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Introduction

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Introduction

Barbara Lewis

The Trotter Review, which has been published for over fifteen years, is entering a new phase. That is what the current issue represents, a marriage of old and new, a branching out into expanded territory that does not betray, we hope, the ideals or principles of the past.

What we have put together is historical and cultural and political. We raise questions. We draw connections and provide context as we focus on the local, the national, the international, and the diasporic. In addition, we give cognizance to the literary, as an expression of the urge to order the real, to give it utterance, or, as Chuck D would say, to bow to the power of the pad.

We wanted to sample the range of work that the Trotter has produced, and for that reason, many of the articles and essays are drawn from papers that the Trotter Institute has published as monographs over the years. There is a theme here, and it is the resistance of the African-inflected spirit, generation after generation, community after community, and country after country in an internecine war that has not yet come to an end

Deborah Elizabeth Whaley writes of the continuing relevance of William Monroe Trotter, and his journalistic activism, how he connects to the insurgent black rappers and cartoonists and visual artists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Cultural citizenship is at the core of her concern, how do folks of color (and that definition is porous these days) factor into the discourse of the post-9/11 world, with its focus on domestic terrorism.

Where is the moral imperative in the contemporary? With all the talk of family values in the midst of galloping hypocrisy, is the moral a mask to be put on and taken off according to convenience and

circumstance? Not everywhere, Claudine Michel argues. She demonstrates how vodou, which marries African belief and Catholic practice, has created an abiding moral resource as Haitians struggle for sociopolitical significance.

Marta Cruz-Janzen ventures into fraught territory in her investigation of the ways in which the black female is maligned and victimized in Latino culture, and specifically in Puerto Rico, her native land, where she learned that the only social role open to the woman of darker skin is a subservient one. Throughout Latin America, efforts to whiten the culture, to eliminate the stain of the African, have been rampant and persist still.

Ida B. Wells and Anna Julia Cooper were feminists and activists in the crossover from the nineteenth into the twentieth century. They were also contemporaries of William Monroe Trotter. Indeed, Wells and Trotter were allies. Like Trotter, they call out to be revisited and remembered, and Stephanie Athey places them not only in the context of their times but also shows how the legacy that they pioneered is very much the feminist agenda today.

Housing for people of color in Boston and around the country has long reflected how much access to the good life is off limits. In the nineteenth century, it was illegal in Massachusetts for blacks to will property to their children or heirs. Inheriting wealth was a privilege denied. Robert Hayden, historian of black Boston, writes about that time and its extended impact.

We end with a short story by Richard Tenorio of sibling love and sacrificed ambition, which is set in Roxbury, traditionally the twentieth-century home territory for blacks in Boston. Today, Roxbury is poised on the lip of gentrification, and blacks in Boston are on the move again, seeking home and security and belonging.

The Trotter Review, in its new incarnation, will seek to have one hand in the academic and the other hand in the journalistic or topical as it pays close attention to and tracks the issues that matter most to blacks (broadly defined and inclusive of the diaspora). With its location in Boston, the *Trotter Review* has a wide and important vantage. This city on a hill, where democracy fought for air in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and is still trying to catch its breath, remains an educational portal for so many around the world, who come here to study and learn.

The new *Trotter Review* aims its lens out into that world, which is increasingly diverse.

Further, emboldened by the onslaught of history repeated, I end with a question that is motivated by a current crisis. What distance have we as a people covered if we are still living in a country that in 2007 attempts to legally lynch young black boys in Jena, Louisiana, with a loss of their futures because they fought back against a noose hung on a southern tree? Lynching, which galvanized William Monroe Trotter and Ida B. Wells and countless others, is still alive and kicking backsides into jail and into a dead tomorrow in the twenty-first century.

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