

The struggle of black inequality



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Adam Faircliff commences at a convenient point of the failure of the reconstruction process after the civil war and triumph of white supremacy in the decade that followed. Faircliff 's writing indicated the struggle of black inequality in the period immediately following the triumph of the northerners over the south republics and the hopes and expectations of the Negro population in the aftermath of the civil war. Their hope of freedom and equality before the law.

The 13th amendment and the recognition of Negro marriages,, their right to form families , to worship as they viewed fit, to acquire and hold property , enjoy the freedom of movement but they soon realized that liberation would be empty without land , legal rights and the right to vote in an atmosphere free from persecution , Faircliff skillfully introduces the aspirations that black held through the period 1890 to 2000 and the inequality they suffered in gaining what was legally theirs at the hand of a militant and biased white population.

Emancipation was nothing without independence and the Negro population quickly realized that and began organizing themselves into groups and associations to ensure this. They began to distance themselves from the white population by forming their own churches and rejecting the limitations of the whites in laboring contact.

Faircliff illustrated the circumstances that surrounded the fall of the reconstruction program with the assassination of President Lincoln and the appointment of the former slave holder vice president Andrew Jackson, this

political situation undermined the reconstruction movement as He quickly reintroduced self government to the southern states.

The introduction of Black codes helped to nullify the reconstruction movement as the legislature passed discriminatory laws, that place blacks under strict white supervision, the black codes expresses the determination of southern whites to define freedman of color as rural laborers with inferior right. The black codes convinced many republicans that the reconstruction process needed federal governance, along with race riots that were prevailing through the southern states during this time . The republican realized that the reconstruction process was being sabotage by the president and there was a need to regain control of the process.

In the 1866 congressional elections the republican party was able to gain a 2/3's majority in the new congress and they were able to return the south to a military occupation and restart Reconstruction anew. The program is referred to as the Radical Reconstruction Process, the 14th amendment of 1867 stuck down all Black codes making black full citizens and the " equal protection of all laws" An the fifteenth amendment 1870 forbade denial of the vote to any adult male base on race, class , color or former servitude . The republican the went about a process of registering the black population

Fairclough depict the upward movement of the black population under the reconstruction process, the holding of public office , under the occupations of sheriffs, judges, councilmen and commissioners , legislators, congressmen and senators,. He notes the role of the freedmen's bureau in creating a system of education for the black population. Firclogh also points toward one

of most important flaws in the radical reconstruction process that sabotaged the success and that was land. The promise of 40 acres and a mule that was expected did not materialize instead the republican part gave back whites their confiscated land .

He note however that blacks did manage to acquire land but fails to reveal the process of the land acquisition, and the fact that many blacks , began to cooperated under a system of sharecropping, he also fails to reveal the continued domination of the white landholder during this process. He illustrates another flaw of the Republican part in the process and this was the Education process, with the closing of the freedman's bureau in 1870 education was placed under the supervision of state legislatures, and under them, the system faced gross neglect.

In 1890 1/2 of the white population was enrolled in school in comparison to the 31 % of the blacks . And high illiteracy gap between the races with the 65 of the black population being unable to read or write. However the worst failure of the reconstruction project was the governments inability to enforce it's own policy of racial equality. Radical in conception it was weak in execution, The republicans alienated most of the white southerners by disenfranchising them , they quickly reinstated the confederates into the union and had a mere skeleton p force to maintain control in the south.

The idea of reconstruction was not well meet whit white southerners as they rallied behind the democratic part and the fought to reestablish white supremacy. Terrorism was employed to scare off whites sympathetic to the cause and the Ku Klux Klan was in Pulaski Tennessee in 1866. However it

was the blacks that bore the brunt of the terrorism this terrorist threat help in the destabilization of the republic legislature in the republican strong holds of South Carolina , Louisiana, Mississippi .

The republican attempted to stop the wave of these terrorist attacks by deploying troops , forming state militia, spending the writ of habeas corpus and prosecuting. . In a move to legislate through the federal government and they allowed the democrats to redeem the south. With the democrats in power in the southern legislatures, the attempted to infringe on the black voting process, by sleath , they gerrymanded electoral districts, abolished elective post and devise complicated methods of the procedures of voting.

They attempted by every means possible to sabotage black voting and even resorted to fraud. But the points out that the black vote was hard to suppress despite of every obstacle blacks continued to vote in large numbers. In 1890 Mississippi the state with the largest black population adopted a new constitution requiring all electors to be able to read and interpret any part of the constitution this cut down vote from 190, 000 To 8, 000.

This led to ripple effect in other states as the federal government's inaction on this matter led to adoption of this procedure in other states in the south. Faircliff also draws reference to the attempts at a populist movement based on bi raciality. The populist argument that blacks and whites alike face the same economic problems and ought to act together, the accident of color did not make a difference in the interest of farmers share croppers and laborers.

In North Carolina in 1884 the populist and the republican formed a coalition referred to as ' Fusion' and was elected to power. Fusion was home grown

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experiment in biracial politics that allowed for a greater degree of black participation. However the modeled was short lived and was never exported to the other southern states. The model failed under the banner of white supremacy and the whites organized themselves into quasi military groups and the newspapers were dominated by instance or alleged instance of Black men reaping white women.

Hysteria was rased at the threat of Negro Domination . He raises the point that Fusion would have collapsed without the interface of thew white supremacist because of it own contradiction, while they accepted bi raciality they shied away from promoting racial equality. Firciff also attributes the failure of reconstruction to the lack of interest by the republican party, because of their failure to protect their interest in North Carolina t it represent their half hearted commitment to the politics of the north.

BY 187 and the failure of reconstruction they made only token gestures to the movement for racial equality and by 1900 they were comfortable in endorsing white supremacy. The had lost their belief in the blacks ability to rise to level of whites due to the fact that immigrant were viewed as inferior white breed if this was so then how could the blacks be remotely equal to the old stock Americans. Firclough in this chapter traces the demise of the reconstruction movement in the south he attributed this to the changing northern perception of the ability of the blacks to transform themselves according to the republican.

As time passed the Influx of immigrant in the northern states contributed to the changing perception of the northern whites to the status of the blacks

and the understanding of the northern whites of the racial supremacy of the south. This massive influx of inferior whites helped the whites to come to terms with the inferiority of the black, also the southern had launched a series of campaigns at the northern to educate the north about the realities of the Negro population preaching the doctrine separate but equal, all of these factor helped in establishing the supremacy of the white man.

In the next chapter two chapters he looks at the two extremes of the responses to the conception and practice of black inequality, protest and accommodation, especially he illustrates two Black Americans who epitomized to two diverging conceptions of how the society should be organized , Ida . B Wells and Booker . T. Washington. Chapter is dedicated to the work and protest of the colored Journalist Ida b. Wells and her campaign against Lynching, he also address's the formation of women's clubs and groups of colored descent, and the raising of international awareness of the inhumanities of lynching in Southern America..

Fairclough described her campaign against lynching as the starting point in the modern civil rights struggle, the beginnings of the first organized fight against the concept of white supremacy. The chapter describes the harsh realities of lynching as a method of justices and the general apathy and unofficial acceptance as a method of justice in the southern. He makes clear to mention that it was accepted by both the people and the officials as a method of justice and the detention of perpetrators were never forthcoming, despite the fact that many of the perpetrators were boastful of their deeds.

The ideological justification of lynching was the fact that the black man was a savage brute, it was justification for denying blacks the vote, discrimination in the workplace, discrimination in their ability to be jurors and it expresses the need for strict segregation by stressing black sexuality and the awful consequences of social equality, which was seen as the rape of white women and the hands of black men. He points out that during the 1880's the black organisation, did little more than denounce the process of lynching and their response was caution and apologetic. It was Ida B.

Wells an outspoken Journalist who challenged the idea of lynching as a justification of rape, even denying that lynching was a form of justice against rape but it was a method of terror and inhumanity to suppress the economic progress of the black man because of the fears of economic displacement if the black man advanced. Wells started her journalism career as an unpaid contributor to a local black newspaper but soon she was expanding her base by selling articles to newspapers such as the "the American Baptist", The Indianapolis world" the Kansas city dispatch and the New York Freedman .

In 1889 she became part owner and editor of the Memphis free speech.

Wells openly depicted the idea of Black men raping white women but put forward the view of a consensual sexual act between the two parties in one of her articles. The south retaliated threatening to hang the writer of the article her two business partners fled and she moved to the North to avoid retribution. Her migration to the north allowed her to galvanize the atrocities of lynching and to gain support for her movement against the inhumane method of justification.

In 1895, she published a Red Record that investigated the circumstances surrounded the occurrence of lynching and he was revealed that only 1/3 of the lynching cases in the south there was ever a justification of rape, this emphasized her point of the brutality of the process and lackluster justification. She was pivotal in raising international awareness of the inhumanities against lynching . Her 1893 trip to London helped to gained disapproval for the brutality of the process and embarrassed the united states on the international stage.

Her most important allies emerged in the 1890's with the formation of black women's clubs and in 1896 the National association of colored women were formed. By 1900 the NACW had 18, 000 members in 300 local clubs. She was directly involved in the formation of the Women's Loyal Union . These clubs supported Wells attack on lynching echoing her denial that rape was either a justification or a cause . In raisin the subject of interracial sex Wells challenged the stereotype of the depraved , lubricious Negro.

Wells made an enormous contribution to the , modern civil rights struggle he impact was felt and her arousal of international attention helped in the process of the decline of lynching. BY 1895 Booker T. Washington emerged giving his famous Atlanta compromise speech which crystallized the tread towards accommodation, he urged blacks to abandon agitation and for new settlement was proposed between the races a settlement of accommodation. Booker T . Washington was a living refutation of White Americas degrading image of the black man.

His unflagging efforts to mend the rift between the black man and the white earned a reputation as a statesman as well as an education and by the time of his death in 1915 he was the most powerful black leader in America.

Washington preached the ideology of economic cooperation and offered two concessions . The first was the admission that radical reconstruction had been a mistake believing that blacks had started from the top instead of at the bottom and had devoted too much energy to politics neglecting the skills of habit and industry.

The second concession to white assurance was the fact that blacks were not looking for social equality and many white saw this an endorsement to racial segregation.. Though challenged and criticised Washington put forth a positive program for economic cooperation . He urged blacks to stay in the south concentrate on working hard rather than agitating for their rights and cultivate friendly relations with the white southerners.

Washington's Atlanta comprise ushered in a new era of race relations but as the 19th century gave way to the 20th century and the position of blacks did not improve he was criticized by a small but influential group that later from the NAACP . They claimed that the Atlanta compromise was not a compromise at all but blacks made all the concessions and whites made nothing. The comprise seemed more to illustrate and emphasize the fact of white supremacy. According to Fairclough Washington strategies for black process rested upon his Tuskegee Institute and the idea it represented.

It arrived in Alabama in 1881 and was administered only by black persons.. In creating a wholly black runned school, Washington was making a powerful

statement of racial equality. It was proud symbol of hope to both Black African and West Indians. Tuskegee represented the philosophy of progress through education. . The Tuskegee Idea was progress through master basic working skills and applying them to the demands of the Southern agricultural economy.

Firclough in his fourth chapter describes the rise of the NAACP , this organisation spearheaded the black struggle for equality and became one of the most influential organisations of reform in American history. On Mat 31st 1909 a array of eminent American gathered in New York city to attend the National Conference on the Negro and they denounced the growing oppression and brutality that blacks were enduring. The men and women who formed the NAACP were typical of the Progressive era (1980-1917) .

The whites within the organisation were affluent old stock American , protestant, socialist , they lived in the big cites and many were descended from the abolitionist movement. The blacks were also well educated and of relatively high economic standing. Howe ever fairclough indicates that those who formed the movement differed from the conventional progressives who had little interest in Black America. The NACCP ideology was a rejection of total racism , they believed in the equality of all humanity beyond the lines of color.

The moved repudiated Booker T. Washington's claim of advancement through accommodation and their was a call for agitation against oppression. The conference insisted on a strict adherence to the constitution and equality. Howevre fairclough concludes that the NAACP was and unbalanced

and uneasy relationship between whites and blacks . Whites were well represented on the 30 member board but the 3 key positions of prominence were held by whites. This made it uneasy in the eyes of its critics but it was W.

E Bois presence and support of the movement that aided their credibility as a organization geared toward the advancement of Black America. W. E Bois was a well educated Colored defender of Black equality versed in the arts he was a ardent critic of Booker T. Washington's accommodation program. . He believed that true emancipation would not coming along through economic striving alone .. Bois idea of the talented tenth as a cultured broadminded leadership , that would fight for equal rights .

His views were in direct opposite to Washington as he belived that no amount of economic wealth could counter the loss of education or the right to vote. The Niagra movement formed in 1905 was the first collective attempt by Afivcan Americans to demand full citizenship tights in the 20th century, howere fairclough saw this movemnt as failing to to be a beckpoon of black protest as it also demonstrated the flaws that accompanies Dubois leadership in the fact that its roots were in the Northern States and was ill trusted byy black southerns.

Firclough attributed the race riot of 1906 which took place in atlantan as an important , ark in the failure of the Niagra movemnt as it demoralized the altanta leadership and gace Wqashington a platform on which to reaserat his influence in the black community. The failure of the niagra movement allowed for the progession of the NAACP and DuBois as it spokesman. The

Naacp pursued a line of aggressive litigation. Firclough illustrated the fire of the movement, and the increased support of the movement that was demonstrated by the increase in the number of members.

In 1916 the membership stood at 8,785 with 8 branches spread throughout the north and south. Firclough claimed that the death of Booker T. Washington opened up a vacuum that was filled by the NAACP, but this did not mean unity as a number of blacks especially in the south were reluctant to the idea of open agitation. Firclough deals with the impact of the First World War on the community of black Americans as it inspired blacks with hopes that this war would end white supremacy as the civil war had ended slavery.

The great war was according to Firclough had a number of effects on Black America. The first and most notable was the great Migration to the Northern States he attributed this to the economic opportunities created by the outbreak of the war, industries that had previously excluded blacks, opened their doors to them during the great war. Firclough made the important point that though economic opportunity may have been a pull factor in this migration politics played an influential role as he attributes this to the fact of decades of oppression in the Southern States.

He also notes that the war presented a renewed effort at agitation, due to the racial segregation in the military. This led to a more militant attitude as the blacks became more resentful to racial discrimination at home so were the whites in their determination to blacks repressed. The migration resulted in a vicious clash by white America as they saw the black movement as a threat to their economic security. On July 2nd 1917 in Houston, a brutal race

riot ensued that left 40 blacks dead and 8 whites dead, this illustrated the intensity of the tension in the migration process.

There was clear military segregation Fairclough draws reference to the fact that 80% of the blacks were assigned to labour battalions and comprised of 1/3 of the army's pick and shovel workers. He attributes this to the militancy in America on their return the bitterness of their discrimination changed the political landscape and transformed black aspirations /This militancy was captured by Jamaican born Marcus Garvey leader and founder of the UNIA The Universal Negro Improvement Association.

The powers of DuBois and Garvey helped to translated black agitation into an international affair. In the post world war scenario the NAACP began to grow in the southern states The militancy manifested itself in the formation of labour unions and organized protest. The climate of the period after the great war was tense. The backlash was even tenser Fairclough describes the red summer of 1919 to emphasize this point in the racial tension within society. As it exploded in violence and lynching to both north and south.

During this period as well the Interracial Cooperation committee was formed to end racial violence and facilitate cooperation. The sixth chapter entitled Marcus Garvey and the UNIA reflects on the creation of a mass movement, the first of its kind integrating black America. It was a nationalist movement of international dimensions. Garveyism was built upon the idea of the superiority of the black race dismissing notions of black inferiority. Garvey a

fiery orator was able to enthrall mass support for the concept of Africa for the Africans.

Firclough accounts the rapidity of the rise of Garveyism to the death of Booker T. Washington and the UNIA ability to showcase the strength of an all-black organisation, as the NAACP had failed because of its white membership. Garvey embraced the idea of Racial Segregation and advocated separatism, he advocated racial purity and he advocated the accommodationist philosophy of Washington. This in many ways discredited his legitimacy, the failure of the black strline and the Libya movement all helped in the disintegration of the movement of Garveyism.

He also attributes the changing direction of the Garvey philosophy as one of the major reasons for the failure of the movement, the most erroneous action on the part of Garvey according to Firclough was the fact that he admitted to holding secret talks in Atlanta with the imperial wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. This was viewed as an act of betrayal by the black community to the idea of black nationalism. This new program adopted by the Garvey movement was attacked with a vengeance. An anti Garvey movement was launched comprised of members of the NAACP and other prominent officials.

The NYT attempted to discredit a Garvey character and in 1927 he was deported to Jamaica on the basis of Mail Fraud. Firclough makes pains to portray the movement as a mass movement of international proportions demonstrating the fact that the movement was spreading throughout the world and the British Empire's concern with the movement as they viewed it as a threat to the status quo within their own territories. Chapter 7 the radical thirties

attempts to capture the radicalism that swept across America during the Great Depression that the country faced in the 1930's.

The chapter captures the spirit of the swelling tensions and the rise of Communism as an avenue for social and economic redress. Fairclough attributes the rise of Communism as a ideology of change to the Scottsboro affair. He uses this as a means of illustrating the rise of the party as a deliverer of justice and their ability to fight for a cause and their willingness to take on the cause of the black population. He also indicated the growing faction between the NAACP and the Communist party during this period again indicating the split in the movement of the black population.

He views the communist party as being an avenue of change especially when both white and black America were suffering immense economic hardship. He puts forth the view that the NAACP was an inadequate organisation during this period of economic distress as they failed to relieve the climate of the nation and their emphasis of civil rights created a vacuum that the communist was able to fill with their advocacy of betterment in the economic conditions of the working class. The 1930's saw mass action on the part of blacks through labour unions.

The most powerful example according to Fairclough was the autonomous action taken by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. In 1935 the BSCP signed a contract with the Pullman company who were very anti-union, gaining substantial perks for their members. Under the leadership of Phillip Randolph the BSCP was able to make of one of the most triumphant conclusions to one of the longest negotiating processes and in this action they gained

one of the most important recognition in the American Labour Movement they were the first Black organisation to gain recognition to by the American Labour Movement.

Its victory embodied a contradiction between means and ends and bedevilled the struggle for equality. The formation of the NATIONAL Negro Congress and their attempted Mass March on Washington in 1941 allowed for the executive order 8802 which allowed for the elimination of discrimination of blacks in defense industries and government agencies. The order was an affirmative commitment to racial equality by the government of the United States. However by 1945 the radicalism associated with the communist ideology had run its course as the cold war action characterized by the McCarthyism commenced.

Therefore eliminating the communist ideology as an alternative to change. Chapter 8 raises the issue of the black situation in the south between the period 1919-1942, The struggle for racial equality can be chronicled in terms of agitation and protest, courtroom confrontation and non violent progress. In the segregated south during the heyday of white supremacy which lasted until about 1950 blacks rarely challenged whites without undisputed brutality as a reaction. But Fairclough describes methods in which blacks adopted to ensure their survival within the confines of white supremacy.

He describes that their freedom was to organize under the banner of Racial Uplift. Behind the walls of segregations, they built parallel institutions, Racial Uplift represented one step forward but two steps

backward, as they adopted tactics of indirection, they worked for short-term improvement within their separated world. Women played an important role in bridging the color lines, viewed as less threatening than men they were able to coordinate with white women to attempt to instruct reform.

At a special meeting in Memphis in 1920 the women's arm of the Commission on interracial cooperation and the women's missionary council of the Methodist church made a genuine landmark in the interracial movement. It represented the idea of cooperation despite the fact that the meeting failed to organize any program it represented an ideal. In 1930 a group of 26 women initiated the most significant campaign against racial discrimination.

The associating of southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching and by 1941 this women were able to secure 1,355 pledges by white policemen and sheriffs to protect the rights of prisoners. Friclough puts forth the view that interracial cooperative movements had always been a poor substitute for political action, as it was viewed as an institution geared toward preserving the status quo rather than changing it. He claims that the CIC neglected in order to appease southern whites, which was a basic contradiction at the heart of the interracial co-operation movement.

Education, revealed the ambitions of the campaign for better schools. The education system was a battle for blacks, black southerners since the commerce of the reconstruction program depended on white philanthropy to fund many of their institutions. But despite the raise and improvement in education it was sacrificed at the cost of greater bureaucratic control by southern whites. However education was seen as having the long range

effect of nourishing and strengthening the Negro protest, Black schools and colleges encouraged political awareness by teaching literacy.

Education inspired self worth, ambition and a desire for liberation. In chapter 9 "The NAACP's challenge to white supremacy, 1935-45", Fairclough attempted to put forth the claim that even in the deep south during the zenith of white supremacy, some black southerners protested against Jim Crow. There was subtle resistance by indirect means and those who agitated openly to racial discrimination. In this chapter he attributes the rise of the early civil rights movement to the growth of the NAACP as a mass organization.

Many of the NAACP critics viewed the organization as comprising of mainly upper and middle class men and women who were not in touch with the masses but Fairclough skillfully argues that this was necessary as the men and women who led this organization had to be economically independent of whites in order to perpetuate the cause of the movement. The rise of the NAACP was attributed to the growth in labour unions and their integrating into the NAACP, by 1946 there was over 500,000 many of whom had already participated in open agitation under their respective unions.

Fairclough emphasizes the point that the second world war brought with it employment, and turned the Pacific coast into an economic colossus. And again black America pressed their claim of equal citizenship. But the attitudes of white America were stringent. The second world war brought jobs but not equality. The executive order of 1941 was viewed as the greatest victory since the civil emancipation however the formation of the Fair Employment Practice Committee that was issued under the order was sabotaged by the

attitude of racial America, demonstrating that racial tension were paramount during the 1940's .

This tension according to Fairclough was not limited to employment practices and industries only . It extended to the military as well, while America portrayed the image of equality during the War it remained highly divided , this resulted in tension and violence within the military ranks. An issue which escalated during the war was the segregation issue, and according to Fairclough the issue loomed large under wartime pressure and the incident of violence was pervasive.