

“Recognition, Respectability, and Loyalty: The Quest for Civility Among Black Churches,” in *New Day Begun: Black Churches, Public Influences, and American Civic Culture*, Edited by R. Drew Smith, Duke University Press, 2003.

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Introduction and Overview

Historically, the overwhelming majority of African-Americans have been ensconced in the morals and manners of American civil society without the benefits of its social and political merits. The most loyal (and at times the most reverent) allegiance to constitutional faith¹ and the most vigorous defense of American civil life have come from its benighted sons and daughters who have been denied access to participation and benefits of these practices. This contradiction is at once a statement about the hypocrisy and disloyalty of a nation that has continually uplifted the ideals of democratic society as attainable to those who play by its moral rules and customs. It is also a damning commentary on the anguished dilemma of African-Americans who have had to deal with the psychosocial dynamics of civility in respect to public life and political participation.

The black church is at the center of this portraiture of misplaced loyalties and reverence. More than any other institution in American society, the black church has demonstrated what political scientist Frederick C. Harris calls *the dualistic orientation of oppositional civic culture*. Despite the ways in which black church life and practices mirror and reinforce the conflicting loyalties of faith and nation, these faithful civil practitioners have been able to bridge the relationship between their

internal religiosity and unrewarded civility into political organizing and participation.² The roots of these practices, as they relate to civility, can be best understood by examining the historical entrapments of race and ideology within the American civil context and identifying the discursive formations that represent the broad and often conflicting practices of civility in black life. These discursive formations, it will be argued, provide heuristic instruments that allow us to look at the sources of conflicting social practices and to identify ways in which acts of civility may serve as *social capital* and transforming praxis within social and political spheres of influence.

Civility, as understood within the Black Church tradition, is both problematic and redemptive.³ It is problematic because of its historical roots in what has been variously described as *the American dilemma*, i.e., the problem of *doubleness* in African-American history and culture. It is redemptive because black churches have dealt with the problematic in ways that have also produced three underlying social practices that informed a transformative praxis that has sought the best in American democratic idealism. These three practices, *recognition*, *respectability*, and *loyalty*, respectively, have been the cornerstones of African-American strivings within a society that has misnamed, disrespected, and disenfranchised African-Americans in civic life. Nonetheless because of the ironic, even paradoxical manner in which black churches have continued to maintain their loyalty to a system that has historically abused their commitment, I am suggesting a theological re-evaluation of our public commitments in light of these three underlying practices.

The operative assumption throughout this essay is that black churches, by virtue of their allegiance to democratic idealism and long-standing practice of civility as a means of accessing the social rewards and benefits of civil society, have invested largely in *social capital*. But their investments have often been disallowed or manipulated in ways that have rendered them ineffectual and non-negotiable in political life. Nonetheless, the practice of civility is a *good* in and of itself; and its benefits extend beyond the political sphere. Civility, in black churches, and in African-American life generally, provides the moral and spiritual infrastructure that makes its *own* community life possible. Furthermore, civility as subversive speech and action provides the moral and spiritual material that sustains its place within political life and public discourse. Because of black churches' long-standing commitment to American democratic society and their commitment to civility as normative for participation in public life and polity, it is necessary to inquire regarding its theological rationale for participation in civil life. The church, unlike other social institutions, claims loyalty to a sphere of influence and being beyond the political. Its inner life and practices point to a higher value than the political. Black churches, variously constructed and sanctioned, claim loyalty to God as the highest value and source for their participation in public life. How, then, might civility in black church life and practices be explored as an historical, political, and theological phenomenon without violating its *raison d'être*?

The approach in this analysis is first to inquire concerning black churches' socio-historical entrapment in race and ideology expressed most profoundly in the language of *the American dilemma* and to explore the genesis of civility in black churches as a post-

bellum phenomenon. Secondly, we will examine the role of education in inculcating certain habits and practices that conspired with the ideology of race that promoted patriarchal formulations and race-management as primary moral grammatical expressions of civility among black elites, including black clerical leadership. The historical implications of this white-sponsored and politically manipulated moral training found creative resonance with the psychosocial need among freed men and women for recognition, respectability, and loyalty. Finally, a brief proposal for a theological rationale for civility among black churches that is subversive and transformative is offered as a prolegomenon to a larger effort in process.

The Quest for Civility

The quest for civility is a popular subject in various media and discussions about the decline and renewal of community in American society. Civility as intellectual discourse has received increased attention since the publication of Stephen Carter's popular treatise by the same name.⁴ The publication of Carter's work coincided with the publication of *A Call to Civil Society: Why Democracy Needs Moral Truths*⁵ by The Council on Civil Society chaired by Jean Bethke Elshtain of the University of Chicago, which was also home to yet another distinguished scholar concerned with civility as an intellectual and practical discipline, the late Edward Shils.⁶ The subject matter of civility, however, has been the matter of serious intellectual debate preceding the rise of the nation-state.⁷

In American civic life, our earliest progenitors found social and political merit in practicing civility. Fourteen year-old George Washington is reported to have copied

from a seventeenth-century English translation of a sixteenth century French book of manners for what later became his *Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and in Conversation*.⁸ Civility, as a quest for social dignity and political reward, promised its most loyal practitioners a place within democratic polity, but for those who failed to abide by the rules or who by virtue of race, ethnicity, gender, class, or sexual lifestyles were deemed unfit for civil society, the etiquette, manners, and ways of civility were punitive and damning.

Civility, Civil Society, Civic Life, and Civic Capacity

Civility is used in a variety of contexts often masking complex historical, sociological and methodological issues. Civility in common usage refers to a set of manners, certain etiquettes and social graces that are rooted in specific class orientations and moral sensibilities.⁹ Civility, however, does not refer to simply etiquette, manners, and social graces, but is inclusive of *social capital* and the inherent benefits accrued by these *networks of reciprocity*. Civility also has to do with the individual's social dignity within that system. In the following discussion, the term civility is used as a framework for discussing the role of *social capital* within the context of black church life and practices.¹⁰ I do not limit civility, however, to social capital, but refer more broadly to the concept as *the social-historical script or contract that the individual citizen negotiates within the context of the larger society*. *Civility is the psychosocial ecology of the individual; a certain understanding or self-referential index of the individual's place within a social system as it relates to individual character.*

Civic life, in this discussion, covers broad territory—included in civic life are questions of what constitutes *civility*, *civic capacity*, and *civil society*. For instance, Robert Wuthnow suggests that civil society is “the arena in which individual freedoms, even those that are self-interested, are kept in tension with collective values and community participation.”¹¹ Michael Walzer defines civil society as “that 'space of uncoerced human association' and 'the set of relational networks' and institutions that fill it, all trying to harmonize the conflicting demands of individual interests and the social good. Families, schools, churches, synagogues, mosques, voluntary societies, nongovernmental organizations, and communications media all belong to civil society.”¹² The critical point of leverage in both definitions is the role of *values* (freedom, self-interest, collective good, community). Included in the idea of civic life is this larger understanding of the role of values that make civil society possible. Undergirding these values, or better, the practice that infuses and sustains values within a democratic social and political culture is civility. Civility, in this context, treats social capital and civic capacity as synonymous in that they both refer to “connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.” Moreover, social capital is related to civic virtue in that the latter is “most powerful when it is embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations.” Putnam opines, “A society of many virtuous, but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital.”¹³ This description of *social capital* and its role in creating and sustaining community is important for the following discussion in two ways. One is that *social capital* provides networks for community engagement that can be inclusive and socially

beneficial even for those who are not civically engaged; and secondly, social capital derives its life and power from the norms of reciprocity that it engenders and sustains.

Black Civility and the *American Dilemma*

The Negro Problem

Any serious accounting of the genesis of civility within black church life must investigate the underlying discursive practices wrought by *dilemma* and its civilizing effects upon black freed men and women. Since Gunnar Myrdal's classic study, An American Dilemma¹⁴, the term *dilemma* has come to represent broad and conflicting ideologies in respect to African-American life and culture.¹⁵ The subtitle of Myrdal's work, however, underscored the fundamental character of the issues at stake. He characterized the *dilemma* as "The Negro Problem and Democracy." *The Negro Problem* (sometimes *The Negro Question*) has been the staple ideological statement defining and representing the life and place of the African in American society since slavery. *The Negro Problem*, formulated, by all sides of the male-dominated white power elite was "What shall we do with the Negro?"¹⁶ *The Problem*, however, reached its most significant historical impasse during the last two decades of the 19th century and the first two decades of the twentieth. With increased African-American political participation, economic development, and the large population of blacks in the South during Reconstruction, these years witnessed a rise in racially motivated violence, lynchings, legislative and judicial practices aimed at stripping agency from freed men and women and returning the country to a place that was safe for "white

women.”¹⁷ At the same time former abolitionists, emigrationists, mostly Northern white religious leaders, politicians, industrialists and philanthropists worked diligently to solve the *Negro Problem* through education as a means of *civilizing* the *child/savage* generally depicted in bestial and minstrel images.¹⁸ Such was the social and political context that greeted the African-American entrance into the twentieth century and which informed the moral and civic practices of black intellectual elites and religious leaders. Myrdal’s formulation of the American dilemma, however, betrayed a deeper and more fundamental problem seldom echoed in quiet, genteel places where the *problem of whiteness* was suppressed and ignored.

The Problem of Whiteness

The problem of whiteness had its roots in bourgeois acquisitiveness and was deeply related to religion, culture and morality. Since the "founding" of this nation, the culture-shapers and policy-makers have struggled with "the republican dilemma." The dilemma was how to salvage "freedom" to pursue wealth from the in-bred contamination that accompanied it. The resolution, of course, was to promote republican ideology and Protestant asceticism, the toxic mixture of which had striking implications for the development of possessive individualism in American society and the problem of race.¹⁹ More precisely, the question that plagued white evangelists and the founders of the republic was "How does one justify the nefarious trade in human cargo and bondage through religious and moral means without a scapegoat?"²⁰ All acts of public piety that erase shame and guilt demand a ritualistic sacrifice to insure the *order* of civilization. The child/savage imagery of Africans was used by white elites to first justify the barbarous treatment of freed

men and women, but underneath this imagery was a more subtle and sinister need-- the perpetuation of class and gender ideology. The strife between lower classes of indigent whites fighting to protect the “virtue of white women” and the demonic depiction of African-Americans as beasts and minstrels provided for white elites both the justification and the means for capital accumulation and dominance through race and gender constructions. But the resolution of *the problem of whiteness* had mixed results. According to Toni Morrison, it made the white perpetrators of this madness sicker and sillier; and it made African-Americans worst than both—it planted jungles within them.²¹

Moreover, the failed resolution of the *problem of whiteness* produced “iron cages” that held both enslavers and the enslaved in bondage.²² The duality of the image of child/savage created even greater anxiety for white ruling classes—it also created a *dilemma*. White elites had to decide whether to continue dominance through psychological, cultural, economic, political and physical coercion or to adopt elaborate emigration schemes. White philanthropic and religious leadership were split on this issue and not surprisingly, so was African-American leadership at the turn of the century.²³

Recognition, Respectability, and Loyalty

Before Myrdal’s highly acclaimed study of the Negro Problem, W. E. B. DuBois’, in artful prose forthrightly captured the nature of the problematic in black life:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Tueton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, -- a world which yields him no true

self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of the world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,--and American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, --this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. . . He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.²⁴

DuBois's depiction of *doubleness* is a meditation on the psychosocial condition of the African-American at the turn of the century, but it is even more. At the core of the problematic is the plea for *recognition, respectability, and loyalty*. *Recognition, respectability, and loyalty* were also cornerstones of racial uplift ideology that dominated the landscape of post-Reconstruction activities among black leadership. These civic goods were sought through education, suffrage, political leadership, and jury service based on natural rights arguments.²⁵ Most prominent among these strategies, however, was education.

Education as the Battleground for Social Control for Freed People

In his now classic study of *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, James D. Anderson contends that beyond the specific arguments regarding the utility and efficacy of industrial versus classic education among freed men and women, there was a larger, more significant ideological design promoted by race and capital. Anderson demonstrates the ways in which white patriarchy conspired with Negro leadership, most notably with Booker T. Washington, to maintain the subordinate status of black and white laborers through industrial education expressed most dramatically in the Hampton-Tuskegee Model. Critical to Anderson's analysis is the formation of an alliance of Northern white philanthropists, politicians, religious leaders and industrialists who met in secretive meetings with the landed gentry of the South from 1899-1901; and later forged a campaign for southern education from 1901-1914 in order to insure the perpetuation of hegemonic practices of the planter's class. At stake in this alliance was the resolution of two contending ideologies on *the Negro Problem*. One was the proposal offered by northern and southern religious and social leaders for universal education as a substitute for older and cruder methods of socialization and control.²⁶ The resolution of this dilemma for those on all sides was universal education, but with an important caveat, freed people would benefit best from industrial education based on the Hampton Model.²⁷

Key to the success of this campaign was collaboration with Negro leadership. Before Booker T. Washington and W. E.B. DuBois became the popular representatives of industrial versus classical education between freed people, the ideological die was cast by the growing white resistance to a literate black leadership through the work of General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, the founder and principal of the Hampton Normal and

Agricultural Institute. Armstrong believed that political participation by literate black leadership spelled the death of the South as an economic force, and that with the failure of the South, the economic stability of the nation. His solution was to insure that freed men and women would maintain a labor force for the agricultural wealth of the South. His strategy was to train a generation of trained laborers who would teach the values of hard work, thrift, and subservience to other blacks. His pedagogy reinforced belief in Black subordination to the planter class ideology of minstrelsy and infantilism, i.e. an educated black leadership was detrimental to the political economy of the South. He found his perfect pupil in one Booker T. Washington.

The dilemma is hardly resolved; it still exists at the heart of African-American life and practices and has far reaching implications for the ways in which African-American leaders understand and participate in civic life. In recent years a number of scholars working in critical race theory and in historical, literary, cultural, multicultural, philosophical studies have addressed the problematic in other terms.²⁸ Most relevant to the purposes of the present discussion is the treatment afforded by cultural critics who ask the question of *dilemma* or *doubleness* as it pertains to binary oppositions in black life that grow out of adaptation to a North Atlantic aesthetic. These studies seek to understand the ways in which attachment to the heroic ideal of the European aesthete prevents and further complicates progressive critiques and strategies for agency and peoplehood. Preoccupation with *dilemma* as a one-dimensional causal phenomenon is unproductive and akin to riding two horses galloping in different directions, which is a strain on the anatomy. More progressive

critiques look at the question of *dilemma* in respect to macro economic and political variables and their relationship to cultural meanings.

Education, Uplift Ideology and their Civilizing Effects

Broadly speaking, education among freed persons was utilized as a means of racial uplift, but it had the paradoxical advantage of inculcating certain habits and practices that encouraged bourgeois manners and morals.²⁹ The civilizing influences of education, despite great ideological divides as to which type was most effective for uplift, had much the same impact on recognition, respect, and loyalty to democratic values. Black intellectuals and race leaders such as Ida B. Wells, Anna Julia Cooper, W. E. B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, Thomas T. Fortune, and Mary Church Terrell all embraced the polite and gentle pursuits of bourgeois morals embodied in *thrift, industry, self-control, piety, temperance, and the work ethic*—all necessary, they believed, for successful citizenship and economic independence. Kevin Gaines adds, “[E]ducation of the freedpeople was often tied to moral evolution and industrial training rather than citizenship and political independence.”³⁰ Gaines’s observation is important in that it demonstrates the ways in which discursive formations provide the means for the articulation of moral languages that over time become distinct from habits and practices that were originally related to or assumed to be related to the historical project of their discursive features—in this case to the ideology of racial uplift.

Black elite ideology of racial uplift was accompanied by a specific moral vocabulary, born of the rigors of slavery and Jim Crow, but in its most basic

formulation it was a language that sought recognition, respectability, and loyalty to an ideal embodied in democratic life and practices. Furthermore, the moral vocabulary of black elites evolved over time to embrace a bourgeois worldview that promoted self-reliance and social egalitarianism. This worldview proved to have complex and aggravating features that impacted ways in which black people, especially black churches understand civility.

The ideological divide in the education of freed people, industrial *versus* classical, was symptomatic of a deeper fissure between self-reliance and social egalitarianism, reflected most radically in accommodationist stance of Booker T. Washington and protest discourse of W.E. B. DuBois. Even more was at stake in this division—self-reliance and social egalitarianism also had specific gender and politico-economic alliances. Gaines suggests, “[R]acial uplift, in order to function ultimately depended on the recognition of the other, namely those often contemptuous whites and insubordinate blacks. And racial uplift ideology seemed to function best for those of its adherents who had internalized the language of patriarchal power.”³¹

Nonspecificity and Erasure of Female Agency

Joy James’s critique of patriarchal power among black elites provides insight into the moral discourse that perpetuated itself beyond its distinct discursive formation and mission. According to James, two poles of intellectuals represent black leadership: *instrumental and consensus building*. The instrumental leader according to James is primarily functional and administrative, whereas consensus-building leaders are

concerned with speech and agreement. Both mark two distinct, yet related modalities of leadership and moral perspectives. Both modalities are necessary for effective leadership in African-American life and practice, yet the most popular form is *consensus building* because at the heart of its discourse are democratic values. On the other hand *instrumental leaders* are concerned with institutions and more formally with public life. The two forms have produced two main types of black leaders—public intellectuals and leaders guided by a sense of vocation and public responsibility.³²

Classic examples of this divide are representations of gender and class associations in respective ideological clans. Paul Robeson and W. E. B. DuBois versus Ella Baker and Claudia Jones are examples cited by James. James further suggests these respective divisions also tend to promote fictive and non-fictive characterizations of black women intellectuals. *Nonspecificity* and *erasure* of black women leaders are the means by which the charismatic public intellectual perpetuates the divide and fosters a certain kind of moral vocabulary not unlike the accommodationist rhetoric of their predecessors. “*Nonspecificity* promotes the disappearance of the detailed historical or empirical record. In some respects, it erases subject, deeds and events, while simultaneously discussing them. *Nonspecificity* promotes *erasure*.”³³ *Nonspecificity* and *erasure*, as we shall see, significantly impact conversations regarding the role and place of women in black church leadership.

Race Management as Elite Category of Moral Practices

Hierarchical dominance is a key element that emerges in the moral discourse and practices of black elites, male and female (not be confused with patriarchal practices and

self-reliance ideology). Black elites also functioned as “race managers” according to James. Perhaps, there is no example more powerful than the figure of Booker T. Washington at the turn of the century. But Washington is not alone. The hierarchical/functional model that accompanies leadership practices among black elites has direct correlation with ways in which race and capital have functioned within patriarchal systems.³⁴ The moral vocabulary, however, that undergirds the practices is even more invasive and disrespectful of the masses. Gaines suggests that Black cultural elites saw self-help and Negro improvement as a statement about “the moral and cultural deficiency of impoverished Blacks rather than economic exploitation and coercion.”³⁵ Moreover, the language of leadership sought to dislodge itself from those whom it sought to manage.

The Black Church and Civic Life

The Black Church is not immune from the *doubleness* of Black life and its role in civic life and practices, specifically Black church leadership. Historically, Black church leadership has and still maintains the primary function of race management for political and social elites. Gayraud S. Wilmore notes that since Reconstruction, there has been a de-radicalization of the black church in respect to political engagement and prophetic practices. Although Wilmore’s thesis has been criticized as providing a convenient narrative of decline in Black church activism in order to promote the project of Black Theology, with few notable exceptions, the political posture of Black churches has been essentially defensive and accomodationist. This was witnessed most recently in the Gore - Bush campaign and subsequent meetings with church leaders.³⁶ In addition, the

patriarchal formulations of black church leadership and the accompanying race-management discourse have functioned in deleterious ways to subvert black political participation and organization. At the same time, these leaders still function as the hope and possibility of transformative practices in black civic life. The ideological and cultural precedents for black church leadership have their genesis in the *doubleness* already described.

Edward L. Wheeler, in a neglected study of black ministerial leadership from 1865-1902, underscores the problematic in respect to dilemma. He suggests that for black ministerial leadership during Reconstruction and at the turn of the century, *doubleness* was portrayed in respect to *accommodation* and *possibility*. Given the horrific circumstances of black life during white political reentrenchment, the censure of black economic and cultural agency through lynching and racial strife, freed people had limited options. Temperance and education provided the fundamental options of possibility for black ministerial leadership. Education, of course, became the dominant cultural mechanism for uplift and provided the cultural lens through which civic life was engaged.³⁷

Wheeler's analysis points to the ideological sequences in the later work of contemporary black theologians, sociologists, and church historians who tend to overlook the role of accommodation and possibility as twin constructs in a larger historical narrative that either romanticizes the protest traditions of black churches or condemns them for their embrace of normative cultural values that promote accommodation and acquiescence.³⁸ In the following pages will argue that ideological and cultural precedents of black civic life represented in racial uplift remain as essential moral guides for Black church leadership. Also, the modalities of *recognition*, *respectability*, and *reverence* will be revisited as central,

heuristic loci for the reformulation of civic life in black church practices, especially as they pertain to leadership and agency.

Civic Life and Practices in Black Church Leadership

Stephen Carter compares civic life to a train ride with many passengers with competing needs and interests. He argues therefore that

Civility . . . is the sum of the many sacrifices we are called to make for the sake of living together. When we pretend that we travel alone, we can also pretend that these sacrifices are unnecessary. Yielding to this very human instinct for self-seeking . . . is often immoral, and certainly should not be done without forethought. We should make sacrifices for others not simply because doing so makes social life easier (although it does), but as a signal of respect for our fellow citizens, marking them as full equals, both before the law and before God."³⁹

While I am in agreement with Carter's suggestion that civility requires a certain kind of sacrifice for the common good, far more is at stake in the question of civility in black church life and practices. Carter's understanding of civility tends to be sympathetic to the ways in which black church leadership has often succumbed to the suffering servant ideology that leads to quietism and accommodationism.⁴⁰ The metaphor of a train ride, as it relates to the historical experience of African-Americans, is even more problematic. In black life generally, civility as a social and political option is severely limited. In fact, some scholars even question its utility as a political good.⁴¹ Nonetheless, in black churches, because of the ideological and cultural precedents mentioned earlier, civility has come to represent precisely that—a social and political good elevated to the

level of *civic virtue*. In this respect, it has to do with “the rules of association of free members (of society) and so the basis of social dignity.”⁴² Evelyn Brooks-Higginbotham’s examination of the “politics of respectability” signals part of what is at stake in the usages of civility as a social and political strategy for citizenship rights among women of the Negro Club Movement. Higginbotham writes, “[T]he politics of respectability assumed a fluid and shifting position along a continuum of African-American resistance. Through the discourse of respectability, the Baptist women emphasized manners and morals while simultaneously asserting traditional forms of protest, such as petitions, boycotts, and verbal appeals to justice.”⁴³

Similarly, early architects of the modern civil rights movement utilized civility as a means of cultivating habits and practices that conspired toward engagement in democratic society. Most notable among these leaders in mid-twentieth century were black religious elites and pastors such as Reverdy Ransom, Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, Howard Thurman, Benjamin Mays, and William Stuart Nelson.⁴⁴ Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, in a memorable speech, entitled, “The Faith of the American Negro,” declared,

Since their Emancipation from slavery the masses of American Negroes have lived by the strength of simple but deeply moving faith. They have believed in the love of and providence of a just and holy God; they have believed in the principles of democracy and in the righteous purpose of the Federal Government, and they have believed in the disposition of the American people as a whole and in the long run to be fair in all their dealings.⁴⁵

It is not surprising the most outstanding exemplar of this legacy of civility is represented in the person of The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and his leadership in

the modern civil rights movement. Perhaps better than any other church leader of the twentieth century, King was able to forge civility in a subversive weapon in the struggle for equal rights.⁴⁶ Stephen Carter indicates that the modern civil rights movement is a case in point of the efficacy of civility in public life.⁴⁷

The value of education among these ministerial elites was without question of highest importance. At stake in the education of black religious elites was the quest for recognition and respectability. The pioneer black sociologist, E. Franklin Frazier, wrote in his classic study of the Black Bourgeoisie, that among the Negro middle class there was a quest for social status and prestige that developed from an “inferiority complex.” The fixation with social recognition was manifested in the aspirations of the middle-class Negro in puritanical family and sexual mores, which set them apart from the black masses. “But the chief compensation for their inferior status in American society,” writes Franklin, “was found in education.”

While their racial heritage and conventional standards of morality only gave them a privileged position in the Negro community, education gave them access to a world of ideas that provided an intellectual escape from their physical and social segregation in American life. Therefore, they placed an exaggerated importance upon academic degrees, especially if they were secured from white colleges in the North. If one secured the degree of doctor of philosophy in a northern university, he was regarded as a sort of genius. Consequently, for the relatively small group of educated Negroes, education was an indication of their ‘superior culture’ and a mark of ‘refinement.’⁴⁸

Tied to the drive for educational accomplishments were also certain morals and manners not unlike those of their ideological predecessors. Among these morals and manners were the deeper and more problematic issues of patriarchal power, race management, and honor and shame. One cannot read the histories, biographies, and proceedings of black church leaders and denominational meetings without acknowledging the fierce strife, political maneuvers and to use James M. Washington language to describe Black Baptists, “frustrated fellowship.”⁴⁹

Civility and Civic Capacity in Black Churches

R. Drew Smith has suggested that the issue of *civic capacity* among African-American churches merits critical analysis and review because of churches’ long and well-documented history of “engagement of the public space in the pursuit of a public good that extends beyond the religious and social concerns of [their] immediate ecclesiastical constituencies.”⁵⁰ Smith’s concern is with the intersection between church and society and the ways in which African-American churches have impacted specific public policy—or in the larger orb, the public good. An important, yet grossly neglected dimension of this phenomenon are the interstices of civic associations within black communities and the ways in which they have impacted public policy. Implicit in this suggestion is the argument that civic associations provide the social capital and the moral and spiritual infrastructure for political and social movements that conspire towards political participation and public activism. This has been especially true in black civil society. Cornel West claims that

The two most effective forms of organizing and mobilizing among black people were the black women's club movement led by Ida B. Wells and the migration movement led by Benjamin "Pap" Singleton, A. A. Bradley, and Richard H. Cain. Both movements were based in black civil society—that is, black civic associations like churches, lodges, fraternal orders, and sororities. Their fundamental goals were neither civil rights nor social equality, but rather *respect and dignity*, land and self-determination.⁵¹

Without strong and active civic associations like the black church, the moral fiber and industry essential for political engagement among African-Americans are scarce if not absent altogether. Frederick C. Harris has demonstrated the ways in which the civic capacity of African-Americans in voting behavior has been influenced by church membership and attendance. Harris also suggests that internal religiosity is causally linked to self-esteem and personal efficacy. Personal efficacy, he believes, is causally related to political efficacy and consequently to political activism among black churches.⁵² Harris favors a focus on religious institutions rather than clerical leadership as a way of conducting a valid scientific investigation of these claims. I would suggest that the issues at stake warrant a closer look at black church leadership as well, especially in respect to the ways in which leadership in these religious institutions impact internal religiosity, self-esteem and personal efficacy. The task of leadership in respect to these dimensions is both ethical and theological.

Civility and Ethical Leadership in Black Churches

The cultivation and practice of civility in black churches cannot be understood outside the larger narratives of moral traditions and the ways in which leaders are formed in these communities. The suggestion here is that leaders are formed in specific communities of discourse and practice and that *character as* “the unity of a narrative quest,” is a fundamental ingredient of the civic infrastructure that Smith and Harris address.⁵³ One of the critical yet unexamined dimensions of African-American churches’ civic engagement in matters that impact the public good is the role of ethical leadership.⁵⁴ Ethical leadership includes the complex and often-conflicting notions of the role of religion, ethics, and leadership in influencing public life; and how these notions impact the ways in which civic engagement is understood and practiced. At stake for African-American churches in the examination of civility is the dynamic tension created by the need for adequate political, economic and social structures and the increasing void in the value infrastructures that make civic life and political engagement possible. Consequently, we must inquire regarding the critical resources and methods available to enhance the civic capacity of African-American churches through religious experience and give particular emphasis to the place of religion, ethics, and leadership. It is in this context that the troublesome and controversial notion of *doubleness* must be revisited both as a problem for civility and black life and as a critical theological resource for creative engagement and possibility for black church civic practices.

A Re-Evaluation of Recognition, Respectability, and Reverence as Theological

Constructs

I would like to propose a closer look at civility in black church life from a theological perspective that takes *seriously recognition, respectability, and loyalty* as inherited discursive features in the quest for participation in American democratic life and practice. Loyalty, however, in respect to this quest for civility in black church life has been more closely related to *reverence* or to a sense of ultimacy and hope. It should be kept in mind that the quest for civility for African-Americans has been a quest for community, a sense of belonging and acceptance. Ideally, civility as a goal has promised access to this community through recognition, respectability, and loyalty. Theoretically, each foci represents a dimension of human experience: self/personal (recognition); society/public (respectability); and spirit/piety (reverence).

Recognition

Recognition in black life has a long and painful history and does not require extensive commentary here. For Orlando Patterson, the drive for recognition from the master was the basis for the social dignity and honor sought by enslaved Africans—and consequently was the means by which their masters manipulated them. Civility, as a response to the insatiable need for social dignity and respectability, became the chief aim of black church leadership as it did for their secular counterparts.⁵⁵ I simply refer the reader to chronicles of black literature that attest to the inordinate need in black life for recognition from the Other—the Other being the normative gaze that judges, condemns and sentences

black agency to despair, destruction, and death. Whether DuBois' eloquent meditation cited earlier or Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* or Louis Armstrong's theodical lament, "Lord, what did I do to make me so black and blue?" the quest for civility is in its first moment, a quest for social recognition and agency. As a religious question, Howard Thurman captures best what is at stake in black church life and practices. In a meditation, he writes, "It is a strange freedom to be adrift in the world of men without sense of anchor anywhere . . . It is a strange freedom to go nameless up and down the streets of other minds where no salutation greets and no sign is given to mark the place one calls one's own."⁵⁶ Martin Luther King's famous sermon on recognition, entitled "The Drum Major Instinct," is another example of the central place that recognition plays in the life of black people especially African-American churches.⁵⁷

The quest for recognition, in black religious life and practices, finds its apotheosis in the search to be understood and to be named by God. Many of the spirituals attest to this search. "I've got a new name o'er in Zion," "I told Jesus it would be alright if he changed my name," or "I once was lost, but now I am found" speak to the namelessness, lostness, and invisibility in American civic and political life. To be seen, heard and intimately understood as an individual in a community with others is one of the marvelous ministries performed by black churches. At the same time, the black church has participated in the often vicious and violent practices of *nonspecificity* and *erasure* of female agency and voice. A theological perspective that takes seriously the place of recognition would inquire about the specific roles of female leadership and agency within its own ranks and the ways in which churches must not sanction in their own inner lives the related practices they decry in public life.

Respectability

Closely related to recognition is *respectability*. In the construal of civility I am proposing, respectability has more to do with the rules of association of free people (citizens) and with social dignity. In this view, respectability includes 1) a certain self-referential index that recognizes oneself as inhering and therefore deserving certain acknowledgements of one's human dignity in public space; 2) and an obligation or duty to the other to demonstrate in public space one's obligation to the other as inhering and therefore deserving certain acknowledgements of human dignity. Undergirding this two-fold definition of respectability is the need for empathy and balance in relation. In this view, Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot's excellent and creative exploration of respect as a non-hierarchical expression of human relationship is invaluable for the theological task of the black church.⁵⁸

The Negro Women's Club Movement's politics of respectability should be viewed in this perspective as a civic virtue raised to political engagement. Similarly, along with recognition, respectability was a key goal sought by the modern civil rights movement. Frederick C. Harris refers to this distinctive phenomenon as the *dualistic orientation of black oppositional civic culture*. Harris captures in this statement the paradoxical strivings of black church life and practices that combine the quest for social dignity with political activism. Throughout the modern civil rights movement this dualistic orientation of black *oppositional civic culture* provided black church leadership with the critical skills and competencies to wage an unorthodox campaign against social inferiority and segregated statues. James H. Evans has argued that this quest for respectability is part and parcel of

black church life and practices and serves as the theological rationale for the larger question of honor and grace.⁵⁹

In addition, a theological treatment of respectability would also inquire concerning the ways in which race-management of the masses violates the fundamental theological norm of respectability within black life and culture. Leadership would stress non-hierarchical associations that breed and nurture equal dignity and freedom of individuals in covenant relationships that perceive power as opportunity for empathy and balance.

Loyalty (and Reverence)

One of the supreme tests of civility among black churches has been, and continues to be, the question of *loyalty*. In his book, The Social Teachings of the Black Churches, in a chapter, entitled, "Autonomy in Dilemma," Peter Paris discusses the long-standing struggle within African-American communities between loyalty to faith and loyalty to the nation.⁶⁰ The dilemma, Paris informs us, is how do we reconcile these contending demands for loyalty: the inclusive moral demand of faith *versus* the more particularized, and often self-annihilative demand of the nation. These loyalties, he suggests, "represent, respectively, theories of politics and ecclesiology that imply moral conflicts in theory and practice."⁶¹ Historically, African-American church leaders have tended not to reconcile these conflicting demands, but rather acquiesce to the demands of the national loyalty.⁶² Our whole-hearted participation in all American wars is an illustration of this position. Such a posture has stymied not only our "power" within the political scenario of the United States, but has

prevented black churches from authentically participating in the world community.

Politically, this conflict of loyalties has played out in an inept embrace of public policy that adversely impacts black life and culture and renders church leadership vulnerable to charges of accommodationism and invisibility.

Theologically, the quest of loyalty to faith versus loyalty to nation is highly problematic. The dearth of prophetic proclamation within the ranks of black church leadership rests on conflicting ideologies that are at once political, cultural, theological and existential. The elucidation of the web of interaction among these complex interrelations of political, cultural, theological and existential variables is not the task of this discussion. Suffice it to say that the prevalent theological presuppositions surrounding dilemma, exodus, the problem of suffering in black life are not unrelated, but are essential nodal points for further investigation into the resolution of the problem of loyalty addressed above. Such an investigation would aim toward a resolution of the problematic by stressing a new paradigm for black church leadership that moves beyond fixation with dilemma as an authentic and redemptive category for thought and praxis. Similarly, the exodus motif which has played such a central role in theologizing about black political and culture existence within the United States would need to be re-examined in light of a broader theological category which incorporates exilic state of black life both nationally and globally. Finally, the existential state of black people, nationally and globally, would need to be raised in light of catastrophic and disproportional black suffering against the question of a God of mercy and justice. Theologically, the question might be raised as John the Revelator's depiction of the "second death", the theological equivalent of Orlando Patterson's concept of "natal alienation."⁶³ The critical theological issue in this instance as it relates to loyalty and the

larger question of civility is “How can black life be saved from eternal namelessness, invisibility, and profanation of civic inclusion and participation?” The theological response must be formulated beyond *repair* (as in reparations, justice), but must seek a profoundly spiritual and social remedy not unlike the answer given in the utopian vision of the Revelator, “a new heaven and a new earth” of which Pentecost is a divine foretaste. In this respect, loyalty to nation versus loyalty to faith gives way to reverence for the creation. Here, the ideal of a beloved community serves as normative vision for civil life and practice.

In many respects, Martin Luther King’s last prophetic vision of the World House mirrors what is in mind with this projection. At once, in a singular vision of possibility King articulated the dream of the beloved community in which civility was inspired and undergirded within the context of global communion—a vision in which it was possible to see the movement of black life from dilemma to Diaspora; exodus to exile; and the “frying pan” (second death) to the fire (Pentecost). Many believe he was speaking in many languages as the Spirit gave utterance—languages that speak in loving and just ways to the agonizing, yet redemptive possibilities inherent in recognition, respectability, and reverence for an Ideal of community more grand than even the nation can ever hope for—*a new heaven and a new earth*.

Notes to Chapter 5:

1 Sanford Levinson, *Constitutional Faith* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

2 Frederick C. Harris, *Something Within: Religion in African-American Activism* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 2000), 40.

3 The definition of "the Black Christian tradition" offered by Peter Paris, best captures the distilled formulation of the syncretistic perspective that informs this view; Paris, *The Social Teachings of the Black Churches* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). Paris claims that

[T]he tradition that has always been normative for the black churches and the black community is not the so-called Western tradition per se, although this tradition is an important source for blacks. More accurately, the normative tradition for blacks is the tradition governed by the principle of nonracism which we call the black Christian tradition. The fundamental principle of the black Christian tradition is depicted most adequately in the biblical doctrine of the parenthood of God and the kinship of all peoples . . . (10)

This critical principle of nonracism, according to Paris, is fundamental for "justifying and motivating all endeavors by blacks for survival and social transformation." Moreover, the black Christian tradition has functioned both in priestly and prophetic functions: "the former aiding and abetting the race in its capacity to endure racism, the latter utilizing all available means to effect religious and moral reform in the society at large." A biblical anthropology, which affirms the equality of all persons under God is the locus of authority and basis for the moral and political significance of black churches (10-12).

This tradition boasts of a distinguished company of African-American theological visionaries who sought to carve out of American democratic liberalism, as represented by the "founders" of this nation, a basis for a just society which is inclusive and responsible to the high moral ideals articulated in the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation. The specific strand of Black church tradition referred to in this essay represents a long stream of tradition in the African-American community in which liberation and integration are inextricably linked. Theologically, Howard

Thurman labeled this quest, "the search for common ground"; and Martin Luther King called it "the search for the beloved community." Lawrence Jones contends that "ever since blacks have been in America, they have been in search of the 'beloved community', a community which is grounded in an unshakable confidence in a theology of history. Jones observes that African-American churches sought to actualize on earth the vision of the 'beloved community' embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Bible. Lawrence N. Jones, "Black Christians in Antebellum America: In Quest of the Beloved Community," *The Journal of Religious Thought* 12:2 (1985) 12. See also Vincent Harding, *There Is A River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1981), 42-43; James Melvin Washington, *Frustrated Fellowship: The Black Baptist Quest for Social Power* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer Press, 1986).

The approaches to the problem of community in American society by the illustrious exemplars in this tradition clearly constitute an analysis of the broader problematic of religion, race, and culture. The Black Church tradition, at its best, is an argument about the meaning and destiny of American democratic dogma. Alasdair MacIntyre has suggested that "a living tradition . . . is an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition." Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).²²² James M. Washington placed the black church protest struggle for equality within "the American dissenting tradition." This tradition, according to James M. Washington, included "abolitionists and many other varieties of social reformers. Many Americans do not understand or have forgotten how indebted we are to the stubborn tradition of loyal opposition in American history. The opposition's determination to put righteousness, conscience, and morality before social and political expediency helped to shape some of our most fundamental values and institutions." *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers), xi; see also Cornel West, "The Prophetic Tradition in Afro-America" in *Prophetic Fragments*, 38-49.

⁴Stephen L. Carter, *Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1998).

⁵The Council on Civil Society, *A Call to Civil Society: Why Democracy Needs Moral Truths* (New York: Institute for American Values, 1998).

6 Edward Shils, *The Virtue of Civility: Selected Essays on Liberalism, Tradition, and Civil Society* edited by Steven Grosby (Indianapolis: The Liberty Fund, 1997).

7 For an excellent summary of the Aristotelian philosophical inheritance of civility and its modern theoretical history, see Lawrence Cahoon, "Civic Meetings, Cultural Meanings" in *Civility*, ed. Leroy S. Rouner (University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 40-48.

8 James Schmidt, "Is Civility a Virtue?" in *Civility*, 17-19.

9 Amitai Etzioni's definition of civility is helpful. "...The term civility has been used in different ways, most commonly it has referred to the need to deliberate in a civil manner about the issues society faces, and to sustain intermediary bodies that stand between the individual and the state." Amitai Etzioni, *The New Golden Rule*. New York: Basic Books, 1996, 95-96.

10 Robert D. Putnam's *Bowling Alone* is one example of the ongoing public debate on the significance of civil discourse and social networking that is part of a larger conversation about the need to recapture, reappropriate, and sustain the habits and practices essential for the survival of an American ethos of generalized reciprocity and mutual obligation. Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000). See especially Putnam's discussion on the significance of "social capital" as both a bonding and bridging social phenomenon and its relationship to civic infrastructures that build community. *Bonding* refers to the ways in which social capital tends to reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups. *Bridging* refers to ways in which social capital tends to produce broader and more inclusive group behavior and to encourage reciprocity (22-24).

11 Robert Wuthnow, *Christianity and Civil Society: The Contemporary Debate* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).

12 Michael Walzer, "The Idea of Civil Society," *Dissent*, (Spring 1991). Quoted from Wuthnow, op cit.

13 Robert D. Putnam, op cit, 19.

14 Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and American Democracy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944).

15 Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: The Failure of Black Leadership*; Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: The

University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 5. Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Readers in U.S. Women's History*, edited by Ellen DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz (New York: Routledge, 1990), 292-29; and Joy James, *Transcending the Talented Tenth: Black Leaders and American Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 1997). See Carl P. Henry, *Culture and African-American Politics* (Indiana University Press, 1990), 10-11. See Henry's critique of Cruse's dilemma oriented polemic which leaves unresolved the ideological premise that black elites must provide an adequate social theory based on living ingredients of African-American history. The challenge for Cruse, as for other black elites, tends to be this unresolved problematic often-couched in *dilemmalistic* language.

16 Ralph Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Sidney M. Wilhelm, *Who Needs The Negro?* (Anchor Books, 1971); Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Making of America* (New York: Collier Books, 1964).

17 Joy James, *Transcending the Talented Tenth: Black Leaders and American Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 1997). Ralph Luker, *op cit*.

18 Patricia A. Turner, *Ceramic Uncles and Celluloid Mammies: Black Images and Their Influence on Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994) is an excellent resource for the significance of the black iconography and its impact on cultural and ideological sequences in black life and the larger society. Similarly, Spike Lee's most recent film, "Bamboozled" expresses some of the fundamental concerns of racial ideology and iconography and its impact on black life, culture and the larger society.

19 Ronald Takaki describes the development of the dilemma in this manner: "The fusion of Protestant asceticism and republican theory provided the ideology for bourgeois acquisitiveness and modern capitalism in the United States. The seventeenth-century belief in the covenant of grace had made it possible for the Puritan to affirm God's omnipotence while he strived to demonstrate he had outward signs of salvation. This Protestant anxiety -- the need to know how one had been predestined and to do good works and diligently follow one's calling -- led ironically to the erosion of piety itself. Good works resulted often enough in worldly goods and a concern for the here rather than the hereafter. Eighteenth century republicanism accelerated this thrust toward commodity accumulation and the primacy of the marketplace, as it disintegrated the feudal order and freed men as individuals to prove their virtue in the pursuit of

possessions.” Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 11. While Takaki relies heavily on Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, it is helpful to compare his analysis with H. Mark Roelofs's concept of "The Protestant-Bourgeois Syndrome" where he argues that Martin Luther is preferred over John Calvin for the Protestant pole of this syndrome "because his type of radical, evangelical pietism was much more influential in the development of American religious feeling than was Calvin's more doctrinal theology." For the political, bourgeois pole, Thomas Hobbes is representative of the modern mind. Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin are their American counterparts. Roelofs, *Ideology and Myth in American Politics: A Critique of a National Political Mind* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1976), 51. See also Vetterli and Bryner, *In Search of the Republic*, 1-18; and C. B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford University Press, 1962); MacPherson, *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

20 See Orlando Patterson, *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries* (Basci Books, 1998), 169-232. See also Rene Girard, *The Scapegoat*. Trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Theophus Smith, *Conjuring Culture: Biblical Formations of Black Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

21.. Toni Morrison, *Beloved: A Novel* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1987), 198-199.

22. Ronald Takaki uses the metaphor of "iron cages" to describe the historical entrapment of American culture by the ideology of race. Responding to Stanley Elkin's claim that enslaved Africans adopted a mode of behavior which he called the "Sambo type", i.e. "the slave was 'submissive,' 'docile,' 'happy,' 'conscious of his [her] own inferiority and proud of being own and governed by a superior,'" Takaki argues that "The image of the slave as Sambo helped to comfort the tortured consciences of many of the members of the ruling class . . . But the slavemasters' need for a Sambo was more complex than the desire to defend the peculiar institution and to mitigate guilt: The image helped to assure them that the slave was contented and controlled. Surely a happy slave would not violently protest his bondage; surely he would not slit his master's throat at night. So slavemasters wanted to believe. Yet while they were comforted by the happy Sambo, they were also terrified by the specter of the rebellious "savage." Takaki, 121.

23 James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of

North Carolina Press, 1988), see especially Chapter 3, Education and the Race Problem in the New South:

The Struggle for Ideological Hegemony,” 79-109. See also Ralph Luker, *op. cit.*

24 W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989), 45-46.

25 Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 33.

26 “In pursuit of this goal, they collided with the South’s landed upper-class whites and their allies, who depended for their wealth and power on large classes of illiterate, exploited agricultural laborers.” James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 80-81.

27 *Ibid.*

28 C. Eric Lincoln, *Race, Religion and the Continuing American Dilemma* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984; and Victor Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness: An Essay on African-American Religious and Cultural Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1995); See Cornel West’s observations on *doubleness* in “Black Strivings”— specifically, its relationship to despair, destruction, death using DuBois’s metaphor. Henry L. Gates and Cornel West *The Future of the Race* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1996); see also Robert Michael Franklin’s discussion on “strenuous life” in *Liberating Voices: Human Fulfillment and Social Justice in African-American Thought* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990).

29 See Evelyn Brooks-Higginbotham’s discussion on “The Politics of Respectability” as being the primary socio-political strategy for women of the Negro Club Movement. At stake for these black elites was the promotion of “manners and morals” as a campaign against pejorative images of black womanhood depicted as shameless, bestial, and sexually licentious. See Higginbotham *Righteous Discontent* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

30 Gaines, 35.

31 *Ibid.*, 99.

32 According to James, “Given our two conceptions of political activity, we can see straightway how, in the struggle against race, gender, and class oppression, this difference between the classical sociological model of the charismatic leaders-intellectual and the leader-intellectual whom is guided by a sense of

vocation and public responsibility.” Joy James, *Transcending the Talented Tenth: Black Leaders and American Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 1997), xiv—vi.

33 Ibid, 40ff; 54.

34 *Ibid.*, 16-17.

35 Gaines, 31.

36 Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism : An Examination of the Black Religious Experience in Religion* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1973), 226; “Bush Meeting Focuses on Role of Religion,” *New York Times*, (December 21, 2000), The Churches, By Richard A. Oppel Jr. With Gustav Niebuhr.

37 Edward L. Wheeler, *Uplifting the Race: The Black Minister in the New South: 1865-1902* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1986).

38 See Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972); *Black Theology: A Documentary History* ed. Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993).

39 Stephen L. Carter, *Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1998).

40 For classical critiques of the suffering servant ideology from black theologians, see James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), 163-194; William R. Jones, *Is God A White Racist? A Preamble to Black Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973, 1998), 71-168.

41 James Schmidt, “Is Civility a Virtue?” in *Civility*, ed. Leroy S. Rouner (University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 17-19.

42 Lawrence Cahoon, “Civic Meetings, Cultural Meanings” in *Civility*, 46.

43 Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *op. cit.*, 187.

44 See Anthony Pinn, ed., *Making the Gospel Plain: The Writings of Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1999); Ralph Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, “Faith of the American Negro” in *Cavalcade, Negro American Writing from 1760 to the Present* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971); Walter Earl Fluker and Catherine Tumber, eds. *A Strange Freedom: Howard Thurman on Religious*

Experience and Public Life (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998).

45 Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, op. cit., 681.

46 See Jeffrey C. Goldfarb's excellent discussion in *Civility and Subversion: The Intellectual in Democratic Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Although the example he cites is the disruptive public speech of Malcolm X, the civility practiced by King and the modern civil rights movement represents the epitome of civility as disruptive speech and action. In this sense, King is rightly depicted as a *bricoleur*. See Jeffrey Stout, *Ethics After Babel: The Languages of Morals and their Discontents* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988).

47 Stephen Carter, op. cit., 28-32.

48 E. Franklin Frazier, "Inferiority Complex and Quest for Status," reprint in Frazier, *On Race Relations: Selected Papers*, edited and with introduction by G. Franklin Edwards (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 254.

49 See James M. Washington, *Frustrated Fellowship: The Black Baptist Quest for Social Power* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986); see respective essays by Clarice J. Martin, Marcia C. Riggs, and Cheryl Townsend Gilkes in Walter Earl Fluker, ed., *The Stones That The Builders Rejected: The Development of Ethical Leadership From The Black Church Tradition* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, International, 1998); James H. Evans, *We Shall Be Changed: Social Problems and Theological Renewal* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 17-43.

50 R. Drew Smith, "The Public Influences of African-American Churches: Local, National and Transnational Civic Engagement." Proposal to The Pew Charitable Trust, June 1998.

51 Cornel West, "Black Strivings in a Twilight Civilization," in Henry Louis Gates and Cornel West, *The Future of the Race* (New York: Alfred J. Knopf, 1996), 67-68. Italics added.

52 Frederick C. Harris, *Something Within*, 81-85.

53 See Peter J. Paris' excellent essay, "Moral Development for African-American Leadership" in *The Stones That The Builders Rejected*, 23-32.; Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

54 In a recent publication, I have outlined my thoughts on the need for the development of ethical leadership from *The Black Church Tradition*. There I suggested that *The Black Church Tradition* serve as a

locus of inquiry for the kinds of stringent intellectual and creative tasks involved in the development of ethical leadership for civic life. Because of its distinctive sociocultural location and long history of producing ethical leaders, despite inadequate material and social resources, *The Black Church Tradition* is a prime candidate for offering direction for the development of ethical leaders for our national and global communities. *Ethical leadership* refers to the critical appropriation and embodiment of moral traditions that have historically shaped the character and shared meanings of a people (an *ethos*). Ethical leadership does not emerge from an historical vacuum, but arises from the *lifeworlds* of particular traditions and speaks authoritatively and acts responsibly with the aim of serving the collective good. Ethical leaders are leaders whose characters have been shaped by the wisdom, habits, and practices of particular traditions, often more than one, yet they tend to be identified with a particular ethos and cultural narrative. Finally, ethical leadership asks the question of values in reference to ultimate concern Walter Earl Fluker, ed., *The Stones That The Builders Rejected: The Development of Ethical Leadership From The Black Church Tradition* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, International, 1998).

55 Referencing Hegel's dialectic of recognition between the Lord and Bondsmen, Patterson writes, "Confronted with the master's outrageous effort to deny him all dignity, the slave even more than the master came to know and desire passionately this very attribute. For dignity, like love, is one of the human qualities that are most intensely felt and understood when they are absent –or unrequited." Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press) 100.

56 Howard Thurman, "A Strange Freedom," in *A Strange Freedom: The Best of Howard Thurman on Religious Experience and Public Life*. Edited by Walter Earl Fluker and Catherine Tumber (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), vii.

57 Martin Luther King, Jr. "The Drum Major Instinct," in *A Knock At Midnight: Inspiration from Great Sermons of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.*. Edited by Clayborne Carson and Peter Holloran (Time Warner Books, 1998).

58 Lawrence-Lightfoot notes that respect is often viewed as "a debt due people because of their attained or inherited position, age, gender, class, race, professional status, accomplishments, etc. Whether defined by rules of law, habits of culture, respect often implies required expressions of esteem, approbation, or submission. By contrast, I focus on the way respect creates symmetry, empathy, and connection in all kinds of relationships . . .

.” Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot, *Respect: An Exploration* (Cambridge: Perseus Books, 2000), 9-10.

59 James H. Evans, op cit.

60. Peter J. Paris, op cit.. While this formulation is problematic because it uses the metaphor of an autonomous self, which connotes a highly individualistic consciousness to address a socio-historical phenomenon, I think it is still useful for our purposes.

61 *Ibid.*, 29.

62 Hans A. Baer and Merrill Singer, *African-American Religion in the Twentieth Century: Varieties of Protest and Accommodation* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992; Carter G. Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church* (Washington, D. C.: The Associated Publishers', Inc., 1972); and E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

63 Orlando Patterson, op cit, 7-8.