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**Morality and Truth:
Problematizing the Good Intentions Narrative of the
Freedmen's Bureau
Sharissa Staples**

The modern lack of access to education by students of color has become a systemic problem that has stemmed from historical reasoning. Segregation, both in schooling and housing, began during Reconstruction and remains in existence today. In 1933 Carter G. Woodson called segregation the “sequel to slavery,” because black people were now seemingly inescapably bound to the lowest class.¹ The ideologies of implementation came during Reconstruction, a time in which the objective was to integrate newly freed blacks into Southern society. Various social programs were set up by the United States government, such as the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (now known as the Freedmen's Bureau), which aimed at transforming newly freed blacks and poor whites into educated and successful land owners. Northern white philanthropists, as well as white missionaries, also established educational programs in the newly *freed* South. Although well meaning, these programs failed to recognize how deeply entrenched racism was in the South and how they themselves perpetuated racist views. The programs opted for separationist policy by funding and building all black schools and neighborhoods, which only served to further isolate newly freed blacks. Segregation, which has proved to be an insidious social condition, was birthed during a time that sought to rectify the wrongs of slavery by giving Blacks their own spaces. These spaces and social programs were not initially used as a means of repressing black minorities as they aimed at creating equality. Rather, it was the use of racial justification that allowed for spaces to be used as legitimizing factors in the argument for segregation.

In 1863 Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in which he declared all slaves in the Confederate states “shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free;” however, his proclamation did not actually free a majority of slaves. For example, slavery was practiced in Washington D.C. and continued to thrive after the signing. The Proclamation only applied to slaves who lived in

¹ Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1990), 102.

Confederate lands and was conceived as a method of seizing Confederate resources, not as a judgement against the morality of slavery. Lincoln also technically only “freed” people he had no control over because at the time, the North was unable to enforce the Proclamation. Additionally, the Proclamation had no legal backing; it was not a law or an amendment, and therefore state governments had the ability to ignore it without any repercussions. In fact, many abolitionists declared the Proclamation a farce, because of its hypocrisy and impossibility of its enforcement. As Union soldiers continued their campaign through the South, they were ordered to continue to free Blacks without, however, any plans or programs to address their newly freed status. After the Civil War, states that still practiced slavery were not allowed to join the Union until they freed any person held in bondage. The Proclamation called for slaves to be free but did not call for equality and never equity. The false sense of hope that the Proclamation had instilled in Southern Blacks would mirror the sense of hope that would be sparked by Reconstruction.

In 1865 the 13th Amendment was passed, which declared that “neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime...shall exist within the United States.” The amendment formally abolished slavery, but did nothing to address the deep and entrenched racial inequality. It was not until 1868, five years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation and three years after the passing of the 13th Amendment, that newly freed slaves gained citizenship with the passing of the 14th Amendment. The newly passed amendment aimed to protect the civil liberties of the newly freed slaves but failed to recognize that these people never had civil liberties. All of the states in the Confederacy, with the exception of Tennessee, refused to ratify the amendment, prompting the North to block the Southern states from joining the Union until they signed. Again, in theory the passing of 14th Amendment should be celebrated, but its writers and America at large was unable or unwilling to address America’s racial climate. For example, while the 15th Amendment, passed in 1870, gave Black men the right to vote, this right was severely limited in most Southern states. Many former Confederate states implemented poll taxes, literacy tests, and grandfather clauses to block Black men from voting. The failure of addressing institutional and systemic disenfranchisement of Black people in America played a major role in why both the 14th and 15th Amendments would ultimately prove useless for almost 100 years.

Another attempt to support former slaves was the Freedmen's Bureau, established by Congress in 1865. Its goal was to help former slaves and poor whites gain the skills and capital to be successful in the United States. Striving towards equality and not equity would prove to be not only the downfall of the Bureau but also the catalyst for segregation and the implementation of "separate but equal" policies. Instead of integrating newly freed blacks into Southern society, the Bureau legitimized, formalized and gave backing to segregationist desires by creating all black schools and neighborhoods. The Bureau created the conditions for separatism to occur and thrive.

The initial historiography about the Freedmen's Bureau positions it as a good intentioned charity organization which ultimately fell short due to Republican pressure. Many of the early writings came from both white and Black historians, however the historiographies that garnered the most attention were those written by white men. This historiography fails to recognize and address how systemic and institutional racism played a major role in both the creation and failure of the Freedmen's Bureau. In 1901, twenty-three years after the closure of the Bureau, Paul S. Peirce wrote the first historiographical piece on the Bureau.² Peirce's work does not overtly challenge this "good-intentions" narrative but nonetheless calls it into question by examining official reports and letters published by Congress against actual statistics. This historiography became the primary source for information pertaining to the Freedmen's Bureau and arguably became one of the first white challenges against the racist narrative that was being constructed around the Freedmen's Bureau. Peirce argues that Reconstruction, and thus the Freedmen's Bureau, were attempts to solve "the negro question" because "these creatures [Black people] must be fed, clothed, and usefully employed; they ought to be educated, intellectually and morally."³ The focus is heavily shifted onto the military commanders who were in charge of implementing Bureau policies.

A Chapter in the History of Reconstruction offers both critical analysis and chronological narration of the events that occurred during Reconstruction. Peirce draws attention to the back and forth between what was reported and the reality, and often challenges these irregularities and inconsistencies. For example, Pierce

² Paul S. Peirce, *The Freedmen's Bureau: A Chapter in the History of Reconstruction* (Iowa: University of Iowa City, 1901).

³ *Ibid.*, 2.

repeatedly references the false reporting by local officials on the rate of crime, which was exaggerated to cover up the use of newly freed Blacks on plantations. Piece also asserts “the original freedmen’s bureau act made no provision for negro education. Consequently, during the first year, the educational operations of the bureau were relatively unimportant.”⁴ Pierce’s work doesn’t attempt to whitewash historical fact, which many scholars did, thereby turning their narrative into historical fiction. In their place, Pierce offers an honest and original critique.

Although Pierce offers a significant and comprehensive juxtaposition of fact versus fiction, his work did not discuss the racial implications of the actions of the Freedmen’s Bureau. It really was not until the Civil Rights era that mainstream historians’ rhetoric began to shift, thus influencing the study of the Bureau as a whole. Nonetheless, many Black academics and scholars began their racial critiques of the Bureau as early as 1901, the same year Pierce published his historiography. Black historians, such as W.E.B. Du Bois in 1901 and Carter G. Woodson in 1933, critiqued Reconstruction and its failures and repeatedly pointed out the biased and narrow perspective offered by white men writing about Black history. They argued that the majority of the writings by white historians undermined and deprecated Black intellect, and regarded newly freed Blacks as too ignorant to handle education and positions of power. These assertions of Black inferiority were not based in historical fact, but rather racism, which was common amongst almost all white historians. The critiques by the first Black historians will be expounded upon later in the paper, but it is important to note the time in which they were writing, as Black people were challenging the history of the Bureau earlier than the 1960s.

In 1955 George R. Bentley published what at the time was considered the most comprehensive analysis of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands.⁵ Bentley and Peirce held similar views regarding the significance of the Bureau, and Bentley used Peirce’s work largely for his source material. However, both scholars relied heavily on Bureau documents, and did not incorporate local narratives to craft their historiographies. The documents and records were notorious for being edited to fit the needs of high government

⁴ Ibid., 75.

⁵ George R. Bentley, *A History of the Freedmen’s Bureau* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1995).

officials. Moreover, although Bentley's work offered a significant history of the Freedmen's Bureau, it did not discuss the racial dynamics and outright racism that existed within the Bureau. A more nuanced perspective would come later.

The historiography and rhetoric used when discussing the Freedmen's Bureau began to shift in the early 1960s, just as the Civil Rights Movement was gaining momentum. Historians began to see the Freedmen's Bureau as an agency of economic and social control rather than racial uplift. The ways in which the Bureau implemented educational and labor policies were labeled racist and paternalistic by scholars of the time, because such policies did more to stagnate rather than enhance Black wealth and intellectual growth. The schools set by the Bureau, similarly to the schools set up by white philanthropists and missionaries, sought to indoctrinate newly freed Blacks into staying in the labor market, instead of encouraging them to pursue an education that would allow for intellectual and social growth.

In 1959 Bernard Weisburger published in the *Journal of Southern History* an influential essay, which became the first published work to challenge the racist tones embedded in Reconstruction literature and historiography.⁶ Weisburger states that many early historians of Reconstruction refused to acknowledge the realities and failures of Reconstruction, and constructed narratives which denied any failures. In their own minds these historians were not revisionists but rather persons who were accurately and factually telling the story of Reconstruction. These historians' sources, however, were often those of other revisionists, and relied on previously published works by other racist historians to confirm their own racial bias. Many of these historians refused to use new information and sources because a majority of the new information that was being uncovered pertaining to the Reconstruction period illustrated many of its faults. Weisburger argues, "If modern historical scholarship teaches anything, it teaches that 'well-established' facts are constantly changed in implication as new facts are unearthed." Weisburger continues, "there are several sensible departures from any set of facts, depending upon whose definition of sensible is employed" and speaks on how facts can be ignored or strategically utilized to prove any point.⁷ The

⁶ Bernard Weisburger, "The Dark and Bloody Ground of Reconstruction Historiography," *Journal of Southern History* 25, no 4 (Nov., 1959).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 434.

language of these earlier revisionist historians reflects their racial biases, as specific terms are used to garner reactions, such as “Carpetbagger” and “Scalawag,” and the dialogue surrounding “negro suffrage” hints that newly freed blacks were more opportunistic than intelligent. Weisburger also believes that white historians have avoided addressing the issue of race conflict mainly due to “the difficulty in recognizing their own emotional involvement in the problem.”⁸

In 1973, Allen B. Ballard, an African American historian, published a book that argued that the desire for economic control could be seen as legitimizing “the sense of black mental inferiority [that] was deeply ingrained in the thoughts and actions of those whites who shaped the contours of Black education in the South.”⁹ Ballard’s work elaborates on how most of the whites who either began philanthropies that aimed to educate the “uncivilized” Blacks of the South or helped run the Freedmen’s Bureau had just as many racial biases as the whites of the Deep South, but acted on them differently. Significantly, Ballard and these other historians were challenging who had long been defined as a racist, urging for that narrow definition to be expanded. The changing historiography aimed to challenge the dominant narrative that has highlighted the good intentions of the Freedmen’s Bureau and replace it with the realities of what the Bureau actually did.

There are two scholars whose work in the 1980s illustrated the changing perspectives to historical views on the Freedmen’s Bureau that were spawned in the 1960s. In 1988, Ronald E. Butchart, a leading authority on the history of African American education, argued that attempts by both the Freedmen’s Bureau and white philanthropists and missionaries were civilizing missions rather than actual attempts to educate newly freed slaves. In his view, “white supremacist historians” of the early 1900s, who interpreted this history differently, “were apologists for the emerging social order in the South. They sought historical evidence to justify racial oppression and exclusion.” These *historians* used their “findings” to support segregationist claims and believed that Northerners and

⁸ Ibid., 436.

⁹ Allen B. Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk: The Afro-American Struggle for Knowledge in White America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 11.

Blacks “were to blame for any evidence of southern backwardness.”¹⁰ The failures of the philanthropists and Freedmen’s schools, rather than being seen as racialized failures of these organizations, were used to reinforce racist ideas of black inferiority. Because black education was seen as a civilizing mission its failure seemed to offer “proof” for the narrative that Blacks were uncivilized and unable to learn Western ways. Ira C. Colby, a professor of social work and education specialist, in 1985 wrote an article titled “The Freedmen’s Bureau: From Social Welfare to Segregation.” He argued that “the Bureau served as a primary vehicle for the development of segregated social relations,” and the dominant positive narrative of the Bureau’s work and Reconstruction is fictitious.¹¹

Beginning in the early 2000s there was a shift among white historians in critiquing the critique of the Freedmen’s Bureau, and much of their language began to echo that of the white supremacist historians of the early 1900s. In 2005 Paul Cimbala published *The Freedmen’s Bureau: Reconstructing the American South after the Civil War*, in which he asserts that the Bureau had good intentions that just did not work out. Cimbala’s work fails to recognize the racial tones and motivations that went into the running and organizing of the Bureau. He dismisses Bentley’s argument that the Bureau over extended itself and was too dependent on economically disadvantaged Southern economies; Cimbala argues that the Bureau served as a “guardian” to the newly freed Blacks. The term “guardian” is used instead of the more fitting title of paternalistic overseer. Cimbala’s work, while nuanced, nonetheless mirrors that of the Reconstructionist white supremacist historians and their political agendas, where intent is considered more important than actualities.

More recently, in 2007, Robert Harrison published an article in which he argued “within the parameters set by the unforgiving dynamics of Reconstruction, Bureau agents, most of them at least, struggled to negotiate the terms of freedom for African Americans.”¹² Harrison calls the historians of the 1960s “revisionists,”

¹⁰ Ronald E. Butchart ““Outthinking and Outflanking the Owners of the World’: A Historiography of the African American Struggle for Education,” *History of Education Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (Autumn, 1988), 341.

¹¹ Ira C. Colby, “The Freedmen’s Bureau: From Social Welfare to Segregation,” *Phylon* 46, no. 3 (3rd QTR., 1985), 220.

¹² Robert Harrison, “New Representations of a ‘Misrepresented Bureau’: Reflections on Recent Scholarship on the Freedmen’s Bureau,” *American Nineteenth Century History* 8, No. 2 (June 2007), 205.

and that the revisionist's claims are based in the historical misconceptions of Reconstruction, particularly in regards to the President and Congress. Harrison's interpretation of the Freedmen's Bureau seems to most similarly mirror that of both Pierce and Bentley, however, he includes the theory of intersectionality into his approach. Harrison contends, "Perhaps the greatest failing of the Freedmen's Bureau was that it never quite comprehended the depth of racial antagonism and class conflict in the post war South."¹³ This critique factors in both the environment in which the Freedmen's Bureau functioned while simultaneously holding the Bureau responsible for its failings.

Many Black leaders pushed for education for newly freed slaves because they believed that educated blacks would appeal to white America's morals and therefore be seen as equal. Little did the Black leaders know that white America did not have morals, but rather a deep desire to maintain white supremacy by any means necessary, which is why the White philanthropists, missionaries, government officials allowed for only industrial education. This type of education was in fact no education at all because, in actuality, industrial education sought to erode and destroy the possibility of Black intellectuals, who might lead Black America to equality. While "free, public Southern education [has been] the legacy of Freedmen's education," the actual history is much more complex than that. The paper will contribute to the scholarship of Reconstruction by further examining how the failings of the Freedmen's Bureau allowed for segregationist policies to thrive as well as its continuing influence on the educational aspirations for Black Americans today. I will do this by examining three themes: northern meddling in Southern race issues, black ignorance, and Southern paternalistic concern which informed the Freedmen's moral training, all of which influenced Black Freedmen's education.

In 1865, out of the five million Blacks living in the South "95 per cent were illiterate," and in response to this crisis there was a large push by the Black community towards education, but which type of education remained the question.¹⁴ The debate about the type of education that newly freed Blacks would have was not new, but rather a continuation of the conversation amongst the few

¹³ Ibid., 211.

¹⁴ Ballard, *The Education of Black Folk*, 9.

educated Blacks of the South prior to the Civil War. In 1840, Black education advocates such as Martin R. Delany were debating the merits of classical education, which is the study of the Arts and Sciences, versus industrial education. The idea was that the former would allow for the growth of a Black professional class such as doctors or lawyers, whereas industrial would train newly freed people in practical business, in which they would work in service and labor industry rather than have careers.¹⁵ Delany believed that Blacks should be educated for practical business because he did not believe that Southern Black society would be able to utilize these new Black intellectuals in a way that offered a sense of reciprocity, both monetarily and intellectually. Delany was so steadfast in his beliefs because he deplored the current situation of Southern and Northern Blacks, as “they were either totally illiterate, or trained in classical education, and thus unprepared for entrepreneurship and the business world.”¹⁶ In Delany’s view, a successful and vibrant Black economy would have to come first before classical education would be worth the time and effort.

Martin R. Delany was not alone in his convictions, as Frederick Douglass also believed the Blacks were not in a position to utilize a Black educated elite, however, the two men disagreed on how education should be implemented. The biggest chasm between Douglass and Martin surrounded the decision on whether white help should be utilized in educating Black children. Martin initially supported white help but after the repeated failures and his exposure to Southern white racism, he lost his hope. However, “the integrationist and still optimistic Douglass solicited the assistance of the White abolitionist Harriett Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.” Delany strongly objected to white assistance, “especially on such a crucial matter as the education of Black children.”¹⁷ Given the racial tensions of the South and the racial laws that punished Black education prior to the Civil War, many Blacks, both freed and enslaved, could not fully trust the intentions of white help.

Given this mistrust many freed and enslaved Blacks put educating themselves and their children into their own hands, and formed what has now been

¹⁵ Tunde Adeleke, “Much Learning Makes Men Mad: Classical Education and Black Empowerment in Martin R. Delany’s Philosophy of Education,” *Journal of Thought*, Spring-Summer (2015).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

named “Native Schools.” These schools were run by self-educated Blacks, admitted Black children only, and operated in secrecy. The Native Schools were established to prevent the Black “educational movement [from becoming] controlled by the ‘civilized’ Yankees.”¹⁸ The schools formed without the help or influence of the Freedmen’s Bureau, missionaries, or philanthropists. By 1866 “there were at least 500 [native] schools” in the South, all of which were run by members of the Black community. The building and operation of Native Schools “predated the Civil War period and simply increased their activities after the war.”¹⁹ However, most of their early work remains unknown, as Black education was illegal in the South during this time. The schools were initially thought to be self-sustaining and survived for a few years just on the donations and self-imposed taxes of local Black communities. Multiple factors ultimately hindered the success of the Native Schools. Because the majority of newly freed Blacks who were in charge of teaching in the schools lacked a formal education themselves, learning could only go so far. Despite governmental and philanthropic good intentions, the flooding of white Northerners to the South eventually destabilized the Native School system. However, even the schools which were run by the Bureau and the missionaries remained heavily dependent on the donations of Black community members.²⁰

White missionaries, funded largely by Northern philanthropists, began flooding into the South after the Civil War to begin their mission of educating the helpless *uncivilized* blacks. The flood was not caused by the white missionaries seeing Reconstruction as a time to rectify the wrong of slavery but rather as an opportunity to perform *charity* work. The emphasis on charity is important because it highlights the attitudes that many of the missionaries held when entering the South: they perceived themselves as better than the newly freed slaves. A majority of the Northern missionaries “went South with the preconceived idea that the slave regime was so brutal and dehumanizing that Blacks were little more than uncivilized victims who needed to be taught the values and rules of civil society.” However, many of the missionaries “were astonished, and later chagrined, to discover that many ex-slaves had established their own educational collectives and

¹⁸ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

associations, staffed schools entirely with black teachers.”²¹ Their findings challenged the dominant narrative of black ineptitude that permeated the subconscious of white Northerners and Southerners alike. The way history is written gives the false impression that the North was racism free, when in actuality many Northern whites believed in the same racial binaries and stereotypes as those in the South, but acted on these prejudices differently. While the majority of the South was outwardly racist, thus the fight to keep slavery, the North promoted racism more discretely through educational and employment disenfranchisement as well as redlining housing areas for people of color.

The Northern white philanthropists who funded the missionaries had a vested interest in controlling the type of education newly freed Blacks would receive, as they believed that Blacks were childlike and lazy and that they were unable to think critically and analyze problems. In response, the schools funded by the Northern white philanthropists created institutions that taught industrial education, which would force Blacks into labor jobs and fields. Many of the institutes that Northern white philanthropists opened did not provide adequate primary education but labeled themselves institutions of higher learning. These “colleges” did not provide anything past a basic high school education, and of the almost 200 institutes that were created in the thirty-year period after the Civil War, few would be considered colleges today. Not only did these institutes not provide an adequate primary education, not to mention secondary, “the source of funding [for the schools] was white, the faculties were white, [and] the administrators were white.”²² Control over the type and quality of education Blacks would receive was no longer in the hands of the newly freed slaves, but rather was becoming quickly owned by white led organizations.

In addition to inadequate schooling, the missionaries provided and implemented racially insensitive educational material, which would today be considered blatantly racist. The American Missionary Association (AMA) published most of the material that was circulated in the missionary schools for Black children. In books such as *The Freedmen’s Primer*, *The Freedmen’s Spelling Book*, *The Lincoln Primer*, and the *First, Second, and Third Freedmen’s Readers*, the content aimed to socialize and indoctrinate Black children into positions of

²¹ Ibid., 6.

²² Ballard, *The Education of Black Folks*, 13.

subordination. In the books, Black children and adults were portrayed through the lens of white racist expectations and stereotypes, while simultaneously indoctrinating them to support free labor. White abolitionists also released similar books and pamphlets that outlined rules of etiquette that were also sexist and idealized male and female gender roles, such as the works by Clinton Bowen Fisk and Maria Child.²³ Young Black girls were taught not to give into their promiscuous nature and instead learn to be ladies who would do well in white society, and young Black boys were told not to aspire to anything beyond a laborer.

These pamphlets became educational lesson plans on insubordination for young Black children. Although one could argue that they aimed to assimilate Black children and young adults into the realities of the free world, one also cannot ignore the blatant racial undertones of these works. Most of the lessons on inferiority were guised as simple stories, where the Black child or adult was often given simplistic characteristics, and more importantly the Black character was always saved by the graciousness of a white person. The success of any Black character was depicted as being dependent on their willingness to fill an insubordinate position and then take the back seat to the more important, and more intelligent, white character. What these books failed to do was first acknowledge cultural difference, second understand the racial context of the South, and lastly remove white racial opinions about Blacks. As Black parents began realizing the type of education their children were receiving, they started pulling their children out of schools that were being run by missionaries. The missionary public school's numbers quickly declined and by the 1870s Blacks had all but pulled out of the public school realm.

The Freedmen's Bureau, formerly known as the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, became a functional institution in 1868 but its conception and planning began in 1865 just as the Civil War was ending. The Bureau was initially proposed in the Civil Rights Act in 1866, but many whites, from both the North and the South, believed that the wording of the act was too pro-Black and thus unfair to whites. The Bureau was then reimagined and

²³ See Clinton Bowen Fisk's "Plain Counsels for Freedmen: In Sixteen Brief Lectures," 1866 (<https://archive.org/details/plaincounselsfor00fisk>) and Lydia Maria Child's *The Freedman's Book*, 1865 (<https://archive.org/details/freedmensbook01chilgoog>).

restructured to include refugees, which included many poor whites. This reconfiguration would become the first of many as the Bureau struggled to survive, as it relied primarily on wealthy white men for its funding. Although initial intentions to educate the disenfranchised Blacks may have been pure, the ways in which the plans were carried out often revealed their ulterior motives.

One of the Bureau and the AMA's biggest accomplishments was forcing "whites of all classes to confront the question of universal schooling," as Blacks were going to be educated no matter what, and there was an opportunity for those with money and power to influence the type of education.²⁴ The legacy of the Freedmen's Bureau has been crafted to include its creation of the free public school system and various institutions of higher learning, such as Fisk and Howard, which are known today as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). However, the *free* public schools often came at a cost to Black intellect, as schools run by the Bureau utilized many of the materials printed by the AMA, and Black children were educated separately from white students. If having a separate curriculum for Black children was thought of as necessary, it should have included a comprehensive history of Blacks in America, which could have been used to explain their current situation. Instead the separate schools and different curriculum were used to further segregate the already highly marginalized newly free Blacks.

The Bureau and missionaries funded by Northern white philanthropists capitalized on the desire of newly freed slaves to become educated and literate, thus funneling resources into education programs considered appropriate for Blacks. Despite the efforts of the Native Schools and the Black desire for "practical education," the Bureau, missionaries, and white philanthropists operated schools that implemented industrial education. While practical education, which was frequently confused with industrial education, taught specific skills that are applicable to one's everyday life. The practical is learned through the realities of life, as well as giving context to past experiences. Industrial education sought to indoctrinate Blacks into seeing themselves as inferior and only units of labor. As mentioned before, industrial education had both its positives and its negatives; however, white communities who would fund education saw many of the negatives as positive aspects. Industrial education, rather than allowing for the blossoming of

²⁴ Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 26.

Black intellect, aimed to dismantle Black intellectual education as well as prevent their social mobility. Blacks who received an industrial education were trapped as manual laborers, serving as a cheap labor force for whites, and unable to climb the social ladder.

Education became a method “through which freed slaves could become employable, typically providing them with the skills necessary to access the values of contracts, to negotiate with potential employers, and to form a southern counterpart to the expanding northern capitalist economy.”²⁵ Many Christian missionaries, not unlike many slave owners, used Christianity as a tool to inculcate messages of Black inferiority and used labor as the only sense of purpose for Black communities. Many of the newly freed slaves were Christian, because many of their former masters had forced the religion upon them, as the Old Testament was repeatedly used to justify slavery. The missionaries were not alone in exploiting the religiosity of the South, as the Bureau also capitalized on the relationship between religion and education. J. H. Caldwell, a Bureau official and educator in Georgia, stated, “It is one of the most hopeful signs of the time... that throughout my entire district, when the benign influences of education and religion have prevailed, the Colored population have been marked for their morality and industry.”²⁶ One could argue that the influences of education and religion are almost never benign and, when in used in conjunction with one another, especially in the case of mission education, there was always an ulterior motive. Although the Bureau and the AMA are seen as separate entities, their views and practices were often dependent on one another as were their biases against Black people. Both the Bureau and the AMA would condemn Black communities for not entrusting their children to Bureau and missionary run schools because, for them, it illustrated Black failure to assimilate into Northern (white) society.

In addition to sharing similar views, the Bureau was highly dependent on missionaries and missionary teachers to not only help run Bureau funded schools but also by employing evangelical leaders as “special agents and as Bureau

²⁵ E. Allen Richardson, “Architects of a Benevolent Empire: The Relationship between the American Missionary Association and the Freedmen’s Bureau in Virginia, 1865-1872” in the *Freedmen’s Bureau and Reconstruction: Reconsiderations*, ed. Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 125.

²⁶ Ibid.

officers.”²⁷ While industrial education, or free labor education, may not have been the Bureau’s initial intent, it became the reality as those who supported and championed industrial education were now in positions of power to implement it. As a result, the Freedmen’s Bureau and the AMA became interdependent on one another, as “the Bureau provided funds for the purchase and construction of schools, and, in return, the benevolent associations were expected to pay teachers’ salaries.” In this exchange the Bureau forfeited to the AMA both the responsibility of overseeing the schools as well as planning the curriculum. The Bureau and the AMA utilized white missionary teachers as the “primary instrument” for reform and “understood [them] to be catalysts for an educational process that would reconstruct southern society.”²⁸ However, the policies and views held by the missionaries that the Bureau thought would “reconstruct southern society” held more closely in line with the views already held by a majority of Southerners. While a large number of whites in the South were holding onto a potential Confederacy revival, those who had a more nuanced outlook pushed for the next best thing, which was keeping the newly freed Blacks in positions of inferiority.

To combat the industrialization of education, the Native schools, formerly free public all-Black schools, began transitioning into privatized schools. With the influx of white northern missionaries and philanthropists and the heavy influence of the Freedmen’s Bureau, the formerly independent Native schools began to lose their autonomy and uniqueness. The Bureau set standards, educated white teachers were held to a higher esteem than Black teachers, and funding became dependent on a school’s ability to follow the rules set by the Bureau. In the 1867 *Freedmen’s Record*, officials at the Bureau “complained about the tendency of ex-slaves to prefer sending their children to Black controlled private schools rather than supporting the less expensive northern dominated ‘free’ school.”²⁹ Schools run by the Bureau and the AMA did not focus on the Black child as a potential intellectual but rather saw each Black pupil as future laborers. To resist this, Native schools not only became privatized but also reverted their funding back to donations from the Black community. Bureau run schools that operated near the newly privatized “Native Schools” eventually closed due to low enrollment numbers and a lack of

²⁷ Ibid., 126.

²⁸ Ibid., 127.

²⁹ Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 12.

funding, as Black parents donated largely to the “Native” private schools. The opening and operating of private schools for Black youth, which were outside of Bureau control and influence, served as a mechanism for guaranteeing the continuity of Black education that served to uplift the Black community rather than to suppress it. Even “when the Bureau reopened its schools” after the continued petitioning by some Black parents, “private schools for Black pupils continued to spring up [outside of the Bureau’s] control.”³⁰

In the midst of the Native Schools, schools run by the Bureau, and missionaries were Black teachers, many of whom were former slaves or were freed just prior to the beginning of the Civil War. In 1885, thirteen years after the formal closure of the Freedmen’s Bureau, Reverend Elijah P. Marris wrote an autobiography about his time as Union soldier, becoming a teacher, and his transition into the Church. During his time as a teacher, Marris worked at a school in his hometown of Simpsonville. The whites of Simpsonville were perplexed on how to treat someone who was once a slave and returned home a free man after the war. Marris “was the first colored school-teacher they have ever seen,” but it was the familiarity of who he was that shocked the white residents of Simpsonville the most. The white townspeople often sent Marris math problems to solve because in their opinion he needed to prove himself and when Marris succeeded they would tell Marris and his friends “That Elijah is a smart nigger!”

This confusion took more violent forms as well. Although under the “protection” of the Freedmen’s Bureau, Black schools were under frequent attacks by the KKK. In his autobiography Marris includes a story of how a Klan member shot at students while they were playing at recess. When Marris confronted the man he narrowly escaped with his life, convincing him that “no man was safe from [the Klan’s] depredations.”³¹ Not only were the students receiving an education that indoctrinated inferiority, the students also had to live under the constant threat of murder and death just because they were in schools.

Furthermore, Marris notes the competition between the two Black schools of his town, as one was ran by the Methodists and the other ran by Baptists, “which culminated in a division of the school and the formation of two distinct

³⁰ Ibid., 10.

³¹ Elijah P. Marris, “The Life and History of the Reverend Elijah P. Marris: First Pastor of Beargrass Baptist Church” 1890, republished in *Documenting the American South*, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/marris/marris.html> (accessed: April 20, 2016),

organizations.”³² Due to this division, only one school would receive funding from the Bureau and thus each school had to vie for the support of the Bureau. After the split, only the school run by the Baptists was “under the protection of the Freedmen’s Bureau,” and in response the Methodists filed reimbursement and financial need claims to the Bureau.³³ Both the Methodist and Baptist schools felt entitled to support from the Bureau, but the Bureau only would support the schools that adhered to their course curriculum and report requirements. Marrs, who worked in the school run by the Baptists, was being paid by the Bureau and not the Church and thus had to maintain his good standing with the Bureau to continue making a living. Marrs eventually took control of the school during the period of strife between the Baptists and the Methodists, although he remained neutral throughout the conflict. With the support of the Bureau, Marrs was elected to lead and later to supervise his school. Marrs, through the Bureau’s prompting, was put in a position to teach other educators how to file their mandated reports to the Bureau. If the reports from other teachers did not match those of Marrs, they would “not get any money” from the Bureau, although much of the monetary support of these schools came from Black donations and fundraising efforts.³⁴

The legacy of the Freedmen’s Bureau has been closely tied to the mandated free public education for which it implemented. Both Black and white children did not have access to a primary education, nor was it financially feasible for many poor families to send their children to school. Often children were sent off to work from a very early age to help support the family. However, with the implementation of free public schools many children were able to access an education. Again, the type of education these children received is important to note, as poor white children received a more traditional or classical based education, while Black students were taught how to position themselves within the labor field. Interestingly, the Freedmen’s Bureau documented that “many free Blacks [were] reluctant to send their children to school with former slaves.”³⁵ There was a push to separate the newly freed Blacks from the rest of the (white) country, which allowed for white supremacists to begin the campaign for mandated

³² Ibid., 79.

³³ Ibid., 80.

³⁴ Ibid., 82.

³⁵ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution 1863 – 1877* (New York: HarpersCollins Publisher, 1988), 101.

segregation. Robert Mills Lusher, a school superintendent of Louisiana pushed for the separation of both Black and white curriculum and schoolhouses. Lusher championed for free public schooling because he believed that without primary education white children would not be “properly prepared to maintain the supremacy of the white race.”³⁶ White support of free public education came more from their own self-interest in maintaining a racial hierarchy than it did from educating the youth. Poor whites were often times just as uneducated as newly freed Blacks, however, education was now seen as a looming threat to white supremacy because it could challenge the narrative of the ignorant savage. If the newly freed Blacks became more literate and educated than whites, the racial pseudoscience that white supremacy in founded upon would begin to show its faults.

Subsequently in reaction to the push for free public education for both white and Black children, a counter-revolution was spawned by the planter class who did not want Blacks to become educated, no matter the type of education they were receiving. The counter-revolution’s main goal was to limit the upward mobility of newly freed blacks by disrupting or limiting their access to receiving an education. To do this many planters began hiring young Black children to work the plantations, creating an early dependency on the children’s wages, who were then unable to be sent to school. Many plantation owners and overseers believed that “learning will spoil the nigger for work,” meaning that Blacks would begin to demand basic human rights.³⁷ If Blacks became educated they would no longer work for miniscule wages or tolerate being treated inhumanely, threatening the planters’ cheap labor source. The South’s entire economy was sustained by agriculture and the transition towards an industrial based society was not in the foreseeable future. Besides, agriculture was part of the “Southern way of life,” and many Southerners believed that too much had already been disrupted or criminalized for them to also have to give up the ways in which they sustained themselves. A more educated Black population meant a reduced labor supply, which ultimately meant less cotton production, the product that had come to define the South’s economy. Slavery was now “illegal,” meaning that the South now lacked a steady supply of free labor; moreover, Southern whites now were being

³⁶ Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 27.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

forced to see Blacks as equal. Ideas of equality were borderline blasphemous during this time (arguably still), thus maintaining the “Southern way of life” meant maintaining the racial hierarchy in which the foundations of the South were laid.

In response to the planter class’ counter-revolution, newly freed Blacks who sought employment on plantations, which were the primary source of employment for the former slaves, began to demand education clauses to be a part of their labor contracts. These contracts, which were prompted by the Bureau, sought to outline the type of work, wages and conditions a person was to work under. However, because the Bureau did not have the resources to enforce and make sure that these contracts were being upheld, many of the former slaves returned to abusive working conditions. In their education clauses, newly freed Blacks sought to legalize and formalize their right to receiving an education and these clauses often permitted them to miss work to attend school. Initially met with large pushback, the plantation owners eventually agreed but with the understanding that they would have control over the type of education their workers would receive. Many of the plantation owners sent their workers to all Black schools with Black teachers, because they believed any education a person would receive from a Black teacher would be inadequate and thus useless. Yet, as Frank R. Chase, the Freedmen’s Bureau’s superintendent of education for Louisiana contended, “the most prosperous schools in the state [were] taught by competent colored teachers.”³⁸ This view of colored teachers being incompetent was a reoccurring theme throughout Reconstruction, as many of the missionaries also believed that the Native schools, which were ran by Black teachers, afforded Black students a lesser education.

In 1869, Congress discontinued the Freedmen’s Bureau and closed and ended its operations in all aspects except those affecting education, which struggled to survive for three more years. The education sector of the Bureau was officially dismantled in 1872, due to allegations of corruption and the mishandling and misappropriation of funds. Maintained by the War Department and headed by Major General Oliver Otis Howard, from the beginning the Bureau lacked the foundational necessary support from the president; indeed President Johnson repeatedly attempted to veto the formation of the Bureau. It was only Congress’s ability to overrule the president that allowed for the Bureau to exist at all. Although

³⁸ Ibid., 22.

Howard's only experience had been as the former commander of the Army of Tennessee, he served as the Bureau's commissioner during the entirety of its existence. Howard was given this position because he was an avid supporter of humanitarian educational efforts and his intent is what is memorialized in the Freedmen's legacy. Although the Bureau opened over 1,000 schools for newly freed Blacks, the type of education they provided has been largely ignored, as well as the realities the students of the schools faced.³⁹

At the time of the Bureau's closure in 1872, Blacks had contributed from their own pockets over \$1,000,000 (in today's currency almost \$19 million) towards educating themselves and their children. However, "poverty undercut black educational efforts" and forced many Black ran schools "to turn to the Freedmen's Bureau and Northern societies for aid."⁴⁰ With the closure of the Bureau and the flight of missionaries back to the North, many poor Blacks were now not only educationally stagnant due to the implementation of industrial education but lacked the independent funds to keep their schools open. The schools that remained open ran on the Hampton Model, which was a form of industrial education that "did not challenge traditional inequalities of wealth and power" in the North or the South.

The Hampton Model was conceptualized in 1868 Hampton, Virginia, a Confederate stronghold during the Civil War. Founded by a white Northerner named Samuel Chapman Armstrong and championed by Black activist Booker T. Washington, the Hampton Model partnered with Washington's Tuskegee Institute, founded in 1881, and became known as the "Hampton-Tuskegee Idea." However, this "newly" formed idea "represented the ideological antithesis of the educational and social movement begun by ex-slaves."⁴¹ The Hampton-Tuskegee Idea maintained its contradictory Black curriculum and educational implementation until the late 1920s, where the shift was made towards mainstream Black education. The Hampton Institute did not aim to provide higher education nor trade schools but rather served as a program for "less educated, older, and more

³⁹ Elaine C. Everly, "Freedmen's Bureau Records: An Overview," *Federal Records and African America History* Vol. 29, No. 2, (Summer 1997.)

<http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1997/summer/freedmens-bureau-records.html>

⁴⁰ Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863 – 187*, 89.

⁴¹ Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 33.

economically disadvantaged” Black folks who wanted to become trained as common school teachers.

On paper the institute seemed beneficial to the Black community and served to provide a mechanism for education and eventual employment, however there was a darker truth behind the institute. Manual labor was at the core of the institute, a practice that would appear out of place at an institute whose objective was to train teachers. Armstrong championed for manual labor to be at the core of the institute because he believed that it would “teach students steady work habits, practical knowledge, and Christian morals.”⁴² In reality Armstrong did not want Blacks to be educated but rather used his institute to trap Blacks into powerless and subservient positions. Similarly to the white missionaries and the organizers of the Freedmen’s Bureau, “Armstrong viewed industrial education primarily as an ideological force that would provide instruction suitable for adjusting blacks into a subordinate social role in the emergent New South.”⁴³ The institute purposely did not offer access to higher education because its mission was to control the type of education Black youth would be receiving by creating a class of teachers who were unprepared and undereducated.

Similarly to the Bureau and the AMA, the Hampton model used industrial education as a tool to further disenfranchise and marginalize newly freed slaves, their children, and the generations which would follow. What all of these organizations sought was generational disenfranchisement, in which a “classical” education was unattainable and the cycle of poverty would be impossible to break. In essence what the “Hampton Ideal” called for was “the effective removal of Black voters and politicians from southern political life, the relegation of Black workers to the lowest forms of labor in the southern economy, and the establishment of a general southern racial hierarchy.”⁴⁴ Armstrong wanted to challenge the policies of Reconstruction with what he called “Black Reconstruction,” which sought to undue, remove, and further suppress Black people. The South believed, rightfully so, that Black education was dangerous to the Southern way of life because it disrupted, challenged, and broke down racial expectations and power structures.

⁴² Ibid., 35.

⁴³ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Interestingly, while disavowing Black education and empowerment, Armstrong claimed to be “a friend of the Negro race.” He made this claim while simultaneously pushing for the removal of Black people from any positions of power because he believed that their removal was the “first step towards ‘proper’ Reconstruction.”⁴⁵ Armstrong was an opportunist, as he attempted to offer support to some Black politicians, as he knew their positions would soon become obsolete as the Union soldiers began pulling out of the South in 1877. Much to his dismay and challenging his institute’s premise, Black politicians were voted into office due to highly influential Black votes in the years following the Union’s withdrawal. In response, Armstrong, as his forefathers did before him, began spewing racial hatred, often pulling from pseudoscience to back the arguments of Black inferiority. Armstrong alleged that Blacks should not be allowed to vote because they were culturally and morally deficient; he often resorted to using terms like “savages” and “darkies” when speaking about Black people.

Armstrong shared many common views with the Southern planter class who also believed that the newly freed slaves were morally deficient, incapable of critical thinking, and deserving of their subhuman condition and treatment. Where Armstrong’s views differed from the planter class was on the topic of education; the planter class believed that education would spoil the minds of ex-slaves and make them believe that they should be treated equally. Armstrong believed that industrial education should be used as a tool “to socialize blacks to understand and accept their disenfranchisement and to make them more productive laborers,” instead of a burden; the ex-slaves would become an economic asset to the South.⁴⁶ To make his vision become a reality, Armstrong began to propagandize the North and the South with information and pamphlets that led Blacks to believe they had more economic and educational opportunities in the South than they did in the North. Armstrong proclaimed himself “a friend of the Negro people” while simultaneously deconstructing Black agency and recruiting in the North and the South using false promises of a better life. To this end, he published the highly racist *Southern Workman* pamphlet. The illustrated monthly-published reports on (white) public opinions and views on the position of Blacks in the New South,

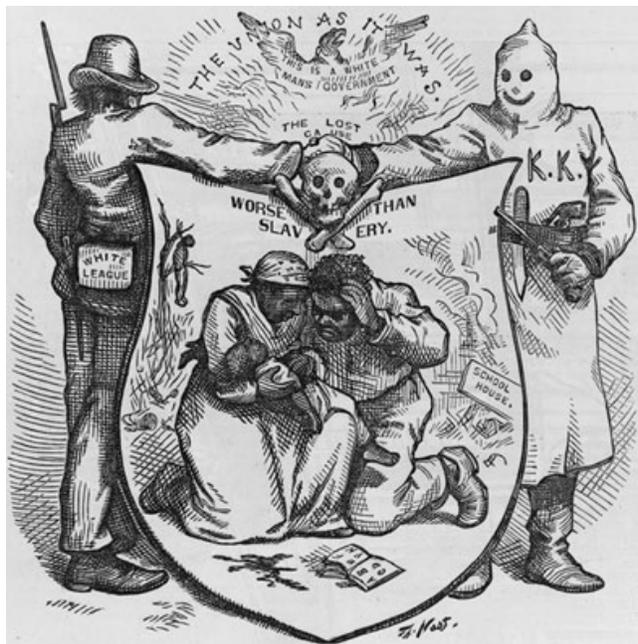
⁴⁵ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 42.

often referring to educational plight of Blacks in the South as “The Negro Problem.”

Black and white newspapers alike began to denounce the *Southern Workman* as being reactionary and conservative rather than a platform for different voices to be heard. Thomas Nast, the coauthor and illustrator of the pamphlet *Harper’s Weekly*, which featured world news, fiction, thought pieces, and humor, all alongside illustrations published “The Union as it was / The Lost Cause, worse than slavery” in response to the hate propagated by the *Southern Workman*.⁴⁷ The image depicts two men, one labeled “White League” who is shaking the hands of the Ku Klux Klan. Their hands join at the head of a skull and crossbones, beneath the skull is a shield depicting a Black couple who appear to be mourning their possibly dead child, and behind them is a man hanging from a tree and a schoolhouse is burning. A child’s book lay open in front of the couple and wording above the eagle at the top of the image reads, “The Union as it Was. This is a White Man’s Government.” The image highlights the violent struggle Blacks had to endure just to receive a basic education, albeit an education which taught them

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Thomas Nast. "The Union as it was / The Lost Cause, worse than slavery."

Harper's Weekly, v. 18, no. 930 (24 Oct 1874), p. 878.

The Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-128619.

they were inferior. Blacks had to endure arson, lynching and various forms of intimidation just for existing in the South and attempting to better themselves. In this image Nast asserted through illustration that the environment of Reconstruction was “worse than slavery;” that the level of violence inflicted against newly freed Blacks in the South was far worse than the suffering they endured while enslaved.

As mentioned before, Booker T. Washington was an avid supporter of the Hampton Institute despite its racism. When learning about school and what it meant to be educated, Washington came to believe that “not even Heaven presented more attractions to me than did the Hampton Institute in Virginia.”⁴⁸ Washington also described Armstrong as “a great man – the noblest, rarest human being that it [was] ever been [his] privilege to meet,” and how Armstrong’s presence offered any listener a “liberal education.”⁴⁹ Later on Washington depicted Armstrong as a perfect being, without any flaws, which makes one question whether Washington knew about Armstrong’s blatant racism or chose to ignore it. This contradiction between who Armstrong was and who Washington believed him to be may perhaps have originated from the image of the Black education crusader which Armstrong projected to the students of the Hampton Institute. The language Washington uses in his autobiography when he writes about Armstrong blurs the line between adoration and worship, as Washington himself admits that he and other students worshipped Armstrong. There appears to be a sense of idolization. Washington goes as far as comparing Armstrong and the other missionaries to Christ.

Washington believed that “the history of the world failed to show a higher, purer, and more unselfish class of men and women than those who found their way into the Negro schools.”⁵⁰ Blacks, especially those who lived in the South, were so unaccustomed to any white person recognizing them as human that anyone who showed them an ounce of sympathy was glorified. For example, while at the Hampton Institute, many of the Blacks who had migrated from the South would sleep in a bed with sheets for the first time. This exposure to basic human recognition can and should be attributed to the Hampton students’ deification of

⁴⁸ Booker T. Washington, “Up From Slavery” in *Three Negro Classics* (New York: Avon Classics, 1965), 51.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

Armstrong. While at Hampton, Washington was socialized into believing that the newly freed Blacks were not ready for the true classical education that would free them from the shackle of manual labor, but rather were better suited for industrial education. Washington also came to see Reconstruction as a farce, where the North wanted to punish the Southern whites by placing newly freed Blacks into positions of superiority over their former masters. The internalized oppression and racism Washington exhibited is evident throughout his writings and were highly influential in maintaining and expanding his relationship with Armstrong and the Hampton Institute. Washington should be seen as a successful byproduct of the indoctrination of Black inferiority that the Freedmen's Bureau and Missionary schools promoted.

As a result of the Bureau, missionaries, and the Hampton Institute creating all Black schools and centers, segregation was not only legitimized but also gave moral backing. In 1896 the U.S. Supreme Court legalized segregation by declaring "separate but equal" constitutional. Homer Plessy brought charges against the city of New Orleans after he was told to vacate a train car that was for whites only, as he contended this removal violated his Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments. The Supreme Court chose to ignore the protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment, and instead focused on the sections that highlighted that it was the state's right to choose how it chose to handle policing and the enforcement of laws. The Court alleged that the purpose of the Fourteenth Amendment was "to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law... Laws ... requiring their separation... do not necessarily imply the inferiority of either race." The ruling also included a response to the claims against segregation because they believed the "assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is... solely because the colored race choose to put that construction upon it."⁵¹ Only one Justice dissented in the vote, the white Kentuckian and former slave owner John Marshall Harlan, who believed that while the Constitution was intended to be colorblind, white racists viewed themselves as superior and used the law to legitimize their thinking. It can be argued that because the Black people of the South were not allowed classical educations, they lacked Black legal representation. By giving states the power to

⁵¹ Eric Foner and John A. Garraty, "Plessy v. Ferguson," *History.com*, 2009, <http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/plessy-v-ferguson> (accessed May 21, 2016).

impose “merely legal distinctions” between the white and Black races, the Constitutional decision would allow for segregation to take hold legally and influence American history forever.

Due to the educational stagnation created by the implementation of industrial education, the Black South lacked the legal system and civil servants to protect their rights. The few Black lawyers that existed during this time practiced in the North, and although they did attempt to help the Blacks of the South in certain cases, the Black South lacked its own legal voice. The Freedmen’s Bureau began its operations in 1865 and the influx of white missionaries from the North came immediately after, so between the opening of the Bureau and the defeat of Plessy in the Supreme Court over thirty-one years had passed. This means, if a Black child was either born during or Post-Reconstruction and they were given the appropriate educational resources and opportunities, this child could have been a practicing lawyer by the time the Plessy case was being taken to court for the first time.

As a result of the absence of an educated class of Blacks in the South during the beginning of the twentieth century, many of the first critiques of the failings of the Freedmen’s Bureau and Reconstruction came from Northern Blacks. The first of whom was W.E.B. Du Bois, who released his critique in 1901 in his self-published monthly, *The Atlantic*.⁵² Du Bois believed that both the Bureau and the missionary associations were attempting to offer temporary relief to a deeply systemic and institutionalized problem. The need for the Bureau and the AMA came from the visual destitution that the newly freed slaves were living under, with tattered clothes and no place to live, their situation was appalling to anyone who saw them. Du Bois’ critique was coming from a Black perspective and therefore was more critical towards the failing of the government to address the racial tensions that remained after the Civil War and Reconstruction. The U.S. Government assumed charge of the newly freed Blacks with the implementation of the Freedmen’s Bureau, but failed to realize and recognize how these “black men [had been] emasculated by a peculiarly complete system of slavery, centuries old; and now, suddenly, violently, they [came] into a new birthright, at a time of war

⁵² W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Freedmen’s Bureau,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1901, <http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/01mar/dubois.htm> (Accessed May 22, 2016).

and passion, in the midst of the stricken, embittered population of their former masters.”⁵³

General Howard, who was in charge of the Bureau, had too large a task to complete on his own without the support of the American people and the government. Du Bois believed that Howard, although good intentioned, had “too much faith in human nature” and too “little aptitude for systematic business and intricate detail.” Conversely, Du Bois also viewed Armstrong and other missionaries who opened schoolhouses in the South as “apostles of human development.” Maybe, like Washington, Du Bois was blinded by the positive intent of the missionaries and Armstrong to see the realities of the educational indoctrination that these individuals and groups were pushing for. Like many other historians, Du Bois believed that the lasting legacy and “greatest success of the Freedmen’s Bureau lay in the planting of the free school among Negroes, and the idea of free elementary education among all classes in the South.”⁵⁴ Perhaps in 1901 it was too early to tangibly see the negative effects of the type of education that was being imposed on Black children in those schoolhouses.

In response to the failing of the mission schools and the closing of the Freedmen’s Bureau, in 1907 white Quaker philanthropist Anna T. Jeanes started the Jeanes Foundation, also known as the Negro Rural School Fund. The “Jeanes teachers” were white and worked in the public schools previously established by the Freedmen’s Bureau, and their supervisors were Southern Blacks. However, many of the teachers instead reported to the local white community, as segregation was in full swing and racial hostilities were on the rise. Again, local white communities wanted to influence the type of education Blacks would be receiving. There was a push towards maintaining the implementation of industrial education over classical education, because although the Freedmen’s Bureau attempted to create policies to “fix” inequality, it did not attempt to remedy the deep and entrenched racism of the South. The Jeanes teachers, despite their good intentions, should be examined and critiqued under the same lens as the Bureau and the AMA, given that they too went into the South with “good intentions.”

In 1930, Carter G. Woodson published his critique of the Bureau and the use of industrial education its consequences. Woodson, one of the first African

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

American historians and founder of the Association for the Study of African American life and history, was born in 1875 to two former slaves in New Canton, Virginia. Woodson's parents had migrated to the North after they heard that Black high schools were being built and witnessing the shortcoming of the educational institutions of the South. Woodson would go on to earn his PhD from Harvard, the second African American to earn a degree after Du Bois. Two famous Woodson quotes are, "The mere imparting of information is not education" and "When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions." These quotes in essence capture Woodson's opinions regarding the use of industrial education and the work of the Freedmen's Bureau and the AMA. Woodson was highly critical of the Civil War and Reconstruction as a whole, as he believed "Black people had [only] been liberated as a result of a sectional conflict of which their former owners emerged as victims."⁵⁵ Specifically in regards to industrial education, Woodson believed that "this undertaking was more of an effort toward social uplift than actual education" and the Bureau and missionaries goals were "to transform the Negroes, not to develop them."⁵⁶ Woodson noted that industrial education was the byproduct of an education system designed by the whites that had once enslaved Blacks and "now sought to segregate them."⁵⁷ Black teachers and the removal of white teachers, especially in schools ran by missionaries, was the first step in the successful and correct educating of a Black person. However, the Black teachers needed to be trained by fellow Black teachers, otherwise they would further "mis-educate the Negro." Woodson asserted that education system set up during Reconstruction and the one that existed during his lifetime, which was under the control of whites, only served to "train the Negro to be white and at the same time convinces him of the impropriety or the impossibility of becoming white."⁵⁸ However, Woodson recognized the need for white teachers until Black trained teachers were a feasible reality, yet these white teachers would always be temporary.

Although some would see Woodson's critiques as promoting separatism, Woodson was speaking on the truth and reality of the results of white dominated

⁵⁵ Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, 1933 (Washington D.C.: Africa World Press, Inc. Ed., 1990), 9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

Black education. As a historian, Woodson repeatedly acknowledged how the history of both the “Negro” and the Freedmen’s Bureau had been white washed into a narrative that suppressed and erased Black intellect, while uplifting even the most racist of whites. Woodson holds everyone responsible, including “educated” Blacks, for Jim Crow and Segregation, as they are both institutions that people chose to participate and live within. A considerable majority of “educated” Blacks that lived in both the North and the South had “accepted segregation” and “became its fearless champions.” Woodson believed that “educated” Black acceptance was the direct result of the education that Blacks were force fed in industrial schools. The consent towards segregation, Woodson asserts, serves as “an opiate, [as it] furnishes temporary relief,” however, “it does not remove the cause of the pain.”⁵⁹ For many Blacks, especially those indoctrinated to believe that they were inferior, it was easier to live in compliance with the ways of the white dominated society, than have to actively challenge their position. Challenges towards the social hierarchy often resulted in violence and even death. Woodson saw segregation as the sequel to slavery, as society did “not show the Negro how to overcome segregation, but rather [taught] him how to accept it as final and just.”⁶⁰ Slaves were taught that they were less than human and therefore deserving of their inferior position, and their slave status was further legitimized through the misquoting and paraphrasing of the Christian bible. Slaves were not allowed to be educated and even learning how to read was punishable by death, thus slaves were never able to question their status or challenge the racial allegations. The slaves, like their freed descendants, were mis-educated “innocent people who did not know what was happening.” The brainwashing of Blacks into positions of inferiority had been “so subtle that men have participated in prompting it without knowing what they were doing.”⁶¹ The realities and long lasting effects of industrial education were shockingly apparent by 1933; the Bureau and missionaries had arrived in the South with “good intentions” but the consequences were devastating and have affected many generations.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 100.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 101.

⁶¹ Ibid., 102.

Quick fixes by white savior organizations and white government have repeatedly occurred since the closure of the Freedmen's Bureau. Schools were desegregated in 1954 with the passing of *Brown v. Board of Education*, which declared "separate by equal" unconstitutional. However, laws that prompted states to implement civil and equal rights between Blacks and whites were ignored up until the 1970s. Integration, although mandated to create equality, proved to be a temporary performance. The backlash against integrative efforts resulted in the deaths of many Black activists, and history is narrated in such a way that erases the violence that lasted well into the 1970s against integrated schools. The anti-busing movement of Boston in 1974 mirrored that of the Civil Rights counter movements led by racist whites in Selma, Alabama just ten years prior. While America was shocked by the images of Black men and women being beaten while peacefully protesting, we remained silent when the images of "Wild, raging mobs of white men and women...confront[ing] armies of police, while youths in their teens and younger hurled rocks, bottles, and racial epithets at buses carrying terrified black youngsters to school."⁶² The racial climate at the newly integrated schools is all but ignored in our textbooks, as America has decidedly chosen to depict an account of quick progressivism. The racism and entrenched hatred that Black students experienced and are still experiencing into at predominantly white institutions has been largely ignored since the 1970s. And as quickly as images of integration plastered every American's T.V. screen, they disappeared. Schools stopped bussing in Black children and no one seemed to notice. Black issues would only be brought back to America's attention through the Crack Epidemic and the War on Drugs.

America's apathy stems largely from the false narratives and distraction tactics utilized by the Reagan and Clinton administrations. Reagan, arguably one of the most racist presidents in America's history, actively fought against the Civil Rights Bill, supported apartheid in South Africa, and used the War on Drugs to criminalize Black America. The Reagan administration understood that mobilizing many of the racist whites who still felt scorned by the Civil Rights Acts would be the key to winning the 1980 election, so his administration implemented the "Southern Strategy." Using the Southern Strategy, Reagan would use racist code

⁶² Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1991), 1.

words during his campaigns and speeches, which spawned what has been now labeled “closet racism.” This is when one is no longer outwardly racist, but rather uses specified words that allude to racial innuendos and stereotypes. Clinton, similarly to Armstrong, has long been hailed a hero by Black America, but the laws and policies the Clinton administration implemented are largely responsible for the disproportionate number of Black men involved in the criminal (in)justice system.

We no longer see Blacks as victims of centuries of disenfranchisement, but rather a group that is holding onto the past that needs to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. America gave Black people Civil (but not Equal) Rights and access to an education (but fails to acknowledge the type), and therefore equality was achieved. But if this were the case, how is it in 2016 that schools are more segregated than they were in 1950? Why are universities that are not HBCUs struggling to have Black enrollment numbers over 3-5%? The legacies of the Bureau and the missionaries’ schools are not just free public school but rather something much uglier and we have failed to notice it because it has been so subtle, which poses the question, are we the new “mis-educated Negro” that Woodson condemned for allowing the system to function?