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HISTORY AND HEROES: A MEANS OF SOCIAL
UPLIFT IN 1930S HARLEM

By

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B.S., Gonzaga University, 1961
B.A., University of Washington, 1970


Presented in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

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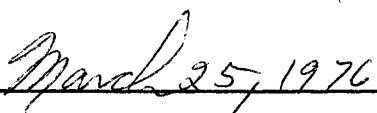
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History

History and Heroes: A Means of Social Uplift in 1930s Harlem (137pp.)

Director: H. Duane Hampton *W.D.A.*

During the 1930s Harlem residents studied Negro history in a manner similar to that pursued by Blacks in the 1960s. Through this study they learned of Negro achievements, honored heroes and heroines both black and white, and propagated the historical facts of the Negro that they discovered. In Negro history they found a basis for their claim to equality in American society. Harlemites' Negro history pursuits were just one part of the larger Negro History Movement initiated with the founding of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915. Carter G. Woodson, founder and unswerving mentor of the Movement and the Association provided constant encouragement, information and counsel to participants. The major work of the Association and its followers in Harlem was to establish Negro history courses in schools from primary through University levels. Many Harlem area clubs and groups organized for this purpose as well as to study Negro history, and to sponsor contests, lectures, and plays regarding Negro history.

Talented individuals like Black artist Jacob Lawrence participated in the 1930s Black History Movement by propagating their history through the medium of their art. The Depression years, fraught with social consciousness and economic deprivation, provided fertile ground for the peak of Negro History Movement activity as demonstrated in Harlem. Roots of the 1960s interest in Negro history and culture can be traced back to the 1930s movement through the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, through the work of artist Jacob Lawrence, and through the Negro history courses established at that earlier period and continued through the present. Three major sources were used for this study: The Journal of Negro History, The New York Amsterdam News and The New York Age.

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PREFACE

This study originated from the author's interest in the career and art of Black history painter Jacob Lawrence as well as the Black history study groups active in Harlem during the 1930s. Lawrence participated in the Harlem Black history study groups and his art resulted from the knowledge he gained from such groups.

In the process of tracking information about Harlem's Black history study groups the author wrote to several prominent authorities on Black American history. In reply to such enquiries, both discouraging and helpful advice emerged regarding possible sources of information. Columbia University History Professor Nathan I. Huggins responded that he believed Negro history study groups were more a matter of oral history rather than of written accounts. He acknowledged that many people like Black artist and author Romare Bearden referred to Negro history clubs but he knew of no newspapers, magazines or other written records that cited such groups. Romare Bearden was no more encouraging than Professor Huggins regarding specific written accounts regarding Black history study groups.

Professor Nancy Weiss of Princeton University's Department of History, in reply to the same enquiry, stated that

she had not encountered references to Harlem Black study groups during her research for the history of the New York Urban League. Nevertheless, Professor Weiss advised that two Black newspapers, The New York Age and The New York Amsterdam News might reveal the information sought. Fortunately this proved to be the case, as both newspapers published much information about Negro history study groups and the Negro History Movement of which they were a part. The Age and Amsterdam News, supplemented by the Journal of Negro History, proved to be of the greatest help.

The New York Times provided very little information regarding topics of Negro history study during the time period 1930 to 1944. References to Blacks found in the Times mainly concerned poverty, crime and other social problems. When articles referred to uplift or social betterment they were considered attainable through monetary means and not by studying and propagating Negro history. News of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and of persons like Carter G. Woodson seldom appear in the Times. This is particularly true in the early years of the study time period. During the late 1930s and during the 1940s accounts of the yearly meetings of the Association and Negro History Week appeared more often. Nevertheless, the best sources of information for this paper were the Age and the Amsterdam News. Reference is made to the Times in the later years especially to art criticism of Jacob Lawrence's painting.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The conscientious demand for Black history and culture courses in the 1960s gained prominence "in a new Black push for an invigorated collective ego-identity or group self-respect and self-direction."¹ Black Americans developed a vital awareness that to enact social and political change they should better understand their origins, roots, development, and accomplishments. Black leaders and educators realized the need to inform the race of its history and culture and thus transform traditionally information "poor" communities into information "rich" environments.²

This interest in Black history and culture during the

¹Nathan Hare, "The Teaching of Black History and Culture in the Secondary Schools," Social Education, 33, 4 (April, 1969):385. The terms "Negro" and "Black" will be used interchangeably in this paper. During the 1930s the term "Negro" was used predominately. "Negro" has fallen from favor and use by members of the Black race to the exclusive usage of "Black" or "Afro-American." "Afro-American" is not used in this paper because it was seldom used during the 1930s and seems inappropriate when writing about events of that period.

²Charles A. Morton, "Editorial Comment: Black English and Black History Continuing Themes," Journal of Negro Education (hereafter cited as JNE), XLIV, 3 (Summer, 1974): 263.

1960s succeeded and emanated from the Black Civil Rights Movement. Its development was not a unique twentieth-century occurrence. Rather, this concern was a resurgence of the Negro History Movement that had been initiated by Carter G. Woodson in 1915; a movement that had experienced considerable participation and support during the Depression years. From the inauguration of the Movement, Woodson and his followers asserted manifold efforts to establish Negro history courses in the schools, to have history textbooks rewritten to include Negro participation and accomplishment, and to educate the general public through lectures, history clubs, pageants, and Negro History Week celebrations.³

In a similar but less dramatic attempt to gain civil rights than that of the 1960s, Blacks in the 1930s researched, studied, and promulgated their history. They sought a reevaluation of the place and perspective of the Negro in contemporaneous American history courses and textbooks. They recognized a comparable need to look to Black racial roots, developments, and accomplishments. The Woodson-led Negro History Movement sought the reeducation of both Negro and white populations to inform them of the

³Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (hereafter cited as A.S.N.L.H.) are treated in depth in chapter 2. Woodson, who held a Doctorate in History from Harvard, dedicated his life to the goals of the Negro History Movement.

"true" Negro past. Through this educational process they hoped to develop pride within the Negro community and acceptance within the white community.

The Negro History Movement was only one element of an early twentieth-century Negro-led drive to avert what appeared to them to be the threat of Black extinction in the United States. Earl E. Thorpe, Black author-historian, asserts that there was probably no other time in which "the Negro experienced so much fear mingled with hope as he did in the 1900 to 1914 period," a time considered the nadir of American race relations.⁴ Race leaders urged numerous "survival" programs upon the Negro population in an effort to change their patterns and emphases, at a time when survival loomed almost as urgently as during slavery days.⁵

This survival base in twentieth-century American race relations served as the origin of the Negro History Movement.

⁴Earl E. Thorpe, The Mind of the Negro, An Intellectual History of Afro-Americans (Westport, Conn.: Negro University Press, 1961), p. 413.

⁵Ibid., p. 414. "It was in this atmosphere of fear plus the hope which all Americans evinced in the Populist and Progressive movements, which bred such phenomena as the National Negro Business League, Booker Washington's Gospel of Work, the Carter Woodson-led Negro History Movement, the DuBois-led Talented Tenth Movement, the Washington-led Industrial Education Movement, the independent Negro Labor Movement, the growth of the Negro Press, an emerging interest in Socialism and Communism, the strengthened puritanism and evangelical nature of much Negro preaching and religious thinking, the archaism evident in a renewed interest in Negro spirituals and dialect, and the birth of the blues."

Equal rights efforts founded on past achievements increased in the 1920s. These efforts culminated during the 1930s in the active participation of Blacks in an array of Negro hero adulation, Negro history clubs, history contests, and crusades for public school Negro history courses. Earl E. Thorpe refers to these efforts of the 1920s and 1930s as a loosely-organized mass movement that found "expression in scholarly books and journals, novels, poems, college and high school courses, plays, the very popular Negro History Week, and the beginning of numerous private and public manuscript and book collections."⁶

Black historians, from the nineteenth century to the present, have justified the existence of their ethnic history as a means to develop and instill racial pride. In addition, these historians maintained that their history established the worth of the race and, therefore, its right to demand freedom and equal participation in the responsibilities and benefits of a democratic society. Thorpe stated that "written Negro history had its beginnings in America primarily as an attempt to justify emancipation."⁷ The "Beginning School of Negro historians were as much interested in the uses of their history as they were in its

⁶Ibid., p. 477.

⁷Ibid., p. 441; Earl E. Thorpe, Negro Historians, A Critique (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1971), Chap. 1.

discovery."⁸ Thus Negro history emanated as much from an urge to uplift the race as it did from an impetus for scholarship. This urge for social uplift did not die when the early efforts to unearth Negro history terminated.

The social uplift theme in Black history continued to dominate the Middle Group of Black historians.⁹ William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, Black historian, sociologist and scholar, wrote in his earlier autobiography:

I was going to study the facts, any and all facts concerning the American Negro and his plight, and by measurement and comparison and research, work up to any generalization which I could. I entered this primarily with the utilitarian object of reform and uplift; but nevertheless, I wanted to do the work with scientific accuracy.¹⁰

Du Bois was not alone in his attempt to uplift the race through the study of Negro history.

In a similar vein, another Middle Group historian, Carter G. Woodson never tired of reiterating the social benefits to be derived from the study of the Negro past--or the

⁸ Italics mine. Thorpe, Mind, p. 441. Also see Thorpe, Black Historians. In this latter book Thorpe groups Black historians by time periods: Beginning School (1800-1896), Middle Group (1896-1930), and the New School (1930-1960).

⁹ See Introduction, footnote 8.

¹⁰ W. E. B. Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, An Essay Toward An Autobiography of a Race Concept (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1940), p. 51. Du Bois wrote two major autobiographies during his lifetime. Dusk of Dawn, the first. The second published in 1968 was entitled The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois, A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century (New York: International Publishing, 1968).

pitfalls that neglect would produce. In 1926 Woodson claimed that a race ignorant of its history remained "child-like." If a race has no tradition or history ". . . it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world" and risks the danger of extermination.¹¹ Woodson cited the precarious twentieth-century situation of the American Indian: Negroes should avoid following the example of a people threatened with extinction because it had left no continuous record of its heritage and tradition. On the other hand, the example of the Hebrew people, who had withstood centuries of persecution while honoring their recorded history and traditions, should serve to substantiate the necessity to know and preserve the Negro's historical past.¹² Woodson continued throughout his life to warn that the race must know, take pride in, and spread the story of the Negro past. By so doing, the race could avert prejudice, discrimination, and the threat of extinction by twentieth-century white society, as well as gain the place it deserved in American democratic culture.

The two major historians of the Middle Group, Woodson and Du Bois, placed great emphasis upon using the scientific method of research to produce "truth" in Negro history study.

¹¹Carter G. Woodson, "Negro History Week," Journal of Negro History (hereafter cited as JNH), XI, 2 (April, 1926): 239.

¹²Ibid.

Both historians frequently referred to application of the scientific method in their research and writings. They extended this emphasis by the influence each exerted upon the study of history in the Negro History Movement, which peaked during the 1930s.

Woodson counseled that any "program for the uplift of the Negro in this country must be based upon a scientific study of the Negro from within, to develop in him the power to do for himself what his oppressors will never do to elevate him to the level of others."¹³ Woodson consistently maintained that the Negro had not received his rightful place in American history and that he would gain deserved recognition only by his own achievements and efforts to seek truth. "Let truth destroy the dividing prejudices of nationality and teach universal love without distinction of race, merit and rank . . . let us help men to rise above [the] race hate of this age unto the altruism of a rejuvenated universe."¹⁴

In 1932 Woodson reported what he considered to be the beneficial results of truth discovered through scientific research. He disclosed that there was a definite increase in the desire of both Negroes and whites to know ". . . the

¹³Italics mine. Carter G. Woodson, The Mis-Education of the Negro (Washington: Associated Publishers, 1923), pp. 144-145.

¹⁴Carter G. Woodson, "Notes," JNH, XI, 2 (April, 1926):241.

truth and nothing but the truth about Negro history."¹⁵

Du Bois claimed that he had begun his career in historical research with the desire to work on the basis of scientific accuracy.¹⁶ This leader was a product of his times since "he received his training when the new 'Scientific History' was just beginning to make its imprint on historical writing."¹⁷ Du Bois, like Woodson, strived throughout his life for scientifically researched truth that he might free the Negro and give him equal status in society.

By means of the Negro History Movement of the 1920s and 1930s, Negro leaders and various uplift groups promulgated the racial achievements and accomplishments of Black heroes and heroines. Marcus Garvey, prominent during the period as a Black Nationalist and leader of the Universal Negro Improvement Association

¹⁵Carter G. Woodson, "Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History," JNH, XVII, 1 (January, 1932):2.

¹⁶Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, p. 51.

¹⁷Thorpe, Black Historians, p. 80. Scientific history was imported into the United States with the German Seminar during the 1870s. Previous to that time history was a branch of literature, "seldom concerned with the painstaking search for truth, made no use of the techniques of documentary criticism, and had little concern for the causes which lay behind events. The development of scientific history brought enormous changes in the narrative of the past. Slowly the professional historians, trained in the seminars at Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Columbia, Chicago, and Wisconsin, reexamined the evidence and reinterpreted the past in the light of new researches." W. E. Hesselstine, "A Quarter Century of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History," JNH, XXV, 4 (October, 1940). Hesselstine was a white historian.

proudly recalled for his followers, though not always with complete accuracy, the stirring heroism of such leaders of American slave rebellions as Denmark Vesey, Gabriel Prosser, and Nat Turner. The struggles of Zulu and Hottentot warriors against European rule, the histories of Moorish and Ethiopian rule, and the exploits of Toussaint L'Ouverture against the French in Haiti were not neglected in the effort to make Negroes conscious and proud of their racial heritage. Garvey delighted in references to the colored civilizations at a time when white men were barbarians and savages.¹⁸

Garvey's was just one of many voices expounding the achievements and accomplishments of members of the Negro race.

W. E. B. Du Bois, convinced that an elevation in self-esteem within the Black community must accompany an end to white discrimination, "rented large stadiums such as Griffith Park in Washington, and [the] Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles, for the staging of great race pageants which not only celebrated dramatic events in Negro history, but also encouraged pride in Negro accomplishments and beauty."¹⁹ Furthermore Du Bois, Woodson, J. A. Rogers, and other professional and lay-historians attempted to rekindle an interest in Africa among members of the race. These historians

¹⁸Edmund David Cronon, Black Moses, The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 47. Garvey led the Back to Africa Movement popular during the 1920s. The U.N.I.A. was his support organization.

¹⁹Raymond Wolters, Negroes and the Great Depression, The Problem of Economic Recovery (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1970), pp. 241-242.

believed that a revival of the true story of the African past would eliminate self-hate and would contribute to a significant racial pride.²⁰

During the 1930s the awareness of Negro participation in the historical development of America as well as the Negro's origins in Africa, continued to grow. Despite the hardship inflicted by the Depression, the Negro History Movement did not falter in its program to educate both Negroes and whites. Carter G. Woodson worked without salary while he successfully solicited funds to support the A.S.N.L.H. in Harlem and other Negro communities. Regardless of the economic and social plight of the 1930s, the study of Negro history increased in areas of concentrated Negro population. Dr. Woodson attributed this increase in racial study to a demand for recreation by a people who could ill-afford to purchase entertainment during the Depression.²¹

Members of both the dramatic and graphic arts participated in the 1930s Negro History Movement. Harlem's Lafayette Theatre hosted the presentation "Haiti," a

²⁰This concept can readily be perceived in innumerable writings of both professional and lay-historians of the 1920s and 1930s; see the newspaper columns of Woodson, Du Bois and J. A. Rogers, found in the Amsterdam News and the New York Age.

²¹Carter G. Woodson, "Annual Report of the Director," JNH, XVII, 4 (October, 1932):391.

dramatization of that island's liberation from French rule to become the first Black Republic in the Western Hemisphere. Black artists freed by the Harlem Renaissance from the historical Negro stereotype portrayals of the race, depicted the Republic's accomplishments and achievements. Black artist Jacob Lawrence reached maturity in Harlem during the 1930s Negro History Movement. His art was influenced by the Movement and by other artists who participated in the cause by painting Negro historical events. Lawrence painted a number of Negro history series that remain aids in the dissemination of racial accomplishments. By continuing to integrate Negro history topics in his work, Lawrence bridges the period between the two active stages in the Movement--the 1930s and the 1960s.

From 1928 to 1941, Harlem Blacks participated in the nationwide Negro History Movement. Black history study groups met at the 135th Street YMCA, as well as at the Harlem Branch of the New York Public Library, which houses the Schomburg Collection of Negro History and Literature. Oratorical contests, essay contests and history bees educated and tested the knowledge of Negro youths concerning their racial history. The two Harlem weekly newspapers--the New York Age and the Amsterdam News--published historical and contemporary achievements of Black heroes and heroines. These newspapers kept their readers informed of the activities

of the A.S.N.L.H. as well as of Woodson and other Movement leaders. As a result of the dissemination of historical information pertinent to Negroes, both Black history clubs and individuals demanded the institution of Black history courses in local public schools and colleges.

The activities and effects of the Negro History Movement in Harlem during the 1930s were numerous. The Movement undoubtedly influenced other lives and careers in the manner in which it impressed Jacob Lawrence. Moreover the activities of the 1930s Negro History Movement provided the foundation of the 1960s resurgence of interest in, and demand for, the study of Black History. The A.S.N.L.H. sustained the Movement through periods of decreased support and interest, and currently supports Negro history activities. During the Second World War, when preoccupation with the war effort distracted attention from the Movement, the Association maintained uninterrupted operation. Thus, since the Movement's inauguration in 1915, its followers have worked continuously to gain civil rights by informing the public of the Negro's past in World history.

CHAPTER II

CARTER G. WOODSON AND THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF NEGRO LIFE AND HISTORY

Five persons meeting in Chicago on September 9, 1915 founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (A.S.N.L.H.).¹ The group had abandoned its initial plan to hold a national meeting to organize the Association in favor of this alternative. These leaders of the Negro History Movement decided that a national following for a Negro history association could be awakened only after an actual demonstration of its possible benefits.² The group met due to the initiative and leadership of the historian Carter G. Woodson, whom they named Director of the Association and Editor of its publications. Woodson retained both positions until his death in 1950.³ Thus Carter G. Woodson

¹Besides Carter G. Woodson (the second Negro to receive a Doctoral degree in History from Harvard), the men who attended the founders' meeting for the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History were: George Cleveland Hall, who served as Chairman; J. E. Stamps, who served as Secretary; W. B. Hartgrove and A. L. Jackson. Charles H. Wesley, "Creating and Maintaining an Historical Tradition," JNH, XLIX, 1 (January, 1964):27.

²"Constitution of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History," JNH, II, 4 (October, 1917):446.

³"Personal," (Obituary), JNH, XXXV, 3 (July, 1950):244-248; Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Making of America

combined his forceful leadership and inspiration--with the assistance of four interested persons--and commenced the Association's work, as well as the Negro History Movement. Both the Association and the Movement expanded rapidly and grew in influence.

Woodson provided the major impetus for the A.S.N.L.H. Every aspect of the organization reflected his influence and leadership. Woodson's authority was so overwhelming in the Association that most writers refer to him as the founder of the organization.⁴ Writing in 1940, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Association, W. B. Hesseltine commented that,

the zeal and devotion, the fertile ingenuity and the incessant labor of Dr. Carter G. Woodson have been the dominant forces in the Association's history. His personality, combining scholarship with missionary zeal, a protecting paternalism with inspiring example, has brought the Association to its present prestige.⁵

The numerous volumes of the Journal of Negro History witness the extent to which Woodson's influence pervaded the entire Association.

Article Two of the A.S.N.L.H.'s Constitution states that the functions of the organization were to collect

(New York: Collier Books, 1969, revised ed.), p. 203.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵Hesseltine, p. 441. Hesseltine was a Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

sociological and historical documents and to promote Negro studies.⁶ Association members developed numerous methods of effecting these group objectives. To collect and to research materials that recorded the Negro past were early Association activities that provided information for writers to produce books and articles concerning Negro history. Research also furnished materials for what Woodson considered the most important function of the organization: the educational role. He maintained that data buried in reports and monographs "would do neither the average man nor others better educated very much good as an influence on the program of social uplift."⁷ As the research activity provided materials for the Journal of Negro History, books, theses, and dissertations, the Association--consistent with its educational concept--initiated a home-study program, a Negro History Week, and branches of the organization. The organization also supervised the activities of independent Negro history clubs.

Research by members of the Association--as well as appeals to the Negro population by persons interested in the preservation of records found in Negro homes--resulted in the collection and establishment of a library and ar-

⁶"Constitution of the Association," p. 445.

⁷Carter G. Woodson, "Annual Report of the Director," JNH, XVIII, 4 (October, 1933):360.

chives. The collection comprised "newspapers, magazines, facsimiles, letters, and books of all sorts bearing on the Negro."⁸ Manuscripts from this original collection, in addition to handwritten materials pertaining to the lives and history of various Negroes, inaugurated a manuscript collection at the Library of Congress. A special grant from the Social Science Research Council to the Association supported an exploratory effort to obtain from Negroes handwritten accounts of their lives and history.⁹ Continued efforts through the years increased this collection; by 1933 it contained 3,140 manuscripts.¹⁰

In January, 1916, the Association issued the first copy of the Journal of Negro History. Carter G. Woodson provided the major portion of the funds required for the first publi-

⁸Carter G. Woodson, "Annual Report of the Director," JNH, XI, 4 (October, 1926):554.

⁹Woodson, "Annual Report" (October, 1933):367-368; "Annual Report of the Director," JNH, XIV, 4 (October, 1929). Social Science Research Council on Race Relations was an organization that awarded funds for research in economics, political science, sociology, cultural anthropology, psychology, history, statistics, geography, and other subjects. The Council, with headquarters at 230 Park Avenue, comprised a membership that included the American Anthropological Association, the American Economic Association, the American Historical Association, the American Political Science Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Sociological Association, and the American Statistical Association. New York Times, April 14, 1935, II, 3:4, and New York Times, April 29, 1935, 13:5.

¹⁰Woodson, "Annual Report," (October, 1933):368.

cation, which he issued without consulting the Executive Council of the Association. Protesting Woodson's unauthorized action, one member of the Council resigned.¹¹ In the early years of the Journal's existence, Woodson performed nearly all staff duties. Thereafter, staff members joined Woodson, who continued to edit the periodical.¹² Woodson contributed the largest number of book reviews submitted to the Journal. As the Director, he wrote an annual report, and he authored the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the A.S.N.L.H. and other articles that appeared in the magazine.¹³

Woodson modeled the Journal on the American Historical Review. The purposes of its publication were several: to collect sociological and historical information regarding the Negro; to study peoples of African descent; to publish books concerning Negro history and sociology; to promote harmony between the two races by acquainting one with the other.¹⁴

In 1935 Rayford W. Logan, longtime Chairman of the Department of History at Howard University and one-time editor of the Journal, evaluated the first twenty volumes of that

¹¹Thorpe, Black Historians, p. 110.

¹²"Personal," p. 244; and Thorpe, Black Historians, p. 110.

¹³Thorpe, Black Historians, p. 110.

¹⁴Ibid.

publication. He commented that "the founding and continued publication during twenty years . . . constituted a significant landmark in American historiography, a monument to Negro creative ability and historical scholarship, and the most indispensable contribution to the field of research."¹⁵ Logan stated that, as far as the contents of the Journal were concerned, the majority of the articles were entirely creditable, whereas some could be rated excellent and only a few mediocre.

Author-historian Earl E. Thorpe, asserted that the Journal

. . . gave tremendous impetus to scholarship in history by Black scholars. It provided them with a journal which they felt would receive their articles with fairness, and gave them a living example of the level of scholarship that could be reached within the field of Black history.¹⁶

Thorpe further reported that the Journal circulated on five continents during its first year and began its second year with a subscription list of four thousand.¹⁷ Both the initial and continued support among a diverse, biracial readership demonstrate the Journal of Negro History to be a successful

¹⁵Rayford W. Logan, "An Evaluation of the First Twenty Volumes of the Journal of Negro History," JNH, XX, 4 (October, 1935):397.

¹⁶Thorpe, Black Historians, p. 115.

¹⁷Ibid.

publication.

Early in the development of the A.S.N.L.H., Woodson determined the need for facilities to publish those manuscripts that resulted from the research of Negro scholars and of the Association. He believed that

the Negro faces another stone wall when he presents . . . scientific productions to the publishing houses. They may not be prejudiced, but they are not interested in the Negro. . . . If the Negro is to settle down to publishing merely what others permit him to bring out, the world will never know what the race has thought and felt and attempted and accomplished, and the story of the Negro will perish with him.¹⁸

To overcome the barrier to Negro publication, Woodson, in 1920, organized the Associated Publishers to handle the publication, distribution, and sale of books. By establishing this printing house, Woodson provided a means of publication for his own and other Negro authors' work. In the next ten years, the Associated Publishers released ten of Woodson's monographs and influenced the development and training of scholars who participated in his research.¹⁹

¹⁸Charles H. Wesley, "Carter G. Woodson As A Scholar," *JNH*, XXXVI, 1 (January, 1951):13ff. Wesley played a prominent role in establishing the field of Afro-American studies.

¹⁹Thorpe, *Black Historians*, p. 112. The Associated Publishers was a private corporation, in which Woodson owned over 90 percent of the stock. He organized Associated Publishers because he believed white publishers were not interested in producing scholarly works by Black scholars. Associated Publishers published books by writers other than Woodson. In 1929, for example, a work by Maurice Delafosse

In 1926 the A.S.N.L.H. assumed one of its major educational responsibilities: to plan and sponsor an annual Negro History Week. The organization scheduled this celebration for the second week of February so that it would coincide with the birthdays of the Negro heroes Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.

Annual preparations for the occasion began in November and December. The A.S.N.L.H. issued a "Negro History Week" pamphlet, written by Woodson. It presented a theme and outlined a program of activities for the week. The prevalent emphasis was the "true story" of the Negro's role in American and world history. Woodson emphasized

the importance of African background, the Negro in the discovery and exploration of America, the laborer, the inventor, the soldier, the poet, the artist, the spokesman, the press, the businessman, the professional class, the educator, and the minister.²⁰

Pamphlets were sent upon request to any interested persons who wished to participate in the celebration.

Following the first Negro History Week celebration, in 1926, Woodson reported that many groups had participated in the festive program. He listed social welfare agencies,

entitled The Negroes of Africa History and Civilization was released (JNH, XIV, 4 [October, 1929]:538). In 1930 Associated Publishers released Plays and Pageants From the Life of the Negro by Willis Richardson.

²⁰Thorpe, Black Historians, p. 113.

recreational establishments, and business organizations that had held special events. Ministers had opened their churches for services, and schools had prepared programs suited to their need, both during the daylight and evening hours.²¹ Woodson stressed that the meaning of the celebration was "not so much a Negro History Week," as a History Week. "We should emphasize not Negro History but the Negro in history. What we need is not a history of selected races and nations, but a history of the world void of national bias, race hate, and religious prejudice."²² Woodson believed that with effort, not only during Negro History Week but throughout the year, such idealistic goals could be secured.

The more immediate and realistic goal that the A.S.N.L.H. expected to attain through the Negro History Week activities was to "induce educational authorities to incorporate into the course of study the same sort of treatment of the Negro that we have of other elements of the American population."²³ The organization hoped that, by giving students more information about the Negro's historical role, Negro youths would be proud of their ancestors and white youths would develop

²¹Woodson, "Negro History Week," p. 241.

²²Ibid., pp. 241-242.

²³Carter G. Woodson, "The Celebration of Negro History Week, 1927," JNH, XII, 2 (April, 1927):105.

understanding and would avoid prejudice.

During the late 1930s, Negro History Week became a widespread and popular event, particularly in areas of dense Negro population. Harlem, the largest Black metropolis in the world, was no exception.

Editors and columnists in Harlem's two weekly newspapers--the New York Amsterdam News and the New York Age--published information regarding Negro History Week and urged participation in the event. A 1932 Amsterdam News editorial reprinted that part of the annual Negro History Week pamphlet which advised both Negroes and whites "to reflect on Negroes who have made history in worthwhile endeavor."²⁴ The title of the pamphlet from which the editor quoted was "What the Negro Has to Celebrate." It told of the heroic events in the lives of Crispus Attucks, Peter Salem, Salem Poor, and other Negro heroes. A 1933 New York Age editorial informed its readers that Negro History Week for 1934 would stress the importance of saving and preserving Negro family records. "In the homes of many are valuable materials in the form of letters, diaries, wills, deeds, bills of sale, and manumission and naturalization papers, in which are revealed facts of racial history not mentioned in books."²⁵ Both editors aspired to elicit

²⁴Carter G. Woodson, "Negro History Week Again," New York Age, December 16, 1933, p. 9.

²⁵Ibid.

the participation of Harlem residents in Negro History Week activity.

Woodson wrote of the possibilities of dramatizing Negro history as part of the week's activities. He related his experience witnessing a play presented by Negro fifth-grade students, entitled "The Two Races." The play depicted the struggles of the Negro to elevate himself and to serve his country. Woodson noted that the play was the crude product of a District of Columbia teacher who had the right idea but lacked the dramatic ability to give it the proper artistic touch. He found it unfortunate that Negroes having the ability to refine such productions, instead employed their efforts on Shakespeare and other classics.²⁶

The idea of Negro history dramatizations became popular during the 1930s on both amateur and professional levels.²⁷ The Association published a book of plays that it urged schools to perform as part of Negro History Week activities. In his 1931 Annual Report, the Director announced that "the publication of Willis Richardson's Plays and Pageants From the Life of the Negro, devoted exclusively to such dramatization, is advisable in public schools."²⁸ New York area

²⁶New York Amsterdam News, February 10, 1932, p. 8.

²⁷An example of the dramatization of Negro history on a professional level was the play "Haiti," starring Paul Robeson. See chapter 3, "Negro Heroes and Heroines, this study.

²⁸Carter G. Woodson, "Annual Report of the Director,"

groups heeded Woodson's advice to dramatize Negro history. In 1937 Brooklynites presented "Portraits from Negro History" as part of their Negro History Week observance.²⁹ In February, 1938, the New York Amsterdam News reported that a presentation depicting the American Negro role in United States development would be given in the Harlem schools.³⁰ For the Negro History Week celebration in 1941, a group of Harlem junior high school students presented a play entitled "The Negro in American History," which portrayed race achievements during the Civil War and Reconstruction.³¹

The dramatization of Negro history was only one method utilized during Negro History Week to awaken the general

JNH, XVI, 4 (October, 1931):354. Woodson continued his urging to dramatize history and stated that "Ethiopia at the Bar of Justice," a production from Richardson's book was used extensively to visualize the trials and struggles of the Negro in the modern world. "This collection of plays, therefore, has not only met a long-felt need, but by suggestion it has stimulated the writing and staging of numerous other plays of this kind, which are used at various points, but are not yet available in printed form. Such plays are now being collected and will appear at some time in the near future as a collection for further dramatization of the life and history of the Negro." Also see Woodson, "Negro History Week, JNH, XXIV, 2 (April, 1939):140.

²⁹New York Amsterdam News, February 13, 1937, p. 24.

³⁰New York Amsterdam News, February 12, 1938, p. 5. In addition to the dramatic presentation, the Negro History Week celebration in Harlem during 1938 included an art exhibit at the West 135th Street Library, and discussions and lectures in the clubs, churches, and other organizations of the community.

³¹New York Amsterdam-Star News, March 8, 1941, p. 4. The New York Amsterdam News merged with the Star in February 1941.

public to achievements of the race. Woodson and members of his staff, as well as other professional and nonprofessional historians, traveled throughout the country to give lectures and to provide information about the race. Furthermore, there were programs in schools, clubs, and churches. Through the 1930s, Negro History Week expanded to become the major educational activity of the Association. By 1939 Woodson measured the success of the Negro History Week movement by the fact that it had stimulated the study of Negro history in schools throughout the academic year.³² Resulting from Negro History Week propaganda, formerly apathetic, cynical faculties and students in biracial schools had become interested in Negro history. Not only Americans, but also foreigners--from as far as the Phillipines and several locations in Africa--responded to the encouragement and literature of the Negro History Week movement.³³ The success of Negro History Week was thus measured by results within the United States as well as other areas of the world.

The A.S.N.L.H. initiated other mechanisms for Negro history and culture study. The organization encouraged its followers to form local Association branches. In the first years of Negro History Week, the Negro History Week pamphlet

³²Carter G. Woodson, "Negro History Week The Fourteenth Year," JNH, XXIV, 2 (April, 1939):137.

³³New York Amsterdam News, January 4, 1941.

instructed readers to form branches and junior branches, as part of the week's celebration.³⁴ In January, 1928, the Journal announced the institution of a Home Study Department. This division planned to inculcate an appreciation of Negro achievements and to promote Negro studies through instruction by mail. Listed among the staff were: Charles H. Wesley, Instructor in History; Alain Locke, Instructor in African Art; E. Franklin Frazier, Instructor in Sociology; Carter G. Woodson, Instructor in Anthropology.³⁵ By completing the Home Study program, a student qualified for credit acceptable to some colleges. Woodson and the Association demonstrated a real ingenuity in their pursuit to educate the public.

Woodson often exaggerated the A.S.N.L.H.'s success in

³⁴Carter G. Woodson, "Negro History Week," (January, 1928):106-110. The formation of Association branches and junior branches will be dealt with in greater detail in chapter 5, "Negro History Grass-roots Organizations in Harlem," of this study.

³⁵Ibid. Alain Locke, Negro educator, clergyman, and author, wrote The New Negro in 1925. E. Franklin Frazier, Negro author, historian and sociologist, wrote The Free Negro in North Carolina. Other men, lesser known than the previously listed, included on the staff of the Home Study Department: David A. Lane, Instructor in Literature; Luther P. Jackson, Instructor in Education; Miles Mark Fisher, Instructor in Church History; James Hugo Johnston, Instructor in Social History; Charles S. Johnson, Sociologist, author and editor of Opportunity, and teacher at Fisk University. In this article specific details of the course are outlined--that is, method of instruction, number of hours required for each course, fees, requirements, how to begin this study, time allowance, and credits given.

his Annual Reports, published in the Journal of Negro History, but the achievements of the Association during the 1920s and 1930s were, in fact, substantial. This period of accomplishment markedly contrasts with the period of the organization's inauguration. At that time, in the first decades of the twentieth century, race relations were at their nadir. Few people realized the Negro's role in history or cared to learn about Negro heroes and heroines. Earl E. Thorpe asserts that Woodson's "greatest contribution to historiography lies . . . in the fact that he founded the Association through which he launched and popularized a successful movement."³⁶

Historian W. B. Hesseltine believed that, following a quarter century of active work, the Association's real significance lay "in its contribution to the intellectual life of the Negro in America and to the whole field of historical research."³⁷ Hesseltine then summarized what he considered the greatest accomplishments of the Association. He stated that it had helped to change the entire concept of Reconstruction history by opening its pages to those dissenters who dared to disagree with the Dunning School interpretation.³⁸

³⁶Thorpe, Black Historians, p. 132. Thorpe is Negro.

³⁷Hesseltine, p. 441. Hesseltine is white.

³⁸William A. Dunning was a professor at Columbia University, where he held seminars for doctoral candidates who addressed the Reconstruction period in Southern States. "Mostly Southerners, and themselves products of the post-war

He further noted that the work of the organization successfully stimulated racial pride and developed respect for the Negro's role in history from both whites and Negroes. Hesselstine concluded that, through the work of the socio-historians W. E. B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson, the Association demonstrated the correlation between historical and sociological research.³⁹

Woodson successfully solicited financial support for the Association, its publications, and its works, from Julius Rosenwald, the Carnegie Corporation, and the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial--in addition to membership fees and donations from private individuals.⁴⁰ If success can be measured by finances and publishing, the A.S.N.L.H.'s first twenty years warrant the appellation successful. From 1915 to 1935, the organization received and spent almost \$338,000 and published more than thirty volumes.⁴¹

The effectiveness of the Association might also be determined by its activities--which, in 1940, demonstrated that

period, they undertook a revision of the accepted version of Reconstruction. A reaction against the Radical Republican interpretation of the period, these students attempted to find historical justification for the Bourbon rule, the Negro disfranchisement, and the 'white supremacy' of the Southern states." Ibid., pp. 445-446.

³⁹Ibid., p. 447.

⁴⁰Thorpe, Black Historians, p. 111.

⁴¹Ibid.

this organization

was publishing not only its own organs but directing studies and Afro-American history in clubs and schools, promoting the home study of the race by mail, producing text-books, collecting and preserving documents, and subsidizing scholars in their studies. It had sent investigators to work in the archives of the West Indies, in Seville, Spain, the British Museum and the Public Record Office of London, and had sent one person to study the folklore in Haiti. In addition, by this date the Association had purchased the A. A. Schomburg Collection of 4,000 books and presented this collection to the New York Public Library. Funds for this latter purchase were granted by the Carnegie Corporation.⁴²

The Association does not deserve unqualified praise. At times Woodson's domination of the organization was stifling and permitted minimal opportunity for direction and intellectual stimulation by other Negro intellectuals for the Negro History Movement. Woodson's scholarship was limited, and with time his writing became repetitious and boring. Woodson and other authors exaggerated the concept of the "Negro-herd" within American society. However such extreme group togetherness led to greater social segregation rather than to the integration that they sought.

Nevertheless, the Association supplied much information for public education and provided a real impetus for scholarship in Negro history. Woodson's domination was overbear-

⁴²Ibid., p. 114. Thorpe obtained his information from C. G. Woodson, "An Accounting For Twenty-Five Years," JNH, XXV, 4 (October, 1940):425-426.

ing but without him there might never have been an A.S.N.L.H. Woodson maintained the Association during periods of financial hardship and times when interest in Negro history dwindled. When he died, the organization was established sufficiently to continue without his guidance. The Association inaugurated the Negro History Movement and became the vehicle through which the Movement has continued to function from 1915 through the resurgence of interest in Negro History in the 1960s. The Negro activists of the 1960s might not remember the specific Negro History Movement events of the 1930s. Nevertheless the accomplishments of that earlier generation provided a foundation for the contemporary Movement, for those who were aware of and utilized information sources such as the A.S.N.L.H. Regrettably, some persons active in the resurgent Movement of the 1960s have neglected this organization and the benefits it could provide. For the young and militaristic of this current group the A.S.N.L.H. is another aspect of the "Uncle-Tomism" that they wish to avoid.

CHAPTER III

NEGRO HEROES AND HEROINES

During the 1920s and 1930s leaders of the Negro History Movement availed themselves of opportunities to publicize Negro heroes and heroines in American and African history. In a manner historically similar to other minorities they hoped to encourage Negroes to develop racial pride and moral courage, by which they could aspire to success. In this way Black men and women who had overcome hardship, prejudice, and discrimination furnished inspiration for the Negro race.

Carter G. Woodson emphasized the need to promote and imitate the virtues of the Negro heroes and heroines who had suffered or died for ideals.¹ Woodson spoke in religious terms when he stated that the courageous Negro had "imbibed the spirit of the Great Nazarene."² As He had died to make

¹Carter G. Woodson, see chapter 2 of this study. Black historian Earl E. Thorpe relates that abundant evidence exists supporting the belief that Movement leaders sought to increase the race's self-esteem through the use of history. He states that "people always have sought to inspire the young by telling them of the outstanding qualities of their ancestors." Thorpe, Negro Historians, p. 11.

²Carter G. Woodson, "Annual Report of the Director," JNH, XII, 2 (April, 1927):10-15.

men holy, the heroic Negro had died to make men free. Woodson frequently cited Nat Turner, "who lived up to the ideal of Jesus, that greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."³ Examples of such virtuous heroics were not restricted to the Black race. Woodson also referred to the great deed John Brown undertook for the Negro at Harpers Ferry: inspired by the example of Nat Turner, Brown had displayed moral courage and suffered martyrdom.⁴

Negro History Movement participants also extolled the virtues displayed by individuals of lesser sacrificial bent who lived to reap the benefits of success. Negroes proved as susceptible as whites to American success ideology. Acquisitive virtues, such as thrift, industry, initiative, perseverance, promptness, and reliability, distinguished the hero or heroine from the ordinary mortal.⁵ In an effort to encourage ambition among Negro youth, the "Talented Tenth" injected their novels with heroes and heroines who gained success through the practice of these virtues.⁶ Thus developed

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Robert A. Bone, The Negro Novel in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 13.

⁶Ibid. Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Making of America (New York: Collier Books, 1969, revised ed.), p. 173. The "Talented Tenth" was that group of degree-bearing Negroes which Du Bois considered would furnish the leaven for the rise of the race.

the concept that Negro heroes and heroines who practised the Calvinist virtues such as frugality and duty, and avoided self-indulgence and idleness, deserved emulation by all Blacks.⁷

Residents of Harlem often read accounts of heroic accomplishments in their weekly newspapers, the New York Age and the Amsterdam Star-News. One editor realized the Negro's traditional inferiority feeling and his need for racial paragons. He indicated that benefits could be derived from acknowledging superior Negroes and their accomplishments.

So thorough has been the job of propagandizing in this country and the world about the Negro's alleged inferiority that wherever and whenever possible Negroes have attempted to deny their own racial identity. This is because they have no pride in their own . . . they have no heroes to worship, no great men to emulate, no tradition to cherish.⁸

Other writers conformed to this Amsterdam Star-News editor's opinion that heroes and heroines should be honored. They recalled past accomplishments and experiences that could spur the Negro generation of the 1920s and 1930s to greater hope and action.

Boston journalist Louis White reminded readers of the Age that, from the time of Crispus Attucks' participation

⁷Bone, The Negro Novel, p. 13.

⁸New York Amsterdam Star-News, August 23, 1941, p. 14.

in the American Revolution, Negroes had joined all American military struggles, and had ostensibly fought for the liberty and rights of her people. White affirmed that these heroes had won their right to full citizenship. Nevertheless, he warned, the deeds of such men did not guarantee the same rights for the current generation. "The memory of their sacrifices should spur us on in our fight against racial discrimination of every kind, and the retention of those rights to which as citizens we are entitled."⁹ White thus admonished his readers to seek their rightful place and privilege through their own efforts, encouraged by, but not relying upon, the achievements of past Negroes.

Educator Arthur D. Wright stressed the need for teaching Negro children about their racial accomplishments. He believed that they should learn how Black men and women had overcome a variety of racial handicaps to attain political and social status as citizens of the United States and other countries. If educators failed to teach the Negro child about his racial heroes, they would deprive him of his greatest means of inspiration and encouragement.¹⁰

Carter G. Woodson blamed slavery for deterring his race

⁹New York Age, March 9, 1929, p. 9.

¹⁰Richard Wright, "What We Should Teach the Negro Child About Himself and About Others," JNH, XIX, 1 (January, 1934): 35.

from honoring Black traditions and from appreciating the distinguished Negroes of the past. He warned that the race's apparent inability to evaluate past accomplishments and to use them as inspiration for the future would leave the race stranded in its caste position.

We must go back to the achievements of these black men . . . [and look] . . . into these black faces of heroes and heroines, get inspiration to achieve as well as they did with a vision of these great souls looking down upon us and urging us on to complete the unfinished task to the performance of which they made an outstanding contribution, let us press forward to the next objective in the development and uplift of the despised and rejected of men.¹¹

Woodson persevered in his efforts to glean from the Negro past means of encouragement with which to develop pride for racial uplift. However, he also realized that an inspiration derived from the past must demonstrate relevance and functionalism in the 1930s.

Woodson's weekly New York Age column counseled its readers against an attempt to imitate the precise actions of past leaders. Woodson knew that some individuals learned what famous Black men had attained and then attempted to duplicate these accomplishments. He feared that these persons failed to realize that the specific actions and goals needed in the past were no longer relevant.

¹¹Carter G. Woodson, New York Amsterdam News, December 21, 1932, p. 6.

The world does not want and will never have another Frederick Douglass or a Booker T. Washington. What we need is an enlightened youth not to undertake the tasks like theirs but to imbibe the spirit of these great men and answer the call of duty from the present generation with equal nobleness of soul.¹²

Thus Woodson advised his readers that the Negro should imitate the virtues not the deeds of Black heroes and heroines.

Resulting from the urging of the Negro History Movement leadership, Negro communities began to formulate a mythology by which to celebrate their historic past. Harlem, similar to other smaller American Negro communities, favored certain heroes and heroines. Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Phillis Wheatley were especially popular heroines. Frederick Douglass, George Washington Carver, Crispus Attucks, and Toussaint L'Ouverture enjoyed comparable popularity. Harlemites also celebrated eminent whites who had accomplished feats of benefit to the Black race. John Brown received unswerving esteem from the race.¹³ Most Blacks honored Abraham Lincoln as the "Great Emancipator." Dissenters, however, regarded Lincoln as a questionable friend "because of his reluctance to accept Negro troops, [his] devotion to coloni-

¹²Carter G. Woodson, New York Age, July 11, 1931, p. 9.

¹³White abolitionist, John Brown, in an attempt to arm a group of insurgent slaves, led an attack upon the arsenal at Harpers Ferry, now in West Virginia, on October 16, 1859. He was forced to surrender to Col. Robert E. Lee, was tried for treason, convicted, and hanged. Anti-slavery elements hailed him as a martyr.

zation and [his] hesitation in issuing an emancipation proclamation."¹⁴ Thus, despite the general tribute accorded him, Lincoln failed to attract appreciation and honor from some Negroes.

Negro communities commemorated their heroes and heroines through various activities. Since military heroes figured prominently in the Negro History Movement's developing mythology, they gained strong recognition and celebration. Crispus Attucks rated a pre-eminent mythological position because of his involvement in the Boston Massacre. The National Equal Rights League, under the leadership of William Monroe Trotter, annually appealed for a national Crispus Attucks Day, to be celebrated on March fifth, the day of Attucks' death.¹⁵ The League justified its appeal by declaring "it to be a historical fact that Attucks, colored American, not only was the first to shed his blood for this

¹⁴Thorpe, Mind of the Negro, p. 395.

¹⁵The National Equal Rights League, headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts, actively sought equality for Negroes during the 1930s by encouraging the celebration of famous Blacks, as well as dates and events in Negro history. The League was one of several Negro protest and betterment organizations which became popular during the 1920s. Such organizations were a product of the Negro migration from the South and their principal branches located in cities of high Black population. William Monroe Trotter was editor of the Boston Guardian during the early years of the twentieth century. He was an N.A.A.C.P. activist who led a delegation of Negroes which delivered a petition opposing "Jim Crow" to President Wilson on November 6, 1913.

Republic but he conceived, executed and led the coup which was the most vital stroke in inciting the patriots to take up arms for Independence."¹⁶ Although several historians disputed the League's interpretation, the proponents of Crispus Attucks' Day continued to seek recognition for their American Revolutionary martyr.¹⁷

In 1932 Congressman Joseph A. Gavagan, a New York Democrat, introduced a joint resolution in the House of Representatives directing the President to proclaim March fifth Crispus Attucks Memorial Day. Harlemites claimed a Crispus Attucks Day celebration second only to Boston's festivities. The Revolutionary hero was commemorated annually in Boston where he died, superseded in importance only by the observance of Independence Day.¹⁸

In defense of Attucks' detractors, Carter G. Woodson criticized the directors of the George Washington Bicentennial who, he claimed, attempted to minimize or eliminate Attucks' part in the Boston Massacre. Woodson based his case for Attucks' historical significance upon eighteenth-century Boston Gazette copy, upon the Boston trial records of those British soldiers defended by the patriot John Adams, and upon

¹⁶New York Age, February 28, 1931, p. 5.

¹⁷New York Age, January 2, 1932, p. 9.

¹⁸New York Amsterdam News, February 20, 1936, p. 1; New York Age, January 2, 1932, p. 9.

the research of noted historian John Fiske.¹⁹ Woodson refuted the allegations which described Attucks as white; he maintained that they emanated from those misguided whites who believed that the Negro race could not produce a hero.²⁰ The New York Age supported Woodson with its statement that the Bicentennial affair was the "culmination of an effort on the part of prejudiced historians to minimize the role that Attucks played as a pioneer in the revolt against British rule."²¹ Such journalism, which elaborated the actions of Black heroes and heroines, won favor and support among those Harlem readers who sought reinforcement for their racial pride.

Attucks was not the Harlemites' sole claim to racial participation in Revolutionary War heroism and fame. Peter Salem and Salem Poor had enlisted in the colonial militia and served at the Battle of Bunker Hill. "One story not thoroughly substantiated says that [Peter] Salem won the admiration of his comrades in arms by shooting the British Major [John] Pitcairn," whose death was a "part of the moral victory won by patriots on June 17, 1775."²² Salem

¹⁹New York Age, January 2, 1932, p. 9.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹New York Age, January 9, 1932, p. 4.

²²John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, A History of Negro Americans (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), p. 131.

Poor's battle conduct gained the praise of fourteen officers, who sent the Massachusetts Assembly a petition in his behalf that stated "he behaved like an experienced officer as well as an excellent soldier."²³ Military heroes gave the Black community a claim to participation in the struggle for independence, just as they emanated pride in Negro accomplishments. For example, the Boston branch of the National Equal Rights League paid tribute to Negro Revolutionists who, like Peter Salem, distinguished themselves in battle. The group annually held commemorative services at the Bunker Hill Memorial.²⁴

During the 1930s, various Harlem activities promoted the Black liberator of Haiti, Toussaint L'Ouverture. In 1932 the League of Struggle for Negro Rights summoned a conference to plan an observance for the 189th anniversary of L'Ouverture's birth.²⁵ In 1936 the Amsterdam News announced that a London theater group would test the dramatic

²³Quarles, Negro in the Making, p. 47.

²⁴New York Amsterdam News, June 14, 1933, p. 3.

²⁵The League of Struggle for Negro Rights (LSNR), was established in November, 1930 by the American Communist Party to develop a wider race movement and bring various classes of Negroes under Party direction. Party control of the League was immediate and complete. The LSNR's program proposed to correct all the wrongs of all Negroes in the United States and do it immediately. For example, the League called for the abolition of Jim Crowism. Wilson Record, The Negro and the Communist Party (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951), pp. 78-79.

possibilities of the Haitian liberator's career. The play entitled "Dessalines" starred Paul Robeson portraying the hero who rose from slavery to the presidency of the Republic and suffered betrayal by Napoleon and imprisonment in the French Alps.²⁶ In 1938 the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) Theatre Group introduced "Haiti," the dramatization of L'Ouverture's life, at Harlem's Lafayette Theatre. Prior to the opening performance Arthur Schomburg acquainted Harlem residents with the drama's historical background through lectures given at the theatre.²⁷ The Harlem Branch of the New York Public Library complemented the honor credited to L'Ouverture. In conjunction with the theatrical presentation of "Haiti," the library displayed historical Island manuscripts, engravings, and books. Visitors viewed the signatures of Toussaint L'Ouverture and Henri Christophe as well as numerous woodcuts, drawings, and illustrations of prominent figures in Haitian history.²⁸

²⁶New York Amsterdam News, February 22, 1936, p. 3.

²⁷New York Age, January 29, 1938, p. 7. Arthur Alonzo Schomburg was a Puerto Rican born Negro who moved to the United States in 1891. He was a lay-historian best known as a bibliophile and founder of the Schomburg Collection of Negro History and Literature housed in the Harlem Branch of the New York Public Library. The Collection was purchased from Schomburg in 1926 for \$10,000 donated by the Carnegie Corporation. The purchase resulted from the efforts of the New York Urban League.

²⁸Henri Christophe was a free Haitian Negro who aided Toussaint L'Ouverture and Dessalines in the Haitian rebellion

Harlem Negroes immediately realized the significance in celebrating the liberator of the only Black republic in the Western Hemisphere.²⁹ Toussaint L'Ouverture symbolized Negro triumph over the white race. A precedent existed; Harlem Blacks could hope that they too would overcome segregation, discrimination, and domination.

George Washington Carver and Frederick Douglass provided outstanding examples of determination for Negroes to pursue. Both overcame slave origins to become "successful," by the standards of both white and Black Americans. An Age reporter wrote, "Dr. Carver's accomplishments are a living refutation of the statement that a Negro cannot succeed and reach the top in his chosen field if he will but apply the necessary essentials of study, practise, merit, etc."³⁰ The National Urban League and Opportunity Magazine honored Carver in 1939 by presenting a radio dramatization of the noted scientist's life. This broadcast narrated the first in a series of famous Negro life stories depicting individuals who had overcome the racial barrier and succeeded.³¹

against French rule. In 1807, Christophe became ruler of the northern part of Haiti following the death of Dessalines who succeeded L'Ouverture. The New York Amsterdam News, May 7, 1938, p. 13.

²⁹New York Age, December 4, 1938, p. 9.

³⁰New York Age, September 12, 1931, p. 3.

³¹New York Amsterdam News, April 15, 1939, p. 6.

In the same year, Carver's work was the focus of Harlem's Industrial Fair. The Carver exhibit was comprised of products he had developed from his research: varnishes, stains, soap, insulation board, dyes, and other goods made from peanuts, sweet potatoes, and clay.³²

The ex-slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass predominated among celebrated historical Negroes. The National Equal Rights League, conscientiously observed the birthdays of great benefactors and heroes of the Negro race--Crispus Attucks, Abraham Lincoln and Toussaint L'Ouverture--and, in addition, it urged Negro communities to honor Frederick Douglass. The League believed that the commemoration of persons like Douglass not only fostered racial pride and self-respect among Negroes but also engendered respect from white Americans.³³ In Harlem the Frederick Douglass Junior High School represented a permanent tribute to the memory of this great leader. Newspaper reporter Cleveland Allen considered Douglass one of the greatest men ever produced by the Negro race. Allen believed Douglass could provide inspiration to the students who attended the school named in his honor. A Harlem citizen, Allen campaigned many years to enshrine Frederick Douglass in the New York Hall of Fame, where he could serve to inspire other Negroes to seek racial

³²New York Amsterdam News, July 1, 1939, p. 4.

³³New York Age, February 11, 1933, p. 3.

uplift.³⁴

Harlem residents, as part of the general American Negro community, memorialized their racial heroes and heroines with monuments, museums and libraries. In 1932, Booker T. Washington's admirers dedicated as a shrine his West Virginia home. Delivering the main address at the dedication, Carter G. Woodson stated that Washington never discriminated when speaking for the underprivileged of mankind: "While advocating the uplift of the Negro . . . [he] did not fail to speak out for the handicapped white man."³⁵ Other Negroes were similarly honored.

The Dayton, Ohio, home of Paul Lurance Dunbar, famed American novelist and poet, became a museum in 1938.³⁶ When the city erected a new Harlem public library in 1942, Negro residents campaigned to name the new structure for the late bibliophile and curator Arthur Schomburg.³⁷ In the same year, the North East Federation of Women's Clubs initiated a fund-raising drive to erect a monument at Phillis Wheatley's tomb, which had remained unmarked for a century and one-half.³⁸ Future generations of Americans would remember

³⁴New York Amsterdam News, February 14, 1934, p. 6.

³⁵New York Age, July 2, 1932, p. 1.

³⁶New York Age, July 9, 1938, p. 9.

³⁷New York Amsterdam Star-News, February 6, 1942, p. 6. This effort was unsuccessful but nonetheless an important honor for Schomburg.

³⁸New York Age, February 17, 1940, p. 11.

the poetess and first Negro to gain recognition for the race in American literature.³⁹

Harlem's two weekly newspapers informed their readers of Negro heroes and heroines through columns written by the professional historians Carter G. Woodson and W. E. B. Du Bois, and non-professionals J. A. Rogers and Kelly Miller.⁴⁰ In addition to publishing these columns and providing general information regarding Negro achievements, the Age and the Amsterdam News supplied special, condensed biographies of Black historical figures. Through the early 1930s, the News published a column entitled "Color No Handicap." The discussions told of such heroes as Tippoo Tib, the African trail blazer who, by his discoveries, facilitated the expe-

³⁹New York Amsterdam News, February 2, 1940, p. 4.

⁴⁰W. E. B. Du Bois devoted himself to Negro sociological and historical problems. He was a Professor of History and Economics at Atlanta University, helped launch the Niagara Movement, and for twenty-four years was the director of publicity and research for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Du Bois took a militant position on race relations as opposed to Booker T. Washington. Kelly Miller was a faculty member at Howard University, beginning in 1890. He also served this institution as Dean of Arts and Sciences. Thorpe, Black Historians, p. 152, stated that Kelly's writings were the crudest produced by any member of the group Thorpe called the Laymen's School. Miller, nevertheless, did help to popularize Negro history. J. A. Rogers discovered and publicized facts which illustrated the contributions of Negroes to civilization. His newspaper columns were designed to acquaint black people with their history.

ditions of David Livingstone and Henry Morton Stanley.⁴¹ The column also considered early African civilizations and such African kings as Behanzin Harsu Bowele.⁴² The New York Age published a comparable column, "Notable Negroes of Other Days," which also featured Africana.⁴³

Later in the 1930s, Amsterdam News educated its readers regarding heroes and heroines by means of an illustrated column, "Guiding Lights." The feature presented such notable Blacks as Peter Salem, Meta Warrick Fuller, William Wells Brown, Isaac Murphy, Arthur Alonzo Schomburg, and Jan E. Matzeliger.⁴⁴

⁴¹New York Amsterdam News, May 3, 1933, p. 10. Henry M. Stanley and David Livingstone, both British, explored previously unknown areas of Africa. Stanley investigated the Congo River system while Livingstone traced the course of the Zambezi River during the late nineteenth century.

⁴²New York Amsterdam News, May 10, 1933, p. 10. Behanzin Harsu Bowele, King of Dahomey, descended from African rulers of the twelfth century. Behanzin led African troops against the French during the nineteenth century. Following defeat, the French exiled Behanzin to the West Indies. He died in North Africa in 1906.

⁴³New York Age, September 2, 1933, p. 5.

⁴⁴New York Amsterdam News, January 21, 1939, p. 6. Meta Warrick Fuller began her art career in Philadelphia. In 1899 she traveled to Paris where she continued her studies as a sculptress. New York Amsterdam News, March 25, 1939, p. 10. William Wells Brown, Negro historian, was one of the first writers to record and popularize the achievements of his race. He was born in 1816. New York Amsterdam News, May 20, 1939, p. 10. Isaac Murphy, gained fame as one of two jockeys who had won the Kentucky Derby three times. New York Amsterdam News, May 4, 1940, p. 15. The Dutch-Negro youth, Jan E. Matzeliger, revolutionized the shoe industry

Other members of the communications media joined in publicizing historical Negro heroics. In 1939 Million Dollar Productions, a Los Angeles concern, announced its intention to produce movies that depicted the life stories of outstanding Negroes. Million Dollar Productions planned to film the lives of Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Crispus Attucks, Peter Salem, Phillis Wheatley, Benjamin Banneker, and Booker T. Washington, as well as other prominent Negroes.⁴⁵ In 1941 a New York company, Stage and Screen Productions, released the movie "The Spirit of the Hell Fighters." This film presented the heroic story of the Negro soldier in World War I.⁴⁶ During the 1930s and 1940s, information concerning outstanding Negroes encountered increased dissemination through the various media.

During the Great Depression, Negro History Movement

when he perfected a machine to hold a shoe on a last, to grip and pull the leather down and around the heel, to guide and drive nails in place, and to eject the shoe from the machine.

⁴⁵New York Amsterdam News, May 6, 1939, p. 21. Sojourner Truth was a notable Negro abolitionist who traveled throughout New England and the West during the nineteenth century. The author has not been able to determine whether Million Dollar Productions produced the proposed films about Negro heroes and heroines. Most likely the plan was carried through as announced. The significant fact was that the film company believed that at that time the filming of Negro hero and heroine life stories was important and would experience acceptance and support.

⁴⁶New York Amsterdam News, August 30, 1941, p. 20.

leaders recognized that heroes and heroines could develop racial pride and effect Negro racial uplift. They constantly reminded Blacks of the outstanding men and women of their race who had overcome hardship and accomplished extraordinary deeds by which they achieved recognition. In this manner these leaders hoped to inspire other Negroes to seek equality and freedom within the American system.

The teachings and advice of Negro History Movement leaders produced results: Negro communities developed a mythology by which they could celebrate historical Black figures. Clubs and organizations encouraged Negro communities to commemorate important dates and events in the racial past. Within the developing mythology Frederick Douglass, George Washington Carver, Booker T. Washington, and Crispus Attucks were favored heroes. Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Phillis Wheatley predominated among Negro heroines. Negro History Movement leaders encouraged Blacks to emulate the virtues not the deeds of these extraordinary Negro personalities. Participants in the Movement aspired to develop racial pride among Negroes, acceptance by whites, and equal social status for Blacks in American society. They believed these goals could be attained by demonstrating past Negro accomplishments that would disprove the generalized belief in the inferiority of the race.

CHAPTER IV

INSTITUTING NEGRO HISTORY IN THE SCHOOLS

During the 1930s, increasing numbers of Negroes demanded that Negro history courses be instituted in both public and private schools. These demands were a logical extension of the spreading Negro History Movement. Carter G. Woodson, from the inception of the Movement onward, stressed that it was important to include the factual Negro past in curricula at all levels of both white and Negro schools.¹

As the work of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (A.S.N.L.H.) increased, it elicited greater public recognition of the need for Negro history in the school.² School administrators from primary grades through universities responded to individual and group pressures to institute Negro history courses in the curricula. Simultaneously educational experts began to reassess American

¹See "Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History," chapter 2 of this study.

²The constitution of the A.S.N.L.H. states that the association's objective is the collection of sociological and historical documents and the promotion of studies bearing on the Negro. Woodson often stated that the educational work was the most important activity of the organization.

history courses and textbooks, with the intention of providing the Negro his rightful place in the general interpretation of past events.³

Late nineteenth-century Black historians realized the need to educate their people concerning the Negro past. This necessity gained continued recognition through the twentieth century, and its fulfillment became a major goal of the A.S.N.L.H. The activity of the Negro History Movement during the 1920s and 1930s dispels any misconception that the concentrated effort of the 1960s to install the Negro in American history was a seminal event. In fact, from the late nineteenth-century through the continuing twentieth-century Negro History Movement, concerned persons have aspired to correct this omission in American history and education. The highly publicized efforts of the 1960s that resulted in the establishment of Black Studies programs in many American colleges and universities demonstrate the

³Many references can be cited regarding the racial prejudice found in American history textbooks. Outstanding are the writings of Carter G. Woodson, found in the Journal of Negro History, the New York Age, the New York Amsterdam News, and The Mis-Education of the Negro. Lawrence D. Reddick, Black historian (former curator of the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature, and lecturer at New York City College), contributed an article for the Journal in which he reviewed the "attitudes relative to the Negro as reflected in American history textbooks" used in the South (JNH, XIX, 3 [July, 1934]:225). The Journal of Negro History during the 1920s and 1930s includes many articles and references describing the need for rewriting history books to present the true story of the Negro.

continuum of this historical racial process. Similarly, the 1960s Black minority that demanded a reassessment of American history courses, and the educators who responded with re-written textbooks and restructured courses that acknowledged a greater Negro role in history, were all participants in a resurgence of a continuing Negro History Movement.⁴

Nineteenth-century Black historians recognized that schools did not teach Negro students the traditions, heroic deeds and accomplishments of their race. In an effort to rectify this deficiency, Edward A. Johnson, in 1891, published the first Negro history textbook: A School History of the Negro Race in America, From 1619 to 1890. Johnson believed that white authors wrote exclusively for white children and neglected the outstanding Negro deeds in their textbooks. He emphasized the need for Blacks to learn that their ancestors had shown valor; he regretted that Negro children missed the experience of learning about their heroic predecessors. To Johnson, the Negro gained nothing upon completing the assigned course in United States history, because in that course the Black student found not a single creditable word about even one among the millions of his ancestors who have lived nearly three centuries of his nation's history.⁵

⁴Carter G. Woodson considered the educational work of the Association second to no other. Journal of Negro History, XVIII, 4 (October, 1933):360.

⁵Charles H. Wesley, "Creating and Maintaining," pp. 25-26.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, additional Negro-history texts appeared; for example, Benjamin Brawley's A Short History of the American Negro (1913), and John Cromwell's The Negro in American History (1914). These books augmented opportunities for learning about the Negro past. But greater striving proved necessary to overcome the traditional white prejudice that prevented teaching Negro history. The organization and activity of Carter G. Woodson and the A.S.N.L.H. furthered, to a far greater extent than did any other group, the effort to establish Negro history in the schools.

During the years that followed the Association's founding in 1915, its continued effort resulted in the institution of courses that taught the Negro his past.

In 1919 Carter G. Woodson assessed the portrayal of the Negro as presented in American schools. He admitted that the depictions of white authors John W. Burgess, James Ford Rhodes, and U. B. Phillips were in many respects correct. Nevertheless Woodson claimed that when these same historians wrote of the slavery or Reconstruction period, their prime interest dwelt on the effect of these institutions and processes on the white man. Woodson maintained that the white man's attitude toward the Negro continued to be that of a merchant-manufacturer toward the materials he handled. As a consequence of this conception, the Negro emerged with a

history in which his race appeared only as an oppressed people. White authors did emphasize that Negro enslavement was a disgrace of which the entire country should be ashamed. They neglected, however, to address either the heroic Negroes who had born the burden of slavery or those Blacks who had gained freedom through escape or purchase and had attained success as useful, even exemplary American citizens.⁶

Northern history teachers accepted and taught the Southern white's opinion of the Negro, as evinced in the writings of Burgess, Rhodes, and Phillips.⁷ Southern institutions of higher education operated on the basis that already too much knowledge about the Negro existed--therefore why attempt to convince whites that one race might learn more about the other? As a result, Southern school curricula generally offered no courses pertinent to Negro life and history.⁸

In contrast Northern schools exhibited a less discouraging situation. During the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, history classes in Northern colleges and universities had studied slavery and abolition in detail. Unfortu-

⁶JNH, IV, 3 (July, 1919):276.

⁷John W. Burgess, Ulrich B. Phillips and James Ford Rhodes were American historians whose research and writings helped to create the early twentieth-century interpretation that all the evils of Reconstruction resulted from the newly enfranchised Blacks, and from the cynically selfish scalawags and carpetbaggers.

⁸JNH, IV, 3 (July, 1919):276.

nately during the 1920s and 1930s history teachers had been converted to a belief in the justice of Negro oppression. However, some contemporary efforts furthered the recognition of Negro contributions to United States history: for example the University of Nebraska offered a course entitled the "Negro Problem Under Slavery,"; Ohio State University's catalog listed "Slavery Struggles in the United States."⁹

Most Negro schools were poorly prepared to meet demands to institute Negro history courses. Yet such universities as Tuskegee, Atlanta, Fiske, Wilberforce and Howard, earnestly participated in the field of Negro history. These schools endeavored to maintain Negro history and cultural courses despite the lack of teachers trained for advanced work in the field and the "dearth of unbiased literature."¹⁰

In 1933 Woodson elaborated on the erroneous methods of educating his race. He constructed a hypothetical curriculum for Negro schools that included Negro history and the study of problems peculiar to Blacks.¹¹ Woodson exhorted Negroes to demand an education that would develop racial personalities and gifts, rather than merely train them to imitate the white man.¹²

⁹Ibid., p. 278.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Thorpe, Black Historians, p. 124.

¹²"Negro Education," review of The Mis-Education of the

Negroes had been trained neither to value themselves nor to contend with their special needs.

The Negro has never been educated. He has merely been informed of things which he has not been permitted to do. The program for the uplift of the Negro in this country must be based upon a scientific study of the Negro from within to develop in him the power to do for himself what his oppressors will never do to elevate him to the level of others.¹³

Therefore, the two most important aspects of Negro education emerged: to teach the history of the race; to train Negro individuals' talents. By means of this combination, racial and individual respect could be restored.¹⁴

One reviewer of Woodson's proposal concluded that Woodson sought an educational program based upon "race history, specific study of the racial condition, independent consideration of race programs, and special cultivation of racial morale, solidarity, and self-esteem."¹⁵ The critic concurred with Woodson that such a program was imperative for mass Negro advance and improvement. He further noted that such education should bring Negro leaders closer to the interests and psychology of the masses.¹⁶

Negro, in the New York Times Book Review, February 26, 1933, p. 15.

¹³Woodson, Mis-Education, pp. 144-145.

¹⁴"Negro Education," p. 15.

¹⁵Alain Locke, "Black Zionism," review of Mis-Education by Carter G. Woodson, in The Survey, October, 1933, p. 363.

¹⁶Ibid.

Much racial prejudice resulted from teaching approaches that maintained that the Negro had never contributed to the progress of mankind. Woodson, therefore, believed it necessary to teach both Negroes and whites historical Negro accomplishments. As a result, prejudice would be diminished.¹⁷ In 1922 Woodson contributed directly to a solution for this problem--he authored The Negro in Our History. It became the standard textbook in Negro history courses throughout the United States.¹⁸

Continued deficiencies in Negro education prevailed despite the progress made toward instituting Negro history courses in schools. In 1926, at accredited universities--and especially at those institutions in Northern and Border states--students had the advantage of courses in Negro history and culture. Such courses were supplemented by Negro history clubs which studied contemporary social problems. In Southern schools, where Negro history courses were not allowed, Black students organized extracurricular history clubs to study their racial past.¹⁹

Negro History Week, initiated in 1926, aroused white interest in Southern areas where recognition of Negro his-

¹⁷Carter G. Woodson, "Proceedings of the Spring Conference," JNH, XI, 2 (April, 1926):240.

¹⁸Thorpe, Black Historians, pp. 118-119.

¹⁹Woodson, "Annual Report of the Director," JNH (October, 1926):551.

tory was practically nonexistent. Southern whites conceded that "in the education of Negroes, some attention must be given to their own past in order that the race may have proper aspirations."²⁰ School authorities permitted Negro teachers to hang pictures of outstanding Black men on classroom walls and to place books that presented racial ideals on library shelves.²¹

During annual conventions of the A.S.N.L.H., delegates discussed various means of stimulating school interest in Negro history. In 1927 Association members addressed the problem of including the "Negro story" in the Black child's training. They concluded that the American Negro's potential was limited unless he could be inspired by Black ideals and aspirations.²² At a subsequent meeting, Professor Edgar E. Bye, of the Teacher's College of Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, lectured concerning teaching of Negro history as an inter-racial problem. Bye related his experience as a high school teacher and as a college instructor; he concluded that teaching Negro achievements to white high school students modified their prejudicial attitude toward the Negro. If teaching the subject is deferred until these students reach college or

²⁰Ibid., pp. 572-573. Similar interest in Negro history by Southern whites can be found in the Amsterdam News and the Age.

²¹Ibid., p. 573.

²²Carter G. Woodson, "Proceedings of the Annual Meeting," JNH, XIII, 1 (January, 1928):5.

graduate school, Bye believed it was too late to change pre-established racial thought.²³

Throughout the 1930s the A.S.N.L.H. continued its efforts and progress toward the integration of Negro history courses in curricula. Commencing in 1931, increasingly more white and Black schools participated in Negro History Week and accepted books about the Negro for instruction and supplemental reading.²⁴ A significant effect of the Association's work during this decade was the openmindedness that developed in Southern academic institutions. The most progressive of these institutions invited both whites and Negroes to address their students on Negro life and history. With the Association's cooperation, these schools also offered courses relevant to Negro history and culture.²⁵ In 1931 Andrew Paschal, author and educator, stated that some Southern secondary schools taught courses based on Woodson's text

²³Carter G. Woodson, "Proceedings of the Annual Meeting," JNH, XV, 1 (January, 1930):11.

²⁴In 1926 the A.S.N.L.H. inaugurated Negro History Week, to be celebrated during the second week of February. Its purpose was to educate the public to Negro history and culture. The Association encouraged schools and organizations to sponsor programs and provided a theme and outline of activities to follow. The Association continues to sponsor Negro History Week. Interest and participation in Negro History Week by the general public came later than the early thirties. During the early 1940s The New York Times printed more articles about the celebration and Governor Lehman of New York encouraged the people of the state to join with the A.S.N.L.H. in observing Negro History Week. New York Times, February 15, 1941, 14:2, and February 6, 1942, 11:1.

²⁵Woodson, "Proceedings" (January, 1930):11.

The Negro in Our History. He appraised such instruction as a momentous beginning in the effort to overcome prejudice-prone curricula. Paschal perceived, however, that integrated Northern schools posed a problem different from that of segregated Southern schools.

In Northern institutions the subject of the Negro is entirely excluded from the curriculum; no textbooks of the history or of the literature of the race are used, and the Negro is mentioned in other books only for condemnation. Consequently, the young Negro student goes through the elementary, the secondary, and in many instances, the university, without having the vaguest idea of the accomplishments of his race.²⁶

Paschal chastised Northern Negroes who did not apply pressure to institute Negro history in their secondary schools-- although Black leaders repeatedly admonished them to pursue such effort.²⁷

By the 1930s the earlier twentieth-century position of Northern and Southern schools in regard to Negro studies seemingly had reversed. Previously, Northern schools had

²⁶Andrew Paschal, "The Paradox of Negro Progress," *JNH*, XVI, 3 (July, 1931):256. By the 1930s philosophy in regard to teaching Negro history reversed in the North and South as opposed to what it had been during the 1920s. The South had become more liberal allowing segregated Negro schools to teach Negro history. The North, by comparison, taught few courses in Negro history in relation to the Negro population. Negro population had increased in the North during the period, as a result of the Northern Migration. Northern integrated schools neglected to teach American history integrated with Negro history.

²⁷Paschal, p. 258.

offered Negro history courses while Southern educators had found such courses inappropriate or unnecessary. During the 1930s Southern school authorities not only allowed but encouraged Negro teachers to instruct Negro history in segregated schools. Northern schools, despite the increased Negro population resulting from the early twentieth-century Northern Migration, did not increase their offering of Negro history courses.²⁸

In 1933 Woodson reiterated how administrators of Southern educational institutions were providing instruction in Negro culture and history, while Negro history courses at Northern schools remained limited. Some Northern colleges and universities offered a few special advanced courses pertinent to the Negro and his problems. Woodson related, however, that during the preceding year a large number of Northern secondary schools had reported their initiation of Negro study.²⁹

²⁸The twentieth-century Northern Migration of Southern Negroes from rural areas to Northern industrial cities started in the post-World War I years. Northern industries advertised available jobs in Southern newspapers. Job advertisements were answered by Negroes who wished to improve their economic situation and social status. At times Southern whites tried to prevent the loss of their cheap labor force and to varying degrees, sometimes with police force, hampered the flight of the Northbound Negroes. Nevertheless, Negroes continued to flow into large Northern cities where they located in cheap rent areas that ultimately became ghettos.

²⁹Woodson, "Annual Report of the Director," JNH (October, 1933):361.

For a number of years, schools interested in teaching Negro history had clamored for an outline that would assist teachers to instruct their classes. Some schools' regulations forbade teaching separate Negro culture and history classes. Therefore, the A.S.N.L.H. provided an outline that integrated the Negro in ancient, medieval, and modern world history. The Handbook for the Study of the Negro presented the Negro's achievements in science, literature, philosophy, art, industry, trade, and government--and his involvement in the development of religion and education.³⁰

Biased books remained a major difficulty to be overcome if Negro history was to be integrated in school curricula. White authors presented only a portion of the Negro story and left untold aspects that might prove unpopular among segregationists. Woodson solved this predicament: Negro authors should write their racial history so that the race could be studied from a Negro perspective.³¹ Despite such hindrances, Woodson, in 1934, was greatly encouraged by the increased school courses "bearing upon the Negro." A greater number of students pursued the study of "The Race Problem," "The Negro in America," "The Negro in Africa," and "African Ethnology." The A.S.N.L.H. intended that the

³⁰Carter G. Woodson, "Annual Report of the Director," JNH, XIX, 4 (October, 1934):347-348.

³¹Ibid., p. 350.

member's research would provide books to initiate and continue Negro studies.³²

By 1938 the Association had provided a major contribution in the work to obtain Negro history courses on all educational levels from preschool to post-graduate. Teachers, principals, and supervisors planned their activities to include significant facts of Negro history and culture. Students demonstrated strong interest and some of them exhibited greater knowledge of Negro history than did their teachers. As a result, student precocity provoked their teachers to increase their own study of the subject.³³ Despite initial regional opposition and the deficiency of textbooks and teachers for Negro history courses, the Association--through a continuous, well-planned program--had attained some of its goals.

Harlem residents witnessed A.S.N.L.H. efforts to initiate Negro history courses in local schools. Dr. Woodson addressed citizens in New York City in a 1931 nationwide campaign to inform Americans of his new Negro education program. Woodson also influenced the Harlem population through his columns in its two weekly newspapers, the

³²Ibid., p. 351.

³³Carter G. Woodson, "Annual Report of the Director," JNH, XXIII, 4 (October, 1938):413. Similar references can be found in the New York Age and Amsterdam News during the 1930s.

Amsterdam News and the New York Age. In both lectures and weekly columns, Woodson elucidated his program for reconstituting the educational system to include information about Negro culture.

Harlemites responded to this continual propaganda by supporting efforts to institute Negro history courses in area schools. In 1931 the News reported the bias it found in a sixth-grade history book used in New York-area schools. Author Helen F. Giles, in the preface of her text, stated that "history for the sixth-grade child should be a series of vivid situations."³⁴

The News reviewer questioned Giles' purpose and the book's impressions, which he opined distorted the Negro's character and role in Reconstruction. He charged that the author's "vivid pictures" portrayed post-Civil War Negroes as ignorant--which, she stated, was the result of their recently achieved freedom. Giles portrayed Negro officials in Reconstruction governments as pompous, illiterate men who knew nothing of political sciences and sought only personal gain.

The Age attacked Giles' book as biased and partisan; it charged that the author was factually misinformed about the Reconstruction era. Indeed, Giles based her "impres-

³⁴New York Age, November 15, 1930, p. 4.

sions" on distortions and totally ignored those honest Negro officials, including judges, who participated in Reconstruction's government. Furthermore, she failed to explain the unjust, illegal suppression of Negro suffrage that developed at the end of the period.³⁵ The Amsterdam News, through its reviewer, aroused Harlemites to the biased history taught in their schools and thereby helped to spread the work of the Negro History Movement.

In 1932 the New York Board of Education received a petition signed by fifty thousand citizens requesting the inclusion of Negro history in Harlem public schools. The New York branch of the A.S.N.L.H. had circulated this petition, whose signees were biracial and occupationally diverse.³⁶ Because an official response to the petition was not immediate, local newspapers continued to inform Harlemites of the issue's progress and the continued deficits of Negro education.

In 1933 the New York Age announced that a group of Southern educators had recommended that a "textbook giving a faithful account of the contribution of the American Negro to the life of our country should be prepared and studied in all public schools, white and colored."³⁷ These educators

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ New York Amsterdam News, February 10, 1932, p. 1.

³⁷ New York Age, August 26, 1933, p. 5.

represented all Southern states' departments of education. They believed such courses would increase the mutual racial knowledge necessary to a biracial society, to "promote goodwill, fair play and a spirit of cooperation."³⁸

While Harlem newspapers continued to feature information regarding Negro education, they encouraged local citizens to obtain similar Negro culture courses in their schools. In December, 1934, a committee representing the Yoruba Literary and Debating Club presented a petition, signed by "hundreds of students," to officials of the City College of New York (C.C.N.Y.). The petition requested the institution of a Negro history course in the C.C.N.Y. curriculum.³⁹ Responding to this pressure, the College assigned Dr. Max Yergen to teach a Negro history class in the School of Education during the spring term of 1937. Yergen was the first Negro to teach at C.C.N.Y.; the class enrollment more than fulfilled the expectations of the City Board of Higher Education which had appointed him.⁴⁰ In October, 1938, the School of Education announced that, commencing one year hence, a regularly scheduled course on Negro history and culture would be offered by Dr. Yergen.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹New York Amsterdam News, December 22, 1934, p. 1.

⁴⁰New York Age, October 16, 1937, p. 10. Dr. Yergen taught his course on the graduate level; his class consisted of sixteen students, most of whom were white.

According to the College announcement, this course teaches the early civilization of the Negro tribes in Africa and the cultural effects of the contact of European civilization with the African races. There follows an account of the Negro in America from colonial days to the present time. The course concludes with the consideration of the contributions of the Negro to American culture and an examination of the problems confronting the Negro today.⁴¹

Five years were to elapse before C.C.N.Y. students obtained a permanent course in Negro Studies but other New York groups obtained success more quickly. In 1935 Samuel Levenson, the principal of Junior High School #40, in South Jamaica, announced that a formal Negro history class would be initiated in the fall. Levenson believed that the prospective course would be the first of its type ever taught in a public school building in Queens County, if not in the entire City of New York.⁴²

Black concern for Negro history courses in local public schools became a political issue. In 1935 Stephen Carney, a Democratic candidate for the New York City Board of Aldermen, promised, if elected, to use his influence to force introduction of Negro history in the City's school

⁴¹New York Age, October 8, 1938, p. 6.

⁴²New York Amsterdam News, July 6, 1935, p. 17. Evidence from Harlem newspapers and the JNH indicates that Levenson was correct in his judgment that the Negro history course that was taught at his school was the first taught in a Queen's County school building if not in the entire city of New York.

system. As a result of this pledge, Carney won the support of the Student's Literary and Debating League, a militant, biracial group of students and college graduates central to Harlem's Negro History Movement.⁴³

The theme of the A.S.N.L.H.'s twenty-first annual convention, in 1936, was the instruction of Negro history, literature, and art on the elementary, secondary, and college levels.⁴⁴ Negroes--whether or not they participated in the History Movement--could derive encouragement and racial pride from the organized efforts of the A.S.N.L.H. On a national level the organization worked to raise the Negro's status by increasing public awareness of the race's participation in the past.

In January, 1938, one of Carter G. Woodson's columns in the New York Age featured Jane Dabney Shackelford, a Negro teacher in Terre Haute, Indiana. Shackelford daily integrated her lessons with Negro history, and Woodson advised that teachers and students could well profit by adopting her methods. The mandatory texts from which Shackelford instructed related almost nothing about the Negro. Shackelford, however, "constantly culled from books, newspapers and magazines, accounts of the achievements of

⁴³New York Amsterdam News, November 2, 1935, p. 5.

⁴⁴New York Age, October 10, 1936, p. 2; New York Amsterdam News, October 10, 1936. p. 2.

the race and correlated the fragments with the work outlined in texts from which her race has been purposely excluded."⁴⁵ Woodson reminded his readers that opportunities existed daily for teachers to instruct their pupils in the manner of Jane Dabney Shackelford.⁴⁶ Harlem teachers who read Woodson's column and tried Shackelford's methods in their classrooms were pioneers in Negro education. Until educational administrators initiated formal Negro history classes in the curricula, teachers could still assure progress for the Negro History Movement by these limited means.

In September, 1938, the Harlem People's School commenced teaching "special courses on the 'Negro Question,' 'The Colonial Question,' and 'American History,' stressing the important role that Negro people have played in the historical development of the United States."⁴⁷ Yet, whereas local facilities like the Harlem People's School were readily able to institute racially oriented courses, the local public schools progressed more slowly in integrating Negro history courses in their curricula.

Nevertheless, during the late 1930s, many New York City schools provided special programs during Negro History Week.

⁴⁵New York Age, January 29, 1938, p. 9.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷New York Amsterdam News, September 17, 1938, p. 11.

In 1939 David Goldwaser, the principal of Harlem's Cooper Junior High School, convened two assemblies devoted to Negro history. These performances portrayed the achievements of outstanding Negroes and their contributions to American history and culture. Goldwaser believed it important to cooperate with a new tolerance project conducted in the New York City public schools.⁴⁸

Precocious children living in Harlem who wished to learn about Negro history pressured their teachers to teach the subject. When Public School #194 opened for the first time, in the Autumn of 1940, ten-year-old Black student Linton Scott, Jr., told his white teacher, "that she should teach her class, (mostly Negroes), something of the history of the race."⁴⁹ When teacher Ann Goodwin replied that she knew of no books on Negro history, Scott "went to the Negro Division of the 135th Street Branch Library and borrowed a book," which he read to his class.⁵⁰ Other classes at P.S. #194 followed the example of Goodwin's fifth grade in studying Negro history. Scott's enthusiasm spread throughout the school and resulted in a plan for the entire student body to become involved in the Negro History Week celebration of the

⁴⁸New York Age, February 18, 1939, p. 2.

⁴⁹New York Age, December 14, 1940, p. 1.

⁵⁰Ibid.

following February.⁵¹

During 1941 demands increased for Negro history courses in New York-area educational institutions. In early January, 1941, the Booker T. Washington Memorial Society of Brooklyn organized a meeting to force the public schools there to "place emphasis on Negro history."⁵² Dr. George E. Payne, Dean of New York University's School of Education, spoke to Society members who already had initiated a Negro history course in one Brooklyn school. Harlemites derived encouragement when they read in their local newspapers about the success of Negroes in neighboring boroughs who were able to inaugurate Negro history courses in their schools.

Harlem students attending Brooklyn College profited when Brooklyn residents supported a demand for Negro history at the school. In the Autumn of 1941, the Harriet Tubman Society of Brooklyn College campaigned for a course in Negro history.⁵³ Dr. L. D. Reddick--curator of the Schomburg Collection at the Harlem Branch of the New York Public Library, and instructor in Negro history at C.C.N.Y.--already had begun a lecture series entitled "Negro History and National Defense"⁵⁴ at Brooklyn College.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²New York Amsterdam News, January 11, 1941, p. 7.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴New York Amsterdam News, November 1, 1941, p. 4.

Harlem residents, encouraged by the racial activity and success in adjacent neighborhoods, continued their campaign for Negro history--until United States involvement in World War II became the central preoccupation of all Americans. In September, 1941, Reverend John W. Robinson, Chairman of the Permanent Committee for Better Schools in Harlem, demanded the "inclusion of Negro history in the courses of the Harlem Evening High School."⁵⁵ Since the enrollment at the Harlem Evening School was overwhelmingly Negro, members of the Committee believed a course in Negro history and culture would be a valuable addition to the school's curriculum.⁵⁶

The War in Europe distracted Harlem Negroes' concentration from their efforts for social uplift through an increased knowledge of racial history. The accelerated pre-war economy improved the economic, social and attitudinal situation and specifically alleviated the Depression hardships in Harlem. Negroes found that the war not only provided jobs--it presented opportunities and hopes for the uplift of the race. In 1941 the Negro more fully became integrated in the mainstream of American life as a result of the nation's vast Second World War rearmament program.

⁵⁵New York Amsterdam News, September 27, 1941, p. 3.

⁵⁶Ibid.

A more viable means of social uplift had developed.

During the 1930s and early 1940s, the A.S.N.L.H. and other participants in the Negro History Movement achieved moderate success for their efforts to integrate Negro history courses in the curricula of the schools. Carter G. Woodson and his followers endeavored to generate racial pride and win racial uplift by teaching both Blacks and whites the accomplishments of the race. Their success varied regionally as well as with time and Negro population shifts.

The North adopted more Negro history courses per Negro resident when fewer Negroes lived in the region. Increased Negro population did not immediately induce authorities to establish Negro history and culture courses in Northern integrated schools. In contrast, the South demonstrated a slow response to Negro demands for racial history. However, by the early 1930s, Southern educational administrators responded more readily than Northern officials to the Negroes' requests.

Woodson and the A.S.N.L.H. influenced Harlemites and other New York-area Negroes with their propaganda. Harlem residents, aware of the benefits to be derived from Negro history, submitted organized requests to public school officials. Harlemites attained moderate success more often in private schools than in public schools. Nevertheless,

public school principals and teachers informally integrated events of Negro history in American history classes and sponsored student participation in Negro History Week activities.

The limited success of the 1930s Negro History Movement provided a basis for the resurgence of interest and effort during the 1960s. The work of the A.S.N.L.H. did not cease during the 1940s and 1950s; the Association's continued efforts provided a bridge between the 1930s and 1960s efforts to integrate Negro history in public and private school curricula.

CHAPTER V

NEGRO HISTORY MOVEMENT GRASS-ROOTS ORGANIZATIONS IN HARLEM: ACTIVITIES DURING THE THIRTIES

The Negro History Movement experienced manifold success in 1930s Harlem. This resulted in part from the increased leisure thrust upon economically deprived residents, who could ill-afford to purchase entertainment during the Depression. Further, by the 1930s the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History was sufficiently organized and developed to inform the public of Negro history teaching methods. Harlem residents responded by forming grass-roots organizations--adult history clubs, student history clubs, and discussion and lecture groups meeting at the local churches, Y.M.C.A., and Y.W.C.A. These groups determined to learn more about Negro history through their own efforts. In addition, they hoped to persuade local schools to teach students Negro history and culture courses. Not least, these ghetto residents wished to inform the general public of past Negro accomplishments through which they aspired to gain equal status, by razing the social barriers in an obviously segregated city.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Black clubs, literary so-

cieties, history study groups, and the Negro Church, directed Negro History Movement activities on the local level. The major purposes of these organizations were to develop racial pride and to generate social uplift through public education of the Negro's role in history.¹ Groups participated in the Movement to greater or lesser degree, staging programs for Negro History Week or sponsoring birthday celebrations for Negro heroes and heroines such as Frederick Douglass, Crispus Attucks, or Harriet Tubman. Whatever the degree of commitment, these organizations contributed an important role in the Movement's crusade to produce greater social equality for the American Negro.

As in all areas of Negro concentration, these organizations actively flourished in Harlem. The 135th Street Library and the Harlem Y.M.C.A. provided meeting places for history study clubs. Local students organized history clubs to supplement their courses in American history which minimized or distorted the historical role of the Negro. New York Blacks joined and supported the local branch of the

¹The term "social uplift" has become vacuous as a result of over-use. During the 1930s this term was used with far greater meaning by the participants in the Negro History Movement. For them "social uplift" meant raising the social status of the race above the low level it experienced at the beginning of the twentieth century, to a plane free of discrimination, segregation and inferiority feelings. This is the context in which "social uplift" will be used in this paper. The term will be used interchangeably with "social improvement" and "social betterment."

A.S.N.L.H. The American Methodist Episcopal Church, the Baptist Church, and other predominantly Negro churches opened their doors to Negro History Movement activities.

This popular predilection to organize for social betterment was not a unique phenomenon for American Negroes. By organizing, they were maintaining the traditions of improvement through historical interpretation of the past that had been used by innumerable minorities before. Negro improvement groups or mutual-aid societies dated from the eighteenth century and were similar to groups that had developed among the various national groups who migrated to the new world. During the nineteenth century, ethnic groups had formed historical societies in an attempt to trace their separate contributions to history and culture. Carter G. Woodson and the other founders of the A.S.N.L.H. combined these two traditions when they inaugurated the Negro History Movement.

American Negroes demonstrated a penchant for organizing and joining clubs and societies not unlike their white fellow Americans. For the Negro, to join a group or society of mutual aid provided a means to combat adversity. "Even when patterned after those of the whites, his organizations performed a broader function--that of inspiring and uplifting a peculiarly disadvantaged group."²

²Quarles, Negro in the Making, pp. 96-97.

The Negro Masonic Order, founded in 1765, was the first of the formal mutual-aid societies. A second secret fraternal organization, the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, began in 1843. Both of these groups contributed significantly to Negro uplift when they provided economic assistance and social acceptance withheld by the white majority. Other groups which were neither secret nor closed to women were formed. The Free African Society, established in Philadelphia in 1787, and the Sons of African Society, founded in Boston in 1798, were examples of such groups.³

Literary societies developed subsequent to the mutual-aid organizations, but the former were similar in their self-improvement efforts. "Founded to spread useful knowledge by providing libraries and reading rooms, these societies were widespread throughout the North, numbering at least forty-five before the Civil War."⁴ Literary groups remained popular into the twentieth century. Several literary societies--for example, the Student's Literary and Debating Club and the Premiere Literary Group--functioned in Harlem during the 1930s.⁵ Through self-help organiza-

³Ibid., pp. 98-99.

⁴Ibid.

⁵New York Amsterdam News, February 15, 1933, p. 11. This article, as well as other references, describes the

tions, the Negro believed he had assumed control of his fate and had addressed his problems as best he could.⁶

The Negro Church overshadowed all other local organizations that worked toward Black uplift.⁷ Carter G. Woodson contended that the Church served the Negro as a social center from which stemmed virtually every effort for racial advancement.

The social uplift agencies [which] organized, the schools [which] established, and businesses [which were] promoted, have all directly or indirectly connected themselves with the Negro Church. . . . When other avenues were closed to race and there seemed no likelihood of their being opened in the near future, the Negro, using the Church, the only agency under his control, made it serve the purpose of ministering to his social and economic as well as his spiritual needs.⁸

The Negro Church also served as a training ground for the Negro leadership of reform groups. Church-trained Negroes were instrumental in "launching one of the most significant

Student's Literary and Debating League activities. New York Age, September 30, 1933, p. 2, reported that A. A. Schomburg addressed the Premiere Literary Circle on the "Negroid Culture in American Civilization."

⁶John Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, p. 408. Franklin reported much the same information concerning mutual-aid and self-help organizations. Franklin's chapter entitled "Philanthropy and Self-help," reviews these historical organizations.

⁷Quarles, Negro in the Making, p. 99.

⁸Carter G. Woodson, "Proceedings of the Spring Conference," (April, 1926):237.

expressions of social action among Negroes, the colored conventions." Colored conventions were meetings held to protest the status and treatment of the Negro in American society.⁹ These conventions marked the earliest collective Negro endeavors to combat allegations of inferiority with facts. Although the first conventions were void of historical references, delegates to the largest pre-Civil War convention--held in Rochester, New York, in 1853--"declared that by the facts of history Negroes are American citizens and could boast with pride and hope to men of great Achievement."¹⁰

Negro historical societies did not become active until the late nineteenth century. The American Negro Historical Society, the first Negro history association, established itself in Philadelphia in 1892.¹¹ The American Negro Academy was organized on March 5, 1897, in Washington, D.C. Although the American Negro Academy did not operate as a true historical society, it did produce papers on historical subjects. One of its prime objectives was to gather valuable data concerning Negroes and the works of Negro authors.¹²

⁹Quarles, Negro in the Making, p. 102.

¹⁰Wesley, "Creating and Maintaining," p. 18.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

The most influential Negro history organization formed in the United States is the A.S.N.L.H. Inaugurated in 1915, under the leadership of Carter G. Woodson, it combined the two traditions of social improvement and history organizations to seek the equal status of Blacks in American society. Since initiation, the Association has expanded its work and influence throughout the world.

Early in the A.S.N.L.H.'s history, it encouraged the public and particularly the Negro population to form grass-roots branches. Article Three of the Association's constitution provided the formation of history clubs or branches to execute the organization's objectives.¹³ The A.S.N.L.H. employed J. E. Ormes as its first field agent. His duties included organizing clubs for the study of Negro life and history. Any five persons who wished to pursue Negro history studies could organize a club. For a two-dollar membership fee, the Association sent to members the Journal of Negro History and a quarterly study outline. In addition the fee entitled them to mailed instructions from the Director regarding what to study in Negro history.¹⁴

In 1929 the A.S.N.L.H. announced that, in response to

¹³Carter G. Woodson, "The First Biennial Meeting of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History at Washington," JNH, II, 4 (October, 1917):445.

¹⁴"Notes," JNH, IV, 2 (April, 1919):237.

public interest plans had been formulated and approved to extend membership to junior branches. Either adult branches or someone knowledgeable in Negro history supervised the junior members. These youngsters followed a history study outline provided by the Association and read African Myths and Negro Makers of History to complete their study program.¹⁵ During the 1930s a Junior Study Group met to investigate Negro history at the Harlem Branch of the New York Public Library on 135th Street. In addition to their explorations in Negro history, members sponsored a Negro history quiz and presented plays depicting the lives of racial heroes and heroines.¹⁶

The purposes for establishing Association branches were several. The A.S.N.L.H. leadership instructed its branches to collect records of the Negro past--old newspaper articles, receipts, manumission papers, deeds, and wills. The directorship encouraged members to write life histories of those "near great" Negroes whom other writers had neglected. Woodson and his staff urged the branches to promote the study of Negro history in their club or a class following the outline they provided. Members were to propagate additional racial information by instructing children in schools and churches

¹⁵"Notes," JNH, XIV, 1 (January, 1929):107-108. African Myths and Negro Makers of History were adaptations of Woodson's The Negro in Our History, meant for the elementary-school level.

¹⁶New York Amsterdam News, February 3, 1940, p. 4.

and by telling stories of distinguished Negroes in business, education, religion, and other professions.¹⁷

In his annual report to Association members, Woodson reviewed the progress and activity of the various branches and announced the formation of recently inaugurated groups. The branches rapidly assumed the function of supervising and stimulating Negro history study in various independent clubs. In addition they continually advised public school authorities that it was important to give "the opportunity to learn something of the past of those of African blood."¹⁸ In 1933 Woodson reported that the Association's New York branch, with the assistance of Negro historian Willis N. Huggins, had successfully developed a Negro history study program. Furthermore, with Huggins' assistance, this branch had induced other local organizations to cooperate in attempts to initiate Negro history courses in the curricula of Harlem schools.¹⁹

Woodson's annual report also discussed the various clubs and literary societies that pursued Negro studies. Although these groups were not affiliated directly with the Association, they often sought advice and information from the Director to organize their studies. Woodson discerned that,

¹⁷"Notes," JNH, XIII, 1 (January, 1928):110.

¹⁸Woodson, "Annual Report," (October, 1933):365.

¹⁹Ibid.

in Negro communities he considered advanced, college-educated adults continued their education. Such progressive groups met and followed a definite program of studying the civilization and culture of various countries. During the 1920s and throughout the 1930s, these groups applied themselves to the study of Negro culture and history. Woodson also reported that white groups similarly interested in interracial matters read books about Negro culture and invited lecturers to address racial topics.²⁰

Negro and white university students, particularly in the Northern and border states, formed clubs that met to discuss topics pertinent to Negro culture and history. Despite the fact that these clubs had no official connection with the Association, they frequently appealed to the Director for literature and for advice in interpreting convoluted issues encountered in their studies.²¹

In 1926 Woodson delineated the distribution of these Negro history groups. Clubs existed in practically all cities with large Negro populations. He commented that "they seem to flourish better near the border states, where Negroes have most of the advantages of the North and few of the disadvantages of the lower South."²² Cities typical of

²⁰Woodson, "Annual Report" (October, 1926):552.

²¹Ibid., p. 553.

²²Ibid.

this description included Washington, Richmond, Nashville, Louisville, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Kansas City. In the Deep South, in Negro schools which neglected to teach the history of Negro achievements, students formed their own history clubs to supplement their learning.²³

During the early 1930s, the number of clubs interested in disseminating Negro history rapidly multiplied. "The interest in the study of the Negro is increasing almost beyond expectation, and in so doing it has outstripped in this respect the institutions of learning, many of which have not enriched their curricula with courses bearing upon the Negro."²⁴ Clubs, social welfare agencies, and churches initiated and encouraged Negro studies. They proposed, for public school adoption, textbooks that related the Negro's part in history. Thus Negroes concerned with self-improvement and racial uplift responded to the urgings of the A.S.N.L.H. Many whites, supportive of the Negro's upward struggle, joined the ranks.²⁵

Residents of Harlem, segregated from the major populous of New York City, responded to a Negro History Movement that promised a means to racial pride and improved social status. Harlem boasted numerous grass-roots groups and organizations

²³Ibid.

²⁴Woodson, "Annual Report" (October, 1931):357.

²⁵Ibid., p. 358.

that either participated in or sponsored Negro History Movement activities. These groups included: student history clubs in schools, adult history clubs, literary societies, social welfare groups, like the Y.M.C.A., church groups. In addition there were groups established to memorialize favored heroes and heroines.

In June, 1930, Frederick Douglass Junior High School students organized a history club. Members collected and borrowed available books by Negro authors. The club's sponsoring teacher compiled a selected bibliography and advised students who sought information concerning Negro life and history. The group invited speakers to address subjects of Negro history.²⁶

Students of Harlem Evening High School listed a biracial membership of one thousand in their History Club--the largest in any city. With the guidance of Principal Charles E. Thellusen, Assistant Principal Monis Field, and Willis N. Huggins, the school successfully had installed the first Negro History Library in the New York City school system. Students and faculty delivered recommendations to the Board of Education "to make African history a duly accredited

²⁶New York Age, June 30, 1930, p. 5. Guest speakers included the Rt. Rev. C. C. Allyeyne, bishop of the Western New York District of the A.M.E. Zion Church, a veteran of several years in Africa; the historian Carter G. Woodson, and the actor Richard B. Harrison, star of the play "Green Pastures," which gained great popularity during the 1930s.

course in all Harlem schools and make it required reading in all social study courses throughout the system."²⁷ Until that time when Negro history courses would be installed in the curriculum, history club members at Harlem Evening High School were prepared to continue their twice-weekly instruction under the guidance of Huggins.²⁸

During the 1920s and 1930s the Harlem or 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library accommodated public adult-education lectures. In 1929 the Egyptian historian Duce Mohamed Ali opened a series of Library lectures before a biracial audience. Series topics included an introduction entitled "After the Flood," followed by "Greece Receives Her Culture From Egypt," and "Moorish Conquests of Spain--Its Cultural Influence on Europe." Other topics revealed the influence of early African culture upon European civilization.²⁹

In 1931 a Negro history group formed at the Harlem Library to publicize the study opportunities available in the Negro History Division housed there.³⁰ The Arthur A. Schomburg Collection of Negro History and Literature com-

²⁷New York Amsterdam News, November 19, 1938, p. 5.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹New York Age, May 11, 1929, p. 10.

³⁰New York Age, February 7, 1931, p. 7.

prised the major part of this division.

Throughout the 1930s, individuals and groups interested in Negro history initiated Library activities. The Harlem Adult Education Committee sponsored four lectures in 1932 regarding "The Negro in the New World." A Columbia University English Instructor, Professor Vernon Loggins, presented the initial address, "A Negro Literature in the United States." The same lecture series featured Arthur A. Schomburg, Director of the Division of Negro History and Literature at the Library, who lectured concerning "The Negro in Spanish America."³¹

The Harlem Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. were two social-welfare organizations that sponsored Negro history programs. In 1933 the Educational Committee of the Ashland Y.W.C.A. scheduled a three-program series that portrayed the cultural contributions of Negroes to American life. Schomburg prepared a Negro literature exhibit for the first program, which featured an address by Willis N. Huggins.³²

During the Spring of 1933, J. A. Rogers, author and foreign correspondent for several American weeklies, conducted a series of four lectures entitled "The Negro in the Modern World," at the Harlem Y.M.C.A.³³ Other historian-

³¹New York Amsterdam News, May 18, 1932.

³²New York Amsterdam News, February 1, 1933, p. 11. Ashland Y.W.C.A.

³³New York Amsterdam News, March 1, 1933, p. 6.

lecturers (for example Willis N. Huggins) also lectured as part of the Y.M.C.A. educational department program.³⁴ In addition an adult Negro History Club, formed in the early 1930s, centered its activities at the Y.M.C.A. Members sponsored an annual dinner which featured noted speakers knowledgeable in the field of Negro history. The Negro History Club conducted classes about racial culture and history topics, held at the "Y."³⁵

During the mid-1930s, the Works Projects Administration (W.P.A.)--one of President Roosevelt's New Deal agencies--sponsored Negro education programs in Harlem. In conjunction with the City Board of Education, the W.P.A. conducted Negro history classes at St. Jude's Chapel, on West 99th Street.³⁶ In 1937 the W.P.A., in cooperation with the Harlem Branch of the Y.M.C.A., offered a public Negro history course taught by Willis N. Huggins.³⁷

WPA-sponsored programs also benefitted young people in Harlem. In 1938 the WPA and the City Department of Sanitation sponsored a lecture series that told "The Story of Negroes Who Have Helped to Influence the History of the

³⁴New York Age, April 5, 1938, p. 2.

³⁵New York Amsterdam News, April 19, 1933, p. 4; New York Age, November 4, 1933, p. 2.

³⁶New York Amsterdam News, November 7, 1936, p. 15.

³⁷New York Amsterdam News, September 25, 1937, p. 15.

Nation." The Junior Inspectors Club directed the program.³⁸ Other WPA programs included free lectures on the Negro's contribution to American history and civilization conducted through its Adult Education Program. The National Negro Congress joined the WPA in these efforts.³⁹

These WPA-sponsored lectures and courses experienced notable success. "Interest in the part the Negro has played has not been of spontaneous growth, however, but due to continuous efforts of such brilliant scholars as Dr. Carter G. Woodson, J. A. Rogers, and Willis N. Huggins and others."⁴⁰ A consciousness had developed among Harlemites that the race had participated to a far greater degree in history than previously had been understood.⁴¹

Woodson reported the Negro History Movement's success to the Association in 1937:

These more successful efforts in the educational field have naturally resulted in the extension of clubs and the organization of classes for the study of the Negro. These

³⁸New York Age, March 26, 1938, p. 2.

³⁹New York Amsterdam News, November 26, 1938, p. 23. In 1935 Negro leaders established the National Negro Congress through which they hoped to establish a united front program among all Black Americans. These leaders believed that a Negro agency embracing all Negro unions, together with religious fraternal and civic groups would unify and arouse the Negro masses to effective political and economic action. Initial widespread response followed by considerable skepticism due to the left-wing support of the movement, marked the ten years duration of the organization.

⁴⁰New York Amsterdam News, January 20, 1940, p. 6.

⁴¹Ibid.

have become so general that it is difficult to find in a community an outstanding church which does not have some sort of a literary organization dealing especially with the life and history of the Negro.⁴²

Church-sponsored Negro history clubs and groups were common in Harlem and its adjacent neighborhoods. The Negro Church traditionally participated in racial uplift; the activities of the Negro History Movement were no exception.

The Students of Negro History established its headquarters in the Bethel American Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church of Brooklyn. This group planned special programs for Negro History Week and invited noted lecturers such as Willis Huggins to address it.⁴³ During Negro History Week, the Allan Christian Endeavor of the A.M.E. Church presented a national Negro program. The production included the reading of six papers regarding Negro history, a review of George Washington Carver's life, and the singing of Negro spirituals.⁴⁴ Christ Community Church of Harlem joined the Negro History week celebration; its Excelsior Cadets of America presented "The Men of Tomorrow Forum."⁴⁵

⁴²Carter G. Woodson, "Annual Report of the Director," JNH, XXII, 4 (October, 1937):412.

⁴³New York Age, March 21, 1936, p. 7; New York Age, February 13, 1937, p. 7.

⁴⁴New York Amsterdam News, March 6, 1937, p. 10. Allan Christian Endeavor was a social and educational group.

⁴⁵New York Age, February 25, 1939, p. 6.

Other independent groups united to provide public educational activities concerning Negro history. The Ethiopian Research Association--also known as the Ethiopian Historical Society--contributed to the 1930s Movement. Professor Charles C. Seifert founded the group composed of men and women devoted to the discovery of Negro contributions to civilization.⁴⁶

In 1936 a group conscious of Negro history formed the Booker T. Washington Historical and Memorial Association. This group dedicated itself to a "wider knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the Negro's accomplishments in his upward struggle."⁴⁷ This association planned a Museum of Negro Art, Literature and Science, with features intended to enlighten the public concerning racial achievements and to inspire Black youth to high ideals.⁴⁸

In these ways many varied groups in Harlem and the greater New York area directed their activities to the objectives of the Negro History Movement. Their methods sometimes differed, but their purpose was uniform: to gain for the Negro greater equality in American society by educating themselves and others to the achievements of the Negro race in history.

⁴⁶New York Age, February 7, 1931, p. 2.

⁴⁷New York Age, February 27, 1937, p. 7.

⁴⁸Ibid.

The organizations involved in the Negro History Movement often developed ingenious tactics to interest and educate the public in Negro history. One method that many organizations and clubs employed was to stage contests--especially during the annual Negro History Week celebration.

In 1929 at the annual meeting of the A.S.N.L.H., held in Washington, D.C., participants discussed "How to Encourage the Study of Negro History Among Young People and How to Place it in Their Societies."⁴⁹ The delegates suggested that historians in local organizations stage Negro History oratorical contests.⁵⁰ Harlem groups adopted this suggestion and developed the contest idea into essay competitions and history bees. The latter contest tested the participants in much the same manner as does the spelling bee.

Harlemites received further encouragement to sponsor history contests when they read of the success of such events throughout the country. A New York Age editor reported the fortunate results of the "America's Tenth Man Contest." The Commission on Interracial Cooperation of Atlanta, Georgia, conducted the competition. The term "tenth man" indicated the Negro who then represented one-

⁴⁹Woodson, "Proceedings" (January, 1930):9-10.

⁵⁰Ibid.

tenth of the national population. The Commission on Interracial Cooperation noted that one paper written by a young, white contestant was "significant as illustrating the effect of certain educational processes . . . steadily gaining ground in the South." The paper demonstrated "how a study of Negro history and a record of the achievements of the race . . ." caused the student writer to alter her concept of the Negro. Through the study of Negro history, she had changed her position from hearty agreement with segregation-movement tenets including the suppression of colored people, to a position of understanding and knowledge of the difficulties that the Negro faced when he tried to achieve. The Age editor believed the success of the "Tenth Man Contest" could be judged by this essay alone.⁵¹

In 1932 the Harlem-based Students Literary and Debating League inaugurated a Negro history bee, to be held during the annual celebration of Negro History Week. "The bee plan was decided upon by the League to stimulate interest in the study of the history of the Negro, to correct error and to disseminate information."⁵² The contest format consisted of questions pertinent to Negro history, to be answered by the contestants. Participants with the highest

⁵¹New York Age, January 24, 1931, p. 7.

⁵²New York Amsterdam News, December 14, 1932, p. 10.

ratings received awards. The contest gained support and praise from eminent leaders in the Negro History Movement and from Negro Church leaders in the Protestant Episcopal Church and the American Methodist Episcopal Church.⁵³

The League's history bee enjoyed continued enthusiastic support throughout the 1930s and early 1940s. At the first competition, in 1933, "the several hundred questions asked in the bee illustrated, to the audience and to the contestants as well, how little Negroes know about themselves. Many questions prompted ridiculous answers or were left unanswered. . . . One contestant had never heard of the N.A.A.C.P. (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People)."⁵⁴

A number of clubs and organizations sponsored participants in the history bee. New York area groups which sent contestants included a Brooklyn literary society called the Acme Association, a local branch of the International Defense, the Concord Baptist Sunday School, the Communist Party, the Booker T. Washington Society of Brooklyn Evening High School, and the Ralph Avenue Sunday School.⁵⁵

The Student's Literary and Debating League received

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴New York Amsterdam News, February 15, 1933, p. 11.

⁵⁵New York Amsterdam News, February 21, 1934, p. 11.

high praise for inaugurating this program which stimulated a desire to study Negro history among both the contestants and those witnesses of the event.⁵⁶ In 1941 the New York Amsterdam News predicted that the annual contest promised to be an outstanding event, "because of the extensive preparations which the contestants are making."⁵⁷ Participants answered questions that covered the period from the "introduction of slavery in America . . ." up to and including current events and persons in the Negro world.⁵⁸

Each year the League invited an outstanding Negro historian or leader to address the audience and participants attending the bee. Roy Wilkins, editor of Crisis, Carter G. Woodson, Arthur A. Schomburg, and Willis N. Huggins were speakers at these events.⁵⁹

Other forms of Negro history contests won popularity in Harlem and its environs during the Depression years. Both oratorical and essay contests received support from those who hoped to demonstrate their knowledge of Negro history and to gain the honors or money to be awarded. In 1933 Upsilon Chi Gamma, the College Club of the Boy's Work

⁵⁶New York Amsterdam News, February 28, 1934, p. 11.

⁵⁷New York Amsterdam News, February 8, 1941, p. 11.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹New York Amsterdam News, February 15, 1951, p. 10.

Department, initiated an oratorical contest to be held annually at the Little Theatre in the 135th Street Y.M.C.A. The first contest's topic was "An Outstanding Negro Prior to 1860 and His Contribution to Society." Contestants chose to speak of Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner, and Henri Christophe. Judges for the competition were contributors to Negro history study and research. In 1933 these men included Willis N. Huggins, the historian Charles C. Seifert, and Harcourt A. Tynes, President of the local A.S.N.L.H.⁶⁰

The Fraternal Order of the Elks also instituted an annual oratorical contest in the early 1930s. An educational committee directed the contests as part of the Elks' educational program. Topics for the contests included "The Negro and the Constitution," "Slavery and the Constitution," and "Booker T. Washington and the Constitution." In 1939 the contest winners who spoke regarding "The Negro and the Constitution," analyzed defects of enforcing those parts of the Constitution that apply to Negro rights.⁶¹

The N.A.A.C.P. sponsored an oratorical contest "to develop in youth a greater desire for the study of the race's history." Edward Lawrence, Chairman of the Arrangements Committee, believed that "an accurate knowledge of

⁶⁰New York Amsterdam News, April 26, 1933, p. 2.

⁶¹New York Amsterdam News, August 26, 1939, p. 18.

our historical background and achievements will help us to go forward by eradicating the impression that Negroes always held a secondary position in civilization."⁶² Entrants chose to orate on the topics "The Patriotism of the American Negro," "Segregation and Discrimination," "The Negro Soldier in the Wars of America," "Frederick Douglass," and "Booker T. Washington."⁶³ The N.A.A.C.P. also sponsored an essay contest. It offered prizes for the six best essays applicable to such subjects as "The Struggle Against Segregation" and the "Fight for the Right to Vote."⁶⁴

Other groups conducted Negro history writing competitions. The Omega Psi Phi social fraternity sponsored a nationwide essay contest as part of its program to inspire Negro achievement. The fraternity invited college students to submit papers entitled "The Significance of the Achievements of Negroes," while high school students considered the topic "Why Mention the Negro's Achievements?"⁶⁵ In 1938 the Toussaint L'Ouverture Society of Hunter College proffered the competition title "The Contribution of the Negro to American History." The winning paper, written by a white girl, interpreted the Reconstruction Era as a

⁶²New York Age, February 15, 1936, p. 7.

⁶³New York Amsterdam News, April 11, 1933, p. 11.

⁶⁴New York Amsterdam News, January 10, 1934, p. 6.

⁶⁵New York Amsterdam News, May 10, 1933, p. 10.

period of fertile political and economical development for the Negro.⁶⁶

From 1927 to 1942 the Negro History Movement found productive ground in which to grow--the Negro metropolis of Harlem. Negro History Movement activities provided diversion and recreation for significant numbers of the earliest economic victims of the Depression.⁶⁷ Grass-roots clubs and organizations increased in numbers, membership, and functions during the Depression. Their Movement activities included the sponsorship of lectures, classes, contests, and discussion groups relevant to Negro history and culture.

The A.S.N.L.H., under the direction of Carter G. Woodson, was an effective and influential organization during the 1930s. Yet, without the assistance of these intermediary organizations which developed in Harlem during the 1920s and 1930s, the Association never could have accomplished its work--to inform the public of the Negro's role in history. Likewise, neither could the local clubs and study groups have worked as efficiently without the effective, coordinated guidance of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History.

Woodson appealed to Negroes by offering them greater

⁶⁶New York Amsterdam News, December 24, 1938, p. 5.

⁶⁷Woodson, "Annual Report" (October, 1932):397.

status in American society--through the study of Negro achievements and, thereby, through the development of racial pride. Grass-roots organizations furthered this campaign; they provided immediate methods by which to learn of the Negro past.

CHAPTER VI

JACOB LAWRENCE: AN ARTIST IN THE NEGRO HISTORY MOVEMENT

The 1930s Negro History Movement included among its participants artists who depicted Negro achievements and historical events in their works. Many of these artists gained inspiration from propaganda distributed by the Movement. They reciprocated and aided the Movement with graphic portrayals of Black heroes, heroines, accomplishments, and racial suffering in Negro history. Their paintings and sculpture described and clarified the Negro history concepts that Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, presented to the general public.

Black artist Jacob Lawrence participated in the Negro History Movement during the 1930s and early 1940s in this manner. Since that time he has continued to portray Negro history in his paintings. Lawrence's art bridges that period of semi-dormancy in the Negro History Movement between the earlier active phase of the 1930s, and the resurgence of interest in Negro history in the 1960s.

Jacob Lawrence is a member of a group of painters

nominally termed American Scene Painters. This group of artists developed its distinctive mature style during the Depression. As a member of this group Lawrence is more specifically known as a Social Realist or a Social Commentator--a painter whose work depicts realistic scenes with social implications.¹ Before Lawrence succeeded as a Social Realist, however, he previously had gained prominence with several series of historical paintings presenting Negro achievements. He painted heroic events in the lives of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the Haitian liberator, Harriet Tubman, who led escaping slaves to freedom, the abolitionist Frederick Douglass, and John Brown, the white insurrectionist for the Negro cause of freedom. In addition, Lawrence's earlier work traced the Negro migration from the rural South to Northern industrial cities that occurred early in the twentieth century, and in which his parents participated. Harlem Negro History Movement activities in the 1930s directly influenced Lawrence's career as a Negro history painter. He moved from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Harlem with his family in 1929, at the age of twelve; he matured

¹Matthew Baigell, The American Scene Painting of the 1930's (New York: Praeger, 1974). Baigell contrasts the Regionalists and Social Realists, both of which composed the group called American Scene Painters. They both rejected an elitist conception of art and with it Parisian modernism. "Class consciousness, rather than local or national awareness, informed the art of these Social Realist painters," p. 58.

there during the time of the Movement's peak activity directed by Carter G. Woodson.²

Harlem in the 1930s provided a felicitous environment for the social conscious and historically interested artist. Social and economic dislocation as well as the Negro History Movement's appeal for historical antecedent awareness promoted artistic recording of historical events. The promise of social stability and status resulting from historical awareness further encouraged these painters. Negro history propaganda and the many organizations that promoted it, influenced Jacob Lawrence and instilled in him an abiding awareness of his people's history.

Lawrence used Black history topics as subject matter for his painting--for example, the series he painted during the 1930s and 1940s, presenting events from the lives of Black heroes. Lawrence has maintained this interest and has continued to portray Negro history subjects, in addition to painting contemporary social scenes. Negro soldiers and sailors appeared in his 1947 War series, and Black slaves in his 1955 to 1956 Struggle series. He recently completed a series of paintings that depict the pioneering

²Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, Six Black Masters of American Art (Garden City: Zenith Books, 1972), p. 100. Elton C. Fax, Seventeen Black Artists (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1971), p. 147. Milton W. Brown, Jacob Lawrence (New York: Whitney Museum Exhibit Catalogue, 1974), p. 9.

endeavors of George Washington Bush, a Negro who settled in Washington state during the nineteenth century.³

The influence of the Negro History Movement on Lawrence's art increased in 1930s Harlem. Numerous community events encouraged and maintained Lawrence's interest in Negro history. In 1930, while Lawrence attended Frederick Douglass Junior High School its students organized a Negro history club. Guest speakers addressed the group on topics ranging from "Outstanding Negro Personalities," to "The Present-Day Negro." Club members collected books written by Negroes and made these volumes available to the student body.⁴ Jacob Lawrence registered as an official Douglass High history club member, and he readily was exposed to the activities of the group.⁵

For six months during 1936, Lawrence served in the Civilian Conservation Corps (C.C.C.) at a camp near Middletown, in upstate New York.⁶ Here he helped to build flood-

³Brown, Jacob Lawrence, p. 60.

⁴New York Age, June 30, 1930, p. 5. Brown, Jacob Lawrence, "Chronology," p. 48.

⁵Letter, Jacob Lawrence to the author, November 22, 1975. "During the time that I attended Frederick Douglas [sic] Junior High School I was a member of its Negro History club. I was an active participant to the extent of attending the weekly afterschool meetings to hear a black teacher discuss the Negro and his history."

⁶Bearden and Henderson, Black Masters, p. 103; Brown, Jacob Lawrence, "Chronology," p. 48.

control dams, to clear trees, and to drain swamps; here too he could have benefitted by aspects of the Negro History Movement. Negro history was a popular topic in many C.C.C. camps usually taught on an upper-elementary level. The approach, subject matter and method was adapted to the interests and capacities of the men.⁷ Possible exposure to Negro history during his C.C.C. service and the confirmed participation in the Negro History Club at Douglass High combined with the influence of his Harlem art instructors to direct Lawrence toward Black history as subject matter for his painting.

During his early years in Harlem, Lawrence studied with two artists who incorporated topics of American and Negro history in their art. In 1932 he studied under Charles Alston in College Art Association classes, held at the Harlem Workshop in the 135th Street Library. During 1934 and 1937 he worked with Henry Bannarn's Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) art classes meeting at the 141st Street Studio.⁸

Henry Bannarn's prime ambition was to teach Negro history through his art. An artist, sculptor and wood-carver, he fashioned the noble features of Negroes "who had contributed to world history." Bannarn's great passion was to

⁷Carter G. Woodson, "Report of the Director," JNH, XXI, 3 (July, 1936):249.

⁸Brown, Jacob Lawrence, "Chronology," p. 48.

show Negro school children what great Negroes in American history looked like. Bannarn hoped to contribute to Negro culture through his art, in a manner similar to that which the subjects he portrayed had contributed to both Negro and American culture.⁹

Charles Alston, Lawrence's earlier art teacher, painted WPA murals during the Depression. In one project Alston produced a two-panel piece for the Harlem Hospital that depicted the history of medicine, entitled "Magic and Medicine." The first panel portrayed the ancient African practice of magic. Panel two showed the development of modern medicine, with Negro doctors and medical personnel working in a laboratory and in a surgery.¹⁰ In this way Jacob Lawrence learned the basics of his art in an environment in which other Negroes were painting their history. Fortunately, Lawrence trained in a period when, for the first time, American society in general accepted Negro depiction other than mere caricatures of crooning darkies, faithful mammies, and carefree serfs in an idyllic land of magnolia trees.¹¹

⁹New York Amsterdam News, November 13, 1937, p. 12.

¹⁰Elsa Honig Fine, The Afro-American Artist: A Search for Identity (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973), p. 140.

¹¹New York Amsterdam News, September 6, 1933, p. 9. Fine, Afro-American Artist, p. 45. Some art critics and art historians would disagree with this statement that historically depictions of Negroes had been unflattering, and

Other Harlem Negro artists of the 1930s presented Negro history in their works. Vertis Hayes and Aaron Douglas, as well as the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, depicted the Negro past in their easel paintings and murals. Lawrence and Vertis Hayes became friends while studying at Charles Alston's studio. Aaron Douglas and Lawrence became acquainted through a mutual friend, Augusta Savage, the gifted Black sculptress and mentor of many talented young Negroes.¹²

Vertis Hayes rose from a Georgian mule team driver to a master-artist position for the Federal Arts Projects. He painted a mural for Harlem Hospital, entitled "The Pursuit of Happiness," that described the Negro continuum from

unacceptable unless represented as stated in this text. However the author refers to writers like James Thomas Flexner who states that William Sidney Mount ". . . depicted the slaves of rural Long Island--who were not, in fact badly treated--as inhabitants of a childlike Arcadia. . . ." That Wilder Image (New York: Bonanza Books, 1962), p. 30. Some critics regard the paintings of Negroes by Winslow Homer to be dignified, especially that the Negro lost at Sea in the Gulf-Stream. Yet, Winslow was greatly criticized for other paintings on Negro themes executed during a post-Civil War journey to the South. "He painted the ex-slaves with rare sympathy and more than once got into trouble for it. An offended belle asked him, 'Why don't you paint our lovely girls instead of these dreadful creatures?' 'Because,' said Homer, 'these are the purtiest.' On another occasion he was threatened with bodily harm; local toughs were determined to get rid of the 'damned nigger-painter.'" James Thomas Flexner and the Editors of Time-Life Books, The World of Winslow Homer (New York: Time, Inc., 1966). The fact is, even these dignified depictions were not acceptable art and that Mount did present Negroes in a class situation.

¹²Fax, Black Artists, p. 106; Bearden and Henderson, Black Masters, p. 151.

primitive African tribesman to absorption in American community life. The mural portrayed the occupational shift from agriculture to industry in the context of early American plantation life and the twentieth-century city and factory.¹³

In 1930 Aaron Douglas completed murals in the newly erected library at Nashville's Fisk University. According to one viewer, Douglas used the murals to tell "what the Negro has accomplished in America, what he has contributed toward the progress of the country and the underlying forces which affected his progress."¹⁴ Religion, Emancipation, and Education were major themes of this series.¹⁵

Douglas continued to paint historical mural scenes throughout the 1930s. In 1934, while working for the WPA, he completed a mural in the assembly hall of the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library. Jacob Lawrence frequented the Harlem library in which Douglas' murals described the "Exodus North," the "Momentary Happiness of Harlem," and the final "Disillusion of the Negro Worker."¹⁶ Lawrence, in the early 1940s, created a series of forty

¹³New York Amsterdam News, October 2, 1937, p. 13; New York Amsterdam News, December 18, 1937, p. 10.

¹⁴New York Amsterdam News, October 29, 1930, p. 13.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶New York Amsterdam News, November 24, 1934, p. 9.

panels entitled the "Northern Migration of the Negro"-- depicting the same early twentieth-century shift in Negro population as had Douglas. From viewing the historical painting of his contemporaries, as well as participating in art workshop discussions at the Alston and Savage studios, Jacob Lawrence derived a basis for the art he practiced.

The Mexican socialist painter Diego Rivera resided in New York from 1931 to 1933. During his stay, he provided socially-conscious artists with theories, inspiration, and methods for developing nationalistic art. In addition to the disputed murals at Rockefeller Center, Rivera painted a revolutionary mural series at the New York Worker's School. The artist included representations of Negroes in both of these projects.¹⁷ The Worker's School mural depicted the Indian, the Negro, and the white pioneer as integral elements of United States history. Rivera emphasized the Negro's prominent role in the American Revolution by including a mural scene that showed the killing of Crispus Attucks on Boston Commons. Other scenes pictured Sojourner Truth beckoning to enslaved Negroes in the South, and John Brown and Nat Turner in their insurrectionist roles.¹⁸ Through his own art and through the inspiration

¹⁷New York Amsterdam News, August 2, 1933, p. 1; Worker's School was located at 51 West 14th Street.

¹⁸Ibid.

he provided for Negro artists like Jacob Lawrence, Rivera actively participated in the 1930s Negro History Movement.¹⁹

Those Negro History Movement activities which most directly inspired Jacob Lawrence were the lectures sponsored by the Harlem Y.M.C.A. Negro History Club. Lawrence joined other Harlemites who flocked to hear Negro history lectures given by the nonprofessional but scholarly Black historians Charles Seifert, Joel A. Rogers, and Richard B. Moore.²⁰

Lawrence first encountered Charles Seifert when the latter spoke at the Harlem Y.M.C.A. Lawrence took immediate interest in Seifert's topic. Seifert advised his audience that "Black people were never going to get anywhere until they knew their own history and took pride in

¹⁹In the Rockefeller Center Murals that Rivera painted, he included a portrait of Vladimir Lenin which caused an uproar among the public and in the press. As a consequence, the mural was destroyed. Rivera engaged in socialist activities such as speech-making during his 1930s residency in New York. Speaking at the New York Urban League, 206 West 136th Street, under auspices of the Scottsboro Defense Club, in 1933, Rivera admonished his listeners that "Not in the romantic return to a homeland in distant Africa, but in practical union with other darker groups throughout the three Americas lies the solution of the American Negro's problem." Not only in his art but also through his socialist activities, Rivera became a participant in the Negro History Movement. New York Amsterdam News, August 16, 1933, p. 6.

²⁰Fax, Black Artists, p. 152.

it."²¹ Seifert delineated the achievements of African Blacks, told of the golden city of Timbuktu, reported the African use of iron at a time when most Europeans were unaware of it, and described the elegant bronze casting required to create the superb art treasures of Benin in Nigeria.²²

Through just such lectures presented by the Negro History Club, Lawrence became interested in the liberator of Haiti, Toussaint L'Ouverture. Club members believed the valor and statesmanship of this former slave and founder of the first Black Republic had been neglected by most American historians. For this reason the Negro History Club researched and reconstructed this lost history. One source of information that these lay historians uncovered was Wendell Phillip's oration "Toussaint L'Ouverture," which they enlarged and then related to their audiences.²³

"The more young Lawrence heard about Toussaint, the greater became his desire to comment upon him in the way he knew best."²⁴ When Lawrence determined to paint the Haitian liberator's achievements, he concluded that L'Ouverture's deeds were too diverse to depict in a single painting. He thus decided to create a forty-one-panel

²¹Bearden and Henderson, Black Masters, p. 104.

²²Ibid.

²³Fax, Black Artists, p. 152.

²⁴Ibid.

series of paintings addressing Toussaint's life. Prior to beginning this project, Lawrence felt obliged to research thoroughly the life and achievements of his subject. He pursued research in the New York Public Library's Schomburg Collection, "the largest collection of literature and artifacts by and about Negroes anywhere in the world."²⁵ Included among the thousands of books, manuscripts, and pamphlets collected by A. A. Schomburg was Toussaint L'Ouverture's original revealing and inspirational "Proclamation for Freedom". Jacob Lawrence discovered a "veritable gold mine" of information about L'Ouverture in the files of the famous collection.²⁶

The Toussaint L'Ouverture series that Lawrence began in 1937 initially appeared in New York's DePorres Interracial Center in 1939.²⁷ Lawrence had become an active participant

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., p. 154; Brown, Jacob Lawrence, p. 11. Father John La Farge took an active interest in the exhibit of the L'Ouverture series when it was shown in the DePorres Center. In April, 1933, the Amsterdam News, while reporting the events of the annual dinner presented by the Negro History Club at the Y.M.C.A., related that, "the Rev. Fr. John La Farge, editor of the Catholic weekly, America, surprised his listeners when he asserted that his great-grandfather was once the slave of Toussaint L'Ouverture, Haitian liberator." New York Amsterdam News, April 26, 1933, p. 3. This connection undoubtedly explains La Farge's interest in the series of paintings. The DePorres Center was named after the Negro Saint Martin DePorres.

in the Negro History Movement that had served to prompt his work. His paintings would educate and inspire both whites and Negroes. The painter subsequently researched and composed other series, commencing with events in the life of Frederick Douglass in 1938. In successive years, Lawrence featured Harriet Tubman, the Northern Migration of the Negro and John Brown.²⁸

In 1939 Lawrence revealed his motives for painting his chosen subjects. He had selected Haiti for a series study because he admired the island's courageous Black men and their contributions to Negro culture and freedom.²⁹ Lawrence's intense interest in Negro history and in the Negro struggle for freedom demonstrated his involvement in the Negro History Movement. He commented upon and extended to others his knowledge of Negro history with his most effective means--his art. By painting the Negro past, he was able to assist the dissemination of Negro history.

Black artists like Lawrence who painted Negro history subjects during the 1930s were virtual pioneers in their field. Resulting from the Negro History Movement and the Harlem Renaissance, the depiction of Negro racial subjects

²⁸Brown, Jacob Lawrence, "Chronology," p. 48.

²⁹New York Amsterdam News, June 3, 1939, p. 11.

gained substantial public acceptance. Nineteenth-century Negro artists had worked in liberal white environments, isolated from their race. "By the late 1890's, . . . they were forced increasingly, by the fact of race into 'academic cosmopolitanism' or into equally conservative; sentimentalized portrayal of racial types."³⁰ Racial subjects, taboo prior to 1920--for example, scenes depicting racial accomplishments or Black men demonstrating strength and dignity--gained popularity with the racially proud Black generation of the 1920s. Yet the Negro caricature did not disappear, nor did the Negro become an acceptable artistic subject for American society until the 1930s--when the romanticized Renaissance concept of the Negro had been absorbed into American cultural mores.³¹ These developments proved fortunate for the Negro History Movement and for the Black artist participants who painted topics from the Negro past. While the artist's talents developed portraying subjects from the Black cultural milieu, the Negro History Movement benefitted from the further propagation of Negro accomplishments and history.

Two major developments in American culture provided a foundation and an acceptance for Jacob Lawrence's history

³⁰Richard Bardolph, The Negro Vanguard (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1959), p. 181.

³¹Fine, Afro-American Artist, p. 45.

painting. First, the Negro History Movement, inaugurated in 1915 and peaking during the 1930s, provided Lawrence the stimuli to explore and depict Negro history subjects. Second, that racial pride generated by the 1920s Renaissance generation developed public esteem and fascination for Negro culture. In turn, the popularity of Black culture removed the taboo which forbade Negro subjects other than caricature depictions in art. As a result, Lawrence's series of Black history painting not only gained public acceptance and esteem, but they also provide a permanent source of education in Negro history.³²

³²Increasingly during the early 1940s New York Times art critics referred to shows displaying Jacob Lawrence's art with praise. Such comments can be readily located in the New York Times Index.

CHAPTER VII

THE LULL BEFORE THE STORM: A CURTAILED NEGRO HISTORY MOVEMENT

From the time Carter G. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (A.S.N.L.H.), in 1915, participants in the Negro History Movement have persisted in their work to educate the public to the Negro's true role in history. The Movement has derived its major support from the A.S.N.L.H., from Carter G. Woodson, and from other dedicated advocates like Black artist, Jacob Lawrence, and Black historians Charles H. Wesley, Lawrence D. Reddick, and William M. Brewer.¹

The Movement has enjoyed peaks of great and manifold support, alternated with periods when it suffered decline resulting from diverted interest. The 1930s in Harlem provide a prime example of a peak in Negro History activity. By the early 1940s, preoccupation with the Second World

¹See chapter 2, "Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History," and chapter 6 "An Artist of the Negro History Movement." Charles H. Wesley took a dominant role in the establishment of Black studies. Lawrence D. Reddick was curator of the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature. He also taught at New York's City College. William M. Brewer is currently editor of the Journal of Negro History.

War curtailed the support and interest of former Negro History Movement advocates. The Movement experienced a period of limited activity, followed by renewed interest in and reinforcement of the goals of the A.S.N.L.H. in the 1960s. During periods of reduced concern, the A.S.N.L.H. persisted in its educational role.

In 1940 Woodson opened his annual report to the Association with comments that illustrate the disquietude of the times. The European war had caused anxiety about the future within the Negro History Movement, as it had throughout the United States. Woodson assumed a cautious stance as Director of the A.S.N.L.H. He feared that the already unstable domestic conditions precipitated by the War could increase with United States participation in the conflict.²

The War in Europe and the threat of United States involvement, in several ways diverted attention from the Negro History Movement activities. For example, the conflict provided war industries jobs, which promised Negroes elevated status in American society. Black preoccupation with

²Carter G. Woodson, "Annual Report of the Director," *JNH*, XXV, 4 (October, 1940):407. "The work of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History has made steady progress. Not many new undertakings have been launched. Numerous developments which appear from day to day render new projects less assuring for success, and the expansion of what has already been undertaken cannot be easily carried out in the midst of so many unforeseen things, the outcome of which cannot be determined."

economic status superseded the benefits derived from the Negro History Movement and provided more immediate results.³

A second diverting factor was the threat of world Fascism--with its special emphasis on a blond-haired, blue-eyed "super race." An Adolf Hitler dictatorship promised Blacks a lower social status than that which they suffered in Depression America. Moreover, Nazism threatened possible racial persecution and annihilation. This threat especially encouraged Negro involvement in the war effort and thereby permitted less time for History Movement activities.⁴

Third, the patriotism elicited among Negroes by the possibility of United States involvement in the war gained temporary precedence over their allegiance to Black nationalism, an allegiance basic to the Negro History Movement.⁵ This

³New York Amsterdam News, January 4, 1941, p. 4. "The impact of the war on the Negro race throughout the world is already producing fundamental changes and far-reaching results. . . . the vast U.S. re-armament program in which the Negro is being more fully integrated into the full stream of American life are among the important and significant effects of the Second World War on the development of the black race in all parts of the world in . . . 1941."

⁴Quarles, Negro in the Making, pp. 216-217. Negroes had recognized dramatically the racist attitudes of Nazi leader Adolf Hitler during the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. Hitler deserted the observation stand whenever a Negro athlete won an event, to avoid congratulating the Black winner. Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, p. 574. "Negroes were among the earliest and most energetic Americans to condemn the fascism that was rising in Europe. They early learned to hate Nazism and its Aryan doctrines."

⁵Black nationalism is not used here in the separatist sense of the Back to Africa Movement of the 1920s nor militant mode of the 1950s and 1960s. In this paper and within

patriotic spirit encouraged Negroes to believe that through determined participation in the war effort they could preserve what status they enjoyed--if not gain their well-deserved, long-promised equality. Despite these aspirations, the Negro population recalled the experience of the First World War and maintained healthy skepticism regarding improvement of their social position through war-effort participation.⁶

While the American public pursued the war effort Carter G. Woodson and the A.S.N.L.H. continued to enliven the Negro History Movement. During the early 1940s, Woodson maintained an optimistic view regarding the continued progress of the Association's educational activities. The A.S.N.L.H. remained cautious and astutely avoided the development of new undertakings while the world situation remained precarious. Yet, by 1944, Woodson reported that the War had handicapped the organization's research work, as well as its other activities. "The materials to be discovered and examined have been made less accessible, and persons qualified to do the

the scope of the Negro History Movement Black nationalism is a term used to refer to the loyalty and group cohesiveness of the Black minority in the United States.

⁶Quarles, Negro in the Making, p. 216. "The Negro reacted to the coming of the war as a patriot with an ingrained touch of skepticism. Not having forgotten that his gains in World War I fell short of expectations, he was wary of high-sounding phrases about freedom."

work with scientific objectivity have been drawn into the war or required to give attention to matters which at the time cannot be neglected."⁷ Despite these handicaps, Woodson remained optimistic. For example, he noted that some Negroes stationed overseas had sent information to the Association regarding the people and customs of their respective locales.⁸

In 1945 Woodson met the central dichotomy directly. "Many clubs and classes directing attention to the long neglected study of the Negro have had to be cautioned not to become completely absorbed with the problems of the present war."⁹ Woodson urged these groups to learn the lessons of history, the better to understand those causes underlying the contemporary world conflict. He listed the historical evils which he believed had caused the War: belief in racial inferiority, bigotry, caste, and race prejudice.¹⁰

By the Autumn of 1946, one year after the cessation of conflict, the Association still had not recovered and prospered as anticipated. "In some respects the work has

⁷Carter G. Woodson, "Annual Report of the Director," JNH, XXXIX, 3 (July, 1944):251.

⁸Ibid. Woodson does not specify, but he probably referred to soldiers stationed in Africa and other places with Negro populations.

⁹Carter G. Woodson, "Annual Report of the Director," JNH, XXX, 3 (July, 1945):251.

¹⁰Ibid.

materially advanced and in others it has suffered a decline. The principal cause for this situation is that the post-war conditions turned out to be worse than the conditions during the war."¹¹ Woodson noted that, despite the generalized decline in the organization's activities, the Association's educational work had suffered no real diminution of interest during the critical war years.

Two aspects of the Association that did show the effects of the war, however, were general finances and the Negro History Bulletin.¹² The Bulletin had suffered especially from wartime labor and paper shortages. Resultant delays in publication and distribution had prompted schools to cancel their subscriptions when they could not rely on scheduled deliveries. Subscriptions extant in 1946 were inadequate to publish the Bulletin. Indebtedness became a continual problem for the Association.¹³

Although many of the Association's activities suffered during the Second World War, Woodson maintained the organiza-

¹¹Carter G. Woodson, "Annual Report of the Director," JNH, XXXI, 4 (October, 1946):387.

¹²Ibid. The Negro History Bulletin was founded in 1938 to replace the old Negro History Week Pamphlet. The Bulletin provided Negro history information to young people.

¹³Woodson spoke of this constant indebtedness in the annual reports of the late 1940s. After his death in 1950 other Directors continued to relate this distressful financial situation in their annual reports. The A.S.N.L.H. restored publication of the Bulletin.

tion at a steady, if diminished level. Prior to United States involvement Woodson had anticipated the decline in both income and manpower to be inflicted upon the Association by the war cause. At times he equivocated about the loss of support for the Movement, but the decreased interest could not be denied. Harlem especially experienced a decline of Negro History Movement activity.

Harlem's two weekly newspapers--the New York Age and the New York Amsterdam Star-News--both demonstrated a gradual shift to war topics in the late 1930s. News of the European conflict increased after 1939, with a coincident decrease in reports concerning the Negro History Movement. Following United States intervention, in December, 1941, fewer Movement-activity accounts appeared. During 1942 the two papers showed marked absence of articles regarding the Negro History Movement while Second World War reports abounded. This was a marked change from the previous decade when the Negro History Movement had flourished in Harlem. Both Harlem newspapers and the Journal of Negro History had monitored the Movement's increased support during the late 1920s, its peak of activity during the 1930s, and its decline as a result of the Second World War.

Several factors contributed to the popularity of the Negro History Movement during the 1930s. The 1920s Harlem Renaissance developed in Blacks racial awareness and racial

pride, which, in turn, initiated the study of Negro achievements both past and contemporary. In addition, the economic hardships of the Depression developed among Americans a social consciousness. This social awareness--complemented by Woodson's warning that a race which did not know and preserve its history was threatened by extinction--served to arouse Negro participation in the Movement. Woodson believed that public knowledge of historical Negro achievements would prove the justice of the Black man's claim to equality, and would eradicate contemporary social prejudice. Other Negroes seeking equal rights appropriated this belief and joined the Movement. Also persons suffering limited economic resources during the Depression gained more leisure time, some of which they spent participating in the Negro History Movement. Because of these varied factors the Movement flourished during the 1930s.

The contributions of the Negro History Movement in Depression Harlem are measured by the relevant coverage of the two community newspapers. Both the Amsterdam News and the Age increasingly reported the establishment of clubs and organizations that studied Negro history and sponsored lectures, classes, and other Negro History Movement activities.

Yet no single event or activity designated the Harlem Negro History Movement a success. Rather, success prevailed as a result of a growing multitude of events, accomplish-

ments, recognitions of Negro achievements, diminutions of prejudice, and the developments of racial pride and understanding.

In 1941 News reporter A. M. Maillet spoke in general terms of the Harlem Movement's performance and progress. "The steady growth of the movement to integrate what is called Negro history into the content of American public and higher education is an encouraging indication of the receptive and cooperative spirit of human beings in a limited democracy."¹⁴ Maillet attributed the Movement's national popularity to Carter G. Woodson and its Harlem success to bibliophile Arthur A. Schomburg. He asserted that the New York Public Library's Schomburg Collection of Negro literature, history, biography, and prints had "done more than any single thing to impress upon the people of America the seriousness of the massive achievements of Africa and the African at home and abroad."¹⁵

Other developments in Harlem--especially in the field of education--demonstrated the prosperity of the Movement. Through the 1930s, demands increased for the inclusion of Negro history in the curricula of private and public schools. In September, 1941, a Harlem minister commenced a campaign to institute Negro History in the curriculum at Harlem

¹⁴New York Amsterdam News, August 9, 1941, p. 8.

¹⁵Ibid.

Evening High School.¹⁶ The Movement fortunately had interested Harlemites in furthering the cause of Negro history.

Greater attainment evolved from an adult public education program. Instruction sponsored by the WPA Adult Education Program taught past and contemporary Negro history in local meetings. The classes became a popular pasttime in 1930s Harlem. Yet this interest in Negro studies did not develop spontaneously; it resulted from the continued efforts of Carter G. Woodson, J. A. Rogers, and Willis N. Huggins.¹⁷

Young children also benefitted from the educational efforts of the Negro History Movement. At the Speyer Experimental School--located within P.S. #500, on West 126th Street--cultural-history courses resulted in white students showing racial understanding, acceptance, and tolerance, while Negro students displayed racial pride. "These nine year olds, had already studied the habits and culture of other racial and national groups for a course on race equality and understanding."¹⁸ Such examples demonstrated minimal elements of progress toward racial parity.

The study of Negro history and heroes produced remark-

¹⁶New York Amsterdam News, September 27, 1941, p. 3.

¹⁷New York Amsterdam News, January 20, 1940, p. 6.

¹⁸New York Amsterdam News, March 23, 1940, p. 7.

able effects. One white girl, after reading a Negro textbook, exclaimed that "Black men who were captured in Africa and brought on slave ships to America weren't cowards."¹⁹ She explained that many people believed that African Negroes succumbed to white captivity without struggle, and she adamantly contradicted this belief. A Black classmate, his voice filled with pride, agreed with her: "As a matter of fact, many of them jumped into the sea rather than to become slaves. I read about one in a book I had the other day. That guy was all right."²⁰ Speyer Experimental School elicited progress toward reducing racial prejudice by teaching young children Negro history.

The Negro History Movement affected Harlem residents of all ages, thereby attaining one of the prime objectives espoused by Carter G. Woodson. Many Negroes and whites learned of the Negro race's history through lectures, classes, and programs sponsored by history clubs, church groups, the 135th Street Library, such welfare organizations as the Y.M.C.A., and other predominantly Negro organizations. Most of these groups associated themselves, either directly or indirectly, with the A.S.N.L.H. and received its guidance. Individuals and groups demanded that Negro history be taught in local schools. As a result, some schools instituted Ne-

¹⁹Ibid. (Italics mine.)

²⁰Ibid.

gro history classes. The fact that Harlemites organized to demand Negro history courses marked success for the Movement. Such action indicated that Negroes and whites had become involved with Negro history, realized its importance, and developed racial pride and tolerance--all goals of the Movement.

The major, long-term goal sought by Woodson and his followers was the equal status of Negroes in American society. If the Movement is judged solely on the criterion of this objective, it was a failure in Harlem as it was nationally. Yet persons involved with the Negro History Movement were concerned more with the immediate goals aligned with propagating Negro history than they were interested with the long-range goal of equality. Woodson and other Movement participants believed that when other races learned of Negro history and achievement, they would realize the invalidity of Negro inferiority. When education had convinced white American society that Negroes were not inferior, then race prejudice, discrimination, and segregation would disappear. This moralistic concept of American democracy was both short-sighted and idealistic. It does not negate, however, the relative successes of the Movement.

The Negro History Movement did not culminate with the Second World War. The Association continued its work through the 1940s, and the 1950s, increased its activity during the

1960s, and maintains its original goals in the 1970s. The moral argument for equality proved inadequate to achieve those legislative changes that political action accomplished in the 1950s and those social changes that militancy precipitated in the 1960s. Yet the A.S.N.L.H. continued to provide the basis for these political and militant actions. In addition the Association functioned as the prime informational source for the Negro history revival of the 1960s. During this decade Negroes and sympathetic whites revived the demand for Negro history courses and for rewritten American history textbooks which would include a more objective appraisal of the Negro's part in American development. The 1960s coalition also presented a new demand: Black Studies programs in colleges and universities. The Negro History Journal monitored the resurgent interest in Negro history. In 1956 William M. Brewer, editor of the Journal, reported increased interest concerning Negro history. "Integration in education and the new day of awakening and concern about Negroes in America and the world, place before the Association daily inquiries from home and abroad for information. . . ." ²¹ Brewer recognized the renewed role of the A.S.N.L.H. in the rising Civil Rights Movement.

In 1960 the Association's educational efforts began to

²¹William M. Brewer, "Annual Report," JNH, XLI, 1 (January, 1956):3-4.

increase. With few exceptions, Black institutions offered courses addressing the Negro, and many white institutions included Negro studies in their curricula. Association branches continued active study groups, and lecturers from the branches and colleges presented Negro history to thousands of children, students, and adults--persons who had encountered little or nothing concerning the Negro in school-books, except the derogatory and shameful. In the 1960s Black newspapers began to provide "splendid" educational services, while the Association continued to redefine Negro history themes through its scholarly historical publication.²²

Charles H. Wesley, Executive Director of the Association, in 1970 informed members and other Journal readers that the fiscal year ending June 30, 1969, was one of the most productive in A.S.N.L.H. history.

Negro History and Black Studies have taken hold as never before in the life of our Association. They have swept across the nation like a wildfire. Universities, colleges, and schools have demanded courses in Black history, and some have urged the establishment of separate departments of study and teaching with black historians. Institutional libraries have increased their holdings. Demonstrations take place now for Black studies as educational institutions begin a new year. Last summer [1968] witnessed violence in the streets and on campuses, but they [sic] were rarer this past summer. Some of the credit for this calm period should be given to the

²²William M. Brewer, "Annual Report," JNH, XLV, 1 (January, 1960):65-66.

advocates of Negro history and to those who yielded to the demands, requests and proposals of the proponents of Black Power.²³

Wesley further advised that Black history should be an objective and scholarly endeavor. He urged that these historical study programs be structured as academic disciplines and not simply as "soul studies," that Blacks could complete on the basis of their street experience. A dire need existed for qualified teachers who "are not playing the game for the galleries but who have striven to learn a competence in history and then into a Black history. . . ."²⁴ Wesley and other Association members believed that both white and Black historians were qualified to assist in the reawakening of the Black History Movement.

Thus the Negro History Movement has continued to function without interruption from its inception in 1915. Both Negro and white historians have praised the work of Carter G. Woodson, the A.S.N.L.H., and the Journal of Negro History.²⁵

²³Charles H. Wesley, "Annual Report of the Director," JNH, LV, 1 (January, 1970):89.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵For comments regarding the Journal of Negro History and the A.S.N.L.H., see: "How the Public Received the Journal of Negro History," JNH, I, 2 (April, 1916), Woodson's published letters written to him by such white persons as Joel E. Spingarn, head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, praising the first volumes of the Journal. Other articles praised the accomplishments of Woodson and the Association. "Negro Education and the Progressive Movement," JNH, XLIX, 3 (July, 1964), written by historian Harvey Wish of Western Reserve University cites the achievements of Woodson and the organization he founded.

Their efforts are praiseworthy. If at times Woodson and others strayed from the scientific method that they advocated, it is understandable. For it is difficult to remain objective when one is constantly confronted with prejudice and discrimination in a society that boasts equal rights for all.

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