

## ABSTRACT

Title: JIM CROW, POLITICS, AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT:  
*THE AFRO-AMERICAN LEDGER*, 1902

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This case study of Baltimore's *The Afro-American Ledger* in 1902 analyzes the news and editorial content, demonstrating the power of advocacy journalism at the turn of the last century. The *Ledger* used its pages to persuade readers to fight the Jim Crow car bill, and to provide information about the bill's status. When blacks in other Southern states lost their right to vote and participate in the political process, the *Ledger* encouraged readers to use their vote and their voices to speak out against the Democratic and Republican parties during an election year. As a black-owned and operated newspaper whose founders were also men of the cloth, the *Ledger* encouraged more black Baltimoreans to own their own businesses, self-govern themselves, and obtain respectable jobs. Many of the editorials were devoted to finding ways to uplift the black community morally, spiritually, economically, and politically. This thesis puts the meaning and purpose of the news articles and editorials within the context of the time period in which they were published: the Jim Crow era, which is of enduring interest.

JIM CROW, POLITICS, AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT:  
*THE AFRO-AMERICAN LEDGER*, 1902

By

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## Introduction

The *Afro-American Ledger* welcomed the New Year with much promise on Jan. 4, 1902. A picture of a black Baby New Year was prominently displayed below the masthead. Correspondents throughout the country detailed the religious activities of black churches from Plant City, Fla.,<sup>1</sup> and Wilberforce, Ohio.<sup>2</sup> While a closer look at that week's edition showed that for African-American Marylanders, possible trouble loomed ahead, it also showed the *Ledger's* role as an advocate for the rights of blacks in Baltimore and throughout the state.

This thesis will be a historical case study of the *Afro-American Ledger's* news coverage in 1902. Evidence shows that both rural and urban blacks in Maryland faced social and political changes that would affect their lives. First, the newspaper helped sustain a three-month campaign to defeat the Jim Crow car bill from becoming a law in the Old Line State. The bill was a proposal to separate passengers on trains and steamboats based on race. Second, this was an election year, and lastly, the publication echoed the sentiments of well-known black intellectuals on how to uplift the race.

Furthermore, this thesis discusses how the editorials and front page stories of the *Afro-American Ledger* laid the groundwork for the news organization's platform. Despite the fact that black Marylanders had very few people in political office looking out for them, and their personal freedoms were restricted during the post-Reconstruction era, the *Ledger* consistently made attempts to push back and challenge the powers that be. One way they attempted to do this was by trying to hold public officials accountable for the promises they had made to blacks in the state. The goal of this thesis is to look into a

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<sup>1</sup> "A Quiet Christmas," *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 4, 1902.

<sup>2</sup> "Bishop's Council to Meet in Philadelphia," *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 4, 1902.

small window of an alternative newspaper, the editorial board's reactions to the events of the day, and how the audience responded to said events.

I selected news articles and commentary pieces from the *Afro-American Ledger* in 1902 because of its availability and its news coverage of events affecting African-Americans in Maryland at the turn of the century. There were other African-American newspapers during the Jim Crow era in Baltimore, such as the *Lancet*.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, many libraries do not have complete editions of other publications that catered to black audiences. A good portion of the newspapers were scattered throughout various libraries across the state or country. Missing newspapers would not chronicle a year's worth of events from beginning to end.

However, the *Ledger* had been in print from 1900-1915. Locally, the Enoch Pratt Library in Baltimore and the Theodore R. McKeldin Library at the University of Maryland at College Park, had the most editions of the newspaper, from 1902-1915, available in microfilm. I went to the R. Lee Hornbake Library, which is also located at the University of Maryland at College Park, for rare books and those that were a part of special collections. Even though two years' worth of news is missing, I picked the *Ledger* because it was the most complete and intact publication compared to the other black newspapers. Also, I chose to examine 1902 because news organizations tend to spend the first few years in business creating a platform and an identity. By examining the third year of publication, I was able to analyze the paper after it had formed its identity. Although the *Ledger* dedicated a good portion of its pages to events that were

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<sup>3</sup> Maryland State Archives, "Guide to Maryland Newspapers: Featuring the Newspaper Collections of the Maryland State Archives," [http://speccol.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/speccol/catalog/newspapers/cfm/dsp\\_number.cfm?id=131](http://speccol.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/speccol/catalog/newspapers/cfm/dsp_number.cfm?id=131), (accessed September 9, 2010).

happening across the country and overseas, such as the treaty between Great Britain and Japan,<sup>4</sup> issues concerning Marylanders at the dawn of a new century are the primary focus.

W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington were two well-known figures in the African-American community in 1902, and several news articles and editorials suggest that the *Ledger* expressed support for Washington's ideas on what was best for black America. The editors agreed that black Baltimoreans should practice self-sufficiency in terms of providing high-quality goods and services to the community, such as decent stores and good schools for its children.

On the other hand, some of DuBois' teachings were also influential. For instance, the successful three-month campaign to prevent Jim Crow from gaining a foothold in the state's transportation system demonstrates the *Ledger's* desire for more equality in society. Its routine criticism of the state's Republican Party for straying from the ideals of President Abraham Lincoln indicates that it wanted to be involved in the political process, and avoid becoming passive followers. Saying anything to get elected seemed to be wearing thin on the minds of the editors, which is discussed later in the thesis.

As a small black-owned newspaper, *The Afro-American Ledger* would later grow in size and content, and become what is now known as *The Afro-American*, or *AFRO* for short. Overall, the *AFRO* has been in business for well over a century, and is one of the most prominent and enduring newspapers within the black community. The *Afro-American* has been published continuously since its inception in 1892.

In a 1992 *Washington Post* article celebrating the *AFRO's* 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, legendary journalist Chuck Stone, who is also a professor emeritus in journalism, worked

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<sup>4</sup> "England Allied With Japan," *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 15, 1902.



at the *AFRO*'s Washington office during the Kennedy administration, and said that the newspaper's role in chronicling events in the black community embodied "the length and shadow of our race."<sup>5</sup>

Professor Emeritus Roger Wilkins, a journalist and attorney who taught history at George Mason University at the time, had this to say:

Just think about where black people were 100 years ago. It was 16 years after the end of Reconstruction. Blacks had been reenslaved to a very large degree by state laws, federal neglect and night-riding terrorism. The beginning of the Afro was like a beacon in the night.<sup>6</sup>

The first chapter of my thesis will give a brief history of the *Afro-American Ledger*. In the second chapter, my goal is to analyze the content of the news and editorial pages during the *Ledger*'s crusade against a proposed Jim Crow car bill. I will observe the news and editorial content regarding Maryland politics in the third chapter, and how the state was affected by some of the political actions at the federal level. The news articles and editorials that encouraged economic empowerment in spite of discrimination are discussed in the fourth chapter. Lastly, I will offer my conclusions about the information that I found, the significance of advocacy journalism within American history, and the need for more research regarding the history of black journalism, particularly in the state of Maryland.

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<sup>5</sup> "The Newspaper That Wrote History: Baltimore's Afro-American at 100," *The Washington Post*, August 15, 1992.

<sup>6</sup> "The Newspaper That Wrote History: Baltimore's Afro-American at 100," *The Washington Post*, August 15, 1992.

## Chapter 1: Brief History

The *Afro-American Ledger* was interested in social and political issues from the very beginning. The founders and employees who were involved in the newspaper's business and editorial affairs in the early decades were men who were very active in Baltimore's black churches, and were also engaged in the city's political, civic, and business activities. In 1889 Rev. William Alexander, an ordained minister originally from Virginia, founded the newspaper, which was first named the *National Home Protector*.<sup>7</sup> Alexander, who was also the pastor of Baltimore's Sharon Baptist Church, changed the newspaper's name to the *Afro-American* in 1892.<sup>8</sup> In addition to serving as a clergyman and running a news organization, Alexander fought for the rights of black Baltimoreans, including the right to have decent schools for black students.<sup>9</sup>

Over time, a few members of the black business community in Baltimore would have a stake in the newspaper's ownership, such as William H. Daly, head of the Northwestern Family Supply Company.<sup>10</sup> The Northwestern Family Supply Company had a chain of retail stores that operated within Baltimore's black communities. Daly brought the *Afro-American* in 1895, and became one of its five directors after it was incorporated in 1896.<sup>11</sup>

The newspaper's parent company experienced financial trouble and in 1896 the *Afro-American*'s printing equipment was sold to two stakeholders to repay its loans.<sup>12</sup> In 1897, John H. Murphy, Sr., became the new owner for the *Afro-American*, buying the

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<sup>7</sup> Hayward Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950*, 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950*, 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950*, 3.

newspaper after its previous owners became bankrupt.<sup>13</sup> Murphy was a former slave who fought during the Civil War; he earned his freedom after completing his tour of duty. After the war, Murphy became a Sunday School teacher and superintendent within the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) denomination and was in charge of the printing aspect of the newspaper prior to purchasing it.<sup>14</sup> According to the second edition of *The Black Press, U.S.A.*, and *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950*, Murphy had also been a whitewasher.<sup>15</sup>

In 1900, the *Afro-American* merged with another black-owned newspaper, *The Ledger* (1898-1899), to become *The Afro-American Ledger*.<sup>16</sup> The *Ledger* was founded by Rev. George F. Bragg, Jr., a priest within the Episcopal Church; according to *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950*, Bragg would serve as the editor under the new merger, until 1915.<sup>17</sup> The Afro-American Company ran and operated the *Afro-American Ledger* in 1902. By that time, Murphy was the *Ledger*'s manager, and was identified as J. H. Murphy in the newspaper's editorial page.

In 1902, the *Afro-American Ledger* was "Published Every Saturday in the Interest of the Race," according to its motto on the masthead, sold for three cents a copy, and was eight pages long. The editorial page listed its headquarters in Baltimore at 307 St. Paul Street, with an uptown office at 1336 North Carey Street.

Church activities, particularly in the Baptist and A.M.E. denominations, were well documented and took up a majority of the front page news. "Midnight's Musings," a

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<sup>13</sup> Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950*, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950*, 3-4.

<sup>15</sup> Roland E. Wolseley, *The Black Press, U.S.A.*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 44.

<sup>16</sup> Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950*, 4-5.

<sup>17</sup> Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950*, 4-7.

weekly column written under the pseudonym J.O. Midnight,<sup>18</sup> highlighted the columnist's interstate travels and his encounters with clergy leaders. Reporters and special correspondents covered church news from around the country, while correspondents throughout Maryland covered the agricultural, social, religious, and political events within their communities. Also on the front page was a column titled either "Throughout the State," or "The State of Maryland," which chronicled local religious and political news.

The second page of the *Ledger* was dedicated to world events and news from around the country in 1902. Advertisements for products such as shoes and life insurance, advertorials, and stories were found on page three. Page four was the editorial page, which discussed the issues of the day. The editorial pages were where the editors derided both the Democratic and Republican political machines while addressing the needs of the black community. Moreover, the editors were not afraid to chastise blacks who they thought were putting African-Americans in a negative light.

On the fifth page, readers could find the conclusion of the "Midnight's Musings" column, more news briefs, advertorials and advertisements from local businesses. The sixth page would provide information about the railroad and steamboat schedules. Information about commerce could be found on the seventh page, and readers could also see quotes for the price of hay, oats, and corn. Lastly, page eight usually had four columns: "About the City," which talked about notable residents, prior events, and recent deaths, "Religious Notices," a column that provided information about upcoming worship services, and "Special Notices," which had brief information about community activities, or a memorial tribute to a deceased individual. The fourth column, "Personal Notes,"

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<sup>18</sup> Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950*, 6.

contained brief information about local residents and their most recent trips and vacations. In addition, the *Ledger* had several more columns that were published in the paper, including: “Notes and Comments,” which was dedicated to more news briefs, and “The Sabbath School,” which provided information about Sunday School activities.

The *Afro-American Ledger*’s early years would lay the groundwork for when the newspaper would become the *Afro-American* in 1915. At one point, the *Afro-American* would be circulated in other parts of the nation, with correspondents in New England, the Deep South and in the Midwest.

Today, the *Afro-American* is still in circulation and published weekly, but is limited to the Washington and Baltimore markets. John H. Murphy’s descendants continue to maintain ownership of the *Afro-American*, and the newspaper continues to offer news and commentary on the social, political, and economic issues affecting African-Americans. Previously, there have been books, such as *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950* by Hayward Farrar and *The Black Press, U.S.A., Second Edition* by Roland E. Wolseley, that have discussed the history and business aspects of the *Afro-American*. However, my thesis will be largely devoted to studying the news content on the front and editorial pages of the publication, when it was known as *The Afro-American Ledger*.

## Chapter 2: An Early Defeat of Jim Crow

A proposed Jim Crow car law was reported in the newspaper's first edition for the New Year, on Jan. 4, 1902. "Are we to have a "Jim Crow" car law in Maryland? A Bill to that effect has been introduced in the Legislature," said the brief statement in the editorial page.<sup>19</sup> The Jim Crow Car Bill was introduced by a Maryland lawmaker from the Eastern Shore, and its goal was to separate passengers on steamboats and trains based on the color of their skin.

Those 22 words marked the beginning of an intense campaign to get African-Americans in Baltimore and throughout the state to protest against this new bill. Next week, the editors published another statement that clearly explained how the editorial board felt about the proposed segregation law. "Mr. "Jim Crow," well-known in the Southland, is making an effort to get lodging in Maryland. We have no use for him, nor any member of his family in this State," reads a Jan. 11 quote.<sup>20</sup>

When the editors said that Jim Crow is "well-known in the Southland," they were referring to the racial discrimination that was already taking place in the Deep South and other border states. In this thesis Jim Crow refers to the system of excluding or denying blacks a place in society through legal means, threats, and intimidation. Also, not all of the Jim Crow practices were legally sanctioned. Some of the practices were carried out based on the culture and customs of a particular state or region.<sup>21</sup>

The *Afro-American Ledger*'s coverage of the Jim Crow car bill was significantly different from that of other newspapers in the city and throughout the state in terms of

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<sup>19</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 4, 1902.

<sup>20</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 11, 1902.

<sup>21</sup> C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 7, 22-34, 82-96.

their level of interest in the story, its place in the paper, the length and quantity of the stories and the number of editorials in the paper. The *Ledger* had a vested interest in the fate of the Jim Crow car bill because the paper was founded and written by blacks, they covered black social and religious figures, issues that concerned blacks, and their news was aimed at black Marylanders.

In this chapter, all of the quotes from the newspaper articles of the *Afro-American Ledger* are cited exactly as they were originally published. The style, grammar, and errors are not a reflection of the author of this thesis. In order to reflect the tone and flavor of the political, social, and racial climate for blacks at the turn of the century, none of the quotes were edited.

From Jan. 4 to March 1, not a week went by that the *Ledger* did not write about the Jim Crow car bill. During this three-month period, there were a total of six editorial essays, eight brief quotes in the editorial page, eight news articles, a copy of one speech that was made before the state's General Assembly, one poem, and two letters to the editor, that were devoted to the controversy. I will show how the news coverage began as a brief statement in the editorial page and snowballed into lengthier and more pointed comments in opposition to the bill, both on the front and editorial pages. Correspondents in Cambridge, Md., and Frostburg, Md., not only reported the news for a larger audience, but they highlighted the reaction of the bill within their respective communities.

Other newspapers did not express the same level of interest in covering the Jim Crow car bill, and this was reflected in terms of the placement, length, and quantity of the stories. The *Baltimore Sun* placed a brief, three paragraphed story of the news of the bill

at the back of the paper, on page 12.<sup>22</sup> The *Baltimore Morning Herald*, a daily newspaper, published a two paragraphed article of the bill's introduction into the State House on the front page of the paper.<sup>23</sup> The publication would go on to print occasional stories about the status of the bill, including one about how some members within Baltimore's black community responded to the measure.<sup>24</sup> The *Morning Herald* also published news articles about members of the clergy in the Presbyterian, Congregational, Reformed Ministers,<sup>25</sup> and the Methodist<sup>26</sup> churches submitting resolutions to the General Assembly opposing the bill, but the newspaper did not address the issue in its editorial pages. Outside of Baltimore, *The Evening Times* of Cumberland, Md., mentioned in a one paragraph news bit that the Jim Crow car bill "was greeted with enthusiastic applause when introduced in the House,"<sup>27</sup> and only wrote one paragraph about its fate.<sup>28</sup> On Feb. 27, 1902, *The News* of Frederick, Md., sandwiched the fate of the bill between two other pieces of legislation, one of them being a petition from Frederick County residents to encourage the House of Delegates to pass a bill that does a better job of enforcing liquor laws.<sup>29</sup>

By Jan. 18, the Jim Crow controversy made its debut on the *Ledger's* front page:

Good morning Mr. Jim Crow—you have made your appearance very early in the session but indeed we earnestly hope that you will pass around the other way and find your final resting place in the waste basket instead of disgracing the statute books with your vile and ugly presence. But seriously Mr. Editor, we are not surprised at this "Jim Crow" movement. For years we have been dreading it.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> "Will Draw the Color Line," *The Baltimore Sun*, January 1, 1902.

<sup>23</sup> "Jim Crow Car Bill," *Baltimore Morning Herald*, January 1, 1902.

<sup>24</sup> "Colored Citizens on Jim Crow Bill," *Baltimore Morning Herald*, February 21, 1902.

<sup>25</sup> "Protest Against "Jim Crow" Bill," *Baltimore Morning Herald*, February 7, 1902.

<sup>26</sup> "Methodists Oppose "Jim Crow" Bill," *Baltimore Morning Herald*, February 11, 1902.

<sup>27</sup> "State Legislature Resumes Sessions," *The Evening Times*, January 8, 1902.

<sup>28</sup> "Democratic Caucus," *The Evening Times*, February 27, 1902.

<sup>29</sup> In The Legislature, *The News*, February 27, 1902.

<sup>30</sup> The State of Maryland, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 18, 1902.



The writer then cited bad behavior on the cars and steamboats by a certain “class of our people,” as one reason why Maryland would attempt to create a bill to “humiliate” blacks, and said the bill was “not a democratic measure.” Instead of ending his or her report about current events on a note of anger and dread, the Frostburg special correspondent took it a step further, making a call to action to readers:

“It now becomes the duty of every Afro- American in the state to take off his coat and resolve to put up the stiffest kind of fight against this infamous measure. Surely we will not sit idly by and permit ourselves to be robbed of every right held dear by every American citizens. Negroes of Maryland, up and at it.”<sup>31</sup>

By mid-January, the editorial page went from using one to three brief statements. Like the Frostburg reporter, the editorial board made a general statement about the controversy in one quote and urged action in the latter statements, which were published six quotes below the first one:

A “Jim Crow” car is unnecessary in Maryland.<sup>32</sup>

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Let the colored men in every part of the State get up petitions and use every honorable means to defeat the “Jim Crow” car law. It means work for us. Will we measure up to the standard. Surely we have a few friends left that can be relied upon.<sup>33</sup>

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It is up to the Republican Delegation in the Maryland Legislature to see to it that the “Jim Crow Car Law” is put down once for all. The most of them have been elected by the votes of colored men, and it is to them that the colored people are looking.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The State of Maryland, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 18, 1902.

<sup>32</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 18, 1902.

<sup>33</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 18, 1902.

<sup>34</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 18, 1902.

However, in the Jan. 18 edition the editors went from making opinionated remarks using 52 words or less to express disapproval about Jim Crow, to writing longer editorials making more specific comments.

“The Proposed Separate Car Law” was the first editorial essay published that week. It told residents where to go and what to do to help fight the bill, using emotion to appeal to its audience, and encouraged them to take action:

It behooves the colored people of Baltimore to promptly respond to the call of the committee appointed at a recent meeting of colored citizens for the purpose of defeating the measure now pending before the Legislature having for its object the separation of the races in ordinary travel. The law commonly called the “Jim Crow” car law has for its real purpose the humiliation of our people. It is a wicked and shameful measure and should be defeated. But in order to defeat it, it, whatever is done must be done at once. Money is needed for actual expenses, printing, postage etc, and should be cheerfully be furnished by all of our people who are interested in this matter. Mr. Warner T. McGuinn is chairman of the committee and his address is 310 St. Paul St. Let us act at once. Give the committee the funds to prosecute the work. Any amount can be left at the office of the Afro-American Ledger and a receipt will be given for the same. The amount will be duly acknowledged by those having the matter in hand. Who will be the first to respond.<sup>35</sup>

A shift in the approach to covering the Jim Crow bill took place in the Jan. 18 edition. The editors were no longer making brief statements in opposition to the bill but were becoming active in the community by using their facility as a place where Baltimoreans could send their financial contributions toward the cause.

In this column, the editorial board wanted the city’s black residents to be active and not passive citizens. Based on their brief comments and their first editorial essay on the controversy, they wanted their readers to hold themselves to a higher standard, to do whatever they could to make a difference, and to hold elected officials accountable for

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<sup>35</sup> “The Proposed Separate Car Law,” Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 18, 1902.

their actions in the state's General Assembly. The editors made it very clear that the defeat of the bill depends on using any and all resources available.

News coverage about the proposed separate car law increased as such that by Jan. 25, the *Ledger's* last edition for the month, the newspaper featured two special state correspondents whose columns were displayed prominently on the front page, and both articles were talking about the response to the Jim Crow bill within their respective communities.

"More About That Jim Crow Business," under the newspaper's regular "Throughout the State" column, featured a Cambridge special correspondent who wrote that the bill is "much talked about," and "is stirring up the people in this town."<sup>36</sup> The Cambridge reporter was the first at the paper to claim that there was another newspaper within the community who supported the bill: "The afternoon paper here known as the "Banner" seems to favor it and showed that it is the wishes of the colored people to be to themselves even when travelling."<sup>37</sup>

This Eastern Shore reporter disagreed with the publication's reasoning, calling them "mistaken." "The Negro with true manhood does not look upon the white man to be any more than a man. He does not care whether he sits beside him or not and while a few "Jim Crow" Negroes will laugh and knuckle to these humiliating acts. it gauls the manly Negro to know that he is cast into separate seats or cars," the correspondent said.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "More About That Jim Crow Business," Throughout the State, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 25, 1902.

<sup>37</sup> "More About That Jim Crow Business," Throughout the State, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 25, 1902.

<sup>38</sup> "More About That Jim Crow Business," Throughout the State, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 25, 1902.

Still, the correspondent hoped decency would prevail. “We trust that a committee will wait upon the Legislators and inform them that there are thousands of colored men who desire no special seats for our white friends nor colored friends. nor do we wish separate cars and boats but wish to travel as the state provides for her best citizens.”<sup>39</sup>

The *Ledger*'s Frostburg special correspondent reported on the people's response to the bill in Western Maryland, and pointed out that elected officials in the General Assembly must be dedicated to defeating the bill, especially the Republican politicians who relied on the black vote:

We repeat what we said last week: we do not regard it as a democratic measure, and as Col. Midnight would say: We'll bet a dollar to a doughnut that when the time comes to vote, many of the republican will vote for it, or absent themselves to keep from voting.

Their action in the past gives ample grounds for basing such a conclusion, and we are of the opinion that there is as much to be gained by appealing to the democrats as there is in pinning faith to these people.<sup>40</sup>

The Frostburg reporter not only expressed his or her personal disapproval of the measure, but concluded the front page news article by vowing that the members of the community will be vigilant in encouraging its elected officials to do the right thing.

“We intend to hold our end in this matter, cost what it will. Alleghany County's representatives will be called upon to place themselves squarely on record, one way or the other,” the reporter said.<sup>41</sup>

At the end of the month, the *Ledger* also published a poem written by H. M. Leaman of Hagerstown, Md., in which the Marylander expressed their opinion on the controversy:

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<sup>39</sup> “More About That Jim Crow Business,” Throughout the State, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 25, 1902.

<sup>40</sup> “Not Regarded as a Democratic Measure,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 25, 1902.

<sup>41</sup> “Not Regarded as a Democratic Measure,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 25, 1902.

## Jim Crow Cars.

Fear not, yea sons of Africa,  
To ride on Jim Crow Cars,  
The kind of cars we ride upon  
Does not decide life's bars.  
Man looketh on the outward hue,  
God looketh on the heart,  
The purest man that ever lives  
May drive a garbage cart.  
The palace cars go down to wreck  
The dudes are crushed to death.  
The streamers with the finest deck.  
Take travellers' last breath.  
If you are on salvation's car,  
And for God's station bound,  
Your color may be that of tar.  
If you are faithful near and far,  
You will in heaven be found.<sup>42</sup>

In February, the newspaper stepped up its attacks on the proposed bill. During this month, it expanded its argument against Jim Crow tactics to include the mentality behind the creation and public support of such laws:

“If the Negro is to be regarded as a kind of “inferior man,” then it will be comparatively easy to Jim Crow him, take away his suffrage, lynch him, oppress him, and by a steady process of humiliation practically return him to the state and condition by him occupied before the civil war,” said the editors in the Feb. 1, 1902 commentary, “The Defeat of the Bourbon Spirit.”<sup>43</sup>

The editorial essay was initially referring to the mayor of Baltimore's nomination of a black man to the city's Board of Managers of the House of Reformation; the editors

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<sup>42</sup> “Jim Crow Cars,” Poem, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 25, 1902.

<sup>43</sup> “The Defeat of the Bourbon Spirit,” Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 1, 1902.

believed that the opposition to the appointment was more about the nominee's race than it was about his character.<sup>44</sup>

In February, the *Afro-American Ledger* also expanded its coverage of the public's response to the Jim Crow car bill beyond Baltimore, Frostburg and Cambridge.

"The "Jim Crow Car" was the subject under debate at the Epworth League on Tuesday night," said a Frederick correspondent in an article on the lower left hand column of the front page of the Feb. 8, 1902 edition. "The people in this vicinity are much stirred up about this bill and hope it will not become a law. All of the pastors in the city were present and took part in the debate."<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, the Frostburg reporter made good on his or her promise to encourage citizens to become engaged in the issue, and reported increased community involvement in the efforts to prevent the bill from becoming a law. The Frostburg reporter also said that they spoke to a Democrat who claimed to be against the bill:

The fight against the "Jim Crow" movement is waxing warm and we are determined to carry the war into Africa. A public meeting is called for Tuesday night, at which time resolutions will be adopted and sent to Alleghany's representatives both Democrats and Republicans.

On Saturday night last at 12 o'clock we talked with one of the most prominent influential Democrats in the county. He told us that he was opposed to this "Jim Crow" business, and that he intended to go to Annapolis this week and put up the strongest kind of a fight against it. We know he means it, every word of it. He is now and always has been a staunch friend of the Afro-American, and is one of the most polished scholars in the county.

A letter just received from the Alleghany Senator causes us to feel that when the proper time comes he will be found on the right side.<sup>46</sup>

February was also the month in which the editors expressed their disdain for those who were not participating in the effort. In an opinion piece labeled "Cowardly Negroes,"

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<sup>44</sup> "The Defeat of the Bourbon Spirit," Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 1, 1902.

<sup>45</sup> "Frederick Happenings," Throughout the State, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 8, 1902.

<sup>46</sup> "New Blood is Wanted," *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 8, 1902.

the editors wrote a brief commentary on Feb. 8 chastising blacks who refused to sign petitions protesting Maryland's Jim Crow car bill and explained why it was in their best interest to support coalitions who were opposed to the bill:

A number of representative citizens of this city recently got together and formed themselves into a committee in order to prepare a petition to the Legislature, in opposition to the "Jim Crow" car bill, which was introduced by a member of that body from the Eastern Shore. These gentlemen have been assiduous in their efforts to place the race in a proper light before the law making body of this State. A number of colored men have been approached and asked to sign these petitions, a number of them refused, on the ground that there was no necessity for such action, as the white people would do what they were going to do no matter what efforts the Negroes themselves might put forth. Others again said that it was not necessary for the Negroes to do anything as the railroads and the white men would fight the bill and so on. These are cowardly actions. Any man who has not the spirit or the ambition to take steps to help better his own condition, is not worthy of being called a man. And the most surprising thing about this matter is, that in most instances these men are classed as intelligent men. We have no words to express our contempt for this class of Negroes, they are beneath wives, if they have any, should promptly kick them out of doors, for they are a disgrace to the name of man.

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." and the man who sits idly by and waits for some one else to fight his cause is a cur of the lowest type.

We do not know whether the bill will pass or not. and yet we believe in fighting it, even if we knew that that every other man in the legislature was against it. We must show ourselves worthy or we will never get anything. This is no time for fooling. We need active, vigilant men. Men who will step to the front and take up the burden and carry it. Not mongrels, curs and cowards, but men. Just men, that's all.<sup>47</sup>

The irony of the commentary is that, while the editorial board is concerned with racial injustice, they show a lack of sensitivity to issues of gender inequality by saying that men who do not fight the bill are "beneath wives." This type of attitude was reflected at the

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<sup>47</sup> "Cowardly Negroes," Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 8, 1902.

turn of the century, when racial inequality was considered more important than gender inequality.<sup>48</sup>

The Cambridge reporter was the first to mention “Jim Crow Negroes” in that region in the Jan. 25 “Throughout the State” column, after writing about the *Banner*’s support of the bill in the same article. The Eastern Shore correspondent recalled an incident at a local church where the ministers reserved some of their seats for white visitors:

Net long ago I visited a church and shortly after a while, a couple came in and it seemed to me that the whole church was in a commotion. The pastor gave orders for certain seats to be vacated and for that one couple a whole bench was given, but not until all who occupied it were given elsewhere. While that was going on the blood boiled in me to see such acts as that carried on by one of the men sent to teach the people race pride. Another church had a rope or a small white line across with a couple of officers to inform the colored people that these seats aro for white folks. What a shame ! and some of the best men of the community are connected with these churches yet they are silent to actions which tell the white man that we think he and his wife are too fine to sit beside our wives and daughters. All such actions will bring Jim Crow cars, for the white man knows they are surrounded with “Jim Crow” Negroes.<sup>49</sup>

Not only did the editorial board deride feeble-minded blacks, but the Feb. 15 commentary “Rip Van Winkles” was another take on the “Bourbon Spirit,” an individual who has not kept up with the changing times when it comes to racial equality:<sup>50</sup>

Every now and then some crank who does not know what else to do in order to call attention to the fact that that he is living in the world, immediately gets to work to introduce some measure or publish some article to injure the Negro. Immediately the Negro press takes him seriously and he is heralded from one end of the country to the other. In Maryland we have a few of this kind of nincompoops, and just now they are bobbing up with uncommon regularity. The first chap to bob up was the “Jim Crow” car man, and now another crank bobs up and wants to have the school tax apportioned according to color. It is needless to say that we do not believe such a bill will pass, for it is too late in the day in this

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<sup>48</sup> Johnetta Betsch Cole and Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Gender Talk: The Struggle for Women’s Equality in African-American Communities* (New York: The Ballantine Publishing Group, 2003), 73-79.

<sup>49</sup> “More About That Jim Crow Business,” Throughout the State, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 25, 1902.

<sup>50</sup> “Rip Van Winkles,” Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 15, 1902.



State for any such measure. But we call attention to the fact that such a bill was introduced simple to show that we have in our midst a large number of the old-time bourbons that do not know that the war is over yet. They, like Rip Van Winkle, have been asleep for the past thirty-seven years and have not yet awakened to the fact that the world is moving with it. These fellows are standing still and they think everybody else is doing the same. We have nothing but pity for this class of people, and all the harm we wish them is that they should to be confined in some institution for the feeble minded. They have lived behind the sun for so long that their eyes are not yet opened to the light of day. Just why the Maryland Legislatnre should be burdened with this class of “way-backs” we do not know, but it is a pity that such men should be allowed to sit for a moment in such an august and intelligent body.<sup>51</sup>

The front and editorial pages of the Feb. 22 edition reported how blacks across the state were making a final push to thwart the Jim Crow bill. “Many signatures will be given in this town to oppose the Jim Crow Car Bill before the Legislature,” wrote the Cambridge special correspondent on Feb. 18. The crusade against the bill even attracted the attention of the black youths in town, according to the reporter:

The Literary at Wangh Chapel had an excellent program for Friday night The young people of that church are taking nicely to the intellectual things and if they continue they will do much to mould sentiment in this place. They discussed the Jim Crow Car Bill last Friday night and showed that they were well acquainted with newspaper facts. We shall give a sketch of the proceedings each week and hope that more of ihem will be interested in the Afro-American Ledger.<sup>52</sup>

In their final efforts to voice their disapproval of the Jim Crow bill before Maryland’s lawmakers voted on the measure, the editorial board published another brief statement: “Maryland must be preserved from the iniquitous “Jim Crow” car.”<sup>53</sup> Reporters and editors were not the only ones involved in the public discussion about Jim Crow coming to Maryland. “The Forum,” a column for readers to write letters to the editor, was published occasionally and two men wrote to express support for the “Cowardly

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<sup>51</sup> “Rip Van Winkles,” Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 15, 1902.

<sup>52</sup> Throughout the State, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 22, 1902.

<sup>53</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 22, 1902.

Negroes” commentary that was published two weeks earlier. One of the men was named Bishop H.M. Turner. He said:

Editor Afro-American, Sir:-I have just read the editorial in your issue of the 8th. inst., entitled, “Cowardly Negroes,” and had to exclaim involuntary, hurrah, hurrah, hurrah for the Afro-American. You have properly, righteously and heaven approvingly used terms appropriate, and in every respect befitting, these cowardly, dirt-eating and worthless vagabonds who wish to pose as colored gentleman, and who are not worth the salt that go to season the food they eat. They had rather ride in a Jim Crow car and pay as much as the whites do to ride in rolling palaces, than to open their worthless mouths to say, “give me my rights.” I know thousands of you condemn me for advocating emigration, but I do so because I see the Negro will never be anything here in the aggregate, but spittoon lickers for white men. The only hope for the Negro race is to carry a portion of them at least, to some country where they can be men, and where they can be raised and propelled by the instincts of manhood. I congratulate you again upon that editorial, and hope you will not fail to hurl such thunderbolts against that worthless class of our race who encourage the whites in exacting laws that would disgrace hell itself. I am sorry my paper, *The Voice of the People* is so crowded that I cannot publish the entire editorial. I shall have to make a short mention of it at all events. Some of these fellows, if I may use that term to such a cowardly vagabond crowd, think because they have been to school and studied some white men’s books, they are educated gentlemen. When you can scarcely call them educated asses. They are as you call them, cowardly dirt-eating, and slop lapping curs.<sup>54</sup>

Another reader, Rev. J.O. Custus, also wrote to the *Ledger* and offered his opinion of both the editorial and current political climate surrounding the bill:

Mr. Editor:-The editorial of the 8 inst., under the caption of “Cowardly Negroes,” was a timely and masterly article and the heroic stand of a brave man for right in the State of Maryland against the “Jim Crow Car” bill. Although I do not endorse the word Negro, yet I fully endorse the whole editorial. I have solemnly entered my protest against such a bill, and have twice written to our delegates at Annapolis. I have also signed the petition sent us from Baltimore, and the same is being extensively signed throughout the country. The Afro-Americans are bitterly opposed to such wicked and unchristian law. We have loyal Afro-American here, and the ministers of the Gospel are doing their duty along that line, and are determined to stand up for right.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Bishop H.M. Turner, letter to the editor, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 22, 1902.

<sup>55</sup> Rev. J.O. Custus, letter to the editor, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 22, 1902.

While the *Ledger*'s editorial staff was pleased with Bishop Turner's opinions about blacks who refused to protest against the bill, a brief essay was published just above Turner's letter, in which they disagreed with his belief that blacks should leave the country. They said:

In another letter will be found a letter from Bishop H. M. Turner, endorsing a recent editorial in this paper. Bishop Turner uses some very vigorous language and yet we believe he is justified in so doing. The cowardly, good-for-nothing Negroes that will not do anything to help themselves do not deserve anything but the worst that can be said of them. They are a positive hindrance to the race and it would be a good thing to the race if they could be gotten rid of. But we cannot see for the life of us how emigration is going to help us, for the kind of men we need at home are the kind of men who have the ambition and pluck to go elsewhere, where they think they can live like men.

The good-for-nothing sort are the ones who are going to stay just where they are and hinder rather than help, otherwise they would be better off in this country, and we will have to do the best we can with and for them.<sup>56</sup>

In the next two columns to the right of Custus' letter, the editorial board reprinted the speeches given before the General Assembly in Annapolis to petition the bill, under the headline "Protest Against "Jim Crow" Cars." It was reported that a group of Baltimore's religious and civic leaders went before the Committee on Corporations and "presented a petition signed by more than one thousand colored and white citizens of Baltimore and also of the State, protesting against the passage of the "Separate Car Bill," better known as the "Jim Crow Car" law."<sup>57</sup> A few members of the delegation's remarks were reprinted by the *Ledger*, including those of Rev. Ernest Lyon of John Wesley M.E. Church:

Your petitioners regard such a measure as a backward step—as a serious blow to Christian civilization—as a grave mistake in legislation and as a reflection upon the hitherto untarnished reputation of this Christian Commonwealth, whose very existence is the outcome of numerous struggles to

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<sup>56</sup> "Emigration Will Not Help," Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 22, 1902.

<sup>57</sup> "Protest Against "Jim Crow" Cars," *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 22, 1902.

escape persecution, and to secure the liberty of the conscience and the enjoyment of manhood rights.<sup>58</sup>

Rev. Lyon said at the conclusion of his speech: “We do not believe that Maryland will consent by class legislation to dishonor the memory of Banneker and Douglass, who though they were men of color were Marylanders, who by their honorable conduct and splendid genius brought honor and renown to the State.”<sup>59</sup>

Among other members of the delegation were Warner T. McGuinn, whose house was the headquarters for the city’s committee against the bill, and who was mentioned in an editorial written by the *Ledger* the previous month.<sup>60</sup> According to the article, McGuinn, who was identified as a lawyer, was also the chairman of the delegation and made the opening remarks before introducing Rev. Lyon.<sup>61</sup>

Victory was finally realized on Feb. 26. “Killed the Jim Crow Car Bill,” read the March 1 front page headline that took up the first two left columns below the masthead.<sup>62</sup>

The Committee on Corporations voted against the bill, 45 to 40, based on a minority report submitted by Del. Peter J. Campbell (D-Baltimore City),<sup>63</sup> the committee’s chairman. State Del. A. Lincoln Dryden (R-Somerset) “moved to indefinitely postpone the further consideration of the bill,” but Democratic Del. W.T. Giles, also of Somerset and who first introduced the bill, was not going to give up without a fight:

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<sup>58</sup> “Protest Against “Jim Crow” Cars,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 22, 1902.

<sup>59</sup> “Protest Against “Jim Crow” Cars,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 22, 1902.

<sup>60</sup> “The Proposed Separate Car Law,” Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 18, 1902.

<sup>61</sup> “Protest Against “Jim Crow” Cars,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 22, 1902.

<sup>62</sup> “Killed the Jim Crow Car Bill,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, March 1, 1902.

<sup>63</sup> Edward C. Papenfuse, ed., Lynne M. Browne, Diane P. Frese, and Jane W. McWilliams, assoc. eds. *Governors, Legislators, and Other Principal Officers of Government, 1632 to 1990*, vol.1 of *Archives of Maryland New Series I: An Historical List of Public Officials of Maryland*, 151. Giles’ and Dirickson’s first and middle initials, Campbell’s middle initial, as well as the titles, districts, and the political parties of the politicians mentioned in this chapter and in Chapter 3 are also cited by this source, using pp. 151, 257, 276, 347, and 360.

Mr. Giles in opposing the minority report asked why ministers who did not want the bill passed, did not open the doors of their churches and admit colored worshippers. He also made reference to separate schools, churches, etc.. and said that if these things did not humiliate the Negro, the separate car bill would not.<sup>64</sup>

Another state legislator, Del. E.J. Dirickson (D-Worcester), tried to tweak the bill so that the separate car law applied to the Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland, but that measure was rejected by the Speaker of the House.<sup>65</sup> The correspondent who reported from the State House ended the article by listing the names of the committee members who opposed the bill and the county they represented.<sup>66</sup>

The editors were happy with the outcome in their “Jim Crow’s Defeat” commentary:<sup>67</sup>

The Jim Crow Car bill was defeated in the legislature at Annapolis this week. The defeat of this measure was in a large degree due to the decided stand taken by the Republicans assisted by a number of Democrats. The defeat of this bill thus ends the most iniquitous measure that has ever made its appearance in this state. All honor to those who stood in the defence of right and justice and who are determined that Maryland should not be disgraced by humiliating even one of its humblest citizens. The thanks of every Negro in this state is due these noble men who stood for righteousness and truth. We should not only remember them but if ever the time should come when, we may, in part, pay a debt of gratitude these men should be especially remembered.

Let every Negro who reads this paper cut out the roll of honor on another page and post it in the most conspicuous place in his house and let him teach his children to honor and reverence the men who stood by us in the hour of need. And be they republicans or democrats, never let them want for our vote when they need them.

Praise should also be given the committee of gentlemen who took this matter up and went to Annapolis and appeared before the Committee on Corporations. The very modest way in which they presented their case to the committee won for them not only praise but decided interest in their case by those who were in a position to help them.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> “Killed the Jim Crow Car Bill,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, March 1, 1902.

<sup>65</sup> “Killed the Jim Crow Car Bill,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, March 1, 1902.

<sup>66</sup> “Killed the Jim Crow Car Bill,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, March 1, 1902.

<sup>67</sup> “Jim Crow’s Defeat,” Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, March 1, 1902.

<sup>68</sup> “Jim Crow’s Defeat,” Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, March 1, 1902.

In the next three columns to the right of “Jim Crow’s Defeat,” the editorial board republished attorney W. Ashbie Hawkins’ legal argument before the legislature against the Separate Car Bill, which he made the previous week.<sup>69</sup> Hawkins was named in the “Protest Against “Jim Crow” Cars” article as one of the members of the delegation who went to Annapolis to protest the measure.<sup>70</sup>

Celebration over the Jim Crow bill’s demise was tempered with a sense of cautious optimism. In a separate brief opinion printed below “Jim Crow’s Defeat,” the editorial board urged the legislative committee to remain vigilant, especially since Dirickson wanted to introduce a new bill that applied to Maryland’s Eastern Shore:

“We do not want any such bills for any part of the state. Keep both eyes and ears open, gentlemen, and do not by any means be caught off your guard,” the editors warned.<sup>71</sup>

Despite the victory, the editorial board’s concerns that Jim Crow would resurface, was again reflected one week later in their March 8 commentary, “Jim Crow Again”:

“Jim Crow” has again reared his head and this time in another shape. The bill introduced by Mr. Dirickson is intended to apply alone to the Eastern Shore of Maryland, all counties east of the county of Cecil. We do not want “Jim Crow” to light anywhere in Maryland, and so the committee who has had the matter in hand had better prepare to move again on Annapolis. No time is to be lost, as there are not many more days of this session and bill may be sneaked through any time. “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty” and it is well to be on the look out. People of the Eastern Shore counties should be on the move, the matter is very near to them, and we on this end may be not able to stay the tide this time as the bill is a local one and as many of the delegates have birds of their own to pick, they may be willing to help some one else in their picking in order to get help themselves. The people of Cambridge, Easton, Princess Anne and Somerset, must get a move on them or they will know what “Jim Crow” means in a way that will not be at all pleasant to them. It is the time for action. Rev. Martin, at Cambridge,

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<sup>69</sup> “Mr. Hawkin’s Argument,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, March 1, 1902.

<sup>70</sup> “Protest Against “Jim Crow” Cars,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 22, 1902.

<sup>71</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, March 1, 1902.

John P. Forrester, John P. Henson, and other leaders ought to get work and keep at work until the monster is killed once for all.<sup>72</sup>

Throughout the rest of the year, the *Ledger* would report on attempts to implement Jim Crow bills in other states. Almost a year later in December 1902, the paper published three brief, successive statements regarding Jim Crow in the South and in the North in the Dec. 20, 1902 editorial page:

Between the dark skin whites and white skin darks, the “Jim Crow” car people are having the time of their lives.<sup>73</sup>

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White folks suing for being made to get into a “Jim Crow” car, and colored people suing for being made to get out of a “Jim Crow” car are some of the troubles that are coming to the “Jim Crow” people in the South.<sup>74</sup>

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Those Negroes in Boston who are clamoring for “Jim Crow” schools, ought to be sent down South where they can get a taste of “Jim Crowism.”<sup>75</sup>

Maryland’s struggle to defeat Jim Crow was reflective of what was happening to other former slave states such as Virginia and the Carolinas. While blacks and whites lived in close proximity to each other during and after slavery, there were attempts to separate the races in the public sphere, including schools and places of employment. A few years later, Maryland would join Mississippi in passing a separate car bill in 1904.<sup>76</sup>

In spite of the attempts to infringe on the right for blacks to peacefully ride alongside whites in the same cars, the fight against Jim Crow in Maryland was a significant victory

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<sup>72</sup> “Jim Crow Again,” Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, March 8, 1902.

<sup>73</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, December 20, 1902.

<sup>74</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, December 20, 1902.

<sup>75</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, December 20, 1902.

<sup>76</sup> Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 97.

six years after *Plessy v. Ferguson*, in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that “separate but equal” was constitutional.<sup>77</sup>

The Jim Crow era was due to the appeasement of Democrats from Republicans, both on the federal and state level. As the opportunities for blacks in the South began to narrow after Reconstruction, and there was an increase in racial conflicts, there were whites in the South who felt they had the answers to the race “problem,” and over time the North became less vocal about the oppression of blacks.<sup>78</sup>

Despite this account of the Jim Crow car bill in Maryland, segregation laws that were legally on the books represented only a fraction of the discrimination African-Americans experienced in the South. According to the well-known book *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, there were a myriad of ways in which blacks’ movements were restricted, such as being prohibited from using the same entrances and exits as whites at public establishments, being forbidden to receive medical treatment from a white nurse in a hospital, and being denied jobs in certain sectors. There were even laws to segregate prisons and orphanages.<sup>79</sup>

The victory over Jim Crow did not last long, but what is notable is how the black community at the turn of the century put up a resistance against the practice, defying the stereotype that all blacks were meek and actually preferred segregation over integration.<sup>80</sup> The early actions of protest by members of the alternative media via editorials, and the petitions from the political and religious communities, were a stepping stone in the

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<sup>77</sup> Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 71.

<sup>78</sup> Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 67-93, 96.

<sup>79</sup> Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 98-99.

<sup>80</sup> Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 168-169.



struggle for equality. It was also one way in which the reporters at the *Ledger* fought for a better quality of life.

## Chapter 3: Politics in Maryland

The *Afro-American Ledger* welcomed 1902 with a bleak assessment of the Republican Party's efforts to reach out to black Marylanders.

This chapter focuses on the *Ledger's* coverage of political events during a year in which there was a mid-term election. A total of 25 news articles, 27 editorials, 41 brief statements, and three front page endorsements of a political candidate, including one that was a political cartoon, were examined. The text from the news and editorial pages are reprinted exactly as they were originally published. The style of writing, and any typos or grammatical errors that are contained in the quotes, are authentic.

In "Need Not Look for Any Favors," the special correspondent in Frostburg warned blacks not to expect anything from Republicans in the state, for the members in the Party of Lincoln only cared about receiving their votes and abandoning them after getting elected to public office: "More than a year ago we told your readers that the republican organization wanted nothing from the Negro but his vote, and when that is said, all is said."<sup>81</sup>

Even though the correspondent praised politicians such as the state's U.S. Sen. George Wellington (R),<sup>82</sup> he or she said it was no longer a good strategy to overwhelmingly support one political party. "We believe that the time has fully come in which it is the imperative duty of the Afro American to break away from the old lines and

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<sup>81</sup> "Need Not Look for Any Favors," *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 4, 1902.

<sup>82</sup> Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, "Wellington, George Louis-Biographical Information," <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=W000279>, (accessed April 1, 2009). Wellington's party affiliation was cited from this source.

assume a manly independence holding the right to cast his ballot in whatever direction his best interest may dictate,” the reporter said.<sup>83</sup>

Political action was important to blacks in Maryland at the turn of the century because of the need to have legislators represent their interests at the state and congressional levels, and in the White House. This was due to the increase in racial tensions post-Reconstruction, which resulted in lynching incidents, a decrease in government positions for blacks, and an overall decrease in engagement with society at large.<sup>84</sup> The lack of representation decreased the chances of blacks receiving equal treatment within the courts, the community, and in the workplace.

An example of inequality within the justice system for African-Americans in Maryland can be found in the Jan. 9, 1902 edition of the *Baltimore Morning Herald*:

One of those continuous performances by motormen and conductors of the United Railways on the one hand and the coal cart and truck drivers on the other was given yesterday at high noon on the corner of Liberty and Baltimore streets. The curtain dropped at the Western Police Station after another unique performance by the genius who deals out justice in choice chunks to the offenders. Frank Badart, conductor of John street car 1222, northbound, was behind time, and yelled to John Barnes, colored, who had a heavily laden truck, to pull out. Barnes said he tried to get out as fast as possible, but the load was too heavy. Witnesses testified that Badart ran up to Barnes, and, cursing him, dealt him a blow in the face. In return Barnes swung his whip and left a scar on Badart's face. Then more white witnesses testified that several other conductors and motormen ran up, the latter with brake handles, with one of which a terrible blow was aimed at the colored driver, whose skull would certainly have been fractured had he not dodged. As it was, a spoke in the wagon wheel was broken by the blow. There was intense excitement until Officer Henneman arrived and arrested the conductor and driver. Then Justice Poe rendered one of his unique decisions. He fined the motorman \$5 and costs for assaulting Barnes, and then to equalize matters and show that he dealt out justice impartially, assessed Barnes \$5 and costs for defending himself from being killed. There was a murmur of surprise from the big crowd in the room at the decision, but there was no appeal. Both fines were paid.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> “Need Not Look for Any Favors,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 4, 1902.

<sup>84</sup> Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 43-44, 86-88, 105-106.

<sup>85</sup> “Self-Defense Discouraged,” Bits of Baltimore News, *Baltimore Morning Herald*, January 9, 1902.

Two weeks later on Jan. 18, after the Frostburg correspondent's rebuke of the Grand Old Party, the *Ledger's* editorial board made a brief mention of another paper's apparent support for Wellington's rival.

"The Baltimore American is no doubt well pleased that Mr. Gorman will step into Mr. Wellington's shoes,"<sup>86</sup> referring to Arthur P. Gorman, a Democrat who would replace Wellington in the Senate in 1903.<sup>87</sup>

Blacks in Maryland, as well as throughout the South and the rest of the country, experienced a significant decrease in political representation after Reconstruction.<sup>88</sup> Some of the *Ledger's* reporters and editors realized that even the Republican Party could not be counted on in the fight against the Jim Crow bill. Seven sentences below the one that mentioned Gorman and the proposed Jim Crow legislation, the editors singled out Republicans in a separate quote for not taking a stand on a policy that disproportionately affected people of color:

"Now is the time we need our friends and those Republicans in the legislature who do not come to our rescue should be marked for all time to come. They have told us time and again that they were good friends of ours, now then is the time for them to show it."<sup>89</sup>

It wasn't long before the Frostburg reporter came up with a proposal to help blacks increase their political clout. "Why Negroes Should Divide Their Votes" was a Feb. 15 article recalling how a black Republican from Darnestown, Md., went to Washington and opposed the re-election of Rep. George A. Pearre (R), to Maryland's 6<sup>th</sup> District,

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<sup>86</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 18, 1902.

<sup>87</sup> Maryland State Archives, "Arthur P. Gorman (1839-1906) , MSA SC 3520-1675," under "Archives of Maryland (Biographical Series)," <http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/speccol/sc3500/sc3520/001600/001675/html/msa01675.html>, (accessed December 20, 2010).

<sup>88</sup> Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 82-89.

<sup>89</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 18, 1902.

according to *The Washington Axe*.<sup>90</sup> The Darnestown man was upset that he did not receive any recognition from the party, according to the reporter:

We would like to say to our Darnestown brother that he might just as well go home and settle down, and when election time comes around to put spit on his hand and go at it again—in another direction. We believe in independence in politics, and we don't wish any body to ever hereafter regard us as a dyed-in-the-wool republican, and we are not hunting office either.

In our opinion, we believe that the time has come when it behooves the Afro-American to throw off the shackles of party allegiance and make the best terms possible with those who will at least safeguard our rights as citizens.

We have fought the democrats in almost solid phalanx and now they are fighting us, and it must be conceded that they are getting back at us in excellent shape.

A prominent Democratic legislator said to your correspondent several days ago, your people ought to divide your vote, not for partisan purposes, but to safeguard your rights. By many, this may be regarded as a trick; but, stop a while and look into it and you will find a whole lot of common sense in it, and unless we are sadly mistaken this kind of talk is going to set a goodly number of intelligent Negroes to thinking, and thinking hard.<sup>91</sup>

In the same edition, the editorial board wrote in their “Leaders Needed” commentary on the need for more effective leadership in Maryland politics, such as being sensitive to diversity by refraining from employing blacks to work in subservient jobs:

We understand that Mr. Charles Schirm, a member of the United States Congress from the Fourth Congressional District, is mending his fences by having a few colored men appointed to petty positions in Washington. There are a number of important positions in this city that colored men could fill with ability and distinction. And yet every colored man is hurried off to Washington to fill some position which he would not think for a moment of touching in this city. If men want porter's positions it would be well for them to seek them in this city where they would be near home and where the expense of living would not be so great as in the city of “Magnificent distances.” We have in mind at this writing several colored men who would scorn to take a posi-in this city where they have to clean spittoons, carry wood and coal in the winter and ice in the summer, and yet this is what they are doing in Washington under our distinguished senators and representatives.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> “Why Negroes Should Divide Their Votes,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 15, 1902.

<sup>91</sup> “Why Negroes Should Divide Their Votes,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 15, 1902.

<sup>92</sup> “Leaders Needed,” Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 15, 1902.

However, the editors also chided members of the race for not demanding better job opportunities from their elected officials:

Twenty years ago the Republican leaders would scorn to offer an intelligent colored man a place of this kind, but our present leaders think they are honoring the colored contingent of the party when they give them anything at all. We are getting to be such a race of cowards and trucklers that we take anything we can get, and thank the Lord for it.<sup>93</sup>

Despite the feeling that the Republican Party had abandoned its principles and black constituents, the editorial board implored the city's blacks to exercise their civic duties during the Jim Crow Car bill controversy, regardless of their politician's political affiliation. There were three brief statements in the Feb. 22 editorial page that expressed their views about civic engagement. The opinions were published shortly before the segregation bill was defeated:

Write letters, importune your member in the legislature. Let them know that you are thinking and also acting.<sup>94</sup>

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Now is the time for action. Let every church in the state get up a petition and forward it once to their deiegate in the legislature. What is to be done must be done quickly.<sup>95</sup>

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Do not be afraid to spend a few dollars. Go down to Annapolis and wait on your delegate. He is your representative. No matter who elected him, he represents you, be he democrat or republican.<sup>96</sup>

In the wake of the victory over the Jim Crow bill, a Frostburg reporter warned readers of U.S. Sen. Louis McComas (R) in a March 1 article, because the public official reversed his position on issues affecting blacks, for political expediency.

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<sup>93</sup> "Leaders Needed," Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 15, 1902.

<sup>94</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 22, 1902.

<sup>95</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 22, 1902.

<sup>96</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 22, 1902.

The special correspondent noted that during McComas' tenure in the U.S. House of Representatives, the Republican lawmaker lost his seat in Congress because he made a speech that sided too closely with blacks in the quest for equality, and has since appealed to blacks only when he needs their vote.<sup>97</sup>

The Western Maryland writer also encouraged readers to exercise their political capital in the wake of the bill's defeat. While the reporter did not believe that black voters would abandon the Republican Party in droves, he or she did believe that blacks should also give well-meaning Democrats a chance to represent their district:

"The republicans are casting about for a good chance to dump us, and now is our time to get back at them in good style," concluded the reporter.<sup>98</sup>

Within the editorial pages, the "Maryland and Political Patronage" commentary lamented the inferior images of black men in the state: "We like to boast of the great colored men that our state has produced, and no doubt we are wise in so doing, but what will, what can our brethren of other states think of us in the face of such poor showing at the National Capital?"<sup>99</sup>

Even though the journalists at the *Ledger* were critical of the elected officials at the state and national level, the writers were also quick to praise blacks, and whites, for working together for a common goal, which was to fight for equality in Maryland. This theme was reflected in a March 8 opinion piece, "Light Out of Darkness. Good Out of Evil":

The self-respecting men and women among us cannot be but immeasurably gratified with the many kind and favorable expressions drawn from white brethren by reason of this attempt to humiliate us. We are encouraged and

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<sup>97</sup> "Senator M'Comas Not Enthusiastic," *The Afro-American Ledger*, March 1, 1902.

<sup>98</sup> "Senator M'Comas Not Enthusiastic," *The Afro-American Ledger*, March 1, 1902.

<sup>99</sup> "Maryland and Political Patronage," Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, March 1, 1902.

strengthened in the knowledge of the increasing effects of the brotherly spirit between the races, while at the same time, by reason of the criticisms of our adversaries, we realise more clearly the urgent necessity of doing all within our power to eliminate from our ranks the boastful, disorderly and insolent Negro. It helps us a great deal to know that our white brethren appreciate our difficulties, and are inclined to patiently cooperate with us so that the Negro will “so conduct himself that his presence shall be no offense simply because of the color of his skin.”<sup>100</sup>

According to the commentary, the Baltimore *Evening News* was one of their supporters, whose correspondent’s “magnificent and gracious spirit” also recognized the importance of giving blacks an opportunity to improve their lot in society.<sup>101</sup>

As the political campaigns progressed throughout the year, the editorial board at the *Ledger* weighed in on key congressional races in the U.S. House of Representatives that affected their black Baltimorean constituents. In the April 26 editorial “They Are Candidates,” the congressional races in Maryland’s 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> districts were profiled, and the candidates were Frank Wachter and Charles Schirm, respectively. The editors acknowledged that the two men were entitled to run for public office, and that even though blacks had voted for them in the past, there were qualified black men who were capable of running for office. “There is nothing criminal about it, and he has just as much right to aspire to get a good thing as any other man, and yet if a colored man wishes to get into a good office he is told that it is not the time,” said the editors.<sup>102</sup>

Schirm in particular was later put on notice in the fall, when the editors published a clergyman’s letter to Schirm after the candidate wrote a letter in an effort to get black churchgoers to vote for him. According to the editors, Schirm had not been supportive of blacks’ attempts to gain equal footing in society:

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<sup>100</sup> “Light Out of Darkness. Good Out of Evil,” Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, March 8, 1902.

<sup>101</sup> “Light Out of Darkness. Good Out of Evil,” Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, March 8, 1902.

<sup>102</sup> “They Are Candidates,” Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, April 26, 1902.



The Honorable Mr. Schirm, who awhile ago was reported as having said that the colored people did not desire their Civil Rights, seeme to be somewhat uneasy with respect to his election. So much so that he is not ashamed to ask colored preachers in his district, to urge colored voters to register so that they may have the great pleasure and gratification of voting for him. Last Saturday evening, by special post, a certain colored clergyman received the communication found below, from Mr. Schirm. We naturally presume that the other preachers in the district received a similar copy. As the clergyman to whom we have referred promptly, that same night, answered Mr. Schirm's letter, and as his letter is a sufficient comment upon Mr. Schirm's letter, without further comment we give below both of them.

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MR. SCHIRM'S LETTER.

Baltimore, Sept. 27, 1902.

My dear Sir:-

May I take the liberty of addressing you upon a political matter and *ask you to bring it to the attention of your congregation* at a suitable opportunity. Many of the colored voters in the Fourth district, have failed to register, and believing as I do, that the prosperity of the country, as well as the political interests of the colored men, will best be preserved through the election of a Congress in sympathy with President Roosevelt. I respectfully solicit your kind offices to that end. I should be very glad to meet you at my office or at your home, if you will kindly indicate that such a meeting will be agreeable to you.

Very respectfully yours,  
CHARLES R. SCHIRM.

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THE CLERGYMAN'S LETTER.

Baltimore, Md., Sept. 27, 1902.

The Hon. Charles R. Schirm,-

Dear Sir:-Your favor of the 27<sup>th</sup>, inviting my interest in the registration of colored men, as well as other Republican candidates for Congress, is before me. I am sorry to confess, that you and others like you, are very largely responsible for the manifest apathy of colored voters with respect to the coming election. I greatly fear that you will find but little enthusiasm among the colored republicans in this district with respect to your success in November next. I would not be surprised if the republican party in Maryland discovered itself, in November next, disconnected from the hearty support of many who hitherto have delighted to stand by the Grand Old Party. It would not be strange at all if the National Republican Party discovered, in the results of the election, the extreme dissatisfaction of the colored race at the manner the National Republican Party has gone square back upon our suffering brethren in the South, acquiescing in Southern assaults upon the ballot, and heartlessly looking upon the systematic efforts of dehumanizing the race, whose freedom inspired the organizing of the party of Lincoln.

In view of the fact that the Republican Machine in Maryland cares not a rap for the Negro, save to get his vote; in view of the fact that even such a reputable representative of the race as JAMES T. BRADFORD and others like him, have been turned down by your congressional delegation, and still further, in view of the current opinion among many intelligent Afro-Americans that you have publicly expressed yourself as unfavorable to our Civil Rights, I am somewhat amazed how that you could reasonably expect great enthusiasm towards your return to Congress. The Republican party seems to have left the principles of Fremont, Lincoln, Morton, and others, and gone square back upon the very people whose liberation called it into existence.

It is to be earnestly hoped that the way may be made clear whereby decent and thinking colored men shall be able to assist in your election, and that of a republican Congress in general, without dishonoring their manhood and sense of equity and justice.

Hence, as I do not know of a single reason why colored men should vote for your return to Congress, save the fact that you are on the so-called Republican ticket, you could hardly expect me to go out of my way to advance your interests.

With great respect,  
I am truly yours,

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Just below “They Are Candidates,” another editorial, “Maryland Politics,” commented on how blacks at the time were given less input in the political process than they had in previous years, and places the blame squarely on blacks for the race’s decreased stature:

There was a time in the history of Republican politics in this state when few men aspired to fill any of the leading positions without first consulting some of the leading colored men. Delegation after delegation, of colored men were sent to Washington to look after the interest of this one or that one. and in more than one case, it was the colored delegation which cast the weight of influence with the powers that were, and secured the coveted plum. Now all this is changed and the colored man has no more influence at the White House, than a “yaller dog.” Now why is this? Who is responsible for this condition of affairs? We answer without hesitation, the colored man himself. It is he alone who has allowed the power to slip from his grasp, and permitted himself to be relegated to the rear. In other words, he has become so degenerated as far as politics are concerned, that he has been told to “Go ’way back and sit down.” And he has politely obeyed the order.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> “Colored Churches and the Registration of Colored Voters,” Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, October 4, 1902.

<sup>104</sup> “Maryland Politics,” Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, April 26, 1902.

By Aug. 23, the paper endorsed Rep. Frank Wachter (R-Baltimore City) to be re-elected for a third term.<sup>105</sup>

On the lower right hand corner of the front page, there was a cartoon of Wachter, highlighting his accomplishments as a congressman.<sup>106</sup> Wachter's record of siding with Navy Yard workers by voting in favor of giving them more annual leave and granting eight-hour work days for government workers were among some of the reasons they supported him in the editorial.<sup>107</sup>

Near the end of the editorial, the *Ledger* also printed a small chart for its readers that detailed how much money Wachter had allocated for key projects. The funding included \$25,000 for "Back Pension Claims," and \$120,000 for a "Light House entrance to Baltimore Harbor."<sup>108</sup> The purpose of publishing how much money he allocated for city projects was a way for the newspaper staff to make him more appealing to its audience.

To show how sincere they were in endorsing Wachter, the editors published a brief profile on the lower right hand corner of the front page of the Oct. 25 and Nov. 1 editions. For each profile there was a picture of Wachter, and the amount of money he secured for the district and the state, which totaled at \$539,900. The *Ledger* described him as "Faithful to every interest," and said Wachter promised to be "The willing servant of every interest of his District, and has proven a true and tried Representative of the people."<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> "Wachter and Congress," Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, August 23, 1902.

<sup>106</sup> "What Mr. Wachter Has Done," cartoon, *The Afro-American Ledger*, August 23, 1902.

<sup>107</sup> "For Congress," Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, August 23, 1902.

<sup>108</sup> "For Congress," Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, August 23, 1902.

<sup>109</sup> "Vote for Hon. Frank C. Wachter," *The Afro-American Ledger*, October 25, 1902.

The profile concluded with a reminder to vote on Tuesday, Nov. 4, 1902, that the polls were open from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m., and to vote at the designated location.<sup>110</sup> Wachter was able to keep his seat after winning re-election:

“Mr. Wachter was once a very poor and hard working lad, and despite his changed condition and the many honors which have come to him he always manages to keep in sympathetic touch with the great masses of the people to whom he is always accessible as a man and brother beloved. Especially is this true with respect to Afro-Americans,” said the editors in their “It Is All Over Now” commentary.<sup>111</sup>

The *Ledger*'s successful endorsement of Wachter indicates that they were active in public affairs, and did not believe in taking a position of neutrality. When the other Southern states created more laws that disenfranchised African-Americans, black Baltimoreans in 1902 still had the right to vote, and the newspaper encouraged black voters to exercise their civic duties and avoid apathy, both in the campaign against Jim Crow and in statewide elections.

On the national level, President Theodore Roosevelt was in his second year as the 26<sup>th</sup> president in 1902. However, the editors of the *Ledger* were skeptical at first about Roosevelt and how he would reach out to black constituents.

“Will Not Change White House Servants,” read one headline at the bottom of the Jan. 25 edition:

President and Mrs. Roosevelt have introduced many new customs at the White House but there are some traditions which they carefully respect. It is to employ colored men as waiters at the White House The trend of the times at present is to place white men in these positions, and it is frequently complained, that some of

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<sup>110</sup> “Vote for Hon. Frank C. Wachter,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, November 1, 1902.

<sup>111</sup> “It Is All Over Now,” Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, November 8, 1902.

them are so distinguished in their appearance that there is difficulty to know the guest from the waiter.<sup>112</sup>

Apparently the first lady did not find any qualified black waiters in Washington, so she sent the waiter in charge to Baltimore, where more prospective black waiters could be found, according to the Washington correspondent.<sup>113</sup> This practice reinforced stereotypes about the role of blacks, who were expected to be servile and subservient to whites.

President Roosevelt's positions on African-Americans might have been shaped by his background and upbringing. He was born and raised in New York City, but his mother was originally from Georgia.<sup>114</sup> At the turn of the century, Roosevelt seemed to practice a gradual method of allowing blacks to participate in the larger society, instead of supporting efforts to grant all blacks equal treatment all at once.<sup>115</sup>

On Feb. 15, the editorial board said that the black press did not have "an entirely unanimous opinion" about Roosevelt at the beginning of his term. However, the editors warned that "if Mr. Roosevelt does not do the right thing, he may be nominated by the white wing of the Republican party, but there is enough colored votes in the pivotal states in the north and west to turn the tide. It would be well for the President not to forget this."<sup>116</sup>

Usually, when Roosevelt was mentioned in the front or editorial pages of the *Ledger*, it was within the context of his relationship and interaction with blacks. He was also

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<sup>112</sup> "Will Not Change White House Servants," *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 25, 1902.

<sup>113</sup> "Will Not Change White House Servants," *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 25, 1902.

<sup>114</sup> Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 5, 93-94.

<sup>115</sup> Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race*, 91-92, 101-103.

<sup>116</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 15, 1902.

mentioned in some of the stories pertaining to national or international affairs on page two of the *Ledger*. For example, there was a mine strike in Pennsylvania in 1902, in which the Frostburg correspondent said that the miners in Western Maryland saw the settlement talks as “a victory for organized labor,” according to a front page article on Oct. 25.<sup>117</sup> The *Ledger* was on the record for supporting the miners.<sup>118</sup> However, they also wanted Roosevelt to address issues that disproportionately affected African-Americans:

“Now that the President has the strike off his hands for a time at least, would it not be well for him to turn his attention to the condition of affairs in the South, where Negroes are being lynched and burned to death at the stake,” reads a brief statement in the Oct. 25 editorial page.<sup>119</sup>

As reflected in the *Ledger*'s pages nearly every week, the news and editorial staff were concerned about how to keep the freedoms and achievements that were gained during Reconstruction. Black Marylanders were experiencing a backlash from the Republican Party, and being politically savvy was an ongoing discussion within the pages of the *Ledger*.

“Lynchers' Festival,” reads one bold headline on the front page of the Nov. 8 edition. On Nov. 1 in Darling, Miss., 4,000 people attended the lynching of a black man, according to the article:

Circus day crowds and convention day crowds were small as compared with the throng that gathered to take part in the lynching of a Negro at Darling today. There were four thousand persons present and it was the merriest kind of a gathering.

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<sup>117</sup> “Can Master New Ballot,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, October 25, 1902.

<sup>118</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, October 18, 1902.

<sup>119</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, October 25, 1902.

The Negro was burned on a bed of oil soaked boughs. A score of men fought to be the first to apply the torch.

It was dark when the poor wretch was burned, and the crowd standing around hooted as the flames played up to the writhing flames,

While he stood with arms pinioned the victim confessed that he and a white man had killed E.O. Jackson and a wealthy planter named Rose.

After the Negro had been burned, forty men galloped to Bridgeport, where they captured the white man. He has been taken to the scene of the double murder and tonight, it is reported that the lynchers are divided on the question of killing him.<sup>120</sup>

In addition to lynching, beatings and accusations of discrimination were also reported.

“White Brute Whips Colored Woman,” reads an Oct. 11 front page headline of an Oct. 4 court case regarding a crime that took place in Wilcox County, Ala. The incident, “A story of humane slavery,” arose from a contract dispute between Mr. Dickerson, a white lawyer who had a plantation, and Phyllis McCants, a black woman from Mobile, Ala., who was hired to work for him.<sup>121</sup>

Dickerson was able to obtain an arrest warrant for McCants, who was accused of breaching a contract. The woman worked for Dickerson for almost three years, and had a debt that she had to pay off from a previous employer, according to Dickerson’s testimony:

The woman who had in her arms an infant two months old. testified that she had worked for the firm as stated. that just before January 15 she left, going to the home of her mother, seven miles distant; that Dickerson came after her, and tying a rope around her neck, the other end of which he tied to the pommel of his saddle, led her the entire distance. That upon arriving at the store she was taken into a rear room and notwithstanding her physical condition; was beaten by Mr. Dickerson. In proof of this assertion the woman show- numerous welts that looked as if made by a rope, across her arms and back.

Judge Williams dismissed the woman from custody.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> “Lynchers’ Festival,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, November 8, 1902.

<sup>121</sup> “White Brute Whips Colored Woman,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, October 11, 1902.

<sup>122</sup> “White Brute Whips Colored Woman,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, October 11, 1902.

Towards the end of the year, Roosevelt made one particular move that pleased the *Ledger* staff. With the *Baltimore American* as its source, the newspaper published a story on the front page about Roosevelt seeking to appoint a black clergyman from Maryland to serve as a minister to Liberia on behalf of the United States.

“The position pays \$4,000 per annum, and there is not much doubt but that the state has a colored resident, probably dozens of them, possessing the necessary qualifications, educational and otherwise, for the diplomatic post. The fight will open at once,” the article reported.<sup>123</sup>

The post was significant because an African-American was being appointed to a prominent position that was neither stereotypical nor demoralizing. The writer wrote briefly about the history of Liberia and Maryland’s budget for those who wanted to return to Africa, and that said in 1831 the Maryland legislature began to set aside \$10,000 for 26 years to help aid blacks in returning to Africa.<sup>124</sup>

The journalists and editors at the *Ledger* understood the importance of showing solidarity with fellow blacks in the South, regardless of where they lived. A victory in one corner of the country in terms of civil rights, such as Maryland’s defeat of the Jim Crow car bill, could give hope to blacks in other parts of the country.

There were other methods of oppression that were used in other Southern states that the editors did not mention when talking about the political situation in Maryland. These methods included the poll tax, literacy tests and being attacked by angry mobs.<sup>125</sup>

Another reason why Jim Crow was practiced in the United States while American and European countries seized control over territories such as South Africa, the Philippines,

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<sup>123</sup> “A Colored Man for Minister,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, December 27, 1902.

<sup>124</sup> “A Colored Man for Minister,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, December 27, 1902.

<sup>125</sup> Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 83-87.



and the Samoa Islands was because of the rhetoric and stereotypes about people of color that were prevalent during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Public figures such as politicians and well-known writers would use biology, sociology, and religion to justify the treatment of blacks and other people of color. Blacks were portrayed as being inferior, barbaric, and unable to govern themselves.<sup>126</sup> The correspondents and editors at the *Ledger* sought to erase these stereotypes through their weekly news coverage and commentaries, by encouraging black Baltimoreans to believe that they were worthy of adequate representation.

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<sup>126</sup> Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race*, 1-68.

## Chapter 4: Economic Empowerment

The *Ledger* did not dedicate most of its stories to just covering the events of the day. The journalists also felt it was their responsibility to empower blacks in Baltimore and throughout the state. Many of the articles that the *Ledger* wrote in 1902 were about the importance of making positive changes as an individual. One way that the *Ledger's* reporters encouraged economic prosperity was by showing support for legitimate black-owned and operated businesses.

This chapter will illustrate examples of how blacks in Baltimore and throughout the state were able to create a community of economic growth despite being denied opportunities to actively participate in mainstream political and social activities. The information in this section is based on an analysis of 33 news articles, five letters addressed to the editor, 46 editorials, and 27 brief statements. As with the previous chapters, the text is reprinted in the manner in which it was originally published, and the typos and grammatical errors are not those of the author of this thesis.

At the turn of the last century, W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington were two of the most recognized figures in America who provided different views on how African-Americans should succeed post-slavery. Washington believed that educating and training blacks for technical or agricultural jobs was the way to fight injustice, in the hopes that whites would change their prejudiced views and see them as equals.<sup>127</sup>

In his 1901 autobiography *Up From Slavery*, Washington said that many freed slaves thought that an education would free them from manual labor, and explains one of the

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<sup>127</sup> Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963), 61, 66-67.

lessons he learned while a student at Hampton Institute, now known as Hampton University:

...at Hampton, for the first time, I learned what education was expected to do for an individual. Before going there I had a good deal of the then rather prevalent idea among our people that to secure an education meant to have a good, easy time, free from all necessity for manual labour. At Hampton I not only learned that it was not a disgrace to labour, but learned to love labour, not alone for its financial value, but for labour's own sake and for the independence and self-reliance which the ability to do something which the world wants done brings.<sup>128</sup>

On the other hand, DuBois believed that being forceful in demanding equality was a better way to fight racism, and that blacks could not wait for whites to grant them equal rights under the law. In DuBois' 1903 book *The Souls of Black Folk*, he talked about the importance of fighting for the right to vote, to participate in the local and national political process, and the right to have a quality post-secondary education, regardless of how unpopular those views may be within mainstream society.<sup>129</sup>

While DuBois recognized and praised Washington's rise from slavery to become the head of a major historically black college, the scholar believed that Washington's speeches tended to reassure whites that he was not going to upset the status quo, and at the same time encouraged blacks to postpone their demands for equality; this, DuBois said, does not bode well for African-Americans:

These movements are not, to be sure, direct results of Mr. Washington's teachings; but his propaganda has, without a shadow of doubt, helped their speedier accomplishment. The question then comes: Is it possible, and probable, that nine millions of men can make effective progress in economic lines if they are deprived of political rights, made a servile caste, and allowed only the most meagre chance for developing their exceptional men? If history and reason give any distinct answer to these questions, it is an emphatic *No*.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Washington, *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography*, 52-53.

<sup>129</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 69-70.

<sup>130</sup> DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 68.

The *Ledger* praised Washington both as a man and as an educator for his efforts to improve the quality of life for blacks.<sup>131</sup> The noted educator, orator, and president of Tuskegee Institute received more coverage than DuBois in 1902, and the paper even dedicated both its front and editorial pages to covering a major fire that occurred at a Birmingham, Ala., church where Washington had given a speech, which resulted in more than 100 deaths.<sup>132</sup>

Despite their admiration for Washington, some of their tactics in addressing issues affecting blacks in Baltimore and throughout Maryland mirrored that of DuBois, and they even profiled him once in 1902, in a review of one of his literary works in the editorial page. DuBois had published a six-chapter article in another publication about the effects of poor housing, and the need for African-Americans to build and obtain better housing for optimal physical health and moral welfare.<sup>133</sup> However, the *Ledger* did not take a hard line stance by supporting one man over the other.

Many of the articles were about church-related activities such as events, gatherings, and convention meetings. For example, Mt. Zion M.E. Church in Ellicott City, Md., had a fall rally the previous Sunday, according to the Nov. 22 edition of the *Ledger*. The article, “Church Rally Nets a Good Round Sum,” was featured below the masthead of the paper, and reported that Mt. Zion was instrumental in raising more than \$200 during the event.<sup>134</sup>

On the lower left hand column of the front page of the Nov. 22 edition, Ashbury Methodist Episcopal Church of Frederick, Md., held an evening “Twentieth Century

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<sup>131</sup> “The Wisdom of Washington,” Editorial, *The Afro-American*, May 24, 1902.

<sup>132</sup> “The Great Panic in Birmingham,” Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, September 27, 1902.

<sup>133</sup> “Lessons from the Housing of the Negro,” Literature, *The Afro-American Ledger*, February 15, 1902.

<sup>134</sup> “Church Rally Nets a Good Round Sum,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, November 22, 1902.

Bazar” on Nov. 17 that had “attractions” and prize giveaways for those in attendance, and charitable organizations also pitched in.<sup>135</sup>

The churches featured in the *Ledger* were those who usually practiced charity and good works within the community. The extensive coverage of black churches throughout Baltimore and the rest of Maryland indicated that many in the black community relied heavily on religious institutions at the turn of the century.

Some of Baltimore’s black churches would form a joint partnership with other institutions, as evidenced by a news brief on the editorial page of the Sept. 6 edition of the *Ledger*:

The Afro-American Ledger has made arrangements with one of its special staff correspondents, Miss Hattie S. Jackson, to furnish us with a full report of the National Baptist Convention, which meets in Birmingham, Ala., September 14-24. Agents will do well to order their special copies in advance.<sup>136</sup>

The partnership between the *Ledger* and the National Baptist Convention providing copies of the news covering the national convention shows that the editorial board was serious about the need for blacks to support businesses and institutions within the community, and that they believed in practicing what they preached.

Not only were partnerships encouraged, but the *Ledger* also publicized new business openings, and offered its critique of the establishment:

The “Home Shoe Company” opened for business Saturday, and from all accounts did a fairly good business. We are glad to know that another business enterprise has been opened in our midst and speak for it a generous patronage of the people of this city. And this reminds us again that we ought not to wait for large aggregations of capital before going into business, which we are afraid many of our people are doing. We would much rather see a large number of shops opened than one very large business. Frequently we hear the remark that we ought to have a large department store in Baltimore. Suppose we had the capital

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<sup>135</sup> “Twentieth Century Bazar,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, November 22, 1902.

<sup>136</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, September 6, 1902.

subscribed to open one, have we the people who are capable of making it a success? We question the fact very much. And therefore, we say, we would rather, by far, see a number of shops opened and successfully managed than one or more large stores. Hardly one of the large stores in this city were started in their present capacity, they have grown by degrees, some of them from very small beginnings, to their present capacity. And this emphasizes the more the necessity of us beginning in a small way and growing.

It is hoped that by the opening of so many diversified business interests in our city recently, that new life will be given to our people along this line and that it will be the means of many more going into business. Say what we will or may when we get to be a business community, producers as well as consumers, the race question will in a great measure disappear and we more and more increase in wealth and business capacity. Gold has but one color, and no matter who is the owner of it, the fact that it is gold, is of value to the possessor, whether he be black or white, and in proportion as the quantity in his possession grows the individual grows also in the eye of the community, and in the same proportion does the community become color blind as to the possessor.

The fellow that has something is the fellow that stands well in the community, and the fellow that has nothing is the fellow that has but very little standing in any community and it matters not whether that fellow be black or white.<sup>137</sup>

The *Ledger* was a strong proponent of entrepreneurship, but while they were writing opinion pieces about how blacks should start their own businesses, the editorial board also criticized black establishments that were giving their customers subpar service. An example can be found in a brief statement below, from the newspaper's Dec. 27 editorial page:

Our business men should learn to treat their customers with more courtesy and politeness. Remember that is the other fellow's money wanted. Business is carried on by the exchange of money for goods, and the goods will do one little good unless they are sold and the money turned over and over again. And that applies to colored patrons as well as white.<sup>138</sup>

Once blacks learned how to empower themselves and their communities, they can effectively seek change within society's institutions, according to the articles and opinion pieces found in the *Ledger*.

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<sup>137</sup> "A Question of Business," Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, September 6, 1902.

<sup>138</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, December 27, 1902.

Education was considered another key to empowerment, and in October 1902, the *Ledger's* editorial staff commended the school board for converting two all-white schools into black schools, and thus giving more black teachers an opportunity to teach and earn a living. The editors also believed, based on their comments, that an increase in the number of black teachers would have a positive effect on black children, increasing their ability to succeed in the classroom:

We congratulate Mr. Van Sickle, efficient and just superintendent, for the wisdom displayed in so promptly and quietly bringing about the elimination of white teachers from the Biddle street Public School and the annex on Druid Hill Avenue, and supplying colored teachers in place thereof. Slowly but surely the present School Board is practically demonstrating its real and genuine interest in the welfare of the colored people of this city. We also congratulate our people on the change and record here our grateful appreciation to the school authorities.<sup>139</sup>

Black women were also encouraged to seek employment in 1902, according to the *Ledger's* articles. Due to the legacy of slavery and the economic struggles of blacks during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century under Jim Crow, African-American women were essential to maintaining financial stability.

A news article promoting a new factory was prominently displayed below the masthead on Dec. 27 and was written by a Cambridge special correspondent who actually encouraged women and girls to apply for work at a shirt factory:

We take this opportunity to notify all women and girls who are working in oyster factories and elsewhere that here is a chance for them if we can get twelve or fourteen good needle hands to work on piece work in a colored shirt factory.<sup>140</sup>

Because women were still denied the right to vote, employment was one of the few means of economic empowerment for women. As previously mentioned in an article

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<sup>139</sup> "Another School for Colored Teachers," Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, October 11, 1902.

<sup>140</sup> "Opportunity for Women," *The Afro-American Ledger*, December 27, 1902.

about creating schools for black children, the *Ledger* encouraged more blacks to work in less demeaning jobs.

In addition to obtaining employment, black women developing and maintaining a desirable image was also considered important, judging by the beauty ads that were prevalent in the *Ledger*'s pages in 1902. The hair straightening and skin bleaching advertisements promised to make a woman's hair change from short and coarse to long and straight, and to make her skin lighter. There were paradoxical views within the paper regarding concepts about beauty and status. On one hand, the newspaper rejected the discrimination that they and other blacks throughout the country had faced at the turn of the century; however, there seemed to be a prevailing view that black females must obtain a more Eurocentric look in order to improve their station in life.

Creating business opportunities in other industries as a means to fight against discrimination was another important topic discussed throughout 1902 in the front and editorial pages of the *Ledger*.

Some of the articles read like "Help Wanted" advertisements, in which the writer would mention the need for more workers in their local business communities.

In Frostburg, it was reported on the front page of the Nov. 22 edition that a new factory was being created. "Work on the new fire brick plant is progressing rapidly and it will not be long before another new and substantial industry will be in operation," wrote the special correspondent.<sup>141</sup> A Frostburg journalist also said in the Dec. 27 edition that work was "good, money plentiful" during the holiday season, but the mining industry was not doing too well. "Work is a little slack at this time. Not because there is no

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<sup>141</sup> Throughout the State, *The Afro-American Ledger*, November 22, 1902.



demand for coal but simply because the railroads cannot or will not furnish sufficient cars to keep things moving,” said the Western Maryland reporter.<sup>142</sup>

In addition to gainful employment, the *Ledger* was in favor of just compensation for those who worked hard and made sacrifices on behalf of a cause. “Pension Commissioner Evans has at last handed in his resignation, for which every Grand Army man will be profoundly grateful. Under his rulings, a man must be nearly dead to get on the rolls,” criticized the editorial board in an April 12 commentary:

Crippled with disease and suffering from exposures, brought on during the days that tried men’s souls, these men hardly get enough to keep the wolf from the door, and in many instances are compelled to humble their pride and almost beg for the pittance thaa a grateful country, through its agents doles out to them.<sup>143</sup>

In an Aug. 30 article below the masthead, the Frostburg reporter said that the white press was criticizing the black community for supporting the right for black people to run for public office. The reporter said African-American citizens should remain firm in their beliefs and support the politician who has the constituents’ best interests:

If the candidates of our party are distasteful to us, we should cast our votes for the other fellow and see that the distasteful candidates remains at home.

They tell us that we have no man competent for these positions. Well, we have men up this way who are sufficiently acquainted with orthography to enable them to spell “boodle.” And we are certain that in the state somewhere we have men who can draft their own bills and advocate them after they are presented, and this is more than Alleghany county can say of many of her representatives sent to Annapolis.

But, be not deceived, this cry of the white press is but stage play. There is a motive underlying all this, they seek by this dishonorable means to create difference among the Afro-Americans—to engender, which, will cause the rank and file to turn against their leaders and break up any movement that has for its end the disthronement of the hide-bound republican Negro. Thus far such schemers have worked admirably, b\_ will they work in the future? That is the question which we now have to consider.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> “Great Preparations for the Holidays,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, December 27, 1902.

<sup>143</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, April 12, 1902.

<sup>144</sup> “Newspapers Troubled,” *The Afro-American Ledger*, August 30, 1902.

Despite expressing support for black-owned businesses, blacks seeking political office and black women who worked outside the home, the *Ledger*'s editorials frowned upon pugilism. In 1902, a young black boxer named Joseph "Joe" Gans was making a name for himself in the region for winning fights. The editorial board made a brief statement at the beginning of the New Year criticizing the media's coverage of Gans:

Mr. Joseph Gans, better known as "Joe" Gans, is a colored man and a pugilist. Mr. Gans gets more space in the white papers than all the respectable colored people in the state. Moral—If you wish to be noted in white folks' paper become a fighter or a criminal.<sup>145</sup>

In addition, the *Ledger* ran a Jan. 11 editorial criticizing both Gans and the sport, after a reader by the name of E.B.T. criticized the editorial board for the aforementioned statement. In the letter, E.B.T. admitted that he was an acquaintance of the boxer and does not consider the sport neither a "commendable nor desirable" profession; however, E.B.T. said the editor's Jan. 4 comment "not only intimates that a prize fighter is essentially disreputable, but he objects to the many and meretorious newspaper reports of and comments upon Mr. Gans' battles."<sup>146</sup> The reader also believed that "yet deep in the breast of every Afro-American, there is a certain satisfaction, when he reads in the morning paper, how on the previous night, Mr. Gans outpointed some aspiring Caucasian pugilist."<sup>147</sup> In response, the editors wrote:

Our critic is right when he intimated 'that a prize fighter is essentially disreputable,' and he very gallantly comes to our aid by citing the opinion of the St. Louis Star, that the only two decent fighters in the prize ring for twenty years are Peter Jeckson and George Dixon, The Afro-American Ledger has no desire to inquire into Mr, Gans personal character—that is a matter wholly his own. It is with Mr. Gans as a public character that we deal. He may be perfect spotless; we hope he is. All of this, however, cannot change the point of our argumens that

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<sup>145</sup> Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 4, 1902.

<sup>146</sup> E.B.T., letter to the editor, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 11, 1902.

<sup>147</sup> E.B.T., letter to the editor, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 11, 1902.

white papers give more space to those things which degrade us than they do to those which show our efforts to be men. It is a matter of pride even to the Afro-American that the only decent prize fighters in the last twenty years were men of our race but that does not destroy the fact that pugilism is essentially dishonorable, and those that engage in it can be hardly otherwise. Our critic shows himself a veritable dreamer when he intimates that the solution of the vexed Negro problem is to come by the way of the prize ring- The example he cites of the growing tolerance in this city for Gans' proves nothing, except perhaps that the fellows who shouted "put him out" had their money on Gans, and for that reason wanted the "nigger" to win, not so much for himself, but as protection for their gold.<sup>148</sup>

In contrast, the *Baltimore Morning Herald* portrayed Gans in a positive light in its sports pages, publishing a picture of Gans striking a pose in his boxing shorts above a Jan. 4 article about Gans winning a fight after six rounds. Gans' battle against Tom Broderick was called "a rattling exhibition of the fistic art, and those who saw it voted it the finest thing of its kind in Baltimore for many moons."<sup>149</sup> Three days later, the *Baltimore Morning Herald* then published a second picture of him wearing a suit and hat, next to another article about him winning a boxing match against boxer Eddie Connolly in Philadelphia. "Referee Rocap stopped the bout after Connolly had been rendered practically helpless by Gans' punches. Connolly was hog fat, and was as much out of place as he would have been in the show window of a millinery shop," according to the article.<sup>150</sup>

Overall, the *Ledger* advocated for a multi-pronged approach to gaining economic independence. In many articles and editorials, the reporters not only wrote about obtaining power, but how to keep it and to remain vigilant whenever there is injustice. Although the language was mostly masculine, there were times when the *Ledger*

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<sup>148</sup> "As to Mr. Gans," Editorial, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 11, 1902.

<sup>149</sup> "Joe Gans Bests Tom Broderick," *Baltimore Morning Herald*, January 4, 1902.

<sup>150</sup> "Joe Gans Beats Connolly," *Baltimore Morning Herald*, January 7, 1902.

acknowledged the strengths of women, particularly those who worked within religious and educational institutions, as there were households that depended on a woman to work.

In 1902, churches with predominantly black congregations were the most important religious and business institutions. Every Saturday, when the *Ledger* printed its latest edition, most of the front pages pertained to the administrative duties of the places of worship within the black community, their clergymen and their members.

The news coverage depicting examples of economic empowerment via articles, commentaries and advertisements demonstrate that even though the business community was small yet growing, it was also vibrant in the sense that the *Ledger* showed its readers that there were businesses to support that would give them proper customer service, despite the rising tide of Jim Crow.

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The *Afro-American Ledger* would change its name to the *Afro-American* on Dec. 11, 1915, with its new name printed on the front page of the newspaper's masthead. It would go on to expand its coverage of national and international issues. In the early 1930s, the *AFRO* published two editions: one for the Washington readers, and another for a national audience. By the mid-1930s, the *Afro-American* would have offices in Boston, Detroit, New York, Atlantic City, N.J., and Philadelphia, and would dedicate several pages to covering news from their respective bureaus. The editorial staff would support the inclusion of black police officers and firefighters within the police and fire departments, equal pay for schoolteachers regardless of race and gender, and would show support for organized labor.<sup>151</sup> Over time the newspaper would change its position on boxing, and provide news coverage of sports stars such as boxing legend Joe Louis.<sup>152</sup>

Like other media outlets, the *Afro-American* in recent decades had to narrow its focus to a few markets, namely Baltimore and Washington, and readers can view local and national news at their Web site. Recently, the newspaper had to increase its cost per copy to \$1.

The reporters were witnesses to a side of history that received little or no coverage by the mainstream press. As written in the pages of the *Ledger*, some of the mainstream media's coverage of blacks was either inaccurate or insufficient, raising questions about the authenticity of the news about people of color in publications that were read outside of African-American communities.

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<sup>151</sup> "What the AFRO Stands For," Editorial, *The Afro-American*, January 12, 1935.

<sup>152</sup> "Joe Louis Whips Perroni; Chalks Up 13<sup>th</sup> Victory," *The Afro-American*, January 12, 1935.

In 1902, television, cable, the internet and cell phones did not exist, so the journalist alone was the witness to events. “The Forum,” a column featuring letters to the editor in the *Ledger*’s editorial page, was the outlet where blacks could express their opinions about the paper, or report on something they had witnessed.

In reporting the events that were happening in Baltimore and throughout Maryland, journalists would often describe their reaction to the situations that were taking place. For example, the Cambridge reporter talked about how, as he or she watched a clergyman instruct church members to rope off several pews in their sanctuary to accommodate white visitors, “the blood boiled in me to see such acts.”<sup>153</sup>

The *Ledger*’s credibility came from the readers’ response to some of the issues of the day, particularly after the editorial board wrote “Cowardly Negroes” to express their anger at blacks who refused to sign a petition to oppose the Jim Crow car bill from becoming a law.

Both the news and editorial staff used words such as “we,” “us,” and “our” to show solidarity. Another reason why the reporters might have used “we” in their writings is because they might have experienced the limitations of their journalistic endeavors, seeing that the mainstream press did not take the time to cover issues affecting African-Americans, and how the Republican and Democratic parties did not always have the best interests of the black community. Most likely, they also experienced the same injustices as other blacks who were not working in the media.

In addition to their anger over the mainstream media’s inattention to African-Americans, the reporters might have felt unable to articulate their pain to a wider

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<sup>153</sup> “More About That Jim Crow Business,” Throughout the State, *The Afro-American Ledger*, January 25, 1902.

audience because they were unable to pursue a journalistic career that was on par with their white counterparts. Many of the reporters wrote part-time and worked in other fields such as education and religion to make ends meet.<sup>154</sup>

During the course of this research there were topics and issues that came to my attention and are worthy of future research. First, better care of old newspaper articles is essential not only for research purposes but also for future generations to know and understand both Maryland's and the nation's history. I found out about the location of the *Afro-American Ledger's* collection when I went to the Web site for the Maryland State Archives, which said the full collection was available at the Enoch Pratt Library in Baltimore.<sup>155</sup> When I went to the Enoch Pratt library in fall 2008, I was told by the librarian that they had the first two years of the *Ledger* back when it was known as the *Afro-American*, but they somehow went missing when the library was moving the microfilms from a room upstairs to downstairs on the main floor, which was where they were located at the time of my visit. I sometimes wondered if historians have used every opportunity to obtain old newspapers, or if there was a better way to preserve materials.

I went back to the Pratt Library on Sept. 2, 2009. Nearly one year since I first visited the library for my research, I found the missing roll in the file cabinet drawer along with the other *Ledger* microfilms. On that date, I briefly looked at some of the clips on film and conducted a more in-depth research of the news articles on Nov. 12, 2009.

The label on the microfilm's box said that the roll contained *Ledger* publications from March 10, 1898 to Dec. 28, 1901, but the roll actually had clips from March 12, 1898, to

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<sup>154</sup> Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950*, xiv.

<sup>155</sup> Maryland State Archives, "Guide to Maryland Newspapers," [http://speccol.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/speccol/catalog/newspapers/cfm/dsp\\_number.cfm?id=63](http://speccol.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/speccol/catalog/newspapers/cfm/dsp_number.cfm?id=63), (accessed May 1, 2009).

the editorial page of Dec. 7, 1901. Many of the pages had been ripped, torn, or looked like they had been folded back. Some of the pages looked as if they were held together by scotch tape, and some of the news and editorial columns had holes in the middle. As the result, it was difficult for me to read articles and know when the story had been published.

As I was reading the articles on microfilm, I saw the *Ledger's* Dec. 30, 1899 edition, and then the film jumped to the torn front page of the Aug. 10, 1901 newspaper. More than a year and a half's worth of newspaper editions were missing from the film. Editions that were published in 1900 and the first half of 1901 had not been preserved. I am fortunate that I was able to see the clips published in 1898 and 1899, which were missing when I initially began my research, but I was disappointed that I would not be able to get the full picture of what happened in neither 1900 nor 1901.

In addition, the Aug. 16, 1902 edition was missing from the microfilms at both the McKeldin and Pratt libraries. In late March 2010, I found out that the University of Maryland at College Park announced on its library Web page that they acquired a digital database of the *Afro-American*. When I conducted a search, the missing print editions of 1900, 1901, and Aug. 16, 1902, were not available digitally. At this point, the question was if the *Ledger* was either still in business, or did the paper have its operations temporarily suspended. In April 2010, I received an official letter from the AFRO's archivist verifying that the *Ledger* was still in business, and that any gaps in the microfilms were a reflection of the institutions themselves, not the newspaper.

During a visit to the AFRO's current headquarters in August 2010, I met with the archivist to verify if the paper published an edition for Aug. 16, 1902. The archivist's



digital search turned up several torn and folded pages, and he suggested that Morgan State University in Baltimore had the best collection that he's seen. Unfortunately, when I visited Morgan State's library, their microfilm did not include Aug. 16. Also, the library employee who assisted me said that for several decades, only one company, ProQuest, has been responsible for preserving print media; some of the older boxes for the microfilms featured another name, UMI, which is now a part of ProQuest.

Later, as I was looking at the microfilm at the McKeldin Library, I realized that the film had several spare pages after the Aug. 23, 1902 edition, and those pages looked identical to the ones submitted to me by the *AFRO*'s archivist. Whoever created the microfilm made an error in placing the few pages of the Aug. 16, 1902 edition behind the Aug. 23, 1902 newspaper.

Most recently, I contacted the library representatives of Bowie State University and Johns Hopkins University, respectively, to see if they had any of the missing editions, and neither of them did. Therefore, this latest finding only reinforced the importance of taking care of historical documents.

The issue of gender in the black press is another topic that should be studied for future research. Upon reading *The Black Press, U.S.A.*, the author only mentioned two black women who were instrumental in the black press during the turn of the century, one them being anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells Barnett, who spoke out against lynching in her work. The other woman was named Victoria Earle Mathews, who was born into slavery but later became a journalist who worked for the *New York Age*. She was not as well known as Barnett, and there were no details available about when and how she died.<sup>156</sup> Based on the articles that were published in 1902, the *Ledger* felt that racial inequality

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<sup>156</sup> Wolseley, *The Black Press, U.S.A.*, 40-42.

superseded the importance of gender inequality. There were times when the writers seemed insensitive to what they wrote regarding women, namely the “Cowardly Negroes” commentary. Most of the commentaries referred to men, and did not address men and women.

Lastly, the political activity of black churches during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is another topic worthy of research, because the founders of the paper were men who were active in the church and saw the newspaper as a means to carry out their religious and political agendas. In *Politics in the Pews: The Political Mobilization of Black Churches*, author Eric L. McDaniel lists some of the key factors that makes some black churches more politically active than others, such as the pastor’s willingness to engage in politics, the congregation’s acceptance or disapproval of political activity, the resources that are available, and the environment in which the church is located.<sup>157</sup> McDaniel conducted a case study on seven black churches in Detroit and Austin, Texas in 2002, 2005, and 2006 to determine why some churches were more politically active than others. During these years, both cities had mayoral elections, referendums, and local controversies.<sup>158</sup> The author also put the political activity of black churches into historical context. For example, black churches in the North might have been more outspoken in the 19<sup>th</sup> century about slavery and the abolitionist movement compared to black churches in the South.<sup>159</sup> However, his research on the seven churches is too recent to determine what made some churches in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Maryland more civic-minded compared to others. The

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<sup>157</sup> Eric L. McDaniel, *Politics in the Pews: The Political Mobilization of Black Churches* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), 12-19.

<sup>158</sup> McDaniel, *Politics in the Pews: The Political Mobilization of Black Churches*, 21-56.

<sup>159</sup> McDaniel, *Politics in the Pews: The Political Mobilization of Black Churches*, 61-65.

research should focus more on a particular church's history and institution, as opposed to the individuals in the church.

As I spent long hours looking at the news and editorial articles, I developed a greater understanding and appreciation for the *Ledger*. During the Jim Crow era, censorship was not unheard of. In parts of the South, movie theaters would refuse to play a film that did not either endorse white supremacy, or maintained the status quo that blacks were second class citizens; in other cases, they would delete the offending scenes. Civil rights workers who were caught passing out voter registration literature were routinely beaten, harassed, and in some cases paid for it with their lives. African-Americans who were wrongly accused of a crime, especially if it was committed against a white individual, were not afforded due process, and at times they were victims of lynching, which was carried out by local white residents.

While the South was carrying out these terrible practices in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the North retreated and looked the other way, post-Reconstruction. As previously mentioned in Chapter Two, there were northern cities, such as Boston, that practiced segregation. Therefore, the *Ledger* served as a watchdog, reporting and monitoring various cases of injustice, both in Maryland and in other states.

Based on the editorials and articles published by the *Ledger* in 1902, it seems like African-Americans were between the proverbial rock and a hard place during the Jim Crow era. Many Democratic politicians enacted laws that encroached on the personal liberties of African-Americans, making it harder for them to meet their basic needs for survival. On the other hand, there were Republican lawmakers who were not as vocal as they should have been during passage of such laws.

This research is important to me because I have learned about the importance of advocacy journalism. In 1902, many blacks did not have an outlet to express their feelings and frustrations due to discriminatory practices. The *Ledger* served as an advocate for citizens who did not have a voice in the mainstream media. Whereas newspapers such as the *Baltimore Sun* and the *Baltimore Morning Herald* published little or nothing about the major issues facing blacks, the *Ledger* served as an alternative media, a source of news for members of the community who wanted to see more positive coverage of African-Americans.

Conducting a case study on the *Ledger's* news coverage in 1902 made me realize how courageous the reporters were. They were covering news during the Jim Crow era, a period in history where those who published written material that did not uphold the status quo of segregation and white supremacy were considered threatening and subversive.<sup>160</sup> Not only would I recommend more research on gender issues in black journalism and political activity within the black church, but I also think more attention should be given to the lives of the black reporters at the turn of the last century. Many of the journalists who wrote the articles toiled anonymously, without bylines, but whose stories helped inform the black community.

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<sup>160</sup> Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 165-166.

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