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THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF CARTER G. WOODSON



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THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF CARTER G. WOODSON
PRAIRIE VIEW AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE

Studies in Historiography

No. I

A Thesis Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
"The Historiography of Carter Godwin Woodson"

Prarie View Agricultural and Mechanical College
Prairie View, Texas
August, 1950

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF CARTER G. WOODSON

By

Curtis B. McGowan

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

July 30, 1952
Prof. Michael H. H. H.
Master of Arts

in the

Division of Arts and Sciences

of

Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College

Prairie View, Texas

August, 1952

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Prairie View, Texas

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BIOGRAPHY

The author, Curtis H. McGowan, was born in Danville, San Jacinto County, Texas, October 13, 1926, the fifth of six children born to George and Margery (Willie) McGowan.

His elementary education was received at Mack Wheatley Elementary School, Danville, Texas, and was

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Jeraldine Bradley McGowan, who has inspired me in this study.

He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in History in May, 1948. He then secured a position as a teacher in the Lamarque Independent School District the following school year.

Recognizing the need for additional academic training, he re-entered his alma mater in the summer of 1950, to pursue graduate work in the field of history, under the instruction of Dr. George Noble Woolfolk.

He is still employed by the Lamarque Independent School District.

BIOGRAPHY

The author, Curtis B. McGowan, was born in Camilla, San Jacinto County, Texas, October 12, 1926, the fifth of six children born to George and Margery (Willis) McGowan.

His elementary training was received at Mack Wheatley Elementary School, Camilla, Texas, and was graduated from Lincoln High School, Coldsprings, Texas, May, 1944. The following September he entered Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College, where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in history in May, 1948. He then secured a position as a teacher in the LaMarque Independent School District the following school term.

Recognizing the need for additional academic training, he re-entered his Alma Mater in the summer of 1950, to pursue graduate work in the field of history, under the instruction of Dr. George Ruble Woolfolk.

He is still employed by the LaMarque Independent School District.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

The death of Carter Goodwin Woodson, April 3, 1950,¹ has led directly or indirectly to the publishing of many articles and essays concerning Dr. Woodson's life and his various works. It is beyond doubt that many of these articles have lacked objectivity and were not critical in their analyses. There has been a tendency for those people who have cared to write an article on Dr. Woodson, to be lavish in their praise with far less care to the elements of historical analyses.

It would be presumptuous, at this time, to measure the full effect of his endeavors, but the time is ripe for beginning an impartial analysis of the works of a man who dedicated his life to the task of providing his people with a respectable past in accordance with the latest historical methods of research. Laboring under the apparent assumption, as expressed in a letter to the George Washington Bicentennial Celebration, that the Negroes, ignorant of their past, "have permitted others to discredit their past, which is just as glorious as that of

¹American Historical Review, Volume LV, No. 4, July, 1950, p. 1041.

any race,"² he sought to give future historians the instrument of a respectable Negro history, which, if fused with the white historians' perspective, would provide a broader frame of reference for the reconstruction of history.

Some of our leading historians and social scientists contend that Dr. Woodson accomplished a titanic task embracing the latest historical methods, while other prominent historians and social scientists believe that he deliberately over emphasized the facts, thus reducing his life's work to mere propaganda.

In the light of these hypothetical contentions, the writer, realizing that a man is the product of his time, proposes to make an objective analysis of the historiography of Carter Goodwin Woodson as measured by the historical methodology of the time in which he wrote, with special emphasis upon his frames of reference. The problem for consideration is whether posterity will accept his findings as a valid foundation for future development, or will his historical works become a negligible factor in the field of historiography?

²Journal of Negro History, Volume XVII, No. 1, Januray, 1932, p. 103.
Hereafter cited J. N. H.

Scope

The scope of this paper covers the period from 1875-1950. It includes a discussion of Dr. Woodson's younger life including his birth, family, childhood, and academic training. Sixteen historical books and fifteen historical articles by Dr. Woodson, have been chosen to develop this study.

Method of Study

The method employed in making a study of the historiography of Carter G. Woodson is in accordance with the scientific spirit in historical research which is characterized by an awareness of the existence and nature of problems that may be treated historically; recognition of the functions and the limitations of the historical method in the treatment of historical problems; readiness to collect and submit to careful selection in accordance with the established rules of historical methods, the available evidence necessary to support the statements made in any piece of written history and to sustain the context of the historical construct; willingness to give proper weight to the various pieces of the evidence thus selected; acknowledgment of one's own socio-economic and other biases and the effort to eliminate their effect; determination to make

only such conclusion or inferences as are justified by the evidence; always use the source; say nothing that one does not know from the original; write nothing without producing the appropriate references; avoid assertion without proof; work from the texts; distinguish between the important and interesting facts and those that are insignificant and without interest, emphasize the former and neglect the latter; estimate the value of a historical fact in terms of its degree of influence upon the evolution of the individual group, or society that is being studied; present the facts in an impartial and objective manner; in publishing that which is new, the pertinent facts should not be buried beneath that which is insignificant and of the character of rubbish; and, finally, let the research be long and the results, short.

Definition of Terms

Historiography is used in three senses:

- (1) primarily as the intellectual processes, critical, constructive, by which history is written (in which sense it is often treated as equivalent to synthesis in historical work);
- (2) the results of those processes (in which sense it is largely equivalent to secondary historical literature);
- and (3) the study and criticism of the sources and

development of history (in which sense it is largely equivalent to the history and critique of history.)

Frames of Reference refers to the set of principles which guides him in the selection of his problem, the organization of his materials, and the evaluation of his findings.

Posterity refers to one's descendants collectively.

Elite refers to those who reach the highest places in society.

Generalization is the mental process of arranging objects in classes or of forming ideas general rather than particular.

Reconstruction refers to the period after the American Civil War when the rights and privileges of the Union were in the process of being restored to the states that had seceded.

Pragmatic is used to refer to the consideration of events with reference to their causes and results, deducing therefrom a practical philosophy of history.

Teutons refer to the German people.

Seminar is used to refer to an advanced course of study, especially original research in a particular line.

Archaeology refers to the study of the prehistoric relics of the early races of mankind.

Hypothesis

Dr. Carter G. Woodson's diligent effort to write Negro history is connected with the cultural aspect of the Negro Protest Movement, which has taken various forms since its early beginning in American history. He proposed to apply established historical methodology, and construct a history of the people of African blood capable of becoming the intellectual weapon necessary to liberate the minds of the Negro people, and provide future historians with a broader perspective relative to the contributions and capabilities of the Negro.

His historical works will not become a negligible factor in historiography because no other work is of such breadth, but their values have been greatly reduced because of his frames of reference and his failure to keep abreast of the development of American historiography during the period in which he wrote.

It was in this rural school atmosphere that Woodson was first introduced to the fundamentals of the various school subjects.¹ He was able to master these fundamentals largely by self instruction, by the time he was seven or eight years old.

¹ Ralph S. Hoyle, *In Life of Woodson*, p. 12.

² *The Chicago Defender*, March 6, 1927.

³ *Journal of Negro Education*, 1928, pp. 282-283.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF
CARTER G. WOODSON

Carter G. Woodson was born of ex-slave parents near New Canton, Buckingham County, Virginia, December 19, 1875. His father was John Henry Woodson, and his mother, Anne Eliza (Riddle) Woodson.¹ The place and date of his birth must be recorded because they account for the formation of early and almost indestructible impressions on the mind of the future historian.

As he was one of the rather large family of nine children, his parents who started life in poverty, could not provide him with ordinary comforts of life and could not regularly send him to the five months district school taught alternately by his two uncles, John M. and James B. Riddle, any longer than when he was old enough to work on the farms.²

It was in this rural school atmosphere that Woodson was first introduced to the fundamentals of the common school subjects.³ He was able to master these fundamentals largely by self instruction, by the time he was seventeen years old.

¹Ralph W. Bullock, In Spite of Handicaps, p. 122.

²The Chicago Defender, March 6, 1937.

³Current Biography, 1944, pp. 982-983.

Ambitious for more education, Woodson and his brother, Robert Henry, moved to Hunington, West Virginia, where they hoped to attend the Douglass High School. But Woodson was forced to earn his living as a miner in the Fayette County coal mines, and once collecting garbage, a task which he was not the least bit ashamed to admit. He was able to devote only a few months annually in his schooling.⁴

Woodson finally entered Douglass High School in 1895, at the age of twenty. He completed the course that won him his diploma in less than two years. His instructor, William T. McKinney, inspired him to aspire to higher things.⁵

Dr. Woodson entered Berea College in Kentucky in the winter term of 1897, and attended intermittently until 1903 when he was graduated with the A. B. Degree.⁶ While attending Berea, he began teaching first at Winona, Fayette County, West Virginia, in 1898. From Winona, he was called to the principalship of the Douglass High School of Hunington, from which he had been graduated four years before.

⁴Ralph W. Bullock, Op. Cit., p. 123.

⁵Carter G. Woodson, The Negro in our History, Eighth Edition, p. xxiii.

⁶Virginia Auvil, Assistant Registrar, Berea College to Curtis B. McGowan, April 15, 1932.
Hereafter cited Virginia Auvil to Curtis McGowan.

There he remained from 1900 to 1903. During this period he entered The University of Chicago, June 18, 1902. He attended the university in the summer quarter, 1902, and the autumn quarter, 1903. Apparently he then went to Berea College and Lincoln College in Kentucky and was allowed considerable amount of advanced standing for the work done there.⁷ He served three years as a supervisor of schools in the Phillipines, from 1903 to 1906.

Between 1906 and the autumn of 1907, he traveled and studied a year in Asia and Europe and spent one semester at LaSarbonne, the University of Paris, where he did graduate work in history, under the instruction of professors Alphonse Aulard, Charles Diehl, Henri Lemonier, and Auguste Bouche-Leclerc.⁸ His experience in the Phillipines, and in France enabled him to speak Spanish and French fluently.

Returning to the United States, he re-entered the University of Chicago in the autumn quarter 1907, and continued in the university on a full time basis through the summer quarter, 1908. He received the degree of Bachelor of Arts from the university on March 17, 1908, and the degree of Master of Arts on August 28, 1908. He completed

⁷E. C. Miller, Registrar, University of Chicago to Curtis B. McGowan, July 17, 1952.
Hereafter cited, E. C. Miller to Curtis McGowan.

⁸Carter G. Woodson, Op. Cit., p. xxiv.

quite a large proportion of his study through their Home Study Department. His field of specialization was in American and European history.⁹ His studies in American history were under the instruction of Andrew Cunningham McLaughlin, Edwin Earl Sparks, Francis Wayland Shepardson, and Claude Halstead Van Tyne. Ferdinand Schevill was his instructor in European history, and his English history was under the instruction of Joseph Parker Warren. His master's thesis entitled "The Policy of France in The War of Austrian Succession," was written under the supervision of Ferdinand Schevill.¹⁰ After further study at Chicago, Woodson went to Harvard to continue his research work in history and political science, specializing under professors Edward Channing, Charles Gross, Ephraim Emerton, and W. B. Munro.¹¹

In 1909, Woodson became a teacher of Romance Languages in the Washington High Schools. This was done in order that he might do research in the Library of Congress. In this way he wrote his doctoral dissertation entitled, "The Disruption of Virginia," under the supervision of

⁹E. C. Miller to Curtis B. McGowan, July 17, 1952.

¹⁰Jane Ashby, History Department, University of Chicago, to Curtis B. McGowan, May 20, 1952.

¹¹Carter G. Woodson, Op. Cit., p. xiv.

Dr. Albert Bushnell Hart, which was accepted at Harvard in 1912, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dr. Woodson remained in the Washington Public School system for ten years, 1908-18 offering instruction in French, Spanish, English, and history. The last two years of this service was in the capacity of instructor in English and the history of education at the Mrytilla Miner Normal School and principal of Armstrong Manual Training High School. In 1919 he became Dean of the School of Liberal Arts of Howard University but resigned at the close of the year because he could not agree with the policies of the administration.¹²

From 1920 to 1922, Dr. Woodson served as Dean of West Virginia Collegiate Institute, mainly to reorganize the undergraduate department.¹³ He became dean of the college upon the invitation of President John W. Davis.¹⁴ At the expiration of this service, Dr. Woodson retired altogether from teaching to devote his time to research and publication in connection with the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History.

¹²Ibid., p. xiv.

¹³Chicago Defender, March 6, 1937.

¹⁴Harrison Ferrell, Dean, West Virginia State College to Curtis B. McGowan.

This association was organized by Dr. Woodson in Chicago on September 9, 1915, with five persons; namely, Dr. George C. Hall, Alexander Jackson, J. E. Stamps, W. B. Hartgrove, and the founder. It was incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia on the third of the following October. The purpose of this undertaking is to preserve and publish the records of the Negro "in order that the race may not become a negligible factor in the thought of the world. The association has endeavored to collect sociological and historical documents of Negro life and history to publish therefrom informing books, that the world may not forget what the race has thought and felt and and attempted and accomplished."¹⁶

An official organ of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History is the Journal of Negro History, a quarterly scientific review of more than 100 pages of current articles and documents giving facts generally unknown. This publication has been regularly issued since January, 1916. In bound form, it constitutes a veritable encyclopedia of information concerning the history of the life of the Negro in this country and abroad. Dr. Woodson was its director-editor, and since he was the second Negro in the United States to become a trained historian--almost

¹⁶Ralph W. Bullock, Op. Cit., pp. 124-125.

its entire active staff. So indispensable is this publication that practically all of the larger college and university libraries of this country subscribed to it, and even some abroad. The journal has subscribers in South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa.¹⁶

In 1921, Dr. Woodson organized Associated Publishers, Washington, D. C., to produce books and pictures of Negroes not generally accepted by commercial firms.¹⁷

"The establishment of Negro History Week in 1926" Woodson reports, "by dramatizing the achievements of the race, about Negroes and their co-workers throughout the United States--not to play up their grievances but to demonstrate what Negroes have actually achieved in spite of their handicaps. This celebration stimulated other efforts . . . for the improvement of Negroes. The hidden truth revealed at last to such large numbers exposed the bias textbooks, bared the prejudice of teachers and compelled here and there an enrichment of the curricula by treating the Negro in history as we do the Hebrew, the Greek, the Latin and the Teuton, . . . more impetus was thereby given to the effort to improve the relation between the races by acquainting the one with the other and

¹⁶Current Biography, 1944, p. 742.

¹⁷G. James Fleming and Christian E. Burkel, Ed. Who's Who in Colorado America, 1950, p. 572.

to prevent the Negro from becoming a negligible factor in the thought of the world."¹⁸

He founded and edited The Negro History Bulletin in October, 1937, to inculcate an appreciation of the past of the Negro.¹⁹

Dr. Woodson was the active head and almost the active staff for the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Associated Publishers, and the Journal of Negro History. Somehow he found time for teaching and writing as well. On numerous occasions during the first three years, he deprived himself of many necessities in order to make up the association's deficits from his own salary as a teacher in the Washington Public Schools. The association has from the beginning had to depend mainly on what it could get from Negroes, a relatively poor group, and from a few white people. Six years after the group had been organized, Dr. Woodson succeeded in obtaining a grant of \$25,000 from Carnegie Corporation; later, two of \$25,000 and \$37,000 from the Laura Spellman Memorial, and still later a total of \$32,500 from the Rockefeller Foundation, given under the condition that the sum be matched elsewhere.

¹⁸Carter G. Woodson, "An Accounting for Twenty-Five Years, J. N. H., Volume 25, No. 4, October, 1940, pp. 428-429.

¹⁹The Negro History Bulletin, Volume XIII, No. 8, May, 1950, p. 170.

The association has never been sufficiently financed to do the highest type of research, which is a very expensive undertaking. The financial situations became very difficult when wealthy persons and foundations withdrew all assistance as the result of an attack made by certain individuals and agencies on the association's policy of publishing whatever facts it found regardless of whom it affected.²⁰ The association was forced to present its case to the Negroes of the country and to appeal to them for the assistance--in the very midst of the depression. The response was of such nature that the association was soon able to earn its own income and pay its way.

During these years of hardships and worry, the painstaking research of Dr. Woodson continued to turn out a number of articles for the Journal of Negro History. In addition, he has turned out a steady stream of books, all dealing with the history of the Negro. He is the author of the following books: The Education of The Negro Prior to 1861, 1915; A Century of Negro Migration, 1918; History of The Negro Church, 1921; The Negro in Our History, 1922; Negro Orators and Their Orations, 1925; Free Negro Owners of Slaves in The United States in 1830, 1925; Free Negro Heads of Families in The United States, in 1830, 1925;

²⁰Carter G. Woodson, "An Accounting for Twenty-Five Years," J. N. H., Volume 25, No. 4, October, 1940, p. 425.

The Mind of The Negro as Reflected in Letters During the Crisis, 1800-60, 1925; Negro Makers of History, 1928; African Myths Together with Proverbs, 1928; The Rural Negro, 1930; The Mis-Education of the Negro, 1933; The Negro Professional Man and The Community, 1934; The Story of The Negro Retold, 1935; The African Background Outlined, 1936; African Heroes and Heroines, 1939; co-author, The Negro Wage Earner, 1930; editor, and The Works of Francis J. Grimke, 1942. He has also directed surveys, written many articles and reviewed more than eighty-seven books in the Journals of Negro History.

Dr. Woodson has been honored with the Spingarn Medal, awarded him by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for outstanding achievements in the year, 1926, by a Doctor of Letters degree from Morehouse College in 1940, for his outstanding contributions in the field of history and in writing and research, and the fine type of leadership which he gave to the Association for the Study of Negro life and history,²¹ and in editing the Journal of Negro History, and an L. L. D. from Virginia State College in 1941.²²

²¹B. R. Brazeal, Dean, Morehouse College to Curtis B. McGowan, May 19, 1952.

²²Current Biography, 1944, p. 743.

The latter part of the forties marked a decline in Dr. Woodson's health, which culminated in his death, April 3, 1950.

Carter G. Woodson's *Workshop of Negro History*—
Environmental, Educational, and Social

His death removed Dr. Woodson from his labors, but he was engaged in a self-appointed task of writing a comprehensive history of the Negro in six volumes. Considering the stress placed on the use of critical sources when writing history in comparatively recent years and the limited supply of sources in Negro history, courage was required even to attempt such a project, and in view of the subsequent distinct contribution to American historiography, failure to reach the final goal is much to be regretted.

The extent to which Dr. Woodson was able to carry out his plan will be known in the future. His work will always be a source of inspiration and guidance to those who are engaged in the study of Negro history. His points of merit are readily distinguishable by any scholar, and it requires only a cursory examination to appreciate the value of his work.

Woodson was born in the rural state of the Confederacy, of an early period. His youth was spent in poverty and the traditions of a people's environment. Working in the coal mines of West Virginia for many years, he

CHAPTER III

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CARTER G. WOODSON'S HISTORICAL WORKS

Carter G. Woodson's Frames of Reference--
Environmental, Educational, and Racial

When death removed Dr. Woodson from his labors, he was engaged in a self appointed task of writing a comprehensive history of the Negro in six volumes. Considering the stress placed on the use of critical sources when writing history in comparatively recent years and the limited supply of sources in Negro history, courage was required even to attempt such a project; and in view of the consequent distinct contribution to American historiography, failure to reach the final goal is much to be regretted.

The extent to which Dr. Woodson measured up to the most exacting standards of historical method will always be a bone of contention among his critics. Defects as well as points of merit are readily distinguishable by any scholar, and it requires no deep searching to uncover plausible explanations for some of them.

Woodson was born in the capitol state of the Confederacy, of ex-slave parents. His youth was spent in poverty amid the traditions of a hostile environment. Growing "up in the turbulent years of Post-Reconstruction

era, when sectional tempers were still sharp and when the majority forces of reconciliation fostered a policy of regarding the Negro as a problem for the south to solve . . ." which, "proceeded to take steps to create a position of permanent inequality for the Negro. Through a systematic program of disfranchisement, segregation, and discriminating . . ." ¹ the Negro lost the rights and privileges of citizenship.

It was only natural that such environmental consideration should furnish a viewpoint which would at times play havoc with Woodson's formula of treating all historical phenomena objectively. Some knowledge of the educational background of Dr. Woodson is essential to a critical appraisal of his historical writings. Dr. Woodson was never pleased with his high school training. He later stated that he had not been benefited with a high school education. After completing the meager high school courses offered, he entered Berea College. Berea undoubtedly left an indestructible impression upon the mind of young Woodson, because it was there that he gained a deeper knowledge of the racial prejudice, that he was to spend the rest of his life combating.

Berea was founded by the son of a slave owning

¹John Hope Franklin, "The Place of Carter G. Woodson in American Historiography," The Negro History Bulletin, Volume XIII, No. 8, May, 1950, p. 174.

Kentucky planter, who disinherited him because of his determined effort to free the family of slaves. His name was John Gregg Fee. Fee was a clergyman, who felt himself called to take up the cause of abolitionism and to preach the gospel of impartial love. In an attempt to build up a congregation among anti-slavery members in Kentucky, he was shot at and on several occasions beaten. His synod soon censured him for disturbing the peace of Zion, and as a result he withdrew his church from the presbytery, naming it the Church of Christ and placing it under the auspices of the American Missionary Society. He invaded his native Bracken County to establish his similar church, and labored at these charges until 1853, when a group of anti-slavery supporters of Madison County invited him to preach to them. This led to the formation at Berea in the same year of a small Union (nonsectarian) Church to which Negroes were admitted freely. In 1855, John G. Fee and Rogers started a school, dedicated to love in religion and justice in government, which was the nucleus of the present Berea College.² Fee was never successful, and through misrepresentation he and his followers were driven from the state. After the Civil war, he revived the church and school and

²The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Volume XXIV, p. 301.

Hereafter cited The N. C. A. B.

secured money for temporary buildings. In 1865 the admission of Negro students on the same terms as white students greatly offended southern feeling. In 1869 the Rev. Edward H. Fairchild was called to the presidency of what had then grown to be Berea College. As a young man he had been drawn to the anti-slavery movement. Berea College, under his leadership performed an invaluable service in educating Negroes and the neglected mountain whites. The school had declined seriously when death removed Rev. Fairchild in 1889.

Dr. Woodson entered Berea, in 1897, during the administration of William Goodell Frost, who had been elected president of the college in 1892. Prejudice against Negro students continued to mount during his entire stay at Berea. It developed to the extent of requiring president Frost's every effort to create a school "attractive to northern students who would help to overcome the prejudice against Negroes."³

Woodson received his A. B. degree in 1903. "In 1904, the Kentucky legislature passed a law prohibiting the teaching of white and Negro students in the same school."⁴ In spite of the mental strain bred by a hostile educational

³The N. C. A. B., Volume XXX, p. 355.

⁴Ibid., p. 355.

environment, "Dr. Woodson's work was of high caliber."⁵

Undoubtedly Dr. Woodson never fully forgot his experiences at Berea, as his historical writings seem to reflect thoughts occasionally dominated by extreme animosity for a system of thought that almost robbed him of a decent education. In this frame of mind, it was impossible for Dr. Woodson to maintain objectivity in his extensive writings.

Dr. Woodson's quest for knowledge carried him next to the University of Chicago. Dr. William Rainey Harper, president of The University of Chicago, aimed at the "creation of the most comprehensive and liberal university the world has ever seen and the reformation of its collegiate education."⁶ After his death in 1906, he was succeeded by Dr. Harry Pratt Judson, who continued to build a greater university. Dr. Woodson, as a student in this great university, associated with and studied under national and internationally known scholars. Before Dr. Woodson received his Bachelors of Arts degree from the University of Chicago, he was privileged to serve as supervisor of schools in the Phillipines, travel and study a year in Asia and

⁵Virginia Auvil to Curtis B. McGowan, April 15, 1952.

⁶The N. C. A. B., Volume XI, p. 66.

Europe, and spent one semester at LaSorbonne, the University of Paris. Here, at LaSorbonne, he studied under such scholars as Professors Alphonse Aulard, the world-famed historian of the French Revolution; Charles Diehl, author of the standard manuals on Byzantine Art; Henri Lemonnier, a leading author on the history of France in the sixteenth century, and Aguste Bauche-Leclercq, authority in Greek science.

After receiving his Bachelor of Arts and Master degrees from the University of Chicago, he journeyed to proud Harvard, "the institution which trained the sons of New England's intellectual elite."⁷ Dr. Woodson's studies at Harvard were during the administration of Dr. Abbott Lawrence Lowell, under whose guidance Harvard underwent a great transformation, which included not only changes in its physical plant, but facts, new ideas, and advanced curricula which altered its entire educational structure. In his inaugural address he called attention to the fact that college life has showed a marked tendency to disintegrate, both intellectually and socially, and attributed the lack of solidarity to the system of free electives, which gave students very little guidance, and to the

⁷William T. Hutchinson, Ed., The Marus W. Jernigan Essays in American Historiography, p. 296.

increasing size of the college, which was causing a breakdown in the old social life. "The task before us", he said, in that address, "is to frame a system which, without sacrificing individual variation too much, or neglecting the pursuit of different scholarly interests, shall produce an intellectual and social cohesion, at least among large groups of students, and points of contact among them all."⁸ The first step toward the realization of his program of "planned freedom" was taken in 1910, when a system of concentration and distribution was substituted for free election of college courses. His next reform was, with the exception of the later "house plan," the most radical of his administration. This was the general examination plan, according to which all students who were candidates for degrees were required to take a general examination plan, covering not only the subject matter of specific courses but the entire field of specialization.⁹ This method was introduced in the medical school in 1911 shortly thereafter adopted in the college of liberal arts, first in one division and gradually in others.

Dr. Woodson, receiving his Doctor of Philosophy degree from Harvard in 1912, was exposed to the latest and best education offered anyone in America. The son of ex-

⁸A. Lawrence Lowell, At War With Academic Tradition in America, p. 35.

⁹Ibid., pp. 249-250.

slave parents had traveled far from the coal mines and garbage wagons of his humble origin. He became the second trained Negro historian in the United States. He had become a product of attitudes and tendencies which were induced by his environment, but found himself confronted with the necessity of returning to an environment which he had been alienated through education.

In various excerpts from commencement speeches delivered by Dr. Woodson, he has stated that "when a Negro has finished his education in our schools he has been equipped to begin the life of an Americanized or Europeanized white man, but before he steps from the threshold of his Alma Mater he is told that he must go back to his own people from whom he has been estranged by a vision of ideals which in his disillusionment he realizes that he cannot attain. . . . For arduous task of serving a race thus handicapped, however, the Negro graduate has had little or no training at all."¹⁰

For ten years he remained in the Washington Public School system as a teacher and finally as a principal.

Phases of Dr. Woodson's historical writings show signs of revolting against the educational policies which have mis-educated the Negro.

A situation of this nature illustrates that valuable

¹⁰J. N. H., Volume 16, No. 3, July, 1931, p. 344.

talent is often sacrificed in America because of race. This is a real dilemma.

In addition to the environmental and educational influences that played upon Dr. Woodson, is that of race. He was aware of the Negroes' need for historians who could not only inspire pride in their past, but refute the claims of the historians who supported the Southern demagogues. As a specialist in American history, Dr. Woodson was to take the responsibility of further developing the historical angle of the new Negro or Protest movement, which had its beginning early in American history.

Negro leaders of slave insurrections represented early types of protest leaders. Negro fighters in the Abolitionists movement in the north, represented a second early crop of Negro protest leaders. Unlike the slave insurgents, these leaders set the future pattern on which Negroes based their protest. The new pattern consisted of non-violent legal activities in accord with the democratic principles of the American creed and christian religion.¹¹

After Reconstruction, the restoration of white supremacy violently robbed the Negroes of all civil and political gains made during Reconstruction, the reasons for the Negro protest again mounted, but to no avail. Major

¹¹Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma, pp. 736-737.

forces of reconciliation fostered a policy of regarding the Negro as a problem for the South to solve. The Negro problem as a national issue was dead. In the South, the protracted process of legalizing political and social discrimination continued its course. There was nothing left for the Negro protest but to fight a losing struggle and to go underground.

In this great calamity for the Negro cause, Booker T. Washington stepped forward and established himself as the national leader of a pragmatic and conciliatory school of thought.¹²

Among the Negro intellectuals, particularly in the North, Washington and the gradually fortified "Tuskegee Machine," met severe criticism. It became vocal in 1901, when two Negro intellectuals, Monroe Trotter and George Forbes, began the publication of the Boston Guardian. Dr. W. E. B. DuBois soon became leader of this protest group. He stated that the "Tuskegee Machine . . . , became a vast information bureau and center of advice After a time almost no Negro institution could collect funds without the recommendation or acquiescence of Mr. Washington.

¹²Ibid., p. 739.

Few political appointments were made anywhere in the United States without his consent. Even the careers of rising young colored men were very often determined by his advice and certainly his opposition was fatal."¹³ Dr. DuBois further contends that Washington's powerful control over the Negroes became the instrument by which "the Negro intelligentsia was to be suppressed and hammered into conformity."¹⁴ DuBois' ultimate aim was to crush Washington's influence. In the Soul of Black Folk, 1903, he gave literary form to a philosophy antagonistic to Washington's. DuBois demanded full social and political equality for Negroes according to the constitution, and complete cultural assimilation.

In 1905, twenty-nine Negro Intellectuals met at Niagara Falls with the high hopes of forming a National protest organization to fight all forms of segregation and discrimination, and Washington's gradualist and conciliatory policy, which they considered, sold-out Negroes' rights for a pittance and even broke their courage to protest.

The Niagara movement represented the first organized attempt to raise the Negro protest against the great reaction after reconstruction. Its main importance was that it brought to open conflict and wide public debate two

¹³W. E. B. DuBois, Dusk of Dawn, p. 73.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 74.

types of Negro strategy, one stressing accommodation and the other raising the Negro protest. Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois became national symbols for these two main streams of Negro thought.

The party led by Washington was made up of the masses of the common people; the radical party on the other hand, represented what may be called the intellectuals of which DuBois was the unquestionable leader.¹⁵

The antagonism between these two streams of Negro thought became very bitter, until it reached "the point where most Negroes of any intelligence at all have taken their place on one side or the other."¹⁶

When the National Association for Advancement of Colored People was organized, the DuBois wing merged to help the new organization, and the old antagonism, in a considerable measure was transferred.

One must not lose sight of the fact that during this period a pattern of Negro thinking and Negro controversy became established. This discussion still goes on among intellectual and professional Negroes in much the same terms as at the beginning of the century.

When Dr. Woodson organized The Association for the

¹⁵Ray Stannard Baker, Following the Colour Line, p. 222.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 219.

Study of Negro Life and History, September 9, 1915, the situation, in brief, was as follows: Booker T. Washington remained in ill health until his death November 14, 1915,¹⁷ after which the conservative mass of Negroes, together with a larger part of the white South and the greater proportion of the Northern whites at all interested in the Negro, stood firm under the banner of the Tuskegee Idea; Negro militants and white champions of equal rights for the Negro were grouped together in the National Association; in addition, there was a third group, under the leadership of Monroe Trotter, editor of the Boston Guardian. Mr. Trotter, in many respects an able man, zealous almost to the point of fanaticism, an implacable foe of every form and degree of race discrimination, waged, during this period referred to, a relentless and often savage fight through his newspaper against Dr. Washington and the Tuskegee Idea.

The upheaval in Southern agriculture prior to the First World War, the mass migration to cities and to the North, and the war itself all acted as stimulants to the rising unrest of the American Negro people. Then came the war, which brought about the revival of the democratic ideology among the whites, and a desire on their part to

¹⁷The Encyclopedia Americana, Volume XXVIII, p. 741.

promote democratic principles at home. In 1917, Negroes were drafted, but they often found themselves segregated in labor camps or as servants, in 1918, the turmoil and discrimination of actual war; and finally in 1919, the worst experience of mob law and race hate that the United States had seen since Reconstruction.¹⁸ Without doubt the accumulated experiences during and immediately after the First World War were a most severe shock to the American Negroes and had lasting effects. Then came the Organization of the Universal Negro Improvement Association by a West Indian full blooded Negro, Marcus Garvey, who had consecrated his life to the Negro protest. He denounced practically the whole Negro leadership. He exalted everything black. Black stood for strength and beauty, not for inferiority. He gave Africa a grand history and instilled a new pride of ancestry among even the down-trodden lower class Negroes in America. He traveled and agitated. The Negro World was the official newspaper of the movement. He organized collective enterprises. During 1920-1921 the movement reached its peak. It became very strong, in spite of having practically all the intellectual and organizational Negro forces working desperately against him, because he succeeded in assembling the Negro masses under his banner. He preached that the Negroes'

¹⁸W. E. B. DuBois, Op. Cit., p. 246.

future was in Africa.

His movement collapsed. He was finally imprisoned on charges of using the mail to defraud the government. After his release he was deported as an undesirable.

"He made a few abortive efforts later but finally died in London in 1940, poor and neglected."¹⁹

After World War I radicalism among Negro intellectuals developed. Out of this post war-radicalism a pattern was evolved which extends into the present time.

Dr. Woodson, the second trained Negro historian, could not remain aloof to this movement. Therefore he cast his lot with the Negro Protest Movement.

Before and after the Civil War, there had been a concerted effort to provide the Negro people with an honorable history. Numerous slave biographies, and the continuous search for historical data to unveil the deeds of Negroes in the American Revolution, and other American wars is part of this movement.

"Negro historians see tasks both in rectifying wrong notions of the white historians and in concentrating upon the neglected aspects of the Negroes' history. This movement was given impetus in 1915 by the organization of The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and its chief publication, The Journal of Negro History.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 278.

The moving spirit behind the organization, and the editor of the journal was Dr. Carter G. Woodson,²⁰

As a brilliant American historian, he knew that "any written history involves the selection of a topic an arbitrary delimitation of its borders--cutting off connections with the universal. Within the borders arbitrarily established, there are selection and organization of facts by the process of thought. This selection and organization . . . will be controlled by the historian's frame of reference composed of things deemed necessary and of things deemed desirable. The frame may be a narrow class, sectional, national, or group conception of history. . . ."²¹

Dr. Woodson's environmental, educational and racial frames of reference are easily detectable in most of his historical writings, because his ultimate objective in writing Negro history was to impart to his race the things they should think and say concerning themselves.

American Historiography--Its Development and Scholarly Standards

To understand and analyze Dr. Carter G. Woodson's historical writings a knowledge of the development of

²⁰Gunnar Myrdal, Op. Cit., p. 751.

²¹Charles A. Beard, "Written History as an Act of Faith," American Historical Review, Volume XXXIX, No. 2, January, 1934, p. 228.

American historiography and scholarship are prerequisites. Historical writing occupies a disproportionately large space in American letters, for it has been assiduously practiced during periods when little imaginative literature of high merit had been produced; but it has made fewer contributions to American thought than might be expected. American historians have neither expressed so fully the national mind nor disseminated so many influential ideas as have the British or German historians. Most of the best histories were written with artistic rather than instructional aim, and much of the rest never rose to a level which would allow them to receive an ideological tinge. Nevertheless, it does reflect with some accuracy changes in national temper, cultural equipment and interest. While pure literature was passing through the theological, federalist, romantic and realistic periods of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, history showed alterations rising from increased democracy, improved education, burst of nationalism, lessened interest in European affairs, the growth of scientific method and other factors. Although rigid partitions are misleading, four general phases may be distinguished: first, the primitive historical work of Colonial period, done with an autobiographical or a strictly utilitarian motive; second, the patriotic and filiopietistic writing which followed the revolution; third, the highly

"literary" history of the New England renaissance; and fourth, the scientific production of the period after 1875 marked also by a notable broadening of the scope of history. Another striking general fact in American historiography after 1875 was the tendency to turn entirely away from European themes.

The close of the nineteenth century and the opening of the twentieth saw an unprecedented number of historical students busy in America, with constantly growing aid in the form of libraries, university seminars, historical organizations and foundations to subsidize research. Scientific principles of study continued to receive emphasis; the tendency to produce monographs and to avoid works of wide scope increased; "literary" qualities were treated coldly; as specialization grew, cooperative histories became numerous; and history reached out to embrace fields previously neglected. It levied tribute upon archaeology, sociology, economics, and psychology.

As specialization increased and the field of history broadened, cooperative histories of a highly scholarly character became important.

Meanwhile, the influence of seminars grew steadily. Before 1900 that of Herbert Baxter Adams at John Hopkins, emphasizing institutional and local history, was especially important. This seminar had been organized by him in 1876.

It was the first to inaugurate critical and scientific historical investigation in the United States. Between 1900 and the World War those of William A. Dunning at Columbia on southern reconstruction, of George at Cornell on Medieval history, of C. W. Andrews at Yale on Colonial institutions, of Frederick J. Turner at Wisconsin on the frontier and of Morse Stephens at Cornell and California on modern European history proved conspicuously fruitful.²² Others continued to develop men of ranging minds, inspired by the new sciences of man to which a great series of pioneer thinkers were just giving a characteristic American stamp, began to use their hypothesis as heuristic principles in historical investigation. Whatever new ideas or approaches gave promise to illuminating the past had to be first adjusted to the requirements of the profession.²³

It is generally agreed by all historians that true historical scholarship should be maintained by applying the premises of the scientific spirit to all historical writing. They are, awareness of the existence and nature of problems that may be treated historically; recognition of the functions and the limitations of the historical methods in the treatment of historical problems; readiness

²²Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, Volume VII, pp. 387-8.

²³Merle Curti, et al., Theory and Practice in Historical Study, Bulletin 54, (Social Science Research Council) pp. 25-26.

to recollect and to submit to careful selection, in accordance with established rules of historical method, the available evidence necessary to support the statements made in any piece of written history and to sustain the context of the historical construct; willingness to give proper weight to the various pieces of the evidence thus selected; acknowledgment of one's own socio-economic and other biases and the effort to eliminate their effects; determination to make only such conclusions or inferences as are justified by the evidence.²⁴ Other prescribed and established rules of historical writing suggest that historians always use the source; say nothing that one does not know from the original; write nothing without producing the appropriate references; avoid assertion without proof; work from the texts; distinguish between the important and interesting facts and those that are insignificant and without interest; emphasize the former and neglect the latter; estimate the value of a historical fact in terms of its degree of influence upon the evolution of the individual group, or society that is being studied; present the facts in an impartial and objective manner; in publishing that which is new, the pertinent facts should not be buried beneath that which is significant and of the character of

²⁴Ibid., p. 134.

rubbish; and finally, let the research belong and the results short.

Carter G. Woodson's Theory of History

Dr. Woodson's theory of history is of some importance to an understanding of his historical works.

A close study of his public statements and writings seem to indicate that he believed that historical information concerning the Negro should be used in order to stimulate race pride, and to provide the necessary preliminary to readjustment and reform. His dominant purpose was to turn his historical training and preparation to the best racial account.²⁵ Dr. Woodson believed the Negro "must abandon the search for treasures from without and must uncover those within."²⁶ The Negroes past "is just as glorious as that of any other race."²⁷

In an address relating to Negro history delivered in Baltimore before the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, April 5, 1923, Dr. Woodson emphasized "the necessity for the study of this record to inspire the

²⁵Carter G. Woodson, The Negro in Our History, Ninth Edition, p. XXV.

²⁶J. N. H., Volume XVI, No. 3, July, 1931, p. 346.

²⁷J. N. H., Volume XVII, No. 1, January, 1932, p. 103.

race with a hope of greater achievement and to disabuse the mind of the white man of the idea of racial superiority."²⁸ He also believed that if a race fails to record its history it "becomes a negligible factor in thought of the world and stands the danger of being exterminated."²⁹ Prejudice was the result of our history being suppressed and should therefore disappear when such knowledge becomes the common possession of all the people. Dr. Woodson's concept of history seems to sanction the idea that Negro historians must create a favorable past for their race so as to provide it with the needed stimulus for greater achievement. This type of historical writing often leads to a distortion in the emphasis and the perspective given the facts. This is not in keeping with the highest standards of true historical scholarship.

Another danger in this type of writing lies in the fact "that written history, whether it be good or bad, plays an important role in the contemporary world. Ideas which men have about the past influence their action in the present. . . . Mein Kampf is both a historical treatise and an outline for action. . . ."³⁰ This type of historical

²⁸J. N. H., Volume VIII, No. 3, July, 1923, p. 354.

²⁹Current Biography, 1944, p. 742.

³⁰Louis Pelzer, "Projects in American History," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Volume 31, No. 4, March, 1945, p. 501.

writing often leads to serious consequences.

Dr. Woodson's writings cannot be placed in the category with Mein Kampf, but he seemed to have applied the German method of historical writing to the Negroes' past.

George Bancroft failed to practice what he preached in its entirety, but he left a statement that all historians should remember when writing history. He stated that "indiscriminate praise neither points to the life, nor teaches by example, nor advances social science; history is no Mosaic of funeral eulogies and family epitaphs, nor can the hand of truth sketch character without shadows as well as light." He continues, "The historian, even more than philosophers and naturalists, must bring to his pursuit the freedom of an unbiased mind; in his case, the submission of reason to prejudice would have a deeper criminality; for he cannot neglect to be impartial without at once falsifying nature and denying providence."⁵¹

Dr. Woodson was apparently guided by Mr. Reuther's statement that "just as the white American school child is taught American history from the point of view of the American chauvinist, the Negro school child is to see it from the point of view of the black racialist."⁵²

⁵¹George Bancroft, A History of the United States, Volume V, pp. 69-70.

⁵²Gunnar Myrdal, Op. Cit., pp. 752-3.

If there are colored and white historians allowing this type of historical scholarship to dominate their thinking, the historical profession will eventually be entirely mutilated because they are representing history almost as a battle of dogs and cats. This form of historical scholarship must be attacked because of the prejudice it introduces, and the thought it misguides and enfeebles. This type of history distorts the course of historical narration.

Carter G. Woodson Historical Works--Their Strength and Weakness

Dr. Woodson's historical writings do not display true historical scholarship in many instances. His intense desire to provide Negroes with a favorable past, occasionally made this impossible. He wrote Negro history with the purpose of transforming it into a social tool strong enough to build a respectable place for the Negro, as other races have done, especially the Teutons. An examination of his historical writings substantiates the belief that he was determined to develop this type of race history even if it meant challenging established facts with extravagant generalizations.

The following examples reveal the presence of his concept of history in his works.

In his first book some source should have been used

to make the sweeping generalization that Negroes as early as 1782, "had intellectually advanced to the extent that fifteen or twenty per cent of their adults could at least read."³³ He shows undue enthusiasm out of which a biased tinge can emerge, for the accomplishments of Benjamin Bannaker and Phillis Wheatley.³⁴

Dr. Woodson's concept of history reveals that he believed racial prejudice and hatred would cease when other racial groups learn of the Negroes achievements. He attempts to supply this knowledge in his book entitled, African Heroes and Heroines. In the preface, he states that the African heroes and heroines "of a despised people measure up to the full stature of the heroic in the histories of other nations." He believed this book would provide Negro youth with an enriched racial heritage. An examination of his book entitled, The African Background Outlined or Handbook for the Study of the Negro, reveals a continuation of his trend of thought that white historians have misrepresented the Negro when he states that Europeans and Americans have "regarded the Negro merely as undesirable--an undeveloped person constituting a problem in not being able to keep pace with others" He believes this book would

³³Carter G. Woodson, The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861, p. 85.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 90-91.

"show that the Negro has achieved much in various spheres."⁸⁸ In his book entitled, The Negro In Our History, he seems to have been more concerned in all probability, with providing a stimulus for high achievement on the part of Negroes rather than a history.

In Dr. Woodson's book, The Mis-Education of the Negro, his concept of education, which he applied to history emerges. He feels that Negro education should accomplish the same results Jewish education has "in spite of universal persecution."⁸⁹ Dr. Woodson regards "the educational system as it has developed both in Europe and America an antiquated process which does not hit the mark. . . , because it has been worked out in conformity to the needs of those who have enslaved and oppressed weaker people." He believes that through a systematic effort "the Negro's mind has been brought under the control of his oppressors."⁹⁰

This book expounds the doctrine that the Negro's mind must be liberated because it prevents him from realizing his potentialities.

The remaining historical works of Dr. Woodson's represent this same trend of thought. His writings reveal

⁸⁸Carter G. Woodson, The African Background Outlined or Hand book for the Study of the Negro, p. v.

⁸⁹Carter G. Woodson, The Mis-Education of the Negro, p. x.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. xii.

that he has mainly chosen the facts that can be intimately bound with Negro achievement. They are written in the same vein, and are definitely a continuation of his social concept of history.

In examining the strength of Dr. Woodson's works, it seems valid to say that his writing history with a purpose, released challenging problems to the Negro.

His historical works will always possess some value to future historians. For example, his book entitled, The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861, is a real contribution to the subject, based on secondary and original sources. It has a valuable appendix of documents, and an excellent bibliography and index.

His book entitled, A Century of Negro Migration, is a valuable addition to the material dealing with the great race problem. Its usefulness is increased by his maps and diagrams based on the census.

The Negro in our History, is a great achievement because of its extensive nature. Research students will find this broad work serviceable as a guide to research in Negro history.

His book, Free Negro Heads of Families in the United States in 1830, possesses some historical value because of his extensive study of the census of 1830.

His works' main strength is their pioneer contribution to research in Negro history.

When examining Dr. Woodson's work for scholarly weaknesses they are readily distinguishable. A few examples are as follows:

In his book The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861, he was unable to use the desired critical judgment, because he used neither Colonial newspapers nor plantation records extensively.

An error distracts from any work. In his book, A Century of Negro Migration, it was not the flood of the Mississippi River (pp. 169-170) but the freshets in Alabama and the Carolinas in 1916 that prompted the migration in that year. There have been no serious overflows of the Mississippi River since 1912.^{ss}

In the Preface of his book, The History of the Negro Church, he stated that a number of very important facts could not be obtained because many denominations failed to keep records and others were not divulged because of indifference and suspicion on the part of certain authorities. He should not have attempted to develop such a sweeping scope if sufficient historical evidence was not available.

Dr. Woodson's book entitled, The Negro in our

^{ss}William O. Scroggs, "A Century of Negro Migration," Reviewed In American Historical Review, Volume 24, No. 3, April, 1919, p. 500.

History, reveals certain biases and doubtful statements that should have been footnoted.

His book entitled, The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters Written During the Crisis, 1800-1860, is based primarily upon letters taken from The Liberator, published by William Lloyd Garrison. This newspaper was published by the most fiery anti-slavery agitator in the ante bellum period.

An adequate cross-section of letters should have been used in order to judge the mind of a whole people.

Dr. Woodson's Mis-Education of the Negro, cannot go on record as embracing true historical scholarship because it is a reflection of the author's experiences and observations, and is therefore occasionally subjected to extremely biased assertions.

With regard to organization and techniques of presentation, Woodson probably appears at his best. To cite his most extensive book, The Negro in Our History, illustrates this: Seventy pages discusses the Negro in Africa; a chapter to tropical America. The remainder of the book, chronologically, deals with such subjects as slavery, the Civil War, reconstruction, achievements of freedom in literature, art, business, and the professions, the Negro in World War II, social justices, etc., which are organized in accordance to their proper historical settings.

Most of Dr. Woodson's other books are generally of a specialized nature, and contains the necessary organization to promote clarity and understanding.

The focus of Dr. Carter G. Woodson's work as a historian rests primarily upon his courageous attempt to write a complete history of the Negro from the remote shores of Africa to his development and contributions to American life. The magnitude of the task was appalling, considering the limited supply of sources in the long neglected field of Negro history.

His frames of references greatly affected his historical writings. They occasionally prevented him from properly setting his sources to secure the most unprejudiced and reliable information.

His writings do not embrace the highest standards of true historical scholarship. They constitute a revolt against the contentions of white historians that the Negro misrepresented the Negro's past. His determination to refute these contentions often led to a distortion in the evidence and the perspective given the facts. Many historical events have sometimes been greatly exaggerated.

After all the evidence that may be offered, the fact remains that Dr. Carter G. Woodson will always occupy a unique position on the roll of American historians.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The fame of Dr. Carter G. Woodson as a historian rests primarily upon his courageous attempt to write a complete history of the Negro from the remote shores of Africa to his development and contributions to American life. The magnitude of the task was appalling, considering the limited supply of sources in the long neglected field of Negro history.

His frames of reference greatly affected his historical writings. They occasionally prevented him from properly sifting his sources to secure the most unprejudiced and reliable information.

His writings do not embrace the highest standards of true historical scholarship. They constitute a revolt against the contentions of white historians that he feels has misrepresented the Negro's past. His determination to refute these contentions often led to a distortion in the emphasis and the perspective given the facts. Minor historical events have sometimes been greatly exaggerated.

After all the criticism that may be offered, the fact remains that Dr. Carter G. Woodson will always occupy a unique position on the roll of American historians.

There will probably never again be a similar production, for American historiography has reached the stage where the task to which Woodson aspired offers insuperable obstacles to the most venturesome scholar.

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