CHAPTER ONE

THE EVOLUTION OF THE "RACE PROBLEM"

In tracing the evolution of the “race problem”, it may be well to begin by stating some well-known but seminal facts. English colonization in America has been dated by authorities to have begun from A.D. 1578. In this year, Sir Humphrey Gilbert was granted a charter by Queen Elizabeth I of England to attempt such colonization. Though he was not successful his brother, Walter Raleigh, later succeeded in establishing a colony on Roankoe island of Virginia. The advent of the first group of coloured persons followed soon after in the form of a group of Africans to Jamestown in 1619. From the very beginning the Africans were distinguished from others similarly held in bondage by the permanent nature of their captivity. While it

2 John Hope Franklin, Race and History: Selected Essays, 1938-1988 (Baton Rouge, 1989), p. 132. It is interesting to note that the status of these “twenty Negars” is not clearly specified in the records which only mention that they were dropped off by a Dutch ship. It is through other evidence that historians have deduced their probable status of labour—whether “slaves” in terms of later usage or not is still open to question. See, Carl N. Degler, Out of Our Past: Forces that Shaped Modern America (New Delhi, 1986), p. 28.
3 While this generalization holds true in most cases, there were exceptions to it. In their work, “Myne Own Ground”, Race and Freedom on Virginia’s Eastern Shore, 1640-1676 (New York, 1980), T. H. Breen and Stephen Innes have dwelt upon the opportunities available to Blacks in Virginia in the period under discussion. This is important in recognizing the tangential path and multi-patterned growth of the institution of slavery even in the colony which later came to symbolize slavery in the minds of many people. Winthrop Jordan, in his White Over Black (Chapel Hill, 1969), has shown with the help of extensive records that the extant evidence is not enough to
was not unusual for even white persons to come to the New World as bonded labour in case of poverty, they generally managed to buy their freedom back after putting in a stipulated amount of labour. The Africans, on the other hand, seemed to have been denied any such concessions in most cases.

The second major difference between their position and that of other population groups entering the English American colonies was that the others had "chosen" to come to the land while the Africans were "brought" to it mostly through a successful slave trade. Between 1619 and 1776, when the English colonies attained independence from British rule, Negro slavery spread unevenly throughout the expanding English settlements. For example, by mid-seventeenth century, the

reach any definite conclusions about the status of Negroes—whether indentured servants or slaves—before the institution was written into laws beginning 1640s. He, however, emphasizes that slavery probably existed in practice before it gained legal recognition.

4 John Hammond, in 1656, wrote that men and women going to the English American colonies and "...not paying their own passages, must serve if men or women four years, if younger according to their years, but where an indenture is, that is binding and observing...". John Hammond, *Leah and Rachel, or Two Fruitful Sisters, Virginia and Maryland*. Excerpted in Ina Woestemeyer Van Noppen, ed., *The South: A Documentary History* (Princeton, 1958), p. 59.

5 Jordan, n. 3.

6 A fair amount of debate has raged over the nature of the slave trade which facilitated the captivity of the Africans in the New World. One group of scholars blames the avarice and lack of scruples displayed by the "white" traders who "stole" the people from their homes for the sake of profit. Perhaps the most famous effort to popularize this version was made by Alex Hailey through his work, *Roots*. The other school maintains that Africans themselves facilitated the trade in slaves, as it was a common practice in the continent. They claim that the whites can be blamed for taking advantage of an existing African practice but not of instituting it. The debate has acquired added significance since there is a demand for compensation to be paid to African Americans in lieu of slavery that was considered even by the Congress of the United States. For details, see, Kevin Beary, "African Roots", *National Review*, 10 March 1997, vol. 49, pp. 45-46.
Negroes were considered slaves for life in Virginia. A Virginian law of 1660 implied this in stating "...Be it enacted that in case any English servant shall run away in company with any Negroes who are incapable of making satisfaction by addition of time..." which meant that already the latter's whole life was pledged to servitude. In Pennsylvania, on the other hand, in 1783 Justice Cushing stated that "...the doctrine of slavery...has been heretofore countenanced by the Province Laws formerly, but nowhere is it expressly enacted or established." Thus while Virginia felt the need to legislate on the subject, Pennsylvania could rely on custom to control the practice, showing perhaps the greater importance of slavery in Virginia. However, in all settlements, within a hundred years of their arrival in the English American colonies the Africans had been declared an inferior people in common sentiment, and often also in law. Legal codes in many colonies echoed the 1712 code of South Carolina which expressed popularly held views about them by proclaiming that the Negroes needed to be governed by special laws "as may restrain the disorders, rapines, and inhumanity to which they are naturally prone and inclined." These special laws, in effect were draconian instruments denying them

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8 "The Quock Walker Case, Massachusetts, 1783" in Commager, n. 1, p. 110.
9 Although the term slavery appears in the legal records late, it seems the practice of discrimination against the Negro had almost always preceded the law. For a detailed study of racial attitudes during the colonial period, see, Jordan, n. 3.
10 Quoted in Franklin, n.2, p. 132-33.
...independence of thought, ...opportunity to improve their minds or their talents or to worship freely, ...right to marry and enjoy the conventional family relationships, ...right to own or dispose of property, and ...protection against miscarriages of justice or cruel and unreasonable punishments. 11

In other words, the rights generally taken for granted in normal circumstances.

The fact that from the time they set foot on the continent, the Africans were both expected to do and assigned inferior tasks 12 would in itself have been enough to lower them in the social rank over a period of time. But social inferiority, based only on labour status, could at least have been expected to improve in future. Negro position in America, however, was also a byproduct of the English prejudice against the colour black. The historian, Winthrop Jordan carried out an extensive investigation of the significance of colour in prejudicing the English more strongly than other European imperialists against the Negro, in 1969. He attributes the intensity of the prejudice to the suddenness with which the English encountered the black people. The Portuguese had been subjugated by darker people earlier. Moreover, they were used to having Moors as

11 ibid., p. 132.
12 The effect of exercising control can be the source of feeling superior to one’s captive. The anthropologist Ashley Montagu cites references from the documents left behind by some members of the slave-trading community to show that they felt superior to the Africans due to their power over them. Unlike the later pro-slavery Americans, however, the slave-traders were aware of the raw source of their power and did not seek to justify it in “scientific” or ideological terms. The author asserts that some in fact realized that in terms of natural intelligence their captives were often their equals. See, Ashley Montagu, Man’s Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race (Walnut Creek, 1997), ch.1.
their slaves and servants even in Europe. But the English did not touch upon the shores of West Africa till after 1550. Jordan has quoted from contemporary sources to show how the fact of blackness never failed to impress the English observers as borne out by their frequent comments on it. Also,

In England perhaps more than in southern Europe, the concept of blackness was loaded with intense meaning.... Englishmen found in the idea of blackness a way of expressing some of their most ingrained values.... Black was an emotionally partisan color, the handmaid and symbol of baseness and evil, a sign of danger and repulsion.

It was this marriage of black with baseness which promised permanence of Negro subordination since it was bolstered by economics under slavery but not dependent on it. In the event, it continues as an American value in twentieth century even after slavery was ended (1863). It ought to be mentioned further that neither the practice nor the profits from Negro slavery were limited to the area that later became the southern United States and went to war to defend slavery. By 1630s Maryland, by 1660s Carolina, by 1750s Georgia, amongst others had fairly well established slave systems. But the middle colonies also took slaves and in many places on the East Coast they worked as domestics. The slaves were supplied to these places by "...some merchants of Newport, Providence, Boston, and Salem

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[who] were vigorous and eminently successful participants in the slave trade”. 16 Thus people spread throughout the colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries enjoyed the profits from the trade. The North-South divide on the issue, therefore, was not in place before nineteenth century.

Any opposition to slavery at this time could have been held as a personal creed without becoming a “continental”, “national”, or “colonial” problem in the sense that all persons of the community would be required to hold views on it, and their views would place them in one of two opposite camps, as happened later. The Quakers, in fact, as well as some other religious groups, did oppose slavery not only in the American colonies of England but anywhere on earth. This made them a part of the effort, underway from the sixteenth century itself, in the whole of “Western” civilization to erase slavery as a western practice.

Negro slavery in the English American colonies in the seventeenth century did not pose as a novelty or a moral dilemma. It was part and parcel of the general practice of planting the institution on the American continent followed by Europeans of all nationalities. 17 It derived its value in the

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17 In the 1950s, Frank Tannenbaum began to study the reasons for what were perceived to be the milder racial legacies of the Portuguese in Latin America. The race problem did not seem to be so strong after the end of slavery there as in the United States. He recognized institutional protection of the slave through legal instruments, the Catholic Church and the earlier familiarity which the Portuguese had with people of color as the reason. Though this thesis has been challenged by several scholars, it still provides important instruments for studying slavery in United States. See, Frank Tannenbaum, “Slavery, the Negro, and Racial Prejudice” in Laura Foner and Eugene
English colonies chiefly from its utility in growing the main cash crop, i.e., tobacco. To be successful, the tobacco planter required labour that would be cheap, could be worked hard though no particular skills were needed, and most of all this had to be labour whose availability could always be counted upon. Negro slavery was one form of labour that answered the description perfectly.

By mid-eighteenth century, and more so by early nineteenth, divergent economic development coupled with the intellectual struggle to define “Americanism”, unleashed by the process of constitution-writing, began to shape race into an “American dilemma” to be bequeathed to twentieth century. In this period, most of the northern states found the institution loosing its economic value. Gradual abolition, in places through judicial interpretation, saw slavery being abolished from Vermont in 1777, Massachusetts in 1780, New Hampshire in 1783, Pennsylvania in 1780, Rhode Island and Connecticut in 1784, New York in 1799, and New Jersey in 1784. There were signs of a similar movement in the South in the latter part of the eighteenth century as tobacco was then fast becoming an unprofitable crop. However, two historical factors combined at this time to revive and sustain slavery in a major way by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The first of these was the Industrial Revolution in England. As the textile industry was

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18 A visitor to the South wrote in 1779, “...[the Negroes’], condition of life evidently subjects them to harsh usage even from the best of masters....” Alexander Hewitt, *Historical Account of South Carolina and Georgia*. Excerpted in Van Noppen, n. 4, p. 77.

the first to feel the effects of the Revolution the demand for cotton in the world market went up manifold. The second was the invention of the Cotton Gin in 1793. The gin revolutionized American cotton farming by expediting the preparation of its short-fiber cotton crop for the mills. The result was the appearance of the United States on the world map as a major cotton-exporting nation.20

The cultivation of cotton had to be undertaken at a large scale with sizeable capital investments. Like tobacco earlier, cotton growing also required a stable supply of labour to perform the many tedious and repetitive tasks involved.21 In a

21 The conditions and treatment of slaves has inspired a great deal of research. Though differences existed from farm to farm but in general slaves led a hard life. Scholars have shown that their lodgings consisted of narrow, wooden cabins with sparse or no furniture and hardly any ventilation seemed to have been provided. The fare in most cases was bland consisting primarily of meal and meat. Captain Basil Hall, an English visitor to Georgia, with evident sympathy for the slaveholders, wrote in 1830, “The stated allowance of food to every slave, over fourteen years of age, is nine quarts of Indian corn per week....A quart of salt monthly is also allowed, and salt fish, as well as salt beef occasionally, but only as a favour, and can never be claimed as a right.” (Captain Basil Hall, Travels in North America in 1827 and 1828. Excerpted in Van Noppen, n. 4, p. 124.)

The clothing of a larger number of slaves was so scanty and uniform that it came to be known as “Negro clothes”. Shoes were not handed out except during winters. An 18-hour day was not uncommon.

The status of the slaves was laid down in law through the Black Codes. They recognized the slave as the property of his master and cruel punishments, even to the extent of death, could be given. The movement of slaves was strictly regulated by the masters and any influence, chiefly reading and writing that could make them more aware, was strictly prohibited. Those whites who did not own slaves were connected with the institution through patrol duty. They were obliged under the law to help patrol the areas where slaves lived to prevent them running away. It is pertinent to note that in 1860 only one-fourth of the white population in the South owned slaves. But the
land famous for shortage of labour, the importance of slavery for such an enterprise could hardly be over-emphasized. Slavery was revived in a big way and till its abolition in 1863 proved to be the controversial nucleus around which the South developed its ideas and civilization. On the economic front, the struggle over slavery was a struggle between an agricultural and industrial economy.

As the North imported the Industrial Revolution to the United States in this very period. The northern industrialists were dissatisfied with the forcible tying down of precious labour resources to the plantations. Since the slave was the property of the slaveholder under the law the market mechanism of higher wages was ineffective in securing his services for the industry. Over the years, this resulted in an alliance of the industrial

superior position thus assigned to all whites--master or not--to capture and punish the slaves was a factor in ingraining in the whites a feeling of racial superiority in the long term.

The position of slaves was worsened by the legal denial of their human relations. The masters could break up families and sell them to different buyers. The female slave was particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Since the law did not recognize the slaves as human they were totally without redress of any kind.

The slaves responded to their condition in one of two ways. While the majority accommodated themselves to the system, though their folk songs testify to their grief, a handful rebelled either singly or in groups. The whole period of slavery was marked by slaves attempting to run away even though they faced severe punishments, if caught. There were also a number of slave revolts like the Vesey rebellion in 1822 and the Turner rebellion in 1831. The majority which chose to live with the system depended to a large extent on the priests and ministers to give them hope and strength. For a thorough-going discussion of the working and living conditions of slaves, their responses, and economic issues, see, Stampp, n. 16; also see, Franklin, n. 15; and Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma (New York, 1972), for a discussion of the socio-economic conditions, see, Eugene D. Genovese, The Political Economy Of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South (New York, 1965).
interests with others favouring abolition and brought its financial clout to bear upon the question of abolition.

Kenneth Stampp has argued convincingly that white labour could do as well or as badly as black labour. The only difference was that the slave trade ensured replacement of black hands who perished. Moreover, it has been shown by a number of historians that the major pattern of farming even in the slavery areas was of small holdings worked by yeoman farmers. A majority of these did not own slaves. Mostly it was the large plantations which put the slave to work producing cash crops. Thus agriculture that provided the population with food, and therefore was necessary for its survival, was provided by whites and not slaves. However, during the time of its existence and even afterwards slavery was held in the South to be essential for its economy.

The reasons, other than the economic ones, for the continued importance of the issue of slavery for the South have been often, and cantankerously, debated. The primary reason seems to be the attacks which it invited from many quarters in the nation even during its heyday. From 1800 till 1860s, slavery was responsible for driving a wedge between the North and the South of the United States. Their divisions flared up over many issues and took many forms. The chief controversies related to the efforts of the Abolitionists, mainly operating from the New England area, to hasten the end of slavery either through government action or through private ones, if the government refused to help.\footnote{The divergence of attitudes towards slavery in America was made acute by the rise of the Abolitionists. When, by 1830s, it seemed fairly clear that the planters would not agree to voluntary abolition as had}
perceived as the undue meddling of northerners in liberties guaranteed to them under the constitution. As the new nation was witnessing zealous expansion into new areas in the first half of the nineteenth century, the accession of each new area earlier been hoped, a number of individuals in the North became more militant in their opposition. The Abolitionists, as they were called, based their antipathy to slavery on grounds of Christianity above all else and the dedicated members of the movement made personal sacrifices to aid fugitive slaves to run away. Most members owed allegiance to different Protestant churches and the whole movement was permeated with a spirit of religious idealism. New England, specially Boston, was the centre of the movement, though other branches later emerged in Ohio and New York. By 1840s, their number has been estimated to have reached a membership of 200,000. Their activities included protest meetings, marches, publication of pamphlets and newspapers, and most famously, the organization of the Underground Railroad, which helped a large number of slaves to escape to Canada. Though considering the total number of slaves, those who took advantage of the Railroad were not numerous but the chief impact of the entire enterprise was in actively challenging the institution of slavery and providing an optimistic folklore for the slaves. The Abolitionists brought a religious zeal to the opposition of slavery which goaded people into taking sides. Most of the slaveholders as well as many moderate northerners were put off by the strong invectives used by them. To quote from perhaps the most famous Abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison, "...yea, till every chain be broken, and every bondman set free! Let Southern oppressors tremble; let their secret abettors tremble; let their Northern apologists tremble; let all the enemies of persecuted blacks tremble." (Louis Ruchames, The Abolitionists: A Collection of Their Writings [New York, 1963], p. 30). Though they called slavery both anti-Christian as well as anti-American, they were prepared even to denounce the constitution for the compromise on slavery. By forcing the issue upon the conscience of the nation, the Abolitionists became instrumental in expediting the end of slavery. For reference to original papers pertaining to the subject, see, Adler, n. 7, vol. 3 (USA, 1969), pp. 161-276; C. Ripley, ed., Black Abolitionist Papers, vols 1-5 (London, 1985), Louis Ruchames, op. cit. For a discussion of the ideas and approach of the foremost Abolitionist, see, Aileen S. Kraditor, Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850 (New York, 1969), for biographies of some prominent Abolitionists, see, Robin Kadison Berson, Marching to a Different Drummer: Unrecognized Heroes of American History (Westport, 1994), pp. 67-74, 106-112, 113-120, 121-126, 195-201, 255-264, 294-302. Also see, Filler, n. 19, for a general discussion.
as "slave" or "free" revived the controversy several times and had to be dealt with through a number of compromises over the years.

The first compromise, however, had been made by the Founding Fathers. The American Declaration of Independence proclaimed that all men were created equal by their creator. It also declared the belief of the Founding Fathers that all persons enjoyed the Lockean rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But all apparently did not include the substantial number of Negroes resident by the time in the rebellious colonies. Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration, wished to condemn slavery in the document but was prevented by the representatives from the South. The latter succeeded in having the Negroes count as population with regard to representation in the new legislature, and as property in matters of capture and rendition of fugitive slaves with federal help. It was one of the compromises that the new republic was founded on. This compromise gave pro-slavery forces the prestige of the constitution as a weapon in their battles with anti-slavery forces. Of far greater help, till well into twentieth century, were the views of some of the venerated leaders of America.

Even Jefferson desired the abolition of the slave system only due to his tremendous regard for human independence. He was not free at least from suspecting that "...the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstance, are inferior to the whites in the endowment both

of body and mind". George Washington, in recruiting soldiers to fight for American freedom, forbade the enlisting of Negroes along with traitors, children and the dregs of society. He changed that policy later not due to any ostensible change in his sentiments but because the Negroes were joining the British in large numbers to secure their freedom.

There were some individuals at the time of independence itself, like Abigail Adams, the wife of John Adams, who felt genuinely embarrassed at the clear dichotomy between the words and acts of the colonies in arms. They realized the injustice of fighting for their own freedom while persistently denying it to a certain group amongst them on the basis of race. Quakers were foremost amongst the groups that organized anti-slavery societies, but not the only one. Many individuals freed their slaves in a bid at reconciling their thoughts and practices. In the few years after the end of the war of independence most states of the East made provisions for the gradual emancipation of slaves. The anti-slavery movement, however, failed to make any statewide impact in the South that could lead to progressive laws. Thus the end of the eighteenth century found the American society dealing at a conscious and overt level with its "race" problem. This was a rare moment in American history since part of the intangibility of this problem is its all pervasive

24 This view of his is particularly revealing about the strength of the prejudices regarding the inferiority of the Negroes. Recent evidence has thrown up strong suggestions of his intimate relations with his slave, Sally, but even such close connections could not remove such doubts from his mind. For a discussion on the subject of Sally Hemings and her descendants, see, Lucian K. Truscott IV, "Tom and Sally and Frank and Me" American Heritage, February/March 1999, pp. 82-84.
25 Franklin, n. 2, p.133.
but subterranean nature. By nineteenth century, however, doubts about racial integration had become all pervasive.

Even northerners in the period prior to the Civil War did not seek to justify racial subjugation but they too subscribed to the idea of racial segregation. In most places in the North even churches remained segregated. Though abolitionist sentiment was certainly stronger here than in the South, the abolitionists often stopped short of advocating integration of the races. Many advocated the return of the Negroes to the "land of their fathers". Even Abraham Lincoln had exhorted the Congress to adopt a measure to this effect. Thus, the liberals were different from the conservatives in wishing for two "separate but equal" "worlds of race" while the latter desired a hierarchical ranking of the two—but neither stood for equality of the races. It is symbolic in this regard that the American Declaration of Independence demanded the rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" as the basic rights of all; unlike the French, they did not include "equality" in their list even after proclaiming that all men are created equal. As the twentieth century opened, this legacy necessitated a lone struggle by African Americans to make at least the liberals see that

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26 A telling example of this attitude is seen in the portrait "James T. Ayers, Civil War Recruiter" in Franklin, n. 2, pp. 227-249. Though Ayers was a passionate believer in the cause of abolition, he was equally passionately opposed to any suggestions of intimate relations between whites and Blacks. "When it was suggested that Negroes with freedom would mingle freely with whites, Ayers said, 'Dam the niggers I would Rather Blow there Brains out than they should do this and so would I. No man would abhor the sight of A big buck nigger leading my daughter or Any white mans Daughter Round than I and yet I think we have ungrounded fears'" (p.30).

27 See President Abraham Lincoln's message to the Congress on 1 December 1862 on compensated emancipation of slaves. Reproduced in Commager, ed., Documents, n.1, pp. 403-05.
The southern society, in this period, developed a whole body of philosophy to justify the denial of the sacred "natural" rights to the Negroes. Kenneth M. Stampp, a foremost scholar on the subject, has recognized three crucial myths developed at this time that were used to convince whites of the need and justification of slavery. The first amongst these was that "an all-wise" creator had designed the Negro for labour in the South. The argument was supported by facile "facts" regarding the demonstrated capacity of the race to work and survive in a climate where others perished. The second myth said "Negroes, in contrast to people of other races, possess certain racial traits which uniquely fitted them for bondage, and which created in the South a lasting 'race problem'. The third tradition claimed that "Africans were barbarians who therefore needed to be subjected to rigid discipline and severe controls. Their enslavement was essential for their own good and for the preservation of white civilization."30

The Reconstruction years (1865-1877) also added to the myths which have all along been such an important part of the racial issue. Anti-Black propaganda successfully portrayed the coloured representatives at the various state convention to have been motivated by feelings of revenge, of lust for white women, for unearned money, and generally justifying the fear that the free "nigger" was going to be as "uppity" as knowledgeable southerners had predicted. That he/she was going to utilize the

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important works with a bearing upon this topic may, however, be found in Montagu, n. 12, chs 1-3. Also see, William S. Jenkins, Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South (Chapel Hill, NC, 1935); Henry Fairfield Osborn, Preface to Madison Grant, The Passing of the Great Race, third edition (New York, 1921) and R. Ruggles Gates, Human Ancestry (Cambridge, 1948).

30 Stampp, n. 16, pp. 5-12.
new-found freedom for humiliating the whites. The large number of historical studies which have proved the opposite\textsuperscript{31} and upheld the very creditable performance of the black representatives have been unsuccessful in countering the popular strength of these myths. What was remarkable about the new myths about the coloured population was the partial turnaround in the image of the Negro. The slavery-time myths had claimed that the Negro was a childlike, lazy, good-natured but irresponsible fellow who needed to be governed and disciplined by the white man. Literature, nostalgically portraying the white man lovingly administering the law to the cheerful Negro, found favour amongst the whites.\textsuperscript{32} This image was popularly conveyed by the term “Sambo”.


\textsuperscript{32} An example is the following excerpt from Susan Dobney Smedes, Memorial of a Southern Planter: “When the southern move [from Virginia to Mississippi] was decided on, Thomas called his servants...[and offered] to buy all husbands and wives, who were connected with his negroes...No money difficulty should stand in the way. Everything should be made to yield to the important consideration of keeping families together.

Without an exception, the Negroes determined to follow their beloved master and mistress.” Excerpted in Van Noppen, n. 4, p. 137. Though not necessarily untrue, the account blurs the many pictures of slave families being broken up and sold separately to which many visitors and planters themselves had testified. In fact, this sale of human beings, with its concomitant of separation and suffering, was one reason why the slave trader was so despised in the South before the Civil War (See, Abraham Lincoln’s speech delivered at Peoria on 16 October 1854 against the extension of slavery to free territories. Reproduced in Adler, n. 7, pp. 437-47. For more accounts expressing the sense of outrage and distrust felt by whites at the heightened powers of the Blacks after the Civil War, see, excerpts from Francis Butler Leigh, Ten Years on a Georgia Plantation After the War (pp. 325-328 and 338-339); Thomas Nelson Page, “The Southern People
The most famous and path-breaking discussion of this personality type was the analysis of Stanley Elkins. He compared the experience of the Negro slave with that of the inmates of Nazi concentration camps in that both had a single "authority figure" which held absolute control over them. He argued that the Negro slave did actually take on the persona of the "Sambo" and behaved like the childlike but immature creature that most southern slaveholders described him to be. He further proposed that there could be some truth in the contention, often made in postbellum South, that the Negro

during Reconstruction" (pp. 343-347); Randolph Abbott Shotwell, "Three Years in Battle and Three in Federal Prisons" (pp. 349-353), reproduced in Van Noppen, n. 4.

33 Though the Elkins thesis is revolutionary in its analysis, its rebuttal comes from several quarters. Sterling Stuckey in his "Through the Prism of Folklore: The Black Ethos in Slavery," which appeared in The Massachusetts Review in 1968 has carried out a powerful survey of Black spirituals and folklore to show that the slaves were well aware of the injustice and difficulties of their position. He quotes from songs like "Hold the Wind" to stress verses like: "When I get to heaven, gwine be at ease

Me and my God gonna do as we please" which hardly needs to be analyzed to show the pain and sorrow in the heart of the singer. Fredrick Douglass has also been quoted as being surprised that anyone could think that the slave's singing came from joy rather than sorrow. Herbert Apthekar, in Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion (New York, 1966), has dealt with the problem of a sensitive slave who fails to reconcile himself with the injustices meted out to blacks, free and slaves alike. One can also refer to the chapter "A Troublesome Property" in Stampp, n. 16, for details of the slave's resistance to his condition. However, the Elkins thesis cannot be dismissed out of hand as the number of slaves choosing the path of resistance was admittedly very small. The harsh conditions, the constant vigilance, the harsh punishments, the isolation of the plantations in general were certainly responsible for forcing most slaves to accommodate. That the instruments for that accommodation could, at times, have been fashioned out of Sambo-like behaviour, at least seems to be a fair conjecture. But what seems equally certain is that most slaves did not really internalize these values or else they would not have poured their grief out through music and poetry as they did.
even as a free person continued to be a dependent personality till she/he awoke to the uselessness of playing the Sambo part. But the southerners did not quite react as if the freedman was a dependent personality. The allegations of lust, cunning and abuse of power hardly sat well with the earlier myths. But what continued, as a running thread was the degraded image of the black people. Whether as Sambo or as the cunning ingrate of postbellum period, they continued to be painted in terms incompatible with dignity and self-respect. As persons dependent on white "authority" figures in isolated settlements, the self image of the blacks must have been affected by these myths. The large number of movements throughout twentieth century, from Tuskegee Institute of Booker T. Washington to Afrocentric academic tilts, which have attempted to bolster self respect amongst blacks testify to the damage done by such myths. Before a mass effort could be made in 1950s to improve the lot of African Americans, this self image needed to be improved.

These myths did not die with the death of slavery. Given the respectability of long usage, their authority was uncritically accepted by most. It was only after the Second World War that scholars like Stampp brought their expertise to bear upon the subject, debunking the myths as convenient fallacies hiding material interests behind them. Till then, however, the myths were responsible for the segregation between racist in even a vital organ like the armed forces, for lynching of black soldiers to prevent them from becoming "uppity" and for strict social segregation in both North and South.

The most immediate factor affecting African Americans at the turn of the twentieth century was the American Civil War
and its results. The moral crisis created by the issue of slavery, when enmeshed with other factors, brought on the Civil War in 1861. The papers of Abraham Lincoln belie the widespread belief that the American Union, under his direction, went to Civil War to free the slaves. In fact, at the time of going to war, Lincoln wished only to preserve the Union at whatever cost. It was later that the prevailing view of the more vocal northern groups and the sentiments in the Congress converted him to a more benign view of the slaves and persuaded him to include their freedom in his wartime agenda.

The Civil War was fought in the years 1861 to 1865 due to the obdurate refusal of the Confederate states of the South to accept prohibition on slavery. At the end of the war the South

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34 In his message to the Congress, meeting in a special session, the President succinctly summarized the issues at stake. He said:

In this act [of rebellion], discarding all else, they [the confederates] have forced upon the country, the distinct issue: 'Immediate dissolution, or blood'.... And this issue...presents to the whole family of man, the question, whether a constitutional republic, or a democracy...can, or cannot, maintain its territorial integrity, against its own domestic foes.


35 Till the 1960s, the causes of the Civil War were generally traced by historians to the extremely divergent world views developed by the northern and southern societies. The most important analysis in this vein was perhaps the one presented by Frederick Jackson Turner in The Significance of Sections in American History (New York, 1932). In the 1960s, this "one-dimensional" view, as the critics described it, came under attack from scholars adopting a more diverse view using the tools of social sciences. Joel H. Silby was an important scholar who exhorted historians to examine issues like racism, religious conflicts and partisanship for a richer version of the causes of the war (Joel H. Silby, "The Civil War Synthesis in American Political History" in Robert P. Swierenga, ed. Beyond the Civil War Synthesis: Political
stood defeated, at least on the battlefield. The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 freed all slaves and ended slavery at the stroke of a pen. Between 1865 and 1867 the Congress of the United States adopted three amendments to the constitution which revolutionized the legal status of the Blacks in America. By the first of these amendments slavery was abolished in America. The second and third guaranteed citizenship and suffrage to the community. However, it soon became clear that the South had given in on the battlefield only because it could not hold out any longer. Reports on the conditions of the time bear out the view of Professor Franklin that there was no conversion of the southern hearts to a different ideology. The remainder of the nineteenth century witnessed a war of attrition more wearying for the nation than the armed conflict which had

*Essays of the Civil War Era* [Westport, CT, 1975]). This school has been fairly successful in showing, through tools like election result analyses, that a variety of factors weighed in with the voters in the period prior to the war and sometimes they had nothing to do with slavery. In 1974, however, Eric Foner, in his "The Causes of the American Civil War" [reprinted in Swierenga, ed., *Beyond the Civil War*] disagreed with the substituting of "one-dimensional 'religious man'" with the "economic man" as the new historians were doing. He insisted that the war was certainly a conflict to decide the "future of the nation". The conflict continues seemingly depending on the viewpoint of the historian and both schools seem to offer evidence to enrich the understanding of the period.

36 Franklin, n. 2, p. 140. A good example is furnished by Randolph Abbott Shotwell, a minister's son from North Carolina, who fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. He wrote after the war about the aristocracy in his town:"All of this class were true as steel to the South during the War, and in no single instance that I am aware of have since deserted the faith for which we fought." (Excerpted in Van Noppen, n. 4, p.156). Though, admittedly the view of an individual, in conjunction with the later events which relegated the Negroes to the lowest rung of the southern society in the 1880s, this picture may be considered fairly accurate testimony.
preceded it. The Radicals in the Congress summoning the constitution to their moral aid, helped by the persevering Abolitionists, struggled to define the content of the northern victory in terms of institutional arrangements guaranteeing real freedom to the black men. The Democrats and a number of southerners, on the other hand, fought to reerect the ante-bellum social code, subordinating all Blacks to all whites on racial grounds in fact if not in words.

The end result as witnessed at the end of the century was the definite death of the plantation system and of slavery as a form of labour in USA. But the degradation of an inferior status in society for black people persisted and they were further forced to find work to earn a living which was not always easy

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37 This entire period was marked by cycles of development favouring the “Black” and the “White” causes alternatively. Between 1865 and 1867, the administrations of Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson adopted a conciliatory attitude toward the defeated states hoping to stamp out treason from southern hearts rather than focus on mitigating the lot of the slaves. They trusted to time to achieve the latter. The period from 1867 to 1877 is generally known as the era of Radical Reconstruction which was driven by the Congress rather than the presidency. It secured the vote for the freedmen and was remarkable for a number of state conventions with Negro participation. By 1877, however, the so-called Radical Reconstruction had simmered to an end and power was back in the hands of more fiercely pro-white Democrats with most of the laws and institutions of the preceding period failing to survive the change. The factors responsible may briefly be stated as: the determined opposition from whites and the consequent lawlessness; the desire of the northern industrialists for quieter markets in the South; the advent of a large number of European migrants to swell the ranks of industrial labour reducing the need to induct the Negro in that role; the bad name given to the Reconstruction efforts by the northern and southern opportunists known as the “carpetbaggers” and the “scalawags”. The literature on the period is rich and some of the important works are: W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York, 1964); Eli Ginzberg and Alfred S. Eichner, *The Troublesome Presence* (London, 1964); Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro in Our History* (Washington, DC, 1922); Adler, n.7, vol. 2, pp. 216-94.
due to the prevalent antipathy of whites who held them responsible for the war and their humiliation. Moreover, the failure of Radical Reconstruction meant that the African American community was left with very little resources of any kind and no further help on a large scale could be expected from the government. The African Americans found themselves forced to live in conditions reminiscent of the slavery days. Once the Democrats came back to power in the 1870s, they began to erect legal fences to hedge in the new-found freedom of the community. These were called the Jim Crow laws. In effect they were newer versions of the older black codes with the coercive power of the old master now vesting in the white community and the state.38

In the economic field it was that the African Americans suffered the greatest disillusionment. Though the North had disregarded the appeal of the South that the abolition of slavery would be a violation of its sacred property rights, it was not willing to go further. The famous Congressman, Thaddeus Stevens presented the Congress with the plan of breaking up the former plantations and dividing the land amongst the freedmen.39 But the North, afraid of opening the floodgates to government intervention in property matters, declined to intervene. This was a great setback as the freedmen were forced


to go back to their old masters in most cases for work. The sharecropping system which resulted was a rude caricature of the old plantation with the freedom of the slave existing mostly on paper. Together with Jim Crow, the economic arrangements produced an almost total segregation of population along racial lines wherein the African Americans were again at the bottom of society.

The American society thus at the turn of the century was marked by racial segregation. As a result, though the humanity of the coloured person was no longer denied, her/his individuality still was. A whole gamut of privileges and opportunities remained out of bounds for the community simply due to their race. The white society continued to view them as a group rather than as individuals who may differ from the stereotypes. The result was again the emergence of a spokesman, recognized by whites, who preached accommodation at least for the time being. This person was Booker T. Washington. A former slave, Washington taught the former slaves to rise by the dint of hard work and set up the famous Tuskegee Institute to teach industrial, in reality vocational skills, to Blacks. He was approved of by the whites since he did not threaten the status quo. Opposed to him was the scholar, W. E. B. DuBois, who based his appeal upon the morals embedded in American Revolution and Christianity. He followed the path of rebels of old while Washington was close to the position of the accommodationists of slavery days. But in the repetition of this very pattern was reflected the continuation of old racial arrangements though in a new garb, howsoever much, the famous Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the US constitution emphasized their
liberation, their equality and their voting rights, the black men and women continued to remain a highly neglected segment of American society.

It is in this context that the racial problem of America began casting its long shadow over the coming years of the twentieth century. The prominent black leaders, such as W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey and William Trotter would soon launch the movements against segregation, discrimination and related social evils. Part of the twentieth century would also witness agitations and reform movements in the form of Niagara movement, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), National Association for Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Urban League. They all manifested the frustration of the black population against the white majority.

In their struggle to realize the American Dream, the African Americans found themselves operating in an intellectual and empirical context which impacted on the racial issues as much as the legacy of slavery and Civil War and so could not be left out of reckoning. Their approaches were in reaction to the imperatives of their national context.