, was exceptional indeed.<sup>13</sup>

From the time period of 1880 to 1930, approximately 723 whites who were sympathetic to the African American agenda of freedom and equality as well as nearly 5,000 blacks were lynched. This period of time became known as the “Nadir Period” for African Americans after this phrase was coined by Rayford Logan. Logan, who wrote the book *The Negro in American Life and Thought*, defines the Nadir period as the period in United States history at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. According to many historians, racism in the United States was worse during this time than at any period before or since. During this period, African Americans lost many of the civil rights gains they made during the Reconstruction period. At the conclusion of the Reconstruction period, there was an increase in segregation, racial discrimination, and expressions of white supremacy. Two of the most notable expressions of racial dissention

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<sup>12</sup> Royster, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings*, 8

<sup>13</sup> Royster, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings*, 8



following this period were lynchings and race riots.<sup>14</sup> During the post Civil War period, lynching became a widespread method by which whites sought to control blacks. Marian Horan says that, “lynching was the practice of citizens taking the law into their own hands to end the lives of other citizens who stepped outside of social norms.”<sup>15</sup> Horan further describes lynching as “a systematic weapon of terror against African Americans, white and black Republicans, and anyone else who challenged the construction of a new, white supremacist, southern regime.”<sup>16</sup>

Lynching was a devastating punishment used by the white power structure against African Americans who were perceived to have stepped out of their anticipated place of submission, and whites who had become too sympathetic to the African Americans’ fight to end injustice. According to Ginzberg: “burnings and hangings (which lynching constituted) were spectacles, announced in advance, attended by whites including women and children, and covered on assignment by newspaper reporters in a manner not unlike contemporary coverage of sporting events.”<sup>17</sup> The practice of lynching was a systematic tool used by the southern whites to ensure the success of their reassembled white power structure after Reconstruction. Historians Lucius Baker, Mack Jones, and Katherine Tate combined to write the book *African Americans and the American Political System*, where they say that “violence [such as lynching] and the threat of violence were used to

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<sup>14</sup> Rayford Whittingham Logan. *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901* (New York: Dial Press, 1954), 23.

<sup>15</sup> Horan, Marian. Anti-Lynching Bill: “How Did Black Women in the NAACP Promote the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, 1918-1923?” available from the women’s social movements site: <http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/> <http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/lynch/intro.htm>; Internet; accessed (November 18, 2007), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Horan, Anti-Lynching Bill: available from the women’s social movements site: <http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/> <http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/lynch/intro.htm>; Internet; accessed (November 18, 2007), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Ralph Ginzberg. *100 Years of Lynching* (New York: Lancer publishing, 1962), 46.

intimidate and dissuade blacks from political activism.”<sup>18</sup> This system of domination created fear in southern blacks, made them apolitical, and ensured that the Jim Crow system prevailed and flourished. The whites’ use of terror accomplished its purpose. “By 1901, the last black congressman had left office, and the state and local governing bodies were rapidly reclaimed by their lily-white complexion.”<sup>19</sup>

Ida B. Wells, who served as one of the most influential opponents of lynching, spoke of this Nadir Period in her legendary work *A Red Record* saying that prior to this period, “the slave was rarely killed; he was too valuable; it was easier and quite as effective, for discipline or revenge, to sell him Down South. But Emancipation came and the vested interests of the white man in the Negro’s body were lost. The white man had no right to scourge the emancipated Negro, still less to kill him. But many southern whites’ had been educated for so long in that school of practice, that it “made right.” their disdain in drawing strict lines of action in dealing with the Negro”<sup>20</sup> This tragic period of time became so dangerous for blacks in the South, many decided to leave for what they saw as the safer alternatives of living in the North as well as the West, in what is now known as the Great Migration.

During the Great Migration, many blacks chose to relocate, with most migrating to Oklahoma, Kansas, Illinois, New York, and Michigan.<sup>21</sup> This period of time represented the first mass exodus for blacks in American history and the period of the Great Migration coincided with the first calls for black nationhood through the Black

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<sup>18</sup> Lucius Barker, Mack Jones, and Katherine Tate. *African Americans and the American Political System* 4<sup>th</sup> ed., (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc. 1999), 17.

<sup>19</sup> Barker, *African Americans and the American Political System*, 17.

<sup>20</sup> Ida B. Wells “Red Record,” in [Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti Lynching of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900.] ed. Jaqueline Jones Royster (Boston and New York Bedford St. Martin’s, 1997), 1.

<sup>21</sup> “Great Migration,” available from PBS [www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/reference/articles/great\\_migration.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/reference/articles/great_migration.html): Internet: accessed (November 18, 2007).

Nationalist Movements.<sup>22</sup> Both movements encouraged blacks to leave the South for an opportunity for a better life in the West, the North, or in a return to their homeland of Africa, where they would be respected and treated as human beings. According to historian and author Bettye Collier-Thomas: “In May 1879, black leaders from fourteen states gathered in Nashville, Tennessee, and proclaimed that ‘colored people’ should immigrate to those states and territories where they can enjoy all the rights which are guaranteed by the laws and Constitution of the United States.”<sup>23</sup>

Black leaders such as Benjamin "Pap" Singleton and Ida B. Wells-Barnett supported the declaration and called upon their supporters to do the same. Wells, one of the most vocal black leaders to endorse black migration out of the South, used her pamphlets to voice her reasons and logic behind her stance. Her calls proved to be influential, as evidenced by the *Encyclopedia of Chicago* which defines The Great Migration as “a long-term movement of African Americans from the South to the urban North, which transformed Chicago and other northern cities between 1916 and 1970. Chicago attracted slightly more than 500,000 of the approximately 7 million African Americans who left the South during these decades. Before this migration, African Americans constituted 2 percent of Chicago's population; by 1970 they were 33 percent.”<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the inner city populations of most of these states are still largely occupied by African Americans today. Many of these occupants are the descendants of those who moved North and West during the Great Migration.

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<sup>22</sup> John T. McCartney. *Black Power Ideologies: An Essay in African American Political Thought* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 27-33.

<sup>23</sup> Bettye Collier-Thomas. *Sisters in the Stuggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement* (New York University Press, 2001), 23.

<sup>24</sup> “Great Migration,” available from the *Encyclopedia of Chicago*.  
<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/545.html>; Internet; accessed (November 18, 2007).

Thus, when considering the social position and mentality of African Americans entering into the 1930s, it is essential to recognize the political, legislative, intellectual, social, economic, and hegemonic monopoly that whites had throughout the South. Holistically, the societal advantages that white southerners enjoy and the exclusive access they had to most of the regions resources created severe discrepancies between the two racial groups in almost every aspect of life, but especially in regards to health, educational, finances, and politics. Nowhere was this more evident than in Macon County, Alabama where blacks comprised eighty-two percent of the population, and most barely earned a living as sharecroppers.<sup>25</sup> These demographics would prove to be critical in the Public Health Service's (PHS) attempt to Study and understand syphilis, in their efforts to stymie the disease that was spreading throughout the country, and in particular, the rural South, like wildfire.

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<sup>25</sup>Lynn M. Harter, Ronald J. Stephens, Phyllis M. Japp, "President Clinton's Apology for the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment: A Narrative of Remembrance, Redefinition, and Reconciliation. *Howard Journal of Communication* 11:11 (2000):19-34.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE EVOLUTION OF A GOVERNMENT-SANCTIONED MEDICAL APARTHEID:

#### DETAILS OF THE TUSKEEGE SYPHILIS EXPERIMENT

In the early part of the twentieth century, the majority of Americans believed that venereal diseases such as syphilis were strictly a result of immorality, sexual promiscuity, and unethical choices. This flawed conclusion and logic overshadowed some of the main causes that were class restrictions and economic constraints. Consequently, many Americans did not realize that a substantial number of syphilitics contracted the disease through means that had nothing to do with moral failings, including a child who was born with the disease because his or her parents contracted it before the child's birth, the use of unsanitary drinking water, and the use/reuse of infected or recycled needles without proper sterilization. Consequently, the view of venereal disease as a moral issue, coupled with the derogatory view of blacks as a race, was enough for most Americans to make their own correlation between the higher rates of syphilis among African Americans.<sup>26</sup>

Due to the prevailing view of the statistical evidence and blacks as both morally disreputable and inferior to whites, PHS doctors envisioned conducting a Study that would investigate the long-term effects of syphilis on African Americans. The first PHS Study conducted on African Americans to determine the prevalence of syphilis amongst members of the race took place in 1907 in Bolivar, Mississippi.<sup>27</sup> This was the first of many studies that would be classified under the Wasserman Surveys. These Surveys originated as a pigment fixation test in which several blood tests, given to patients by physicians, that allowed doctors to diagnose the disease and track the development of

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<sup>26</sup> Hagen, "Bad Blood", 29-33.

<sup>27</sup> Michael V. Ushan, *Forty Years of Medical Racism: The Tuskegee Experiments* (Detroit, Thomas and Gale Publishing, 2006) 15.

prescribed treatments for it.<sup>28</sup> The startling numbers from this initial Study illustrated that there was a dire need for medical efforts to combat the disease, especially in impoverished rural areas of the South like the Delta. The success of diagnosing these problems and identifying hotbeds for the disease compelled PHS officials to explore the possibility of reproducing the Wasserman Survey and expanding it to other areas with demographic compositions similar to those in the Delta,

There were reasons for the inflated rates of venereal diseases among blacks. However, there were several people who refuted the validity of the studies and statistics regarding the rates of venereal disease among African Americans as well as the popular belief that they as a race were more susceptible than whites to these diseases. One such antagonist was Lester B. Granger, who was the executive secretary of the National Urban League. In a speech on behalf of the National Urban League he said:

The National Urban League has constantly hammered on the point that it is not only unrealistic, but it is vicious to compare disease and death rates among Negroes with those among Whites, unless careful pains are taken to compare groups from similar income levels and living conditions ... In the meantime, constantly harping on a disproportionate rate of increase among Negroes merely intensifies a distorted picture that White society has of Negro family life, and makes it more difficult than ever for Negroes to find satisfactory adjustment in housing and employment situations.<sup>29</sup>

Granger and other black leaders were determined to put reason and logic behind the statistics of the Wasserman Study in an attempt to prevent the statistics and findings gained through medical research from furthering racial stereotypes that already existed.

Additionally, doctors have recently conducted research refuting the immorality of blacks as the root cause and a valid rationale behind the higher rates of syphilis as well as

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<sup>28</sup> Ushan, *Forty Years of Medical Racism*, 22-25.

<sup>29</sup> Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 158.

other communicable diseases within the African American community during this time. Kimberly Sessions Hagen, a representative of the Center for Disease Control (CDC), in her article entitled, “The Tuskegee Syphilis Study and Legacy Recruitment for Experimental AIDS Vaccines” wrote, “the causes of these health disparities seem clear from a distance --- poverty and its abundant malnutrition; a systematic scarcity of clean, running water, and sewage control; and substandard access to medical care, among others at the time, however, the higher morbidity and mortality rates simply fed a perception that negroes were biologically inferior to white people.”<sup>30</sup> Moreover, research for the education of HIV/AIDS adults also supports Granger’s argument and Hagen’s findings saying, “in the 1930’s African Americans [then called negroes] were generally sick more often than white people and didn’t live as long.”<sup>31</sup> This research conducted prior to the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment itself provides a medical context to analyze the significant disparity in the number of African Americans who both contracted and died from syphilis. It also explains the disproportionate percentage rates concerning the number of syphilitics between the two races.

The theoretical intent behind the innovative Study that the PHS was considering conducting was to discover how syphilis differently affected blacks as opposed to whites and to find out why blacks seemed to be more susceptible to the disease than whites. Heading into the 1930s, the syphilitic theory was that the disease took a different pathology dependent upon a person’s race. This pathological theory was widely accepted throughout the medical community as a theoretical truth despite the fact that there had been virtually no clinical studies done to justify, validate, or even lend support to this

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<sup>30</sup> Hagen, “Bad Blood”, 32.

<sup>31</sup> Hagen, “Bad Blood”, 32.

hypothesis. This theory of pathology suggested that white victims suffering from syphilis experienced more neurological complications, while black victims were more susceptible to cardiovascular damage. This diagnosis of the disease and its varying effects primarily derived from two studies conducted prior to the 1930s and would ultimately go a long way in setting the stage for and providing rationale behind the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Black Male.<sup>32</sup>

The first of the two studies that the PHS used to validate its research interest occurred in 1928, when the Norwegian researcher Dr. E. Bruusgaard conducted what is known as the Oslo Study. In this study, Dr. Bruusgaard reviewed the medical records of nearly two thousand whites who were considered untreated syphilitic patients. All of the patients who were involved in his study had been examined at an Oslo clinic over a twenty-nine year period from 1891 to 1910. Bruusgaard's Study was a retrospective one, where he used information and medical records from patients who had previously been diagnosed with syphilis but were not treated for an extended amount of time and in some cases had actually died from the disease. After examining the data from the study, Bruusgaard consolidated his findings, producing a follow up to the study that was published a year later in 1929.<sup>33</sup>

Bruusgaard did not conduct his study of syphilis with the intent of justifying any kind of racially biased studies. Essentially, Bruusgaard became motivated to conduct his study because no therapeutic remedy for the disease existed. Because of this void he concluded that the best way for him to assist in solving this medical dilemma was to study the natural progression of the disease in people who had previously been affected

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<sup>32</sup> Jones, *Bad Blood*, 25-28.

<sup>33</sup> Jones, *Bad Blood*, 10.



by the disease. So while Bruusgaard's study rivaled what would become the Tuskegee Syphilis Study in its innovation and intent to trace as well as assess syphilis's pathology amongst the human body. The distinguishing factor between Bruusgaard's study and the one the PHS was proposing was that his study was retroactive. This meant that he did not harm or treat any of his study's patients. Furthermore, Bruusgaard did not deceive, misdiagnose, or physically conduct any sort of procedures on any of the patients within his study's sample, thus making his study perfectly moral as well as legal.<sup>34</sup>

Ultimately, when it became time to decide on the extension of the Wasserman Survey, the PHS decided to turn to the Oslo Study as a basis for validating its cause and as a platform for its proposed study. By correlating its study interest with a study that had previously been conducted and was also widely viewed as successful throughout the medical community, the PHS was able to make public acclamations regarding the importance, validity, and necessity of its proposed research. This proved to be essential to its cause because of the economic turmoil which the country faced heading into the 1930s. The Great Depression hit the PHS hard, as it did to all other entities of the time and the economic burden that it placed upon the government severely threatened to end any hopes of extending the Study right when its creators and supporters were gaining credibility and support from both the medical community and outside philanthropists. One of the biggest blows to the hopes of the PHS's plans to extend the Experiment occurred in the early years of the depression when financial losses cost the organization one of its most faithful and diligent philanthropic supporters, the Rosenwald fund.

Historian James Jones discusses the importance of Bruusgaard's research and findings to the implementation of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, saying "the Oslo Study

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<sup>34</sup>Jones, *Bad Blood*, 9-12.

had yielded fascinating data on the incidence of cardiovascular compared to neurological involvement in patients suffering from latent syphilis. Dr. Bruusgaard's findings were unequivocal: Cardiovascular damage was common, while neurological complications were rare. The importance of these findings to Clark's proposed Study of the syphilis in the Negro can hardly be overstated."<sup>35</sup> This was essential to Dr Clark's ability to promote and endorse the PHS's Study under the terms in which it ultimately evolved. Dr. Bruusgaard's findings were inconclusive, in that no blacks were tested during his study, so no prognosis could be rendered in regards to how blacks responded to the disease. However, his findings did fall in line with the majority of American physicians of the day, who theorized and thought that the effects of latent syphilis amongst whites who contracted the disease were more likely to suffer from neurological problems.

While Bruusgaard's research did not specifically say so, the fact that his findings aligned with the majority of physicians in regards to the way the disease affected whites, granted credence to the PHS and other doctors, and they took the liberty of using this fact as both support and affirmation that their theories concerning the different pathology of the disease among the races, was also a medically proven fact. Jones sums up this point and speaks to both its significance to the PHS's pitch of its Study and the findings' subjectivity within the medical community by saying, "while it is true that the Oslo Study had offered no data on Negroes upon which to base a comparison, it did supply evidence that neural involvement as a complication of latent syphilis in whites was rare in comparison to cardiovascular damage. That was precisely what physicians believed to be

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<sup>35</sup> Jones, *Bad Blood*, 93.

true of blacks. Anyone who was not predisposed to find differences might have looked at these facts and concluded that the disease was affecting both races in the same way.”<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, the PHS used the Olso Study to justify the restriction of the proposed Study’s subject base. The PHS argued that its Study should be one conducted upon an exclusively black male patient group, because it asserted that white pathology concerning the disease no longer needed to be studied, because of Dr. Bruusgaard’s study. The PHS believed that Bruusgaard’s study had gone far enough medically and that he was able to produce extensive findings from his investigations into the pathology of the disease among whites. Somehow, this rationalization held weight within the scientific community, despite the fact that Bruusgaard’s study was done in an entirely different country, under completely different circumstances, and was focused on a patient group that was comprehensively different from the one that the PHS was seeking to investigate, in regards to class, education, and economic composition. The disproportionality of the subject’s socioeconomic makeup alone constitutes inherent discrepancies within the PHS’s logic of using Bruusgaard’s findings to compare and contrast the research they wanted to do on the effects of untreated syphilis upon southern black males.

The second medical study on syphilis conducted prior to the Tuskegee Study and that was used by the PHS to justify the basis of its proposed Study was conducted at Johns Hopkins University in its School of Medicine. At the time, Johns Hopkins was recognized as the premier medical school of the country. The syphilitic studies that the PHS called upon were conducted by Dr. Joseph Earle Moore who was the head of the Venereal Disease Clinic. Moore conducted several studies concerning syphilis at the Institute’s outpatient clinic where he became very interested, as were most doctors, in

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<sup>36</sup> Jones, *Bad Blood*, 93.

determining the effect that syphilis had on the body. In an attempt to better understand the disease and therefore have a better chance of developing a cure for it, Moore decided that the best way to go about researching the disease and its pathology was to put an emphasis upon impoverished patients who suffered from syphilis for several years without being treated. Moore felt that these untreated individuals allotted him the best perspective into assessing and analyzing the disease's pathology in what he termed "its spontaneous evolution."<sup>37</sup> While Moore and Bruusgaard both conducted studies around the disease, they both did so from a morally justifiable standpoint where they used science and research ethically. They both properly diagnosed patients whenever they came into contact with syphilitic patients and also composed as well as conducted the majority of their research from previous patients' medical histories and files not from living patients themselves. Both of these studies were conducted in very different manners than the way the PHS would ultimately decide to conduct its Study, even though both of these studies played a key role in allowing the PHS to initiate and justify its Study.

The medical validation provided by these two studies conducted prior to 1930 rationalized the PHS's interest in the study of syphilis in the black male. It also reaffirmed its claim that this issue was significant enough scientifically to invest medical interest and financial resources into. So in 1930, the PHS was officially cleared to begin the revitalization of the Wasserman Study, this time extending both the Study's breadth and regionalism. The new and improved Study would encompass six different locations, all of which were centered in rural southern localities with predominately African

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<sup>37</sup> Jones, *Bad Blood*, 92.

American populations that were economically depressed, educationally deprived, and austere contaminated environmentally regarding sanitation control.

The six locations which were selected were Scott County, Mississippi; Tipton County, Tennessee; Glen County, Georgia; Macon County, Alabama; Pitt County, North Carolina; and Albemarle County, Virginia.<sup>38</sup> This group of locations was selected with the intent of representing a broad range of living conditions that rural blacks throughout the South faced. From these studies, it was determined that forty thousand people were examined in the six counties and of those approximately twenty-five percent of them had syphilis. While this research revealed the startling rates which blacks living in rural environments were contracting the disease, these studies did little else. The PHS did not have the money or resources to actually follow up and treat all of these individuals who were in need of therapeutic treatment because of the economic restraints of the time. Consequently, at the end of 1930, all of the studies were culminated and the findings were consolidated and published within various medical journals.

However, at the close of the Experiments Dr. Taliaferro Clark, who was the acting director of the PHS, could not take his mind off the results of the study, especially those collected in the Macon County, Alabama location. Clark viewed this particular location as the perfect place for the continuation of the work the PHS began during the Wasserman Survey because it was unique from all of the other locations that the study had been expanded to encompass. Clark expresses these ideas to a friend in a letter saying: “the thought came to me that the Alabama community offered an unparalleled

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<sup>38</sup> Ushan, *Forty Years of Medical Racism*, 18.

opportunity for the Study of the effects of untreated syphilis.”<sup>39</sup> Macon County appealed to Clark because its syphilis rates surpassed those of every other locality involved in the expanded Wasserman Survey and unlike the other locations involved in the expanded Study, it encompassed a specialized medical facility. Later into the letter to his friend, Dr. Clark spoke about “how near the center of the county, [was] a very complete John A. Andrews Memorial Hospital at the Tuskegee Institute where practically all of the necessary examinations may be made.”<sup>40</sup> James Jones articulately sums up Clark’s letter and Macon County’s appeal to the PHS by saying; “in short, Macon offered thousands of infected Negroes who lived outside of the world of modern medicine yet close to a well-equipped teaching hospital that could easily double as a scientific clinic.”<sup>41</sup>

When the PHS was able to finally reach its goal of reduplicating the Wasserman Study on a broader scale in 1930, the statistics collected from all six localities told the troubling story of a race in extreme need of medical assistance, but none of the other five locations could compare to the severe situation that Macon County, Alabama faced. The numbers produced from the study there, were not rivaled by any of the other cites that were studied.

Throughout the beginning of the twentieth century, Macon County was characterized by widespread illiteracy and inadequate educational facilities and was a severely economically depressed region. Results of the Wasserman Survey diagnosed 36% of the Black community, which in and of itself constituted 82% of the county, as carriers of syphilis. Furthermore, 62% of those who tested positive had congenital syphilis.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Clark to O’Leary, September 27, 1932, Records of USPHS Venereal Disease Division, Record Group 90, National Archives, Washington National Record Center, Suitland, Maryland.

<sup>40</sup> Clark to O’Leary, September 27, 1932, Records of USPHS Venereal Disease Division, Record Group 90, National Archives, Washington National Record Center, Suitland, Maryland.

<sup>41</sup> Clark to O’Leary, September 27, 1932, Records of USPHS Venereal Disease Division, Record Group 90, National Archives, Washington National Record Center, Suitland, Maryland.

<sup>43</sup> Harter, “President Clinton’s Apology for the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment”, 24.

These results illustrated the significant health disparities that blacks of Macon County, Alabama faced and the alarming rates of syphilis that plagued the community.

Moreover, a national survey in 1932 showed that syphilis rates for African Americans in the country were just under one percent, and that was twice as high as the syphilis rates for European descended Americans. Kimberley Seasons Hagan, the author of “Bad Blood”, believed that this survey, along with a few others, showed good reason for choosing untreated syphilis, saying “at the time, syphilis was an epidemic among rural southerners of all ethnicities, no safe or effective treatment for the disease existed, and its natural course in Europeans had already been well described and documented years before in a study done in Europe, thus making it easy to compare the symptoms and progression of disease between the two racial types.”<sup>43</sup> So, in addition to the need for such a study within the southern region of the country, the fact that Macon County encompassed an eighty-two percent black population, that had a syphilis rate of an alarming thirty-six percent; made Macon County particularly interesting and an ideal place for the study on the effects of syphilis of African Americans.<sup>44</sup>

Many black doctors during the time of the Experiments’ consideration, “raised objections to the notion that venereal disease had a fundamentally different pathological impact upon blacks because of biological differences between the races, a view held, for example, by Thomas Parran.”<sup>45</sup> Thomas Parran was the Chief of the PHS’s Division of Venereal Disease, and despite his avocation that there were no biological differences that affected the pathology of venereal diseases between the races, even in the case of

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<sup>43</sup> Kimberly S. Hagen, “Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Study and Legacy Recruitment for Experimental AIDS Vaccines,” *Wiley Periodicals* (2005): 32.

<sup>44</sup> Harter, “President Clinton’s Apology for the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment”, 19-34.

<sup>45</sup> Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 158.

syphilis, (which was the justification used for conducting the Experiment) the PHS's plans for the Study continued. Brandt's belief that there were no racial differences in pathology can also be identified in his writings. He wrote a book called *Shadow of the Land: Syphilis the White Man's Burden*. Within this book Brandt clearly addressed the issues of pathological and biological differences being the root causes of the inflated statistics of blacks as well as his own theory regarding the prevalence of syphilis. He argues that it was whites who introduced syphilis to blacks and that the main factors contributing to higher rates of infection among blacks were social:<sup>46</sup>

It has been said that the negro slave brought to America malaria and hookworm disease. If he did, the white man paid him back by giving him tuberculosis and syphilis. The fact that he is at the bottom of the economic ladder contributed to his abnormally high [syphilis] rate. For among the third of our population which is ill fed, ill clothed, and ill housed, as a race, north and south, and especially in the rural south, his house is the most miserable, his clothing is the scantiest, and his food ration the most poorly balanced.<sup>47</sup>

While Parran agreed that the overwhelming numbers revealed through the results of the Wasserman Survey illustrated the need for immediate attention to find a solution to African Americans' problem concerning the contraction of venereal diseases, specifically syphilis, he strongly disagreed with the rationale behind the prevalence of the disease among the race. Parran felt that there needed to be a campaign that targeted and addressed the socioeconomic inequalities that created and contributed to the contraction of these diseases, instead of a study that focused on the syphilis itself within the black community. Yet, despite his strong stance on this issue, the fact that sixty-two percent of blacks that tested positive for syphilis in Macon County were diagnosed with congenital

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<sup>46</sup> Ushan, *Forty Years of Medical Racism*, 20.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Parran, *Shadow of the Land: Syphilis the White Man's Burden* (New York: Waverly, 1937), 168.



syphilis, which is the disease in its latest and most severe form, was instrumental in superseding Parran's opinion concerning this matter and helped decide the course of action that the PHS would take on the issue.<sup>48</sup>

The coupling of a need for a cure to the growing epidemic of syphilis in the South and the disturbing statistics regarding African American syphilitics in the region ultimately proved to be influential enough to convince PHS officials to begin the syphilis Study. Consequently, in 1932 the PHS officially began its Study on African American males who had carried the disease of syphilis for a minimum of five years but had not received treatment. The project sought to prove once and for all the theory concerning the differing pathology of syphilis along racial lines and to detail the physiological impact of the disease in its third-stage, which is the final and most severe stage of syphilis. The PHS desired to study the effects of syphilis when it was unimpeded by medical treatment, because drugs treated some symptoms, while prolonged treatments occasionally cured some cases of the disease. The combination of a vast number of African American syphilitics and a poorly educated populace made Alabama the prime location for this Experiment to be conducted, especially in a small rural county in the state, such as Macon County. The impoverished, illiterate, male citizens of Macon County had no access to the treatments, making them the perfect pawns for the Study.

The Tuskegee Syphilis Study of the Untreated Negro Male was only suppose to last six months; however, six months into the Experiment, the acting director of the PHS, Dr. Taliaferro Clark, retired and the Study looked like it was also ending with his retirement. The Study was in severe danger of being terminated upon Clark's retirement due to a lack of interest in its extension from leadership officials within the PHS because

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<sup>48</sup> Jones, *Bad Blood*, 87-93.

most felt that the Study accomplished the goals that the organization originally intended to address. Furthermore, there was deficient funding for the continuation of the project from both governmental and independent philanthropic sources. Nevertheless, after Clark's retirement, Dr. Raymond Vonderlehr was promoted to the position as the new director of the organization, and he was insistent upon continuing the Study. When challenged by peers about the need to extend the Study, Vonderlehr, turned once again to the results of the Wassermann Survey to justify the need to extend the project.

Prior to his promotion to the director of the PHS, Vonderlehr previously served as a field doctor during the initial stages of the Wasserman Survey. Thus upon his promotion, as a researcher, he had a personal stake in the decision to prolong the Study. Vonderlehr identified the extension of the Study as a way to finish what he started as a field doctor during the initial stages of the Wasserman Survey. Therefore, he used his power and position of influence, as the director of the organization to rally support for the cause. Ultimately, Vonderlehr and his supporters won out and the decision to prolong the Study was made behind the new director's persuasion.

The change in leadership from Clark to Vonderlehr, signaled the beginning of many extreme methodological and ideological shifts within the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment. This hierarchical change drastically altered the way the Study was carried out from this point on. The first significant change in the methodology of the Study occurred when Vonderlehr decided to intensify the terms of the Experiment by extending the Study indefinitely. In addition, Vonderlehr decided to further the research done on the Study's subjects because he felt that blood tests, physical exams, spinal taps, and x-rays on live patients that were conducted under the former director could only produce a

limited amount of information about the disease's pathology. Consequently, he and the lead doctors of the Experiment collaborated and decided that in order to gain more information from the Study's subjects the Study would from this point on allow patients to die under the care of the PHS to enable the organization to be able to autopsy the subjects in an attempt to gain a more concise picture of the progression of the disease. Therefore, it was decided that from this point in the Study, that none of the subjects would be given treatment for syphilis during the duration of the Study in efforts to gain the desired information concerning the studies subjects upon their deaths. In correspondence between PHS leadership and the doctors conducting the Experiment it was stated and agreed that "everyone is agreed that the proper procedure is the continuance of the observation of the Negro men used in the Study with the idea of eventually bringing them to autopsy."<sup>49</sup> This new direction of the Study had obvious racist intent in its blueprint.

These two changes permanently tainted the Experiment, a view that is supported by historian James Jones, the author of *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment*. Jones details the process in which the six-hundred black men who were monitored in this Study, forced to endure, deceived, and forced to suffer through the painful side effects of the syphilis without treatment. All of this unnecessary suffering was brought upon these men to bring their lives to a close so that medical information could be collected from their autopsies. The PHS proceeded unimpeded for forty years using the same protocol of passive examination and eventual autopsy.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Vonderlehr to Wenger, July 18, 1933, United States Health Service Division, Record Group 90(1918-1936), Box 239, Folder 2, Macon County, National Archives.

<sup>50</sup> Jones, *Bad Blood*, 139-146.

A little known fact act about the Experiment is that there were two groups of subjects selected to be involved in the Study. Both of these groups were exclusively African American males, but one was suffering from the disease while the other deemed syphilis-free served as a control group for the Study. No treatment for the disease was provided to either group --- even after the discovery of antibiotics therapy. Although other medical services were provided to the participants, there were extended efforts made by the federal government to ensure that the participants of the Study were not obtaining any form of treatment for syphilis from outside sources.<sup>51</sup> These efforts not only illuminates the government's refusal to treat the patients themselves but also demonstrates their willingness to go to extreme measures to make sure that participants would not secure vaccines for their disease anywhere else either, basically ensuring the patients' deaths and treating them as laboratory animals.

One of the most devastating aspects of the Experiment was the government's efforts to prevent the subjects of the Study from receiving treatment for their disease. On various occasions, PHS officials went to drastic means to ensure that the men of the Study had no access to any form of syphilitic medication.<sup>52</sup> When several nationwide campaigns to eradicate venereal disease came to the region of the country where the Experiment was being conducted, the test subjects were prevented from participating. When penicillin was developed in the 1940s, serving as the first real cure for syphilis; the Tuskegee men were deliberately denied the medication.<sup>53</sup> During World War II, two hundred fifty of the men involved in the Experiment were selected for military service

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<sup>51</sup> Smith to Vonderlehr, August 6, 1942, Centers for Disease Control Papers, Tuskegee Syphilis Study Administrative Records, 1930-80, Box 17, Folder Vonderlhr, National Archives-Southeast Region East Point, Georgia.

<sup>52</sup> Lederer, *Subjected to Science*, 121.

<sup>53</sup> Doctor of Health Student Handbook, 17.

through the draft and were ordered, like all soldiers going to the military, to get treated for syphilis and other venereal diseases. However, this did not happen. The PHS made direct contact with the draft board and requested that the men who were subjects of the Study be exempted from required treatments. Unfortunately and unethically, the draft board consented and exempted the participants from the mandatory treatments. A PHS representative at the time is quoted as saying, "so far, we are keeping the known positive patients from getting treatment."<sup>54</sup> Even the Surgeon General of the United States participated in enticing the men to remain in the Experiment, sending them certificates of appreciation, and in 1958, after twenty-five years in the Study, surviving subjects were sent certificate recognizing their "voluntary service" and offering a dollar for every year they had participated in the Study.<sup>55</sup> This sort of personal collaboration with the Study from a governmental official, ranking as high as the U.S. Surgeon General illustrates the various ranks that the corruption of the Study permeated.

For a forty-year-period, spanning from 1932 to 1972, the PHS conducted an Experiment on over 600 Alabama black men from Alabama who were in the late stages of syphilis. These men were never informed that they actually had syphilis or told about the seriousness of the disease. The men involved were deceived and told they were being treated for "bad blood." The doctors who were conducting the Experiment and allegedly "treating" these patients for "bad blood" had no intention of curing these men of their syphilis at all. The data for the Experiment were to be collected from the autopsies of the

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<sup>54</sup> Smith to Vonderlehr, August 6, 1942, Centers for Disease Control Papers, Tuskegee Syphilis Study Administrative Records, 1930-80, Box 17, Folder Vonderlhr, National Archives-Southeast Region East Point, Georgia.

<sup>55</sup> Rivers-Laurie to Dear Sir, July 16, 1963, Centers for Disease Control Papers, Tuskegee Syphilis Study Administrative Records, 1930-80, Box 16, Folder Alabama-Miscellaneous, National Archives-Southeast Region East Point, Georgia.

participants upon their deaths.<sup>56</sup> This was because PHS officials heading the Experiment told doctors to let the participants of the Study degenerate from and suffer through the painful effects of syphilis that can include tumors, heart disease, paralysis, blindness, insanity, and death. One of the doctors involved explained, “we have no further interest in these patients until they die.”<sup>57</sup>

Several years into the Experiment, public sentiment throughout the country regarding venereal disease had not changed much. Syphilis was still considered to be a result of immorality, sexual promiscuity, and unethical choices. In an attempt to clarify these misconceptions, Thomas Parran, the Chief of the PHS’s Division of Venereal Disease began campaigning around the country attempting to promote both the seriousness of the disease and to clarify the myths surrounding the contraction of it as well as the stereotypes associated with the victims who contracted it. Allen Brandt, the author of the book *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in The United States Since 1880*, says “although Parran’s campaign had gone far towards making the point that venereal disease reached all segments of society, the view persisted that these infections particularly affected the working class, the immoral, and certain racial and ethnic groups.”<sup>58</sup> These unjust associations between race and venereal diseases made these infections a problem of morals rather than medicine and downplayed the significance of Parran’s research in the country, especially when it came to the receptivity of his campaign across class and racial lines.

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<sup>56</sup> Jones, *Bad Blood*, 102.

<sup>57</sup> Wenger to Vonderlehr, July 21, 1933, Centers for Disease Control Papers, Tuskegee Syphilis Study Administrative Records, 1930-80, Box 5, Folder Correspondence, National Archives-Southeast Region, East Point, Georgia.

<sup>58</sup> Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 157.

Despite the original claims of the studies' intent, many doctors prior, during, and following the Study have articulated that they were unsure how this Experiment in the manner in which it was conducted could have possibly altered the clinical treatment of syphilis.<sup>59</sup> The questionable validity of the Study, the manipulative manner in which the government conducted it, and the exclusively black male subject base all made many people, especially African Americans, weary of the medical and governmental interests of the United States. It took almost forty years before someone involved in the Study took a hard honest look at the end results, reporting that "nothing learned will prevent, find, or cure a single case of infectious syphilis or bring us closer to our basic mission of controlling venereal disease in the United States."<sup>60</sup>

The story finally broke into the national media by way of the *Washington Star* on July 25, 1972, in an article written by Jean Heller of the Associated Press. Heller's inside source was Peter Buxtun, a former PHS venereal disease interviewer and investigator, who had actually been attempting to object to the Study and get the PHS to call it to a close since 1966. Despite his protestations, the "Experiment" was still being carried out when the story appeared on the front pages of newspapers around the country. The Experiment was exposed, and details of the Study were released. Finally, due to public scrutiny and rapidly surfacing evidence of the government's role in the corruption of the Experiment, the Study was brought to an end within days of Heller's publications. A few weeks after the Experiment was exposed, news anchor Harry Reasoner described it as an Experiment that "used human beings as laboratory animals in a long and inefficient Study

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<sup>59</sup> Jones, *Bad Blood*, 199-202

<sup>60</sup> Jones, *Bad Blood*, 202.

of how long it takes syphilis to kill someone.”<sup>61</sup> This quote rearticulated the view of many Americans, who could not believe that such blatant racism still existed in the United States. At the closure of the Study many of the men involved were finally provided with effective medical treatment for syphilis.<sup>62</sup>

In spite of these startling facts, the PHS and the government remained unapologetic for its actions, saying that the Experiment was done in the name of bettering science and that the men had been “volunteers” for the research. After the Experiment, the director of the PHS, in an interview conducted by the historian James Jones, is quoted as saying that “the men's status did not warrant ethical debate. They were subjects, not patients; clinical material, not sick people.”<sup>63</sup> This unapologetic response illustrates the lack of ethics amongst the people conducting the Experiment and indicates the marginal value they placed on African American lives. However, this argument made by PHS officials is voided by the fact that the men who “volunteered” were unaware of what they were volunteering for. The majority of the men involved in the Study were illiterate sharecroppers who were unable to read the details of the Experiment and incapable of comprehending what they were agreeing to. Additionally, the PHS withheld the true intent of their research from the contracts the men involved in the Experiment were forced to sign, acknowledging their willingness to participate in the Experiment and consent to the procedures involved. These were men who could not afford to feed themselves, let alone their families, or afford the medical care that they needed. So due to their lack of knowledge, economic restraints, and the living conditions that they and their

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<sup>61</sup>Hagen, “Bad Blood”, 32.

<sup>62</sup> Jones, *Bad Blood*, 125-153.

<sup>63</sup> Jones, *Bad Blood*, 179.



families were forced to endure, they volunteered for an Experiment that offered incentives that were otherwise unavailable to them.

Due to the difficulties these men faced, the incentives offered by the government to them and their families for their participation in the Study were legitimate reasons for volunteering for the Experiment. Men who volunteered received “free hot meals on the days of the examination, transportation to and from the hospital, and an opportunity to stop in town on the return trip to shop or visit with their friends on the streets.”<sup>64</sup> These might not seem like huge incentives today, but when someone has no food to eat, no mode of transportation, and no access to medicine of any kind, these are opportunities and resources that would be hard to pass up. Nurse Eunice Rivers made this comment half way through the Study in 1953 saying “what appears to be a real incentive to outsider’s way of thinking may have little appeal to the patient. In our case, free hot meals meant more to the men than fifty dollars worth of free medical examinations.”<sup>65</sup> The access to medicine is a key component of the incentives to point out because although the government doctors withheld both information and treatment for syphilis from their subjects, “they did dispense free medicines to the men; such as pills and spring tonics to treat other conditions during their yearly visits to Tuskegee.”<sup>66</sup>

Similarly, the government was able to produce incentives for both the men participating in the Study as well as their family members. Many families of participants consider the fifty dollars in burial assistance which was given to the families of the participants who gave permission for post-mortem dissection as the most enticing incentive offered to the participants of the Study. This incentive was particularly

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<sup>64</sup> Lederer, *Subjected to Science*, 120.

<sup>65</sup> Lederer, *Subjected to Science*, 120.

<sup>66</sup> Lederer, *Subjected to Science*, 120.

attractive to poor African Americans, who otherwise would not have been able to afford to bury their loved ones. Due to poverty, rural black families welcomed an opportunity to be able to preserve the bodies of their loved ones in much the same order that others from more privileged backgrounds and conditions in American society were able to do. The fifty dollars in burial assistance would allow families to lay the deceased to rest in a casket, formally acknowledge their lives through a funeral, which would be a more appropriate and respectfully memorial service than they would have otherwise be able to afford or conduct.

In the end Fred Gray, who was a renowned lawyer within the southern black community who had previously defended and represented Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., was selected to file a class action suit on behalf of these men and their families. Gray recalled his utter disgust with the Study upon finding out the details of it and said that he had no choice but to take on the case because in his estimation it was a flat-out racist Study designed to harm and even eradicate black men. In his book on the Tuskegee Study, Gray says: “I saw the Experiment as a case of racial discrimination in that sense it became very personal to me, for I had dedicated my legal career to challenging the [South’s racist] segregation under which the [Study] participants and I were born and lived. The Study was as racist as segregation in schools [because it was conducted] solely upon blacks when there were also whites in the community who had syphilis.”<sup>67</sup>

The following quote from Ronald Greenwood’s book *Human Subject Research: A Handbook for Institutional Review Boards* explains the ruling of the law suit that Grey

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<sup>67</sup> Fred D.Grey, *The Tuskegee Syphilis Study: The Real Story and Beyond* (Montgomery, Black Belt Publishing, 1998), 105.

filed on behalf of the men involved in the Study and the compensation they were awarded:

The Assistant Secretary of Health during the Study of the project decided that informed consent had not been obtained from the participants and that standardized measures had not been utilized. Subsequent litigation on behalf of the participants has reportedly resulted in settlements ranging from a high of thirty seven thousand dollars; five hundred dollars was given to survivors who did not contract the virus and five thousand for the estates of deceased participants who contracted the disease.<sup>68</sup>

Due to the unethical manner in which this Study was carried out, Congressional subcommittee meetings were held in early 1973 headed by Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts. These meetings resulted in a comprehensive rewriting of the health, education, and welfare regulations on working with human subjects. In the same year, a 1.8 billion dollar class action suit was filed in U.S. District Court on behalf of the Study's subjects. Consequently, in December of 1974, the U.S. government paid ten million dollars in an out-of-court settlement to the estates of decided participants.<sup>69</sup> The government also finally consented to paying the medical bill of the patients of the Study and their family members who had contracted the disease from them for the rest of their lives. However, despite these and other meager attempts made by the United States Government to compensate for the Experiment and the lives lost during the Experiment, this country's government further eroded an already unstable relationship between itself and its African American population.

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<sup>68</sup> Ronald A. Greenwood. *Human Subject Research: A Handbook for Institutional Review Boards* (New York: Plenum Press, 1982), 20.

<sup>69</sup> Greenwood, *Human Subject Research: A Handbook for Institutional Review Boards*, 28-30.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE CULTIVATION OF A RACIAL ACCOMMODATIONIST: A LOOK INTO THE EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND, POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES, AND SOCIAL METHODOLOGY OF BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

To understand the significance of Tuskegee as an institution and its impact amongst the black community, there must be a fundamental understanding of the reason why the institution was created, the role of its founder as a racial leader, and the impact that his political methodology had on the African Americans. Booker T. Washington was born a slave in Franklin County, Virginia.<sup>70</sup> He remained enslaved until the thirteenth Amendment freed him and all other members of the African Americans from the bondage of slavery. Washington stayed in Franklin County until he left home to attend college at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute (now Hampton University). While at Hampton, Washington's perspective on life was holistically changed. In his autobiography, he recalled: "Life at Hampton was a constant revolution to me; was constantly taking me into a new world, The matter of having meals at regular hours, of eating on a tablecloth, using a napkin, the use of the bathtub and of the tooth-brush, as well as the use of sheets upon the bed, were all new to me."<sup>71</sup> His time at the Hampton Institute not only altered his social behaviors but also provided him with the tutelage, education, and social capital he would need to emerge as a racial leader in the segregated South.

Washington was a political accommodationist. In terms of black politics of the early twentieth century, a political accommodationist would believe in abiding by the racist

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<sup>70</sup> Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery: an autobiography* (New Jersey: Carol Publishing Company, 1997), 1.

<sup>71</sup> Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 58.

legislation of the United States while refusing to agitate the political system of the society or culture in which he or she lived by pushing for equal rights, yet chose to accept the position of blacks as a subordinate race for the time being. This ideology is based on the belief that one day, over the course of time, through patience and diligence blacks would prove themselves worthy to whites and would be included in this country as full and equal citizens. Accordingly, Washington felt that the paramount strategy for African American improvement was for members of the race to focus on jobs that required less skill and formal education because of the lack of education within African American communities at the time. Washington believed the key to social uplift was the establishment of an economic foundation for the black community and that the best way to develop this financial base was for members of the race to focus solely on technical education. Washington believed that industrial education, unlike formal education, would teach African Americans job skills that would lead directly to employment and ultimately the creation of the coveted economic base. Due to this belief in the politics of accommodation, Washington created the Tuskegee Institute and based its education upon the acquisition of industrial skills as opposed to the traditional academic education one would receive at a liberal arts university or college of that day.<sup>72</sup>

Washington chose this path for African Americans for two reasons. The first was an economic rationale because historically blacks had been relegated to the lowest classes and given the worst paying jobs in society; many times they were forced to work with their hands instead of their minds. These menial jobs restricted blacks financially, thus crippling the race socioeconomically. Nonetheless, Washington chose to embrace and

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<sup>72</sup> John T. McCartney, *Black Power Ideologies: An Essay in African American Political Thought* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 57-67.

accept the inequalities of the South and the subsidiary position of blacks both vocationally and socially. The second reason Washington chose to submit to southern racism can be attributed to the intimate relationship he had with his mentor General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, who was the founder of Hampton where Washington was educated. Armstrong fostered the ideology of political accommodation in Washington during his collegiate years serving as his principal, tutor, and idol.<sup>73</sup> As a result, most of Washington's political principles can be traced to his relationship with his mentor.

Armstrong began to mentor Washington at the young age of eighteen when he first enrolled at Hampton. Washington felt such admiration for his mentor that he often said he never met any man who equaled General Armstrong. Within his autobiography, Washington expresses these sentiments saying, "I shall always remember that the first time I went into his [Armstrong's] presence he made the impression upon me of being a perfect man; I was made to feel that there was something about him that was superhuman."<sup>74</sup> The immense endearment with which Washington looked upon his mentor would go a long way in shaping Washington's political, racial, and social ideology.

Armstrong had many regressive feelings concerning African Americans and held reservations about their need as well as ability to participate in an egalitarian society. He felt that blacks should be excluded from voting and all other forms of political practices. Armstrong believed that African Americans' elongated enslavement in the United States and the "cultural paganisms" that the race practiced before being brought to this country in their African homeland had degraded and retarded the race to the point that they could

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<sup>73</sup> McCartney, *Black Power Ideologies*, 58.

<sup>74</sup> Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 55.

not responsibly participate in politics or government.<sup>75</sup> Consequently, Armstrong emphatically advocated Caucasian paternalism within African American education. Historian James Anderson describes Armstrong's motivations for endorsing paternal educational facilities for African Americans in his book *The Education of Blacks in the South: 18060-1933* saying, "Armstrong maintained that it was the duty of the superior white race to rule over the weaker dark-skinned races until they were appropriately civilized. This civilization process, in Armstrong's estimate, would require several generations of moral and religious development."<sup>76</sup> These feelings of inferiority that Armstrong harbored concerning African Americans were reflected in the curriculum he chose to offer at the Hampton Institute. Armstrong selected industrial education as the only academic prospectus offered at the school; this was part of a larger scheme to keep blacks in compliance with the submissive roles that the white power structure ascribed to them within southern society. Historian John McCartney asserts that "ideologically, Armstrong viewed industrial education both as a means of inducing blacks into accepting 'a subordinate role in the emergent New South and as a way of keeping blacks, whom Armstrong saw as 'not capable of self government,' out of politics."<sup>77</sup>

It is imperative to understand the relationship between Armstrong and Washington because the paternalistic bond that developed between the two is principally responsible for Washington's political ideology of accommodation that ultimately shaped his worldview concerning racial relations. Washington worked closely with Armstrong throughout his entire educational tenure at Hampton. Washington says in his

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<sup>75</sup> James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 326-332.

<sup>76</sup> Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 328.

<sup>77</sup> McCartney, *Black Power Ideologies*, 58

autobiography, “He [Armstrong] was worshiped by his students. It never occurred to me that General Armstrong could fail at anything that he undertook. There is almost no request that he could have made that would have not been complied with.”<sup>78</sup> This devotion is exemplified in Washington’s autobiography when he recollects on when he and a few other upperclassmen at Hampton voluntarily moved out of their dormitories to sleep outside in tents during the middle of winter at the request of Armstrong in efforts to compensate for the Institute’s inadequate housing to allow the enrollment of additional students.<sup>79</sup> What is more, Washington owed his ability to receive an education from Hampton to Armstrong, who made financial provisions for him once he found out that he could not afford to pay his tuition. Armstrong saw a lot of potential in his apprentice Washington and simply decided to have his tuition waived for the remainder of his time at the Institute.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, during the last six months of Armstrong’s life, he lived with Washington in his home in Tuskegee.<sup>81</sup> Armstrong passed away May 11, 1893, but not before playing an instrumental role in Washington’s life, both while enrolled at Hampton and after he graduated from the Institute.

In May of 1881 Armstrong received a letter from two men, one was a white ex-slaveholder named George Campbell and the other was a black ex-slave named Lewis Adams. Both men were from the state of Alabama and were writing Armstrong to inquire if he knew of anyone who was qualified and willing to come to Alabama to start a college for African Americans, much the way he had done in Virginia with the Hampton Institute. Armstrong went to Washington who replied telling him that he was interested

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<sup>78</sup> Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 56.

<sup>79</sup> Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 57.

<sup>80</sup> Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 59.

<sup>81</sup> Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 55.



and willing to accept the offer. The next day, Armstrong wrote back to the men telling them that he had found a qualified candidate for the position and that it was a black man named Booker T. Washington. While the men were surprised to hear that the man recommended to them by Armstrong was black, they consented to his endorsement and Washington went on to accept the position, becoming the principal and founder of Tuskegee Institute.<sup>82</sup>

Washington's belief that economics was the key to mobilizing the race led him to base Tuskegee's education on industrial and technical training as opposed to the traditional academic education one would have received at liberal arts universities or colleges of that day.<sup>83</sup> Washington evokes the educational mission of the Institute saying, "We wanted to teach them [students] what to eat, and how to eat it properly, and how to care for their rooms. Aside from this, we wanted to give them such knowledge of some industry, together with the spirit of industry, thrift, and economy, that they would be sure of knowing how to make a living after they had left us. We wanted to teach them to Study actual things instead of mere books alone."<sup>84</sup> The academic mission of the Institute illustrates how Washington's belief in political accommodation affected both the academic aims and curriculum of the Institute.

In developing Tuskegee, Washington emulated his mentor by following his format, policies, principles, and premise. Additionally, through imitating the educational blueprint and political direction of the Institute, Washington illustrated his allegiance to Armstrong. Tuskegee started off as a very meager institution and it ran into financial difficulties shortly after it opened. With the Institute in desperate need for financial

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<sup>82</sup> Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 106.

<sup>83</sup> McCartney, *Black Power Ideologies*, 57-63.

<sup>84</sup> Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 126.

assistance, Washington struggled to make ends meet in efforts to keep the Institute functional and out of debt. During the most severe economic turmoil, General Armstrong resurfaced as Washington's financial aid much like he did during Washington's years at Hampton. However, this time Armstrong devised a plan to ensure that Washington's financial contributions would not come solely from him. Armstrong's plan was centered upon placing Washington in a position where he could benefit from groups of wealthy white northern philanthropists, as opposed to being dependent upon his limited resources.

To ensure the success of this plan, Armstrong informed Washington that the two of them were going to partake in a lecture series across the North in a number of important cities. Armstrong's tactical strategy did two vital things; first, it built Washington's reputation through his association with Armstrong and second, it publicized the work as well as the financial need of Tuskegee. Armstrong devised this plan in an attempt to integrate Washington into his exclusive social circle of powerful friends. Thus, as a result of Armstrong's lobbying, Washington was escorted into a restricted assembly of white elites and introduced to these privileged Americans as the emerging leader of the African American race.

Therefore, through the relationships that Armstrong nurtured, Washington was able to monopolize white patronage for his African American agenda. Moreover, through the lecture series initiated by Armstrong, Washington was able to gain the reputation of being a renowned orator, and as a result of this prestige, he was invited to speak on behalf of African Americans at the 1895 Atlanta Exposition. This was a controversial decision by the leaders of the Atlanta Exposition because no African American had ever been selected to speak in front of a predominately white upper class audience before in the

South. Some organizers of the exposition were worried about the receptivity Washington would garner from the aristocracy attending the conference. In addition, some feared what an African American would have to say concerning the racial history of the South. However, all concerns about racial tension and relations within the South were soon subsided by Washington's memorable speech. Washington proclaimed to the audience that African Americans were content with their status and he also endorsed segregation, black political exclusion, and the preservation of the white power structure.

In the beginning of his speech, Washington addressed the relationship between the races saying, "To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the southern white man, who is their next-door neighbor, I would say: 'Cast down your buckets where you are'---cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded."<sup>85</sup> This statement represented Washington's desire for African Americans to remain as residents in the South instead of migrating elsewhere throughout the country, participating in the Great Migration. Additionally, Washington in his encouragement of friendly relations between the races omitted the fact that whites were not living next-door to blacks in reality and they had no desire to have any sort of relations with blacks unless it was in a paternalistic manner or from a position of dominance. Washington goes on to endorse the paternalistic relations that whites like General Armstrong desired by advocating for black employment strictly in the field of industrial vocation saying:

To those of the white race who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits for the prosperity of the South, were I

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<sup>85</sup> Washington, Booker T. "Atlanta Compromise": p 1. Speech given September 18, 1895. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/39/>

permitted I would repeat what I say to my own race, ‘Cast down your bucket where you are.’ Cast it down among the eight millions of Negroes whose habits you know, whose fidelity and love you have tested in days when to have proved treacherous meant the ruin of your firesides. Cast down your bucket among these people who have, without strikes and labor wars, tilled your fields, cleared your forests, built your railroads and cities, and brought forth treasures from the bowels of the earth, and helped make possible this magnificent representation of the progress of the South.<sup>86</sup>

Washington ends his pejorative speech by reassuring white elites that blacks are complacent with their societal positions and that the African Americans are the trustworthy companions the white ruling-class. He also alleviates whites’ fear concerning the “uppity black male” and the desire of African Americans to social integrate saying:

While doing this, you can be sure in the future, as in the past, that you and your families will be surrounded by the most patient, faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful people that the world has seen. As we have proved our loyalty to you in the past, in nursing your children, watching by the sick-bed of your mothers and fathers, and often following them with tear-dimmed eyes to their graves, so in the future, our humble way, we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to lay down our lives, if need be, in defense of yours, interlacing our industrial, commercial, civil, and religious life with yours in a way that shall make the interests of both races one. In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.<sup>87</sup>

In this speech, Washington illustrates his complete disregard for the political, social, educational, and high professional advancement of the race. Washington illustrates his politics of accommodation through advocating that African American submission to whites and the retention of the vocational trades that blacks were previously relegated to in the vocational fields of industry and agriculture. Moreover, Washington tells blacks that “In this connection it is well to bear in mind that whatever other sins the South may

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<sup>86</sup> Washington, “Atlanta Compromise,” 2.

<sup>87</sup> Washington, “Atlanta Compromise,” 2.

be called to bear, when it comes to business, pure and simple, it is in the South that the Negro is given a man's chance in the commercial world."<sup>88</sup> The South had exploited black labor at every opportunity afforded them until this point from slavery, to sharecropping, the lien system, and the relegation of African Americans to the most deficiently paid vocations that existed within society from seasonal agriculture to domestic service work as maids and seamstress.

This speech cemented Washington as the leader of the black race in the minds of white aristocrats throughout the nation. White leaders were overjoyed by Washington's assessments concerning southern race relations, especially his approval in regarding blacks' willingness to remain submissive to the established order of the South, both accepting and appreciating their roles as subordinates. Washington and other gradualist believed that it was justifiable to relegate blacks to the bottom rung of society for a time since they were still primarily uneducated, unskilled, and unprepared for life outside of slavery due to the paternal nature and marginalization that they encountered in the South. Accordingly, gradualists believed that until African Americans gained their equality by successfully illustrating their worth as a people group, paternalism and subordination were not only necessary but essential to the cultivation of blacks in the region. The Atlanta Compromise admitted Washington into a broader circle of patronage, especially amongst southern whites, and throughout his reign as a black leader Washington would frequently rely upon the social connections of these and other white benefactors to endorse as well as propagate his ideology of accommodation.

Due to this political methodology, Washington was often in accordance on political issues with elite whites and politicians of the South. They often used

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<sup>88</sup> Washington, "Atlanta Compromise," 2.

Washington to push politics and policies in the black community, and in turn they would fund Washington's political agenda. An example of this is seen in the creation and funding of the Tuskegee Institute. Washington's political philosophy of accommodation and his concept of industrial training at Tuskegee became so famous that he was a political confidant of some of the most esteemed white elitists throughout the country, men such as Andrew Carnegie and former Presidents Roosevelt and Taft. Washington became the patronage dispenser for both the rich and politically powerful in the black community. What's more, through white patronage he established the funding to create Tuskegee Institute and made it into a prestigious institution of African American learning. Moreover, Washington was also able to use white patronage to catapult himself into national and political prominence, so much so that historian John McCartney says that, "Washington was so successful that by the turn of the century [twentieth] he was the most powerful African American in the United States."<sup>89</sup>

Knowing the supposed purpose of Tuskegee Institute and the man Washington is remembered as being, it is interesting that the institution he founded for the benefit of African Americans would be connected to one of the most legendary atrocities perpetrated on the race. Tuskegee Institute justified its involvement in the Study by asserting that it "perceived this project as a pioneering piece of public health work whose objective was to increase attention to the health needs of the black population."<sup>90</sup> Thus, the Institute felt the Experiment would benefit them by granting validity through association in a revolutionary Study with the federal government. The second rationale the Institute's leadership provided for its involvement in the Study was that the

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<sup>89</sup> John T. McCartney, *Black Power Ideologies: An Essay in African American Political Thought* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 61.

<sup>90</sup> Jones, *Bad Blood*, 138.

Experiment was intended to benefit African Americans through illustrating the differing pathology of syphilis in blacks compared to other racial subjects who suffered from the disease.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Jones, *Bad Blood*, 120-148.

## CHAPTER 5

### A STRANGE MARRIAGE: CORRELATING THE POLITICS OF ACCOMMODATION, THE EVOLUTION OF INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION, AND THE EFFECTS OF THESE POLICIES ON THE TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY AND THE DECISIONS OF ITS LEADERSHIP

Booker T. Washington's gradualism often led him to agree with white elitists, northern industrialists, New South demagogues, and racist politicians who used him as a "ventriloquist" to push political messages and endorse social policies that would otherwise have been shunned and repudiated by the black masses as propaganda from their oppressors. Thus, Washington served as a key to maintaining the white power structure of the South.<sup>92</sup> Washington's access, respectability, and influence within the African American community allowed white patrons to control the black populace. Moreover, Washington used these relationships with white elitists to his advantage, receiving funding for his personal agenda in return for serving as a middle man between groups that sought to preserve the existing white power structure and the African American masses.

Washington's use of white patronage enabled him to obtain the funding he needed to create, sustain, and even renovate Tuskegee Institute. In his autobiography Washington reminisced about a letter he wrote requesting monetary assistance for the construction of a library for Tuskegee. This letter was written to Andrew Carnegie who ultimately became one of Washington's most consistent and prestigious financial supporters. Upon receiving the letter, Carnegie replied, "I will be very glad to pay the bills for the Library

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<sup>92</sup> James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 102-106.



building as they are incurred, to the extent of twenty thousand dollars, and I am glad for the opportunity to show the interest I have in your noble work.”<sup>93</sup>

Similarly, historian John McCartney notes the success Washington had recruiting wealthy white patrons saying, “Washington’s political philosophy of accommodation and his concept of industrial training at Tuskegee became so famous that he was a political confidant of Presidents Roosevelt and Taft, the darling of philanthropist like Andrew Carnegie, and the patronage dispenser for both the rich and politically powerful in the white community.”<sup>94</sup> Accordingly, Washington solicited the support of then President William McKinley, Collis Potter Hunt, owner of the Southern Pacific Railroad, Jabez Lamar Curry Monroe, a former Confederate officer and United States Congressmen, and a multitude of other white benefactors during Tuskegee’s early years. Furthermore, like his mentor Samuel Armstrong, most of Washington’s financial supporters held derogatory views of African Americans and wished to sustain the status quo of African American subordination to white America. Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry, one of Washington’s primary patrons, illustrates the political agenda of most of Washington’s white supporters. In his book, *The South in the Olden Time 1825-1903*, Curry says:

Suffrage was not a legal, nor a desirable sequence of emancipation or citizenship, and has been a curse to the South, to the whole Nation, and so far as the Negroes are concerned, in their bewildering freedom, an indescribable blunder. Denounced as the South may be for its persistent opposition to Negro suffrage in the aggregate, it may as well be understood that the conviction will increase in intensity unless deportation or diffusion, or some other effective agency, reduces the evils of the congestion of the black population. The Southern people approve the limitation of the elective franchise as ordained by Massachusetts, Connecticut, Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina. The more intelligent and conservative regard an educational qualification as an indispensable condition precedent to voting, and coincide with the most

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<sup>93</sup> Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 192.

<sup>94</sup> McCartney, *Black Power Ideologies*, 61.

worthy and remarkable leader of his race, Mr. Booker T. Washington, in wishing the same restriction made applicable to both races and enforced.<sup>95</sup>

The endorsement of Washington by a man such as Curry, who overtly advocated the repression, removal, and inferiority of African Americans, speaks volumes about the regressive ideologies of Washington. Furthermore, Washington willingly accepted financial donations from men such as Armstrong and Curry despite the moral and political intent behind their donations. Despite the immorality of these associations, Washington continued to use the financial endowments of white patrons to develop the Tuskegee Institute into a renowned school for black education and further his own political ascension. Accordingly, by the turn of the twentieth century, he was widely recognized as the most powerful African American in the United States.<sup>96</sup> However, while Washington was able to secure financial support from white patrons to provide ostensible resources and tangible benefits for the black community, these things were provided in exchange for racial accommodation and submission to the existing power structure, stymieing the social, economic, and educational progression of the black race.

At the turn of the twentieth century, African Americans were confronted with a mammoth dilemma: the race needed to create an ideology fostering and promoting racial uplift throughout the nation. The development of such a racial strategy was particularly imperative for southern African Americans, who were still adjusting to their status as freedmen and were only three decades removed from enslavement. Moreover, during the post-Reconstruction era, southern blacks were stripped of all the social, economic, and political advancements that members of the race achieved during the period of

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<sup>95</sup> Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry, *The South in the Olden Time: 18-25-1903* (Harrisburg: Harriburg Publishing Company, 1901), 14.

<sup>96</sup> McCartney, *Black Power Ideologies*, 58-61.

Reconstruction by southern Redeemers. These occurrences forced African Americans into an impossible predicament by thrusting them into a predestined battle for social, economic, and vocational survival against a re-emerging white power structure that monopolized all aspects of the southern society. Therefore, through disfranchisement, vocational exclusion, lynching, segregated courthouses, judicial bias, and the emergence of Jim Crow laws, the southern white power structure was reestablished, and African Americans were relegated to positions of insignificance and statuses of subordination.

Consequently, the need for an innovative philosophy arose within black communities, one with an impetus on assisting the African American masses in collectively mobilizing and one methodologically focused on guiding the race to a position of equality on every front, with a particular emphasis on the South. During the search for this novel philosophy, new leaders emerged throughout the country along with their strategies for improvement. The two most influential African American bellwethers to emerge during this transformative period were Booker Taliaferro Washington and William Edward Burghardt DuBois. Both of these men believed they held the strategies needed to rally the race and improve the socioeconomic position of blacks within America; however, these men had contrasting methodologies for fostering these desired changes.

Rivaling Washington and his political ideology of accommodation at the turn of the twentieth century was W.E.B. DuBois and his strategy of racial integration. DuBois developed a tactical philosophy that encouraged African Americans to engage in higher education, fight for social equality, and be political actors. This philosophy sharply contrasted Washington's that was based upon black subordination and racial submission

to whites by encouraging African Americans to be apolitical and endorsing their exclusion from various vocations and particular forms of higher learning. DuBois believed higher learning was essential for African Americans due to the desperate need for the cultivation of indigenous leadership that would endorse as well as support legislative policies benefiting members of the race. DuBois himself was an early prototype of this rising group of indigenous intellectual leaders whom he envisioned as the vanguards destined to guide the race (later recognized as the “talented tenth”). DuBois obtained his bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees of philosophy all from Harvard; he was the first African American to receive a doctoral degree from this prestigious university. Unlike Washington, DuBois believed that higher education was not only desired by African Americans but was a necessity for the race to truly achieve socioeconomic inclusion into the fabric of American society. DuBois believed formal education would cultivate a new indigenous leadership that would usher the way towards racial uplift and socioeconomic equality.

Washington chose to embrace the ideology of his mentor, General Samuel Armstrong. Consequently, Washington championed industrial education as the path for black success and economic stabilization. Historian William H. Watkins in his book *The White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865-1954* explores why Washington chose the path of accommodation for blacks and what this academic track meant for members of the race. Watkins asserts that industrial education is only one aspect of what is an overarching theme of colonial education. Colonial education is instruction designed by hierarchical colonizers intended to coercively control conquered groups into submission. This hegemonic oppression ensues until the

dominated class no longer needs the colonizer to lord over them as an authoritative figure, promoting their conformity and marginalization; instead, they internalize the messages that are propagated to them. Thus, when colonial education is effective, the subjugated group will assume positions and statuses of inferiority within society independently. Subsequently, the subjugated group begins to intuitively believe they truly belong at the bottom rung of society. Watkins asserts, as did Carter G. Woodson before him, “When you can control a person’s thinking you can control that person. Colonial education in America was designed to control, pacify, and socialize subject people. The education of blacks has always been inextricably connected to state politics and the labor market.”<sup>97</sup> The mental corrosion of African Americans allowed white southerners who were insistent upon maintaining the racial order of the Old South to partner with Northern industrialist and New South demagogues seeking opportunities to financially capitalize on the wave of urban industrialization that was sweeping the nation. This was a prime opportunity for all parties involved to get what they wanted, the Old South was again to maintain white supremacy through finically marginalizing African Americans through this partnership and the Northern industrialist and New South demagogues were able to cultivate an isolated pool of cheap laborers which would allowed them to financially flourish, all while exploiting African Americans of the region. Consequently, these factions joined forces and devised what became the standard of higher education for blacks in the South for the next century.<sup>98</sup>

Watkins devotes the first personal profile of his book to General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, a prototype of the most significant white ideologues behind black

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<sup>97</sup> William H. Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865-1954* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>98</sup> Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 25.

education. Watkins begins by stating, “of our architects of black education, none is more important than Samuel Chapman Armstrong. Moving from missionary to soldier to educator to college president, Armstrong was both ideologist and organizer for the education of blacks in the South.”<sup>99</sup> Watkins further asserts that “Armstrong was an effective and farsighted social, political, and economic theorist working for the cause of a segregated and orderly South. As theorist, curricularist, founder of Hampton Institute, and mentor of Booker T. Washington, Armstrong is at the center of our story.”<sup>100</sup>

During the Civil War years, Armstrong worked his way up the military hierarchy, earning a position as General within the Union Army. During his time in the military, he was frequently asked to lead black soldiers, and it was here he gained his reputation of working well with and effectively controlling blacks. This reputation served him well during his years as a commanding officer as well as in the years following the war. Armstrong’s renown led to his solicitation for several esteemed positions concerning race relations at the conclusion of the war. Nevertheless, he decided to decline them all until he was offered the one position he coveted the most--an appointment with the Freedmen’s Bureau in Virginia. Armstrong viewed this appointment as an ideal opportunity to work towards his missions of humanitarianism and national reconciliation, both of which he felt were critical to the nation after the most divisive period in U.S. history. Additionally, Armstrong specifically desired a Bureau appointment in the state of Virginia because of the affinity he gained for the area and its people when he was stationed in northern Virginia during his military service.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 43.

<sup>100</sup> Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 43.

<sup>101</sup> Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 47.

It was during his tenure at the Freedmen's Bureau that Armstrong developed and refined the tactics, policies, and curriculum of industrial education and truly began to understand its potential. Most of the founding fathers of normal schools advocated technical education for blacks. These men served in leadership positions within the Freedmen's Bureau, and the foundational elements of industrial education and the curriculum of normal schools were extracted from the work, strategies, and practices of the Freedmen's Bureau, which fostered and nurtured paternal education to freedmen. Thus, the new pedagogy of industrial education was inextricably linked to the Freedmen's Bureau. Throughout the duration of the Bureau industrial education was tested and refined, only to be formally introduced to the academic world upon the Freedmen's Bureau demise. However, of these white architects of black education, Armstrong was the most ambitious and personally motivated. While working at the bureau, Armstrong realized that if fashioned properly the pedagogy of industrial education could be used to exploit the new freedmen's passion to learn. By affording blacks with access to formal schooling, which they deeply desired in efforts to better themselves, Armstrong was able to subtly manipulate and gain hegemonic control over African Americans in efforts to further his cause of national reconciliation.

Armstrong decided the best way to achieve his dual objectives would be to simultaneously calm the fears of the North and South. Armstrong's strategy to appease all parties involved was an ingenious one. He began by reducing southern African Americans' fears by granting them access to education. He then turned his attention to pacifying white southerners by using the education which he was affording blacks as a hegemonic tool to teach them to be complacent with their subsidiary roles within a racist

society, Finally, in order to satisfy northerners, he presented them with an opportunity to monopolize exclusive access to a cheap, isolated labor force to exploit for financial profit through promoting industrial education.<sup>102</sup>

In efforts to further his cause and capitalize on his educational reform experience, Armstrong decided to pitch his innovative pedagogical creation to southern redeemers and northern investors in hopes of gaining financial support for his project. According to Watkins this was a task that most other reformers of the time would not have been able to successfully accomplish:

few white men were situated as was Armstrong. His status, socioracial views, and politics made him welcome among industrialist, governors, high political officials, educators, and other influential people of the time. He interacted and exchanged views with northern hegemonists and southerners alike. On the other hand, his background and work in Virginia made him very knowledgeable about and connected to black life.<sup>103</sup>

These unique connections, associations, and abilities allowed Armstrong to illustrate how his academic plan of industrial education would concurrently benefit the North and the South by giving them what they wanted and all at the expense of the African Americans, about whom neither group truly cared. This proposal was formulated and disseminated in an attempt to gain financial support for his innovative idea, and both groups received his message warmly. Out of his vision was born the Hampton Institute in 1868. Upon its founding Armstrong seemed to have achieved his self-ascribed mission of unifying national interest. With the creation of Hampton and the establishment of patrons backing his academic strategy, Armstrong was able to unify people behind a common

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<sup>102</sup> Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 46-49.

<sup>103</sup> Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 52.



cause, which was the further exploitation of the African American, and he served as the brain-trust behind it all.<sup>104</sup>

The Hampton Institute was the initial institution with a curriculum based solely upon industrial education and ethnic socialization. Watkins addresses this saying, “The Hampton idea was about much more than education. It was about nation building. It was about carefully situating the newly freed Black in a new sociopolitical and economic order. It was about (re)shaping delicate race relations. Finally and most importantly, it was about forging a social order rooted in apartheid, economic exploitation, oppression, and inequality.”<sup>105</sup> Watkins also notes that “Armstrong had a most fervent advocate in Booker T. Washington. Washington’s praise and recommendation of Armstrong’s ideas guaranteed widespread support from the black population desperate for education and uplift.”<sup>106</sup> This paternal relationship was paramount to the success and acceptance of industrial educational, the sustenance of the southern white power structure, and the coalescence of the black masses to submit to the policies of racial accommodation.

James Anderson also notes the connection between Armstrong, Washington, industrial education, and the maintenance of the existing white power structure of the day. Anderson asserts that Armstrong, Washington, and industrial education were interdependent elements that emboldened white supremacy, all the while having the ability to mask their associations with one another thus enabling them to be identified as racially deprecating. He writes, “It is one of the ironies of Afro-American history that the ideological and programmatic challenge to the ex-slaves’ conception of universal schooling and social progress was conceived and nurtured by a Yankee, Samuel

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<sup>104</sup> Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 49-53.

<sup>105</sup> Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 43.

<sup>106</sup> Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 44.

Chapmen Armstrong, and a former slave, Booker T. Washington.”<sup>107</sup> Moreover, Anderson declares that the leaders of the ex-slaves fought to build on the momentum gained upon their emancipation and sought to develop an educational system emphasizing their hopes and goals. Their progress towards these newly adopted concepts of freedom, social order, and equality were stymied by the birth of the Hampton Institute and industrial education. According to Anderson, Hampton was “a conjuncture of educational pedagogy and social ideology of different origins and character [than that of the freedmen]. Armstrong represented a social class, ideology, and world outlook that was fundamentally different from and opposed to the interest of the freedmen. Thus in his establishment of the Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute, he was neither unconscious nor contrarious, but honest. The Institute’s curriculum, values, and ethos represented his social class and ideology.”<sup>108</sup> Anderson concludes this point by saying:

The ex-slaves struggled to develop a social and educational ideology singularly appropriate to their defense of emancipation and one that challenged the social power of the planter regime. Armstrong developed a pedagogy and ideology designed to avoid such confrontations and to maintain within the south a social consensus that did not challenge traditional inequalities of wealth and power. In time these two ideologies and programs of black education collided, and Armstrong’s prized pupil, Booker T. Washington, was at the center of the confrontation. Washington founded Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in 1881, and by the turn of the century, ‘the Hampton-Tuskegee Idea’ represented the ideological antithesis of the educational and social movement begun by ex-slaves.<sup>109</sup>

The above quotes elucidate the intentionality and consciousness that Armstrong and Washington went about implementing their socioeconomic program within the South as well as their plans and desires to see their work replicated throughout the nation.

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<sup>107</sup> Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 33.

<sup>108</sup> Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 33.

<sup>109</sup> Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 33.

Armstrong and Washington marketed their racial accommodationist agenda as progress by promising that their politics of gradualism would ultimately foster a new society. William Watkins articulates this saying, “Armstrong proffered a rhetoric and language of possibility and hope. His commitment to the existing economic and racial order was masked by his language of human uplift. However, his vision of human uplift was absolutely compatible with the most despotic and oppressive political apparatus. He mastered the art of crafting social change without changing society.”<sup>110</sup> Moreover, Armstrong ensured that this deceptive rhetorical ability was something that he taught, instilled, and matured within Washington. This rhetorical development of Washington ultimately proved to be essential to the continuance of Armstrong’s vision and work upon his death; Washington was able to pick up where Armstrong left off and was even able to take the philosophy of industrial education to new heights.

Industrial education at both Hampton and Tuskegee was designed for three reasons. The first rationale was to civilize African Americans morally, socially, spiritually, hygienically, and nutritionally. This was to be done through emphasizing the importance of healthcare and cleanliness and stressing Christian ethics and principles. The second goal of this paradigm was to design and train black teachers who could and would return to their communities to propagate the messages, information, and philosophies associated with industrial education. Anderson asserts that these schools trained black teachers in the hope that “the work of adjusting blacks to this social arrangement would be carried out by indigenous black educators, particularly teachers, and principals, aided by Hampton-style industrial education, local school boards, and

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<sup>110</sup> Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 44.

northern white philanthropists.”<sup>111</sup> The third and most important reason behind the implementation of industrial education within the South was to equip blacks mentally and physically for their roles as menial workers who would occupy the lowest positions and vocations throughout society. To prepare them for this, both schools (Hampton and Tuskegee) instituted manual labor routines into the core of their curriculum in efforts to teach students steady work habits, practical knowledge, and social complacency. Anderson sums up the philosophy behind the Hampton-model of industrial education, writing that “Hampton developed an extensive manual labor routine because the school’s faculty believed that a particular combination of hard work, political socialization, and social discipline would mold appropriately conservative black teachers.”<sup>112</sup>

The notion that education would assist in the maintenance of the existing white power structure was a novel idea and was one that separated Armstrong from most segregationist of the day. Racist whites desired to keep the socioeconomic conditions of the Old South alive after the war, and the majority of southerners abhorred the idea of providing blacks with the opportunity to receive education, believing that it would raise their social, political, and economic expectations. The prospect of an educated black populace was unacceptable because it would challenge the existing power structure of the region and make for more volatile racial relations than the tense and potentially combustible atmosphere that already existed in the South. However, as Anderson notes,

Armstrong held a deep faith in the powerful capacity of moral and industrial education to socialize blacks to understand and accept their disenfranchisement and to make them more productive laborer...Armstrong’s educational and social philosophy focused on methods and content to develop black teachers and leaders who would

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<sup>111</sup> Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, p 36.

<sup>112</sup> Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 36.

prepare the black masses for efficient service in racially prescribed occupational niches.<sup>113</sup>

No pupil ever emerged from the Hampton model who was a greater embodiment of these skills, tactics, and ideologies than Armstrong's most esteemed apprentice Booker T. Washington.

W.E.B. DuBois dedicates a whole chapter in this legendary book *The Souls of Black Folk* to his ideological opponent, Booker T. Washington, and his gradualist philosophies of accommodation and industrial education. The chapter entitled "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others" provides DuBois's critique of Washington's ideologies. DuBois believed that African Americans had to take on the responsibility themselves of solving problems that confronted their race. In order to do this, members of the race had to be willing to take the initiative of producing these needed changes. DuBois believed that only indigenous leaders would care enough to truly dedicate their lives to assisting the race in educating, advancing, and developing African Americans into a truly respectable, competitive, and equal people. DuBois dedicates a latter chapter of *The Souls of Black Folk* to this theory, entitled "Of the Training of Black Men" In this chapter he writes:

We cannot hope, then, in this generation, or for several generations, that the mass of the whites can be brought to assume that close sympathetic and self-sacrificing leadership of the blacks which their present situation so eloquently demands. Such leadership, such social training and example, must come from the blacks themselves...here is the path out of the economic situation, and here is the imperative demand for trained Negro leaders of character, and intelligence,-men of skill, men of light and leading, college-bred men, black captains of industry, and missionaries of culture; men who thoroughly comprehend and know modern civilization, and can take hold of the Negro communities and raise and train them of

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<sup>113</sup> Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 36.

force of percept and example, deep sympathy, and the inspiration of common blood and ideals.<sup>114</sup>

This call for black men to educate themselves and then return to their communities to elevate their families and communities was a truly unique ideology. It was one in which DuBois truly believed, and he exemplified this belief in the cultivation of indigenous black leadership, demonstrating his readiness to lead by example.

Accordingly, due to his belief in indigenous leadership and the ideology of the talented tenth, DuBois dedicated two summers of his collegiate life to building a school from the ground up in Alexandria, Tennessee. This town encompassed an economically depressed populace where young black children were being denied the opportunity to receive an education because of the overwhelming poverty of their community. This town was so poor it could not afford to build a school or to pay a teacher. Despite this, DuBois volunteered to assist this community. He went into the various neighborhoods, secured an adequate location for a schoolhouse, and decided to teach the children of the community for free. Moreover, he was willing to go into the various neighborhoods and surrounding areas of the town to personally campaign for parents to allow their children to attend the new school, informing them of the purpose of his work there, the free opportunity, and the immense benefits children would gain as a result of proper schooling. This attempt to form an elementary school for the underprivileged youth of the race during his summer vacations, even unpaid, illustrates DuBois's dedication to the cause of racial uplift.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> W.E.B. DuBois. *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Cosmo Classics Inc. 2007), 104.

<sup>115</sup> DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 37-45.

DuBois believed that Washington's plan for African Americans called for three costly sacrifices: "Mr. Washington distinctly asks black people give up, at least for the present, three things, - first, political power, second, insistence on civil rights, third, higher education of Negro Youth, - and concentrate all of their energies on industrial education, the accumulation of wealth, and the conciliation of the South."<sup>116</sup> In DuBois's opinion the three submissions that Washington called for would have led to a severe crippling of the race and directly resulted in the disenfranchisement of blacks, civil inferiority, and withdrawal of aid from black institutions of higher learning and training.<sup>117</sup>

Washington's ability to gain and monopolize such a significant number of white patrons alarmed DuBois as to his true intentions as an African American leader. Moreover, in addition to DuBois's questions concerning the motives of Washington as a racial leader, he also speculated about his unconventional rise to power. DuBois argued that nearly all of the prior African American leadership until this point in history had been developed through "silent suffrage of their fellows, had sought to lead their own people alone, and were usually, save (Fredrick) Douglass, little known outside of their race. But Booker T. Washington arose as essentially the leader not only of one race but of two, a compromiser between the South, the North, and the Negro."<sup>118</sup>

Despite DuBois's warnings Washington's plan for racial leadership was adopted and implemented throughout the South. Once Washington began to rise as the dominate figure of leadership among the African American community, he began to serve as the voice for black interests both politically and socially. Upon his ascension to power, he

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<sup>116</sup> DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 28.

<sup>117</sup> DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 29.

<sup>118</sup> DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 28.

and the Institute he founded began to function as dictators within the black community, especially among black intellectuals. The combination of Washington and his Institute became so notorious for their authoritarian style of leadership that they became known as the “Tuskegee machine.” Washington and the Tuskegee machine became virtually unstoppable, especially within the South. Historian Adolph Reed speaks to the power of Washington and the Tuskegee machine in his book *W.E.B. DuBois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line*. Reed suggests that almost anyone who opposed Washington was silenced saying; “Things came to such a pass that when a Negro complained or advocated a [different] course of action, he was silenced with the remark that Mr. Washington did not agree with this.”<sup>119</sup>

In addition to stifling emerging black leaders’ ideologies, tactics, and dissenting viewpoints, Washington and the Tuskegee machine were able to monopolize white patronage concerning the African American agenda. DuBois, like most African Americans of the time, viewed white patronage as a potential ally for the black community. However, unlike Washington, DuBois only viewed white support as beneficial when blacks were allowed to maintain autonomy over the projects for which the financial aid was to be applied and when support was gained without having to sacrifice the goals or aims of the African American agenda of equality. Operating within this framework, DuBois attempted unsuccessfully many times to attract the interest of white philanthropists. One such example of DuBois’s efforts to secure white financial benefactors can be seen in his failed attempt to develop a “Special Committee for the Study of Negro Problems” in 1900. Reed explains why this and many other attempts by

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<sup>119</sup> Adolph L. Reed Jr., *W.E.B. DuBois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 62.



DuBois or like minded black theorists were unable to materialize, saying, “White philanthropists were not moved by DuBois’s estimation of the need for the black intellectual elite to consolidate itself. In fact, the philanthropic community not surprisingly appears to have little interest in independent black activity of any type.”<sup>120</sup>

The refusal of white elites to support DuBois or other black leaders promoting racial independence and traditional academic excellence is telling. It illustrates how reluctant most white philanthropists were to assist the development of organizations, studies, or institutions that were working towards socioeconomic uplift and the establishment of independent, self-sufficient African American communities. Moreover, it demonstrates the profound regressions in which Washington’s politics were entrenched and elucidates the sole reason he was able to receive the funding he did. This illustrates that Washington was only able to monopolize funding from white patrons because these white investors had a vested interest in the ideology he was advocating and disseminating.

Therefore, whether Washington’s political ideologies were a representation of his “authentic private self” or a public display to gain access to capital, his strange bedfellows distinguished him from any other black leader of the period.<sup>121</sup> Reed explicates Washington’s political ideology highlighting the distinctive elements that separated him from his contemporaries.

DuBois and others unequivocally opposed Washington’s acquiescence in the alliance of Redeemers and New South ideologies, an alliance predicated on expulsion of blacks from public life and codification of a regime explicitly based on white supremacy. The urgency of critics’ objections to the Tuskegeean’s stronghold on black debate and access to support for uplift activity, in fact, derived principally from recognition that

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<sup>120</sup> Reed, *W.E.B. DuBois and American Political Thought*, p 63.

<sup>121</sup> Reed, *W.E.B. DuBois and American Political Thought*, 58-63.

his machine's main function was to stifle challenges to the emerging Jim Crow social order. They understood that disenfranchisement and loss of civil rights would ultimately destroy black aspirations. This fault line redefined the broad orientations toward racial strategy that had formed under the conditions of relative openness and expansive political mobilization that had flourished during the first two decades after Emancipation.<sup>122</sup>

Therefore, the supposed competition for white patronage among black intellectuals and leaders was actually a façade. Through compliance with the established white power structure and their aims for the African American populace, Washington and the Tuskegee machine were able to suppress any supposed competition for white patronage. This profoundly crippled the aspirations of other African American ideologists by monopolizing funding blocking them from obtaining the resources needed to enact true racial uplift.

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<sup>122</sup> Reed, *W.E.B. DuBois and American Political Thought*, 61.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE TRAINING OF AN APPRENTICE: RETRACING THE HISTORY OF DR. MOTON

The final connection involved in examining how Washington's political ideology impacted Tuskegee and its willful compliance to the request of the federal government, can be seen through Washington's relationship with his successor as the Institute's president. When Washington realized that his health was fading, a few years before his death he began identifying prospects to keep the Institute flourishing and rooted in the principles of the Hampton-Tuskegee ideological model. He searched, evaluated, and interviewed students, alumni, and faculty from both Tuskegee and Hampton. Washington finally settled on Dr. Robert R. Moton, a Hampton graduate, who worked with and under General Armstrong for an extended amount of time. Additionally, Moton served as the head of Hampton's Department of Discipline and Military Instruction for fifteen years upon graduating from the Institute. Mentored, trained, educated, and supervised by both Washington and Armstrong, Moton ultimately adopted both their practices and policies during his apprenticeship, maturing into a strong ideological advocate of the Hampton-Tuskegee model of industrial education and racial accommodation.

Upon being chosen by Washington as his successor as president of Tuskegee, Moton initially proved hesitant to accept the position. He did not want to leave Hampton and ultimately did not vacate the Institute until after Washington's death, due to prior obligations as a leading faculty member at Hampton. Additionally, Moton did not leave immediately because he was reluctant to accept the immense challenge of replacing his mentor and the legendary figure of the "Wizard of Tuskegee." Moreover, Moton still

proved diffident about accepting the nomination of president, even after he was courted by the Tuskegee Board of Trustees. However, despite his reservations, Washington's opinion, personal selection, and endorsement of Moton to carry on the work he started ultimately proved enough to win Moton over. Moton reflects on this decision in his autobiography *Finding A Way Out*, saying; "To enter upon the varied and delicate responsibilities growing out of Doctor Washington's life work was not to be lightly undertaken, and I confess that I would have had many and even more misgivings about many things, in spite of the assurances of Tuskegee's [board of] Trustees and many of my own friends, had it not been for the kind and generous encouragements of Doctor Washington himself."<sup>123</sup>

Washington held Moton in high esteem, He saw him as a disciplinarian who had served his people admirably after matriculating at the Hampton Institute and as a man who could assist in taking the Hampton-Tuskegee model of industrial education and racial accommodation to a higher level. Washington's book *My Larger Education* includes a passage about Moton, which Moton refers to in his autobiography. He identifies it as a key motivation for his finally deciding to accept the position as the president of Tuskegee:

It has been my privilege to come into contact with many different types of people, but I know few men who are so lovable and at the same time so sensible in their nature as Major Moton. He is chock-full of common sense. Further without your knowing how he does it, makes you believe in him from the very first time you see him and from your first contact with him, and at the same time makes you love him, or always want to be near him. Although he has little schooling outside of what he was able to get at Hampton Institute, Major Moton is one of the best-read men and one of the most interesting men to talk with [that] I have ever met. Education has not "spoiled" him, as it seems to have done in the case of some other

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<sup>123</sup> Robert Russa Moton. *Finding a Way Out: An Autobiography* (New York; Doubleday, Page & Company; 1920), 201.

educated Negroes. It has not embittered or narrowed him in his affections. He has not learned to hate or distrust any class of people, and he is just as ready to assist and show kindness to a white man as to a black man, to a Southerner as to a Northerner.<sup>124</sup>

This ringing endorsement by Washington illustrates the respect, confidence, and admiration he had for Moton and the abilities he felt the Major possessed to make him the ideal successor.

Washington goes on in his book to say that “Major Moton knows by intuition Northern white people and Southern white people. I have often heard the remark that the Southern white man knows more about the Negro in the South than anybody else. I will not stop here to debate that question, but I will add that colored men like Major Moton know more about the Southern white men than anybody else.”<sup>125</sup> Similarly, Washington speaks to Moton’s ability to conduct himself administratively, as the president of an institution would be required to do saying, “At Hampton Institute, for example, they have white teachers and colored teachers; they have Southern white people and Northern white people....Major Moton knows how to keep his hands on all these different elements, to see to it that friction is kept down, and that each works in harmony with the other. It is a difficult job, but Major Moton knows how to negotiate it.”<sup>126</sup> These affirmations illustrate Washington’s trust in Moton to carry on the work that had begun through the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education as well as his ability to conduct the business of the school in the same manner as both himself and Armstrong before him. Washington, concluding

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<sup>124</sup> Booker T. Washington, *My Larger Education: Being Chapters from my Experience* (New York, Double Day, Page & Company, 1911), 214.

<sup>125</sup> Washington. *My Larger Education*, 216.

<sup>126</sup> Washington. *My Larger Education*, 216.

his praise of Moton, says, “I have learned from Major Moton that one need not belong to a superior race to be a gentleman.”<sup>127</sup>

In addition to Washington approving of Moton ideologically, intellectually, and socially, Moton was able to gain the trust and respect of the Tuskegee Board of Trustees. A day after the board held a meeting designed to help elect Washington’s successor, a board member named Colonel Roosevelt wrote to another board member who was unable to attend the meeting, saying;

It is the greatest relief to me to say that I believe that if he [Moton] is appointed that we insure for ourselves every reasonable probability of success in carrying on the great work of Booker T. Washington. I believe that he can run the institution. I believe that he will get on with the white Southern people as well as any Negro now living....I believe that he will get on with Northern white men and be able to help us in getting the necessary funds. He has a very powerful and at the same time an engaging personality. I cannot speak too strongly about the favorable impression he has made on me. Finally I believe that he will be able to widely interpret the feelings and desires of his own people to the white people of both the North and South.<sup>128</sup>

Moton’s ability to reach, relate to, and be accepted by white philanthropists from both the North and the South was key to his selection as the next president of Tuskegee.

Furthermore, his fundraising capabilities were essential to his ability to carry on the leadership of the Institute in the manner of his predecessor. Moton refers to the significance of his role as a financial recruiter saying, “Immediately after my election I was asked by the Trustees of Tuskegee Institute to devote the next few months to helping them raise a fund of \$2,000,000.”<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Washington, *My Larger Education*, 217.

<sup>128</sup> Robert Russa Moton. *Finding a Way Out: An Autobiography* (New York; Doubleday, Page & Company; 1920), 199.

<sup>129</sup> Moton, *Finding a Way Out*, 206.

Moton, like Washington, decided to give an address to the nation, formally addressing his views on racial matters in efforts to calm growing concerns and fears about his ideologies, policies, and tactics regarding his reign as the president of Tuskegee. Moton gave his speech at Tuskegee's commencement ceremony, which also served as his inauguration into the Institute's presidency. Moton's speech, entitled "Cooperation and Consecration," was anticipated by the general public much like Washington's "Atlanta Compromise." Both men's speeches were very well attended, and their audiences were widely diversified, including men from all classes, regions, and races. As Washington's before him, Moton's speech, subsided the racial fears of whites worried about black upheaval and social insurgency. He praised his mentors for their dedication to racial and social progress while also championing the principles of industrial education they advocated. Within his speech Moton said:

Doctor Washington's ideas of education appeared so simple, so unconventional, and even so unacademic, so vastly different from what had previously been expected of an educational institution, that he was often misunderstood. His methods and motives were candidly questioned in some quarters by some honest people, especially by members of his own race. This feeling took such a form as would have discouraged and hampered an ordinary man, but with Doctor Washington, who was truly a prophet and a seer, such opposition served only as a spur to greater and more persistent efforts.<sup>130</sup>

After defending Washington from the growing number of attacks surfacing from other black intellectuals of the day concerning his tactics, ideologies, and personal allegiance to the cause of African American social uplift, Moton then shifted to his endorsement of Washington's policies. He reassured the audience that he believed that these ideals and

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<sup>130</sup> Moton, *Finding a Way Out*, 215.

actions were justified under Washington's presidency and that the same policies and practices would continue under his regime.

Doctor Washington cared little about the kind of education the Negro received, but was exceedingly anxious that it should be thorough and well-suited to his reasonably immediate needs. The truth is, the need of industry and skill, of honesty and efficiency, the lack of land and decent homes, the imperative necessity for better methods of farming, together with a woeful lack of morality, which was prevalent among many of the untrained millions of Negroes--all this made such a strong appeal that any system of education which did not offer immediate relief for these masses made comparatively little impression on him. Doctor Washington worked out a plan of education which showed the training of the hand should strengthen and supplement the mental and moral activities, especially of those who were fitting themselves for leadership. This system of all-around education for larger service, which was so effectively carried on under his direction, has been so productive of good results that it has attracted the attention and respect of educators the world over.<sup>131</sup>

Since Moton was mentored by Washington and was primarily molded by Armstrong, Washington's advisor, while enrolled as a student and a faculty member of the Hampton Institute, it is logical to believe that his ideology, philosophy, and administrative approach at Tuskegee were profoundly influenced by these affiliations. Moreover, the fact that Moton was hand-selected by Washington elucidates the intimate nature of the political tutelage that he received during his ascension to power as the president of the Institute. Additionally, it is important to understand that although Booker T. Washington originally secured patrons for the Institute, most donors became annual benefactors to the Institute and continued to give charitably to Tuskegee well after Washington's death, into Moton's presidency from 1915 to 1935. Consequently, it is rational to believe that since the funding continued under his presidency, Moton's writings, speeches, executive decisions, and track record illustrate that he was influenced

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<sup>131</sup> Moton, *Finding a Way Out*, 216.



by the actions of his predecessors and was also confined to many of the same restrictions that they faced concerning the requirement of disseminating and propagating certain social ideals in return for the funding. Moton was able to accept funding from white benefactors to elevate and establish Tuskegee as a leading institution for black learning, as Washington did before him, in their collaborative effort to “lead” the race through the methodology of racial accommodation.

## CHAPTER 7

### RECONCILING FATAL WOUNDS: LOOKING AT HOW TUSKEGEE HAS BEEN HISTORICALLY REMEMBERED AND ASSOCIATED WITH THE SYPHILIS STUDY

In her article “The Tuskegee Syphilis Study and Legacy Recruitment for Experimental AIDS Vaccines,” Kimberly Hagen, a representative of the CDC, articulates her belief that African American reluctance to participate in governmentally funded Experimental research can be traced directly back to the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment.<sup>132</sup> Hagen explains why the African American community’s resistance is significant to science in its attempts to develop an effective vaccination for diseases that plague the country such as AIDS/HIV. Hagen asserts that black participation in experimental research is critical to our country’s medical research, especially in the case of AIDS, saying “We need an AIDS vaccine – and we need it most urgently for people whose communities are hardest hit [by the disease]. In the United States this means African-Americans. Even though they make up about twelve percent of the total U.S. population, African-Americans now constitute almost half of the reported AIDS cases.”<sup>133</sup>

The above statistic illustrates the extreme need for black participation in experimental research in attempts to eradicate this deadly disease. This situation draws strong parallels to the situation that presented itself in this country in the 1920s, when African Americans were needed by medical researchers in attempts to further science and produce a cure for the syphilis epidemic that was sweeping the nation. The current

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<sup>132</sup> Hagen, “Bad Blood”, 32.

<sup>133</sup> Hagen, “Bad Blood”, 35.

dilemma the medical field faces resembles the atmosphere and conditions that existed around the Tuskegee Study in three major ways. These situations correspond in regards to the patient-doctor power relations, the economic depression facing the people in need of treatment, and the lack of medical resources and funding available to the segment of society that is most in need of the constant treatment necessary to treat the disease.<sup>134</sup>

Despite the prevalence of AIDS/HIV among African American communities, it is easy to see why members of the race who are aware of the testing going on in the field of AIDS/HIV are suspect and reluctant to volunteer for human research studies. This is especially the case in studies that have an emphasis on or are exclusively based upon blacks as the subjects, as was the case in the Tuskegee Study. Amy Fairchild connects the legacy of the Tuskegee Study and the lack of qualified blacks volunteering as research participants in scientific studies today saying, “When we understand Tuskegee as emblematic of a history of racism and the experience of social, economic and political disenfranchisement, its legacy does much to explain the atmosphere of mistrust that surrounds research, especially when the subjects of the Study are poor, vulnerable and are potential targets of exploitation.”<sup>135</sup>

Additionally, the lack of trust African Americans display in the United States Government, as well as any study or research that is governmentally funded or connected, is explicable. The reason for the lack of qualified blacks who are willing to volunteer as research participants in scientific studies is summed up by Hagen,

Being experimented on in the name of science is particularly tough to sell to people who still feel the betrayal implicit in the Tuskegee Study as a personal body blow. To many African Americans, Tuskegee is just the latest, officially sanctioned seal of racist approval on a reprehensible

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<sup>134</sup> Hagen, “Bad Blood”, 32-35.

<sup>135</sup> Hagen, “Bad Blood”, 37.

history of white-black relations that has included slavery, lynching, Jim Crow laws, job discrimination and social disenfranchisement.<sup>136</sup>

The marginalization of the black race, the depth of political corruption in this country, and the traditional lack of value attributed to African American lives explicates the absence of blacks in Experimental research.

The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment was a tragedy created by deceit, racism, and unethical medical behavior. The inhuman suffering of the victims of the Study was unnecessary and could have and should have been prevented. Unfortunately, it was not; therefore, the men involved in the Study, their families, the community of Macon County, and the African American populace as a whole, were victimized by this medical catastrophe. The United States government conducted a medical study that for forty years was based on deceit, and it intentionally withheld a documented treatment for syphilis from men for thirty years after the introduction of penicillin as a cure. The unethical nature of this Study severely handicapped the trust of African Americans concerning both the government and physicians. Moreover, many doctors assert that the effects of this disreputable Study are still being felt today, over forty-years later. The relationship between the African American community, the federal government, and science has never and will never be quite the same after this calamity. This Study greatly severed the already shaky trust of African Americans and further isolated this group of citizens by once again victimizing, marginalizing, oppressing, and exploiting them.

Without Tuskegee University's involvement, which involved the consent of its leaders to host the study, the assurance its name carried, the use of its facility, and medical staff that was used, this Study probably would not have materialized. The

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<sup>136</sup> Hagen, "Bad Blood", 35.

involvement of Tuskegee provided validity for many of the men who ultimately volunteered for the Study and without them or their affiliation with the Study, there would not have been a sufficient number of black men willing to participate in the Study for it to occur. This is evidenced by the fact that in the early stages of the Study, PHS officials unsuccessfully tried to recruit participants for the Study on their own but soon realized their limited ability to recruit within the black community. Upon this realization, PHS officials turned to Tuskegee, its leaders, and other community leaders within the black community in efforts to grant credence to their Study and entice the needed participants. The PHS used trustworthy institutions such as black churches and schools within the community to illustrate the validity of their Study.<sup>137</sup> The African American men involved in the Study principally placed their trust in the Study because of Tuskegee's involvement with it.

The Tuskegee Institute was a fundamental African American establishment whose curriculum, policies, and decisions were influenced and essentially dictated by the political leadership of an African American legend. Even though Washington died on November 14, 1915, before the Experiment began, his policies of accommodation were carried on through his hand-selected mentor, Robert R. Moton, who also attended Hampton University under the mentorship of General Samuel Chapman Armstrong.<sup>138</sup> While the federal government served as the mastermind behind this Study and thus should be remembered as such, there was an internal element involved in this Study. The beginnings of the Tuskegee Institute's irresolute foundation in regards to its fortification of the black community began with Booker T. Washington and his acceptance of political

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<sup>137</sup> Jones, *Bad Blood*, 69.

<sup>138</sup> McCartney, *Black Power Ideologies*, 64-71.

accommodation. Ultimately, this regressive ideology of unquestioned compliance to the established power structures seemed to have trickled down through the University that he founded. After years of championing a sociopolitical philosophy of submission himself, Washington passed down his ideology and practice of accommodation along with the presidency of Tuskegee to Moton. Moton through the Hampton-Tuskegee model of industrial education emulated his mentor and carried on his practices and philosophies which Washington modeled as president before him. Consequently, Moton's acquiescence to the federal government's request for Tuskegee's association with the Study and Tuskegee's leadership accepted the PHS's invitation to collaborate with this Study.

Moreover, Tuskegee benefited substantially from this Study, increasing the Institute's funding, renown, and enrollment by being able to boast and refer to their exclusive medical Study with the federal government, a claim that no other school in the country could proclaim, much less a black school in the 1930s. Additionally, Tuskegee benefited in the aftermath of the Study as well. The University was listed as a victim of the Study by former president Bill Clinton in his apology given on behalf of the government to the survivors of the Study. Tuskegee was also financially rewarded for its supposed victimization by being granted a government endowment that led to the building of a new research and healthcare center. Additionally, after his apology, Clinton announced that the government was granting Tuskegee University 200,000 dollars to build a National Center for Bioethics in research as compensation for its suffering.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Harriet A. Washington. *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*. (New York, Harlem Moon Publishing), p 184.

While most historians have subscribed to the belief that this Experiment was done either purely in the name of furthering science or solely for racist reasons, the truth lies somewhere in between. Looking at the evidence, events that took place, and the order in which they occurred, illustrate that there is validity to each side of this argument. While there was a severe syphilis epidemic going on in the country, especially in the rural South during the beginning of the twentieth century, the fact that the Experiment's subjects were all black raises caution flags. Similarly, the reality that the Study's organizers knew of the indefinite extension of the Experiment that they were not going to treat or allow the patients of the Study to be treated or allowed to receive treatment of any kind from any other physicians clearly shows the racist intent of the Experiment after its extension.

Despite political gestures such as apologies and the speech given by former president Bill Clinton, the compensation that the government provided the remaining survivors, and the free medical treatment they were afforded, the government will never be able to repair the damage done during the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment. Remnants of the broken trust, relations, and communities that African Americans endured during their victimization in this Study still manifest themselves today and do not appear to be fading away. Thus, the supposed reparations that the government dispersed in efforts to reconcile relations with African Americans and the immediate victims of the Study seem futile. In the end, one hundred of the men involved in the Study died directly of syphilis; one hundred more died due to related complications; forty of the participant's wives were infected with the disease; and nineteen of their children were born with congenital syphilis.<sup>140</sup> Unfortunately, the medical records of the other victims of the Experiment were not retained to illustrate the holistic destruction that this Experiment caused, but

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<sup>140</sup> Washington. *Medical Apartheid*, 168.

financial gifts will not compensate for the mistreatment of African Americans in this case.



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