

Abstract

Title: RAISING BLACK DREAMS: REPRESENTATIONS OF SIX GENERATIONS OF A FAMILY'S LOCAL RACIAL-ACTIVIST TRADITIONS

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How do local African American leadership traditions develop and change? How do they compare to and connect with national African American leadership traditions? This dissertation explores some answers to these questions through an examination of the history of one middle-class African American family's communal activist legacy. It is built first, on my research into my adopted family's local, evolving communal leadership ideology, which extends from the antebellum era to the present; and, second, on my examination of how my family's leadership tradition compare with and connect to patterns in national black leadership conventions.

In the chapters, I lay out the basic issues I will investigate, discuss the literature on black leadership, contextualize my study, and introduce and define the concepts of racial stewardship, local racial activism, local racial ambassadorship, and racial spokespersonship which are central to my exploration. I conclude the dissertation with a summation of my work, and how my research contributes to existing scholarly conversations about black leadership traditions found in African American Literature, history, and the social sciences.

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FAMILY'S LOCAL RACIAL-ACTIVIST TRADITIONS

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2007

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Preface

When I was a little boy, I used to crawl up the stairs of our two story colonial home and look up at the imposing portrait of Charles Warner Cansler (1871-1953). The crawl up the stairs was difficult because of the protruding nails that emerged from underneath the carpet. I often had little cuts on my knees, but my parents were impressed that I kept going up to look. Learning to walk and to speak were curiously melded to Cansler's legacy. One of the first questions that I remember asking my father—and he says I asked a number of times—was about the man in the picture at the top of the stairs. My father Charles Warner Daves (1930-) would respond something like this:

He was my grandfather and your great-grandfather. He was a local leader for black people in Knoxville, Tennessee where I was born. When you're older I will give you his book and you will learn more about his life.

My father's words did not make much sense to me then. I obviously did not understand notions of race or the meaning of words like local leader. But from his tone I knew the man in the picture was important.

Beginning to discover Cansler's life, and his role in my family's history, would become important in how I came to define myself and my relationship to society. I remember sneaking into my father's closet when I was three years old, putting on his size 12 wing tip shoes and sliding around in them. I wanted to be him. In much the same way my father considered his grandfather to be his teacher and his role model. Cansler was my father's guide to our family's tradition of educational achievement and racial leadership and activism.

As my father's mentor, Cansler advised my father to go to the North for his education. Prior to the civil rights movement, he went to Northfield Mount Hermon, a prestigious New England preparatory school in 1948; he graduated from Cornell University in 1952 with a degree in American Civilization; he earned a Masters degree in American Civilization from the University of Pennsylvania in 1954; and he received a Ph.D. in English Literature from the University of Minnesota in 1965, thus fulfilling the educational goals his grandfather set. He did not abandon his family's and his grandfather's leadership legacies. In between his masters and doctoral degrees, for example, he taught at Fisk University and Morehouse College. He eventually left the South and accepted a tenure track position in the English Department at the University of Rochester in New York. He remained in the North when later in 1968 he decided to accept an executive position at the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey. I was born two years later and was raised in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, a suburb of Princeton.

When my father gave me my own copy of *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee* (1939) in high school, I learned about Cansler's grandparents' and parents' lives. It is a blue book of 250 pages published privately by Kingsport press. The book is not a stereotypical family history. Cansler does not present a mundane chronicle of family births and deaths. The book is an unusual and compelling narrative that blends memory, fictional imagination, historical truth, and philosophical insight. He wrote the text to instruct and inspire members of the family, Knoxville's black community, and black and white readers more generally. The key text of my family's legacy reaches in two directions. It reaches back in time to vividly describe the

lives and characters of the earliest generation of my family, the Scotts, the second generation, the Canslers, and the third generation of the Canslers my great-grandfather's generation. He brings these individuals to life through novelistic devices like dialogue, and scenes which colorfully convey the feelings and the thoughts of these free black individuals as they sought to define themselves among slaves, other free black families, and white society. In the second chapter of *Three Generations*, "Planning to Leave North Carolina," Cansler constructed a complex image of my great, great, great grandparents. His depiction of their lives formed a powerful image of the origins of the family's existence in-between black and white worlds in the 1840's.

While Scott alone would have had little trouble due to the fact that he was more than three fourths white, with all the features and mannerisms of those of the white race, his wife was dark brown in color with Negroid features, yet with a culture that showed that she must have had careful training unusual to members of her race of that period.

Given its construction, intensity and philosophical underpinning, the book not only reaches back to describe the past, it also reaches forward into the future. As we shall see, the book is, in an important way, a kind of teaching story. It is an imaginative effort designed to communicate a particular call to readers. Many of my family members, including my grandfather and father, took up this call. However, it was a call that I would struggle with for many years of my life.

Raising Black Dreams: Representations of Six Generations of a Family's Local Race Leader Traditions

John Daves

Chapter 1: Introduction

How do local African American leadership traditions develop and change? How do they compare to and connect with national African American leadership traditions? This dissertation will explore some answers to these questions through an examination of the history of one middle-class African American family's communal activist legacy. It will be built, first, on my research into my adopted family's local, evolving communal-leadership ideology which extends from the antebellum era to the present and, second, on my examination of how this family's leadership tradition compare with and connect to patterns in national black leadership.

There are many studies of black leadership, including Ronald W. Walters' and Robert C. Smith's *African American Leadership* (1999), Mark V. Tushnet's *The NAACP's Legal Strategy Against Segregated Education 1925-1950* (1987), and *Society's* July/August 2006 set of essays on Black Leadership Today. However, most scholars readily admit the definitional problems. It is difficult to achieve consensus on how to define black leadership because the concerns, contradictions, characteristics, roles and activities of African Americans who advise and lead others have varied tremendously across the divergent social and cultural contexts and moments of American history. Nonetheless, from a historical and cultural perspective there are definite processes by which some people gain recognition as leaders by groups of people within black communities and by the wider society, including influential white social circles and organizations. From this historical and cultural viewpoint, black leaders are individuals

who are recognized as such by their particular social constituencies and who see themselves as performing this role. Consequently, I used historical, literary and ethnographic techniques to explore what these individuals are concerned about, what they understood themselves to be doing and trying to accomplish within particular historical and social situations, and how their intended audiences and other commentators interpreted their efforts. Important dimensions of black leadership culture emerged and developed from African Americans' struggle for freedom and citizenship privileges. These patterns of black leadership culture included particular survival strategies for blacks and tactics to improve the social situations of the race.

The central concern of this dissertation is to describe and analyze one family's local black leadership legacy and how an examination of their lives compare to and connect with the activities of some of the most revered black public figures' perceptions of themselves as national leaders of the race. The following analytic concepts will be of primary importance: stewardship, local racial activism, local racial ambassadorship and the race's spokespeople tradition. I developed my views on local racial activism and stewardship from Todd Boyd's book *Am I black Enough for You?: Popular Culture from the Hood and Beyond* (1997) and *The Covenant with Black America* (2006), a collection of essays on race leadership with an introduction by Tavis Smiley. These texts document the existence of and need of racial uplift sensibilities. Boyd interpreted the racial uplift vision as influential black public figures like Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois using their autobiographies, essays and speeches to model conduct for educational and social development opportunities within American society for African Americans and to represent the race's case to America. Boyd defined this

practice of black leadership as the race men vision. Boyd interpreted the race men view of black leadership as black public figures literary and social construction of their lives. He argued that these race men used their lives to model moral codes on how blacks can gain educational and social opportunities despite America's social, systemic, and legal practices of racism.¹

Similarly, Edmund Wilson's essay in *The Covenant with Black America* helped me understand my ancestors' roles as local racial activists. In his essay, Wilson displayed The National Urban League's eight kinds of Capital Table. He presented The National Urban League's Table to describe the type of skill sets that are necessary to establish successful black communities. The Scotts' and the Canslers' legacy resembled several of the National Urban League's Kinds of Capital Table: Financial, income, wealth, family, community, and societal economic resources available for education; Human, the talents and educational preparation one receives from their families, schools and communities; Social, the social network relationships a family cultivates to obtain educational and employment opportunities for themselves, other family members and the community; Institutional, developing or helping to facilitate the establishment of educational and socializing institutions like public and private schools and black colleges and universities. The Scotts, the Canslers, and other local racial activists acquired the human capital necessary to take on local racial activist responsibilities, but they had to decide to take on these important positions within their communities.²

Stewardship is essentially educated middle class black individuals' decisions to take on advisory roles for black communities. Local racial activism and local racial ambassadorship are the roles that educated black individuals play within black

communities. Frequently the primary functions of local racial activists and local racial ambassadors are to coordinate racial uplift programs within black communities and to seek valuable resources from influential whites for black communities. As we shall see, local racial activist traditions both differed from and connected with national race leadership conventions.

In this study, I will focus on patterns of black leadership that individuals in the family took up from the antebellum era to the present. As we shall see, these individuals were all concerned with their own particular educational and career development, with taking care of and advancing their own family situations by facilitating educational opportunities for their children, but they were also recognized as leaders within their black communities because they developed strategies to obtain better educational facilities for individuals within their communities. In this way they were unlike national race leaders whose orientations were largely focused on speaking on behalf of the race to white society and to the race.

I argue that national race leaders are basically individuals who successfully use their life stories to help other people understand their own times, while they simultaneously utilize their own experiences to articulate many of race's desires in relation to the larger society. I formed my interpretation of national race leadership from Richard Wright's review of Langston Hughes' memoir *The Big Sea* (1940). Wright wrote a review of Hughes' memoir for *A Journal of Opinion* in October 28, 1940. He described how Hughes used his poems, plays, short stories and novels to represent the Negroes' case to American society. I also used Manning Marable's work *Black Leadership: Four Great American Leaders and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (1998) to establish my

interpretation of the race's spokespeople tradition. The race's spokespeople tradition refers to nationally recognized race leaders' techniques of turning their life stories into racial-identity scripts that speak on behalf of the race and to the race. However, in the introduction to his work, *Black Leadership: Four Great American Leaders and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, Marable questions the extent to which national race leaders' successes can facilitate the race's progress. He believes that the true measure of blacks' progress will be blacks' ability to move away from the charismatic and authoritarian race's spokespeople sensibilities toward the goal of group-centered leaders and grassroots empowerment.

The intersection of these concepts provides the foundation for my exploration into a family's local racial uplift values and their association with some of the personalities that have formed national black leadership culture. My dissertation is not designed to represent a comprehensive view of all the major figures and characteristics of black leadership culture. My limited objective here is to profile the Scotts,' the Canslers,' and the Daves' roles as local racial activists, and to examine how their lives compared to and connected with some of the prominent national race leaders' representations of themselves as the race's spokespeople.

Aspiring national race leaders relied on their success stories to reach white and black audiences. They viewed their representations of self-made man and uplift stories as the best ways of addressing the limited opportunities for black empowerment in a predominately white society that established a culture of racial exclusion and values of white supremacy. As we shall see, while my ancestors' admired national race leaders that they came in contact with, my ancestors,' and other local racial activists, realized that

national race leaders' representations of themselves as the race's spokespeople would not meet the specific needs of blacks in bondage and later within segregated black communities.

During the antebellum era and the Civil War, the Scotts and the Canslers drew on existing local racial development practices that they encountered in Statesville, North Carolina and Eastern Tennessee to develop ways of defining themselves in social spaces between free black and slave communities and white society. I explore how my free black ancestors' applications of local racial improvement principles were recorded in a literary text, oral histories, a Library of Congress book on the white and the black Canslers, a book on black culture in Knoxville, and in several articles. I will compare their communal racial uplift legacy with national race leaders' heritage as the race's spokespeople, and I will examine how my own relationship with the family's legacy informed my racial self consciousness and life choices. As we shall see, a key text in the family's history is Charles Warner Cansler's book *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee* (1939).

In *Three Generations*, Charles Warner Cansler (1871-1953) described how he and his ancestors utilized their understanding of local racial activism ideologies to define themselves between various racial and social class worlds. From oral histories and local and national newspapers and his own cultural perspective, Cansler developed biographies of his grandfather William B. Scott (1821-1885); his mother Laura Ann Scott Cansler (1846-1926); and his father Hugh Lawson Cansler (1835-1919), as well as his own memoir. His hybrid text explained how the Scotts and the Canslers created their communal uplift beliefs and practices from other free black families' perceptions and

implementations of communal-minded principles. Moreover, he demonstrated how each generation embraced the race conscious rituals and adapted them to address their ambitions and the needs of Knoxville's black community. His efforts enabled him to produce images of a family's roles as middle class black advisers for black communities that conveyed a legacy, a living legacy that has evolved from the 19th century antebellum era into the middle of the 20th century—and which called on its readers to continue the tradition into the future.

My dissertation also examines Charles Warner Cansler's son-in-law J. Herman Daves' (1898-1978) related family text, *A Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, a 1926 sociological study of Knoxville's black community. I explore his and his children's participation in the family's traditions; that of his oldest son J. Herman Daves Jr., (1923-2005); his daughter Carolyn Lillian Daves Reinhardt (1925-) and his youngest child and my father Charles Warner Daves (1930-). Explorations of the lives of Canslers' grandchildren will illustrate how the Scotts and the Canslers' advisory role for black and integrated communities became a living black history. I will concentrate on how members of the family became racial advisors by influencing the thoughts and actions of a number of black and white individuals.³ I will show how they embraced the practice of using educational gifts, vocational skills, family name, social-class status and personality to coordinate communal movements between various black and white individuals and institutions for grassroots development.⁴ Placing their advisory performances of themselves for black and integrated communities alongside national race leaders' representations of themselves also provides me with an opportunity to explore

prevalent performances of the race's spokespeople tradition throughout one hundred and fifty years of American history.

As I contemplate these issues, a variety of questions emerge. How did my ancestors and African American artists and intellectuals conceive the predicament of African Americans in the US, and how did they create ideological racial ascendancy performances of themselves that speak for the race and to the race? How did their lives educate white readers and inspire the race to adopt their performances of themselves as models of black pride and leadership? What is it that an individual, a family, or a group of black artists and intellectuals deems important enough to pass down to the next generation as the most significant characteristics of black leadership culture, and how do they seek to convey this legacy? How did the next generations of my family and African American artists and intellectuals respond to the previous generations' performances of themselves: To what extent did the next generations embrace the older generations' interpretations of black leadership culture, and to what extent did they revise, reject or rebel against them? How did Charles Warner Cansler's *Three Generations* contribute to the race's spokespeople tradition found within African American Literature? The common thread among these questions is the complex existence of educated middle-class blacks, and their development of middle-class-minded black leadership traditions to address their struggle with living in between contrasting black and white social realities.

Educated middle-class national race leaders had to develop a collective purpose from slavery and its legacy if they were going to help the race. Their task involved establishing commonly held views of slavery that provided hope, but there were obviously conflicting perceptions of slavery and its legacy among educated middle-class

blacks. Some late nineteenth-century black leaders referred to slavery as a kind of historical void.⁵ For many other national race leaders this perception flew in the face of experience and memory. The most well-known national race leaders realized that recently freed people understood that they had lived productive lives in bondage; they knew that former slaves were keenly aware of what they had built and that they remembered what they had imagined.⁶ They also recognized that many of these survivors had found Christianity in bondage, and their faith enabled them to believe that they were part of a purposeful history.⁷ Still, they were keenly aware of the fact that many others had to face a past that stifled their minds and ravaged their bodies.⁸ Educated middle-class black activists were able to devise representations of slave experiences that addressed blacks' divergent perceptions of slavery's legacy. They were able to rely on their social and educational training to explain the race's complicated relationship with whites that were both horrible and endearing and enriched because they were in the perfect situation to respond to how slavery affected blacks' perceptions of themselves and their relationship with their own families and communities.⁹ Nevertheless, prominent black intellectuals of the late nineteenth century differed, often fiercely, over just how historically minded their people ought to be.¹⁰

For example, two of the most well-known national race leaders were using their accomplishments to advocate for two entirely different approaches to the legacy of slavery. Alexander Crummell, an Episcopal priest educated at the abolitionist Oneida Institute in Upstate New York and at Cambridge University in England in the 1840's, was dedicated to the promotion of emigration to Liberia.¹¹ He made a distinction between

recollection which he considered to be a natural unavoidable part of group consciousness and recollection which was an active matter of choice and dangerous in excess.¹²

Frederick Douglass had an entirely different view of recollections of slavery. Douglass used his own recollections of life in bondage to establish himself as the race's spokesman.¹³ He used his life story to argue that remembering slavery created a felt history that was the moral and legal foundation upon which the race can demand citizenship and equality. Not surprisingly, Crummell and Douglass had different experiences with the institution of slavery.¹⁴

Crummell spent most of the Civil War in West Africa.¹⁵ And while Douglass was a slave, he had more access to his wealthy and middle-class white masters than most slaves. Moreover, he had more access to the elite than even most whites. He learned to read and write from his masters and whites he came in contact with in Baltimore, and he acquired cultural refinement from his exposure to the Lloyd family, one of the prominent families in Maryland.¹⁶ His experiences in bondage made him the perfect spokesman for the cause of abolition. He was able to use his recollection of slavery to convince whites to join the abolitionist movement such that abolitionists sent him across the country and to Europe as their spokesman, and they published his famous slave narrative in 1845. Crummell and Douglass had remarkable talents, experiences, and social mobility opportunities that separated them from even educated middle-class blacks. The majority of educated middle-class blacks were not interested in becoming local racial activists. They felt that they had to be more concerned with their own survival.

When educated middle-class blacks did decide to pursue careers as local racial activists, they also could not agree on how to address slavery's legacy. They were aware

of local, federal, and state governments' refusal to recognize blacks as citizens. They understood that the local, state and federal governments' promotion of white supremacist policies meant that blacks would struggle with severe forms of racial discrimination for the foreseeable future. The black clergy emerged as one of the most influential local racial activists in many southern and northern cities.¹⁷ In 1875 Reverend I.F. Alderidge promoted a conservative racial-uplift philosophy. He believed that if blacks obtained property, money and education that they would eventually achieve citizenship.¹⁸ He counseled against agitation for civil and political liberty, but AME bishop Henry McNeal Turner advocated leaving the country and emigrating to Africa.

Most educated middle-class blacks sided with Howard University Professor B.K. Sampson, however. He believed that blacks would realize citizenship in this country because Christianity and civilization were on their side.¹⁹ Still, Sampson's well-intentioned thoughts did not address the needs of many disadvantaged blacks in rural areas and in small and major cities. Some blacks were disappointed with middle-class blacks' indifferent response to taking on advisory roles for black communities, or their adoption of careful and conservative interpretations of local racial activism. Moreover, many other blacks believed that middle-class blacks were only interested in realizing social class mobility for themselves, or passing for white.

Throughout American history several black writers, and many black and white historians, sociologists and political scientists, have argued that educated middle-class black culture merely involved imitation of white middle-class to upper-middle-class standards of cultural refinement and accommodation to white supremacy, often at the expense of themselves and the race. Intellectuals' and artists' examination of middle-

class black culture has specifically focused on their obsession with imitating upper-class white norms of behavior and the rituals of passing.

In *Neither Black nor White yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (1997), Werner Sollors argued that light or white-skinned blacks who were well educated, and who had achieved middle- to- upper- middle- class status, passed for white. He surmised that culturally refined mulatto individuals may pass full time or part-time for job purposes on a daily basis (a form of commuting out of and back into the race), or for avoiding segregation in transportation, hotels, restaurants, theatres and clubs.²⁰ Moreover, he felt that the culturally refined mulatto person who reinvents themselves as an embodiment of white middle- class- to- upper- middle- class norms may be doing so for a variety of purposes: the opportunity to escape from slavery; interracial marriage and to break away from the rigid restrictions that Jim Crow and segregation imposed on black life.²¹ Thus for many well-educated mulattoes and blacks, middle class black life became characterized by deception because passing involved secretive behavior of the individual alone or with some confidants, family members, friends, protectors and sponsors.²²

Elite black communities' passing rituals led to a genre of "passing" literature. Mulatto and black writers familiar with this culture wrote novels that described how siblings passed (in Charles W. Chesnutt's *The House Behind the Cedars*) and even a whole family (in Edith Pope's *Coltcorton*). Some writers went as far as writing novels about entire towns and groups of people passing (in George Schulyer's *Black No More*).²³ Most of the well-known writers of passing novels revealed how their protagonists felt like cowards and race traitors, or they felt that they had made a bad deal (as in James

Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex Colored Man*).²⁴ In *Passing*, Nella Larsen presented her character Claire Kendry's passing and marriage to a bigot as a public success, but a private social misery, and ultimately a violent death.

"Passing" literature revealed the anxiety not only about skin color but also about social-class mobility found within interpretations of educated middle-class black leadership traditions. Some blacks in black communities across the country felt that middle-class-minded race leaders were participating in a form of passing for prestige and social-class mobility. This form of passing was not focused as much on skin color privileges that allowed prominent mulatto individuals to pass for white within society; it had more to do with developing strategies of social accommodation with whites in exchange for career advancement and financial opportunities. It often involved adoption of white middle-class cultural customs as well. Thus middle-to-upper-middle-class mulattoes' decisions to pass enabled them to seek social-class mobility opportunities, but their efforts were often at the expense of other blacks within black communities. For instance, influential white individuals became adept at finding educated mulatto and black individuals who they were able to nominate as leaders for black communities. They appointed them as administrators for black schools and colleges. Whites wanted their selected race leaders to promote appeasement to white supremacy. Moreover, they wanted their appointed race leaders to gain valuable information on what was happening in black communities across the country and report back to them.

My study complicates this commonly held view of educated middle-class black leadership culture by exploring the lives of six individuals including myself. I will focus on how six generations of my family relied on local-racial-activist principles to define

themselves and their association with various black and white social-class worlds, how they discovered ways of maneuvering in the social spaces in between divergent racial and social class realities, how their participation in local racial activism enables us to understand what they wanted for themselves and the race, and how their legacy compared and connected with nationally recognized middle-class, and often mulatto, race leaders.

Writing a dissertation that involves my self, my family, and canonical African American artists' and intellectuals presents special challenges. I have sought to use an interdisciplinary approach to study the family's legacy and their involvement with other communal activists and nationally recognized African American artists and intellectuals. My study will examine the differences between and connections among communal-oriented practices of local racial activism and individualistic-minded race's spokespeople traditions, including the writings by and about communal activists and national race leaders' representations of themselves. First, I realized that I had to present a general understanding of leadership. Second, I had to explain how intellectuals used their works to gain recognition as leaders. Finally, I had to represent a specific definition of black leadership culture that I would be using, and how this definition compared to and connected with my family's legacy.

Individuals who successfully motivate people to realize their potential in various ways gain recognition as leaders within middle to upper-class society. They emerge as anointed leaders in fields that range from coaches of athletic teams, to teachers and school district administrators, and to executives for businesses, local, state and national governments. While these influential people often appear to be "natural leaders," they regularly have to adapt their styles for different people's personalities, situations, and

cultures to earn recognition and to achieve common goals.²⁵ They often learn to evaluate themselves as leaders by realizing the following objectives: acquiring money, social status, the commitment of their supervisors, peers, and those that they are responsible for, to realize agreed-upon objectives, but what if, however, the goals are more abstract and have more to do with influencing people's thoughts, values and conduct than they do with inspiring people to meet certain quantifiable markers?²⁶

Intellectuals and writers must seek to create effective forms of communication such as speeches, essays, autobiographies, short stories, poems, and novels to inspire their intended followers. Their use of literature enables them to influence the ideals that govern our understanding of ourselves and our relationship with society.²⁷ When we turn to how varied scholars, writers and communal activists interpret ideals of African American leadership, in general social science literature the concept of leadership has been used in such diverse ways to characterize such varied phenomena that there is a lack of agreement regarding even the basic properties of leadership.²⁸

Consequently, I am working with the definition of black leadership that focuses on the role and significance of individuals who use their life stories to promote and to coordinate social action.²⁹ This interpretation of black leadership has been referred to in many different ways from the antebellum era in which abolitionists and prominent blacks referred to Frederick Douglass as the Representative American to black artists and intellectuals' ability to emerge as cultural interpreters of race pride during the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920's.

Unlike the successful portrayals of individualistic minded black leadership and educated blacks' ability to represent the promise of the race, Sociologist E. Franklin

Frazier used his text *Black Bourgeoisie: The Rise of a New Middle Class* (1957) to raise awareness of the absence of collective race leadership traditions within middle-class black communities. Frazier's view shaped many people's perceptions of the black middle class' refusal or inability to facilitate educational opportunities for poverty stricken and working class blacks. Many black scholars adopted the mistaken belief that educated middle-class blacks did not take up black leadership roles until the late 1960's. Many black intellectuals who came of age as scholars during the black power movement felt that the black public figures of the 1960's were set apart from previous generations of black leaders.

Nonetheless, some of the 1960's black social scientists referred back to what I classified as the spokespeople of the race model to articulate the significance of civil rights activists and black nationalists leaders. They applied this definition to Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali, but earlier generations' awareness of the spokesperson model undermined their agenda to separate civil rights activists and black nationalists leaders from the origins of the racial spokespeople and integrationists conventions. From slavery to World War II several generations of African Americans learned about the spokespeople of the race convention in black churches, in schools, and in conversations with their parents.

Consequently, black social scientists' definitions of terms like the "functional approach to leadership" to articulate the purpose of civil rights activists and black nationalists leaders were not new. They were relying on rather old interpretations of national black leadership to define prominent 1960's race leaders' roles such as "designating the individual actor as a leader who for some period of time overtly

identifies with the effort of the race to achieve stated goals.”³⁰ Social scientists during the 1960’s argued that the individual’s behavior and representation of his story was designed to establish patterns of behavior within black communities.³¹ While many blacks born prior to the 1960’s would not know specific terms such as the “functional approach to leadership,” they would be familiar with the idea of a black individual’s narrative designed to establish patterning behavior for the black community’s struggle for racial improvement. Moreover, they would recognize the selection of a black individual as the spokesman for the race. My study challenges the belief that most middle-class black leaders embraced principles of racial accommodation prior to the civil rights movement.

For instance, Charles Warner Cansler had reservations about the selection process of the race’s spokesman. In chapter 8 of *Three Generations*, “Leaders of Another Decade,” he referred to Booker T. Washington’s emergence as the black Moses.

Booker T. Washington became nationally famous after an address he delivered at the Cotton States Exposition in 1895. That address was so eminently sane and practical and pointed the way so clearly to adjustment of the race problem in the South and the country, that the white people of the country, well nigh universally, and many of the colored people, saw him as the new leader, the Moses, destined to lead his people out of the wilderness of their difficulties.³²

Cansler’s analysis of Washington’s famous speech indicated that some local racial activists were familiar with the concept of the heroic, Moses-like, black individual as the representative of the race well prior to the 1960’s. As will be discussed later in much more detail in chapter 3, Cansler criticized Washington’s representation of himself as the spokesperson of the race and influential whites and blacks support of him.

Nevertheless, the almost instantaneous success of Washington's speech provided him with the type of fame that symbolized the hope for improved race relations between blacks and whites. In *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (2001), David W. Blight documented how Washington's contemporary local and national black intellectuals responded to his emergence as the new race leader. "The free-lance journalist and self-styled Black Nationalist John Edward Bruce informed Washington that "You hold the key to the solution of the problem of the century."³³ "And in New York one of Washington's protégés informed his leader: "It looks like you are our Frederick Douglass and I am glad of it."³⁴ Blight also discovered a quote from Cansler's older brother William Cansler. "Indeed, William Cansler, a black teacher from Knoxville, Tennessee, was so inspired that he suggested to Washington that his expression, "separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to human progress," be inscribed on a lapel button, "as worn by Grand army men' and sold on Exposition grounds at the Negro exhibit."³⁵ Nonetheless, Blight agreed with Charles Warner Cansler's earlier assessment in *Three Generations* of the speech. Blight argued, "Washington's speech seemed to embody sweet reason and excited many supporters. Indeed, many black admirers responded to the possibilities in the speech, not to its dangers."³⁶ Still, Washington's initial popularity confirmed the prominence of a national race leader ideology within black communities and the larger society.

In *Black Leadership in American: from Booker T. Washington to Jesse Jackson* (1990), John White stated that by 1900 Washington had a dual career as an educator and the race leader. His position as an educator and founder of Tuskegee Institute enabled him to represent to black communities a racial self-improvement philosophy, but his

power came from the white establishment in the South and the North. White argued that in the South, Washington formed alliances with influential whites by ingratiating himself with successive governors of Alabama, promoted health measures for Negroes, and the establishment of such economic ventures as black own-and-operated cotton mills and land purchase schemes.³⁷ In the North, White discovered that Washington founded the National Negro Business League to promote Black entrepreneurship and to advertise the success some blacks had achieved to promote his accomplishments as the new race leader.³⁸

Washington's mastery of a campaign for public relations as the new race leader provided him with financial support in the major cities in the North. His strategy for recognition as the new black Moses provided him with opportunities to be invited to dinner at the White House by Theodore Roosevelt and to travel extensively abroad and to receive guests from Europe at Tuskegee Institute, but he never traveled to Africa, Asia or the West Indies. Moreover, in Europe in 1910, he resolved not to enter any art gallery, museum or palace as a means of promoting his devotion to industrial education for Negroes.³⁹

Washington's contradictory behavior did not go unnoticed. Northern blacks began to question his status as their new black Moses. They began to express their reservations about his approach to race relations and his industrial education philosophy. W.E.B. Du Bois' critique of Washington philosophy or racial accommodation is well known, but there were other prominent black journalists who also challenged Washington. Julius F. Taylor, Negro Editor of the *Chicago Broad Ax* declared that Washington was "'the Great Beggar of Tuskegee' and 'the greatest white man's Nigger.'"⁴⁰ Moreover, he warned,

“The time is not far distant when Booker T. Washington will be repudiated as the leader of our race, for he believes that only mealy mouthed Negroes like himself should be involved in politics.”⁴¹ Taylor’s view resembled the sentiment of some northern Blacks who felt that Washington’s performance of his status hurt as much as it helped the race because they felt that Washington was willing to promote appeasement to white supremacy for political power and status.

Nevertheless, Washington privately sponsored court cases that challenged segregation, and he became ardent in his views against white supremacy as he realized that America was taking dramatic steps backwards in its recognition of black humanity, but Washington’s philosophy of racial accommodation and narrow-minded obsession with economics as the solution to the race problem were adopted by many middle-class blacks. Thus Washington’s legacy confirmed many astute working-class blacks’ poor perceptions of educated middle-class blacks.

Most black historians and intellectuals suggest that Washington’s critics were largely from the North, but Cansler’s *Three Generations* documents that their were critics of Washington in the South as well. Cansler realized that the idea of the heroic black individual advocating principles of racial accommodation to lead the race to freedom and citizenship would produce limited results. Furthermore, he understood that national race leaders such as Washington and Douglass had social-class mobility opportunities that most blacks did not have in the North, and especially, not in the South. The absence of awareness of Cansler and other southern local racial-activist views in black communities prevented the race from acquiring a more sophisticated view of educated middle-class blacks’ local racial activism in black communities then and in black communities today.

To really understand the history of the divisions that existed between working-class blacks and educated middle-class blacks, it is important to explore how contrasting work cultures led to the creation of divergent social-class existences within many black communities.

In *One Drop of Blood: the Misadventure of Race* (2000), Scott L. Malcomson demonstrated that from the antebellum era through to the Great Depression, the race was primarily working class, tenant-farmers, or servile (as domestics, porters, waiters and maids).⁴² Ambitious and well-educated black families had limited means to realize social-class mobility within segregated black communities. They had to achieve financial prosperity by creating markets for themselves.⁴³ Many of these black families acquired middle-class status within black communities by developing real estate businesses, funeral parlors, or shops in those communities.⁴⁴ However, their success created some tension within diverse black communities because middle-class blacks needed working-class blacks to survive and prosper, but they frequently maneuvered within social circles that often excluded working-class and poverty-stricken Negroes. If educated middle-class blacks did associate with working-class blacks, they habitually had very paternalistic attitudes towards them.

Nevertheless, in the 1920's the term New Negro became popular although it was used earlier. For instance in 1916, William Pickens published *The New Negro: His Political, Civil and Mental Status*.⁴⁵ Pickens embodied many of the principles of the New Negro sensibility. He was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Yale University in 1904, where his prize-winning oratory won him a lucrative offer from New York speaker's bureau to undertake a three-year lecture tour of the United States. Comparable to

Cansler's local racial activist beliefs, Pickens ultimately decided to relinquish his position as vice president for Morgan College (now Morgan State University) in Baltimore in 1918. He wrote a book about his family and a memoir entitled *Bursting Bonds: The Autobiography of a New Negro* (1923). In the 1920's, he took a more activist role in the racial improvement struggle by joining the NAACP as the institution's executive secretary under James Weldon Johnson's leadership, Johnson being the first African American to head the famous organization. Cansler, Pickens, and Johnson observed how Negroes perceptions of themselves dramatically changed into what can only be described as race pride.⁴⁶ Negroes looked to other ways of defining themselves during the 1920's.⁴⁷ Many Negroes were more interested in their own culture and its creation of Ragtime and Jazz than emulating European culture.⁴⁸ Still some educated middle- class Negroes continued to reject Ragtime and Jazz, and many of the Negro elite continued to rely on Western European models of cultural refinement to define themselves.

However, numerous Negro communities became black communities in their thinking, particularly in major southern and northern cities.⁴⁹ They began to reject the belief that mulatto or lighter-skinned Negroes were closer to cultural refinement and humanity than dark-skinned Negroes. Moreover, they were not as concerned with the absence of free Negro ancestry as the means of establishing themselves within black communities.⁵⁰ Consequently during the 1920's and the 1930's the most recognized national Negro leaders' roles as spokespeople created tension within many Negro communities because their lives were often viewed by various Negroes as separate from most working-class Negroes' existences within segregated black social worlds.⁵¹ Their success often resembled the accomplishments of middle-class Negro families who were

members of Negro communities but were often perceived as being separate from the working-class and poverty- stricken Negroes.

The emergence of a new form of cultural race pride within black communities during the 1920's required artists to make the transformation from Negro artists to black artists. For example, Alain Locke and Langston Hughes were educated middle-class nationally known literary figures who decided to form folk-minded artistic sensibilities to situate themselves within this new form of grassroots racial consciousness, but this approach did not indicate that they had intimate contact with the working-class black culture that produced Ragtime and Jazz.⁵² They were the definers of the music's importance for largely white audiences and segments of working-class blacks and culturally refined middle-class blacks, but they remained largely separate from the day-to-day lives of blacks in diverse working and middle-class black communities.⁵³

Cansler also had to respond to the shift in racial identity formation within his own community, but he did have day-to-day interaction with the varied population of Knoxville's black community. He recognized the need to develop a family history that spoke to the community's interest in race pride and encourage subsequent generations to take on the role of stewards within the black community by working with like-minded blacks and whites, because whites had resources that Knoxville's black community required for their own survival.

Unlike Cansler, Locke and Hughes wrote about everyday black culture, Jazz and blues but they continued to promote individualistic-minded autobiographies, novels, short stories and poems of racial heroism. Their literary endeavors enabled them to gain recognition from white critics and elite white and black social circles as the spokespeople

of the race. The evaluation of the tradition entailed: the individual's ability to use his or her life history to display the value of African American experiences and cultural expressions within American history; his or her capacity to convey a journey to self awareness as a critique of America's practices of systemic racism, while simultaneously representing him or herself as a model of the race's artistic contributions and commonly held American values of Christian morality, democracy, liberty and social equality. Individualistic-minded National race leaders often create speeches and narratives that turn into racial identity scripts.

The race's spokespeople scripts were designed to demonstrate their learned insights into the socially constructed racial inferiority stereotypes imposed on them by American society.⁵⁴ Their performances of these racial identity formation scripts became the prevailing representations of the racial self for their intended audiences. Prominent black artists had to entertain and educate foreign white readers for their own financial well being, while they simultaneously had to convince black readers that their narratives were racially authentic and addressed their plight. The forefathers of this method of representing the racial self to the public and to interested blacks were Douglass, Washington and Du Bois. They were able to cultivate valuable sponsorship networks with moneyed white patrons and admiration from segments of black communities across the country. Their associations with influential whites afforded them with unique status as the race's spokespeople.

Although, as we shall see, my family's roles as advisors for black and integrated communities enact somewhat similar views of themselves, they focus more on how their awareness of themselves emerged from their decision-making counsel to Knoxville's

black community in the struggle against racism and later in integrated communities across the country. While individualistic-minded national race leaders were also interested in reaching local black and white audiences, aspiring racial spokespeople often directed their efforts to gaining the attention of influential white benefactors and largely middle-to-upper- class readerships.

As we shall see, the role of national spokespeople of the race and black families' roles as counselors for black and integrated communities have important similarities, connections and differences. While national race leaders used slave narratives, autobiographies, essays and speeches to lobby the nation to extend principles and practices of liberal democracy to include blacks, I contend that Cansler's *Three Generations* sought to show how black families did the day- to-day work of helping local communities survive and hopefully overcome racial and social class adversity.⁵⁵ He described how it was the local teacher, social worker, principal and lawyer to whom black communities first turn for help when faced with moments of crisis, uncertainty or doubt. He also showed that it was the familial and communal-minded black individual who builds the local infrastructure for national race leaders to gain quicker access to the black masses for grassroots efforts.⁵⁶ He displayed how his family's legacy of taking on the role of advisers for the black community provided them with opportunities to earn acceptance in Knoxville's black community. Black public figures' representations of themselves were designed to achieve similar objectives.

For instance, Douglass, Washington, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X created images of themselves in their various writings including slave narratives, autobiographies, essays and speeches as messianic figures who would lead the entire race

to freedom and to citizenship.⁵⁷ They displayed paternalistic images of themselves as Moses figures destined to discover the path out of the wilderness of America's history of slavery and racial oppression to the promise land of freedom and American citizenship. Du Bois, Locke, Johnson, Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin developed a different representation of black leadership culture. They built on Douglass' antebellum slave narrative tradition and Washington's autobiographical convention of the race's spokespeople culture to make America conscious of the need for social and moral change. This literary approach was designed to educate white society about American racism and to demonstrate racial solidarity for African Americans.⁵⁸ Whereas *Three Generations* emerged from literary models, Cansler was searching for a new type of leadership that I define as stewardship.

I argue that Cansler believed that communal principles were needed to provide blacks with skills to survive and prosper within their own communities. Unlike the individualistic-minded national race leadership's emphasis on establishing a universal understanding of racism, migration to northern cities and social class mobility, Cansler believed that racism took many different forms and that educated middle-class blacks should remain in their southern neighborhoods. He noted strange paradoxes:

There are almost as many variations on the race question and race prejudices as there are cities in the South, where racial prejudice is considered general and all of a kind. In the Southern city where I live, Negro police officers have been part of the police force of the city for more than fifty years, but we are unable to get any Negroes in the fire stations as fire fighters. In a neighboring city less than two miles distant, the Negroes of that city, despite many efforts, have been unable to

secure Negro policemen, although they have a fire station well manned by Negroes.⁵⁹

I argue that Cansler wanted educated Negro youth to abandon “city life—the gay midnight revelries of drink, of song and dance.”⁶⁰ He hoped that talented black youth would discover “fulfillment in building the foundation for a nobler and a better race.”⁶¹ Cansler’s criticism of drink, song, and dance was a product of his genteel southern upbringing, but Cansler’s encouragement of talented black youth to take on mentoring roles for black communities in the mid 20th century resembled what many contemporary black intellectuals and black public figures have called on this generation of talented black youth to do today.

As we shall see, in *Three Generations*, Cansler used his ancestors’ life stories to show that black communities must not rely on messianic-minded racial representatives. He believed that individualistic-minded national race leaders would not provide blacks with freedom and full citizenship. He realized that many working-class blacks would not have the resources to travel and access to the same social class mobility avenues that aspiring racial spokespeople exhibited in their narratives. Consequently, he used *Three Generations* to advocate that blacks must discover ways of helping themselves within their communities by working with and alongside prominent black figures and whites. He recognized that the battle for American citizenship would have to be fought at the local level as well as the national level. Cansler may not have been well-known nationally but he was an important figure locally, and his own life established images of stewardship that many of his younger colleagues, as well as my grandfather J. Herman Daves and his children, adopted to define themselves within American society.

The Daves family became largely responsible for carrying on the Scotts' and the Canslers' local racial improvement practices. Charles Warner Cansler's only child with his wife Lillian Webber Cansler, Willard Wilson Cansler, met Herman J. Daves at Knoxville College. They married in 1922.⁶² When Willard and Herman J. Daves' children eventually left Knoxville, Tennessee, they embraced the Scotts and the Canslers' familial and communal principles to define themselves. The Daves family became active coordinators of racial development at various educational, social, religious and international institutions, including Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, the University of Rochester in upstate New York, and the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey, the College of New Jersey in Ewing, New Jersey, the Washington, D.C. Public School system, through to the Washington Cathedral in D.C. and a US ambassadorship to Nigeria. Cansler's representations of the family's lives enables readers to examine the origins and the evolutions of a family's local race leader principles, and how their leadership strategies compare to and connect with the foundations and progressions of national race leaders practices.

Cansler's account of the family's lives provides us with an opportunity to place the family's vision, activities and achievements within a historical and a political context, and it also offers a revealing history of how a family and a black community struggles to overcome Jim Crow, segregation and institutionalized racism. Cansler's account of his ancestors' life stories, and his own experiences as stewards, respond to the literary representation of the racial self in antebellum slave narratives and black autobiographies.

Whereas the most well-known slave narratives and black autobiographies were models for Cansler, in *Three Generations* he moved away from their emphasis on individualistic representations of black heroism. He focused on how members of each generation dedicated their lives to their families' and the community's educational and social development. Prominent black male writers in particular did not usually present their roles as African American family men as central themes in their performances as literary racial spokespeople. The Scotts' and the Canslers' lives as superintendents for the black community, and as ambassadors with whites for themselves and the race, replies to African American writers' emphasis on gaining recognition as the race's spokespeople. Cansler's representation of his family's communal racial ascendancy ethos within black communities created images of how educated middle-class black families helped facilitate economic and social improvement opportunities.

For my study, I draw on available sources about six generations of race leaders in my family. The sources on the family's racial activist heritage are quite varied. For instance, Robert J. Booker's *Two Hundred Years of Black Culture in Knoxville, Tennessee 1791-1991* (1993) is a useful because it provides the historical context for the family's legacy. It documents how many free blacks, slaves and whites were in Knoxville from the antebellum era through to the Civil War. He also provides valuable information about Cansler's and other local race leaders' creation of a social and an educational infrastructure in Knoxville from the antebellum era, the Civil War, and Reconstruction through to the Depression. Booker's articles "The Canslers: Educational Leaders in Knoxville" (1990) and "New YMCA honors Historic Cansler Name" (2003) provide additional information on the family that explains the Scotts' and the Canslers'

participation in collective racial uplift practices and what has been done in Knoxville to preserve their history. William Clifford Roberts, Jr.'s text *The Cansler Family in America: the Ancestors and Descendants of Phillip W. Gentzler of North Carolina* (2001) is another extensive study of the Cansler family. His work deals with both the white and the black Canslers. He acquired information about the black Canslers from *Three Generations*, living family members and from his own historical research, but his work is quite different from *Three Generations*. While he provides some useful information, Roberts is mainly interested in providing an extensive lineage of the white Cansler family. Moreover, he acknowledges that he does not have the expertise to properly tell the black Canslers' story. In addition to those publications, I have had the opportunity to learn about the Canslers and the Daves family through personal documents, including letters and photographs, through oral histories and interview approaches, and through my own experiences as a person raised in the family.

I recognize that my involvement with the family may complicate my analysis of their lives and their local racial activist legacy, but being adopted into the family enabled me to develop both an insider/outsider perspective of my family's lives and activist traditions. Thus I was able to evaluate the unspoken and spoken expectations of being a member of the family as well as the privileges.⁶³

This was a difficult endeavor because I had to examine my own subjectivity. I had to learn and write about how my family's legacy helped shape my understanding of my personal identity and my social identity.⁶⁴ Their lives informed the ways I came to understand myself and my relationship to other family members, blacks and other races from diverse social class backgrounds. Moreover, I had to write about how I came to the

decision to eventually take an active role in my family's unconscious and conscious "subjectification" of my identity.⁶⁵ There were instances throughout my early and young adult life where I passively adopted my parents' interpretations of who I should be and there were various stages of my life where I actively resisted their efforts. My passive-aggressive resistance and outward defiance were responses to the unspoken expectations of being adopted into this remarkable family. Obviously my maturation was painful at times, but I was able to make the conscious choice to define myself within my family's local racial-activist traditions. My awareness of my insider/outsider status helped me to understand my own subjectivity and to develop the important critical distance needed to examine my family's complex life histories.⁶⁶

Keeping in mind Michel Foucault's theory of subjectivity as a means to present my insider/outsider status, I decided to utilize a cultural biographical /autobiographical approach. Drawing on work in anthropology, American Studies and literary criticism such an approach seeks to discover and interpret the cultural systems individuals employ to represent themselves, their situations, and or their topics to their audiences.⁶⁷ I found that this approach could be applied to letters, literary and historically published works, interview transcripts and other personal statements, including my own understandings of my own experiences.⁶⁸

This cultural biographical/autobiographical perspective is useful to discern the larger significance of Cansler's construction of his immediate ancestors' lives and how their lives informed his perception of himself. Moreover, this method is the most appropriate means of presenting *Three Generations'* contribution to the study of black leadership culture, and the role it plays in representing middle-class racial identity

formation experiences within American society. Consequently for my family, the key primary text, *Three Generations*, functions importantly but quite differently for our understanding of each generation.

Because my study requires that I use a cultural studies approach to examine my family's ways of defining themselves, it also requires that I utilize texts from a variety of fields to explore Cansler's treatment of his immediate ancestors' lives. For instance, Charles Chesnutt's novel *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901) and James Weldon Johnson's first person novel *The Autobiography of an Ex Colored Man* (1912) are helpful aids for examining Cansler's representation of William B. Scott's interracial heritage. Chesnutt's historically based novel and Johnson's first-person novel provide a racial and social-class context to explore interpretations of my family's experiences as mulatto middle-class racial activists. Historical texts such as *To Make Our World A New: A History of African Americans*, edited by Robin D.G. Kelly and Earl Lewis (2000), David W. Blight's *Race and Reunion: the Civil War in American Memory* (2001), Dickson D Bruce Jr.'s *The Origins of African American Literature: 1680-1865* (2001) and William Pickens' *Bursting Bonds: The Autobiography of a "New Negro"* (1923) are useful texts for placing Cansler's perception of educated middle-class black racial uplift conventions within a literary and socio-historical context.

Additional texts like Werner Sollors' *Neither Black nor White Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (1997) and Scott L. Malcomson's *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race* (2000) provide historical analysis of the role skin color played in how middle-class mulattoes lived and defined themselves in between divergent black and white worlds during my ancestors' lifetimes. These texts are helpful

in analyzing what racial and social circumstances Cansler had to confront to develop his parents' biographies.

I also consider African American literary theory found in such works as Marlon J. Ross' *Manning the Race: Reforming Black Men in the Jim Crow Era* (2004) to identify *Three Generations* contribution to interpretations of middle-class minded black manhood and racial uplift conventions. In considering another key family text's representation of activism and middle-class black reality, J. Herman Daves' 1926 sociological study of Knoxville's black community, I frame it in comparison with other sociological texts and prominent middle-class minded black literary figures, including W.E.B. Du Bois' sociological research.

In addition, I use literary texts such as Frederick Douglass' slave narratives, Dickson J. Preston's biography of Frederick Douglass *Young Frederick Douglass: the Maryland Years* (1980), Booker T. Washington's autobiography *Up from Slavery* (1901) and *African Americans Reflect on Booker T. Washington and Up From Slavery 100 Years Later: Uncle Tom or New Negro* (2006) edited by Rebecca Carroll to form a comparative dialogue between my family's legacy of middle-class minded local racial activism and prominent black figures' portrayal of themselves as middle-class minded race's spokespeople.

Charles Warner Cansler personally knew nationally recognized African American writers and intellectuals such as Washington, Johnson and Carter G. Woodson, and had met with Douglass. Moreover, his older brother William Cansler had worked with and alongside Washington and Du Bois. Cansler used his experiences with them and his understandings of their works to represent his family's history as local racial activists as

well as his own experience with the tradition. Thus I will seek to locate Cansler's enactment of the family's legacy within the larger discussion about literary performances of black middle-class leadership culture in African American slave narratives and autobiographies

Moreover, I will show that Cansler's *Three Generations* belongs in conversations about the study black leadership within African American Literature and history. Cansler's *Three Generations* is a text that black scholars, teachers and students can use to examine a local racial activist's interpretation of himself and his family within the social-action-minded African American literary tradition. Contemporary critics of African American Literature are beginning to argue that African American Literature and history needs to be taught and studied from both a public and a personal perspective. This is what I seek to do in this study.

For instance while *Three Generations* was written and privately published in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1939, as I mentioned earlier, it resembled the literary sensibility of many of the black writers from the Harlem Renaissance such as Du Bois, Locke and Hughes. Cansler's biographies and memoir were developed to respond to the political realities that blacks faced in American society. Like the Harlem Renaissance's Great Migration roots and promotion of the New Negro Ideology, Cansler's biography of his grandfather William B. Scott is a migration narrative. He employed this mode to describe how his great grandfather overcame free black alienation by moving from Statesville, North Carolina to discovering a prosperous free black community in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1845. He chronicled how his grandfather's adoption of race pride and middle class sensibility enabled him to emerge as a prominent local racial activist in

Knoxville's small free black, slave and prominent white communities. He concluded his biographies with a construction of his father's, Hugh Lawson Cansler, and his mother's, Laura Ann Scott Cansler, ability to form a loving marriage based on familial and communal racial uplift principles. Cansler described how their lives became the context for his artistic, cultural, political and psychological journey of self discovery as a local racial activist.

Three Generations will also remind one of the humanistic-minded protest sensibilities that dominated African American literary circles from the Great Depression to the 1960's.⁶⁹ *Three Generations* bears a resemblance to the movement away from the individualistic minded "talented tenth" critics of the Harlem Renaissance to black intellectuals making conscious decisions to situate their lives and work within the struggle of the black masses.⁷⁰ Cansler's representations of his immediate ancestors and his own life formed images of middle-class-minded black families committed to fulfilling leadership positions as institution builders, teachers, school administrators and politicians for the black community. His documentation of his family's achievements enabled him to develop his own interpretation of the protest tradition that can be compared with Richard Wright's "Blueprint for Negro Writing" (1937), "The Ethics of Jim Crow" (1938) and *Native Son* (1940), Johnson's *Along this Way* (1938) and Hughes' *The Big Sea* (1940). In addition, Cansler's life story was in conversation with Charles S. Johnson's and Benjamin Mays' careers as black intellectuals and managers of prominent black educational institutions. Cansler shared a belief in preparing the next generation for social action and advancement with these men, but Cansler's hybrid text documented that his experiences with practices of racial activism dated back to the Civil War and

Reconstruction. Thus *Three Generations* can provide necessary historical context for scholars,' teachers' and students' research on the positive and negative affects of the loss of these local racial-activist figures in black communities across the country.

Cansler's literary sensibility looked ahead to black nationalistic sentiment found within the Black Arts Movement of the 1960's and 1970's. For instance in his memoir Cansler promoted the work of Carter G. Woodson. I discovered that Cansler's perception of Woodson *The Mis-education of the Negro* (1933) raised the issue of how Woodson's race-conscious interpretation of black history lends itself to the literary politics of the 1960's—a Black Aesthetic, an aesthetic that largely criticized educated middle-class blacks' decision to only look to Eurocentric sensibilities to define their self worth. Amiri Baraka, Addison Gayle Jr., Stephen Henderson and Harold Cruse were just a few writers and intellectuals that promoted the need to continue to promote race pride within black communities. They stressed Black History and black institution building as the primary characteristics of black leadership culture. I discovered that Cansler interacted with largely middle-class black men and women who also denounced middle-class blacks' obsessive dependence on Western European culture to assess themselves. His group of middle-class- minded blacks was a precursor to the Black Aesthetic Movement. He was part of a cadre of local black activists and intellectuals who preached race pride, the merits of Black History and community activism as the primary means of judging one's value. Therefore *Three Generations* contributes to conversations about black communities association with Black Nationalistic sentiments prior to the 1960's.

My dissertation also adds to scholars' current approaches to studying the literary construction of the racial self and its association with enactments of black leadership

culture. This dissertation focuses on a middle-class black family's means of developing local racial identity formation principles from group-oriented racial uplift ideologies and literary presentations of national black leadership culture. Thus I also place my dissertation in conversation with recent black scholars' works such as the renewed interest in late diplomat Ralph Bunche's philosophy of Negro Leadership and his recently published work *A Brief and Tentative Analysis of Negro Leadership* (2005), *African American Lives* (2004), edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham and Manning Marable's *Living Black History: How Reimagining the African American Past Can Remake America's Racial Future* (2006).

My study builds on Gates' contemporary view for analyzing black history and the literary representation of middle-class black leadership culture. In the January/February 2006 issue of the *Crisis* magazine, Gates argues "[t]hat scholars and teachers need to teach black history by teaching black family history from the ground up. This makes African American history personal and real."⁷¹ Gates emphasizes that it is no longer sufficient to merely teach and to study black history from a broad social history perspective and a few super people such as Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X.⁷² My dissertation responds to Gates' current vision by placing several generations of a family's life history in conversation with broad social movements, events and influential literary representations of the race's spokespeople convention.

Chapter Overviews:

Chapter 2, *Living with Unspoken Expectations: Reflections on Being Adopted into my Family's Middle-class- minded Local Racial Uplift Traditions*, examines the journey my

parents embarked on to adopt me and my own struggle with my family's middle-class-minded local racial activist philosophy and rituals.

Chapter 3, the Story of a Race Man, investigates the meaning of Charles Warner Cansler's (1871-1953) life and his construction of his immediate ancestors' lives in his book *Three Generations: the Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee* (1939). As such, this chapter offers important recovery work of a family's racial advancement philosophy and strategies for working with various white and black people divided by race, class, gender and access to cultural currency skills, traditions and networks.

Chapter 4, William B. Scott's Dream (1821-1885), considers how Cansler's biographical portrait of his grandfather dealt with the value of beneficial interracial relationships and the larger significance of the black family man as the model of race leadership in African American literature. I will use Cansler's construction of his grandfather's life as means of addressing the crisis of middle class minded black masculinity within the national racial ascendancy novels and narratives.

Chapter 5, The Emergence of Joseph Herman Daves (1898-1978): A Local Race Activist's Analysis of the Scott and Cansler Families' Racial Uplift Traditions, examines Joseph Herman Daves' quest for belonging within the Scotts and the Canslers' local racial-activist traditions. His efforts to gain acceptance represent a shift in the families' local racial activist traditions. His struggle for recognition from the Cansler family symbolized a twist in the Scotts' and Canslers' legacy because Daves not only has to gain acceptance from the family by demonstrating his ability to see himself through the eyes of the Cansler family, the race and influential whites in Knoxville, but he must also

utilize his heightened consciousness to emerge as a successful scholar and agent for social change in Knoxville.

Notes

¹ Todd Boyd. *Am I Black Enough For You?: Popular Culture from the Hood and Beyond*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) 18, 19.

² Edmund W. Gordon. "Introductory Essay" *The Covenant with Black American*. Chicago: Third World Press, 2006) 23, 24.

³ Ralph J. Bunche. *A Brief and Tentative Analysis of Negro Leadership*. (New York: New York University Press 2005) 2, 3.

⁴ Bunche, *A Brief and Tentative Analysis of Negro Leadership*, 2,3.

⁵ David W. Blight. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2001) 311-313.

David Blight's work was extremely useful for placing the Scotts' and the Canslers' local race leadership legacy within a historical context because his text focuses on national race leaders' perceptions of themselves as spokespeople for the race. He employs Frederick Douglass' and Martin Delany's roles within abolitionist movement and debates about emigration to represent black leaders' diverse opinions on slavery and race relations. Moreover, I borrowed language from Blight's assessment of Booker T. Washington's philosophy of racial accommodation. I also built on his use of one of the Cansler's views of Washington's representation of himself as the race's spokesman to form a dialogue between local racial activists' interpretations of black leadership culture and national race leaders' desire to acquire status as the leaders of the race.

⁶ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 311-313.

⁷ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 311-313.

⁸ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 311-313.

⁹ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 311-313.

¹⁰ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 314-317.

¹¹ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 314-317.

¹² Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 316-319.

¹³ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 316-319.

¹⁴ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 316-319.

¹⁵ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 316-319.

¹⁶ Dickson J. Preston. *Young Frederick Douglass: The Maryland Years*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980) 24, 25.

¹⁷ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 310, 311.

¹⁸ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 310, 311.

¹⁹ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 310, 311.

²⁰ Werner Sollors. *Neither black nor white yet both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997) 250-253.

Werner Sollors work provided me with valuable information about the cultural traditions of free blacks and mulattoes who found themselves in-between socially constructed black and white worlds. Moreover, his text enabled me to place the Scotts' and the Canslers' methods of defining themselves in-between black and white worlds within a larger literary tradition, particularly Sollor's study of the development of passing novels in African American Literature.

²¹ Sollors, *Neither black nor white yet both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*, 250-253.

²² Sollors, *Neither black nor white yet both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*, 250-253.

²³ Sollors, *Neither black nor white yet both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*, 250-253.

²⁴ Sollors, *Neither black nor white yet both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*, 250-253.

²⁵ Manning Marable. *Black Leadership: Four Great American Leaders and the Struggle for Civil Rights*. (New York: Columbia University Press 1998) xiii.

Manning Marable's work provided me with the language to develop my own definitions of black leader traditions and a model of how to compare my ancestors' experiences to black public figures' perceptions of themselves as the race's spokespeople.

²⁶ Manning Marable, *Black Leadership: Four Great American Leaders and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, xiii.

²⁷ Stuart Hall. "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms." *What Is Cultural Studies: A Reader*. Ed. John Storey. (London: Arnold 1996) 38.

²⁸ Ronald W. Walters and Robert C. Smith. *African American Leadership*. (Albany: State University of New York Press 1999) 7, 8.

Ron Walter's and Robert C. Smith's texts enabled me to situate my definitions of local and national black leadership traditions within a historical and a political context.

²⁹ Ronald W. Walters and Robert C. Smith. *African American Leadership*, 7, 8.

³⁰ Ronald W. Walters and Robert C. Smith. *African American Leadership*, 7, 8.

³¹ Ronald W. Walters and Robert C. Smith. *African American Leadership*, 7, 8.

³² Charles W Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Kingsport Press 1939) 162.

³³ David W Blight. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2001) 328, 329.

³⁴ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 328.

³⁵ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 328.

³⁶ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, 328.

³⁷ John White. *Black Leadership in America from Booker T. Washington to Jesse Jackson*. (London: Longman 1990) 35.

³⁸ White, *Black Leadership in America from Booker T. Washington to Jesse Jackson*, 35, 36.

³⁹ White, *Black Leadership in America from Booker T. Washington to Jesse Jackson*, 35, 36.

⁴⁰ White, *Black Leadership in America from Booker T. Washington to Jesse Jackson*, 39, 40.

⁴¹ White, *Black Leadership in America from Booker T. Washington to Jesse Jackson*, 39, 40.

⁴² Scott L Malcomson. *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2000) 230- 233.

Scott Malcomson's book provides an excellent overview of the social constructions of race. His text describes how black people internalized America's culture of racism. I used his text to support my analysis of ambitious mulattoes' struggle to define themselves as part of the black communities in their campaigns for recognition as spokespeople for the race while they simultaneously sought various forms of support from influential whites who also played instrumental roles in anointing the race's spokespeople.

⁴³ Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race*, 230- 233.

⁴⁴ Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race*, 230- 233.

⁴⁵ Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race*, 230- 233.

⁴⁶ Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race*, 230- 233.

⁴⁷ Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race*, 230-233.

⁴⁸ Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race*, 230-233.

⁴⁹ Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race*, 230-233.

⁵⁰ Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: the American Misadventure of Race*, 230-233.

⁵¹ Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: the American Misadventure of Race*, 230-233.

⁵² Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: the American Misadventure of Race*, 230-233.

⁵³ Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: the American Misadventure of Race*, 230- 233.

⁵⁴ William L. Andrews. "Narrating Slavery." *Teaching African American Literature: Theory and Practice*. Ed. Maryemma Graham, Sharon Pinealut-Burke and Marianna White Davis. (New York: Routledge 1998) 24.

William L. Andrews' article offers an overview of the process in which black public figures turn their life stories into slave narratives and autobiographies to gain support from blacks and recognition from whites as the spokespeople of the race. His text provided me with the language to develop my own interpretation of national black leadership, which I was then able to compare to my family's decision and ability to define themselves as local racial activists and local racial ambassadors.

⁵⁵ Ralph J. Bunche. *A Brief and Tentative Analysis of Negro Leadership*. (New York: New York University Press 2005) 4, 5.

⁵⁶ Bunche, *A Brief and Tentative Analysis of Negro Leadership*, 4, 5.

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- ⁵⁷ Bunche, *A Brief and Tentative Analysis of Negro Leadership*, 4, 5.
- ⁵⁸ Manning Marable. *Black Leadership: Four Great American Leaders and the Struggle for Civil Rights*. (New York: Columbia University Press 1998) xv.
- ⁵⁹ William L Andrews. "Narrating Slavery." *Teaching African American Literature: Theory and Practice*. Eds. Maryemma Graham, Sharon Pinealut-Burke and Marianna White Davis. (New York: Routledge 1998) 17.
- ⁶⁰ Charles W. Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Kingsport Press, 1939) 172.
- ⁶¹ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 172.
- ⁶² William Robert Clifford, Jr. *The Cansler Family in America: The Ancestors and Descendants of Phillip W. Gentzler*. (Baltimore: Gateway Press 2000), 441.
- ⁶³ John Caughey. *Cultures and Identities: A Life History*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 2006) 1-5.
- ⁶⁴ Michel Foucault. *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rainbow. (New York: Pantheon Books 1984) 7.
- ⁶⁵ Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 7.
- ⁶⁶ Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 7.
- ⁶⁷ Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 7.
- ⁶⁸ Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 7.
- ⁶⁹ Angelyn Mitchell. "Introduction: Voices Within the Circle: A Historical Overview of African American Literary Criticism." *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*. Ed. Angelyn Mitchell. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994) 12-13.
- ⁷⁰ Mitchell, "Introduction," 12, 13.
- ⁷¹ Henry Louis Gates Jr. "A Journey through Time." In *the Crisis Magazine*. January/February, 2006. 9.
- ⁷² Gates "A Journey through Time." In *the Crisis Magazine*. January/February, 2006. 9.

Chapter 2

Part 1

Living with Unspoken Expectations: Reflections on being adopted into My Family's middle class minded local racial uplift traditions

I was born on December 28th 1970 in Neptune, New Jersey though my birth certificate reads "Trenton." My birth mother, Debra, was a nineteen-year-old black woman. When she became pregnant with me, she was a first year student in college whose grand design for her life had just been drastically altered. College was supposed to be where she would finally have control over her life and liberate herself from her mother and father.

Debra had learned about college from her older sister Leah who in 1968 had gone to Hampton University, a historically black university with a largely middle-to- upper-middle-class student body. Leah returned home after just one year. She felt out of place at Hampton as Black Nationalism took hold with some of the students on campus, and she felt out of place with the black middle-class sons and daughters of doctors, lawyers and undertakers who, I imagine, may have snubbed their noses at Leah's working-middle-class roots. But I know that their mother, and my biological grandmother, tried to create a similar black-middle class existence for them within a small suburban black enclave in Neptune, although she made sure that her daughters lived within the world of middle-class respectability in Neptune's version of black debutante balls in the late sixties. Leah did not feel comfortable in the new black setting of Hampton. She returned home, married a black man named Ned and still resides in a working-middle-class suburb of Neptune. But my birth mother continued to dream of college as the place where she could

escape from her parents and the life she had known. She thought that she had made her dream come true by turning herself into an honor student throughout high school. She earned an academic scholarship to Montclair State College in New Jersey, but because she had little experience with boys, and was not allowed to date in high school, her first real dating experience turned into a pregnancy.

Debra came home in disgrace. Fearful of neighbors' and family friends' judgments of her daughter's illegitimate pregnancy, her mother kicked her out of her home. Debra told me that she knew her illegitimate pregnancy shattered her mother's illusory dreams of middle-class existence. Her mother's only sense of security was the portrait of the American Dream: two beautiful daughters and a nice home in a working-to-lower-middle-class black neighborhood. My birth mother understood at an early age that her chronically abusive father provided merely the appearance of such stability by starting a small but modestly successful trucking business. Her mother had sacrificed her dignity and well being for the appearance of a wholesome black family. So when my birth mother came home pregnant with me, she knew her pregnancy jeopardized her mother's carefully constructed existence. My birth mother, Debra, left home and was taken in by her older cousin in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Debra rarely spoke about my biological father. I know little more than that I resemble him and that his nick name was Hank.

Part 2

Raised with Black Excellence: Coming of age with my family's Academic Legacy and Local Race Leader Traditions

Some of my readers looking at this story will think to themselves that the beginnings of this life are reminiscent of Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940), *Black Boy* (1945), and many other narratives of young black boys growing up poor without fathers. Today, some of my readers have heard this story on the radio in Hip Hop lyrics by the late Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls. Other readers know it well because they live it; and still others may know it because it has become a defining characteristic of the cultural stereotype of what it means to be a black man in America. The story usually describes how a poor and uneducated young black boy in a rural or urban setting searches for black manhood but only discovers crime, incarceration, and death.

However, my life would develop far from the stereotypical narrative of black manhood. I was adopted at three months; I obviously do not remember being adopted. I learned about my birth mother's life years later in 1998 after she embarked on a six-year search to find me. It took me another two years to agree to meet her and to accept her as part of my life. My birth mother remembered how she carried me to term, gave me up for adoption and returned to school. She eventually earned a master's degree in Education from New York University, and she currently runs her own educational consulting business in Chicago. She told me that the cousin who took her in earned a Ph.D. in Education from Rutgers University and was the assistant superintendent of the New Brunswick School District. Learning of her achievements eventually helped me feel more

comfortable with my family's local race-leader legacy, but I was twenty five when my birth mother found me.

What I do remember is growing up in my adopted family's home with role models of academic excellence and local racial activism. My home was like a classroom. I learned as much about race, class, gender, and access to cultural currency at home as I did when I actually went to school. When I was at the Pennington School, a small private school twenty minutes from Princeton University, and when I would come home from college on vacations, my father, a former professor of English and now a retired executive of the Educational Testing Service, would leave articles on my bed from *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Black Issues in Higher Education* and *The Atlantic Monthly*. Sometimes I thought he was preparing me for the demands of living between poverty stricken black communities and affluent and predominately white social settings. After giving me the articles, he would say, "Did you read them?" I always responded, "Yes." He then posed several questions about the articles that made me think about how the articles and our talks emphasized the importance of education. One day I thanked him for readying me for the challenges of life in-between racial and social worlds. He responded by saying, "It's gratifying that you saw it that way. I just thought you would be interested in the articles." The assumption was that I should and would be interested. My preparation for inheriting my family's academic legacy, local racial activist and stewardship traditions began when I was just a boy, but it took me years to embrace it.

Twenty five years ago, my father would wake me up at 6:30 am and take me to the Chapin School in Princeton, New Jersey. I would fight him. He normally had to come

to my room at least five or six times before I would get up and get into the shower. We lived in a two-story Colonial home in a predominately white middle-to-upper-middle-class neighborhood in Lawrence, New Jersey. On my street no one really needed a clock because everyone could discern the time of the day by the routines of suburban life. Husbands and some wives were in the cars and off to their white-collar offices by 7:30. On the weekends, husbands were picking up the morning paper by 8:00 and mowing the lawns by 9:30.

I witnessed this routine every morning as my father drove me down the street to the Chapin School, or when my father took me to my Mercer County soccer and basketball league games on the weekends. The Chapin School is an exclusive, almost entirely white, private school for elementary and middle school students in Princeton, New Jersey about twenty five minutes from our home. After dropping me off at school my father would drive another 10 to 15 minutes to his office at the Educational Testing Service in Princeton. He would return to pick me up at 5:30 at Chapin after my soccer or basketball practice. Whenever we had home games, he was always there. I was an athlete, who lived for soccer, basketball, and track and field. The weekend Mercer County soccer and basketball league games and track and field programs allowed me to learn about the black section of Lawrence, New Jersey.

I realized when I visited some of my teammates' apartments in Lawrence's small black projects that my parents' provided me with access to divergent white and black realities: a white middle-to-upper-class world, with a few Asian and black families, where children received quality public school educations or were admitted to some of the most prestigious private schools in the country, and a black and a Latino impoverished

reality where very few received quality educational opportunities. These divergent realities coexisted in Lawrence, New Jersey within 5-7 miles of each other. I remembered many of the black and Latino friends I met from Lawrence's projects were directed to remedial courses at Lawrence High School whereas my white, Asian, and black friends from Lawrence's suburban neighborhoods were admitted to college prep and AP courses and went on to college.

I know my father was proud of my athletic achievements, and that I was learning about these divergent black and white worlds, but I also know that he was disappointed when he received my C+ and C- grades each semester. My parents wanted me to carry on their legacy of academic achievement, but I felt intimidated by their academic pedigrees. I was adopted into the family. How would I fulfill the unspoken and spoken expectations of their academic accomplishments?

Nonetheless, in 1986 I was accepted at the Pennington School, another prestigious mostly white school. Pennington had as part of its mission assisting students who displayed academic promise but needed more individual instruction. My father enrolled me at the Pennington School from the 9th grade through my graduation. Chapin and Pennington cost my father about 15,000 dollars a year. My father was constantly giving me speeches that it was my responsibility to do well in school so that I could have a better life. I failed to listen. In 1988 during my sophomore year my father had had it. One night he barged into my room and said, "The way you're going you will be lucky to get into a community college. You are ruining your opportunities!" I could hear my mother crying in the background. She had a much softer approach to my reluctance to apply myself in school. She talked to me constantly and tried to figure out why I did not

want to do well. She had graduated from high school in Durham, North Carolina at the age of sixteen, from North Carolina Central and earned a masters degree in history from the University of Minnesota. Later she pursued doctoral studies at Ohio State University. She left graduate school and taught at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul to help support my father as he pursued his Ph.D. in English Literature at the University of Minnesota. I was intimidated by their accomplishments, especially after I learned at the age of seven that I was adopted. I doubted that I could fulfill the high expectations of my family's academic legacy and local- race-leader traditions, and I was not sure that I wanted to.

My father tried to encourage me by reminding me of my interest in my great-grandfather when I was a child. He gave me my great-grandfather's book to read, hoping that it would inspire me to do well in school and take more responsibility for my future. But after reading *Three Generations: The story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, I felt more intimidated. Moreover, I did not see myself in the family's local racial-activist legacy. I grew up within the self-indulgent culture of the 1980's. I rejected the idea of taking responsibility for myself and the race. I found an escape within media-driven images promoting instant gratification and in my friends' belief in focusing on what would make us happy at the moment.

Thus I avoided my family's academic legacy, by joining the party scene at Lawrence High Schools' middle-to-upper-middle class social landscape, weekend parties given by wealthy students from the Hun School of Princeton, Stuart Country Day School, Princeton Day School, and the Lawrenceville School. My athletic ability, and my family's access to the ruling cultural currency skills, traditions, and networks allowed me

to be one of the few “honorary blacks” in predominately white and affluent social worlds. I was part of a small black circle that lived among members of the white generation X establishment. We were granted access to this rather exclusive club in Princeton because we had what sociologist Orlando Patterson would describe as a “thin racial consciousness” rather than a “thick black consciousness.” During our formative years as the minority within a minority in elite private schools, we interpreted our blackness as an ambiguous social marker imposed on us from the outside, by racists. We felt that our mission was to prove that those who rendered us racially inferior were wrong by meeting elite social standards. We wanted acceptance within this world of extravagance and privilege. We were not that interested in the value of thick black consciousness that promoted racial difference and racial solidarity.

My experiences contrasted with my ancestors’ perceptions of themselves and their associations with whites. Furthermore, my naïve and narrow minded view of my interracial interactions conflicted with the articles that my father gave me. I decided to ignore the narratives of black journalists who came of age during the post- civil rights era and President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society. I was not prepared to learn from their beliefs that they were not only venturing into a white world for themselves, but also for the black community.

Nonetheless, my father gave me Roger Wilkins’ autobiography *A Man’s Life* (1982), Henry Louis Gates Junior’s *Colored People: A Memoir* (1994), and Shelby Steele’s *The Content of Our Character* (1990). Despite my resistance to these black autobiographies, and their use of their life stories to promote racial uplift, I later decided to add to the collection by buying Sam Fulwood the III’s *Waking from the Dream: My*

Life in the Black Middle Class (1996), Vernon E. Jordan, Junior's *Vernon Can Read: A Memoir* (2001) and Horace A. Porter's *The Making of a Black Scholar: From Georgia to the Ivy League* (2003). My birth mother also sent me an early edition of Barack Obama's autobiography *Dreams of My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* (1995). I would later enjoy reflecting on how the generation that came of age after the civil rights movement defined themselves and their success, but I also realized that their perceptions of themselves would not exactly represent my experience because I was part of younger generation that came of age not in the late sixties and seventies but in the eighties.

The previous generation used their life stories to define the significance of the civil rights movement and their relationship to it. I did not have direct contact with the movement. The eighties was a backlash of the movement. I had more in common with other books I found like Brent Staples' representation of himself in his memoir *Parallel Time: Growing Up in Black and White* (1994) and Jake Lamar's *Bourgeois Blues* (1991). Their work focused on America's retreat from programs and policies designed to provide blacks with access to the American mainstream and blacks' from generation X rejection of academic excellence as a means of entering the American mainstream. Black journalists from my generation were also describing how America's increased worship of materialism, and how with the obsession with wealth came more subtle and overt forms of institutionalized racism. Nonetheless, even before reading memoirs of writers from my generation I knew my story, and some of my black friends' stories, would not be found within their narratives.

For instance, Marcus Mabry, an African American graduate of the Lawrenceville School, Stanford University and currently the Chief of Correspondents for Newsweek

magazine, wrote a memoir largely about his experiences at the Lawrenceville School entitled: *White Bucks and Black Eyed Peas: Coming of Age Black in White American* (1995).¹ He currently oversees staff in Newsweek's domestic and international bureaus. He had been a correspondent for Newsweek in Paris and more recently a senior editor for Newsweek International since 2001. His career embodied the traditional rags to riches success story. Moreover, his ability to excel at one of the most prestigious private schools in the country mirrored the hope that my generation would finally receive admission to the American mainstream based on our talent, not our skin color. The hope was that Mabry's success would then be viewed as a model of individualistic hard work and determination, but many blacks' belief in meritocracy did not bear financial rewards and social class mobility opportunities in the 1980's and 1990's.

My family's legacy diverged from the traditional version of the American Dream, however. They were involved in establishing infrastructure for collective racial self improvement. Nevertheless, their perception of community development appeared outdated to me then. I came of age within the culture that Mabry described in his memoir.

Mabry's *White Bucks and Black Eyed Peas* is a revealing work. "White bucks" of the title referred to a specific type of suede shoe worn by the white blueblood members of American society. "Black eyed peas" referred to a type of peas blacks have eaten since arriving to this country on slave ships. Placing white bucks and black eye peas together raised the issue at the heart of Mabry's memoir: his existence between these two divergent racial and social worlds. Mabry began by locating his identity within America's legacy of racial discrimination, contemporary American history and the rags to riches success stories of generation X's elite black males:

I was born in 1967, the year before Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. One of the riot years. I started school in the Post Civil Rights Era of the 1970's. For the eight years I was in high school, college and graduate school, Ronald Reagan was President of the United States. I belong to a class of African Americans who came of age in the 1990's. I belong to that minority within a minority that is college educated—and that minority within a minority that is male. We are almost a class unto ourselves: twenty-something, black, professional and bound for success.²

Note how Mabry situated his identity within the racial constructions of twentieth century America. He located his birth with the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr, the race riots of the late 1960's and early 1970's. He presented his coming of age within Ronald Reagan's "Morning in America" and defined himself within "the minority within a minority of elite black males," a class unto themselves between blacks' poverty stricken reality and the affluence of America's most privileged.

Mabry observed the ways in which access to the ruling elite's cultural currency skills, traditions, and networks contribute to our notions of racial identity. His explanations of his life in-between divergent black and white worlds formed an important contrast to my own experiences. While Mabry represented the isolation of successful black males, I learned about my racial identity from my great-grandfather Cansler's *Three Generations*. I would gain my racial consciousness from Cansler's documentation of a successful black family's efforts to facilitate opportunities for blacks in Knoxville and across the country.

Mabry described himself as one of the chosen few poor blacks to earn access to the Lawrenceville School. More than ten years ago when Mabry attended Lawrenceville, day tuition for parents was 18,000 dollars and boarding tuition was 23, 420 dollars a year. While Mabry grew up in a world distant from that of the school, I grew up near the campus.

Our house was about five miles from the Lawrenceville School. When I was a young boy my father would take me to their ice hockey rink. He enrolled me in an ice hockey league at the school every Saturday morning at 5:30 am when I was six years old. I later traded in my skates to join the basketball league held at Lawrence Townships' public middle school. Nevertheless, my father told me about how wealthy southern families often would send their children to Lawrenceville because it was considered to be a pipeline to Princeton University, which is about six miles down the road from Lawrenceville's campus. The other popular colleges for Lawrenceville graduates are Brown, Columbia, Duke, Georgetown, Harvard, University of Pennsylvania, and Middlebury College.³

I always felt comfortable at Lawrenceville. My father and I knew people on campus. Some of my friends from Chapin and family friends' children were students there. And my father knew the resident black English Professor at the School, Max Maxwell. He also knew the history of the school and the campus. He told me that the school was founded in 1810, and the campus' facilities compete with most of the elite liberal arts colleges and public universities. My father introduced me to the host of auspicious Victorian classroom buildings, dorms and the chapel. The school has its own golf course, indoor and outdoor track, squash courts, a large cafeteria and student center

overlooking the campus, and a state-of-the-art music building and fitness center. We would go to the campus for soccer, basketball and lacrosse games. When my mother died of breast cancer, my father arranged for her funeral to be held in Lawrenceville's Chapel.

But Mabry, and more than half of the black students at the Lawrenceville School, had a different experience. One of the dominant themes in his memoir is his movement away from an understanding of himself within sociologist Orlando Patterson's view of a thick black consciousness to the construction of his identity within a thin racial consciousness. He focused on how the imposed label of racial inferiority from the outside made it difficult for him to form a thin racial consciousness of himself to gain acceptance at the Lawrenceville School.⁴ He wanted to separate himself from the despair of his family and black community by excelling at Lawrenceville and creating a new life for himself. But prior to Mabry's first day at Lawrenceville, he recalled only seeing this world on TV: "NBC, "The Facts of Life," Thursday nights at nine."⁵ Mabry had to struggle to gain acceptance within the elite world of the Lawrenceville School. By contrast, I was fluent in the Lawrenceville School's cultural traditions.

My parents provided me with the social skills to gain acceptance within this world. I knew more about the Lawrenceville School's culture than those who were viewed as the representatives of it. I relied on the knowledge that my parents gave me to develop a deeper understanding of myself and my relationship to the privileged elite within American society. I realized early in my teenage years that although my parents had remarkable pedigrees that we would never be fully accepted within America's elite environment. Mabry was a believer, however.

Mabry's portrayal reminded me of Richard Hoggart's scholarship boy.⁶ Mabry is scouted by public school teachers and principals for access to the Lawrenceville School. He is raised by a single black mother and drawn to her because he sees in her eyes his own determination to succeed, yet he also wants to separate himself from her reliance on him. He recognized that her plans for the future largely depend on his success.⁷ He abandoned his mother's life and that of his working-class black community for his teachers' and students' lives at the Lawrenceville School, only to learn that they would not be able to understand him. This realization would force him to return to his mother and try and help her fulfill her dreams. He knew that he had to succeed not only for himself but also for his mother. One day his mother will look to him to take care of her. Moreover, unlike many scholarship boys who are smart but not talented enough to overcome being caught between the worlds of home and school, Mabry's brilliance eventually enabled him to gain access to a much larger community invested in establishing social circles of ideas that resembled the world of my family.

Still, I did not have the same type of pressure Mabry encountered at the Lawrenceville School, but my father knew that I was not ready for the rigorous demands of the School. He sent me to a school where I could grow academically at my own pace. He recognized that at that time I needed to be protected from the rigorous academic nature of the Lawrenceville School. He understood that I had more time to gain access to the ruling elite's cultural currency skills, traditions, and networks represented on the Lawrenceville School's campus. Moreover, my parents wanted me to succeed academically and to live a socially responsible and productive life, but they never expected to depend on me financially.

I was part of a different black world at these schools. Mabry briefly mentions the world I came from in his chapter “The Way of the Wasp:”

He remembered that,

About half of the black students came from poor families in cities like Trenton, Newark, or New York, but a few guys hailed from upper-middle-class backgrounds, the sons of doctors or Foreign Service officers and had gone to better schools.⁸

Mabry does not mention this later black world again. My family came from the world Mabry barely mentions.

Adopted into this world by my parents, I became the son, grandson, and great-grandson of college professors, and teachers, a lineage that dates back to before the Civil War. To take another example of the legacy that I was presented with, my father’s sister, my aunt Carolyn Lillian Daves(1925-) married Dr. John Reinhardt (1920-) in 1947. A year after their marriage, John Reinhardt earned a doctorate in English Literature from the University of Wisconsin. He taught briefly at Virginia State University, a historically black university, but he left academia and worked in the United States Information Agency and the Foreign Service for twenty years. He was a kind of predecessor of former Secretary of State Colin Powell and current Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice. He was the ambassador to Nigeria in President James Carter’s administration, and he was the Director of the U.S. Information Agency.⁹ Their oldest daughter and my cousin Sharman Willard Reinhardt (1948-) sent her children and my second cousin John Stuart Lansfield to Choate Rosemary Hall. John graduated from Harvard with a BA in English and Economics. She sent her youngest son, Daniel, to Reed College. He is currently a medical

student at the University of California Medical School in San Francisco. And my aunt and uncle's youngest daughter and my cousin Carolyn Cecile Reinhardt (1957-) sent her oldest son, Paul Fenstermaker, to Phillips Andover Academy. He is currently a sophomore at Harvard. Their younger son Andrew is a sophomore at St. Paul's School. These two cousins married influential white men. Their children know their racial heritage, but some of them can clearly pass for white. The middle daughter is divorced from a black Harvard Law graduate and is a successful realtor in Washington.

At least two of my second cousins not only inhabit affluent white worlds but they also can live as white men. This is not a new phenomenon in my family. My ancestors were free black mulatto sons of white women and free light skinned mulatto men and enslaved black men from the 1830's, but most of the mulatto men declared themselves black men. Because of their social-class status and education the world will perceive these cousins of mine as upper- middle-class white males. Thus they may privately possess a racial consciousness that many whites do not have, but they may not be seen as black, or accepted as black by other blacks. Most likely they are recognized by whites and blacks as successful whites.

I do not fault Mabry for not describing this world to his readers in more depth; first because he did not have access to this world, and second because his description of his relationship with this elite black world and interracial existence would undermine the dominant paradigm of his memoir: his experiences with divergent black and white worlds and his journey to move from the impediments of a thick black racial identity to a thin racial consciousness. His memoir, and many others like it, relied on the reduction of black reality to an almost undifferentiated bloc of persons.¹⁰

Clearly Mabry recognized the rising black middle class since emancipation that had gradually become differentiated from the black masses, but he probably knew any real discussion of his relationship with this world of the black elite would threaten his performance of himself within the contemporary black male elite's rags- to- riches success story. Mabry knew, too, that his poverty-stricken-to-working-class roots are considered as the authentic black experience; he knew that his perceived racial authenticity would allow him to argue that the black underclass clings to a false black romanticism, which masked feelings of debilitating racial self hatred and insecurity. His critique presented the emergence of a new theme in the post-civil rights generation's black elite: some influential black writers growing ambivalence to their roles as the race's and America's spokespeople.¹¹ Unlike the race's spokespeople tradition found in Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington's, W.E.B. Du Bois', James Weldon Johnson's, Langston Hughes', Richard Wright's and James Baldwin's narratives, Mabry, like Ralph Ellison, rejected the idea of successful black writers' roles as the race's spokesmen. Mabry's rags- to-riches story represented the promise of the race, but he did not find much inspiration in national black leaders' promotion of the ideal that individual achievement symbolized collective racial advancement. His view resembled the perceptions of many black men from my generation.

I could identify with Mabry's interpretation of his racial identity. I was often the only black student in the class who had to speak for or represent the entire race. I only encountered connections to the race from my parents' stories and from reading articles that they gave me and from *Three Generations*. The idea of being a representative of the race was a burden that I had no intention of carrying. In prep school, I believed in

revealing my capabilities only when I needed to. I felt that this was the best way to avoid the racial responsibility that came with striving for academic excellence. Also, I realized that athletic achievement, not academic excellence, offered me acceptance from various black and white social worlds.

In the late 1980's I was drawn to Patterson's idea of a thin racial consciousness. I was more of a member of my private schools' white communities than my private schools' small black communities. Most of my close friends were white and went to the Hun School of Princeton, the Lawrenceville School, Notre Dame High School, or Lawrence High School. They were not thinking about my experiences with racism or their own realizations of it. My friends were much more interested in sports and partying than school work.

Nonetheless, I received letters of acceptance from Susquehanna University, Moravian College, and McDaniel College, formerly known as Western Maryland in 1990, largely because of my success in track at the Pennington School. I remembered that my father cut out the coverage of my track and field meets in the local newspapers and put them in a scrapbook. He also sent them to track and field coaches at small liberal arts colleges. But I could see the look of concern on my parents' faces. As they wondered if I would even graduate from college. Head track and field coaches from Susquehanna University, Moravian College, Saint Joseph's University and Montclair State University sent me recruiting letters. Saint Joseph was the only division 1 school that sent me a letter of interest, but after meeting with the head coach I realized that I did not want to run for a division 1 program.

I chose Susquehanna University because of the beautiful campus and the small size of the school reminded me of the Pennington School. I also felt at home because on my recruiting visit the black track and field athletes I stayed with seemed comfortable on campus. They appeared to have formed their own community while knowing how to become part of Susquehanna's largely white community. But I would later learn that their lives on campus were contrary to the portrait they presented during my visit. Many of the black students were divided along social class lines. The black students from inner city backgrounds formed their own community and the black students from the suburbs assimilated into Susquehanna's community, particularly with white students from the second-tier new moneyed families that dominated the social scene at this small school: Susquehanna's student body in 1990 was about 1,450. There were only two bars and a few restaurants near the rural campus in central Pennsylvania. The middle-to-upper-middle-class students in the fraternities and sororities were the hub of the social scene. These students were largely from Northern New Jersey. They seemed to resemble the students from The Pennington School, the Hun School, and the Lawrenceville School, but I would discover that many of these students did not have any real experiences with social class and racial difference.

On my first night on campus in September of 1990 I realized how different some of the students were. I was walking across campus with some white students I had recently met, when three large and drunk football players walked towards us and shouted in our direction, "Look, a nigger is on campus. We hate niggers." My new friends were small. The football players were big, about 6'4, and 250 pounds. I saw the fear and shock in my new acquaintances' eyes. They immediately said, "That's fucked up."

Then they tried to comfort me with this; “You are not black anyway so don’t worry about it.” I did not say anything, but I was outraged. What do they mean I am not black? From my recollections of that night, I know now that I was partly to blame for their assessment.

I had formed such a good thin racial consciousness of myself that they had accepted me as an exception to the rule. These white students from Summit, New Jersey thought I was not black because of how I conducted myself and because I came from a middle class background. When we got back to the dorm, I left my new friends and went to my room. My white roommate was not there. Tears trickled down my face as I called my mother and screamed into the phone. I told her what happened and shouted that I wanted to come home immediately. My mother’s soft approach changed dramatically. She told me in a stern voice,

You can only come back home after you have your degree in your hand. You are in a fight that we have tried to prepare you for from the very beginning of your life. We have given you all of the educational opportunities we could. Now it is up to you.

I did not comprehend everything that my mother was trying to tell me. And I did not know then that she had just learned that she had breast cancer and the cancer had spread throughout her body. She knew she was facing certain death, and therefore she knew that did not have much time to teach me how to overcome the racial barriers I would face as a black man.

After my conversation with my mother, I began to discern the differences between my experiences within upper-middle-class neighborhoods a few miles from the

world of elite private schools that were pipelines to Princeton University, the other Ivy League Colleges and Universities and highly selective liberal arts colleges, and the student body and culture of a regional liberal arts college in central Pennsylvania. Many of the students at Susquehanna University never had any interaction with a black person, especially not a black person from my worlds. Most of them came to Susquehanna University from small working-class and middle-class towns in Central Pennsylvania and middle-to-upper-middle-class suburban landscapes in Northern New Jersey.

Learning of my mother's illness forced me to grow up quickly. I thought my social development and academic achievements could help my father cope with the pain of losing his wife of over thirty years. I had joined a white fraternity, Theta Chi, seeking a semblance of home with the popular crowd at Susquehanna and the hub of the social life at the school. Some of my fraternity brothers tried to help by traveling three and half hours during the spring exam period to my mother's funeral at the Lawrenceville School, but I was numb.

Furthermore, I did not stay in touch with any of my fraternity brothers from Theta Chi after I graduated from Susquehanna; because while I appreciated their gesture, I never felt that they understood what life was like for me as the only black Theta Chi brother in the house. I quit the track team and I began focusing more attention on academics. I told my Dad I was going to graduate with my classmates. I also began to recognize the need to develop my sense of racial consciousness in my interactions with divergent black and white worlds. I did not realize it at the time but I was beginning to take steps that would help me accept and work within my family's legacy of academic achievement and local racial activism.

During the summer of my sophomore year after my mother's funeral, my father asked me if I needed to take some time off from school. I told him "no." I also knew that I wanted to get into a graduate program in Political Science, my major. The death of my mother made me realize that it was time to take responsibility for my future. I knew that this would be difficult because my grades had dropped substantially. While I did not get into any doctoral programs at the end of my senior year in 1994, I was determined to find my way to grad school.

But I told my father that before I went to graduate school program, I wanted to learn more about a black world that I had little contact with growing up in Lawrence. My father encouraged me to become an intern at Operation Fatherhood, which is a privately funded agency in Trenton, New Jersey. I knew that I would probably get the job because it was an unpaid internship and my late mother was on the Board of Trustees.

The agency was responsible for men who were unable or unwilling to pay their child support. Before President Clinton's welfare reform bill, the law in New Jersey was that negligent fathers would go to jail. Operation Fatherhood enabled the fathers to stay out of jail as long as they were in the program and earnestly seeking employment opportunities. I was only supposed to observe the program, but I decided to get involved. I requested a meeting with Joe Thomas, the Director of agency, and told him that I had a plan. I said, "I could help the men learn how to dress more appropriately for interviews, prepare resumes and take them in the agency's van to meet with employers." He liked the idea, but was a bit concerned about a young man taking on so much responsibility. The mostly black men in the agency were old enough to be my father. I recognized that for my plan to work I had to learn how to become part of their worlds, while I

simultaneously found ways of making them attractive candidates to largely white employers. I did not know that I could do it, but it was better than the men just sitting at the agency or reporting to the agency that they went on job interviews. Many of the black men were anxious, because I was taking them outside of Trenton to the suburbs where there were more job opportunities. One day I discovered how detached the men were from life outside of Trenton.

When I got everyone in the van, I could hear the men saying I was going to do some more “magic” today. Later that day I learned that my form of magic was talking to white men and getting the fathers job interviews. My magic trick was that I informed employers that hiring even one of the men offered state tax incentives. Many of the black men had never been beyond the city limits and most of the men told me that they had not even spoken with a white person. When I would come home and tell my father stories about my day, he said, “I am proud of you because you are using your abilities to learn how to move between black and white worlds and help people.” Whenever I had a difficult time interacting with the black men from poverty-stricken neighborhoods, or the white employers from largely middle class or affluent communities, my father would often say, “You must learn how to be a chameleon; you must learn how to present yourself in a variety of social situations.” When I asked him more about this, he would often say, “Language is like clothes. Just make sure that what you say, and how you say it, matches the situation you happen to be in.”

I worked hard, became friends with some of the men and initially assisted most of my clients in obtaining jobs. Joe Thomas, the acting Director of the Agency, then offered to pay me \$10.00 an hour. My early successes at Operation Fatherhood, and my father’s

advice, made me keenly aware of the role my presentation of my self would play in interactions with various black and white worlds. Looking back at my experiences at Operation Fatherhood, I realize that this was an important moment in my young adult life because it helped me understand the larger significance of my family's cultural currency and local racial activist beliefs. I had several tangible examples of why my parents' stressed critical thinking skills as the most valuable resource in learning how to live within various conflicting social settings and how to help people. Although most of the men I helped did get jobs and stayed out of jail, I was not able to really help them move beyond their poverty-stricken existence in Trenton. More than half of the men had lost their jobs as I left the agency during the summer of 1995.

I learned how the men in the program were victims of two social forces. First, they did not want to work five days a week. Often the men would ask me to negotiate a hustle day on Wednesday or Thursday for them when I talked with their white employers. Second, I discovered that it made more sense not to have a full-time job. Initially I assumed that they had not been exposed to the blue collar or the lower- middle-class protestant work ethic, but I learned that it was more complicated than that. Many of the jobs that the men qualified for would not enable them to eat, to pay their bills and to pay their child support. If they took a full-time job and paid their child support, then they would lose many of their unemployment benefits. I discovered that in that situation staying on welfare and not paying their child support actually made more sense.

In the fall of 1995, I developed a new plan. I decided to change my major from Political Science to English. My interest had changed. I enrolled at Rider University as a continuing-education student. I took three English classes a semester for three semesters.

I made the Dean's List each semester and then in 1996 I applied to Masters of Arts in Teaching in English Literature and Masters of Education programs. I was pleased to get acceptances from several good schools. I chose Colgate. I will never forget the look of pride in my father's eyes when I gave him the acceptance letters.

My decision to become a continuing education English major at Rider University, and to attend Colgate University's Masters of Arts in Teaching program in English Literature, was a product of my experiences in Professor Susan Albertine's classes at Susquehanna University. Her teaching style became my model when I began my teaching career.

In 1993 during my junior year at Susquehanna, Professor Susan Albertine's nineteenth-century American and African American Literature courses provided me with opportunities to understand the meaning behind developing academic cultural currency skills and the value of my parents' local-racial-activist legacy. Professor Albertine was a petite white woman with cropped hair around her oval shaped glasses. She was a soft-spoken woman with a keen analytical mind. She was a brilliant professor and excellent teacher with an impressive academic pedigree. She had earned a BA from Cornell University and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in English literature. I came to her first African American literature class my junior year thinking that a white woman could teach me little about being black. I was wrong. The class discussions in Albertine's course helped to make me more aware of the value of inheriting my parents' local race-leader traditions. As the only black student in the class I felt like I was able to confront the racial responsibility. I recognized I could not represent twenty two million black people, but I also understood that I had the opportunity to play an important role in the

class by helping to raise the white students' awareness of race in American life. Professor Albertine appreciated my papers, but what meant the most to me was that she said that the white students told her that I was a source of enlightenment and inspiration; that she frequently heard from white students how much they learned from me. She told me that my abilities in the classroom reflect my role as an ambassador for the African American community to students at Susquehanna University. Her affirmation helped me to begin to understand that I might fit within my family's academic achievements and local- racial activist heritage.

In my dorm room and at home on vacations I began to reread my parents' editions of Frederick Douglass' *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: Written By Himself* (1845), Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* (1901), W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex Colored Man* (1912), Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940), *Black Boy* (1945), Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), and James Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son* (1955). I realized that they constructed narrative voices that spoke for and to the race; that their narratives enabled them to perform as national race's spokespeople who displayed middle- class- minded racial ascendancy as national race leadership and American moral uplift. My parents' lives, and my rereading of *Three Generations* alongside these canonical African American narratives, enabled me to understand professor Albertine's perception of me as an ambassador for the black community at Susquehanna University.

I also learned the value of my family's legacy in Professor Robert Moore's senior sociology seminar: Minorities. Professor Moore was the first African American teacher that I had at Susquehanna University and one of the few on campus. I could tell that this

was his first teaching position. His nervous introduction to the class on the first day revealed to me that he had just earned his Ph.D. He often had difficulty presenting his ideas to the class, but I could discern the arguments he was trying to express. So I decided to make an effort to translate what he was saying and support his perspective with personal experiences or illustrations of the arguments he presented.

One day after class, he thanked me for the support and asked me to give a lecture on Affirmative Action to his introductory sociology seminar. I surmised that he was uncomfortable giving this lecture to his all-white first- year class. I also know now that he thought I was more fluent than he was in the cultures of the working, middle, and upper-middle class white students at Susquehanna. Moreover, he wanted me to realize what I could do as an instructor. I accepted the extra assignment but felt somewhat overwhelmed by it. I took articles my father had given me to read over the years from *The New York Times*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Black Issues in Higher Education* on Affirmative Action and developed a presentation for the class. I began with a brief discussion about meritocracy as it related to college admissions. The students in class readily embraced the ideal of open competition for college admission, but I posed questions about the difference between myth and practice.

Who are legacy students?

They did not understand at first but then I explained the missions and cultures of elite private schools and how graduation from one of the schools provides one with advantages when applying to college. They then began to ask questions about the differences between prestigious private schools, and rural and suburban high schools. One student asked,

What happens if you have gone to a prestigious private school but your grades are not as good as the grades from someone from a lesser known rural and suburban high school?

I responded,

Students' performances at prestigious private schools may carry more weight because the private schools are designed to prepare students to excel at elite colleges and universities. And many of the private schools have established relationships with Ivy League schools and highly selective colleges and universities that date back to the mid nineteenth century.

Another student raised the issue about whether wealthy parents can greatly increase their child's chances of getting into any school if the parents are alumni and donate money to the schools?

Sure, I said,

Prominent families have always had ways of compensating for their children's poor performances at private schools.

I then argued that most elite colleges and universities do not adhere to myths of meritocracy. These types of colleges and universities perceive themselves as autonomous institutions. They make admission decisions primarily based on what they want the incoming class to look like each year. Test scores and grades are only two factors that they consider.

Then one of the students stated,

But most of the colleges and universities reject Affirmative Action because it lowers their standards.

I responded politely,

No most institutions embraced Affirmative Action because Affirmative Action policies provide them with the diversity of students that they are looking for each year.

I then described my identity as an example. I presented my self by stating:

My racial identity is African American. Why does my racial identity impede my chances of acquiring certain advantages?

While some of the white students immediately stated that I would benefit from Affirmative Action, other students argued that once I got on campus most students would think that Affirmative Action was the sole reason why I received admission to the college. I responded to these questions with a ten to fifteen minute explanation about how my middle-class background and experiences in private schools offered me social advantages to overcome those perceptions. I asked them to come up with some reasons why.

After that ten to fifteen minutes of silence one student said,

How many black people have my middle class social advantages and experiences in private schools?

I also asked them,

Who are the people in powerful positions?

How many of the people who are in positions of power come from these private schools? How many of them who are in powerful positions in schools, in businesses and in law firms hire people that remind them of themselves?

Why would many African American, Asians, Latino, or working class whites have difficulty making themselves attractive to employers who probably feel more comfortable hiring people they know or are like them?

From the look on many of my students' faces and their responses to the questions, I felt that I had reached some of them. After the class had ended a few of the first-year students told me they not only enjoyed the discussion, but that I had made them rethink some of their perspectives on Affirmative Action. I felt then that I was not only learning how to perform in the classroom as an ambassador of the African American community at Susquehanna University, but I was also learning how to be a critic of the systemic culture that affords or denies people access to the American dream. When I look back on that pivotal moment in my life, I realize that my parents had tried to provide me with opportunities to discover who I am. From that time on I began to identify myself within the family's local race-leader and local racial-ambassador tradition. The self awareness that I gained in college also enabled me to develop more meaningful relationships with my prep school friends from home.

For instance in 1976, I had met James Amberg Kuser (1971-2003) in the Mercer County soccer leagues. He was the embodiment of the ruling-elite world Mabry referred to in his memoir, but Jim did not fit the blueblood stereotype. He did not adopt the arrogance and racism that Mabry encountered at Lawrenceville. Jim was the son of Mary Kay and Rob Kuser. The Kusers are the exemplars of Central New Jersey's aristocracy because their ancestry in Trenton dated back to before the Civil War. The Kuser mansion in Trenton, New Jersey is listed as one of the monuments to see when tourists and families come to the area. The Kuser's home was in Lawrenceville in a neighborhood on

a hill above the Lawrenceville School off of Kuser road on Green Avenue. Jim went to the Lawrenceville School. He was a good student athlete who had the opportunity to use his family's legacy at the Lawrenceville School to go to Princeton University. But Jim wanted to make a name for himself on his own.

When Jim graduated from Lawrenceville in 1989, he turned down Princeton University, his father Rob Kuser's Alma Mater, for Notre Dame, where he earned a BA in American Studies. He later earned a MBA from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 1998 and became Vice President of Private Wealth management at Merrill Lynch. He died unexpectedly of a heart attack in 2003.

Jim learned, as I did, how to interact with people who come from various social class backgrounds from his parents and experiences in Mercer County sports leagues. Jim looked like the model of the Irish Catholic elite. His jet black hair, chubby checks and sturdy athletic frame could be on Loyola College's catalogue in Baltimore, Maryland or a University of Notre Dame's brochure. He often wore khaki Ralph Lauren casual wear and loved to go to Princeton basketball and lacrosse games and Notre Dame Football games.

I also knew Princeton University and the town of Princeton well. My father took me to Princeton University's basketball, football, lacrosse and soccer games since I was old enough to walk. During my prep school days, we would often see the Kusers at the games. I would often go to the town of Princeton to meet with friends throughout my prep school and college years. We would eat at the restaurants and figure out what we were going to do over the weekend when we were in prep school, and we would meet in town to decide where we would be going when we came home for Christmas break in

college. My father moved from Lawrence to Princeton, and he remarried in 1998. When I came from my apartment in Philadelphia to New Jersey to visit him, going to Princeton was no longer the same. Most of my friends had moved away, gotten married, and started their families, but I was still trying to find my way.

Nonetheless, I had graduated from college, received a Masters of Arts and Teaching in English Literature, and I was teaching at Friends' Central School. Most aspiring educators would be content, but I was not satisfied. I was thinking about going back to graduate school and about furthering my family's local race leader legacy, but a Ph.D. program would put the normal middle-class routine of going to college, beginning your career and starting a family on hold. So when I came to Princeton to visit my father, I would often walk around alone looking in the high- end shops and stores in front of Princeton University's campus thinking about the next step.

I ran into Jim Kuser in Princeton on one of those nights in 1999. He was running. We immediately recognized each other. He lived in an apartment across the street from Princeton University. He was working at Merrill Lynch's satellite office in Princeton. I had not seen him since we graduated from prep school and a few encounters at sporting events with our fathers in college. We talked for hours that night. Jim asked me questions about what it was like being an African American in these elite and often racist social settings. I initially gave him a pat answer that I often presented when I am not sure how much my white and wealthy friends really want to know. But Jim must have realized it because he said,

I took several African American Literature courses at Notre Dame and I really want to know?

I told him,

I had to learn how to live between worlds. I learned how to adapt my speech, mannerism and attitude based on the social situation I happened to be in.

Jim listened intently. And he asked,

How did I learn to do this?

I smiled,

Black people have been doing this since we arrived on slave ships. You may not think much about your ability to move between worlds because you really do not have to, but I am always reading the social situations I find myself in and carefully thinking about what I want to say and how to say what I want before I speak. And I have learned and studied about my family's history of living this way from before the Civil War. I sometimes feel as if I am always auditioning for acceptance from both blacks and whites.

After describing this further, when I looked in his eyes, it was as if Jim had been exposed to a new social reality. Jim had other black friends and acquaintances but they had told him little about how we as honorary black members of the ruling elite's world live.

Blacks from my world, if they do have any close white friends, usually keep the means of survival between worlds a carefully guarded secret. On another occasion, Jim asked me about something else he was struggling with. He told me about the terrible death of his former roommate from the Lawrenceville School. His prep school roommate was killed at Yale by a young and poor black man in New Haven. We talked about it for a few hours at his apartment, and he appeared to gain some consolation from our talk. In the summer

of 2000 during my initial year as a doctoral student in the American Studies Department at the University of Maryland, College Park, Jim was my first visitor.

My experiences with Jim is just one example of how my family's interactions with the white aristocracy provided me with the background to understand students who either came from this elite world or working- to- middle class students who wanted to earn recognition and acceptance within it. Understanding black and white social class worlds on college campuses provided me with the cultural currency to study and reach out to other minority groups such as Asian and Latino students. I designed literary- based courses on racial- and- social class diversity that offered students opportunities to learn about themselves and their relationship with American society. When I used family stories from *Three Generations* to enhance students' comprehension of the texts we covered in class, I realized from their reaction that I could turn this living black history into a scholarly endeavor.

I realized that my family's history was an important and complex story that could shed light on middle class black leadership and that I personally wanted to know much more about this legacy.

Notes

¹ Marcus Mabry. *White Bucks and Black Eyed Peas: Coming of Age Black in White America*. (New York: Scribner, 1995) 14.

Marcus Mabry's memoir provided me with a use contrast to my own experiences between black and white worlds. I was able to present the larger significance of my experiences with my adopted family by placing my story alongside Mabry's memoir.

² Mabry, *White Bucks and Black Eyed Peas: Coming of Age in White America*, 14.

³ Mike Allegra. *Lawrentian*. Winter 2006, Volume 70, Number 1.

⁴ Marcus Mabry. *White Bucks and Black Eyed Peas: Coming of Age Black in White America*. (New York: Scribner, 1995) 75.

⁵ Mabry, *White Bucks and Black Eye Peas: Coming of Age Black in White America*, 75.

⁶ Richard Hoggart. *The Uses of Literacy*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Press, 2000) 224.

⁷ Marcus Mabry. *White Bucks and Black Eyed Peas: Coming of Age Black in White America*. (New York: Scribner, 1995) 46.

⁸ Mabry, *White Bucks and Black Eyed Peas: Coming of Age Black in White America*, 81.

⁹ Mabry, *White Bucks and Black Eyed Peas: Coming of Age Black in White America*, 161.

¹⁰ Mabry, *White Bucks and Black Eyed Peas: Coming of Age in White America*, 81.

¹¹ Mabry, *White Bucks and Black Eyed Peas: Coming of Age in White America*, 91.

Chapter 3

The Story of a Race Man

Part 1

The Story of a Race Man: Charles Warner Cansler's Life as a Steward and as a Local Racial Ambassador

Charles Warner Cansler was born on May 15, 1871 as President Andrew Johnson issued a reversal of the Republican-dominated Congress' vision of Reconstruction.¹ Upon the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln in April 14, 1865, Vice President Andrew Johnson assumed the Presidency of the United States.² Johnson was a former slave owner, but at least publicly he remained loyal to the Union.³ He had been a compromise candidate for the Vice Presidency in an effort to reconcile the tension between the North and the South. President Johnson referred to his plan for Reconstruction as "Presidential Reconstruction." He returned much of the land newly gained during the Civil War to former slave owners.⁴ Most whites agreed with President Johnson because they believed that the earlier land confiscation had been too harsh for southern whites.⁵ Northern whites in particular advocated fair labor contracts for newly freed blacks instead of opportunities for them to acquire their own land.⁶ Many of these "fair labor contracts" resulted in the continued exploitation of recently freed blacks.⁷

Because Charles Warner Cansler's grandparents were free blacks prior to the Civil War, this decision did not directly affect them. They had entered the free black middle class as merchants in the late 1830's by acquiring artisan skills from their apprenticeships with white tradesmen. They could have easily created a more

comfortable existence with other free blacks in the North, but Cansler's grandparents and parents felt responsible for cultivating racial progress efforts in the South.

Cansler's immediate ancestors began to adopt local racial improvement practices within the backdrop of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Cansler's grandfather, William B. Scott (1821-1885), was the architect of the family's legacy. He created the first black newspaper in Tennessee, *The Colored Tennessean*, in 1868, and he played a role in the creation of the second school for blacks in Knoxville, The Freedman's Normal Institute in 1872.⁸ Cansler's mother, Laura Ann Scott Cansler (1846-1926), created the first school in Knoxville for free blacks in 1863 when she was only 18. Cansler's older brother, William Cansler (1863-1937), studied the law and was admitted to the bar in 1884.⁹ He taught at Austin High School for 12 years, and at intervals practicing as an attorney. He was the first principal of the Maynard School, a position he held for 35 years.¹⁰ And in an article published in *Our Voice* magazine in November, 1970, the contents of one of William's scrapbooks were reviewed. The scrapbook revealed his role as a local racial activist and local racial ambassador and his interest in meeting and learning from national race leaders.¹¹ He gave an oration to the Witherspoon Literary Society, and Tennessee Governor Tom Rye selected him to attend the Negro National Education Conference in Washington, D.C. He also had personal letters from W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. Charles Warner Cansler carried on the family's academic legacy by attending the Freedman's Normal Institute in Maryville, Tennessee before enrolling at Maryville College, which at that time admitted a few black students.¹²

Cansler's pedigree and academic success enabled him to earn recognition as an influential figure in Knoxville. Like his older brother William, he read law and passed the

Knoxville Bar at the age of 21.¹³ He was the Republican Candidate for the legislature in 1892. Nonetheless, he gave up his law practice and his aspirations to become a politician, because he thought he could do more to help the black community of Knoxville as a counselor and a local racial ambassador with whites. He began this work by teaching at the all-black Austin High School in 1900. He was promoted to Principal there in 1911.¹⁴ A year later, while continuing his duties as Principal, he organized the East Tennessee association of Negro teachers. He also began to display his abilities as a local racial ambassador for Knoxville's black community by playing the major role in convincing Andrew Carnegie to finance a black public library on Nelson Street in 1917.¹⁵ And after retiring from Knoxville Colored High School, formerly known as Austin High School, in 1928, he served as the first Principal of Beardsley Junior High School from 1937 to 1938.¹⁶ Cansler had five other siblings who were educators and local racial activists in Knoxville. They all decided to adopt the family's local racial activist traditions to define themselves. The Scotts and the Canslers performed as educators and builders of a social black infrastructure in Knoxville for nearly a century. The Scotts and the Canslers understood that most blacks not only had to remain in their local towns, but they also recognized that they did not have educational and social development opportunities within their local towns.

Consequently, the Scotts and the Canslers were keenly aware of the need to create an educational and social infrastructure that would enable blacks to realize their scholastic potential and prepare them to be able to take care of themselves. They decided to develop roles for themselves as local race leaders that addressed the specific needs of Knoxville's black community that dated back to before the Civil War. Comparing the

experience of his people with other immigrants, a former Tennessee slave thought “every nationality in the United States had been given a distinct advantage over African Americans.”¹⁷ Many blacks during this time realized that knowledge enabled people to obtain better jobs and to see the world beyond their local town.¹⁸ Therefore during the antebellum era, the Scotts and the Canslers form of local racial activism responded to whites’ concerted efforts to prevent blacks from finding ways of improving themselves. They understood that “whites had sufficient incentives to maintain black illiteracy—or to place clear limits on how much knowledge blacks should acquire.”¹⁹ To respond to the existence of white supremacist beliefs in Knoxville, the Scotts and the Canslers realized that they needed help from other whites who rejected white supremacist beliefs. They also worked with other like minded blacks to establish racial stewardship traditions in Knoxville that would facilitate collective educational and social uplift for blacks.

For instance, Cansler decided to take on the role of an adviser for some the black intellectuals in Knoxville. Prior to the writing and publication of *Three Generations*, Cansler served as a mentor for Bartow G. Wilson who was a former Staff-writer, Advertising Manager, Sports Editor, and Columnist for the Knoxville Herald. Wilson’s preface for his book, *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress in Knoxville Today* (1929), offered important insights about Knoxville’s black community at the time.²⁰

This volume has been compiled in the limited quarters of a photography studio—which may, or may not be, a good excuse for any errors that may be found herein. It’s main purpose is to supply information to Negroes in particular, and the public generally, of the progress of the race.²¹

In pursuance of this purpose, we have tried to keep in mind five distinct objectives.

The first has been to awaken the Knoxville Negro to the fact that he is enjoying a most remarkable era of progress.

The second has been to fix responsibility for this great advancement through a Who's Who section.

The third objective has been to stimulate and encourage the Negro youth of Knoxville, and if possible, to create a better understanding among Knoxville Negroes.

The fourth objective has been to emphasize the necessity of cooperation, and the fifth has been to offer proof of this advancement by means of illustrations and pictures of homes, people, and places of business.

This book concerns itself wholly with the Knoxville Negro, and the book is intended primarily as a record of his progress. This effort is unprecedented in Knoxville, and it may seem, to many, incomplete. We have attempted, however, to portray the forces in all avenues of life that are contributing in any way to the progress of the Negro race in Knoxville.²²

Wilson's objectives for his book leave him vulnerable to critiques of middle-class black elitism and naïve confidence in racial accommodationism. This is particularly the case for black and white readers who use contemporary lenses to evaluate Barlow's methods of documenting black advancement, but readers should remember that Barlow was working from the assumption that middle-class respectability was the most effective way of overcoming the dehumanizing affects of the legacy of slavery.²³

Barlow would not have been aware of the notion of middle-class respectability being associated with the abandonment of the race because working-class blacks became middle class within socio-economically diverse black communities. Moreover, he responded to black men and women who wanted to learn because they were aware of their history. They remembered their ancestors' stories about the extraordinary measure whites adopted to criminalize black literacy and to insulate blacks from intellectual contamination.²⁴

Barlow's depictions of the Knoxville Negro's respectability emerged from the realization of educational opportunities in Knoxville's black school system and Knoxville College, other historically black colleges and universities, and predominately white institutions of higher learning in the North, which a few attended. Thus even when they achieved degrees from northern liberal arts colleges, they frequently returned to make homes for themselves in their communities because they wanted to return or had limited alternatives. The Knoxville Negro's achievement of materialism within the community was also considered as a tangible reflection of black progress and respectability, but the definitive expression of Negro respectability was the Knoxville Negro's ability to perform as a steward in the community and as a local racial ambassador with influential whites.

Wilson's interpretation of communal racial identity values in Knoxville not only documented the Knoxville Negro's decision to embrace the "New Negro" ideology of the 1920's, but it also described how smaller southern black communities employed the New Negro ideals to define themselves. The New Negro ideology was a belief that the Negro's subordinate attitude toward white supremacy was outdated; the time has come for the

Negro to demonstrate that he deserved full citizenship.²⁵ This new belief system emerged from a class largely born after slavery. The new generation demanded liberation from social norms of race relations established during slavery. Their value system was a direct response to whites' assumptions that the Negro was a "helpless subject" and "child of nature" requiring the guidance and restraint of whites.²⁶ The new generation wanted to assert their independence by demonstrating that whites did not need to protect blacks from themselves.²⁷ Moreover, they wanted to display for themselves and whites that they were able to embody cultural refinement by establishing collective racial development strategies.

Wilson identified Charles Warner Cansler as one of the most influential models of New Negro values in Knoxville.

Since 1896 Prof. Cansler has been continuously in educational work in this city, serving as Principal since 1911. Under his leadership the high school grew from 80 to 437. He advocated the moving of the High School off of Central Avenue to Payne Street: Urged the erection of the present Austin High School when only a wing of the old building was contemplated. Prof Cansler led the movement for parks and playgrounds for his race in Knoxville: conceived of an idea of a library for the Negro race in Knoxville, and aided materially in securing it and the tablet placed there by City Commissioner gives recognition of his efforts in this regard. He was also the author of the bill, and secured its passage, which gave all colored people in Tennessee the right to inherit real estate in the same manner as white people in the state. Some years ago Prof Cansler wrote and published a book entitled "Cansler's Short Methods in Arithmetic," which was sold in many

northern states. Summing up this sketch, we see Prof. Cansler as an educator, lawyer, statesman and author. Few men have contributed as much to the progress of the Negro race as he. Doubtless, as some of his friends have said, he would have made a greater financial success in the field of law, but the great service he has rendered his race as an educator, and his other outstanding contributions, more than make up for any great financial prosperity that would have been his. Many men and women are making marks in the world as the direct result of his impressive teaching and wholesome inspiration. The many monuments of his efforts will forever stand in memory of this talented and useful man.²⁸

Wilson's biographical sketch of Cansler's life provided black and white readers with a model of the values of a local race man's role as a coordinator of collective race advancement. The biographical sketch begins with Cansler's achievements but it ends with the role he played in teaching and inspiring the next generation. Wilson wanted readers to understand the value of Cansler's sacrifice for the greater good of Knoxville's black community.

Wilson asked Cansler to write a foreword for his book in 1929 because he clearly admired him. Cansler's foreword displayed his wit, wisdom and his middle-class-minded ideology of black progress.

In this day and generation, when we have the literal fulfillment of Solomon's wise saying that "of the making of many books there is no end," any man who has the courage to attempt the compiling of a book needs encouragement, and perhaps deserves sympathy, for when he becomes an old man, he has his youthful efforts

and mistakes to confront him in the shape of the book that he attempted in his green and callow youth.

Seriously speaking, we believe that the Knoxville public will find this volume compiled by Mr. Bartow G. Wilson, much that is valuable. It has been his effort to show in this book the worth-while people and achievements of the Negro race in Knoxville. How well, or how poorly, he has done this the reader may judge from the volume itself. He has had little in the way of precedent to aid him in his efforts, and has been the pioneer to blaze the trail for those that may follow **him to do even better than he has been able to do, for “it is not failure, but low aim, that is a crime.”**²⁹

Cansler revealed his understanding of what is at stake when one decided to create a book designed to inspire the race and educate the public. He knew that such an endeavor would either in time make the author proud of his youthful vision or it would forever haunt him as he reached old age. I interpret the meaning behind “it is not failure, but low aim that is a crime” as Cansler’s response to the struggle of Knoxville’s black community, and other black communities across the country, with racial inferiority issues that emerged during slavery and the promotion of white supremacists views in America. He took this quote from James Russell Lowell, an American poet, critic, editor and English professor at Harvard University. His selection of Lowell’s quotation not only reflected Cansler’s love of wit and literature, but also his belief in blacks’ ability to realize the American Dream.

Cansler was pleased to help Wilson because his book as a whole, and more specifically his biographical sketches, embodied the Scotts’ and the Canslers’ vision of

local racial activist traditions and racial ambassador conventions. Take Wilson's biographical sketch of Professor James L. Carey as an illustration.

Professor Carey holds the Chair of the English Department at Knoxville College. He attended Alcorn A & M College, 1894-1896, and matriculated at Knoxville College, 1898 from which institution he was graduated with the degree of A.B. in 1904, and from the Divinity School in 1909. He also holds the degree of A.B. from Indiana University, 1928, and the degree of M.A. from Northwestern in 1925. He organized the Students' Interracial Committee of Eastern Tennessee and is a member of the state's Interracial Committee.³⁰

Wilson's biographical sketch of Carey defined the credentials and the roles of local racial advisors and racial ambassadors in Knoxville. Carey performed his advisory role as the Chair of the English Department at Knoxville College, and he accepted his function as a racial ambassador by coordinating the Student's Interracial Committee of Eastern Tennessee and participating in the state's Interracial Committees. Wilson's biographical sketch of Carey embodied the general criteria for the local racial advisor and the local race ambassador of Knoxville. His book became tangible evidence that local racial activist practices were an integral part of Knoxville's black community.

Wilson's sketch of Dr. Henry M. Green, B.S., M.D., Ph.D. provided another important illustration. He began Dr. Green's biographical sketch with a description of how a black man from humble beginnings became a doctor.

Scholar, Financier, Scientist, and author, Dr Henry M. Green was born in Adairsville, Georgia, the son of poor but respectable parents, was educated in the public schools of his native state, Knoxville College, University of Michigan, and

Northwestern University. He is an example of the self-made man who has made good in spite of his handicaps, and who has reached the top of his undertakings and yet remained unspoiled by his signal success....As president of his local, his state and finally of the National Medical Association, he was ever mindful of the needs of Negro Physicians.³¹

Prominently displayed on page 19, Wilson situated Dr. Green's sketch within Benjamin Franklin's social construction of the self-made man. He used Dr. Green's life to provide black readers with an example of a man who reached social standing and economic prosperity despite inauspicious beginnings. His description of Dr. Green's rags to riches success story was not just information. It was clearly designed to encourage the black community to strive to emulate Dr. Green's academic achievements, acquisition of economic prosperity and cultural refinement. But Wilson did more than this. His biographical sketch of Dr. Green displayed Dr. Green's realizations of his need to use his talents to act as a local race leader and a local racial ambassador.

During Dr. Green's tenure as president of the N. M.A. Green orchestrated the National Insurance Examiners which assisted Negro Life Insurance Companies by helping them develop and maintain their businesses. He also constructed the National Hospital Association which became the spoken head of All Negro Hospitals in the World.³²

Dr. Green rendered valuable service to his race particularly, and the public generally, while serving as Alderman from the fifth ward. It was during his incumbency as alderman that three new schools were built for Negroes, Negro

sections of the city were included in the city's extensive improvement program and the Negro was recognized generally as a political factor.³³

At the heart of Wilson's biographical sketch of Dr. Green was what J. Martin Favor referred to in *Authentic Blackness: the Folk in the Negro Renaissance* (1999) as "race consciousness" or "race pride."³⁴ Wilson described how Dr. Green used his talents, professional expertise, and the cultural currency those talents and professional expertise had within the world of the ruling elite, to perform a valued administrative purpose within the black community. Dr. Green accepted his role by creating black-run medical organizations that helped to develop and maintain black insurance companies, and as an alderman by working with whites to coordinate the implementation of social policies that benefited the race in Knoxville.

Nonetheless, Dr. Green did not look like a local black civil servant and a local racial ambassador. He did not even look like a mulatto. He looked white. He could in many social settings pass for white. So why did he live as a black man and accept the responsibilities when he could have had a more comfortable and prosperous life as a white doctor? Even if he could not have passed as white in America, he would have been able to do so in Europe. Dr. Green traveled extensively in Europe and received post graduate credits for medical training in Vienna, Berlin, London and Edinburgh. He must have seen that he could have earned more money and lived more comfortably as a white doctor in Europe. Dr. Green's decision to return home and fulfill a local racial activist role for the community symbolized the strong tradition of race pride, race responsibility and racial activism in Knoxville.

Wilson's dedication of a page to influential white politicians and citizens that have been the Knoxville Negro's allies was further proof of the prominence of the local racial activist conventions in Knoxville's black community. In a section entitled "An Introspective View of Greater Knoxville: Emphasizing the Executive Administration of City and County Affairs," Wilson wrote,

Knoxville is known far and wide for the splendid interracial aspects—individuals included in this section are advocates of the progressive development of the Knoxville Negro. They have manifested this by their stand on equality of opportunity for the Knoxville Negro.³⁵

We have as evidence of their sincerity the record of their acts in office. We endorse them as friends of the Negro; we endorse their records—their co-operative method of aiding the Knoxville Negro to greater heights.³⁶

The Mayor Hon. Henry James A. Fowler, The Municipal Court Judge, Hon. Robert P. Williams, many of the Councilmen, Attorney General, Criminal Court Hon. J. Fred Bibb, and Councilman, City-at-Large Hon. James A. Trent were listed as important co-workers in the development of Knoxville's black community. Wilson clearly presented their names and photos for blacks in Knoxville to see that there were influential whites who supported Knoxville's black community.

Critics may read Wilson's decision to profile the success of Knoxville's black community's local racial ambassador practices as the promotion of Washington's philosophy of accommodation and racial subservience. They may interpret his appreciation of white philanthropy as a contradiction to his earlier statements of race

pride. Some may even contend that he is merely another victim of America's efforts to convince blacks of their inferiority and the superiority of whites.

But I would argue that a more careful reading of Wilson's book would reveal how he interpreted mastery of local racial ambassador conventions as evidence of racial sophistication. He understood whites had a monopoly over essential resources that the community needed to survive and flourish. He recognized that if educated middle-class blacks wanted money for schools and other social infrastructures that they had to cultivate networks with influential whites for themselves and for Knoxville's black community. He, and many other local and national race leaders, recognized that the prominence of American racism made complete racial independence impossible.

Racism was born from the institution of slavery, and it reached adolescence during Reconstruction with the continued grouping of individuals based on racial identification. The pervasive social-grouping practice made it almost impossible for individuals to define themselves independent of social constructions of race within American society and throughout the world. Interracial sexual liaisons, remarkable ability to master trades, or the traits of Western European culture like literacy and cultural refinement, were the only means blacks had to gain social-class-mobility opportunities. Acquiring vocational skills and literacy became the objective of most slaves because education aided slaves in their efforts to obtain self awareness, and many blacks realized that their inability to read and write would be used against them by whites.³⁷ Wilson demonstrated how blacks in Knoxville managed to overcome the pervasive presence of racism in their lives. During the early twentieth century white supremacists' views and organizations such as the Klu Klux Klan had become more powerful in the South. The

prevalence of white supremacy led to a dramatic rise in lynching in the South and to additional suppression of blacks' dignity and access to mainstream American society.

Many of Cansler's faculty at Austin High School knew that the Canslers had a very rich local racial-activist legacy. When Cansler retired from the Knoxville school system, his most promising teachers at Austin High School, Darby D. Ervin and Henry H. Smith, finally convinced him to write biographies of his immediate ancestors and his own memoir. In the preface to *Three Generations*, Cansler described Ervin and Smith as surrogate sons. "These young men for a considerable time had tried to impress me with the thought that the story of my life and that of my immediate ancestry should be preserved in printed form, and that it probably would be of interest to those who might read it."³⁸ Cansler relied on a conventional trope in African American slave narratives and autobiographies. The representation of the black writer's desire to develop a black autobiography emerging from the black writer's intended audience is a customary literary convention. Cansler's adoption of this trope was further evidence of his study of the African American literary tradition, because it revealed that Cansler was familiar with the traditional way of addressing the criticism that *Three Generations* is only a reflection of his vanity. Moreover, Cansler consciously described that his family's accomplishments were primarily the outcome of communal-minded principles shared by both blacks and whites that his family encountered. This technique was used to avoid the appearance of glorifying the family's achievements.

Cansler gathered information to create *Three Generations* largely from family stories and from records in local newspapers. In 1939, he privately published and sold copies of *Three Generations* from his home to members of Knoxville's black community,

influential whites in Knoxville, and historically black colleges and universities. He also had a small national and international audience. In 1940, *Three Generations* received favorable reviews from the Minnesota Historical Society, the Mississippi Valley Historical Society, and the Book Dealers World in London, England.

Today, his book resides in the archives of prestigious colleges and universities and prominent historically black colleges and universities, most notably at Duke University, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Howard University. A study of Cansler and his family's local race leadership legacy provides black and white readers with a family's history of local racial activist beliefs within the black community and the strategies they used for earning recognition from progressive-minded whites.

Part 2

Charles Warner Cansler's Construction and Performance of *Three Generations*

Cansler's *Three Generations*, covering a period of over one hundred years, takes us into the lives, minds, social reality and achievements of two generations of a free black family. He employs his grandparents' and parents' lives to promote readings of African American and American history designed to inspire the race and educate whites. Thus Cansler's book is not only a hybrid text because it includes biographical and autobiographical statements of local racial activist traditions and local racial ambassador conventions, but also because it aligns history with literary techniques found in other black writers' representations of themselves, including Frederick Douglass' antebellum slave narratives and his later work *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*.

Cansler relied on local and national newspapers to provide a historical context for *Three Generations*, and he depended on his mother's middle-class and Victorian-minded outlook to provide an ideological framework for *Three Generations*. He recalls,

...father and mother were subscribers to the local weekly, published by grandfather Scott, to the daily newspapers published in the near by city, to the Toledo Ohio Blade, and to the "Sunny South," published in Atlanta, Georgia. I was especially fond of the two latter publications because through them I received the viewpoints of both the North and the South. Scarcely twenty years had passed since the bitter Civil War, and writers in these publications often lived over in them their experiences of those days.³⁹

If these are the sources he referred to develop a historical context for *Three Generations*, then he looked to his mother's collection of novels by Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Sir Walter Scott to develop the dialogues occurring between various voices in *Three Generations* and himself and other people.⁴⁰ He had read all of his mother's collections of Dickens' novels and Shakespeare's plays by the time he was sixteen as well as Frederick Douglass' narratives. His integration of literary techniques with racial ascendancy ideology from Douglass' narratives allowed him to create a local racial ascendancy ideology that black readers would embrace and progressive-minded white readers would recognize and acknowledge as effective writing.⁴¹

Cansler also relied on his knowledge of his ancestors' oral history to construct his book. He used familial oral histories to recreate his immediate ancestors' lives and to demonstrate how he carried on their legacy. From recollections of these oral histories, he constructed the settings, family members' relationships, and their dialogues with

important historical figures. His recollections allowed him to develop both a third- person narration of his immediate ancestors' lives as well as the confident voice of a local public figure in Knoxville recounting his story for black and white readers. For instance when he discussed William B. Scott taking his family and the Gentle family from North Carolina to Knoxville, Cansler wrote in the third person.

These six Negro people moving out of a state that was once one of the most liberal in the southern states in its attitude toward free Negroes, but since the Nat Turner insurrection, had become pronouncedly bitter and hostile, represented in their family histories is an interesting study for any student of that period.⁴²

Note how Cansler's third person narration merged the past and the present by describing how their free Negro family histories in North Carolina form important insights for students of that period.

When he dealt with his own experiences in Washington D.C. in 1896, Cansler employed his interactions with the last southern Negro Congressman, from North Carolina, to offer his historical insights.

While in Washington in 1896 I saw a great deal of Hon. George White, our last Negro Congressman from the South. Mr. White visited frequently a North Carolina friend with whom I was stopping, and I heard much about the difficulties he was undergoing in getting his quota of appointments from the new Mckinley administration. The then Republican United States Senator had made a secret trade with the Democratic leaders of North Carolina to have Negro leaders discredited and not recognized, and eventually to disfranchise the Negroes of the state, which was later done.⁴³

Cansler's third and first person voices are quite striking because of what they relate, but even more so because Cansler's biographies and memoir display the value of documenting his family and his own experiences as local racial activists and local racial ambassadors within America's larger racial landscape. Cansler borrowed the strategy of representing personal experiences that serve the purpose of documenting the pervasive presence of American racism from slave narratives. Cansler's social status allowed him to gain access to corridors of power, but he focused on introducing his readers to how social constructions of racism shaped the behavior of influential whites.⁴⁴

Although Cansler's first and third person voices are the dominant ones in *Three Generations*, they are not the only ones. In its most elemental form, Cansler's *Three Generations* is reminiscent of Douglass' use of other voices to authenticate his antebellum slave narratives. Like Douglass, Cansler used the voices of other characters.⁴⁵ In Douglass' narratives, these other characters' voices appeared in appended documents written by abolitionists to authenticate and vouch for Douglass' story.⁴⁶ However, Cansler's characters' voices appear within the body of *Three Generations*. For instance, he utilized local and national public figures and official documents to authenticate his immediate ancestors' life stories, and he used his interactions with Douglass, Booker T. Washington's and James Weldon Johnson's voices to authenticate his story. Cansler gained artistic control over the authenticating voices in *Three Generations* by developing an introspective analysis of the various voices and documents.⁴⁷

Cansler published *Three Generations* in 1939 as Langston Hughes and Richard Wright were debating their roles as the literary race's spokesmen. Hughes and Wright were performing as the race's spokespeople as blacks suffered with the last hired first

fired social reality of the Great Depression. They knew that their performances had to resonate with blacks' social misery. While Hughes cultivated images of black romanticism in his autobiography *The Big Sea* (1940) from the richness of the black underclass' music and folklore as a response to the legacy of slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, and the effects of the Great Depression, Wright used his essay "The Blueprint for Negro Writing" (1937), his personal essay "The Ethics of Jim Crow: an Autobiographical Sketch" (1938) and his famous novel *Native Son* (1940) to argue that a more radical approach was needed. He shocked his white and black readers with naturalist and realist depictions of the effects of American racism within black and white communities. Hughes thought Wright's revolutionary approach perpetuated racial stereotypes rather than challenged them. Although Hughes and Wright had disagreements about how to develop and present their national racial ascendancy philosophies and narratives, they agreed that the lives of the folk would play a prominent role in their performances as the race's spokespeople.

Whereas Hughes and Wright had largely abandoned the African American middle class and Victorian-minded racial uplift perspective as the model of black progress and American moral uplift in the late 1930's, Cansler did not. His middle class and Victorian minded vision of black progress continued to shape his view of local racial activism and belief in local racial ambassador conventions. He believed that middle class minded racial ascendancy principles should remain as the primary philosophy in the struggle for racial equality, because he perceived them as the only means of enabling black communities to endure American racism.

Cansler's stewardship narrative may not have been well known, or in vogue at the time, but it offered an important contrast to two of the most prominent African American literary figures' national racial ascendancy narratives, because it illustrated how blacks can find ways of being successful and contributing to the prosperity of their own communities. His stewardship text was not designed to profile abstract character traits of self reliance as black leadership. Cansler's text focused on pragmatic matters of acquiring resources from other blacks in the black community but largely from whites to build schools, train teachers, and to develop newspapers and businesses. Hughes' and Wright's artful construction of themselves within folk and Marxist-minded racial spokesmen sensibilities revealed the presence of having access to paths to social-class mobility that the majority of blacks did not have. Moreover, to continue to enjoy their financial rewards and social prestige, they had to translate their lives for foreign white audiences. This meant that they were often promoting individualistic-minded racial ascendancy and migration to the North as the emblem of black leadership, even though most blacks would have tremendous difficulty trying to emulate their individualistic success stories.

Hughes wanted accolades as a black writer from white readers and wealthy white patrons while using his work to speak to the race as a literary race's spokesman. Hughes understood that his primary readerships were wealthy progressive-minded whites and a segment of middle-class black readers. He knew his financial well being was not from black communities but from wealthy white patrons. He also felt that middle-class and culturally refined blacks only accepted him as their race's spokesman after he received critical praise from the ruling elite. As early as 1926 he argued in his article "Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" that the black community did not accept black writers as the

race's spokespeople until whites acknowledge them. He believed his vision of black romanticism would assist him in fulfilling the expectations of divergent white and black readers. Most of Hughes' white readers admired his view of the folk as heroic and artistic figures of the American experience, while many blacks greatly appreciated Hughes' vision of the folk as a form of racial romanticism, and some progressive blacks and whites viewed them as symbols of social protest against American racism.⁴⁸

Wright did not feel that Hughes' vision of black romanticism confronted the reality of American racism. Wright believed realist and naturalist vision of American racism would facilitate the process of racial reform in America. He clearly thought that this approach to the race problem would also help him address the spoken and unspoken expectations as the literary spokesman for the race, but his world at that time was largely within the arena of leftist-minded white intellectuals and white patrons. Wright learned to write not from black intellectual circles like Hughes did during the Harlem Renaissance; Wright's literary apprenticeship was with white leftist and Marxist intellectuals during the 1920's and 1930's.

Cansler was not interested, as Hughes and Wright were, in competing for the title of the race's spokesman. Cansler saw himself as a local grassroots racial activist and a local racial ambassador. He wrote *Three Generations* mainly to and for Knoxville's black community, and secondarily to black communities throughout the nation and to open-minded whites. Nonetheless, he addressed issues that Hughes and Wright did not confront in their national racial ascendancy narratives. Cansler's depictions of his life, and his construction of his ancestors' lives, were designed to respond to the specific needs of Knoxville's black community, and to offer a blueprint of local racial activism

and local racial ambassador conventions for various black communities across the country. His biographical statements and memoir promoted the image of the black middle class working as an assembly of superintendents within their respective black communities, and as local racial ambassadors with progressive-minded whites. Cansler believed that local racial-activist traditions would help blacks realize social standing and racial respectability within their own communities. However, he understood and defined racial “integration” not as blacks living with whites in Knoxville but as blacks staying within their own communities and middle-class blacks taking on the responsibility of advisory roles for the community.

I am not implying that what Cansler did was in any way better for the race than Hughes’ and Wright’s work, but I am arguing that Cansler’s profile of stewardship in *Three Generations* complements Hughes’ and Wright’s enactments of themselves as the literary race’s spokespeople. Placing Cansler’s work alongside their performances, and the founding fathers of the national racial ascendancy narratives, enhances our awareness of the need for stewardship texts.

Cansler had to confront questions about his ancestral past if he was going to write a book about the need for local racial activism. Cansler’s free-black ancestry forced him to explain his ancestors’ relationship with black and white communities in Knoxville. Although there were 500,000 free blacks throughout the country during the antebellum era, most free blacks felt isolated because they were not accepted by blacks or whites.⁴⁹ So they often formed their own communities. Nevertheless, there are many narratives and oral histories of successful free blacks demonstrating the potential of the race. These narratives and oral histories did not receive much critical attention or commercial success

because they did not fit within the slave narrative conventions' commitment to using the debilitating social reality of slavery to educate and mobilize white readers. If free blacks found readers or audiences, small communities of blacks read or heard of their stories. In many cases their life stories were told in novels like Frank J. Webb's *The Garies and Their Friends* (1857). However, Cansler's *Three Generations* is unique because Cansler presented generations of a family as models of middle-class-minded racial ascendancy designed to inspire the race and educate whites. To gain acceptance from blacks and whites, Cansler recalled how his ancestors used their talents for collective racial ascendancy and racial integration. He described how they created black newspapers, black schools and worked with white legislators at the local level to develop a black infrastructure.

Cansler's book begins with representations of free-black-middle-class life. He developed images of free blacks' social reality in Knoxville from his biography of his grandfather William B. Scott (1821-1885). Cansler recollected that Scott was the free black mulatto son of a white aristocratic mother and a mulatto man who was light enough to pass as white.⁵⁰ While many Americans are just learning of these love affairs, Charles Chesnut wrote about these sexual liaisons. In his 1902 essay *The Free Black People of North Carolina*, Chesnut argued that the upper ranks of white women did not get involved with enslaved black men. This topic was particularly important to Chesnut because he could also pass for white. Moreover, his appearance and exposure to the ruling white elite enabled him to become a lawyer and African American artist and intellectual. He recalled only of a few slaves and poor white women having interracial affairs, and the children who followed inherited the condition of the white mother.⁵¹ But

Cansler's recollection of his grandfather's life indicated that, because of the existence of white skinned black men, there were also a few of the upper ranks of white women who had affairs with middle-to-upper-middle- class free Negroes. Cansler described how his great- grandfather, Scott's father, left the family and moved to Canada because someone uncovered his interracial heritage.

Cansler's treatment of his great-grandfather's decision ends abruptly, however. I believe that shame prevented him from elaborating on the pain many mulatto family members felt as they grappled with how they were going to define themselves and receive social acceptance from the margins of America's socially constructed color line. Cansler was clearly aware of the envy associated with skin color in black communities, the dominant culture and the agency that it provided and continues to provide. Cansler's white skinned free black ancestors had access to racial and social class privileges that slaves, most free blacks, and even many whites did not have, but the privileges came at a price.

Cansler's ancestors had to decide between the social and financial privileges of whiteness and their families. They had to choose between living their own socially constructed lie and living as free black mulattoes where they had to deal with more uncertainty over their fate. Moreover, if they chose this path, they risked not being accepted by slaves, other free blacks and whites. Because of the fear of racial rejection, Cansler represented the decision Scott made as the natural decision anyone would make in the family. He presented Scott's choice as if he never second guessed his decision to define himself as a black man by marrying and raising a black family. Cansler's rhetorical choice prevented the reader from gaining a more complex understanding of life

at the margin of the color line. Cansler did not include any details about Scott's relationship with his white mother and her thoughts about his decision to live as a black man. Instead, he only focused on how Scott used his free black middle-to-upper-middle-class status to become a steward for slaves and free blacks in Knoxville.

Scott's relationship with his middle-class white mother would be most the most appropriate space to explore the issues that white-skinned mulattoes faced within society. Scott's mother would more than likely want her son to pass for white. She mostly likely would have wanted to protect him from America's debilitating practices of racial discrimination. Despite his decision to live as a black man within society, Scott's white mother was not only able to provide her son with freedom but also access to white tradesmen. Scott became a master wheelwright and an expert in the printing press.⁵² Like Chesnut, Scott could pass for white, but he decided to live as a black man, marry a black woman, support his family and use his racial and social class advantages to uplift the race.⁵³ As I mentioned earlier, he helped to create the second school for blacks in eastern Tennessee, the Freedman's Normal Institute, a School designed to train blacks to become teachers. He also founded the first black newspaper in Tennessee, *The Colored Tennessean*.⁵⁴ Cansler described how his mother, Laura Ann Scott Cansler (1846-1926), and William B Scott's daughter, established the first school for free blacks in Knoxville and coordinated and taught newly freed blacks how to read and write during Reconstruction at night in Knoxville's black churches.

Cansler utilized his father's life history to further explain how middle-class minded black family men became local racial superintendents during the crisis of slavery, Jim Crow and segregation. He knew that his father's heritage revealed the existence of

local race leadership culture to both black and white readers. Cansler's father, Hugh Lawson Cansler (1835-1919), was also the product of a white woman from a wealthy landowning family, but his father was an enslaved black man.⁵⁵ It was rumored that Catherine Kantzler had an affair with Appius who was one of her father's slaves. Long after her father Conrad Kantzler's death, she bought his freedom in 1850. Appius no longer lived with the family at that time, however. When Conrad Kantzler died as her oldest son Hugh was born, Appius had already left Eastern Tennessee. He remained close to Eastern Tennessee, but he had an estranged relationship with his sons Hugh, Andrew, and Martin.

Catherine Kantzler understood the importance of naming her children. She named her other two sons Andrew Jackson Kantzler (1836) and Martin Van Buren Kantzler (1838). Hugh Lawson Cansler was named after Hugh Lawson White who was born in Idrell, North Carolina, but moved to Tennessee with his family when he was fourteen.⁵⁶ Hugh Lawson White's father, James White, established a frontier fort on the Holson River in the summer of 1787.⁵⁷ This encampment would become the town of Knoxville.⁵⁸ Hugh Lawson White carried on his father's military legacy. Hugh served under General Sevier in the war against Cherokee Indians. In the battle of Etowah, Hugh is said to have helped decide the battle by mortally wounding the Cherokee's leading Chief, King Fisher. At the tender age of 28, Hugh Lawson White was appointed Supreme Court Justice of Tennessee.⁵⁹ Catherine Kantzler understood the value of being proud of your family, even in the case of her mulatto children. She raised her three boys largely on her own with some help from compassionate relatives and friends of the Kantzler family.

Hugh Lawson Kantzler changed his name to Hugh Lawson Cansler after learning about his heritage to form his own identity, but Hugh Lawson Cansler used the Kantzlers' social status and networks to cultivate racial alliances. For three years he trained under Tom Peace and learned to be an expert wheelwright.⁶⁰ Tom Peace was an active magistrate who owned a blacksmith and wheelwright shop.⁶¹ Hugh Lawson Cansler married Laura Ann Scott in 1861. Cansler recollected that not only did his father support the family during the Civil War, but he also convinced David Key, a Lieutenant Colonel in the Confederate Army, to write a letter that provided him and his family with legal shelter from Confederate forces.⁶² He realized that the letter would provide protection because Key was a prominent member of a wealthy southern family in Knoxville.

Hugh had to master the art of racial diplomacy for his and his young family's well being. After working for Key and the Confederate Army for sixteen weeks, Cansler stated that his father Hugh was on his way to the Scott home to get his pregnant wife when he encountered the advanced guard of Union General Sherman's troops on their way to Knoxville. General Sherman's Union troops were heading to Knoxville to support General Ambrose Burnside's troops, who were under siege from General James Longstreet's Confederate forces. Cansler wrote that Hugh volunteered to guide Union General Sherman's forces to the quickest route to Knoxville. He was swung up behind an officer on his horse and the cavalry rode off. After a few miles, Hugh led them to a farmer who was a Union sympathizer.⁶³ Hugh borrowed a horse from him and led the Union troops to Knoxville. Years later Hugh Lawson Cansler's affidavit would help the farmer gain compensation for his horse from the federal government.⁶⁴

Cansler recognized that his grandfather's and his father's development as black family men, local racial activists, and local racial ambassadors demonstrated the usefulness of familial and beneficial interracial relationships. Cansler emphasized the value of such alliances by showing how his grandfather's and his father's apprenticeships with white artisans enabled them to master harness, wheelwright, and printing trades. Cansler recognized how the Scotts' and the Canslers' belief in proper domesticity provided them with the opportunity to further develop public identities as local race leaders in the black community and as racial ambassadors with influential whites.

"Proper domesticity" was the idea that the home was where each generation taught their children how to work with blacks who were interested in collective racial ascendancy and with white people who were interested in being co-workers for the black community's social uplift. Cansler stressed that proper domesticity allowed his grandparents and parents to create a social knowledge tradition for realizing financial comfort and black middle-class respectability. His biographical statements of his grandparents' and parents' lives demonstrated the role teaching principles of proper domesticity played in creating a blueprint for working within the existing socioeconomic system, while simultaneously searching for ways of changing the system and improving the social realities of blacks at the local level.

Cansler's construction of the Scott and the Cansler family values presented a free black family's contribution to the creation of the next generation of local race leaders and local racial ambassadors. Cansler's biographical statements exemplified why his promotion of himself, and his ancestors, was essential to their becoming educators and builders of significant black infrastructures in Eastern Tennessee and Knoxville for

nearly a century. Cansler envisioned *Three Generations* as a historical text but also an educational tool for black and white readers. Black readers would discover a new interpretation of African American history from a free black family's belief in race pride and commitment to collective black uplift, and white readers would encounter an important reading of American history from a story of a free black family that embodied principles of racial cooperation in the quest for social equality and justice. Nonetheless, similar to works in the national racial ascendancy tradition, Cansler's book is also a literary performance of American moral uplift.

Part 3

The Association of *Three Generations* with the National Racial Ascendancy

Narratives

George Lipsitz's article "Academic Politics and Social Change"(2000) and Robert Burns Stepto's book *From Behind the Veil* (1991) offer literary frameworks to compare Charles Warner Cansler's *Three Generations* with national racial- ascendancy narratives. Lipsitz's article critiqued activist- minded intellectuals who have difficulty reconciling their beliefs and desire to produce scholarship within the conservative demands of the academy.⁶⁵ Stepto's *From Behind the Veil* named the dialogue occurring between slave narratives and black autobiographies by addressing the meaning of national- racial ascendancy narratives in African American literature and the larger society. He made a substantial contribution in the debate about how black autobiographers should utilize the success of their national racial ascendancy narratives to act as the race's spokespeople.⁶⁶ Lipsitz's and Stepto's texts provide the language to examine how Cansler's expression of

local racial ascendancy compared to Frederick Douglass,' Booker T. Washington's and James Weldon Johnson's representation of their lives to address American racism.

Lipsitz's explanation of scholars' internal conflicts within the academy resembles black intellectuals' inner turmoil as the race's spokespeople. His concept of "contradictory context" refers to the experience of scholars who adopt apolitical or conservative approaches to scholarship that contrast with their beliefs.⁶⁷ "Contradictory consciousness" refers to situations where the scholars realize that they are producing apolitical or conservative scholarship that conflicts with their experiences and beliefs for particular purposes.⁶⁸ Lipsitz's analysis is helpful in assessing African American literary figures' production of national racial- ascendancy narratives as the race's spokespeople.⁶⁹ "Contradictory context" was and continues to be the imposition of a constructed and oppressive social reality, the existence of white paternalism, and inhumane laws and racism which force national race leaders to adopt public personas that contrast with their beliefs. "Contradictory consciousness" defined black artists' use of carefully constructed public personas to reach white readerships for personal and political reasons. For instance, Douglass and Washington adopted self- made-man ideologies and uplift myth sensibilities that contrasted with their experiences, and in some cases their beliefs, to draw predominately white readers, but their performance of contradictory consciousness enabled them to fulfill the expectations of divergent white and black readers. Many of their largely northern white sponsors provided them with financial resources because they hoped that they would convince blacks to become content with second-class citizenship and moderate racial change. However, comparable to the black masses, Douglass and Washington believed in social equality. Moreover, they wanted to use the money that

they received from their white patrons for career advancement and for collective racial development.

Cansler's decision to become a steward offered him an opportunity to learn from Douglass and Washington about the complexity of national race leadership. As Cansler began his career, he met Douglass. Cansler's role as an advisor for the black community in Knoxville and a local racial ambassador also enabled him to interact with Washington and Johnson. His family's legacy, and his participation in the Afro-America League, helped him to earn Washington's respect. Washington and Johnson were typically in Knoxville on their way to speaking engagements at Fisk University and Knoxville College or to meetings with local black and white racial uplift benefactors. Washington stayed at least once at Cansler's home and Johnson also came to Cansler's home at least five times before his death in 1938.

In chapter VIII of his memoir, "Leaders of Another Decade," Cansler described his interactions with Douglass. He recalled, "[a]s a boy, I had read Mr. Douglass' autobiography and was thrilled with it, for his life had been an eventful one."⁷⁰ But Cansler also recognized that Douglass' status removed him from the race and mainstream white America. Cansler wrote,

Hon. Frederick Douglass was the most prominent Negro in this country during my boyhood. Many Negroes still think that Mr. Douglass was the greatest Negro, in point of ability, that the Negro race has yet produced in this country. Among the whites Mr. Douglass was not universally popular, probably due to the fact his second wife was a white woman. He lost some popularity among his own race, also, because of this marriage.⁷¹

For Cansler Douglass' interracial marriage separated him from many whites and blacks, because his interracial marriage represented a privilege that threatened whites, and many blacks took it as an abandonment of race pride. This was obviously also a personal issue for Cansler because two generations of his family were products of interracial relationship. He looked to both his grandfather's and father's experiences as evidence that interracial relationship of this kind can only end in social misery and despair. He also realized that his patriarchal role models may have benefited from having white mothers, but he stressed that they did everything that they could do to assert their identities as black men. In particular, he emphasized that they chose to fall in love with and marry darker black women. This may have been true, but it was also Cansler's way of coping with the racial anxiety that came with his mulatto ancestry and his desire for acceptance within Knoxville's black community.

Cansler used his experience with Douglass to present one of his dominant supervisory messages to Knoxville's black community: the value of being responsible and on time.

It became one of the greatest pleasures of my life when I found myself serving on a reception committee to greet and entertain Mr. Douglass when he came to deliver an address in our city. As the youngest member of the committee I felt that I was destined to be the most silent and inconspicuous one, but it happened that this turned out decidedly differently, fortunately for me, for only the chairman of the reception committee and I were on time at the station when Mr. Douglass' train arrived, and we were his only escorts to his stopping place.⁷²

When the Chairman had to leave to make the necessary arrangements for Douglass' speech, Cansler stressed that his being on time allowed him to have a few moments alone with the most talented Negro in America.

Cansler also observed that Douglass was obviously well aware that he was an institution. After Douglass entertained Cansler and the Chairman, he requested that they pick him up at 9:45 am. Douglass wanted to hear a noted evangelical speaker who happened to be in town. The Chairman discouraged him from going to the event because the speaker would only humiliate the great Frederick Douglass. Instead of Douglass merely stating the event will not humiliate me, Cansler recalled,

It was then that Mr. Douglass rose to his full height of more than six feet, and with eyes flashing replied, "No man can humiliate Frederick Douglass. I bear upon my body the scars of wounds received at the hands of a mob in the streets of the city of Boston when those of my race were denied freedom of speech and of action. Am I to be more afraid in this new day of freedom and opportunity for myself and my race?"⁷³

If Cansler's memory is at all accurate here, Douglass went into a kind of theatrical performance because he felt that he had to make it abundantly clear that he was not set apart from the race. The Chairman and Cansler came to his room and took him to see the evangelical speaker. As it turned out, the speaker acknowledged that Douglass was one of the most remarkable characters in American history. When Douglass gave his favorite "Self Made Men" speech in Knoxville (a speech he gave across the country in which he received his standard fee of \$25),⁷⁴ Cansler sensed the presence of what he considered to be an overly orchestrated script.⁷⁵ Cansler recalled that Douglass only departed from his

speech to address the accusation found in southern newspapers that he came to the South to teach black men how to marry white women and make bombs. He used his thoughts on how scripted Douglass' speech was to direct black and white readers' attention to the construction of Douglass as the representative Negro of his era.

Cansler obviously recognized Douglass' brilliance, but he was wary of Douglass, or anyone, being anointed as the race's spokesman.

He (Douglass) was such a commanding appearance that, as we appeared upon the Streets with him, nearly all we passed turned to look at him. I thought of him as Sidney Smith said of Daniel Webster. As he looked upon Mr. Webster when the god-like Daniel once visited England, Sidney Smith is said to have remarked, "Daniel Webster is a living lie, for no man can be as great as he looks." And thus I thought of Mr. Douglass.⁷⁶

He recognized the construction of one's public identity is not an exact reflection of the man, even in the case of the Frederick Douglass. Cansler knew this because of the difficult choices that he himself had to make in the construction of *Three Generations*. Moreover, Douglass' career ambition and celebrity status created an internal conflict between his desire for personal gain and the needs of the race.

Cansler's meeting with Douglass helped him develop a more complex reading of Booker T. Washington's life as the spokesperson of the race. When Washington stayed at Cansler's home, Cansler recalled that Washington was not as much of a conversationalist as Douglass. He surmised that Washington was often entangled within his own thoughts even as conversations continued around him. Washington may have been entangled with thoughts about the constant threats on his life and how national sentiment about

supporting blacks' educational and social development had greatly declined. He may have also been entangled in thought about the price he had to pay to maintain his position as the race's spokesman. He knew that he had to promote a strategy of addressing the race problem that at times sacrificed his and the race's dignity and civil rights for the acquisition of personal power and to save lives.

Cansler had a more positive impression of James Weldon Johnson. He considered him a humble yet brilliant and proud race man who had made significant contributions to the collective development of the race. He was particularly impressed with Johnson's musical compositions (such as "Lift Every Voice and sing"). He realized that Johnson's musical scores exhibited a compelling nationalistic sensibility of race pride.

Cansler's interactions with these national race leaders enhanced his representation of his family's lives and his own experiences as cultural superintendents. Their national racial ascendancy narratives construct middle-to-upper- class models of African American respectability as race leadership. Cansler's biographical statements about his grandparents and parents introduced black and white readers to a free black family's ability to gain access to cultural currency skills (such as literacy, vocational expertise, and how to form their own businesses) and conscious decision to use their access to whites for themselves and the black community. It also introduced black and white readers to Cansler's own recollection of how his family's efforts facilitated the development of the next generation of local racial activists within the family and Knoxville's black community.⁷⁷

A comparison of national racial ascendancy narratives and Cansler's *Three Generations* shows the importance of recovering representations of local racial activism

in African American literature throughout American history. For instance, whereas Cansler wrote *Three Generations* and sold it from his home to blacks and interested whites, Douglass' national race leadership performance relied on the support of influential white sponsors and readers. White abolitionists were largely responsible for Douglass' ability to become the most influential race's spokesman of his era.⁷⁸ He established a public persona and narrative image of himself as the self-made man because he knew that his largely white audience believed in the rags-to-riches ideology, but Douglass was not a self-made man.

In the *Young Frederick Douglass: The Maryland Years* (1980), Dickson J. Preston argued that Harriet Bailey's ancestry provided her son Frederick with traditions of social respectability and opportunities for economic independence that most slaves and many whites could not imagine on southern plantations. Preston's biography of Douglass ventured behind Douglass' construction of himself as the representative Negro of his era and the representative American. Preston's biography of Douglass is useful because it revealed Douglass' relationship with his prominent matriarchal black heritage not found in the *Narrative* and only briefly discussed in his revision of his life, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855)⁷⁹ While Henry Louis Gates Jr. was disturbed by Preston's tendency to diminish speculation on the suffocating atmosphere of even the most benign prison house of slavery, in his article "Frederick Douglass and the Language of the Self (1987)," Gates recognized that Preston succeeded where other biographers of Douglass did not because Preston looked behind Douglass' own account to see how much could be verified –or disproved by independent evidence.⁸⁰ Preston did more than Gates suggested. Preston revealed how Douglass' association with sophisticated familial and beneficial interracial

relationships and principles of proper domesticity enabled him to become both the representative Negro of his era and the representative American.

Preston's biography pointed out that Douglass had not sprung full grown out of nowhere. Records from the seventeenth century show that Douglass' mother's name—originally “Baly”—began in Barbados:⁸¹

First Generation: Baly ca. 1701, presumed father of Jenny (jenny, Jinny), born ca. December, 1745. Sue, born ca. 1721, or Selah, Mother of Jeney.

Second Generation: Jenny (Jeney), born 1745, mother of Bets (Bett, Betsey, changed the spelling of name to Bailey, Born May, 1774.

Third Generation: Bets (Bett, Betsey) Bailey, Born 1774, mother of Harriet (Hariat, Harriot), born February 28, 1792.

Fourth Generation: Harriet, born 1792, mother of Frederick Augustus, born February, 1818.

Fifth Generation: Frederick, born 1818, took the name Frederick Douglass.⁸²

The Balies managed to pass down the name as they were sold from Barbados to Maryland for five generations. The mere existence of the Baly name being passed down from one generation to the next can be linked to their ancestry in Barbados, but in Maryland the Baly name signified the long and intimate contact with aristocratic white society that placed supreme emphasis on “breeding” and pride of family. When Frederick's grandmother, Betsey Baly, married Isaac Bailey, they established the family's beneficial interracial relationships and cultural currency traditions in Maryland. Although Betsey was technically a slave, she did not behave or live like one in 1797.⁸³ She managed to display a remarkable degree of social respectability and economic

independence. She made and sold seine nets to catch fish that were in demand as far away as Denton and Hillsboro in Caroline County. Her master, Aaron Anthony, also paid her \$2.40 cents per birth as a midwife. She was clearly recognized as one of the leaders in slave community in Tuckahoe, Maryland.⁸⁴ She was also the wife of a free black man, Isaac, who was as self reliant as she was.⁸⁵ And Frederick's mother, Harriet, could read and write and most likely had an affair with Frederick's father Captain Aaron Anthony, the Baly / Bailey family's master. But readers will find only a modicum of information about Frederick Douglass' matriarchal heritage in the *Narrative* (1845), and readers only get a sketch of the family's prominence on the plantation and use of familial and beneficial interracial relationships in *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) because information about their lives weakens Douglass' construction of himself as the Self Made Man.

To reclaim his life story and public identity from William Lloyd Garrison and the abolitionists, Douglass primarily used his matriarchal ancestry and downplayed his grandfather Isaac's social and economic independence in his second slave narrative, *My Bondage and My Freedom*. Isaac and Betsey owned a cabin in the woods of Tuckahoe Maryland where Betsey was a caregiver for her grandchildren,⁸⁶ but Douglass barely mentioned Isaac in the *Narrative* and *My Bondage and My Freedom*. He was an independent operator as a sawyer of wood. He had business dealings with Captain Aaron Anthony, Betsey's and Harriet's master, and Frederick's master-father, for thirty years.⁸⁷ His business was so prosperous that at least on two occasions he had the means to hire help. Douglass must have known that his representation of himself as a self-made man

would be undermined if he emphasized his grandfather Isaac's social and economic independence.

Unlike Douglass, Cansler's decision to write largely for his community, and secondarily for middle class black readers and open-minded whites across the country, allowed him to display what role strong and respectable free mulatto race men and women played in his life and in the development of Knoxville's black community. Cansler's biographies of his ancestors and his own memoir were able to document, in much more detail, the existence of the social networks free blacks, and fortunate enslaved blacks like Douglass, used to gain various degrees of social and economic independence.

Douglass' construction and performance of himself in between the *Narrative* and *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) revealed his struggle with Garrison's paternalistic attitudes. The prominence of the self-made man ideology within the social mindset of Americans allowed him to respond to Garrison's vision of his life and his own desire for critical praise as a significant literary figure and public speaker. Garrison declared how representative Douglass' experience of slavery had been. But Garrison could not help but note the extraordinary individuality of the black author's rendering of that experience.⁸⁸ His interpretation of Douglass' *Narrative* highlighted Douglass' ability to appeal to white readers searching for heart-wrenching details of life in bondage and black readers' need of a role model of racial uplift, but he ultimately wrote a narrative that emphasized the value of his evolving self destined for mental as well as physical freedom and financial prosperity in the North.⁸⁹ Thus Douglass' performance of himself as the self-made man eventually liberated him from his paternalistic white sponsors, and his careful construction and enactment of his life formed an ideological blueprint for black writers

who wanted to establish their own national racial ascendancy narratives to reach divergent white and black readers and realize their own career ambitions.

Washington's "Atlanta Exposition" speech in 1895 permitted Washington to seize Douglass' throne as the race's spokesman. However, Cansler knew that Washington's speech was the type of national race leadership performance that did more to further his career as the race's spokesman than facilitate racial opportunities for the black masses. Cansler suggested that, "[h]is speech would appeal more to his auditors than the addresses of either of the others."⁹⁰ He perceived that Washington's speech would have more of an affect with Washington himself and his inner circle than further the cause of the race. Cansler did, however, praise Washington's establishment of the Tuskegee Institute.

Moreover, I discovered that Cansler had written a speech that responded to Washington's speech. In some old papers of Cansler's, I found one of his speeches entitled "The Past, The Present, and The Future of Negro Public Schools in Tennessee" (1914). Although he does not provide specific information about where the speech was given, I suspect it was presented for Eastern Tennessee Association of Teachers which he founded in 1912. In this speech, he offered an important response to Washington's philosophy on Negro education.

Cansler's speech signified his realization of how Washington's famous speech shaped the debate about Negro education. Cansler's own talk was designed to revise Washington's vision of Negro education and his performance of black leadership culture for whites and for blacks. Like Washington's famous speech, Cansler began by addressing the sacrifices whites made to establish educational opportunities for Negroes

in the South but more specifically in Tennessee. He realized that his experiences with whites in Tennessee provided him with more revolutionary examples of whites' involvement in the growth of Negro education. In describing "The Past" he focused on Northern whites' decision to come to the South and risk their lives to aid the race in acquiring access to quality educational opportunities. He gave specific examples of this in Knoxville such as white Christian missionaries and their churches: The Presbyterian and Congregational Churches, the Methodist and Baptist Churches who were sending out men and women as early as 1865. He listed the creation of Knoxville College as one result of their efforts.⁹¹

Cansler's description of their efforts to develop Knoxville College resembled Washington's description of white philanthropists' role in the establishment of Tuskegee Institute, but there were obvious differences. Whereas Washington clearly saw Tuskegee as his creation with the aid of white patrons, Cansler presented the birth of Knoxville College as much more of an interracial communal effort. Moreover, their approach to what needed to be done in terms of Negro education was also different. Washington felt he had to lay the majority of the blame for the lack of racial progress on blacks themselves, while Cansler offered a more balanced interpretation.

Cansler began his critique by challenging the commonly held belief that books and higher educational opportunities were only for whites.

It was the old story of the dominant class trying to believe that the wisdom and mysteries of books were intended for it alone. But despite every handicap, the Negro public school made advancement in the thoroughness and efficiency of

their pupils, the pedagogical and scholastic ability of their teachers and the better character of its school buildings and equipment.⁹²

Cansler presented a history that has often been overlooked or ignored by teachers and schools then and today: free blacks' ability to establish schools of their own for themselves and for slaves in northern as well as southern cities. His knowledge and sharing of this history for blacks and whites who were participating in the continued development of Negro education in Tennessee was designed to inspire his interracial audience while he simultaneously offered important criticism. He argued that "In many, many instances white school authorities are not interested in the work of Colored Schools."⁹³ He felt that their visits to colored schools reflected an indifference to them and the issues that they faced. He also asserted that he was tired of the flattery bestowed on colored schools that he felt many blacks school officials know that they do not deserve. He pointed out that white authorities have consciously assigned unqualified white and black administrators to public schools to hinder racial development. His criticism of whites and blacks would clearly be considered radical for 1914, but he did not stop there.

While Cansler did not take on Washington directly as W.E.B. Du Bois did, he presented a stern critique of Washington's almost absolute promotion of industrial education as the primary form of instruction for the race.

Short cuts in Negro education are as detrimental as short cuts in white people's education. The lowering of the curriculum in colored schools—the placing of a premium on industrial education and a corresponding discount upon literary

training is becoming a popular idea in Negro Education and must be forever combated by those who are true friends of our race.⁹⁴

Cansler asserted his view that black students' education should be viewed as equal to that of their white peers. He perceived Washington and other national and local educators and race leaders' emphasis on industrial education as subordinating black students' educational development. His declaration of this view showed that some local educational race leaders advocated a more revolutionary view of black education.

Thus Douglass' and Washington's performances of themselves as the race's spokesmen exposed some of the limitations of national racial ascendancy narratives. Douglass' self-made man performances of racial uplift forced him to conceal the existence of his family's traditions of local racial uplift in Maryland that were largely responsible for his recognition as the race's spokesman, and Washington's uplift myth provided further evidence of his form of contradictory consciousness that many scholars' argue impeded as much as it assisted the race's development. Cansler's decision to represent himself as a local race man and local racial ambassador offered him more artistic freedom. He did not have to deal with the paternalistic views of white patrons and publishers. He was able to display a heritage of black leadership and racial progress for black and white readers that Douglass and Washington could not represent, because the nature of their roles as the race's spokesmen forced them to rely on the self-made man and uplift myth ideologies to tell their stories.

Nevertheless, writing primarily for the Knoxville's black community prevented Cansler from exploring in more depth essential issues of racial identity formation. He wrote from the position of being in an advisory role for the black community. He

believed his role as an author should focus more on the promotion of middle-class blacks as custodians and local ambassadors than as an author who investigates his ancestors' and his own subjectivity. This circumstance also limited the artistic expression of Douglass and other prominent black autobiographers as well because race's spokespeople formed idyllic images of themselves to promote the race's promise. Nevertheless, Cansler's omission of significant details of his interracial ancestors' relationships revealed his anxiety. He concealed difficult racial identity formation issues behind romantic local racial activist images to gain acceptance from black readers and to promote values of local racial equality to white readers.

Still, Cansler's depiction of his grandfather William B. Scott and father Hugh Lawson Cansler introduced readers to embodiments of middle-class-minded black masculinity that Douglass experienced but could not represent in his narratives. Like Douglass' grandfather Isaac Bailey, Cansler's grandfather and father were removed from both the racial and class hierarchies on large and small southern plantations because they were free blacks and models of the merchant American middle class. His grandfather and father share some striking similarities with Douglass' grandfather. Both Isaac Bailey and Cansler's grandfather and father were in a social and economic position to provide for the family's physical needs and social development. William B. Scott and Hugh Lawson Cansler were merchants who were able to gain a substantial degree of social and economic independence and provide educational, social and economic opportunities for their children. The Baly / Bailey's may have been slaves but they also had unique privileges, which enabled them to make their own money, in some cases, and provide economic and social development opportunities for the next generation.

Cansler's grandparents and parents privileges as free blacks were clearly much greater than those of Douglass' immediate ancestors, but in reading Preston's *Young Frederick Douglass: The Maryland Years*, we learn that Douglass had a unique experience on the plantation. He had contact with his free black grandfather Isaac Bailey and exposure to his matriarchal heritage. He also had unique relationships with his middle-class white master-father Aaron Anthony and the Auld family. Moreover, he learned a great deal from his time with the Lloyd family. These unique situations provided him with proper domesticity values and some of the familial and beneficial interracial relationship privileges that Cansler's immediate ancestors' relied on for their social and economic development.

However, the difference was that Douglass could not represent his grandfather Isaac Bailey as a model of middle-class-minded black masculinity and his matriarchal heritage as a symbol of familial racial uplift if he was going to represent himself as the self-made man. Thus the absence of a more sophisticated understanding of Douglass' relationship with his family prevented the reader from learning more about how Douglass managed to achieve his status. For instance, Douglass' special relationships with his family and the white middle class and the Lloyd family allowed him to avoid his master-father's fate. Douglass argued that his master father's demise was a direct result of slavery, but it was not that simple.

Readers of the *Narrative* and *My Bondage and My Freedom* would not learn that Douglass' father was a self-made man. Captain Aaron Anthony grew up fatherless. He rose from an environment of ignorance and poverty with little schooling to largely teach himself how to read, write, and do simple arithmetic. Anthony also learned how to handle

ships. In 1795 young Edward Lloyd V hired him as a captain of Elizabeth & Ann. Shortly after this achievement he received more good fortune when he married Ann Catherine Skinner.⁹⁵ She was from a prominent Maryland family in Talbot County. Edward Lloyd V later offered him a position as chief overseer of the Lloyd estate in Wye, Maryland. He earned 213 dollars a year plus a rent-free home on the Lloyd estate for his wife and family.⁹⁶ Publicly Captain Aaron Anthony became a Victorian-minded model of the middle class. He lived by a code of pride, self discipline, ambition and life-long adherence to thrift.⁹⁷ But misfortune dominated Captain Anthony's life. His wife Ann became an invalid in 1818 and died shortly after, the year Frederick was born.⁹⁸ And his sons Andrew and Richard did not turn out well.⁹⁹ Andrew had an apprenticeship with a cabinet maker, James Neal Easton, and went to Indiana to make his fortune but he returned home a failure with a habit of drinking and gambling.¹⁰⁰ There is no evidence that Richard ever did anything with his apprenticeship with a blacksmith except that he did buy a set of secondhand blacksmith tools.¹⁰¹ Douglass argued in the *Narrative and My Bondage and My Freedom* that Anthony's hard luck was the direct result of slavery, but it could have been that his father did not have the social role models that Douglass had on the Lloyd plantation.

Douglass' interactions with the Lloyds provided cultural references for realizing and preserving financial prosperity that his father would not be aware of. Young Frederick came to the Lloyd's home in 1824 as Edward V took charge of the estate and became the State's Governor and Senator with Edward VI waiting in the wings. The Lloyds maintained the aristocratic dynasty through what Preston described as advantageous marriages. Preston also pointed out that as slave holders of at least one

hundred slaves the Lloyds had developed a shrewd business philosophy. They seldom sold slaves, they never freed them, they consistently hired overseers noted for their strict discipline and they were considered by at least some of their contemporaries as harsh masters.¹⁰² Nonetheless, on the Lloyd plantation young Frederick's experiences were different. Douglass received exposure to the type of cultural refinement that would one day provide him with the persona that commanded the abolitionists' and the world's attention.

Out of some eighty black children on the central farm, and ahead of the scores of eligible boys that belong to Colonel Lloyd, he was chosen to be the companion of twelve year old Daniel Lloyd, the Colonel Edward Lloyd V's youngest son.

Considering all the circumstances, it is remarkable evidence that even at the age of six or seven Frederick was recognized by his white superiors as an altogether exceptional child.¹⁰³

Preston's analysis of the Lloyd's early recognition of young Frederick's promise revealed that at any early age he had access to the ruling elite. His black matriarchal heritage, complexion and innate intelligence made him an attractive figure within the Lloyd's ruling elite cultural traditions. Frederick had to in some way remind them of themselves. He formed from Daniel a clear understanding of the contrast between the daily opulence of the aristocracy and the poverty-stricken daily existence of slave hands whose labor made it possible.¹⁰⁴ He also adopted Daniel's culturally refined diction. When the abolitionists later commented on Douglass' diction, he told them that it came from his time with Daniel Lloyd.¹⁰⁵ Through his exposure to both worlds, he became a keen

outside observer. He absorbed facts, names, and events that he would employ to convince the abolitionists to select him as their spokesman for the abolition of slavery.

Douglass' status clearly isolated him from the black underclass of slaves on the Lloyd plantation. He made no lasting friendships with the children of the Lloyd family's field slaves. His playmates were his Anthony-owned cousins, Phil, Tom, Steve, Jerry, Nancy, and Betty. They would largely be considered as middle-class house slaves. His other playmate was of course Daniel Lloyd.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, Douglass' performance of himself as the self-made man also did not include his relationship with his own children and whether or not he played a role in passing on strategies about how to live in-between various racial and social class worlds and the importance of modeling racial respectability and leadership.¹⁰⁷

Preston exposed how Douglass' construction of himself as the self-made man, as brilliant as it was, could not tell the whole story of how Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey became Frederick Douglass. Douglass' national racial ascendancy slave narratives could not address how his quest for his rightful patrimony began with the Baly/Bailey family and Captain Aaron Anthony, developed with his experiences with the Auld family and determination to steal literacy and self awareness from them, and ultimately ended with a life that resembled his time with the Lloyd family. I contend that Cansler's representation of how he acquired self awareness from his family demonstrated his search for a new paradigm of racial activism.

Cansler's representation of his life offered a different, and to some extent, a more complex and broader perspective on beneficial interracial relationships. He described how Knoxville's principles of race pride and achieving middle class respectability

influenced white educators' perceptions of the race's capabilities. In Chapter III of his memoir "A Boy with a Remarkable Faculty," Cansler's description of his experiences with the white Quaker community and with Principal William Hastings at the Freedman's Normal Institute provided illustrations. He recalled how Knoxville's black community shaped Principal Hastings' belief in local and national racial equality.

Principal William P. Hastings was always on the alert to discover ability in his pupils. When he once discovered it he made every effort to develop it or would encourage them to develop it. He knew each of his more than two hundred pupils thoroughly and seemed to enjoy studying them to find out their inclinations and abilities. He performed this task so well that I think it highly probable that he was able to apprise any of them within twenty five per cent of what they really were.¹⁰⁸

He could have had but little contact with member of the Negro race before coming to head the Freedman's Normal Institute, but he had an open mind on questions affecting them. He spurned the idea of the natural inferiority of the Negro race, and was often heard to remark that the abilities of his Negro students were equal to those of students in any other school with which he had been associated.¹⁰⁹

The black community's belief in race pride and the Quakers' adherence to values of social equality helped Hastings realize that his students were equal to whites. Moreover, Cansler's depiction of his time with Principal Hastings modeled for his black and white readers not only views of grassroots beneficial interracial relationships found within

Knoxville's black community that should be emulated throughout the South and the North, but also ideals of whites' roles as superintendents for black communities.

Cansler's memoir also offered a response to Washington's representation of beneficial interracial relationships. In "the Struggle for an Education," Washington described how his experiences with Mrs. Ruffner provided him with cultural currency skills that facilitated opportunities for higher educational development.

I heard of a vacant position in the household of General Lewis Ruffner, the owner of the salt-furnance and coal mine. Mrs. Viola Ruffner, the wife of General Ruffner, was a "Yankee" woman from Vermont. Mrs. Ruffner had a reputation all through the vicinity for being very strict with her servants, and especially with the boys who tried to serve her. Few of them had remained with her more than two or three weeks. They all left with the same excuse: she was too strict.¹¹⁰

Washington's depiction of Mrs. Ruffner's reputation provided him with a model of the ideal beneficial interracial relationship to reach white and black readers. Like Douglass' interactions with the Lloyds, Washington's experiences with the Ruffners helped equip him to realize higher educational opportunities. Slavery was over, but the rigid class lines between the ruling elite, the middle class and the working class remained. Still, like Douglass, Washington managed to reach middle-class status by earning a job as a domestic with a ruling elite family; and Washington employed that experience to perform as a national race leader and a national racial ambassador.

Washington's description of Mrs. Ruffner's expectations for service produced a conservative image of whites as custodians for blacks. Washington wrote "that the lessons that I learned in the home of Mrs. Ruffner were as valuable to me as any

education I have gotten anywhere since.”¹¹¹ As a result, his model of beneficial interracial relationship allowed him to successfully promote a conventional ideal of race relations. Washington’s relationship with Mrs. Ruffner signified the promise of non-threatening racial cooperation and prosperity. He also reached out to whites who had white supremacist views by appealing to them to take on the responsibility of aiding the race in realizing at least a modicum of cultural refinement and social respectability. His vision provided him with the opportunity to attract white sponsors and offer a modest critique of Jim Crow and white supremacist views.¹¹² White supremacist’s dominant themes were that because blacks had degenerated into beasts they were not suited for freedom and full citizenship.¹¹³ Washington used his experience with Mrs. Ruffner as evidence of blacks’ capabilities for white readers, and as a practical means of realizing social and economic upward mobility for black readers.

Cansler’s association with his white mentors offered an alternative to Washington’s performance of whites’ functions as stewards for the black community. Whereas Washington’s ideal image of a white steward was a white woman of social standing but limited power and a white mentor General Armstrong whom Washington revered, Cansler did not look up to white wardens within the local establishment in Knoxville. Moreover, he demonstrated that he perceived himself as their equal, and that they in turn were able to respect Cansler. He presented his relationship with the Honorable Samuel G. Heiskell, the mayor of the city, as an example.

Hon. Samuel G. Heiskell, a man who came as near believing in equal opportunity and justice for the Negro as any white man I ever knew. A native southerner, an Aristocrat by birth and appearance, he was absolutely unafraid in dealing with

matters affecting the Negro race. From the public platform he proclaimed the doctrine “give the Negro an equal opportunity to every other man in the race of life, give him every privilege that all other citizens enjoy, give him good school facilities for the education of his children enjoy—and then if he fails in the struggle for existence, it will be his own fault.”¹¹⁴

He used Hon. Samuel G. Heiskell to authenticate the local racial-activist traditions and local racial-ambassador conventions in Knoxville. Cansler demonstrated that he was not willing to sacrifice his dignity for personal gain or for a victory for the black community, but he still managed to get what he wanted from Heiskell.

Cansler indicated that while Heiskell subscribed to the separate but equal doctrine, he still believed in fairness. Cansler used Heiskell’s values of fairness to win a victory for the black community. He convinced Heiskell to move Austin High School from a vice district to a new district in a better environment with more money for facility improvements.

He (Mayor Heiskell) began the movement by advocating unpopular means that would have deprived the whites of their old and revered high school site (not to place the Negro high school, there however), that would have increased the tax rate and the city’s large indebtedness. He was assailed in the daily newspapers, by men in the street, but he kept his course—and we won in getting our high school moved out of a vice district.¹¹⁵

He later convinced Heiskell to contact the Andrew Carnegie foundation to fund a public library for blacks in Knoxville. The erection of a tablet authenticated his mastery of local racial ambassador conventions. “This tablet is Erected By The City Commissioners of

Knoxville in Recognition Of The Faithful Efforts Charles W. Cansler, Who First Conceived The Idea Of This Library for His Race—And Who Aided Materially in Securing It.”¹¹⁶

I argue that Cansler’s representation of his experiences with his family’s local racial-activist traditions, and his contributions to their legacy, challenged Washington’s conservative view of how to present healthy race relations. Washington felt that he had to mask his agenda for racial development behind images of black subservience. Cansler formed a response to Washington by documenting his family’s and other local racial activists and ambassadors’ ability to gain recognition and resources from whites without having to sacrifice their dignity. The problem, however, is that Cansler’s vision only works at the local level. Washington’s assessment was arguably the only choice aspiring race’s spokespeople had at that time in American history, but Cansler understood that the idea that a national racial spokesman’s campaign would not address the complexity of issues that black communities faced across the country. Cansler also realized that local racial activists had to address the race’s struggle with internalized racism. Blacks had imposed America’s racial hierarchy on each other. He witnessed lighter skin blacks receiving white or lighter skin privileges in both white America and in black communities across the country. His representation of the culture of passing responded to passing narratives within the African American literary tradition.

For example, Cansler’s biography of his grandfather formed a reply to James Weldon Johnson’s enactment of his protagonist decision to pass for white. Johnson’s first person novel, *The Autobiography of an Ex Colored Man*, (1912) exposed America’s culture of racism. Cansler in a sense responded to Johnson’s passing trope by presenting

his white skinned grandfather as a model of middle class minded black masculinity despite his origins. He formed images of a family's white skinned black patriarch who was dedicated to his family and collective racial uplift. He described how Scott's realization of his tragic biracial heritage governed his view of himself in-between contrasting black and white social realities.

William B. Scott, the leader of the group, was the son of a white woman and by a Negro so light in color that unless one knew of the slight strain of Negro blood which he possessed would easily have taken him for a white man. It was said that he had been given his "free papers" by his white plantation owner father and had made his way to the mountains of North Carolina. There posing as a white of full blood, he met the woman he made his wife. Certain circumstances forced him to reveal his strain of Negro blood a few years after William's birth, (Cansler's grandfather), and soon after, he disappeared, to be seen by wife and son no more. One rumor of the mountain neighborhood had it that his wife's brothers could have revealed the story of the man's disappearance had they chosen. Another rumor had it that he had gone to Canada and there lost his racial identity. But the mischief had been done when the rumor spread that William's father was partly a Negro and therefore William was treated as such by all whom he came in contact.¹¹⁷

His account of his grandfather's childhood was designed to reveal Scott's reasons for adopting a race-man ideology. Because Scott's white-skinned father abandoned his family in Statesville, North Carolina to pass as a white man in either a northern state or Canada, as stated above, Scott realized that race pride and middle-class racial solidarity

were the only means of saving himself from his father's fate. Scott came of age certain that he did not want to sacrifice who he was for the privileges that came with being recognized as a white man in society. He consciously chose to live his life as a black man, marry a black woman, and raise a black family.

Cansler's life history of the younger Scott offered a unique presentation of a race-conscious- white-skinned family man as the embodiment of middle-class-minded black masculinity.

While Scott alone would have little trouble due to the fact that he was more than three fourths white, with all of the features and language and mannerism of those of the white race, his wife was dark brown in color with Negroid features, yet with a culture that showed that she must have had a careful training unusual to members of her race of that period.¹¹⁸

Scott married Maria Jones in 1838. She was the daughter of a widowed free colored woman, Nancy Jones. As the quotation suggests, Cansler understood the importance of stressing his grandfather's beliefs in race pride. He knew that his role as the biographer of his grandfather's life was not only to present his white-skinned grandfather's beliefs of race pride, but also to introduce the role his middle-class-minded racial solidarity played in collective racial advancement.

Cansler also used his own experiences with the culture of passing found in black communities to offer a critique of America's racial hierarchy. In the third paragraph of chapter I of his memoir, Cansler recalled,

That I was born a brown baby perhaps had more significance than anything else surrounding my birth. It certainly had more to do with determining my destiny

than any other circumstance. I was born a brown child but I had no early color consciousness until it broke upon me when I was six years old. I recall events years back of that, but it was only when I was nearly six that it came to me that I was brown, and not white like many other children with whom I played, and that because I was brown I could not go to school with Sophie, the little Scotch girl, who daily came to our house to play, and who seemed so happy with the children of our home.¹¹⁹

Cansler stressed that race was the key factor in his life. He in a sense also builds on James Weldon Johnson's performance of America's culture of racism being taught to blacks and whites in school at an early age. When Johnson's protagonist in *The Autobiography of an Ex Colored Man* learned at school that he was black, Johnson confronted his white and black readers with evidence that race is taught, but this scene was clearly designed to educate white readers because black readers lived it.

Cansler wondered when learning that he could not go to school with his Scottish friend Sophie from his mother: "Is there a school for brown children? And another school for black children? Will Josie (a very fair girl with blue eyes whose father is a mulatto man, and whose mother is white in color) go to school with white children?"¹²⁰ Like Johnson, Cansler raised important questions that undermine America's efforts to establish rigid racial hierarchies but these questions were directed more toward black readers than white ones. Cansler made references to much more complex biracial people that blacks would encounter on a daily basis as more direct evidence of American racial hypocrisy.

Cansler's *Three Generations* is part of a forgotten history of local public figures who dedicated their lives to the social and economic development of the race. A study of

his life helps us better understand the value of the history of communal activism within the black community and in alliance with influential whites. His life reveals how these local public figures use of familial and beneficial interracial relationships, proper domesticity, and black mentorship enabled them to establish schools and newspapers designed to educate and uplift the race. Moreover, unlike the national race leaders' and racial ambassadors' individualistic performances of themselves in national racial ascendancy narratives for social class mobility that only a few could achieve, Cansler's performance of his immediate ancestors, and his enactment of his own life, reveals the role the family and the black community played in forming collective opportunities within black communities. Cansler's *Three Generations* offers a window into a black community that survived and in some cases thrived despite the fact that they had to struggle under the constraints of Jim Crow and segregation.

Part 4

Recovering a Lost History: Black Communities and Brown V. Board of Education

Cansler died a year before the 1954 Brown V. Board of Education decision. The black community that he knew in Knoxville, and others like it, began to disappear after the landmark case mainly because many middle-class blacks abandoned their roles as stewards of local black communities for greatly enhanced access to mainstream American society. Many of the prosperous black families decided to leave the traditional black communities for integrated neighborhoods, or newly forming middle- to- upper-middle-class black enclaves. Most history books define the Brown decision as a triumphant narrative; however, black intellectuals, judges and politicians have recently offered important criticisms of how Brown was turned against successful black

communities that Cansler and other local race leaders and local racial ambassadors helped to build. These influential black public figures who are forming arguments about how Brown was turned against black communities come from both conservative and liberal points of view. Conservative Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas said, “The case reflected an assumption of racial inferiority.”¹²¹ And on the other side of the political spectrum, legal scholar and critical race theorist, Derrick A. Bell, lamented Brown’s irrelevance. Moreover, Elizabeth Eckford, who braved white mobs to desegregate Little Rock’s Central High, declares that she now appreciates “blackness.”¹²² And some white liberals have joined in the criticism including Michael Klarman who argued that Brown halted the mellowing of race relations in the South and hardened white resistance. Gerald N. Rosenberg leads the chorus of disillusioned liberals who grieve that Brown spawned the “hollow hope” the Supreme Court could remedy injustice.¹²³

However, in *Brown V. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy*, James T. Patterson argued that the twentieth anniversary of Brown decision in 1974 represented tangible progress in the South: the end of Jim Crow, and the desegregation of most Southern public schools. Patterson believed that this progress was important in challenging the recent nostalgia for the black communities that Cansler and other local race leaders and racial ambassadors had created during the era of Jim Crow. Patterson argues that these black purveyors forget the “crowded, often leaky tarpaper buildings” and the “awful facilities.”¹²⁴ On the other hand, Patterson may have missed these black purveyors realization of the need for race pride and local racial activist traditions and racial ambassador conventions found in black communities during the Jim

Crow era that could assist black communities who continue to be ignored by federal and state governments.

Moreover, Patterson does not address the de-facto racial segregation within the schools: the existence of divergent white and black, separate and unequal worlds within many of these southern school Districts. Nonetheless, Patterson does at least recognize that Brown changed little outside of the South. Patterson knew that Brown did not challenge Northern de-facto segregation; he pointed out that the Supreme Court's mood was altered by four Nixon appointees to the court and the country's rightward shift. Taking what Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall "called a giant step backwards," the court refused to penalize white flight by equalizing per-pupil expenditures between school districts or merging urban and suburban school districts outside the South.¹²⁵ Thus the racial mixing in schools was declining at the end of the twentieth century. Many white and black students lived divergent educational realities divided not only by race, but also by class and access to cultural currency skills, such as the preparation that would provide one with higher education opportunities. Cansler and other local racial activists and local racial ambassadors cultivated the creation of schools that mentored and trained teachers. They taught teachers how to reach poverty-stricken black students and equip them with cultural currency skills that facilitate access to higher educational opportunities within black communities, but shortly after the end of Cansler's life these black schools were closed and the teachers were fired.

Notes

¹ Noralee Frankel. "Breaking the Chains (1860-1880)." *To Make Our World Anew: A History of African Americans*. Ed. Robin D.G. Kelley and Earl Lewis. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 239. Noralee Frankel's article provides an overview of the historical context in which Charles Warner Cansler presented his immediate ancestors' legacy and described how they shaped his interpretation of himself as a steward, local racial activist and local racial ambassador for Knoxville's black community.

² Frankel, "Breaking the Chains," 239-242.

³ Frankel, "Breaking the Chains," 239-242.

⁴ Frankel, "Breaking the Chains," 239-245.

⁵ Frankel, "Breaking the Chains," 239-245.

⁶ Frankel, "Breaking the Chains," 239-245.

⁷ Frankel, "Breaking the Chains," 239-245.

⁸ Charles Warner Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Kingsport Press, 1939) 34-36.

⁹ William, Clifford, Roberts Jr. *The Cansler Family in America: The Ancestors and Descendants of Phillip W. Gentzler*. Baltimore: (Gateway Press, 2000) 440.

¹⁰ Roberts, *The Cansler Family in American: The Ancestors and Descendants of Phillip W. Gentzle*, 440.

¹¹ Roberts, *The Cansler Family in America: The Ancestors and Descendants of Phillip W. Gentzler*, 441.

¹² Charles Warner Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Kingsport Press, 1939) 94, 95.

¹³ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 118.

¹⁴ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 123.

¹⁵ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 150.

¹⁶ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 150.

¹⁷ Leon F. Litwack. *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1999) 53, 54.

¹⁸ Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow*, 53, 54.

¹⁹ Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow*, 53, 54.

²⁰ Bartow G. Wilson. *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today*. (Knoxville: Trent Publishing Company, 1929) 7.

Barlow G. Wilson's book was an important primary source. His work provided important information about how Knoxville's black community formed leadership practices that I defined as local racial activist and local racial ambassadorship traditions. Moreover, he documented important leaders within the black community that I used as examples of local racial activism and local racial ambassadorship. He also presented Charles Warner Cansler's achievements as one of the leaders of Knoxville's black community.

²¹ Wilson, *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today*, 13.

²² Wilson, *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today*, 5.

²³ Maria Farland. "W.E.B. Du Bois, Anthropometric Science, and the Limits of Racial Uplift," *American Quarterly* 58 (2006): 1017-1019.

²⁴ Wilson, *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today*, 15.

²⁵ Wilson, *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today*, 19.

²⁶ Wilson, *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today*, 19.

²⁷ Wilson, *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today*, 19.

²⁸ Wilson, *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today*, 19.

²⁹ Wilson, *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today*, 19.

³⁰ Wilson, *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today*, 19.

³¹ Wilson, *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today*, 19.

³² Wilson, *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today*, 19.

³³ J. Martin Favor. *Authentic Blackness: The Folk in the New Negro Renaissance*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999) 30.

³⁴ Wilson. *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today*. (Knoxville: Trent Publishing Company, 1929) 67.

³⁵ Wilson. *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today*, 67.

³⁶ Wilson. *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today*, 67.

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- ³⁷ Charles Warner Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Kingsport Press, 1939) v.
- ³⁸ Wilson. The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today, 67.
- ³⁹ Charles Warner Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Kingsport Press, 1939) 98, 99.
- ⁴⁰ Cansler, *The Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 98-99.
- ⁴¹ Robert B. Stepto. *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative* (second edition). (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991) 20, 21.
- ⁴² Charles Warner Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Kingsport Press, 1939) 14.
- ⁴³ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 160.
- ⁴⁴ Charles Warner Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Kingsport Press, 1939) 160.
- ⁴⁵ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 160.
- ⁴⁶ Robert B. Stepto. *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative* (second edition). (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991) 20, 21.
- ⁴⁷ Stepto, *From Behind the Veil: A study of Afro-American Narrative*, 20, 21.
- ⁴⁸ Scott L. Malcomson. *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race*. (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2000) 230-235.
Malcomson interpreted Hughes' view of the black artist as a race's spokesman who would represent the race but also ignore it. The black artist would operate independent of the day to day lives of blacks because the race existed primarily within the black artist's imagination. (231)
- ⁴⁹ "To Our Patrons," editorial, *Freedom's Journal*. 12, March. 1827. First ed.: 2-9.
- ⁵⁰ Charles Warner Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Kingsport Press, 1939) 14.
- ⁵¹ Charles Chesnutt. "The Free Black of North Carolina." *The Workman*, volume 31, number 3. (Hampton: Hampton Institute 1902).138.
- ⁵² Charles Warner Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. Knoxville: Kingsport Press, 1939) 22.
- ⁵³ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 34.

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- ⁵⁴ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 34.
- ⁵⁵ William, Clifford, Jr Roberts. *The Cansler Family in America: The Ancestors and Descendants of Phillip W. Gentzler*. (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 2000) 436.
- ⁵⁶ Roberts, *The Cansler Family in America: The Ancestors and Descendants of Phillip W. Gentzler*, 436, 437.
- ⁵⁷ Roberts, *The Cansler Family in America: The Ancestors and Descendants of Phillip W. Gentzler*, 436, 437.
- ⁵⁸ Roberts, *The Cansler Family in America: The Ancestors and Descendants of Phillip W. Gentzler*, 436, 437.
- ⁵⁹ Roberts, *The Cansler Family in America: The Ancestors and Descendants of Phillip W. Gentzler*, 436, 437.
- ⁶⁰ Charles Warner Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Kingsport Press, 1939) 52.
- ⁶¹ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 52, 53.
- ⁶² Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 60.
- ⁶³ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 69.
- ⁶⁴ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 69, 70.
- ⁶⁵ George, Lipsitz. "Academics and Social Change." *Cultural Studies and Political Theory*. Ed. Jodi Dean. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000) 80-84.
- ⁶⁶ Robert B. Stepto *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative* (second edition). (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991) xi, xii.
- ⁶⁷ George Lipsitz. "Academics and Social Change." *Cultural Studies and Political Theory*. Ed. Jodi Dean. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000) 80-84.
The difference between academics producing scholarship within contradictory context and contradictory conscious circumstances are that in the later situations scholars are aware of having to develop traditional forms of scholarship to maintain their status within academia. Thus they recognize that they are creating conservative scholarship for their own particular purposes. I argue that contradictory context and contradictory consciousness circumstances for activist minded intellectuals resemble black intellectuals' existences as spokespeople for the race. They often realized the need to develop representations of themselves that conflicted with their beliefs to gain recognition as the race's spokespeople. Black public figures used literature to articulate that they understood that they had to develop self awareness from whites' perceptions of them. Moreover, they realized that they had to learn how to perform to reach white readers and manipulate their emotions for recognition and support from foreign and influential white patrons and readers. See also W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* and his interpretation of double consciousness. Dickson D. Bruce Jr.'s "W.E.B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness" and Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem "We Wear the Mask."
- ⁶⁸ Robert B. Stepto. *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative* 2nd edition. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991) xi,xii.

I borrowed from Robert Stepto's interpretation of call and response, a concept that originated in the rhythmic lead-and-chorus relationship between a spiritual leader like Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X and his or her congregation. Stepto uses the idea of call and response to explore prominent literary figures responses to each others performances of their lives. While Stepto focuses more on the texts themselves, I pay closer attention to the racial and social challenges that each generation asserted in their narratives to the previous generation and to each other. Stepto's book provided me with the historical and literary context to represent the differences between what I describe as a national race leader tradition and local racial activists' reactions to the national race leader convention.

⁶⁹ George Lipsitz. "Academics and Social Change." *Cultural Studies and Political Theory*. Ed. Jodi Dean. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000) 80-84.

⁷⁰ Charles Warner Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Kingsport Press, 1939) 155, 156.

⁷¹ Cansler, *Three Generations*, 155-156.

⁷² Cansler, *Three Generations*, 155-156.

⁷³ Cansler, *Three Generations*, 155-156.

⁷⁴ Henry Louis Gates Jr. Ed. *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: Written By Himself*. By Frederick Douglass. Library of American Edition. (New York: Library Classics of America, 1994) 1061.

⁷⁵ Cansler, *Three Generations*, 155-156.

⁷⁶ Cansler, *Three Generations*, 156-158.

⁷⁷ Farah Jasmine Griffin. "Who Set You Flowin'?" *The African American Migration Narrative*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 3.

Black writers' representations of migration narratives enabled them to build on the American autobiographical convention. Griffin's work helped me develop a comparison between Cansler's emphasis on cultivating opportunities for blacks within their communities in his book *Three Generations* and canonical slave narratives and autobiographies representations of how to achieve racial uplift by learning trades and to read and write and migrating to the North.

⁷⁸ Paul Bagget. "Transcending the Boundaries of Nation: Images and Imaginings of Frederick Douglass." *Process: A Journal of African American and African Diaspora Literature and Culture*. 2, Spring 2000. 103-105.

Frederick Douglass was clearly the most recognizable African American leader from the antebellum era to the 1890's. Bagget's article revealed how Douglass' influential white patrons within the abolitionists' movement enabled Douglass to emerge as the representative American both in America and in Europe. His article provided important context for my interpretation of Cansler's evaluation of Douglass' status as the spokesperson for the race.

⁷⁹ Dickson J Preston. *Young Frederick Douglass: The Maryland Years*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980) 172, 173.

Dickson J. Preston's biography of *Frederick Douglass* searches beneath Douglass' construction of his life to fulfill an important literary agenda for himself and the majority of the race in bondage. Preston's study of Douglass' ancestry was of particular importance to me because his research provided essential information about Douglass' grandparents and parents which enabled me to compare Douglass' ancestry with my great-grandfather Charles Warner Cansler's ancestry.

⁸⁰ Henry Louis Gates Jr. *Figures in Black: Words, Signs and the "Racial" Self*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 115.

I borrowed language from Gates' text to develop my interpretation of the race's spokespeople tradition in African American Literature. His text is useful in documenting how Douglass used language to fulfill the role as a black writer who employed his experiences to speak on behalf of the race and to the race. Moreover, his analysis of Preston's biography of Frederick Douglass supported my use of Preston's work in my dissertation because Gates is one of most influential scholars in African American Literature.

⁸¹ Dickson J. Preston. *Young Frederick Douglass: The Maryland Years*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980) 8, 9.

⁸² Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass*, 5-6.

⁸³ Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass*, 17.

⁸⁴ Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass*, 17, 18.

⁸⁵ Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass*, 17-18.

⁸⁶ William L. Andrews. "Narrating Slavery." *Teaching African American Literature: Theory and Practice*. Ed. Maryemma Graham, Sharon Pinealut- Burke Marianna White Davis. (New York: Routledge, 1998) 18. William L. Andrews is one of the most respected scholars of nineteenth century African American Literature. I used his interpretations of Frederick Douglass' slave narratives to develop my interpretation of the national race leader tradition. I was able to refer to Andrews work to document how the success of Douglass' slave narratives enabled him to emerge as the first spokesperson of the race.

⁸⁷ Dickson J. Preston. *Young Frederick Douglass: The Maryland Years*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980) 17, 18.

⁸⁸ William L. Andrews. "Narrating Slavery." *Teaching African American Literature: Theory and Practice*. Ed. Maryemma Graham, Sharon Pinealut- Burke Marianna White Davis. (New York: Routledge, 1998) 17, 18.

⁸⁹ Andrews, "Narrating Slavery," 17, 18.

⁹⁰ Charles Warner Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Kingsport Press, 1939) 162.

⁹¹ Charles Warner Cansler. "The Past, The Present and The Future of Negro Public Schools in Tennessee (1914). Unpublished Speech 2-3.

⁹² Cansler, "The Past, The Present and The Future of Negro Public Schools in Tennessee (1914). Unpublished Speech 2, 3.

⁹³ Cansler, "The Past, The Present and The Future of Negro Public Schools in Tennessee (1914). Unpublished Speech 2, 3.

⁹⁴ Cansler, "The Past, The Present and The Future of Negro Public Schools in Tennessee (1914). Unpublished Speech 3, 4.

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- ⁹⁵ Dickson J. Preston. *Young Frederick Douglass: The Maryland Years*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980) 25-30.
- ⁹⁶ Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass*, 25-30.
- ⁹⁷ Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass*, 25-30.
- ⁹⁸ Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass*, 25-30.
- ⁹⁹ Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass*, 25-30.
- ¹⁰⁰ Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass*, 25-30.
- ¹⁰¹ Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass*, 25-30.
- ¹⁰² Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass*, 42-47
- ¹⁰³ Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass*, 54.
- ¹⁰⁴ Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass*, 54.
- ¹⁰⁵ Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass*, 55.
- ¹⁰⁶ Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass*, 60-61.
- ¹⁰⁷ William L Andrews. "Narrating Slavery." *Teaching African American Literature: Theory and Practice*. Ed. Maryemma Graham, Sharon Pinealut- Burke Marianna White Davis. (New York: Routledge, 1998) 20, 21.
- ¹⁰⁸ Charles Warner Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Kingsport Press, 1939) 106.
- ¹⁰⁹ Cansler, *Three Generations*, 106, 107.
- ¹¹⁰ Booker T. Washington. *Up from Slavery. African Americans Reflect on Booker T. Washington and Up From Slavery 100 Years Later*. Ed. Rebecca Carol. (New York: Harlem Moon, 2006) 41-42.
- ¹¹¹ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 42.
- ¹¹² Michael Rudolph West. *The Education of Booker T. Washington: American Democracy and the Idea of Race Relations*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006) 122, 123.
- ¹¹³ West, *The Education of Booker T Washington*, 122,123.
- ¹¹⁴ Charles Warner Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Kingsport Press, 1939) 148, 149.
- ¹¹⁵ Cansler, *Three Generations*, 148-150.
- ¹¹⁶ Cansler, *Three Generations*, 148-151.

¹¹⁷ Cansler, *Three Generations*, 14.

¹¹⁸ Cansler, *Three Generations*, 14, 15.

¹¹⁹ Cansler, *Three Generations*, 89.

¹²⁰ Cansler, *Three Generations*, 90.

¹²¹ Laura Kalman. "American Apartheid: A historian examines the effects of a famous Supreme Court Decision." *The New York Times*, Monday, January 21, 2002.

¹²² Kalman, "American Apartheid: A Historian examines the effects of a famous Supreme Court Decision"

¹²³ Kalman, "American Apartheid: A Historian examines the effects of a famous Supreme Court Decision."

¹²⁴ Kalman, "American Apartheid: A Historian examines the effects of a famous Supreme Court Decision."

¹²⁵ Kalman, "American Apartheid: A Historian Examines the effects of a famous Supreme Court Decision."

Chapter 4

William B. Scott's Dream

Part 1

The Makings of the Mythical Free Black Community

Free-black activists wanted to establish free black communities dedicated to abolition and racial development, but they had substantial obstacles to overcome. In *Slaves without Masters: the Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (1974), Ira Berlin argued that while whites and slaves resided at the extremes of southern society, according to law and custom, free blacks dangled awkwardly in the middle.¹ Berlin stated that in the early 1800's, they shared few of the privileges of whites and were burdened by many of the liabilities of slaves.² He discovered that their precarious existence meant that they were socially set apart from both worlds.³ Moreover, he contended that they were further isolated from each other because of the class divisions within free black society. In her article "Let My People Go (2000)," Debora Gray White would later support Berlin's view of social class divisions within free black communities. She stated that differences in wealth, literacy, complexion and occupations resulted in different social- class connections and classes within free black society.⁴

In addition, the majority of free blacks resided in the countryside in shanty towns. In North Carolina where William Scott was born so many free blacks resided with their white employers that the state decided to make white employers responsible for collecting freed-men's taxes.⁵ Thus Berlin wrote that in rural areas free-black living conditions were not much different from that of slaves. He explained that white employers often quartered their free Negroes with slaves, and in the cities free blacks had

to develop semblances of respectable home life in back alleys, dank cellars, factory lofts, and the corners of abandoned industrial cities. The divergent geographical locations of free blacks made it difficult for them to establish communities they envisioned.

Berlin argued that most small cities did not have large single black communities. Many free blacks had to reside near their former masters or their white employers because they did not have access to public transportation which arrived for white citizens with the omnibuses in the 1830's. Moreover, Berlin contended that whites were reluctant to allow single free-black communities because of the fear that these communities would serve as breeding grounds for slave insurrections.⁶

In the 1800's the fear of slave revolts led to further restrictions on free blacks.⁷ White southerners viewed them as the most likely catalyst. The worry was that slaves would see the accomplishments of free blacks and demand liberation from slavery and yearn for opportunities of social-class mobility.⁸ Consequently, by the 1830's free blacks were disenfranchised in Delaware, Maryland and Kentucky. Moreover, by 1832 every southern state had enacted legislation barring free blacks from entering their borders.⁹ The pervasive racial oppression, however, did not prevent educated-free- black-national race leaders from organizing communal-minded literary spokespeople conventions.

Newspapers became one of the means of uniting free black communities and reaching out to sympathetic white readers. National race leaders and local racial activists felt that this was one of the best methods to promote free-black racial solidarity and to address the pervasiveness of white supremacist thought in North America. In *Rewriting Race: Race, Class and Cultural Capital in Nineteenth- Century American* (2004), Todd Vogel contended that black antebellum writers understood that an ideology of whiteness

was emerging and that they tried to stop it.¹⁰ He stated that black writers faced the difficult question of how to sound when they spoke on behalf of the race and addressed literate free blacks.¹¹ Vogel claimed that they created their own version of the new “middling style” endorsed by the rising middle class in America.¹² Comparable to that of the rising free black middle class, black writers wanted to turn this approach to language into a form of cultural capital.¹³ The hope was that this strategy of literary racial leadership would provide black writers with opportunities to challenge an emerging scientific racism, which “scientifically” placed blacks at a lower level of humankind and made whites the standard by which all should be measured.¹⁴

In New York City free black papers such as *Freedom’s Journal* and *The Colored American*, Douglass’ *The North Star*, the African Methodist Church’s *Christian Recorder*, and Washington D. C.’s *National Era* were sites for free black abolitionists’ and fugitive slaves’ national leadership efforts.¹⁵ Obviously the editors of these free black newspapers published articles about abolition, but they also found and published articles about citizens’ obligations and rights in a republic. However, the demise of the *Freedom’s Journal* in May of 1829 was clearly a setback. John B. Russwurm and Samuel Cornish had started the paper in New York in 1827, but just a few years later the paper had folded largely because of the lack of financial support. Russwurm and Cornish intended for the paper to be a literary display of race’s promise to counter the slanderous portrayal of slaves and free blacks in white newspapers across the country. The demise of the paper signified the limited avenues to represent the race’s struggle.¹⁶ Other African American journalists had difficulty finding financial support and readerships, but free blacks in particular remained determined to find ways of expressing an independent

voice.¹⁷ The need for black voices became more apparent with the increase of anti-black activity throughout the North, South and the Midwest.¹⁸ In 1829, Ohio revitalized “Black Laws” designed to discourage free blacks from entering the state.¹⁹

Other national race leaders had already realized that literary racial activism can only do so much. From the 1830’s to the 1840’s some national free black race leaders and communal activists came to feel that black newspapers were not enough to promote the need for social change. They felt that the literary approach was important, but that it would not gain sufficient white support to abolish slavery, end racism and challenge white supremacy. This belief further intensified debates about abolition, racial-uplift strategies and emigration. Some influential free black race leaders recognizing the bleak prospects of the struggle, promoted self defense as the best means for realizing citizenship. For instance, in *David Walker’s Appeal in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Colored Citizens of the World* (1829), He argued that blacks should have the right to defend themselves against white violence and oppression. “It is no more harm for you to kill a man who is trying to kill you, than it is for you to take a drink of water when thirsty: in fact the man who will stand still and let another man murder him is worse than an infidel.”²⁰ Many blacks agreed with Walker but they stressed other approaches to achieving citizenship.

Frederick Douglass and Maria Stewart remained committed to supporting socioeconomic and cultural racial ascendancy strategies. Their emphasis on economic, social and moral development created a more positive image of the race’s future prospects in America. Throughout the late 1830’s and 1840’s Douglass proclaimed that the pathway to racial progress and American citizenship would emerge from the display

of intelligence, accumulation of wealth and respectability. Stewart, one of the few black women on the speaking circuit, agreed with Douglass. While she understood Walker's view of self defense, she focused on exhibiting messages of moral improvement in her speeches to blacks. She encouraged free blacks to give up drinking and invest in schools and in seminaries. Nonetheless, other national race leaders disagreed with Douglass' and Stewart's social and economic strategies.²¹

Martin Delany, a Harvard-educated physician and nationally known black abolitionist, championed Black Nationalism and emigration. In his book entitled *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of Colored People of the United States* (1852), Delany wrote "No people can be free who themselves do not constitute an essential part of the *ruling element* of the country in which they live."²² While national race leaders had different views about approaches for the abolition of slavery and whether blacks could achieve citizenship in the Americas, they were united in feelings of racial solidarity and self- confidence. National race leaders' self- assurance protected them from proponents of slavery's belief in white supremacy.²³ William Lloyd Garrison became the editor of an abolitionist newspaper the *Liberator*. He made sure that he presented free black writers' voices in a manner that displayed their moral authority. In the 1850's some national race leaders responded to Garrison by changing their strategy. They moved from a focus on the moral hypocrisy of slavery to acquire converts for the abolitionist cause to exhibiting moral defiance as the means of demanding social change.²⁴

The 1850's became the decade of some racial prosperity. The success of free blacks across the country bolstered national race leaders' self confidence. There was a

steady increase of free black land ownership all over the country. In Nashville, twenty-six blacks had assets of more than a thousand dollars, and in Charleston, South Carolina, which always had a wealthy free black elite, as many as seventy-five whites rented their homes from blacks.²⁵ Throughout the upper South free black agricultural workers successfully lobbied for higher wages because slaves were being sold and moved down South.²⁶ Free black success not only led to the establishment of larger black churches and wealthier congregations, but it also generated optimism that collective activism was the best means for overcoming white racial oppression.²⁷ While these racial collective activist efforts were successful at the local level in ending the oppressive Black Codes in New York City and winning court cases in Richmond, national racial activists were unable to win countrywide victories over America's racial discrimination practices and cultural convictions of white supremacy.

However, historian Deborah Gray White pointed out that there were clear political differences between white and black abolitionists. While many white abolitionists were determined to end slavery because of its sinful practices, they did not possess the same fervor about colonialism, racism and white supremacy as black abolitionists. Black abolitionists wanted to employ language from the Constitution to challenge American colonialism, the institution of slavery and white supremacy, but she argued that many white abolitionists were unable, or unwilling, to make the connections among these powerful forms of racial oppression. They did not understand how much these racist social policies and practices enabled the institution of slavery to thrive in the Americas.²⁸

Additionally, national race leaders had to develop contradictory consciousness to remain as nationwide race leaders. Douglass had to promote views on the Constitution

that he did not agree with to appease his white patrons and influential white audience. In January of 1851, he investigated the possibilities for change. He lobbied for support from a prominent and wealthy abolitionist, Gerrit Smith.²⁹ Acquiring support from Smith became one of the determining factors in whether he would be able to change his view on the Constitution and slavery. He wrote Smith that he was “sick and tired of arguing on the slaveholders’ side” on the question of whether the Constitution is pro slavery.”³⁰ Garrison and other prominent abolitionists were clearly against slavery, but they refused to challenge it on Constitutional grounds. They were not concerned with colonialism and racism. They were only interested in the debate about slavery. Thus they made their case against the institution of slavery exclusively from a religious perspective. Douglass felt he had to gain Smith’s financial backing before making a political shift. Douglass was an astute student of the abolitionist political landscape. When Garrison realized that Douglass had changed his stance on whether the Constitution possessed a pro-slavery stance, he rescinded his financial support of Douglass. Douglass must have believed he would be in financial straits if he did not gain Smith’s monetary patronage to cover the loss of Garrison.³¹

Douglass simultaneously had to address the race’s concerns. In New York City in 1853, Douglass and other black abolitionists held one of their largest black abolitionist conventions in history.³² They were reluctant to advocate black separatism, but they believed the fugitive slave law left them with no choice. Free blacks in the South and the North could at anytime be kidnapped and enslaved. The absence of protection and citizenship in both the South and the North led to the emergence of a black separatist ideology. Phillip A Bell, in the *Weekly Advocate*, wrote, “Whites may make ‘Our Cause’

their cause all they want, but their efforts will be unavailing without our thinking and acting, as a body for ourselves.”³³ It is within this context that free black and mulattoes constructed a free black race-conscious ideology.

The performances of thriving urban free blacks and reports of newly freed black communities in newspapers, biographical sketches of prominent black citizens, slave narratives, autobiographies and novels countered widely held beliefs that blacks did not possess the social and intellectual capacity for American citizenship. Moreover, the ideology of the prosperous free-black community encouraged blacks to discover ways of helping themselves.³⁴ Charles Warner Cansler’s *Three Generations* contributed to this tradition. He is one of the first local black activists to write a text that explored a free black family’s heritage of middle-class racial respectability and local racial activism.

Part 2

Charles Warner Cansler’s Construction of William B. Scott’s Migration Narrative

Cansler’s representation of his grandfather’s life is an illustration of Farah Jasmine Griffin’s perception of the migration narrative. In “*Who set you Flowin?:*” *The African-American Migration Narrative*, Griffin asserted that black migration narratives were marked by four pivotal moments: **(1)** an event that propels the action northward, **(2)** a detailed representation of the initial urban landscape, **(3)** an illustration of the migrant’s attempt to negotiate that urban landscape, **(4)** and a vision of the possibilities or limitations of the North, the West, the Midwest and the South.³⁵ Cansler’s account of William B. Scott’s life as a black-migration narrative demonstrated how Scott’s white - skinned appearance and cultural refinement enabled him to leave Statesville, North Carolina in search of a better life for himself and his family in the North. He reflected on

how Scott's European features and relationships with free blacks and with whites allowed him to find tutors for his children and improved employment opportunities when he moved to Eastern Tennessee. He focused on how Scott's persona and vocational expertise led him to investigate the possibility of realizing his dream to become a local racial activist for Eastern Tennessee's prominent yet small free black community. His representations of Scott's thoughts on race and social-class mobility provide an analysis of both the possibilities and the limitations of local racial activism principles in Eastern Tennessee during the antebellum era.

Cansler's description of William B. Scott's race consciousness and migration to Eastern Tennessee resembled France E. W. Harper's account of local racial activism. In 1869, Harper serialized "Minnie's Sacrifice" from March to September in the African American newspaper *The Christian Recorder*.³⁶ Harper advocated group-oriented racial uplift traditions through the representation of white-skinned Minnie's and her future husband Louis' racial self discovery and decision to become local racial activists.³⁷ When well-intentioned whites rescue Minnie and Louis from the horrors of racism, they were raised as white children.³⁸ Harper promotes ideals of local racial activism like courage, self sacrifice and race pride as the positive outcome of racial identity formation. She described how Minnie's and Louis' racial self discovery represented race pride rather than shame.³⁹ She shows how Minnie's and Louis' discovery of their racial identities revealed a desire to participate in collective action for social change.⁴⁰ Cansler's biography of Scott echoed Harper's performance of white or light-skinned blacks' adoption of a local racial activist ideology as one of the dominant characteristics of racial identity formation. Cansler formed a portrait of his grandfather as a white skinned man

who was privately and publicly committed to racial solidarity and group oriented uplift efforts.

Scott's plan to move from Statesville, North Carolina to Ohio provided compelling images of free blacks' ability to embody the aims of bourgeois humanism as an expression of race pride and racial ascendancy. He thought that if he could get to Knoxville, he would then be able to reach Oberlin, Ohio. "My present mind is to go from Knoxville to Ohio. I understand that a quite a few colored people are living around Oberlin where there is a college that their children are permitted to attend. I am anxious to give my boy and girl some education."⁴¹ Here Scott is portrayed talking to his middle-class white friend Thomas Jenkins in 1840. Mr. Jenkins is selling Scott a wagon for the move. Cansler documented that Scott had already reached free black middle class status because he had relationships with middle-class whites and access to information about other successful free black families. In addition, his plans for his children reflected his belief in egalitarianism because he recognized that both his son and daughter deserved college educations.

Cansler also used Thomas Jenkins' comments to emphasize the requirements for passing for white. Jenkins declared, "I think it a shame, Scott, that a man like you would have to leave our state to go any whar. You are as white as I am, an' I wish I had half your eddication."⁴² Here Jenkins is shown recognizing that Scott can pass for white not only because of his physical appearance, but also because of his intelligence and education. And Cansler utilized Scott's response to highlight his grandfather's rejection of the culture of passing for principles of racial solidarity. When Thomas Jenkins asks Scott about the injustice of being treated as a black man and second-class citizen, Scott

responded. “And my fate in the world is not nearly as bad as that of millions of others of my race who are held in the shackles of slavery.”⁴³ Cansler wanted his readers to understand that Scott considered himself as a fortunate member of an oppressed race not a man with a biracial heritage unfairly linked to an uncivilized race.

Jenkins’ comments about Scott also helped show that influential whites’ admired Cansler’s grandfather. Jenkins’ responded by saying,

I heard Judge Simpson say the other day that you are as well informed as any man in this country. An then, what are the farmers goin to do when you leave the county when we need our saddles and harness mended? I don’t believe thar’s any man any whar better than you at this kind of work.⁴⁴

Cansler’s construction of Jenkins’ comments authenticated his grandfather’s potential for local racial ambassadorship. He also referred to Scott’s relationship with his best friend Rad to make black and white readers aware of other prominent free black men’s thoughts about America’s race problem.

The representation of Scott’s and Rad’s relationship displayed free blacks’ heightened level of sophistication during the late 1830’s. Scott and Rad became best friends because they had a great deal in common. Rad was also born in-between contrasting black and white racial realities. “Rad was the child of an Irish woman by a Negro man.”⁴⁵ Rad’s mother provided him with an ideal beneficial interracial relationship. Shortly after Rad was born, she placed him with a white shoemaker named Gentle. Growing up with Gentle enabled Rad to learn a trade, and he became a master shoemaker. He was also an intelligent man and well regarded in Statesville. Like Scott, he chose to marry a black woman and help raise a black family. Moreover, his reputation

helped to secure his wife's freedom. "Hester Schade, who was to become Rad's wife, had been purchased when a small child by a German immigrant lately come to the United States who had seen the child exposed for auction in the slave market."⁴⁶ The German immigrant hated slavery and was determined to buy the child to secure her freedom.⁴⁷ After raising the child as if she was his own, he learned that his surrogate daughter-slave met and fell in love with Rad. When Rad asked for her hand in marriage, the German immigrant immediately registered her free papers. Rad's racial background not only resembled Scott's racial heritage, but Rad's values and reputation also offered Cansler another important model of African Americans' ability to embody images of bourgeois humanism.

Cansler's representation of his grandfather's life and friends resembled what Michele Mitchell referred to as Afro-American domestic texts in her work *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (2004). She wrote that Afro-American domestic texts appeared in black communities as early as the 1890's and that these texts were created on the pages of tracts, manuals and pamphlets.⁴⁸ She contended that they were produced by the aspiring and relatively elite, they were created to provide the black masses with conduct advice. Aspiring poverty-stricken and working-class blacks consumed them because they were searching for knowledge about how to gain mastery of proper behavior. While Cansler's *Three Generations* offered similar anecdotes about proper conduct, he was primarily concerned with inspiring educated middle-class blacks and vocationally trained working-class blacks to become stewards for black communities. Moreover, he used his free black ancestors' and their free black friends' stories to provide his readers with specific

examples of how individuals and families can become important advisors for their communities.

In Part 1 in Chapter III of *Three Generations* “Scott and Rad Discuss Racial Oppression,” Cansler described how Scott’s and Rad’s conversations revealed the existence of two culturally refined free black men. Cansler wanted his black readers to develop racial consciousness by witnessing their awareness of America’s racial hypocrisy.

Judge Simpson accidentally left a Baltimore paper in my shop the other day when he came in to talk to me about a new set of harnesses he is having me make for that pair of iron gray horses he recently bought. When he left, I stopped my work to read the paper. The caption of the chief editorial was, “The Free Negro—A Threat to Our Internal Peace.” The editor advocated the forcible deporting of all the free Negroes in the country to Liberia. He says that Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Bushrod Washington and others saw this when they organized the “African Colonization Society.”⁴⁹

Not only is Scott able to support himself and his family by mastering trades and owning a successful business, he is also able to read and intelligently discuss the existence of racial politics with his best friend. Scott argued, “I don’t see how it squares with the white man’s idea of justice to bring Negroes forcibly into this country when they did not want to come, and then forcibly to take them out when they want to stay.”⁵⁰ He wanted to make sure his readers were aware of how American racism played a major role in producing oppressive social, racial and class boundaries.

Cansler's description of Rad's comments about wanting to become a Mason is just another example of the South's manufactured and flawed color line. Rad's discussion with his surrogate white father revealed the hypocrisy of the socially constructed color line.

I ran up against something I did not know, just yesterday," said Rad.

"Mr. Gentle has been going out to meet with the Masonic lodge at least one night each month as far back as I can remember. I said to him yesterday that I had been thinking that I would like to join this order if there was any possible opportunity. He said their law said that one to be a Mason must be free, white, and twenty one years of age. By "white" is meant one of full blood, though there has been such a racial mixture due to slavery that I do not know how anyone will ever determine who is a pure blooded white.⁵¹

Rad's words reflect Cansler's view that pure whiteness is almost impossibly rare. Rad knew that whites, both men and women, have intermingled with the supposedly inferior race to such a degree that white society was unable to determine if one is "pure white." Rad's opinions revealed that only an arbitrary line between blacks and whites existed as early as the 1830's because of whites' sexual appropriation of black bodies. Many mulattoes responded to this social circumstance by mastering the culture of passing as white as early as the 1830's.

Cansler instituted a dialogue between Scott and Rad to present his readers with a paradigm that undermined America's socially constructed color line. He also used Rad's statement about his best friend Scott to promote his grandfather's commitment to race pride.

You, Scott, could have gone where you are not known and could have married into one of the best white families. Your children and grandchildren would be Negroes in the eyes of the law if the little drop of Negro blood in you were known, but they would be highly respected citizens if the public was unaware that you had Negro blood. You did not try to “pass over” to the white race, but there are hundreds who have. Don’t you know that many a white family (in name) will run into a skeleton in its family closet one hundred years from now when it begins to trace its family history?⁵²

Cansler’s portrayal of Rad’s assessment of Cansler’s grandfather offers a racially conscious alternative to the culture of passing. Rad argued that Scott could have easily reinvented himself as a prominent white man in American society. But his most important commentary was that Scott was an exception. He witnessed how passing as white became a prevalent custom throughout the antebellum era; he knew that many white people would realize they were legally black if they ever examined their family history. Cansler’s construction of Rad’s thoughts about his experiences not only formed an argument about the prevalence of miscegenation, but he also turned America’s construction of a racial hierarchy on its head. Cansler constructed Rad’s views from family stories. He used his interpretation of family stories to demonstrate how the culture of passing materialized as one of the dominant means of surmounting the color line. His historical construction of Rad’s opinions about Scott’s life and the existence of a culture of passing among mulattoes raised important questions about American society’s disturbing racial history, but he ultimately formed a biography about a free black family man’s dream of becoming a local racial activist.

The enactment of Scott's discussion with Rad about moving North revealed the roots of the family's version of local racial activism. Cansler's account of this conversation displays a white-skinned black man's dream of being completely free and organizing racial uplift efforts for the race.

Each year I have had an ever increasing desire to live where I can be entirely free," said Scott. We are not likely to have complete freedom for Negroes in this state in many years, even though emancipation should come to the slaves. Twenty years ago we free Negroes voted in this state. Today this and many other privileges which we once had are denied us as free men. I should like to go to northern Ohio to live or even into Canada. I believe that someday all of my race will be free and that the main body will live in the South. It is my great ambition to live to see that day and to live among and help my struggling and oppressed race.⁵³

Scott dreamed of participating in extending principles of American democracy to include the race. He wanted to witness the moment when the race obtained full citizenship. Cansler described how his grandfather realized he would not be an eyewitness to this, however. He documented how his grandfather observed that America had taken dramatic steps backwards rather than forward in the process of recognizing black humanity. Still, Cansler's description of how Scott realized his dream of organizing racial uplift efforts generated images of the founding father of the Scotts' and the Canslers' contributions to the local race-activist tradition.

Part 3

Family Values: Charles Warner Cansler's Enactments of Middle- Class- Minded Black Family Men as Local Race Leaders

The Scotts' and the Canslers' local- race- leader tradition was born as the pro-slavery argument gripped the public mind of white society. The crux of the pro-slavery argument was that blacks would never be prepared for citizenship because they were child-like and in need the moral guidance and supervision of white masters.

An intricate system developed on the plantation throughout the South to perpetuate this perception in the minds of both whites and blacks. The institution of slavery maintained the mythology of white supremacy and black inferiority on the plantation by trying to prevent the slave from acquiring any semblance of self-consciousness. Two dominant practices emerged to deny the slave self awareness: constant disruption or destruction of the slave family and organized efforts to prevent the slave from acquiring access to literacy and cultural refinement. Slaves were not allowed to legally marry. Slave men had no rights to protect themselves, their slave lovers or children from their masters.⁵⁴ It was a common practice to separate the slave men and women from each other and their offspring. Moreover, slave men were encouraged to have sex with a variety of slave women on the plantation. While masters trained their slaves to remain active physically, the slave masters were committed to keeping their slaves' minds in atrophy. Slave masters implemented cultural norms and laws against teaching slaves to read and write. They recognized that once slaves gained knowledge they would not be satisfied with their existence within the institution of slavery. The masters understood that by preventing the slave from developing the ability to think for

themselves that the slave master was in the position to think for the slave.⁵⁵ Thus the institution of slavery provided slave masters and their families with the means to promote their own racial superiority to their slaves. The institution of slavery formed an ideological model of dominant and subordinate race relations between master and slave.⁵⁶

Some of the most well- respected white historians continued to believe in and promote this view of slavery as late as the 1960's. For instance in his well known work *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Labor As Determined by the Plantation Regime* (1966), Ulrich B. Phillips employed a widely held paternalistic perspective of slavery to describe the relationship between master and slave. "Masters of the standard type promoted Christianity and the custom of marriage and parental care, and they instructed as much by example as by precept; they gave occasional holidays, rewards and indulgences, and permitted as large degree of liberty as they thought that the slaves could be trusted not to abuse."⁵⁷ Historians like Phillips resonated with southern and northern whites because this depiction of slavery established a mythology of benevolent white supremacy as truth, and it enabled whites in the South and the North to justify healthy race relations defined as the dominant white and subordinate black races. Still, during the antebellum era the free-black communities in both the southern and the northern cities created problems for proponents of blacks' innate racial inferiority.

The most successful free blacks and communal race leaders lived in cities. They could send their children to school, go to churches, shops and bars and bury their dead away from the constant supervising eyes of white slaveholders.⁵⁸ By 1860, they were the most urban of all of America's people.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, where ever they went both in

southern and northern cities they encountered suspicion, hostility and in many instances violence.⁶⁰ Most southern cities began to coordinate legislation designed to curb the population of free blacks because their success was considered a threat to the pro-slavery argument.⁶¹ Scott embarked on his quest to become a local racial activist in Eastern Tennessee because Eastern Tennessee had small-yet-thriving black communities within its cities and progressive-minded whites willing to help.

Cansler's depiction of Scott's racial alliances with influential whites advocated progressive principles of citizenship. A form of middle-class-minded black masculinity was the ideal he thought that black men must develop. This included three ideal character traits: **(1)** to operate within black and white social realities, **(2)** to provide for themselves and their families, **(3)** and to act as influential role models of local racial uplift for the black community despite pervasive racial discrimination practices. He believed that black families, and perhaps more importantly black men, needed role models of racial uplift; then and now the story of middle-class black family men committed to their children and their community have largely been excluded from national black artists' performances of themselves as racial leaders and racial ambassadors. Whites' adoption and application of progressive-minded principles of citizenship also played a substantial role in free black family men and local race activists' social and economic achievements.

The ideal of white citizenship was that influential whites should promote values of racial integration: **(1)** to be willing to act as co-workers for the development of blacks' social and educational advancement, and **(2)** to keep their word to assist the race even as whites challenged their involvement in racial uplift strategies. Cansler's enactment of

Scott's life displayed the value of the black family man and activist within the black community and the importance of progressive-minded whites as allies.

In Part 2 in Chapter VI "Their Arrival in Tennessee" Cansler introduced black and white readers to other middle-class-minded black men who were committed to their families and the race. For instance, the Dogan family decided to take in Rad and Scott and their families. John Dogan was the embodiment of an ideal of black masculinity. Cansler writes that even as a slave Dogan was able to realize the standards of middle-class black manhood by earning the respect of whites.

John Dogan had spent the first thirty years of his life as a slave. A man of powerful frame and great physical strength, he had been hired out by his first master as a blacksmith apprentice and then as a blacksmith after he mastered the trade. There was an agreement that he was to work ten hours each day for which his master was to receive pay, and that for any extra hours above that John was to receive pay at the same rate as his master, and that this money was to be John's.⁶²

Note how Dogan's time in slavery, physical features and strength develop a powerful image of black manhood, and the arrangement that Dogan had with his master demonstrated the role Dogan's physical prowess, expertise and work ethic played in his life. Cansler wrote that Dogan not only earned the respect of his master, but that he also negotiated a financial arrangement which provided him with an opportunity to buy himself out of slavery.

When Dogan decided to use his hard-earned money to first buy his wife out of slavery, he promoted the belief that black men must sacrifice their own needs for the betterment of their families.

So busy did he keep at his work, and so careful was he at hoarding his earnings, that after two years he was able to purchase Myra, a young slave woman, that he had known several years and decided to make his wife. After another two years of hard work and of careful saving, he was able to pay over to his master six hundred dollars, which his master had fixed as a price for Dogan's liberty.⁶³

Dogan realized that saving and spending his hard earned money for his wife's freedom was his first duty as the protector and provider for the family. Cansler also demonstrated how Dogan's principled work ethic and self-discipline enabled him to become successful. In 1847 Dogan owned a thriving blacksmith business in the heart of the town in Eastern Tennessee, a four room cottage, and he had nine hundred dollars in the bank. His administering of the protestant work ethic provided Cansler with an ideal illustration of black middle-class values.

Dogan was the perfect recruiter for the free black community of Eastern Tennessee because he was the model of what could be accomplished in this small free black community. He convinced Rad to remain in Eastern Tennessee.

"There are some twenty five or thirty of us free Negro families here in Knoxville," said he, "and I consider that we are all doing well. You see our white people here in East Tennessee have never been strong on slavery, and not a great many of them own slaves, and those not more than two or three. We grow no cotton, and there are no great plantations. Because of the friendly attitude of the whites toward us this is one of the best places free Negroes can find in which to live. You may go much farther and fare worse. I think Gentle will do well here as a shoe cobbler, as none of our race is working here at that."⁶⁴

Cansler constructed Dogan's plea to explain why the white and black cultural landscape in Eastern Tennessee allowed Rad to become a local race leader in his own right. He became a respected member of the free-black community in Knoxville, a participant in the civil matters in his adopted city, and he realized his ambition to become a Master Mason and leader in that organization. Adding to this account, Robert J. Booker, a local historian, writer for the *Knoxville Journal* and former executive director of the Beck Cultural Exchange Center, Knoxville's Museum of Black History and Culture, wrote that Gentle was nominated as a delegate to the Convention of Colored Citizens of Tennessee on August 7, 1865, at Nashville.⁶⁵ But Scott initially had much more difficulty determining if he wanted to remain in Eastern Tennessee. Scott had to develop relationships with various whites in Eastern Tennessee to discern whether he could make a living for his family, provide his children with educational opportunities, and realize his dream of becoming a local racial activist.

Scott's relationship with Dogan provided access to prominent whites in Eastern Tennessee. Dogan arranged an interview for Scott with Major O'Connor, one of the most influential whites in the area. Cansler's illustration of Scott's interview with Major O'Connor offered a historical account of the prospects for white-skinned free black tradesmen in Eastern Tennessee in the 1840's. Major O'Connor initially was pleased with Scott's plan of establishing a saddle harness-making business in town until Scott declared he was a black man. Major O'Connor then raised serious concerns about whether whites would ever accept Scott's business even if he did remarkable work. Nonetheless, David Jones, a member of the Quaker community in Friendsville, overheard the conversation and approached Scott about the possibility of creating his business there. Jones was a

member of the Underground Railroad as were most of the Quakers in Friendsville, Tennessee. They had rejected principles of white supremacy and had instituted plans for helping fugitive slaves reach the North. But Scott did not make this decision without bringing Jones to see his wife Maria at Dogan's home to discuss the matter.

The Scotts' decision to move to Friendsville, Tennessee symbolized a progressive vision of free-black-middle-class respectability. Cansler wanted his black and white readers to understand that his family's vision of proper domesticity involved a philosophy of egalitarianism. He emphasized that in the Scott and the Cansler family black men and women shared power in making decisions. The Scotts decided to leave the Dogan's home and stay with the Jones family in Friendsville until they built their own home. They then tutored their children and found tutors for them within the Friendsville community. Life went quite well until the Civil War.

In chapter V "The Civil War Brings Persecution," Cansler wrote that in the 1860's free blacks suffered as much if not more than enslaved black men and women, "In New York in July of 1863 the mob of rioters who resisted the draft of President Lincoln in his call for more troops to put an end to the war, went through the streets shooting, and killing all of the Negroes with whom they came in contact."⁶⁶ And in the South, Confederate Soldiers and sympathizers invaded the homes of free blacks, took their household belongings, sometimes flogging them, and left warnings for them to leave town.⁶⁷ Cansler understood from his grandparents' and parents' recollections that slavery was not a prevalent institution in Eastern Tennessee, and many of the slave owners could only afford a few slaves, so they relied more on them. He felt that for these reasons their masters had to protect them at least to some degree from Confederate soldiers and

sympathizers. He also believed enslaved men and women on these small farming properties knew how much food their masters' land could produce. There was at least some certainty for them within the chaos of slavery and the Civil War, but free blacks had no form of protection. Thus successful free blacks became special marks for Confederate attacks.

Scott's children were young adults when General John H. Morgan's Confederate soldiers came into the Scotts' home and kidnapped nineteen year-old William Jr. They also took numerous quilts, blankets and other household belongings.⁶⁸ Cansler described how Scott tried to save his son's life by relying on the family's beneficial interracial relationships. After General Morgan's troops kidnapped his son, Scott immediately began a mile journey to Colonel William Haskill's home to gain assistance in saving his son's life, but Colonel Haskill informed him that he did not have enough political influence to convince General Morgan not to enslave or kill William Jr. and release him. Although William Jr. later managed to escape from his captors, the family had to leave their home in Friendsville and move in with Scott's best friend, Rad Gentle, and his family in Knoxville.⁶⁹

Cansler described why Scott's decision to seek the support of Colonel Haskill to save his son's life was the primary survival tactic of educated free blacks. Their associations with influential whites were often their only defense against other whites and Confederate forces during the Civil War. Even as the family grappled with the loss of their home and the psychological trauma of William Jr.'s kidnapping, Scott again used his interracial alliances to create as much normality for his children as possible.

Cansler described how Scott almost immediately went to the Protestant Episcopal church Rector, the Rev. Dr. Hume, to ask him to teach his children. Hume, despite being a southerner, was an educated and liberal man in his views. He willingly agreed to tutor Scott's free-black children and any other free-black children in Knoxville. Scott's actions displayed his strict adherence to principles of educated- middle- class- black masculinity. He wanted his readers to observe that Scott saw it as his duty to provide educational opportunities for them no matter the situation because he felt that education would provide his children with the necessary transferable skills to find career opportunities to support themselves. Cansler also highlighted the dignity and courage of Scott's white friends.

Hume's commitment to Scott's children formed a compelling image of white citizenship. Hume kept his promise to teach William Jr. and Laura Ann even as a member of his congregation challenged his decision. Hume responded to the criticism:

If these children were the children of slaves, I would not disobey the laws of the state by teaching them. Since under the law, they are as free as I am, I not only see no harm in teaching them, but feel my duty to do so. As to any sentiment against my actions that you speak of I can only say that I assume all of the responsibility for this action, and am willing to take the resulting consequences from it.⁷⁰

Cansler hoped black readers would recognize that there were progressive-minded whites willing to sacrifice their reputations for their free black friends, and he hoped white readers would admire Hume's decision and determination to keep his word. The ability to develop alliances with white men of conviction allowed Scott to emerge as a prominent

local racial ambassador. He knew that he had to become a race leader within Friendsville and Maryville both near Knoxville, as the Civil War ended in 1865. He recognized that four million formerly enslaved black men and women were to be set adrift to fend for themselves, many uneducated and ill- prepared for freedom. Scott's creation of the newspaper *The Colored Tennessean* was one of the ways in which he provided his services as a local racial activist. He produced it almost immediately after General Robert E. Lee's surrender.⁷¹

Scott's *The Colored Tennessean* may have been only a county paper, but it shared the vision of the black newspaper establishment. For instance, in the August 12, 1865 edition, Scott covered the August 7 meeting of the Colored State Convention, with convention speeches covering the entire second page.⁷² *The Freedom's Journal* (1827) by John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish and *The Christian Recorder* (1854) by Rev J.P. Campbell, *The North Star* (1855) by Frederick Douglass, and *The National Era* (1847) by Dr. Gamiel Bailey Jr. were designed to educate the race. As I mentioned earlier, these national newspapers offered important information about the Civil War and its legacy, about the debates in Washington, D.C. on Reconstruction, and about national race leaders' assessments of what black communities needed to do to survive and possibly thrive despite the fact that the North had largely abandoned the race by 1875, and that the South remained largely in favor of principles of white supremacy and violence towards blacks.⁷³

The creation and evolution of *The Colored Tennessean*, however, revealed that local racial activists had to develop a sophisticated understanding of the southern and the northern political landscape to survive.

After a little more than one year spent in the publication of *The Colored Tennessean* in Nashville, William and son removed their plan to Maryville, Tennessee, where Mr. Scott had lived after moving from Friendsville and where he was known to a large number of people. His paper became the county paper and was successively edited by Republican and Democratic editors. At one time it was “the Blount County Republican,” and at another “The Blount County Democrat” although many people in the County knew it as “Scott’s paper.”⁷⁴

Scott recognized that his local interracial alliances had to take precedent over political-party affiliations. The Republican Party of Abraham Lincoln may have freed the slaves and developed a philosophy of instituting civil rights protections for the race during Reconstruction, but the party ultimately abandoned the race during Reconstruction and most southerners saw the Republican Party and its political views as a northern occupying social force.

Scott knew that the Democratic Party denied the cruelty of slavery, ignored the Klu Klux Klan’s murder of blacks and its use of fear tactics to intimidate blacks across the South, but he also knew that he had to find a way of working with both Republicans and Democrats in Maryville if he wanted to provide for his family, protect them and accomplish anything for the community.

Colored men in the South had begun to reflect if it were not better to make friends of the southern people by voting with them than to make enemies of them by voting against them. Scott was one of this number of Negro leaders who favored trying to keep the friendship of the southern white people by a closer political alliance with them.⁷⁵

Cansler presented Colored men's realization that they had to vote contrary to their beliefs as a survival strategy. Cansler argued that Scott and other Colored leaders believed that they would obtain necessary protection and cultural and political capital from whites for voting with conservative southerners. They surmised that voting Democratic would send a message to conservative-minded whites that loyalty to the South superseded America's race problem. They clearly did not believe this, but they realized that this was the stance that they had to take for their own well-being and their families' safety. Laws that could have protected their human rights did not exist or they were not enforced. Their tactics resembled slaves' practices of deceit as one of the means of surviving in bondage. Slaves understood that they had to conceal their feelings about slavery from their masters, even if it meant that they had to lie. They knew that honesty about the horrors of slavery could result in severe whippings or death. Even prominent free blacks had to deal with this overwhelming racial liability.

Cansler recalled witnessing a half dozen of the white lawyers and politicians of the town in his grandfather's room on Sunday mornings. He felt that this showed that this approach provided Scott with access to influential whites. His grandfather's political alliance with conservative-minded southern whites enabled him to live and provide some safety for his family. Moreover, he was also able to have a successful saddle and harness shop. His grandfather's and other Colored Men's philosophy was a precursor to Booker T. Washington's viewpoint of racial accommodation that Washington adopted to acquire power as the race's spokesman at the turn of the century. Scott knew, however, that if he wanted to achieve important social and educational victories for the black community, he had to continue to cultivate his interracial alliance with liberal-minded Quakers.

Scott's relationships with influential Quakers led to the creation of The Freedman's Normal Institute, a black school in Maryville designed to train blacks to become teachers in the community, in other southern black communities and in the North. Cansler noted, however, that his grandfather recognized that educating the black community was only the beginning of the struggle to achieve social and economic opportunities and civil rights entitlements in American society, providing newly freed blacks with educational opportunities merely facilitated the process of gaining employment prospects and American citizenship.

Nevertheless, Cansler characterized the success of his grandfather's school by presenting Booker T. Washington's thoughts about the Normal Institute.

Booker T. Washington, the greatest Negro educator, paid tribute to the work of this school in the following language: "When I first went to Tuskegee I was constantly coming in contact with those who had finished the course of Normal Training at the Freedman's Normal Institute. Most of these people were teachers, and they were thoroughly prepared and skillful teachers. I received great inspiration from them, and felt that perhaps no school in the South at that period was doing better work."⁷⁶

Washington's words show that Scott was part of a group of elite mulattoes' committed to improving the standing of black Americans regardless of color and class differences.⁷⁷

Washington's words illustrate that Cansler's grandfather's school produced aspiring teachers that were prepared to take on the challenge of educating the race. Cansler used Washington's words to offer his black and white readers the idea that Scott's

performance as a local racial ambassador was part of a larger segment of the mulatto elite who sought political and social advancement for the race.

Cansler's life and career as a local racial activist and local racial ambassador in Knoxville resembled the author Charles Chesnut's (1858-1932) life and career. Both men were descendants of free blacks. They were both teachers and principals of black schools and both men earned credentials in law and used their expertise to serve the race, but Chesnut left his hometown of Fayetteville, North Carolina for New York City in search of better employment opportunities. Cansler also had the opportunity to leave his hometown but he decided to remain in Knoxville. Scott and Chesnut had a great deal in common too. Both men were angered by assumptions that any white-skinned black man wanted to pass for white. They decided not to pass because they refused to abandon their families and were proud to serve as local racial activists and national race leaders. Cansler's representation of his grandfather's life also resembled the vision of a local racial activist in Chesnut's novels.

Chesnut's protagonist, Dr. Miller, in *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901), like Cansler's Scott, was presented as a middle-class-minded race hero. This was where the similarities end, however. Chesnut's story of Dr. Miller revealed the reality behind the New South's mask of progressivism. Miller's heroic response to white violence in the fictional town of Wellington was based on the actual Wilmington, North Carolina race riots in 1898.⁷⁸ Whites' savage murder of blacks signaled the crisis of color prejudice and the problem of social segregation at the dawn of the twentieth century. Dr. Miller's dream of creating a black hospital for his race was destroyed; he realized that his apolitical stance and belief in the moral integrity of his white friends would not protect his family

and the black community from white supremacy and racial violence. Dr. Miller believed that by not getting involved in racial politics he would earn recognition as a role model from blacks and gain the support of whites. Whereas Dr. Miller did not engage in political activism, Scott did. He established interracial alliances that enabled him to emerge as a social force for racial progress despite the existence of pervasive white supremacy and violent attacks against blacks.

Cansler represented his grandfather as much more race conscious because he abandoned the primary goal that Chesnutt avowed of reaching and educating white readers. Cansler, in his work, concentrated on blacks within his community and whites who were interested in his family's life stories. He believed that blacks would get the most from the Scotts' and the Canslers' life stories. He hoped that they would learn about group-oriented strategies for acquiring skills to facilitate social and economic opportunities for themselves. He did, however, hope that whites would learn about the values of interracial cooperation from reading about the whites that the Scotts and the Canslers worked with during their lifetimes.

Part 4

The Second Generation: Hugh Lawson and Laura Ann Scott Canslers' decision to Uphold William B. Scott's Local Race Leader Legacy

As expressed earlier, throughout the South many free black families found themselves isolated from slaves and whites. Yet Hugh Lawson Cansler and Laura Ann Scott Cansler continued Scott's local- race- leader traditions. Scott inspired them to use beneficial interracial relationships with white Quakers, state politicians, teachers and principals in Knoxville for the betterment of the family and the race.

Scott's values shaped Hugh Lawson Cansler's and Laura Ann Scott's relationship. Hugh presented himself to Laura Ann as if he were making a case for marriage to her father. Hugh knew that Laura had reservations because her father felt that she was too young for marriage and that getting married during the Civil War was unwise. Nonetheless, Hugh convinced Laura Ann to elope because she loved him, and she realized he had met her father's and her own standards of middle-class respectability. The elopement meant that Hugh had an additional incentive to show that he was a suitable son-in-law. He had to prove to himself and to Scott that he could protect and provide for Laura Ann.

In "Love Leads to Elopement" Cansler provided descriptions of how William B. Scott's life shaped his daughter's perception of whether Hugh was a suitable husband. The Scotts' home was a one-story structure with five bedrooms badly in need of paint but otherwise in fairly good condition; the yard was well kept. Cansler described how his father requested that his mother marry him. Cansler recalled stories of how the house stood back from the gate where a light-brown man, Hugh, well built, clean shaven, and with a face and eyes that gained one's confidence stood one spring day in 1861 talking to Laura Ann Scott.⁷⁹ Laura, seventeen, of a lighter hue, a dark mulatto type and taller than most women, watched and listened to Hugh from the house. She had clean-cut features and straight long black hair. As Cansler portrays it, Hugh was saying:

"I, too, have considered all of this and have talked to David and Summerfield Key about it. The Key boys have finished college and are now lawyers. We work together in the fields many a day. They say that war is coming and they will go with the South, whatever comes. David said to me a few days ago at the wagon

shop where I work, 'Lawson, you are as free as I am, and if war should come, I will protect you with my life.' When I answered him that if war should come he would be away at the front, he said, 'Well, even then, I can take you with me as my own private servant, for I am looking forward to a commission as an army officer. It is already talked that a Sixth Tennessee Regiment is to be formed with James Gillespie as Colonel and with me as Lieutenant Colonel. I will not leave you here to be kicked around if you go with me.'⁸⁰

When Hugh described how the Key boys would protect him, Laura responded "That would be very nice of him for you,but what would become of me? I could not go with you."⁸¹ Cansler wanted to demonstrate that his mother Laura Ann believed if a man wanted to be with her he had to make arrangements for himself and her. She helped Hugh form a new understanding of marriage and black masculinity. Hugh responded by arguing that his mother's family, the Kantzlers, had influential white friends that will go with the South but would protect them from the Confederacy. Laura Ann could have easily asked her father to use his own connections for Hugh and the Cansler family, but Laura Ann believed that Hugh must provide the same degree of protection that her father would provide for his family. Throughout the South many free black families found themselves isolated from slaves and whites. Yet others like Hugh Lawson Cansler and Laura Ann Scott Cansler had relationships with whites that could and did offer them protection from the Confederacy.

Because free blacks relied on their relationship with whites for their own survival, working for the Confederacy was an issue but it was not the issue. The most important concern for Hugh was what working arrangement would enable him to protect his family

from the Confederacy. Working for an influential southern family that he relied on for his own livelihood and his family's well being was the best means of protection. Cansler wrote that Hugh considered himself as an employee of the Key family. Cansler realized that he and his father were having difficulty with the decision that Hugh had to make. Cansler knew that his father's decision left him and his ancestry in a vulnerable position. He had to find ways to explain the complexity of Hugh's situation. He begins by telling his father's story, presenting his father's relationship with slaves and describing how his father carried on his grandfather's legacy.

Hugh's racial- and social-class background evoked images of Laura Ann's father William B. Scott's heritage. Cansler's description of his father's racial and social class background is worth quoting at length.

About the later part of the eighteenth century there came into Western Pennsylvania a family of German immigrants who spelled their name Kantzler or Kanseler. There were five brothers, who with their large families constituted quite a large clan. Three of the brothers migrated to Burke and Iredell Counties, North Carolina, in 1801, purchased land, and became successful farmers. Conrad Kantzler, one of these brothers, with six girls later crossed the mountains and purchased farm land in Monroe County, Tennessee. Conrad Kantzler was a man of immense bulk, weighing about three hundred pounds, with such a pronounced German brogue that his neighbors scarcely ever understood him. In his home they spoke the English language in their conversation with one another. In addition to being a very large landowner, Conrad Kantzler was the owner of several slaves.

He was very indulgent to these slaves, and gave them much larger liberty than slave owners generally granted to slaves.⁸²

Cansler's account of the Kantzler family's migration formed another image of the American Dream. The large family found a home, professions as farmers, and became owners of large amounts of land. Note how Cansler established an underlying link between the large family and their ability to amass substantial amounts of land in the new country. Cansler was able to direct his readers' attention to the family's capacity to redefine themselves as models of the rags- to- riches success story and the protestant work ethic. The Kantzler family's success provided an important backdrop for Cansler's treatment of Conrad Kantzler's life. His enormous size matched his vast property and prosperity.

Nonetheless, Cansler's account of Katherine Kantzler's love affair with one of her father's young slaves clearly stood out. He explained how the ability of some slaves to acquire social skills, cleanliness and the proper demeanor that attracted wealthy white women's attention and affection. He also represented how some of these wealthy white women withdrew from society after having affairs with enslaved black men to preserve some of their moral integrity.

Perhaps it was this freedom from any restraint placed upon one of these slaves, Perhaps it was his intelligence or his comeliness—or all of these things combined that caused young Katherine Kantzler to become infatuated with one particular young Negro male slave. But whatever it may have been, young Katherine either lost her head, or premeditatedly threw all discretion to the winds, for it soon became known in the neighborhood that Katherine Kantzler was the mother of a

colored baby boy. Ordinarily in such cases society ostracizes the woman, but Katherine Kantzler did not wait for society to ostracize her. From the moment the child was born she became a recluse.⁸³

Cansler formed a contrast between his grandmother's and father's lives. Whereas he described his grandmother as an outcast, Cansler simultaneously explained how Hugh Lawson Kantzler eventually change his name to Cansler to begin the process of rehabilitating the family name. Moreover, he described how his father used the Kantzlers' social status and connections to gain vocational training, which allowed him to emulate traits of bourgeois humanism.

Hugh established an apprenticeship relationship with Tom Peace and cultivated an association with the Key family that helped him to provide for and protect his family. Tom Peace was a magistrate who owned a blacksmith and wheelwright shop in Maryville, Tennessee. Hugh's expertise and reputation as a good worker for Tom Peace eventually enabled him to provide for himself, his mother and later for his own family. He was able to rely on Tom when the Confederate Army invaded Eastern Tennessee and Maryville. "He immediately made arrangements with Tom Peace for the use of his team (horses) and wagon to carry himself and wife to the home of his father-in-law (William B. Scott)."⁸⁴ Moreover, his work and association with the Key family provided him and his family protection from Confederate soldiers and sympathizers.

"I am glad you came over," said David Key.

"We are now in the thick of war. As a free colored man, your position is some what serious. There is no danger to you from the older citizens about here,

but we have many hot heads and the sentiment around here is seventy-five per cent for the South. The average white man blames slavery for the whole war crisis and is not friendly disposed to your race as a whole. Some may be bitter because your mother is a white woman, though why you should suffer for that I just cannot understand. You and I have worked together in our fields many a day and every member of my family likes and respects you. I am going to the front as Lieutenant Colonel of a new regiment and can use you to look after my personal belongings. In this way you will be protected from any insult or harm that may come to you if you remain here. What do you say?"⁸⁵

Hugh managed to revise the race relations mythology of the kind and trustworthy masters and contented and hardworking slaves for his own purposes. Key's assessment of Hugh's situation embodied the image of the honorable master; his perception of Hugh builds on southern mythology because Key recognized that Hugh was in danger and wanted to do something about it. Key's expression of goodwill was largely because of the regard Hugh possessed as a hard working and likeable free black that the Key family had grown to respect. Hugh understood that he also had to use his reputation to protect his mother and wife from the Confederacy and their sympathizers. "I am afraid I cannot do that, David," said Hugh. "My wife and mother are in need of my help and protection. It would be cowardly of me to leave them at a time that they need me just in order to save myself. I am not willing to do that."⁸⁶ Cansler's representation of his father Hugh's relationship with the Key family evoked images of southern mythology.

Cansler described David Key as an honorable southerner who was loyal to his friends in need, even if they were free mulattoes. He presented that Key defined himself

as a southern gentleman who aided in a free black man's determination to protect and provide for his family.

“Well, Lawson (Hugh), since you cannot accept my offer, and I agree with your reasons for not accepting, this idea suggests itself to me. Come and go with me only long enough for it to enter the thick skulls that the Keys are in back of you, and that you are rendering service to their cause as my servant, and this will help you, your mother, and your wife as well. If you stay with me only a month, and then come home, it will have a good effect, and I can find some good excuse for sending you back, and give you a letter besides stating that you are a friend to our cause and are not to be harmed in any way.”⁸⁷

Cansler's depiction of Hugh's negotiations with Key illustrated the free-black- middle class' use of interracial alliances. Hugh knew how to bargain with influential whites for his and his family's well being. Hugh's skills and cunning, and David Key's display of integrity, provided Hugh with means to protect and financially support his family. In six weeks Hugh left David Key at the front and returned home with a letter that stated, “Hugh Lawson Cansler and his family are not to be disturbed in any way since Hugh rendered service to the Confederate cause in general and to Lieutenant Colonel Key in particular.”⁸⁸ Hugh stayed with his mother for a few days and then was headed to his father in law's house when Ap, a free black farmer and owner of a small lot of land, came to see him.

Cansler had difficulty representing his father's alliance with slaves because Hugh's free-black social status separated him from the slave community. When Ap went

to Hugh's house for assistance, Cansler described how Hugh was faced with a difficult situation.

In a section of Chapter III "The Runaway Slave and His Cave" Cansler describes how Caesar, a runaway slave, trusted Ap. Ap, a free black from Eastern Tennessee, established close ties to both free black and slave communities. Ap did not see himself as being set apart from fugitive slaves. He had been a slave and Catherine Cansler bought him and set him free, and he was rumored to be Hugh's father. When Caesar arrived in Knoxville, he must have learned of Ap. Caesar's belief in Ap represented the relationship between fugitive slaves and some free middle- class blacks. Caesar fleeing slavery heard about Ap and found a way of meeting with him.

Caesar was a giant, coal black Negro of at least six feet and three inches, and weighing at least one hundred ninety pounds. No one in the neighborhood knew anything about him, for he was rarely seen. He had been first seen in this neighborhood a year or so before this time, though probably fewer than half a dozen persons had ever seen him. Ap had seen him more frequently than any other person except the miller, and neither of these knew anything of his history, or where he lived, or how he sustained himself. The few times that Ap and the miller had seen him, Caesar seemed to suddenly appear, almost as if from thin air, and almost as suddenly vanish, to where no one knew. Rumor had it that he had his home in a cave somewhere in the vicinity, and that he was probably a runaway slave.⁸⁹

Caesar was a powerful slave who did not fear death. He had learned the art of deception and secrecy, and how he made himself visible only to people he trusted. His decision to

reveal himself to Ap indicated that a number of the fugitive slaves considered some free blacks as trustworthy allies in the struggle against slavery. Caesar had also learned that free blacks and slaves respected Hugh Lawson Cansler. When Caesar requested a meeting with Hugh, Ap obliged and arranged the meeting.

Ap's and Hugh's association revealed some of the difficulty of black fathers' relationships with their interracial sons. Katherine Kantzler used her inheritance to buy Ap and set him free shortly after her father Conrad Kantzler died. She also helped him obtain the land he owned and farmed on the outskirts of Maryville. Nevertheless her son Hugh did not have much of an affiliation with Ap, but "rumor had it that Ap was Hugh Lawson Cansler's father, though if this were true, Hugh Lawson Cansler showed little recognition of it, for he always addressed Ap as he would address any acquaintance, and Ap never manifested any unusual interest in Lawson, as he always called him."⁹⁰ When Ap came to see Hugh, he wondered why Caesar wanted a meeting with him. Hugh had not been part of the world of fugitive slaves that Ap must have known well. Hugh had the reputation of being a political local race leader. He led by example. He had not gotten involved in political activism. Hugh had not yet embraced Scott's principles of middle-class black manhood.

Cansler gives the reader the impression that Caesar knew of Hugh, however. Early the one morning at six o'clock Ap took Hugh to the woods to meet Caesar, and he then took the two men to his cave.

I can tell you two what I want with you. I'm gwine to tell you the story of my life fust. I 've told it to not another living soul, and am telling you cause I don't believe you'll tell it, and if you do, woe be to you and your'n. I was bawn down

in Ole Mississippi near de Louisiana line. My massa sold my mother from me when I wuz three years old. Den olde Aunt Jinny kep' me wid about forty other little pickaninnies too little to do any wuk in de fields. When wuz little, dey call me Frank....When I was twenty I took a wife, and den in time my woman had a little boy. All went well until I come home one night and dey tell me dat the ovahseeah sell, or had my massa sell, my wife and little boy, and den hell broke loose in me.⁹¹

Caesar's story provided an illustration of black slave vulnerability. Caesar decided to rob his master and become a fugitive slave, however. When the master's and the overseer's attention focused on another slave's escape from the plantation, Caesar snuck into the master's house, found two hundred dollars he had heard was in a bag in the home and ran into the woods heading northward. In this story, Cansler introduced readers to another white man who not only hated slavery but also was willing to help a fugitive slave. The miller sold Caesar food and did not tell anyone about Caesar's cave. However, Caesar only told his life story to Ap and Hugh because he perceived them as natural race leaders. He wanted to use his story to convince them to join the revolution he was planning.

Caesar used his story to introduce himself to them and to request their support in a rebellion against slavery. He thought that his story would educate and inspire Hugh, in particular, to lead his race in war to overthrow white supremacy in the South.

But I've asked you two to come heah for suumpu'n else. I heah dat massa Linkum's army is near in Knoxville. 'De army ob de lawd campeth roun' about.' I have a plan where I needs you boys and all true men to follow me and help me. We can start right here in these Tennessee mountains a move dat will cause de

slaves everywhar to rise up and strike for dere freedom. With only fifteen or twenty men we can strike agin de McBee place over on de river, burn his big mansion, and kill all de white folk dat may get in the way, and git some of his slaves to go wid us. McBee's got several hundred slaves, and his sister's got more dan a thousand on a big plantation on de Mississippi near whar I come from. If we git hard pressed we can make our way to massa Linkum's army, which is not more dan a days hard travel. Will you boys go wid me in dis fight for our race's freedom?⁹²

Caesar's plan was a grassroots idea for violent liberation from the institution of slavery. His request for Ap's and Hugh's support evoked images of Denmark Vesey's 1822 plan to take over Charleston, South Carolina. Vesey, a free black from Charleston used his status as a well-respected free black Methodist church organizer to unify free blacks and slaves in a violent insurrection against slavery. Whereas Vesey's plan was more elaborate because it involved Gullah Jack Pritchard, an African priest from Mozambique, and Monday Gell, another one of his lieutenants, who wrote two letters to the president of Santo Domingo seeking support for the insurrection, Caesar's plan resembled Vesey's because he wanted Ap and Hugh to be his lieutenants.⁹³

Hugh wanted no part of Caesar's plan. He had read about Turner's rebellion and he thought that such rebellions only ended in the senseless deaths of fugitive slaves. Cansler described how Hugh's command of history demonstrated that he had a different view of slave rebellion than Caesar and Ap.

“Caesar, any such plan as you have mentioned will end in failure. Do you know that a slave named Nat Turner in 1831 attempted the very thing you have in

mind? Turner and his men were captured and hung. John Brown, a white man, attempted the same thing a few years ago, some of his followers were killed, and he was captured and hung. If your plan should succeed, and you and your men were to reach General Burnside's army at Knoxville, the General would simply turn you over to state authorities who would make short work of you. I can not follow such a wild plan."⁹⁴

Hugh's explanations revealed how his life contrasted with Caesar's. Hugh's primary concern was his family and the ability to protect and provide for them. He did not view the North as his savior. He knew slavery was wrong, but he did not believe it was his primary duty to lead a violent rebellion against it.

Hugh was, however, trying to reach Caesar and make him conscious of the fact that the plan would not work. Hugh's most important comment was that the Union soldiers were not necessarily co-conspirators in the war against slavery. Cansler wanted his readers to gain a heightened understanding of the limitations of the Union army in facilitating the abolition of slavery. Hugh knew that the Union was much more concerned with unifying the nation than freeing the slaves. The North and the Union army offered ambiguous responses to the institution of slavery. Caesar tried to convince the men otherwise, but after the meeting Caesar took the men to where they had met earlier and Hugh Lawson never saw Caesar again. Hugh's dialogue with Caesar about insurrection resembled Chesnut's representation of middle-class black masculinity in *The Marrow Tradition*.

Chesnut's depiction of Josh, an imposing working-class black man, and Dr. Miller, a resolute model of the educated black middle class, and their debate about how to

respond to white violence provides a powerful image of the emasculation of middle-class black manhood. Josh was willing to die for the cause of freedom. He decided to defend himself against white supremacy and violence, even if it meant death. His determination to fight back exhibited a belief in dying as a man rather than living as a coward. When Josh advocated taking arms and defending themselves against white violence, Dr. Miller responds,

My advice is not heroic, but I think it is wise. In this riot we are placed as we should be in a war: we have no territory, base of supplies, no organization, no outside sympathy, ---we stand in the position of a race, in a case like this, without money and without friends. Our time will come, ---the time when we can command respect for our rights; but it is not yet in sight. Give it up, boys, and wait. Good may come of this after all.⁹⁵

Dr. Miller's advice revealed just as much about his feelings of isolation and disillusionment as it did about the race's dire situation in the fictional town of Wellington. He wondered if he had the courage to sacrifice his life for a worthy cause even if it was hopeless. "Miller, while entirely convinced that he had acted wisely in declining to accompany them, was yet conscious of a distinct feeling of shame and envy that he, too, did not feel impelled to throw his life in a hopeless struggle."⁹⁶ Dr. Miller's statement revealed Chesnut's perception of the emasculation of middle class black manhood.

While Cansler arguably fails to align his father with the slave community in this instance, he was able to draw from another story to present his father as part of the family's legacy. Cansler relied on Hugh's volunteering to guide General Sherman's

Union forces to Knoxville to aid General Burnside's troops in their battle with General Longstreet's Confederate army. Hugh's choice allowed Cansler to represent his father as part of the Scott family's participation in country-wide local racial activist efforts.

Many successful free blacks' rejection of slaves and folk culture impeded the establishment of cohesiveness between middle-class and working-class blacks. Numerous free middle-class blacks suffered from internalized racism. They wanted to exhibit only postures of European cultural refinement. Thus, they did not acknowledge their use of trickster rituals as survival techniques, but Cansler's representation of Hugh's ability to maneuver between black and white worlds and the Confederacy and Union armies demonstrated that black trickster rituals were not separate from but an integral part of the free middle-class blacks' ways of life. They too used trickster rituals to survive and perform as race-conscious leaders in between various white and black communities.⁹⁷

Hugh's reliance on a prominent southern white family for his protection, and his new wife's safety, symbolized free blacks' realization of their complex power relationships with whites. Many blacks and whites may consider Hugh's decision to work for the Confederacy as a moral contradiction. Some might argue that his choice is a betrayal of his racial identity. Hugh did not believe that he had a choice. He felt that there was no opportunity to really express his free will. Free blacks managed to survive because they recognized the complexity of their relationship with whites. They knew that whites denied them recognition as human beings within society and raped and killed family members and friends, but they also had to understand that their associations with whites enabled them to productively work for white families to establish kinship associations. These surrogate familial kinships enabled free blacks to gain recognition of

their humanity from whites. They were keenly aware of how successfully performing these kinship relationships with whites could save their lives and members of their families' lives.⁹⁸

Moreover, Hugh's ability to work within and against southerners' perception of race relations while believing in and supporting the Union army's Reconstruction policies aided Laura Ann. Hugh's local race heroism allowed Laura Ann Scott Cansler access to General Ambrose Burnside. She capitalized on her husband's heroic efforts to convince General Burnside to support the establishment of a free black school in Knoxville in 1863.

Laura Ann Scott Cansler carried on her father's local racial activist legacy as the Union forces gained control of Knoxville and as later General Lee surrendered to General Grant. Cansler described how many historians of the Civil War pay tribute to northern whites who came to the South after the Civil War specifically to help the race, but he realized that his mother was part of a larger community of successful free black race leaders that have been either ignored or overlooked. Free blacks understood the power of organized activism against slavery and colonization. Many of them rejected principles of race relations that allowed them to live comfortably as second-class citizens in favor of collective racial activism. Substantial numbers of free blacks decided to take a stand against slaveholders and politicians who were advocates of colonization and slavery.⁹⁹ Nonetheless, many black and white scholars and common citizens are unaware that a large number of free blacks recognized that the fight against slavery and colonization was a fight for themselves and for their brothers and sisters in bondage.

In his chapter “Freedmen Tell Stories of Slavery,” Cansler related that “...there was a class of leaders too often forgotten or disregarded, of colored men and women who had been more fortunate than other members of their race in having the opportunity to acquire some education which fitted them for the leadership of the race.”¹⁰⁰ He realized that a focus on their efforts enabled a new generation to understand the role free black families played in black uplift. His definition of leadership is not national race leadership. It is a different form of leadership that I have defined as stewardship. He wrote that “The intellectual and spiritual needs of the freed race were attempted to be met in the organization and building of black churches, in the establishment of day schools, night schools and Sunday Schools.”¹⁰¹ He used *Three Generations* to document how this forgotten group of leaders devoted themselves to the creation of a social and educational black infrastructure.

Cansler’s mother Laura Ann Scott Cansler committed her life to addressing the intellectual and spiritual needs of the race during and after the Civil War. She established the first school for free blacks in 1863. Her teaching during the day ended because she had to take care of her two children.

But she could teach in the Night School when her husband could be home at night to look after the children, for he was better fitted for that job than for teaching school. And she could teach Sunday school, for her husband was willing to take over the children for that purpose on Sunday mornings. And as the children grew older, Willie, the older, became old enough to see after Sammie, the youngest child. She took over such additional duties as organizing and sponsoring the

Young People's Temperance Society, and the formation of a debating club to train the young men and women in the art of public speaking.¹⁰²

Cansler's biographical depiction of his parent's marriage resembled that of black women's post-Reconstruction novels. Frances Harper's *Iola Leroy* (1892), Amelia E. Johnson's *The Hazel Family* (1894) and Pauline Hopkins' *Contending Forces* (1900) constructed models of black womanhood as the domestic nurturer, spiritual counselor, moral advocate, social activist and academic teacher, and as the confident, charming and resourceful superintendent of attractive black homes.¹⁰³ *Three Generations* extended this model to include middle-class-minded black manhood. Cansler considered his father's support of his mother's career aspirations as the family's way of promoting values of achieving self definition, race pride, family-formation and communal uplift. Hugh's participation in rearing the children enabled Laura Ann Scott Cansler to emerge as a social force in Knoxville and fulfill her father's wishes.

Of all of Laura Ann's accomplishments for the black community, she was most proud of the night school.

"These older people are so willing and eager to learn," she used to say. "Though some of them are seventy years of age and more, they crowd in early each night and want to remain even after the hour for closing school. The great ambition of most of them is to learn the Bible. With some of them it is to learn to write so that they can communicate with distant friends. How clumsily they held their pencils to begin with! They took hold of them very much after the way they take hold of a hoe or a shovel. It often takes nearly a month of hard work to get them to hold their pencils properly. But when they finally succeed they are certainly proud.

‘Aunt Chloe Robinson,’ after four months of hard work finally succeeded in scribbling her name, and she could not have been happier by an invitation to a Presidential Address.’¹⁰⁴

Her pride in the creation of the Night School showed that she wanted to do the day-to-day work of helping the black community gain social skills and spiritual fulfillment through education. Her observations of her students’ progress represented the discipline needed to assist the race in acquiring fundamental skills for racial uplift during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Cansler’s mother’s career as a local racial activist was a precursor of a much larger movement for universal black public school education in the South.

The Scotts’ and the Canslers’ roles as local racial activists for the development of black schools resembled black politicians’ efforts to lobby the Republican party to legalize public education for blacks in former Confederate states.¹⁰⁵ Laura Ann Scott Cansler was one of the pioneers in the effort to coordinate grassroots movements to build, fund, and staff schools. Her work coincided with the hard work of other local racial activists. Their commitment provided educational opportunities for blacks before southern states had committed to providing public educational opportunities for blacks, which began in the 1870’s. Still, many major cities did not have adequate educational facilities until the late 1900’s.¹⁰⁶

One of Laura Ann’s pupil’s life stories offered an alternative interpretation of the white-skinned black man’s life in bondage. When she asked her students to talk and tell her about themselves, Jube Bogle replied,

“I was bawn down un Gawgia, though I was somethin’ down thar. My mammy had five chillun and I was next to be younges.’ I nevah did know who my daddy was, but my mammy was dark color and of all de chillum I was de white one— so you can figure it out for yourselfs how I happen to come into the world. I figgered it out for myself when I heard my mammy cryin the night before I was sold from home when she told de white overseeah dat of all her chillum I wuz de last one he ought to want to see sold away. But de ovahseeach jes’ grinned as though he was tiahed of lookin’ at me and tickled to death to git rid of me. You see it was dis way—my ole massa married a young woman from up heah in Tennessee. Massa wuz rich but his wife’s people wuz po’h. When my missis’ sistah comes down in Gawgia to visit she has slaves to wait on her which she don’t have at home. Missus tell her sistah when she git ready to come home dat she give her one of de young slaves to work around her heah. Missus’ sistah say she ruther have a boy to work de gyar’den and keep up de yahd and be handy about de house. After talkin’ wid de overseeah ‘day decide on me to come. I wuz fifteen years old den and mammy liked to cry her eyes out, but dey brought me heah and heah I is today.”¹⁰⁷

Bogle’s life story presented a contrast to the mulatto race leader tradition found in canonical slave narratives and autobiographies. Unlike Frederick Douglass,’ Booker T. Washington’s and James Weldon Johnson’s first- person novel, Bogel’s white-skinned privileges did not provide him with access to cultural refinement. Although his forced move from Georgia provided him with more opportunities in Knoxville, he did not have access to literacy and the resources needed to provide for and protect a family. His

mistress hired him out to learn the trade of blacksmith and allowed him to keep the money to buy his girlfriend Gordie's freedom. Her master said that he would sell her to Gordie for five hundred dollars but their story ended in heartbreak because Gordie's master sold her down South before Bogle had the money. Bogle's story complicated the notion that whiteness immediately provided one with a better life. It may have given him a more comfortable life in bondage, but it did not provide him with nearly the same opportunities that Douglass enjoyed. I contend that Bogle's life was more representative of the white-skinned slaves' experiences with their masters. His story demonstrated that access to white mentors and free black status were necessary ingredients for achieving social and economic self-reliance and nuclear family formation. Cansler realized that his mother was in a position to assist Bogle because of the family's access to cultural currency and their social status.

Nevertheless, Laura Ann was most proud of her children's decision to carry on the family's local racial activist practices. She and her husband Hugh raised nine children, but she still found time to develop schools, and debate teams for the youth and to play an active role in the Women's Christian Temperance Union. In 1952, the city of Knoxville honored their first black teacher by naming the Cansler Elementary School in her honor.

The success of the Canslers' children illustrated the promise of the family's representation of the local race leader tradition. Five of her children William (1863-1937), Nannie (1868-1915), Charles (1871-1953), Rex (1874-1963), and Fritz (1885-1942) became teachers and local race activists in Tennessee and Pennsylvania. Along with William Cansler and Charles Warner Cansler, Fritz began his higher education

career at Knoxville College, but he later attended the University of Pennsylvania and Denver University. He started his career as a clerk in the Census Office in Washington D.C, but he returned home and taught at Austin High School in Knoxville for 10 years before he became an official for the YMCA where he served in branches in Philadelphia and Harrisburg in Pennsylvania. Their lives offer important biographical statements about the need for stewards in black communities because many of the institutions that they worked for created opportunities for blacks to survive and prosper within their neighborhoods and within the larger society.¹⁰⁸

Notes

¹ Ira Berlin. *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*. (New York: The New Press, 1974) 250. Ira Berlin's text provided me with valuable information about the diverse social reality of free blacks prior to the Civil War. I used his book to present the social and historical reality that the Scotts and the Canslers encountered in their quest for better educational and social development prospects for themselves and their families and their efforts to coordinate the creation of an educational infrastructure for blacks in Knoxville.

² Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*, 250, 251.

³ Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*, 250, 251.

⁴ Debra Gray White. "Let My People Go." *To Make My World Anew: A History of African Americans*. Ed. Robin D.G. Kelley and Earl Lewis. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 202, 203.

⁵ Ira Berlin. *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*. (New York: The New Press, 1974) 250.

⁶ Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*, 250.

⁷ Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*, 250, 251.

⁸ Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*, 250, 251.

⁹ Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*, 250, 251.

¹⁰ Todd Vogel. *Rewriting White: Race, Class, and Cultural Capital in Nineteenth-Century America*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004) 20, 21. Todd Vogel's text was useful in presenting the meaning behind racial uplift strategies. Vogel's use of the term cultural currency to describe educated blacks' activism against white supremacy provided me with the language to articulate the various skills that local and national race leaders had to master to gain recognition as influential figures within black communities and the larger society.

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- ¹¹ Vogel, *Rewriting the White: Race, Class and Cultural Capital in Nineteenth-Century America*, 20, 21.
- ¹² Vogel, *Rewriting White: Race, Class, and Cultural Capital in Nineteenth Century America*, 20, 21.
- ¹³ Vogel, *Rewriting White: Race, Class, and Cultural Capital in Nineteenth Century America*, 20, 21.
- ¹⁴ Vogel, *Rewriting White: Race, Class, and Cultural Capital in Nineteenth Century America*, 20, 21.
- ¹⁵ Bruce, D Dickson, Jr. *The Origins of African American Literature: 1680-1865*. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001) 175-177.
- ¹⁶ Bruce, *The Origins of African American Literature: 1680-1865*, 175-177.
- ¹⁷ Bruce, *The Origins of African American Literature: 1680-1865*, 175-177.
- ¹⁸ Bruce, *The Origins of African American Literature: 1680-1865*, 180-186.
- ¹⁹ Philip A. Klinker and Rogers M. Smith *The Unsteady March: The Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) 27-30.
- ²⁰ Dickson D. Bruce, Jr. *The Origins of African American Literature: 1680-1865*. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001) 179-182. Bruce's work enabled me to situate Cansler's *The Generations* within the larger African American Literary tradition of using black newspapers, slave narratives and autobiographies to educate blacks and represent the race's case to the larger society.
- ²¹ Bruce, *The Origins of African American Literature: 1680-1865*, 179-182.
- ²² Bruce, *The Origins of African American Literature: 1680-1865*, 182.
- ²³ Bruce, *The Origins of African American Literature: 1680-1865*, 268.
- ²⁴ Bruce, *The Origins of African American Literature: 1680-1865*, 268.
- ²⁵ Deborah Gray White. "Let My People Go (1804-1860)" *To Make My World Anew: A History of African Americans*. Ed. Robin D.G. Kelley and Earl Lewis. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 218, 219.
- ²⁶ White, "Let My People Go," 218, 219.
- ²⁷ White, "Let My People Go (1804-1860)," 218, 219.
- ²⁸ White, "Let My People Go (1804-1860)," 218, 219.
- ²⁹ Henry Louis Gates Jr. Ed. *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: Written By Himself*. By Frederick Douglass. Library of American Edition. (New York: Library Classics of America, 1994) 1060.
- ³⁰ Gates, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: Written By Himself*, 1060, 1061.
- ³¹ Gates, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: Written By Himself*, 1060, 1061.
- ³² Deborah Gray White. "Let My People Go (1804-1860)" *To Make My World Anew: A History of African Americans*. Ed. Robin D.G. Kelley and Earl Lewis. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 215-217.
- ³³ White, "Let My People Go (1804-1860)," 215-217.

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- ³⁴ White, "Let My People Go (1804-1860)," 218.
- ³⁵ Farah Jasmine Griffin. "Who Set You Flowin'?" *The African American Migration Narrative*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 3.
- ³⁶ Frances Smith Foster. "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper." *African American Writers: Profiles of Their Lives and Works From the 1700's to the Present*. Ed. Valerie Smith, Lea Baechler, and A. Waltonlitz. (New York: Collier Books, 1991) 133. Frances Smith Foster's biographical sketches enabled me to situate the Scotts and the Canslers local racial activist beliefs of collective racial development as the anecdote to white supremacy within black women writers' emphasis on the role black families can play in producing models of how to overcome white supremacist views and America's debilitating practices of racial exclusion.
- ³⁷ Foster, "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper," 133.
- ³⁸ Foster, "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper," 133.
- ³⁹ Foster, "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper," 133.
- ⁴⁰ Foster, "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper," 133.
- ⁴¹ Charles Warner Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Kingsport Press, 1939) 11.
- ⁴² Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 11.
- ⁴³ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 11, 12.
- ⁴⁴ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 12.
- ⁴⁵ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 16.
- ⁴⁶ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 16, 17.
- ⁴⁷ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 16, 17
- ⁴⁸ Michelle Mitchell. *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction*. (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) 108.
- ⁴⁹ Charles Warner Cansler. *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Kingsport Press, 1939) 19.
- ⁵⁰ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 19.
- ⁵¹ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 19, 20.
- ⁵² Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 19, 20.
- ⁵³ Cansler, *Three Generations: The Story of a Colored Family of Eastern Tennessee*, 20, 21.
- ⁵⁴ Deborah Gray White. "Let My People Go (1804-1860)." *To Make My World Anew: A History of African Americans*. Ed. Robin D.G. Kelley and Earl Lewis. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 219.
- ⁵⁵ White, "Let My People Go (1804-1860), 217.

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- ⁵⁶ White, "Let My People Go (1804-1860), 215.
- ⁵⁷ Ulrich B. Phillips. *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor As Determined by the Plantation Regime*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966) 267-270.
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Chapter 5

The Emergence of J. Herman Daves: A Local Race Leader's analysis of the Scotts' and the Canslers' Local Race leader Legacy

Part 1

Remaking the Race in Knoxville: Herman Daves' Quest for Recognition within the Scotts and the Cansler Family's Racial Uplift Traditions

When I was growing up in the late seventies and early eighties, I knew about my great-grandfather Charles Warner Cansler, but I did not know that my grandfather J. Herman Daves was also a prominent local racial-activist in Knoxville. I first learned about J. Herman Daves while looking at old pictures when my parents told me about the influential blacks in photographs with my grandfather. They pointed out that my grandfather stood next to figures like the famous black doctor Charles Drew. I examined the pictures and wondered how he became part of a network of national and local public figures that took on leadership roles for racial uplift and integration prior to the civil rights movement. My father explained that granddad earned recognition as a local black leader because he played an instrumental role in the integration of the Tennessee Valley Authority, an institution that provided water and electricity to homes and businesses in Knoxville and later to a wide geographical area in the late 1930's and the early 1940's. I learned that granddad's journey to become a local racial activist in Knoxville was drastically different than that of the Scotts and the Canslers. Unlike them, he was not part of W.E.B. Du Bois' "Talented Tenth." His economic and social ascent was not the product of familial and communal local racial-activist traditions passed down from one generation to the next.

Granddad grew up in the small town of Rocky Mount, North Carolina, the son of Julia Daves, a black seamstress, and Charles Hammond, a white heir to the Hammond family's grocery store. I learned that Hammond fell in love with Julia after she became the Hammond family's seamstress. On trips to my aunt's and uncle's home, I saw old-looking pictures of an attractive and voluptuous black woman with sad dark eyes and a hefty white man with a congenial disposition. I learned from my father that these were granddad's parents, but that granddad refused to talk about their relationship because he was ashamed of his illegitimate bi-racial heritage.

I asked my father about what he knew of granddad's childhood. He replied, "Dad never spoke about his heritage or his childhood. My sister told me a story about asking him about his father, and he looked intently at her and abruptly walked away. I did learn from relatives that Dad, his sisters, and his brothers lived in a home provided by the Hammond family, and Dad reluctantly worked for Hammond in the Hammond family's grocery store. Obviously Dad had no control over his bi racial heritage so there was nothing to be ashamed of, but in those days you did not talk about interracial relationships. Charles Hammond and Julia Daves could not marry because North Carolina forbade the marriage of blacks and whites. Dad's interaction with the Hammond family only occurred at the store. Dad did not have any interaction with the Hammonds. Dad turned to his relationship with his mother for solace. He often took us to visit Julia Daves, and our aunts, uncles and cousins in Rocky Mount North Carolina."

I asked him how granddad got to Knoxville. My father recalled,

“Dad had a black mentor Dr. John Cotton. He was a minister for the Presbyterian Church in Henderson, North Carolina only a few miles from Rocky Mount. Because Rocky Mount did not provide black youth with a school system, he enrolled Dad in Henderson Academy, a black preparatory school sponsored and run by the church. Dr. Cotton also steered Dad toward Knoxville College and helped him get jobs at steel mills in Pennsylvania during the summers to pay for Knoxville College.”

I inquired why granddad had to work in steel mills to pay for the College. Dad responded,

“Charles Hammond did set aside money for his children’s education because Julia was his common-law wife, and he believed that her children were his family. He never married a white woman. When he died, his sisters took the money intended for Julia and their children. The Hammond sisters were able to break the will and take the money allocated for college tuitions largely because Hammond could not legally marry Julia.”

After hearing about Charles Hammond’s love and loyalty, I thought his benevolent intentions were unusual and rare, but as early as the antebellum era novelist wrote of these interracial relationships.

For instance, Frank J. Webb’s novel *The Garies and Their Friends* (1857) portrays a relationship similar to that of Julia Daves and Charles Hammond. Webb’s novel raises the question: what if a plantation owner and a quadroon woman were an interracial couple in love? Mr. Clarence Garie and his common-law wife Emily are struggling to preserve their love and lives together within a society committed to white

supremacy and rigid racial segregation.¹ They contemplate moving to Europe, but ultimately decide to go to Philadelphia. They met their demise at the hands of a white mob during a race riot in Philadelphia. Julia Daves and Charles Hammond also considered moving to Philadelphia where there was a small but thriving middle class black community, but they ultimately choose to remain in Rocky Mount where they learned to endure white supremacy and the inability to legally and to publicly live as husband and wife. They also had more to deal with than the fictional Clarence Garie and his common-law wife Emily and other interracial families during that time because Julia Daves was dark skinned and possessed prominent African features.

Still, Julia Daves and Charles Hammond suffered more from the Hammond family than from public outrage about their interracial relationship. White families opposed interracial marriages largely because of the belief that interracial relationships threatened their racial and social class status.² While the Hammond family allowed the children to see their father just before he died, the Hammond family refused to let Julia see her common-law husband. Despite the Hammond's effort to destroy the Daves family, my father recalled granddad's determination to succeed.

“Dad was the only one of the six children to earn a bachelors degree, which he did from Knoxville College, a Master's degree in Sociology from the University of Buffalo and do doctoral work at the University of Wisconsin.”

I observed that granddad's successful adoption of Booker T. Washington's pull-yourself-by-your-own-bootstraps ideology enabled him to realize most of his educational, career, and economic aspirations, which made me wonder if he adopted the racial activist philosophy of the Scotts and the Canslers for acceptance and recognition within the

family, or did he always have the ambition of becoming a local racial activist? I asked my father what he knew about granddad's dreams before becoming a member of the Cansler family. He said,

“I think Dad always dreamed of being a role model for his family and for blacks in the neighborhood, but he clearly had an additional incentive; he wanted acceptance from the Canslers, particularly from the patriarch of the family Charles Warner Cansler. When he fell in love with your grandmother (Willard Wilson Cansler, the only daughter and child of Charles Warner and Lillian Web Cansler), he must have known that becoming a well-respected local racial activist was the best means of earning acceptance within the Cansler family.”

I asked my father what he knew about granddad's career as a sociologist and as a local racial activist. He said,

“I knew that Dad was the head of the Sociology Department at Knoxville College from 1931 to 1939, and I knew that Dad began his career with the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1939, but I learned more from the obituaries about his accomplishments than I did from him.”

My father gave me granddad's obituaries. In The Knoxville News-Sentinel, Tuesday, March 21, 1978, I discovered that, “in 1958 he received an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from Knoxville College for his remarkable contributions to the betterment of society through his work with the TVA and in the community. He served on two boards: the board of Child and Family Services and the Cansler YMCA. He was also the President of the Knoxville College Alumni Association and a member of the Board of Trustees of the College.”³

My granddad's life and career builds on what W.E.B. Du Bois famously wrote in 1903 that he came to the realization African Americans conducted their lives in America behind a veil.

Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in the heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows.⁴

Whereas Du Bois was referring to the realization of racial difference imposed on him by white society, my granddad was not only isolated from white society, but he was also separated from the Scotts and the Cansler's free-black pedigree and local race-leader legacy. Granddad was a mulatto, but one who did not enjoy the privileges that the Scotts and the Cansler acquired as early as the 1840's. Unlike the Scotts' and the Cansler's ability to build on their predecessor's successes to emerge as prominent local figures in black and white communities, Granddad had to rely on his determination for access into elite white social circles and educational institutions, and he had to use his networking skills and educational accomplishments to earn respect as a role model within Knoxville's middle- and working-class black communities. His performance of racial and social-class dualism allowed him to coordinate efforts for racial, economic and educational development both at Knoxville College and at the TVA with liberal-minded blacks and whites.

I wondered how Granddad presented himself after he became a force for social change. I specifically wanted to know if J. Herman Daves fashioned himself after W.E.B.

Du Bois because he was clearly the most recognizable activist minded black sociologist in the country. My father responded.

“No. I don’t think so. Du Bois was considered by many in the black community as an intellectual giant and model of the black elite. Dad was not an intellectual in that sense. I knew that Dad knew Charles S. Johnson, President of Fisk University, Benjamin E. Mays, President of Morehouse College, Albert L. Turner, Dean of North Carolina College’s Law School, because he spoke admirably of these men and contacted them when I was pursuing teaching opportunities at these prominent historically black colleges and universities early in my career, but he did not offer many political and racial-uplift opinions privately with the family.”

Thus my father was surprised when I discovered that granddad had written a sociological study of Knoxville based on Du Bois’ research on black communities.

I learned from my father’s stories and my own research that J. Herman Daves was a man struggling with his interracial legacy. I discovered that he became a humble local race leader and racial ambassador as a means of coping with and overcoming his bi-racial heritage. His accomplishments allowed him to create distance from his past. Still, his achievements as a local race leader and an ambassador were more for his family and the community than they were for his own purposes, because he believed his work must not be about him as much as it should be about his family and the community. He wanted to liberate himself from his past and gain acceptance from the Cansler family. He defined his work as a local race leader as way of healing himself and aiding the black community, but most importantly as a means of helping his family. Daves used his association with

the network of black academics and local racial activists as the means of supporting his children and providing a better life for them. He drew on his associations with the black academic community to introduce his younger son to the woman he eventually married. He arranged for my father to meet my mother Allayne Turner (1926-1992) by casually dropping by the Turner house in Durham, North Carolina on a trip to Rocky Mount.

My mother was the daughter of Albert L. Turner, Dean of the Law School at North Carolina College, and Dessa Turner, a formally trained pharmacist who owned her own pharmacy in Durham. In those days, blacks could not stay at hotels so when J. Herman Daves earned recognition within this exclusive community of black intellectuals and local race leaders, he stayed with the Turners and others when he traveled to Rocky Mount to visit his mother. He conscientiously saved enough money from his career as a sociologist and executive for TVA to assist his children in buying homes and sending their children to colleges and to universities.

Part 2

Performances of Racial Uplift: J. Herman Daves' Contributions to Representations of Local and National Race Leadership Traditions

J. Herman Daves' sociological objectives for his (1926) book *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee* resembled Du Bois' famous (1897) work *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*. Daves' and Du Bois' primary methodological tools were house- to- house interviews. Daves conducted his sociological study of the Negro population in the months of June, July, and August of 1925. He focused on East Knoxville and West Knoxville known as Western Heights because the majority of Negroes lived in these areas. Daves wanted to obtain a snapshot of the Knoxville Negro's

life. He coordinated the work of fourteen interviewers and his own interviews to develop a sociological study of 13, 232 Knoxville Negroes. He studied Housing Conditions, General Living Conditions, Room Crowding, The Lodger Problem, Lodgers, and Rent, Negro Industry, Classifications of Workers, Employers' Experiences with Negro Workers, Negro Women in Industry, Domestic Workers, The Family Budget, and, above all, educational opportunities.⁵ Similarly, from August 1, 1896 to December 31, 1897, Du Bois conducted a house- to-house sociological study of the Seventh Ward of Philadelphia, which extended from South Seventh Street to the Schuylkill River, and from Spruce Street to South Street, which was the center of the Negro population.

There were obvious differences between Daves' and Du Bois' studies, however. Whereas Daves only had resources available to him from the Free Colored Library in Knoxville, Du Bois had access to an abundance of resources from his association with the University of Pennsylvania. Thus Du Bois' study of the condition of forty thousand or more blacks residing in Philadelphia was much more extensive than Daves. There were also slight differences in emphasis. While Du Bois made large claims about the Negroes' struggles with white supremacy in American society, Daves' research on Knoxville only made subtle interpretations of how the Knoxville Negro was representative of the larger challenges that the race faced in American society.⁶

Nevertheless, there were more similarities than differences. Daves and Du Bois wanted to acquire information about the distribution of members of the race, their occupations and daily life, their homes and their organizations. Daves focused on the Knoxville Negro's educational opportunities and inter-racial associations, and Du Bois emphasized the need for black educational infrastructures and interracial associations for

racial uplift and for integration.⁷ Not only does Daves' work resemble Du Bois' work, but Daves' research also responded to Du Bois' vision of the role sociology can play in promoting racial uplift and integration.

Daves' study addressed what Du Bois argued at the turn of the century was needed to critically examine the Negro problem. On May 29, 1900 Du Bois developed an outline for what was required to seriously examine the Negro problem from a sociological point of view. His article for *The Southern Workman* emphasized the demand for objective-minded scientific studies of occupations and wages, land, property, and taxation and education.⁸ Du Bois believed that these were the primary subjects that provided accurate measures of how much the Negro has achieved in the war against American racism and systemic oppression. Daves must have had knowledge of Du Bois' work because he produced an objective minded scientific study that focused on similar topics.

Daves' study emphasized housing conditions, employment opportunities for black men and women, educational institutions, hospital facilities and community organizations for racial uplift. He wanted to ascertain the intimate problems facing Negroes in Knoxville—their daily social difficulties, the reflection in their home life of their struggle for existence, how they lived and participated in the Negro community and with influential whites in the surrounding area.⁹ 3,151 Negro families were visited.¹⁰ He discerned from his interviewers' research and his own work that the majority of Negroes in Knoxville were poor.

Daves began his study evaluating the Knoxville Negro's home life. He measured their poverty from his assessment of what the average white citizen considered

fundamental necessities such as bathrooms and electric lighting. These material things were considered luxuries in Negro homes that most could not afford. Most Negro homes in Knoxville were still heated with fire wood, coal stoves and kerosene lamps, and two or three families often shared a poorly constructed three-room home.¹¹ Daves discerned that this was a common occurrence for poverty-stricken black families. On Campbell Street he found a family of eleven living in three rooms.¹² Ages of the family's children ran from one to seventeen, and on Elmas Street a family of twelve lived in four rooms without water, sewage disposal, or electricity. Daves recognized that the black elite in Knoxville enjoyed entirely different home conditions, however. These prominent black families had electric lighting, furnaces, hot water and gas for cooking.¹³ They redecorated their homes once a year, took proper care of garbage, and kept their lawns cut and planted flowers. Their lives resembled those of white-middle class whites' home life in Knoxville.¹⁴

Daves emphasized the lives of the poverty stricken and working classes in the arrangement and interpretation of data, however. Daves stated that there were 15 skilled laborers, 96 semi-skilled laborers and 1, 253 unskilled laborers.¹⁵ He followed these statistics with an interpretation of how the laws and culture of Jim Crow prevented blacks from becoming skilled laborers.¹⁶ Blacks could not join unions and many whites refused to hire skilled black laborers.¹⁷ He argued that this practice enabled industries to keep blacks in the least-profitable paid positions in white-owned-and-run industries. Thus he surmised that this is the reason why most black men in industries in Knoxville remained as common laborers. One could easily argue from Daves' study that common black laborers inability to ascend to higher positions and status resulted in drinking, domestic

difficulties, and their failure to get medical aid when they were sick. Moreover, as Daves pointed out, the Knoxville Negro in general suffered from the lack of adequate hospital facilities. Men drinking on Saturday night and failing to come to work on Monday mornings was a common practice according to one of the firms interviewed for Daves' study.¹⁸ Daves argued that while black men were often common laborers for a variety of industries, black women largely worked in domestic service. He used employment research from the Phyllis Wheatley Branch, Young Women's Christian Association.¹⁹ He observed that the wages were very low for the hours and amount of work expected.²⁰ In most instances Daves discovered that most domestic workers earned 7 or 8 dollars a week for twelve hours of work a day, which he concluded was not enough to support themselves respectably.²¹

The working conditions for a majority of black men and women raised the questions of how Daves presented the differences between poverty-stricken, working class and middle-class black families according to income: which families would be considered living in poverty, which families had achieved working-class status and which families managed to reach middle-class status. He interpreted families living in poverty were earning \$850.00 to \$950.00 a year, working class families grossed \$1,100.00 to \$1,400.00 a year and middle class families made \$1,500.00 to \$1,700.00 a year at that time.²² The middle class were largely Negro professionals, teachers, school administrators, professors, and administrators at Knoxville College, business owners, lawyers and doctors.²³

These middle-class black local race leaders and ambassadors facilitated the establishment of an educational and social infrastructure in Knoxville. Daves argued that

the existence of nine schools for Negro education and Knoxville College was above that of many of the Southern communities; however, all of the nine schools were overcrowded. For instance the Colored High School's capacity was 560, but there was an enrollment of 1060 and only 24 teachers; the Maynard School's capacity was 360, but had an enrollment of 803 and only 14 teachers. The Heiskell School's capacity was 320, but an enrollment of 584 and only 10 teachers. The Sam E. Hill School's capacity was 200, but an enrollment of 210 and only 5 teachers. The Eastport School's capacity was 158, but an enrollment of 187 and only 3 teachers. The New Hope School's capacity was 35 but an enrollment of 63 and only 1 teacher. The enrollment in grades 1- 11 in 1924-1925 was: first, 518; second, 400; third, 359; fourth, 366; fifth, 303; sixth, 208; seventh, 164; eighth, 169; ninth, 119; tenth, 74; eleventh, 45.²⁴

Still, although all of the schools dealt with overcrowding and a shortage of teachers, they had relatively low dropout rates: first, 46; second, 30; third, 29; fourth, 41; fifth, 31; sixth, 27; seventh, 19; ninth, 6; tenth, 4; eleventh, 1. Daves interviewed principals to discover the causes for the dropouts. The principals felt that the reason in Grades 1 to 3, was poverty of the family, lack of suitable clothing, etc. The principals perceived students that dropped out in Grades 4, 5, 6, and 7, (a) had desires to become wage earners, (b) indifference of the parents as well as children. The principals believed that the students that dropped out in high school (a) could not keep up with their studies, (b) needed to provide a living for themselves and for their families, (c) lacked encouragement from their parents. Despite the external and internal issues that led students to drop out, the middle class black community employed interracial coalitions to establish a respectable educational standard of achievement.²⁵

Daves realized that the educational system needed improvements, however. He believed (1) more rooms were needed to alleviate congestion; (2) a high school building devoted exclusively to high school work; (3) establishment of Kindergartens; (4) same-scale salaries as for whites; (5) same standard curricula in colored as in white schools; (6) professionally trained teachers; (7) special teachers for music, writing, and drawing; (8) an athletic director for colored public schools; (9) a commercial course and (10) modern languages.²⁶ Daves' lists of improvements for the Negro school system reveal his desire for the Negro youth to gain skill sets necessary for black middle-class respectability and integration. He understood that as a rule black teachers did not have access to the educational preparation that white teachers received. He perceived that segregation was the primary cause of the racial disparity in teacher training. White teachers come from schools that have a much- higher educational rating in the world than black teachers. Moreover, Daves observed that white teachers had opportunities to do research and take courses at nationally recognized universities during the summer. Nevertheless, Knoxville's black community was able to form a more- than-adequate educational and social infrastructure for racial uplift. They also developed a Free Colored Library, Phyllis Wheatley Branch of the Young Women's Christian Association, Knoxville College, Well Baby Stations, a Free Clinic, YMCA, an Orphan Home and two movie theatres.²⁷

The existence of community organizations designed for racial uplift coincided with Daves' belief that educational infrastructure must provide Negro youth with the skills necessary to realize middle-class respectability and integration. The Student Interracial Commission was composed of representatives from Maryville College, historically black Knoxville College, and the University of Tennessee, five members from each.²⁸

Daves discovered that the primary purpose of the commission was to produce an intelligent study of the race problem with the ultimate goal of contributing something to its correct solutions.²⁹ Daves learned that the commission served as a model for realizing mutual understanding between the races. The Young Men's Civic Club offered another forum for black men to discuss the problems that Knoxville's black community faced. It was started in 1925 as a means of studying the local problems which affect the colored people of Knoxville. It was composed of twenty local racial activists.³⁰ They were committed to generating greater interest in the civic, economic and social problems of Negroes in the city. They hoped that their efforts would facilitate sane, intelligent and constructive solutions.

Whereas Knoxville's black community embraced local-minded racial uplift and integration ideologies, they appeared reluctant or indifferent to national organizations even though local race leaders like Cansler and Daves had access to national race leaders such as Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson with whom they worked with and alongside. Daves noted, nonetheless, that the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was inactive in 1926.³¹ In general, responsibilities that were largely seen as the functions of national organizations' race leaders were handled by local associations. For instance, the Inter-racial Commission became the communal group that was largely responsible for addressing the needs of Knoxville's black community. They developed interracial alliances that responded to health, to housing, to sanitation and to economic issues; the Ministerial Alliance formed a union among the churches to facilitate race conscious Christian spirituality within Knoxville's black community; and the Medical Association

was designed to advance medical knowledge and professional skills for Knoxville's black community.

Daves provided black and white readers his research about how blacks in Knoxville offered more educational opportunities that facilitated possibilities for social class mobility and integration than blacks in much larger cities. Often blacks from other southern states learned about the educational opportunities and migrated to Knoxville where their children earned high school and college degrees, and in many cases the children left for more higher education opportunities in the North.

For instance, I learned from *Glimpses of Knoxville's Black History* (a calendar published by the Beck Cultural Exchange Center in Knoxville in 1982) that Ambrose Caliver (1894-1962) was born in Saltville, Virginia on February 25, 1894, but his parents migrated further south to Knoxville where Caliver completed his elementary and high school education in 1911. He went onto receive a B.A. Degree from Knoxville College in 1915, and in 1920 he earned a Masters degree from the University of Wisconsin and later became the Dean of Fisk University. He left his position there to earn his doctorate from Columbia University in 1929. Following his graduation, Dr. Caliver was appointed as a Specialist in Negro Education with the United States Bureau of Education. He coordinated a survey of the Higher Education of Blacks from 1930-1941, and in 1950 he was appointed to the position of Assistant to the Commissioner of Education.³² There were other influential figures whose parents migrated to Knoxville when they decided to raise a family.

I learned from my father that Victor Giovanni was one of J. Herman Daves' students at Knoxville College. Victor Giovanni from Cincinnati was the father of Nikki

Giovanni, the internationally acclaimed poet who was born in Knoxville on June 7, 1943. She attended Austin High School, earned a BA from Fisk University and an MA in Social Work from the University of Pennsylvania. Caliver and Giovanni were only a few people who benefited from the educational infrastructure for blacks in Knoxville. Daves' work provided sociological information about how the educational infrastructure and community's associations improved the lives of blacks and produced influential black citizens.

The development of an infrastructure designed for racial uplift and integration in Knoxville contrasted with what many blacks encountered in their southern hometowns and when they migrated to urban areas in northern cities. Black migrant workers encountered middle-class black paternalism on the one hand and indifference on the other. They also had to deal with white anxiety and violence about the rise in the black migrant populations.

In the South in 1910 at one of the educational centers for Negroes there was no real black educational infrastructure except for the University. In his study of *The College Bred Community*, Du Bois observed,

It was the last year of my first sojourn in Atlanta University where I taught for thirteen years. Academically our success in these days was marked. Our graduates were among the best teachers of Negroes in the South: principals of schools and professors in colleges. Tuskegee without their assistance could not have kept its doors open. They were beginning to enter the professions. Their careers and those of their fellows as shown by our initial study of college-bred Negro was remarkable and encouraging. We had at Atlanta University the first systematic

study of the American Negro made anywhere in the world; and yet Atlanta University was starving to death. Its support, its funds were dwindling. It had to continually retrench. It was threatened with debt. Dr. Bumstead, the calm, hardworking apostle of the Negro college of the day, was giving his whole life to collecting funds and once in a while I left teaching to go to the North to help him. On a certain occasion I spoke to white, rich, and well-born in Brookline Massachusetts residents, and tried to impress upon them not simply the use, but the indispensable need of the college-bred man in the South.³³

Du Bois witnessed Atlanta University's valuable role in rearing young black men for leadership positions in major professions, but he also lamented Atlanta University's financial crisis. He became both a scholar and a racial ambassador for the school because he had to take on some of the responsibilities of the president. He realized that the school desperately needed him in that capacity. Du Bois turned to the Harvard University community for financial assistance for Atlanta University. He also learned that there were no public schools for black folk in Georgia. The College thus took on the function of educating college-age students, while providing a normal school and the only public high school facility for blacks in Georgia.

Ultimately, Du Bois had to leave Atlanta University because he realized his presence was impeding the University's ability to acquire financial support from northern white philanthropists. Atlanta University was one of the few black educational institutions that offered a liberal arts education. Their mission contrasted with Booker T. Washington's emphasis on industrial education. Washington had cornered the market of northern white philanthropy. Thus Du Bois knew that his feud with Washington about the

need for liberal arts education for Negroes would undermine the University's financial support from the North. Most of the white northern money went through Washington's Tuskegee Institute before it was distributed to the other historically black colleges and universities. Washington knew Du Bois was working at Atlanta University and Du Bois knew Washington may prevent funds from going there.

In *Black Bourgeois* (1957), the critically acclaimed black sociologist E. Franklin Frazier argued that Du Bois' situation and Atlanta University's financial crisis symbolized the dilemma facing most of the historically black colleges and universities.³⁴ If they wanted money, these institutions would have to adopt Washington's mission of industrial education. Washington's industrial education philosophy saved lives, made him the race's spokesman and provided educational and employment opportunities for Negroes, but at what cost? The educational and employment opportunities for Negroes were limited. Moreover, the emphasis on industrial education for black colleges and universities was coupled with teaching Negroes to accept second-class citizenship. When Du Bois left the University of Pennsylvania for Atlanta University, he learned a valuable lesson about racial politics occurring within the black colleges and universities' community.

Frazier's and Du Bois' analysis of the racial politics and limited educational opportunities for blacks in higher education contrasted with Daves' assessment of the educational opportunities in Knoxville, however. William B. Scott's students from the Freedman Normal Institute were considered excellent teachers at Washington's Tuskegee Institute, and Charles Warner Cansler established a working relationship with Washington. I believe that this provided Knoxville College protection from Washington's

attack on black liberal arts colleges. The comparison of Daves' and Du Bois' works illuminated for me what generations of a small black community accomplished in Knoxville and what kind of educational, racial and social obstacles blacks encountered throughout the country, particularly in the South.

Whereas Du Bois' study documented why so many blacks migrated from the South to Philadelphia in search of employment opportunities and better lives, Daves' sociological research explored why southern blacks migrated to Knoxville and why the black community there prepared many of the youth to realize educational and social ascendancy both in the South and the North. His research provided evidence of why the Knoxville Negro's educational infrastructure and community associations were illustrations of Carter G. Woodson's educational ideology.³⁵

Woodson believed real education involved inspiring people to live more abundantly, to learn about society as they found it and make it better.³⁶ For instance in his text *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933), Woodson argued that black individuals who learn to think independently and express themselves were labeled opponents to interracial cooperation. Cansler's representation of his family's lives responded to Woodson's critique of many whites and blacks' perceptions of race relations prior to the civil rights movement. Knoxville's black community embodied Woodson's educational ideology. Their establishment of an infrastructure designed to encourage their students to think independently, to interact with both blacks and whites, and to develop strategies for transforming race relations echoed Woodson's vision. Cansler and other local race leaders subscribed to the belief that interracial cooperation relationships should strive to develop equality of participants.³⁷

Daves' study also represented how Knoxville's black community embodied Du Bois' vision for racial uplift. He argued that, "Negroes develop in the United States an economic nation within a nation, able to work through inner cooperation, to found its own institutions, to educate its genius, and at the same time, without mob violence or extremes of race hatred." Thus Daves' work provided educators with the ability to consider how Knoxville's small black community fulfilled Du Bois' vision and how their efforts compared to the accomplishments of other black communities in major cities.

For instance, the perspective in Daves' work formed a stark contrast to Richard Wright's experiences in the rural South and in urban areas in the North. When Wright's adopted home of Chicago gained more than fifty thousand black migrants from 1910 to 1920, most of the black migrant population did not have skill sets to support themselves and their families. Daves' life was also figuratively in conversation with Wright's representation of himself in *Black Boy* (1945) and Hazel Rowley's most recent biography of his life, *Richard Wright: the Life and Times* (2001).

Daves' aspirations for local race leadership correspond with Wright's desire to become the literary racial representative during the 1930's and 1940's. Their difficult upbringing inspired them to emerge as influential local and national racial spokespeople. Both Daves and Wright were estranged from their fathers' families. Daves felt the shame of his father's white ancestry and the Hammonds' rejection of him and his siblings, and Wright suffered from the abandonment of his father and his disillusionment with his father's family. Daves and Wright embraced their mothers, however. Daves' and Wright's relationship with their mothers shaped their socially conscious activities as local and national racial spokespeople. Daves and Wright loved and financially supported their

mothers. Daves modeled himself as the dutiful son in his treatment of his own family and work for the black community, and Wright wrote as if he was seeking retribution for his mother's, the race's and his own suffering at the hands of white patriarchal society. Daves' and Wright's pull- yourself- up- by- your- own- bootstraps story, educational achievements and innate leadership capabilities provided them with the cultural currency to come into view as a local racial activist in Knoxville and as America's literary race's spokesman.

Daves and Wright came of age during the 1920's. They were both products of the New Negro ideology. They used their lives to contribute to the belief that a New Negro was born at the turn of the century and that the time had come to share with America a new understanding of Negro culture and artistic expression. They benefited from Alain Locke's articulation of New Negro ideology in *New Negro Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (1925). Daves' study of the Knoxville Negro represented that the Negro in Knoxville had already adopted this vision, however. It was Wright who benefited more from the interest in black artistic expression which allowed him to reach white audiences who were prepared to engage with his social protest convention by the 1930's. Whereas Locke's and Wright's literary performances had an indirect affect on the lives of blacks across the country, Knoxville's local racial activists had already begun the day to day work of preparing the next generation to assert themselves within the American mainstream, which was not the case in some of the major cities.

In Hazel Rowley's biography, referred to above, she described the limited educational opportunities Wright experienced when he migrated to Chicago.

In 1960, the last year of his life, Richard Wright would tell an interviewer on French radio that nothing in his life, before or since, was as difficult or traumatic as that journey from the South to the North. And yet he was merely one of twelve million Southern blacks who went North during the “Great Migration” between 1916 and 1928. The trains transported them, overnight from semifeudal conditions in the rural South to the steel and stone grind of modern industrial capitalism. “Perhaps never in history has a more utterly unprepared folk wanted to go to the city.”³⁸

Rowley’s interpretation of Wright’s experiences, and his own words, represent the reality of many blacks in both the South and the North in their search for a better life. Rowley and Wright emphasize that the race was caught between two socioeconomic systems that shackled them to poverty-stricken realities. Because Daves was born and raised in rural Rocky Mount, North Carolina, and he worked in steel mills in Pennsylvania to pay his way through college, he would have understood what Wright and other black migrants across the country encountered. Moreover, their work emerged from their experiences within impoverished southern rural black communities and the destitute environs of urban black families in the South and the North, but these men had no interaction with each other largely because they lived geographically far apart and in different racial social circles.

While Wright made a living by working for the Post Office on the South Side of Chicago, and learned his trade as a black writer and racial representative in Communist-minded John Reed clubs, J. Herman Daves took a more conventional approach made available to him within Knoxville’s black community. The community’s educational

infrastructure offered him the resources and inspiration to become a sociology professor, an executive and local racial activist. Whereas Wright would eventually become one of the most influential racial representatives in African American and American literature, Daves provided for his family and gave back to the community that enabled him to earn recognition as prominent black family man, professor, and executive.

Daves' and Wright's lives as prominent communal and public figures highlight the differences between local and national racial representation. Daves became part of the Scotts and the Cansler's local race-leader legacies because he had a formal constituency that he encountered on a daily basis as one of the local racial representatives for Knoxville College and the TVA, while Wright became a national racial representative because his goal was to use his novels and autobiographies to emerge as the literary spokesman for the race. Unlike Daves, he did not have immediate constituencies that he responded to on a day- to-day basis. Wright wanted everyone to know his work, and he dreamed that his work would make him immortal. He hoped that his work would educate generations about American racism, but he was not held accountable for the opinions and views he portrayed in his novels and autobiographies in the same manner as Daves. Daves had more responsibility than Wright because he had a constituency. His constituency looked to him to lead them in the classroom at Knoxville College and to positions within prominent local institutions like the TVA or offer mentorship on how to cultivate career opportunities in both the South and the North. Moreover, Daves and other local racial activists made a greater sacrifice because their purposes did not lead to riches, fame, and immortality.

The last few pages of Daves' work revealed his personal aspirations and the goals he had for his black students at Knoxville College and employees at the TVA. He provided pictures of homes "owned and occupied by Negroes that are an asset to any community." A picture of Charles Warner Cansler's home resided above this quotation. Daves would eventually inherit the home, when his wife Willard Wilson Cansler Daves convinced him to move the Daves family into Cansler's home in the early 1940's to assist the aging patriarch, Charles Warner Cansler. Daves and his father-in-law were estranged, however. Cansler never felt that Daves was good enough for his only child, and Daves could never forgive Cansler for not accepting him. My father remembers sensing the tension between the two men in the home even as a little boy. The irony here was that Cansler's life was largely responsible for acquiring the funds for the library that Daves relied on for his study of the Knoxville Negro, and Cansler's son-in-law was clearly responsible for subsequent generations' ability to carry on the Canslers' local race-leader legacy within the United States and around the world.

Part 3

Inheritance: Knoxville's Black Community and J. Herman Daves' Local Race Leader Legacy

I draw here on interviews with my father about how Knoxville's local race leader traditions and his father shaped the lives of his older brother's J. Herman Daves Jr., his sister Carolyn Daves Reinhardt's and brother-in-law John E. Reinhardt's lives. J. Herman Daves Jr. (1923-2005) carried on the family's legacy by earning a B.S. in Physical Education from Talladega College, and he earned a Masters in Physical Education from the University of Illinois. He married Jean Lewis while they were students in 1947. They

moved to Washington D.C. where J. Herman Daves Jr. taught health and physical education for 34 years, first at Howard University then in Public Schools. He found the most enjoyment when he became a legendary basketball coach in high schools in Washington D.C. Herman and Jean Daves had three children: Cheryl, Michael and Brian.

I learned about how J. Herman Daves Jr. carried on the Scotts, the Canslers, and the Daves' local race leader legacy from his December 19, 2005 memorial service. He died on November 17, 2005, but the service was held in December. The church across the street from my Uncle Herman's home on Seventh Street, N.W. in Washington D.C. was filled. There were more than two-hundred people at the service. Some of the mourners were unable to find seats in the pews so they sat on the floor at the door for the entire service. Floyd Lewis, one of his best players and brightest students, gave the first tribute. Floyd is a tall man, about six feet eight inches. He had to unfold himself from one of the pews and walk to the front of the church. He informed the mourners in the audience that coach used the game of basketball as metaphor to teach his players lessons about life.

“I learned from him how to read situations and make good decisions which led me to the right choices in life.”

Although he was highly recruited by major Division 1 basketball programs, Lewis decided to attend Harvard University in the early 1970's. He played with James Brown, Fox Sports T.V. analyst and investigative reporter for Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel on HBO. After graduating from Georgetown University Law School, Lewis became a lawyer in Washington, D.C. William Saunders, a retired superintendent and principal in the Washington D.C. school district, informed the mourners that J. Herman Daves Jr. had administrative opportunities but remained in the classroom and as a coach because that

was where he felt he could make the most difference in young peoples' lives. My father, Charles Warner Daves, also spoke at the service. He spoke of how Herman was one of his role models as he was growing up because his older brother exhibited a sense of pride and dignity that he wanted to emulate.

Herman and Jean Daves' children and grandchildren also fulfilled the unspoken expectations of the Scotts, the Canslers, and the Daves family's local race leader legacy. Their oldest child Cheryl was born in 1950. She graduated from Wilson College and is the assistant to the Bishop at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. Michael was born in 1952. He graduated from Bucknell University and has had a successful career as a human resources executive. Michael and his wife Gayle have two children, Andrew and Angela. Andrew is currently in a B.S. and M.B.A. program at Florida A & M, and Angela graduated as a Math and Spanish from Spelman College. Herman and Jean Daves' younger son Brian was born in 1958. He graduated from Brown University and earned a M.B.A and C.P.A from Boston University. At Brown in the mid 1970's, he helped to coordinate a sit-in within the administration building to demand that Brown offer African American Studies courses. He recently was nominated as the President for the nationally recognized Black C.P.A association. He is currently a Vice President of Bank of America in Charlotte, North Carolina, where he lives with his wife Carla.

Carolyn Daves (1925-) earned a BA in Sociology from Howard University in 1946, and she did graduate work at the University of Wisconsin where she was reintroduced to Dr. John E. Reinhardt. Dr. Reinhardt (1920-) was a doctoral student in English literature. She knew of him because he was one of the brightest students to come out of Knoxville's black school system. He was a first year student at Knoxville College

at the age of sixteen in 1935. He was the editor of the Knoxville College newspaper and a leading member of the college's debate team. Carolyn Daves' father had Dr. John E. Reinhardt as a student and remarked that he was clearly his brightest student. They were married in 1947. Although there was a clear age difference, her grandfather and father were pleased to accept John into the family.

Dr. John E. and Carolyn Reinhardt's children represent the emergence of cosmopolitanism within the Scotts, the Canslers, and the Daves' local race leader legacy. John and Carolyn Reinhardt have three daughters. Sharman Willard Reinhardt was born in 1948 in Madison, Wisconsin where John was earning his doctorate. Alice Nicole Reinhardt was born in 1951 in Richmond, Virginia where Dr. John E. Reinhardt accepted an assistant professor of English Literature position at Virginia State University in St. Petersburg Virginia, but their youngest daughter Carolyn Cecile Reinhardt was born in 1957 in Manila Philippines. Their youngest daughter was born in Manila after Dr. John E. Reinhardt entered Foreign Service for the United States.

Dr. John E. and Carolyn Reinhardt's healthy marriage offered a model for their daughters. Their daughters' exposure to their parent's sound marriage assisted them in making important life decisions. Two of their three daughters have had healthy interracial marriages, which can obviously present additional challenges because of race. The Reinhardt's oldest daughter, Sharman, married Neil Lansfield. Neil is a successful builder and accountant in Jersey City, New Jersey and his sister Margaret is a doctor in Princeton, New Jersey where her husband Rush Holt is a Congressman for the 12th District, New Jersey. Sharman is a district supervisor for the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department. Sharman and Neil have two boys. Their older son John Stuart

Lansfield went to Choate Rosemary Hall and earned a B.A. in English Literature and Economics from Harvard University. He currently works for a Hedge Fund in New York City, and their second son, Daniel, graduated from Reed College with a degree in Spanish and Biology. He is currently in Medical School at the University of California, San Francisco. Dr. John E. and Carolyn Reinhardt's youngest daughter, Cecil, married John Feinstmaker, an accomplished organist and choir director. John and Cecil also have two sons. Their older son, Paul, is a sophomore at Harvard University, and their second son is a first-year student at the St. Paul School. Thus Dr. John E. and Carolyn Reinhardt children's and grandchildren's lives reflect the values that they acquired from their parents and Knoxville's black community.

Reinhardt began his Foreign Service career with the United States Information Service in Manila as a speech writer for the United States ambassador to the Philippines, was the Director of the American Cultural Center in the ancient Japanese capital of Kyoto, the Cultural Attache in Tehran, Iran, and served for three years as the American Ambassador to Nigeria. They returned to the Washington area in 1975, and ex-Ambassador Reinhardt worked in the State Department, until his appointment in the Carter Administration as the Director of the Information Agency of the U.S. Before his retirement, he was a staff member for the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. and a Woodrow Wilson fellow.

Reinhardt came from a proud working-class family that struggled financially. His father had several jobs. He was a janitor, and he performed a variety of services for luxurious hotels, and shined shoes. Young John often worked with his father at the posh

hotels to help the family. He knew the social reality of hard working-class families because he worked alongside his father. His father was his son's biggest supporter.

Reinhardt's life and career reminded me of Richard Hoggart's interpretation of the Scholarship Boy in *The Use of Literacy* (1957). Hoggart defined scholarship boys from the educational selection of working-class English boys for admittance into the middle class.³⁹ In the 1950's teachers developed the system because they were interested in promoting the possibility of social-class mobility in an English country that historically was defined by its rigid caste system. Hoggart argued that the selection process led to alienation, however, because these selected working class students were trained to mimic their teachers and middle-class culture rather than learn to think for themselves. They were socialized to shun their working-class roots and look to the system that offered them social and financial mobility for guidance. This process led to their realization that the system offered them much more financial comfort in many cases, but where they were often not fully accepted by it. Thus the scholarship boy no longer belonged to the manual- labor-oriented community of his working-class neighborhood, and he was never fully accepted within the social milieu of middle- to- upper-middleclass English society.

Reinhardt's situation was different, however. While Reinhardt dealt with many adjustments as he became one of the first African Americans to achieve prominence in Foreign Service, his parents and Knoxville's black community encouraged him to master the art of racial dualism. They taught him that the aim was to serve the race by exhibiting race pride with blacks and whites and transcending American society's belief in dominant and subordinate race relations between whites and blacks. His parents and other local-racial activists in Knoxville's black community modeled how one must demonstrate

African Americans' ability to make valuable contributions within American society. Reinhardt's experiences contrasted with Hoggart's impression of social class ascendancy in England and Carter G. Woodson's view of racial and social-class ascendancy in America.

Hoggart's interpretation of the disillusioned scholarship boy in England paralleled Woodson's analysis of the crisis of the educated Negro. In *The Mis-education of the Negro* (1933), Woodson argued that the educational system trained blacks to worship the psychological and economics of American capitalism and reject their own black culture as derivative and insignificant. When they were taught to revere whiteness yet not allowed to live and work in white America, they were forced to return to a black existence where they no longer found any comfort. Reinhardt's capabilities and training enabled him to live in between various worlds. His success symbolized a new form of leadership in the Scotts,' the Canslers,' the Daves' and Knoxville's black local racial activist legacies.

Whereas the Scotts, the Canslers and Herman J. Daves Sr. and Jr. were black leaders in Knoxville and Washington D.C, Dr. John E. Reinhardt was a leader of blacks as well as whites. The difference was that the Scotts, the Canslers and Herman Daves Sr. and Jr. became successful black leaders when they successfully responded to the needs of blacks within their communities, but Reinhardt became a leading African American. A leading African American is defined by being a pioneer in the corridors of power where he or she symbolizes blacks' capacity for leadership in major corporations and international affairs but they only indirectly deal with racial issues. Although Reinhardt became a symbol of racial uplift and integration, his profession had more to do with his

mastery of foreign policy and his ability to act as a national ambassador for America. He was responsible for carrying out the business of the nation in foreign countries and gathering information to protect the country during the Cold War. He was a pioneer in the evolution of local and national race- leader tradition because he demonstrated the effectiveness of African American leadership within national and international politics.

Still, Reinhardt's accomplishments were not known by many of his black successors. For instance, Vernon E. Jordan Jr. (1935-) partner in the investment firm of Lazard, Frere & Company in New York City and powerbroker in Washington D.C. in the 1990's in the Clinton administration did not know of Reinhardt's career. He stated in an interview for Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s *America Behind the Color Line: Dialogues with African Americans* (2004) that when "he finished Howard Law School in 1960 that there was not a job in Atlanta, his home city, for a black lawyer—no matter what school you went to or what you were and regardless of your class standing—not in the city government, the county government, the state government, or the Federal Government, and certainly not in a private law firm."⁴⁰ While I clearly understand why Jordan was arguing that there was not a known small community of blacks within the corridors of power and mainstream institutions, there was at least one black pioneer who was already pursuing an accomplished career in Foreign Service. Although these two men did not know of each other, the two men shared an admiration for Whitney Young Jr., another influential black leader and leading African American. Whereas Jordan spoke of Young's death as marker of when he gained access to the white establishment when he started to cultivate a relationship with the Rockefeller family, Reinhardt was paying tribute to Whitney Young Jr.'s life in Nigeria where Young died.

I learned that Reinhardt dedicated the Whitney Young Jr. Library at USIS on March 20, 1974. The naming of the Young library allowed Reinhardt to express his view of race leadership. The designation of the library honored Whitney Young Jr.'s (1921-1971) devotion to the causes of civil rights. Young had a remarkable career as a scholar and national race leader. He earned a B.S. degree from Kentucky State College in 1941 and he later did graduate work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He also acquired an MA in Social Work from the University of Minnesota in 1947. Young fulfilled his service as a national race leader by becoming the executive director of the Urban League from 1961 to 1971. The Urban League continues to be one of the most effective organizations committed to civil rights and improving the economic opportunities of African Americans. Young was also a successful racial ambassador. He served on seven Presidential Commissions of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. In 1969 Young was one of 20 Americans to receive the Medal of Freedom, the Nation's highest Civilian award from President Johnson. Young died during a visit to Lagos, Nigeria in 1971. President Nixon sent a plane to Nigeria to take Young's body back to the United States.⁴¹

Young's local race leader heritage resembled that of the Scotts,' the Canslers' and the Daves' local race-leader legacies. His family became influential members of the black community in Young's hometown of Lincoln Ridge, Kentucky. His father Whitney Young Sr, was President of Lincoln Institute, the boarding school for African Americans that Young would attend. His mother, Laura Ray Young, was a teacher at the school. Reinhardt's dedication of the library followed a memorial service of 800 mourners. The Rev. Jesse Jackson joined two Nigerian Episcopal Priests in the coordination of the

service. Reinhardt's dedication of the Whitney Young Library in Nigeria was another example of how he had taken the Scotts, the Canslers,' and the Daves' and Knoxville's black community's local race-leader legacies to the world's stage.⁴²

I am not challenging Jordan's assessment of America's history of racism, and I am not arguing that because Reinhardt was a successful diplomat from the late 1950's to the early 1980's that this somehow undermined Jordan's view of race relations, but I am arguing that Jordan's lack of knowledge of at least one of the leading black pioneers in the Foreign Service and the Federal Government says something about the continued work that needs to be done on the Diaspora. Reinhardt was one of the first African American ambassadors to the continent of Africa. It was understandable that Jordan did not know about Reinhardt then, but it is important to place Reinhardt within his rightful place now. Reinhardt's career was a precursor to Vernon Jordan's political career and Colin Powell's and Condoleezza Rice's Foreign Service careers. More recently, Reinhardt was called upon to give his opinions on America's foreign policy in the Middle East.

Reinhardt was asked to take part in a discussion for a News Hour with Jim Lehrer televised on the Public Broadcasting System on November 1, 2001. The topic was how the U.S. and its allies are waging a war of words against the Taliban and Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaida network. Terrence Smith, newly appointed Director for Voice of America, led the discussion. Voice of America is an editorial daily radio station sponsored by the U.S. government which has an audience of 91 million people world wide; George Cowan, the former Director of Voice of America during the Clinton Administration, now Dean of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University

of Southern California; Edmund Ghareeb is an adjunct professor of the School of International Service at American University; Allen Weinstein is the president of the Center for Democracy in Washington D.C; and John Reinhardt, retired member of Foreign Service, was director of the U.S. Information Agency in the Carter Administration.

Smith focused the discussion on the ideological war of winning the hearts and minds of Arabs in the Middle East, which has been the policy of the Bush administration in Iraq and on the war on terror. Smith pointed out that the ominous history of this ideology began during the Vietnam War and that the ideology clearly was not successful. Weinstein, Cowan and Reinhardt agreed that the administration was slow in mobilizing to win this ideological war. They believed that the US has people in all of the Arab countries, and that the US must make more of a concerted effort to assess Arabs' perceptions of America and discern whether America has lost the hearts and minds of Arab populations in the Middle East. Moreover they all felt more resources were needed. In concluding the discussion, Smith had a specific question for Reinhardt who clearly had the most Foreign Service experience.

Smith raised the question: "How do you combat the images of civilian casualties and bomb damage that come out of Afghanistan? How do you put that in a context if you are the United States or if you are running the information end of things?"

Reinhardt: These images are very difficult to combat, particularly in time of war. But you've got to realize that there is a great backlog of information among peoples all over the world about the United States. This is not by accident. Many of these people have studied here. Many of them have come on exchange grants,

vast contracts. There are, there are many peoples around the world who understand what we are like. Some like us, some don't. But the backlog of goodwill is excellent.⁴³

Reinhardt's response acknowledges that the utter devastation that comes with war are difficult images to counter, but he argued that the belief in America as the land of opportunity and America's effort to make that ideology a reality for peoples around the world offers the best form of cultural capital available to respond to what many critics argued was the necessary war in Afghanistan after terrorist attack on September 11, 2001.

Smith: You would tap into that somehow:

Reinhardt: I would certainly tap into that. We must also realize that there are other media in the United States that are read in the Middle East, that are listened to. CNN broadcast for example. All of these are not images that we would like to have, but they are an image, are images that give a balanced picture of the United States.⁴⁴

Reinhardt's reply here offers a complex interpretation of what the American government should do and should not do to win the hearts and minds of Arabs in the Middle East and what role the media plays in Arabs' perceptions of America's Foreign Policy. He relies on Arabs' experiences with Democracy as the best means of battling against anti-American sentiments. I would argue that his confidence comes from how his extraordinary life embodies the creed of American Democracy, but if one looks closely at his reply, he does not adopt blind patriotism. He does not think that America should manipulate the media to reach Arabs in the Middle East. Even in a crisis where the country needs to reach Arabs, he feels that the Arabs must make their own decision based

on what they observed in the balanced information available to them. Moreover, his decision to join a group of ex-officials that criticized the Bush administration's foreign policies in the Middle East is further evidence of his stature and his strong convictions. In June of 2004, Reinhardt signed a letter along with 25 other Diplomats and Military Commanders demanding a major revision of American Foreign Policy, specifically in the Middle East. He believes that America's misuse and abuse of power can only lead to Arabs forming a view that American Democracy is hypocritical. Furthermore, it will lead to the loss of confidence in American leadership world wide.⁴⁵

Although Reinhardt's story marked the most extraordinary evolution in the Scotts,' the Canslers,' and the Daves' local race-leader legacies, my father had a similar experience. His local race leader legacy also involved a migration into the world of the elite prior to the civil rights movement and a decision to emerge as a local black leader and a leading African American.

Part 4

Waking from the Dream: Charles Warner Daves' Performance of Local Race Leadership during the rise and fall of Civil Rights Ideology

Charles Warner Daves (1930-) embodied the use of education as the means of participating in the family's local race leader legacy. My father was born in Buffalo New York where his father, and my grandfather, J. Herman Daves Sr., was working on his Master's degree in Sociology at the University of Buffalo while employed by the local YMCA. My father was three months old when the family moved black to Knoxville because J. Herman Daves Sr. accepted a position as a professor in the Sociology

Department at Knoxville College. My father came of age in Knoxville, but left home in 1945 to attend Mount Hermon School.

When I asked my father about how he got to Mount Hermon, he told me, “Gramps, (Charles Warner Cansler), used to say to me ““Go east, young man” (a variation on Horace Greeley’s “Go West:”) what he wanted was for me to go to an eastern college. He knew of Mount Hermon and encouraged me to apply. I was the last child and several years younger than my brother and my sister. My father had moved onto to TVA, so we were better off financially and Gramp also helped pay for Mount Hermon, where there was a lower-level tuition for moderate income families.”

Mount Hermon marked my father’s move from a small black community to a broader world. He said:

“My first puzzle to solve was learning how to distinguish the white students from one another, especially the blonds who looked alike to me. I was used to only black students who had different shadings and different hair textures. Sports enabled me to gain acceptance in this new world. I played varsity basketball and learned enough soccer to start my senior year. Athletic ability as well as academic ability was important at this all-boy school.”

My father noticed a difference between his educational training in Knoxville and the preparation he received at Mount Hermon, which would later merge with the Northfield School for girls and become Northfield Mount Hermon. He recalled:

“From my first year I gained an appreciation for literature. My English classes at home explained grammar in workbook exercises, so classes at Mount Hermon

were my first serious exposure to literature—American and British. I wrote my first long paper on Robert Frost.”

My father told me that this was how he acquired access to the cultural currency skills that enabled the aristocracy to develop critical thinking skills, mastery of expository writing, and study habits. His training at Mount Hermon enabled him to realize his educational desires and Charles Warner Cansler’s dream. He earned a B.A. from Cornell University in American Studies in 1952. He received his M.A. in American Civilization in 1953 from the University of Pennsylvania. After he earned his masters degree, he became an instructor of English Literature at Morehouse College from 1955 to 1956, and he taught at Fisk University from 1956 to 1959. He returned to school in 1959 and earned a doctorate in English Literature from the University of Minnesota in 1965. He taught at the University of Rochester for four years before taking a position as an executive at the Educational Testing Service from 1968 to 1998. He was also nominated to be a member of the Board of Trustees for Trenton State College from 1974 to 1984, renamed the College of New Jersey in 1996. He was elected as chair for five years. His leadership played a pivotal role in the small state college’s evolution. Today the College of New Jersey is considered as one of the premiere state liberal arts colleges in the country. A plaque of my father’s tenure as chair graces the doorway of the student center. My father’s career as a local race leader, local racial ambassador, and leading African American occurred during a dramatic shift in the public’s perceptions of the civil rights movement. His educational development and career paralleled the rise and fall of civil rights movement ideology.

My father exchanged his credentials at Mount Hermon (renamed Northfield Mount Hermon) for acceptance at Cornell University before the civil rights movement and the introduction of Affirmative Action Programs. He could have made this difficult journey much easier because he could pass for white, but he never did. He consciously chose to live as a black man at Mount Hermon and throughout his academic and executive career.

Cornell offered my father heightened preparation for life in broad settings. He informed me:

“I learned a lot from the classes and from the well-prepared fellow students. Unfortunately, I did not seek out the professors outside of class. They were, however, in many cases good if not excellent teachers and researchers. I learned approaches to disciplines such as historiography, not just the findings. Also because some of the classes were large, I had to learn to represent myself by my written work—papers and exams— I could not rely on the teachers knowing me from my active participation in class.”

My father’s recollections represented the role social class played in academic achievement and career opportunities. He became part of an educational system that prepared the elite for lucrative careers in education, business, politics, law, and medicine. Moreover, he joined a unique fraternity created at Cornell entitled Watermargin: “All Men Are Brothers.”

Watermargin embodied the emergence of a new form of liberalism. Watermargin was born at Cornell in 1950. Leftist-minded historians, sociologists and political scientists counseled the Watermargin fraternity. Dr. Mario Einaudi, professor of

Government, Dr. Paul W. Gates, Chairman, Department of History, Milton R. Konvitz, professor of Industrial and Labor Relations, Maurice Neufled, professor of Industrial and Labor Relations were on the Board of Advisors of Watermargin. Watermargin offered my father the opportunity to experience the progressive sensibility that took hold in northern elite social settings.

I learned the following from my father's brochure of the educational and fraternal organization:

Watermargin is an educational and fraternal organization composed of a group of Students at Cornell University who firmly believe that it is possible for all men to live together in harmony, regardless of racial or religious background.

Watermargin is the implementation of this ideal. The foundations upon which Watermargin is built are the phrases "All Men Are Brothers" and Learning by Doing.⁴⁶

My father recalled that in the fraternity he learned about "social pluralism" and "marginal man" long before he heard the terms from the educated public. He said he lived in a house with other black, white, Latino and Asian students. The students had ranging interests from engineering and mathematics to philosophy and literature. Watermargin provided him with a rich culturally progressive environment, which made my father realize that the future would provide more educational opportunities for blacks. He knew that he would be able to benefit from this. His experiences in Knoxville, on Mount Hermon's and Cornell University's campuses enabled him to become comfortable as the only, or one of few blacks, in a predominately white environment. Moreover, he knew

how to find white mentors to further his career and aid blacks who also found themselves as one of few blacks in predominately white and elite settings.

Ralph Ellison's literary representation of blacks' experiences between black and white worlds resembled my father's thoughts about America's culture of racism. My father read Ellison's *Invisible Man* when it came out in 1952 and was included in an American Literature course at the University of Pennsylvania. He told me that he was blown away by Ellison's writing style and his ability to articulate the inhumanity of America's racial caste system through black history and culture prior to the civil rights movement. He described how Ellison's first-person novel enabled him to develop a critical eye on the rise and fall of the civil rights movement. I learned from my father's eyewitness account of the rise and fall of the civil rights movement that by the late 1960's black people were left again to fend for themselves.

Nevertheless, the materialization of the civil rights movement shaped my father's racial and educational development. He was teaching at Morehouse College when Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat for a white man in Montgomery Alabama and Martin Luther King Jr. coordinated the Montgomery Bus Boycott. He was an English Instructor at Morehouse College shortly after Martin Luther King Jr. received his B.A. there. He observed Dr. Benjamin Mays' performance of race leadership. Mays was the President and a force in the struggle for integration. Martin Luther King Jr. also considered Mays as his spiritual mentor when he was a student at Morehouse College and during the civil rights movement.

My father was an eyewitness to Mays' grassroots construction of local race-leader traditions at Morehouse. He told me that at the beginning of each school year,

Mays addressed the student body in the auditorium. He then brought every member of the faculty onto the stage and recited the faculty's credentials without a note card, and then someone in the faculty would shout out," Dr. Mays what about you?" and Mays replied, "B.A. Bates, Ph.D. University of Chicago." My father told me that in those days the college's student body included sons of sharecroppers and boys from small country towns. They did not have the substantial middle-class black student body that they do today. He believed Mays' performance was designed to demonstrate for these black men that despite America's rigid racial caste system not only can you achieve what you have heard your professors accomplish, but it was your duty to do so as a Morehouse man. Mays also made requests to successful black teachers, college administrators, doctors, and lawyers, all graduates of the school, to return to Morehouse and perform as role models for the next generation of Morehouse men.

While my father observed Mays' grassroots ideology of local-race leadership, my father's experiences at Fisk University exposed him to the elite black middle-class' involvement in rearing the next generation of largely middle-class blacks for racial uplift and integration. He took the teaching opportunity at Fisk after receiving a telegram from Charles S. Johnson the President of Fisk University. My father told me that

"Johnson was an internationally known sociologist who authored many scholarly books. In the 1920's Johnson was editor of the Urban League's new publication, *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* in New York. Under Johnson's editorial leadership, *Opportunity* became a principal publication of the New Negro Arts movement."

My father was proud of the academic and cultural community that Johnson cultivated at Fisk. He told me,

“Johnson continued the development of the Fisk Jubilee singers who were doing tours in Europe. I was a member of the English Department with Robert Hayden, the internationally recognized African American poet. I served with Arna Bontemps, critically acclaimed contributor to the Harlem Renaissance and close friend of Langston Hughes, who was the librarian.”

My father taught the survey course for the first half of American Literature. He told me that one of his brightest students was Hazel Reid, who became Hazel O’Leary. She was the Energy Secretary in President Clinton’s cabinet and recently became President of Fisk University. He told me that my mother, Allayne Turner Daves, earned the opportunity to be an assistant for Professor Mark Heald’s large lecture class in the History of Western Civilization. She had a Master’s degree in History from the University of Minnesota. Johnson hired Professor Heald, a white teacher who had recently retired from Rutgers, to expand academic specialties. Johnson also brought in another white scholar, Professor Scott Buchanan, an expert on Plato, from St. John’s College in Annapolis, Maryland, both as Visiting Professors. My father wanted to get to know Johnson, but he died the first fall that my parents came to Fisk, having married in August of that year.

After completing his doctoral work at Minnesota, he was hired at the University of Rochester. At Rochester he met the Peck family, a liberal white family. Russell Peck is a professor of Medieval Literature. He won a national award for teaching. Ruth Peck, his wife, is a loving woman who genuinely embraced my father and my mother. Their children are also bright and gifted teachers and scholars. Their oldest child Nathan

teaches history at a private school in Saint Louis, their daughter Demary earned her B.A. in English literature from Princeton University and her Ph.D. from the University of Virginia. She taught at Washington and Lee before leaving academia to teach high school and take care of her children after a difficult divorce. Gunther, their youngest child, graduated from Princeton University with a BA in History, and he earned his Ph.D. in History from Yale University. He is currently a history professor at Duke University. My parents were part of Rochester's predominately white and progressive academic community, but they were also involved in the development of the community such as the Urban League in Rochester.

My mother worked at Rochester's Urban League in 1967-1968. She coordinated a program that provided secretarial training for poverty-stricken and working-class black women, who were often single mothers who wanted to support themselves and their children. My father told me that one day my mother came into the office and the black secretary said to her, "You have been black and middle class all your life!" My parents' perceived her observation as one of astonishment." This was one of the many stories I heard about the isolation that came with being black and middle class.

When my parents left Rochester because my father accepted an executive position at the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in Princeton, New Jersey in 1968, the liberal retreat from the principles of the civil rights movement and the conservative backlash had already begun. In his article "The Liberal Retreat from Race during The Post—Civil Rights—Era," Stephen Steinberg argued, that by 1963 there were already signs of liberals increasing disaffection with the movement in the South as well as the North. He used Murray Friedman's essay "The White Liberal Retreat" for *Atlantic Monthly* January 1963

as an illustration. Friedman believed that there were a number of factors that led to this retreat.”⁴⁷ When desegregation came to northern cities, whites realized that the civil rights movement was more than an abstract concept.⁴⁸ The re-emergence of Black Nationalism scared many whites, particularly when whites were asked to concede their leadership positions in civil rights organizations to blacks.⁴⁹ The race riots further tested white liberals’ support of the movement. Friedman believed that they now wanted change without problems and without having to make personal sacrifices. My parents sensed the erosion of white liberal support when they moved into a predominately white middle-to-upper-middle-class suburban neighborhood in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, but they had cultural currency in the form of skin color because my father could pass and my mother was light brown, and they had the pedigree of upper-middle-class America.

Nevertheless, because of my father’s experiences growing up in Knoxville, Tennessee, and educational career at Morehouse and Fisk University, he believed that he has a certain responsibility to be a leader for racial uplift and integration. He focused a great deal of his attention on a response to the liberal retreat and the conservative backlash. At ETS, he encouraged and actively participated in the recruitment of black professionals, and he and my mother helped to mentor new hires, especially as they began their careers in a new environment.

For instance, my father used information for a panel presentation on higher education at the National Urban League Conference on the Black Family in November, 1977 as the material for an article in the IVY Leaf “Education: At What Cost?” The IVY Leaf was the Official Organ of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, one of the premiere black sororities and social networks for college students and alumni. He began his article

with a response to Roger Wilkins' New York Times article "Black America's Holiday Mood: Gloom, Suspicion and Pessimism." Wilkins is an accomplished local and national race leader. He is a law professor and historian at George Mason University and an accomplished author. Wilkins revealed that President Carter's promises to blacks were too optimistic to be believed. He cited that Carter's first year in office was worse than anticipated. My father's thesis for his article came from Wilkins' bleak statistics that the income of blacks was 60% that of whites and unemployment about twice the rate of whites.⁵⁰ My father argued that cultivating educational opportunities for the race were the best means of addressing Wilkins' disturbing assessment of black life.⁵¹ He focused on familial and communal activism as the most effective means of producing educational opportunities which he felt would address the crisis affecting black America.⁵²

My father relied on his experiences growing up with local racial activists in Knoxville, and witnessing Mays' and Johnsons' local race-leader ideologies. He stated "the surest way I know to attack the matter of lower relative income of blacks is by increasing college and graduate school attendance and graduation rates."⁵³ He believed that we have always known that. He felt as many members of the black community do today that blacks must be highly educated and in many cases over qualified to earn career opportunities. He knew that the social reality for blacks had not changed, but what he realized had changed considerably, despite the liberal retreat and the conservative backlash, was access to lucrative career opportunities in business, law, higher levels of management, as well as college and university teaching. He had also witnessed that the generation which came of age after the civil rights movement attended Dartmouth, Brown, Stanford, and Chicago, while their parents had only attended historically black

colleges and universities in most cases. Only a few black families with substantial cultural capital and exclusive networks with prominent whites had been able to send their children to private schools and elite colleges and universities at an earlier time, but during the late 1960's and early 1970's gifted black students from working –middle-class and poverty-stricken families were finally offered opportunities to attend these elite colleges and universities and their own state universities. He believed, nevertheless, that historically black colleges and universities did an excellent job of preparing black students, but this shift enabled the black community's best and brightest to receive the valuable cultural capital that graduating from elite schools provided for America's aristocracy.

Still, my father thought that two issues threaten the means blacks rely on to narrow the socioeconomic gap with the majority population: **(1)** the backlash to affirmative action, and **(2)** the cost of higher education. He realized that the Alan Bakke case led to the mobilization of the reverse discrimination ideology that impeded black progress, and he understood that economic stagnation prevented the mainstream from being sympathetic to the plight of blacks within American society.⁵⁴ He observed elite universities' assertion that they raised tuition, room, and board as well as monies available for financial aid, but he pointed out that in the late seventies even the president of Yale University, A. Bartlett Giamatti, informed the public that despite their large endowment Yale was operating in the red in the last few years.⁵⁵ Elite universities, like largely upper class families, suffered from inflation and the substantial decline in value of stocks. Thus my father perceived that these institutions had to look to more students who could pay full tuition to stretch funds for students who desperately needed financial aid,

which would decrease some of the opportunities for blacks to attend elite colleges and universities.⁵⁶

My father believed, nonetheless, that this was not the major problem in blacks' inability to gain admission to elite colleges and universities because financial aid did exist. He argued that overwhelmed college counselors at high schools were not providing students with information about financial aid. He raised the issue of how many students know about financial aid, and how many students select themselves out because they do not know? He informed people of the new Office for Minority Education at Educational Testing Service developed a manual that served as a guide to acquiring financial aid and grants, but he wanted people to look to themselves for the major solutions. His beliefs came from what he found within Knoxville's black community to develop five possible solutions to narrow the economic and unemployment issues affecting the black community:

- (1) Insure proper distribution of information about financial aid through community organizations like AKA;
 - (2) work with students at early ages to develop cultural currency skills such as problem solving, critical thinking and expository writing;
 - (3) Concentrate on making local schools more effective for all students (you may meet resistance at the administration or in individual schools, but persist).
 - (4) Demonstrate the relationship of schooling to career occupations.
 - (5) Push for and organize efforts for support of black colleges.
- Over the years these colleges have identified and developed leaders and have done so at a modest cost. Do not be convinced that because of greater

opportunities to attend elite institutions that these historically black colleges and universities need not exist.⁵⁷

My father's blueprint for local racial-activism embodied his experiences with the Scotts, the Canslers,' and the Daves' local racial-activist legacies. His view coincided with scholars' realization that the Government recognized the public's liberal retreat and the emergence of the conservative backlash. This awareness indicated that affirmative action would be challenged, but it also meant racism would no longer be a major focus of the Democratic agenda because now both liberals and conservatives wanted to avoid responsibility for the legacy of America's rigid racial caste system and continued customs of institutionalize racism. He believed that the black family and black community had to carry most of the leadership burden. He realized that they were the only ones who were in positions to facilitate educational opportunities that lead to a stronger network for black development, which could facilitate educational opportunities and prospects for lucrative careers.

My father became concerned as he came to realize that the black middle class was abandoning the local racial activist and racial ambassador traditions, when they were desperately needed. He was appalled to learn from a recent investigation in the late 1970's that black students are not only underrepresented generally in higher education, but that underrepresentation at higher income levels was even greater than before.⁵⁸ He recognized that the figures may be deceptive, but that if there is truth to these statistics, then the black middle class and upper-middle classes must make a concerted effort to send their children to college and participate in helping other blacks get into college and

universities. Thus he continued to believe in the figurative family motto: From those who have achieved, more is expected.⁵⁹

I learned from my father's stories, and reading one of his articles, that he anticipated what would happen in the 1980's, 1990's and during the early twenty-first century. My father believed we must provide for ourselves and our families to supplement federal and state programs. He recognized that Democrats firmly believed that continuing the progressive-minded movement ideology's confrontation of America's racial caste system would lead to their becoming a minority party in the house and the senate. He believed that they began to argue that the civil rights movement's ideological end point was the end of legal segregation and limited forms of affirmative action. My parents had frequent conversations over the dinner table about Democratic leaders. They discussed how President Lyndon B. Johnson and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's focus on the black family crisis cast light on the results of America's rigid racial caste system without offering policy remedies for systemic institutional racism. They observed that the movement ideology officially ended when Ronald Reagan's America took control of the White House and mainstream American culture.

My own journey to discover myself within my family's traditions began when I decided to become a teacher. My decision helped me to understand the sacrifices my parents had to make to provide me with opportunities to gain self awareness and have a fulfilling and productive life.

 Notes

¹ Werner Sollors. *Neither black nor white yet both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 214, 215.

² Werner Sollors. *Neither black nor white yet both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*, 214, 215.

³ J. Herman Daves. *Obituary*, in the Knoxville News-Sentinel, Tuesday, March 21, 1978, 15.

⁴ Henry Louis Gates Jr and Terri Hume Oliver. Eds. *The Souls of Black Folk*. A Norton Critical Edition. By W.E.B. Du Bois. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999) 10.

⁵ J. Herman Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Free Colored Library, 1926) 1-7.

⁶ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*. 1-7.

⁷ Dan S. Green and Edwin D. Driver. Eds. *On Sociology and the Black Community*. By W.E.B. Du Bois. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978) 115-140.

⁸ Du Bois, *On Sociology and the Black Community*, 49-51.

⁹ Dan S. Green and Edwin D. Driver. Eds. *On Sociology and the Black Community*. By W.E.B. Du Bois. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978) 115-140.

¹⁰ J. Herman Daves. *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*. (Knoxville: Free Colored Library, 1926) 1-7. J. Herman Daves' sociological study provided me with important data on the shortcomings and successes of stewardship, local racial activist and local racial ambassadorship traditions in Knoxville's black community.

¹¹ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 1, 2.

¹² Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 2, 3.

¹³ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 2, 3.

¹⁴ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 2, 3.

¹⁵ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 4, 5.

¹⁶ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 4, 5.

¹⁷ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 4, 5.

¹⁸ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 5, 6.

¹⁹ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 6, 7.

²⁰ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 6, 7.

²¹ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 6, 7.

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- ²² Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 7, 8.
- ²³ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 7, 8.
- ²⁴ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 9, 10.
- ²⁵ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 9, 10.
- ²⁶ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 10.
- ²⁷ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 11-13.
- ²⁸ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 11-13.
- ²⁹ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 11-13.
- ³⁰ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 11-13.
- ³¹ Daves, *A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee*, 11-13.
- ³² Robert J. Booker. *Glimpses of Knoxville's Black History* (a Calendar). Knoxville: Beck Cultural Exchange Center. 1981, 5.
- ³³ Dan S. Green and Edwin D. Driver. Eds. *On Sociology and the Black Community*. By W.E.B. Du Bois. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978) 61-65.
- ³⁴ E. Franklin. Frazier. *The Black Bourgeoisie: The Rise of a New Middle Class*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997) 4, 5.
- ³⁵ Carter G. Woodson. *The Mis-Education of the Negro*. (Chicago: African American Images, 2000) 20, 21.
- ³⁶ Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, 29.
- ³⁷ Hazel Rowley. *Richard Wright: The Life and Times*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2001) 52.
- ³⁸ Hoggart, Richard. *The Uses of Literacy*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2000) 227, 228.
- ³⁹ Henry Louis Gates Jr. *America behind the Color Line: Dialogues with African Americans*. (New York: Warner Books, 2004) 27.
- ⁴⁰ "Retelling the Story of Civil Rights Leader Whitney Young Jr." Crossroads Vol. 8, No 8 August-October, 2001" <http://usembassy.state.gov/nigeria/wwwhxrdaug.html>.
- ⁴¹ "Retelling the Story of Civil Rights Leader Whitney Young Jr." Crossroads Vol. 8, No 8 August-October, 2001" <http://usembassy.state.gov/nigeria/wwwhxrdaug.html>.
- ⁴² A News Hour with Jim Leher On Line Focus. "Winning the Hearts and Minds." November 1, 2001. www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/july-dec01/heartsminds_11_1.html.
- ⁴³ A News Hour with Jim Leher On Line Focus. "Winning the Hearts and Minds." November 1, 2001. www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/july-dec01/heartsminds_11_1.html.
- ⁴⁴ A News Hour with Jim Leher On Line Focus. "Winning the Hearts and Minds." November 1, 2001. www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/july-dec01/heartsminds_11_1.html.

⁴⁵ A News Hour with Jim Leher On Line Focus. "Winning the Hearts and Minds." November 1, 2001. www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/july-dec01/heartsminds_11_1.html/.

⁴⁶ Stephen Steinberg. "The Liberal Retreat from Race during the Post-Civil Rights Era." *The House that Race Built*. Ed. Wahneema Lubiano. (New York: Vintage Books, 1998) 13-15.

⁴⁷ Watermargin Brochure. (Ithaca: Cornell University 1948).

⁴⁸ Stephen Steinberg. "The Liberal Retreat from Race During the Post-Civil Rights Era." In *The House that Race Built*. Ed. Wahneema Lubiano. (New York: Vintage Books, 1998) 13-15.

⁴⁹ Steinberg, "The Liberal Retreat from Race During the Post-Civil Rights Era," 13-15.

⁵⁰ Steinberg, "The Liberal Retreat from Race During the Post-Civil Rights Era," 13-15.

⁵¹ Charles Daves. "Education at What Cost." *Ivy Leaf*, Spring 1978. 9, 10. Charles Daves' article enabled me to document how members of the family carried on the family's local racial activism and adapted the principles to address the needs of current generations. Moreover, Daves' article reveals how the family's belief enabled him to offer his own vision of the strategies educated middle class blacks may want to develop to carry on local racial activist traditions for themselves, their children and other black families.

⁵² Daves, "Education at What Cost," 9, 10.

⁵³ Daves, "Education at What Cost," 9, 10.

⁵⁴ Daves, "Education at What Cost," 9, 10.

⁵⁵ Daves, "Education at What Cost," 9, 10.

⁵⁶ Daves, "Education at What Cost," 9, 10.

⁵⁷ Daves, "Education at What Cost," 9, 10.

⁵⁸ Daves, "Education at What Cost," 9, 10.

⁵⁹ Daves, "Education at What Cost," 9, 10.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This study was motivated by my desire to understand my family's leadership tradition, my sense that this tradition provided a rich opportunity to explore local racial-activist traditions, and my own desire to come to terms with the family's legacy and my experiences of being adopted into the family. When I first considered analyzing my experiences with my family's local racial-activist legacy, I had to overcome my own skepticism. I had to learn to assess the value of my ancestors' and immediate family members' lives as local racial activists. As a young person, I had observed how influential white and black people admired my parents and immediate relatives, but at first I was unwilling to examine why they, and I, were given unique privileges. I felt that any real evaluation could only end in the feeling that my family and I were Uncle Toms. I felt as though a critical inspection of our lives would result in the conclusion that merely pleasing white people was the basis of our social and economic achievements. My thinking changed as I accepted my family's legacy and became a teacher. I realized that my self-awareness and success was largely the result not of appeasement of whites, but my family's determination to confront institutionalized racism with a variety of methods. Moreover, I discovered that their tactics for overcoming such racism were designed for familial and collective racial self improvement. I recognized that my ancestors' life decisions—from one generation to the next, from the antebellum years to the present—enabled both blacks and whites to articulate what they really wanted from life. Appreciating this was only the beginning, however. Placing their local racial activist life histories in conversation with other local racial activist and national race leaders'

representations of themselves enabled me to form a deeper understanding of literary performances of black leadership culture. Cansler's *Three Generations* was where I began my undertaking.

“The Story of a Race Man: Charles Warner Cansler’s Representation of a family’s Local Racial Activist Legacy” provided me with an opportunity to explore Charles Warner Cansler’s (1871-1953) representation of himself, and how he used his family’s life stories to construct his understanding of himself as a steward for Knoxville’s black community. Charles Chesnutt’s article “The Free Black of North Carolina” was a valuable resource for documenting the origins of the family’s free black status and examining Cansler’s version of it. I was also able to draw from primary sources such as Bartow G. Wilson’s *The Knoxville Negro: Emphasizing the Great Era of Progress Prevalent in Negro Knoxville Today* (1929) to display my interpretation of Cansler’s participation within Knoxville’s local racial-activist and local- racial- ambassador conventions. With the use of these and other primary and secondary sources, I demonstrated how Cansler’s and Knoxville’s local -racial activists’ practices compared to and shared similarities with other communal and national black leadership cultural traditions. Moreover, “The Story of a Race Man” offered me an opportunity to explain how Cansler’s interaction with other communal public figures’ and national race leaders’ enactment of themselves enables us to trace the roots of the civil rights movement not only back to larger- than-life historical black figures, but also to families and black and white neighborhoods.

“William B. Scott’s Dream: A Patriarch’s Legacy” offered me an opportunity to examine Cansler’s biographical interpretation of the patriarch of the family’s roles as

educational and social superintendents for Knoxville's black community. Cansler's vision of William B. Scott's (1821-1885) dream enabled me to discover a white-skinned free black man's identity formation principles between various black and white worlds, how his decision to define himself as a black man, raise a free black family and perform as a coordinator of racial uplift principles offered Cansler the opportunity to display a revolutionary narrative of middle-class black masculinity. I investigated how his vision of Scott's legacy compared with and resembled canonical narrative scripts written by and about activist-minded mulatto writers. Moreover, this chapter offered me an opportunity to explore his daughter Laura Ann Scott Cansler's (1846-1926) and son in law Hugh Lawson Cansler's (1835-1922) adoption of Scott's racial identity formation values and local racial-activist principles, the way Scott's life encouraged his daughter and son-in-law to adapt and implement his strategies for collective racial advancement to gain acceptance and recognition between contrasting racial and social class environments.

“The Emergence of Joseph Herman Daves: A Local Racial Activist's Analysis of the Scotts and Cansler Family's Local Racial Activist Legacy” provided me with the opportunity to analyze Daves' use of the family's cultural values of racial development. He utilized the family's traditions to gain acceptance from the Cansler family and the larger Knoxville community. I explored how his efforts marked a shift in the family's heritage. Because he not only had to gain recognition from the family, but he also had to receive acknowledgement from blacks and whites within the community. Daves' sociological study of Knoxville's black community allowed me to display what Daves learned from Du Bois' research, and how he used his knowledge of Du Bois' work to evaluate the advancement of Knoxville's black community. Moreover, Daves' role as the

Chairman of the Sociology Department and executive at the TVA offered him opportunities to demonstrate his mastery of the family's values. He became a role model for his children. His success inspired his older son Herman Jr., daughter Carolyn Daves Reinhardt, former student and son-in-law John E. Reinhardt, and my father Charles Warner Daves to carry on the family's legacy in a variety of ways. I examined how they interpreted the family's heritage from career paths in teaching and coaching to executive positions in higher education and Foreign Service for the United States government.

Cansler's book is my family's local racial activist legacy in narrative form. His book is a literary performance of their quest for self awareness within familial and group oriented local racial-activist ideals. When he decided not to do a traditional historical analysis of their lives, his book offered opportunities to develop multiple interpretations of their experiences as free black communal advocates.¹ His ability to imagine and to construct dialogues (based on information that he did not know) allowed the family's story to emerge as a living black history for family members, Knoxville's black community and the larger society.² Mastering literary devices such as irony, parody, and rhetorical flourishes³ enabled him to represent the importance of growing up with family's beliefs in local racial-activist principles. His use of novelistic techniques enabled him to do more than develop testimonies to his family's lives as free blacks and achievements as coordinators of what I have defined as local racial-activist tradition. His hybrid text sought to turn my ancestors' life histories from the Civil War, Reconstruction, and World War 1 through to the Great Depression and beyond into inspiring biographical and autobiographical statements.

Consequently, *Three Generations* marked my family's ways of defining themselves between various black and white social worlds. His book revealed how those ways of seeing themselves as local- racial activists were passed onto the next generation. His work made it possible for family members and others to discuss how his life, and his immediate ancestors' lives, worked with and alongside national performances of black leadership culture. For instance, during the rise in lynching in Tennessee, Cansler's letter to Governor Rye in 1917 and *Three Generations* (1939) presented a contradictory reading of Booker T. Washington and his legacy.

Similar to Washington's performance of himself in his Atlantic Exposition Address (1895) and in *Up from Slavery* (1901), Cansler performed as a kind of corporate manager for the race by describing how the lynching of black men dramatically affected the economic well being of Tennessee's economy. He argued that the lynching of black men convinced them and their families to leave Tennessee, which left severe labor shortages throughout the entire state. His use of Washington's strategy conflicted with his unfavorable impression of Washington in *Three Generations*. While Cansler did not support Washington's philosophy of negotiating for the lives of black men almost exclusively through economic justifications, he believed that writing within Washington's paradigm was the best means of gaining Governor Rye's attention and support. Though Cansler was unsuccessful, his decision to use Washington's strategy demonstrated that Washington's racial accommodation philosophy became the ideology that many local racial activists used to communicate with white politicians. Cansler's negative opinion of Washington but use of Washington's tactics allowed me to discover the very real resistance to allowing local and national race leaders their intricacies.⁴

Cansler's contradictory relationship with Washington and his legacy is part of a much larger discussion about Washington and his debate with W.E.B. Du Bois.

Contemporary African American and American Studies Departments and programs nationwide teach W.E.B. Du Bois' debate with Booker T. Washington. They introduce students to African American and American history through these two national race leaders' perceptions of each other and their approaches to racial uplift and integration. Recently, books such as *African Americans Reflect on Booker T. Washington and Up from Slavery 100 Years Later* (2005), edited by Rebecca Carroll, have developed new perspectives on Booker T. Washington and his legacy. From the emergence of Black Nationalism in the 1960's through the reemergence of Black Nationalists sentiment in the late 1980's, Washington was usually labeled as an Uncle Tom: the race leader who abandoned his race for white approval and prestige.⁵ While some black intellectuals and local black politicians continue to agree with Du Bois' critique of him and similar critiques of Washington's legacy, others have argued that scholars did not place him within a historical context. These supporters of Washington contend that scholars and students labeling Washington an Uncle Tom because of his philosophy of racial accommodation do not have an accurate understanding of American history. Still, others argue that they have not blindly labeled Washington an Uncle Tom. They maintain the view that placing Washington within a historical context will not save his legacy.⁶

However, conservative-minded black scholars, and even some progressive-minded black intellectuals, believe that the view that he was an Uncle Tom was merely the Northern black elite looking down on Washington and on the southern, rural and poverty-stricken black masses. Moreover, they consider contemporary generations'

views of Washington as an Uncle Tom as naïve and shortsighted. This debate about Washington, however, is not about southerner's pessimistic perceptions of black youth and the northern black elite, or whether Washington can be definitively labeled a remarkable race leader or an Uncle Tom. The debate should focus on the limitations of the evaluation process. The demand for Washington to be considered as one or the other reveals the lack of imagination in the interpretation of performances of black leadership culture.⁷ The debates about Washington's legacy expose that the lack of sophistication in the study of black leadership culture, both locally and nationally. Washington's accusers and his defenders often either want to condemn him as an Uncle Tom or completely defend his strategy and conduct.⁸ Cansler's *Three Generations* and Daves' sociological study of Knoxville reflect on Rebecca Carroll's collection of more complex readings of Washington and his legacy.

Cansler and his son-in-law J. Herman Daves were southerners from two entirely different social class backgrounds. While Cansler would be considered a member of Du Bois' talented tenth, Daves was a self-made man whose childhood more closely resembled Washington's. Cansler's *Three Generations* and Daves' sociological study of Knoxville allow readers to explore national performances of black leadership culture alongside local race leaders' decision to work with national black leaders and independent of their ideologies.

For example, J. Herman Daves' sociological research on Knoxville's black community was part of a much larger debate about how to measure black progress throughout American history. The post-World War 1 era marked the emergence of black sociologists as influential race leaders on the national scene. Many educated whites and

blacks knew of Du Bois from his collection of sociological minded essays *The Souls of Black Folk*, but by the early 1900's other black sociologists came into view as influential national and local race leaders. Black sociologists were changing as they received more recognition, however. Prominent black sociologist circles adopted the intellectually minded research of the Chicago School. Black sociologists' decision signified a lucrative move away from community organizing and activist-minded view and practice of sociology to a more scientific approach. This shift resembled Du Bois' interpretation of the field prior to his most famous work. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* would eventually mark awareness of the need for more than an objective scientific method to examine America's race problem. *Souls of Black Folk* became a canonical work because of Du Bois ability to develop an interdisciplinary technique to document and represent the black experience within American society, but from the publication of his work, and several years after it, influential black sociologists emulated Du Bois' scientific-minded sociological study of systemic American racism. Nevertheless, some contemporary black scholars doing interdisciplinary work on black masculinity and race leadership believe that Du Bois' peer black sociologists had more in common with Washington than with Du Bois.

In his book *Manning the Race: Reforming Black Men in the Jim Crow Era* (2004), Marlon L. Ross argued that Booker T. Washington's philosophy of racial accommodation shaped the Chicago School's representations of the black ghetto. He employed Charles U. Smith's and Lewis Killian's "Black Sociologists and Social Protest" to argue that Robert E. Park, one of the cofounders of the School, was heavily influenced by Washington's philosophy of racial accommodation.⁹ Ross surmised that

Park's patrons, most notably Julius Rosenwald, were also Washington's prominent patrons. Rosenwald was also part of a cadre of white patrons who sponsored Fisk University's emergence as the premiere historically black university in sociology from the 1930's through the mid-1950's when Charles S. Johnson was chair of the Sociology Department and then the first black President.¹⁰ Ross began his argument establishing a clear connection between Bookerite accommodationism, the Chicago School, and white paternalism—highlighting what he viewed as his most important criticism: how the Chicago School's belief in objective sociological methods were shaped by white paternalism.¹¹

Ross disagreed with the Chicago School's argument that sociological truth materialized from objective interpretation of (housing conditions, boundaries of neighborhoods, cleanliness of laborers).¹² He argued that what the Chicago School was really doing was contending that the central measure of progress was blacks' access to whites who modeled proper housing conditions, cleanliness, and neighborhood configuration. He believed that this construction of the truthful progress reinforced the existence of black inferiority and white superiority as the norm.

While Ross critiqued the Chicago School by arguing that white influence governed their scholarship, not Du Bois' sociological vision, Daves formed an entirely different reading. He employed Du Bois' sociological methods to display the role local racial activists and the black masses played in developing their own interpretations of themselves and their communities; that is, he utilized the establishment of educational institutions and black home ownership to evaluate the effectiveness of race pride ideologies and black social organizations for racial improvement and interracial

cooperation.¹³ Daves' work should be placed in conversation with Ross's and other texts that are forming contemporary studies of black masculinity and black leadership culture throughout American history.

Recent research on Ralph J. Bunche's work during the 1930's and 1940's offers us another important historical and cultural context to evaluate Cansler's contribution to black leadership conventions. He provided an important historical and cultural context for Cansler's views on local race leadership. Bunche's *Brief and Tentative Analysis of Negro Leadership* (1940) has only recently been published, but his notes on Negro Leadership provide a framework to explore Cansler's philosophical representations of his family's local-racial-activist- legacy.

Bunche was the first African American to earn a doctorate in political science from Harvard University. He taught at Howard University through the 1930's. There, he coordinated the establishment of the political science department. He was a pioneer in merging his scholarship with political activism and research on Africa, race and class politics, education and public policy.¹⁴ He also worked at the United Nations from its founding in 1946 to his death in 1971. In 1950 he won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work on mediating the armistice that ended the first Arab-Israeli war.¹⁵

In his notes on black leadership for the Carnegie Foundation's massive study *An American Dilemma* (1944), Bunche argued that there was a black leadership crisis. He asserted that black leaders' reliance on whites for financial support and social recognition were the root causes of the calamity. He believed that once black leaders gained social prestige and political power from influential whites that national and local black leaders

became more concerned with serving their careers than responding to the needs of the race and American society.¹⁶

Bunche presented how white paternalism governed black leadership culture. He described how six of what he considered the most recognizable models of black leadership culture were influenced by white paternalism: **(1)** Aggressive local and national race leaders argued that organizations and ideologies of racial uplift needed to be in closer proximity to black communities. This type of leader for Bunche was outspoken in protest against America's culture of racism and demanded change. He believed that this approach produced limited results, however, because both whites and blacks were fearful of aggressive national and local race leaders, particularly many members of middle-class black communities. **(2)** Cautious leaders publicly defended white society's racist conduct by criticizing the behavior of blacks to earn social recognition from whites and conservative-minded blacks. **(3)** Liaison Leaders act as facilitators for slave masters and later as appointed stooges for local politicians and law enforcement. They were sent by local and national members of the establishment to ease racial tensions and protect the status quo. For their services influential and wealthy whites gave them financial rewards and promoted them as model citizens to whites and to conservative blacks. **(4)** Symbolic Leaders were appointed heads of historically black colleges and university who received recognition as emblems of the race's progress but often appeared more beholden to the titles they acquired from whites than to using their status to educate and coordinate racial uplift strategies. **(5)** Prestige Leaders were national and local figures who began their careers fighting racial injustice but opted for white recognition of their success by taking positions as more moderate heads of schools and government agencies instead of

continuing their radical battles against American racism. (6) Negro Leaders Designated by Whites Bunche believed competed often for whites' recognition as the race's spokespeople.

Bunche perceived that this competition revealed that even blacks often did not accept aspiring local and national race leaders until they earned praise from influential whites. He identified some national and local race leader as embodiments of these types, but they were lesser known local and national race leaders. Nonetheless, Bunche's view of black leadership culture was part of a larger conversation which included Douglass, Martin Delany, Harriet Jacobs, Maria Stewart, Frances E.W, Harper, Washington, Du Bois, Johnson, William Pickens, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes and Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. These national race leaders debated whose performances of racial uplift and integration were more genuine and independent of white paternalism.

Bunche felt that white paternalism and conservative black pathology always had the potential of crippling the growth of progressive-minded black leaders. His efforts indicate that serious scholarship can locate and document the racial anxiety inherent within black leadership culture. He tried to establish rigidly defined models of black leadership culture that were informed by white paternalism. His black leadership categories were intended to document why aspiring local and national black leaders consented to the belief that whiteness was equated with more moral legitimacy.

From Bunche's assessment of white paternalism's control over black leadership culture, it is not surprising that blacks have responded to these issues by simplistically labeling black leaders as one type of black leader or "the other" type to provide

themselves with some sense of security. His critique specified the want to achieve healthy racial identity formation by placing black leaders in manufactured and narrow-minded standard of authentic blackness. Consequently, the anxiety over white paternalism made it difficult for race leaders to examine their own conduct within black leadership culture, because the lack of suitable means of evaluating talented blacks' participation in black leadership culture turned any critique of one's role as a black leader into a personal racial attack. The inadequate criteria available to analyze black leadership performances impeded the maturity of black leadership cultural traditions. For instance, while Bunche established important descriptions of white paternalism influence over black leadership culture, he does not describe his own experiences with white paternalism. Thus he must have known that given the limited means to assess productive and negative enactments of black leadership traditions, it was ill-advised to evaluate his personal experiences. Moreover, his difficulty in expressing personal introspection about black leadership culture revealed why previous and current national race leaders turned to black self help as the dominant stance of race leadership culture throughout American history.

Three Generations offered an opportunity to place Cansler's representation black leadership culture alongside Bunche's perceptive critique. Cansler was able to address white paternalism issues facing black leadership culture from philosophical and personal perspectives. His introspective reading of the family's local racial-activist legacy formed images of how they managed to overcome white paternalism and cope with Knoxville's black community's racial anxiety. Cansler demonstrated how he, his immediate ancestors and other local racial activists cultivated the self-reliance mindset necessary to model excellence for themselves, their families, and the black community. They were able to

demonstrate practices of local black leadership culture that produced results for the black community. Cansler exemplified how the group oriented approach offered a disciplined yet democratic adherence to selfless racial activism. He described how groups of local race leaders in Knoxville produced solutions to problems themselves by learning how to work with each other and form associations across racial and class lines. There were other local racial activists across the country that had similar success.

For instance, William Still's (-1902) family freed themselves from slavery in Maryland and moved to New Jersey. Still taught himself to read and write and moved to Philadelphia. There, he became chairman of the Abolitionist's society. He developed his local race-leader institution by turning his house into an underground railroad and interviewing and keeping records of fugitive slaves that came to his house so that they could eventually find their families. He helped 649 slaves escape. In 1872, Still documented his local racial-activist tradition in a book called *The Underground Railroad*. Still's ability to learn from whites and develop his own local race-leader institution offered another example of how local race leaders established their own black self help traditions and overcame white paternalism.¹⁷ National race leaders also used the black self help ideology for themselves and the race.

Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Exposition speech of September 1895 and Louis Farrakhan's Million Man March of October 1995 surprisingly represent similar images of black leadership principles of self help.¹⁸ While Washington was widely praised for advocating conciliatory and accommodating philosophical responses to racial segregation in his speech, Farrakhan, the Head of the Nation of Islam, was considered a racial demagogue prior to the Million Man March and after it.¹⁹ Nevertheless, only on a

superficial level do Washington and Farrakhan appear to be at opposite ends of the political spectrum.²⁰ Both men became national race leaders as white liberalism retreated from principles and practices of racial activism designed to protect civil rights for blacks and advocate educational and economic opportunities for them.²¹ This decision offered Washington and Farrakhan an opportunity to campaign as the spokesman for the race on an accessible agenda of black self-reliance.²² Both men preached black self-help as a response to the liberal retreat from the struggle against racial oppression, and they both rejected the strategy that the black community should plead for handouts from federal and local governments. Both men also believed property ownership and entrepreneurship held the keys to black upward mobility. Clearly the similarities between Washington and Farrakhan do not make Washington a black separatist or Farrakhan an accommodationist. They do, however, pinpoint what race leaders perceived as the most successful approach to address white paternalism, white abandonment, and racial anxiety.²³ Washington and Farrakhan felt that the representation of black self help as national race leadership enabled them to develop organizations and political alliances to anoint themselves as the race's spokespeople and challenge racial oppression. Their success, however, led to an autocratic and paternalistic national- race-leadership approach which often excluded women and other national race leaders with different approaches.²⁴ Moreover, their presentation of the black self- help ideology could not directly address the various needs of southern black communities.

Cansler's text and Daves' sociological study of Knoxville can be placed in conversation with Washington's and Farrakhan's performances. Cansler and Daves understood that though national race leaders can develop agendas against racial

oppression, a committed group of local race leaders had to turn the national race leaders' program into a tangible reality, to respond to the individual needs of black communities both in the South and the North. The Scotts' and the Canslers' familial-minded and group-oriented racial uplift ideology enabled them to establish black self-improvement institutions. The Scotts and the Canslers beneficial interracial associations facilitated the creation of a series of schools, newspapers, a library, and in conjunction with other black and white leaders of their time in Knoxville, and Daves assisted in nurturing other vital institutions within Knoxville's black community, such as Knoxville College and the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Three Generations presented a family's experiences with the evolution of black leadership culture. Cansler described the accomplishments of local- race-leadership culture as familial-minded black men and women promoting communal activism, race pride, and the formation of interracial alliances for the collective racial self improvement, but he also depicted middle-class black men and women's obsession with materialism and social status as the eventual demise of the local race leadership principles during and after World War 1.

Another major reason for the demise was our, and other prominent black families,' decision to the leave the black community. My father has said that one could make the argument that we, the large number of middle- and- upper-middle-class blacks, should have never left the South after achieving a northern education. Despite some working and middle-class blacks' realization of social class mobility opportunities after the civil rights movement, today we are still the most segregated racial or ethnic group in the country. One wonders were we would be as a race if talented and prosperous black

families surmounted internalized racism and superficial black elitism. What kind of social infrastructure organizations could we have formed? If we had remained in black communities, we could have established types of educational development that provided blacks of all classes with positive self images and interracial principles, and we could have also formed more social-mobility avenues for working class and impoverished blacks.

While some members of my family carried on racial uplift traditions in predominately black neighborhoods and social circles across the country, most of them chose to reside in integrated or predominately upper-middle-class white neighborhoods. While my older cousins had some ties to the black community in Washington D.C. in the early 1970's, they received their educational opportunities at prestigious highly selective liberal arts colleges or Ivy League colleges and universities. Previous generations received these types of educational opportunities at Northern Liberal Arts Colleges, but they returned to the southern black communities after graduation where opportunities were available in black communities and historically black colleges. This ritual ended in the 1950's with the civil rights movement. Increased access to mainstream American society naturally led my family and others like them to affluent integrated or predominately white neighborhoods.

In *Time* magazine's May 10, 2004 edition, David E. Thigpen's article "Topeka Kansas: An Elusive Dream in the Promised Land" further illustrated the effects of my family's and other prominent black families' decision to leave socially and economically diverse black neighborhood. Thigpen's article evaluated the successes and failures in Topeka Kansas fifty years after the landmark *Brown V. Board of Education of Topeka*.

He begins by introducing Robert McFrazier, someone whose life and career in education resembled Charles Warner Cansler's. While McFrazier was only ten during the rendering of the decision in 1954 and Cansler died a year before it, they both employed the value of education as means to define themselves and to exhibit local racial-activist ideologies. McFrazier was from Muskogee, Oklahoma about 250 miles away from Topeka. He can vividly recall the day that the Supreme Court ruled that Separate but Equal was unconstitutional. He remembered how teachers and students alike roared with excitement. He recalled how the promise of integration lured him to Topeka, Kansas where he believed that finally blacks would get a piece of the dream. Similar to Cansler's successful career in education, McFrazier began his career as a junior high teacher, became principal and had a long tenure as superintendent of schools. He retired from the Schools' top post in 2003. Reflecting back on his career and that of the Supreme Court decision, he is disillusioned. He believes that while Brown was a social triumph, it was an educational failure.²⁵

Ironically, McFrazier feels that desegregation is the root cause of Brown's educational failure. He argues, "That the closing of black neighborhood schools—with their traditions, yearbooks, mottoes, fight songs and halls of fame—ripped the centerpiece out of those communities."²⁶ His view echoed the sentiment of many other black intellectuals and activists who now consider the idea of integration being the answer to racial and educational inequality as woefully naïve. Moreover, his perception of middle-class black flight from economically diverse black communities supports my family's view of what has happened. McFrazier also recognized that "Black role models—doctors and educators—left the neighborhood and moved to suburban

communities, taking the achievement ethic with them.”²⁷ He contends that this left lowered expectations. He believed it leaves working-class and impoverished black students in vulnerable situations. While the races may sit side by side in schools, black students are victimized by powerful racial prejudices in the classroom which lead teachers to expect more from white students than they do from black students. In many cases they do not even sit side by side. Too often black students are tracked into remedial courses whereas their white and Asian peers gain access to college prep tracks and AP courses.²⁸

Some of my older cousins did work, however, to instill racial consciousness in their children, my second cousins, by sending them to historically black colleges and universities after preparatory school, but even there they had much more in common with other affluent black children than they would with working-class blacks. My second cousins were part of a group of black students who decided to attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU’s) because their parents had become disillusioned with predominately white and affluent public or private schools. This decision still meant, nevertheless, that they did not have substantial interactions with working-class and poverty-stricken blacks.

Also, several of my older female cousins married upper- middle-class white men. While even a dream marriage can be difficult, the issue of race clearly adds another hurdle. However, my cousins have had loving and successful marriages with healthy, happy, and prosperous children, but this does not mean that they do not face racial identity issues. Some of their children, my second cousins, look white and have had more exposure to the white elite than they have had to blacks of any kind, certainly not the so

called “authentically black” people. While I have tried to carry on the family tradition and they have not and so far they have not, this is understandable. I had to decide to take it up, and they did not have as much exposure to the tradition. The only times that they would hear of this tradition is on occasion from their mothers or their grandparents.

Thus we either emerged as “a minority within a minority of successful blacks” or influential whites who are merely technically black because they happen to have black mothers. Our lives are reflections of why social class within the race can have much significance in one’s experiences with such racial identity issues as skin color. Previous generations of my family had a stronger connection to blacks from a variety of social class backgrounds than we did because they grew up in black neighborhoods.

Our parents’ decision to leave the black community, for a variety of reasons, has altered blacks and whites perceptions of us. Blacks often question our blackness because of our social status and skin color, and whites often treat us as exceptions to the rule: honorary blacks in their social circle, or whites who just happened to have black mothers. Also, there are few black middle-class/working-class neighborhoods left. This migration from the black community to predominately white neighborhood, or exclusive black enclaves, has also affected blacks who have remained within thick working class and impoverished black communities. Because the absence of diverse notions of blackness in these neighborhoods enables socially constructed, and often self destructive notions of what it means to be black, to dominate valuable social spaces. Blackness in schools and peer circles is often now only characterized as criminal behavior such as hustling, prostitution, drug dealing, and gang culture. The entertainment and sports industries are then seen in these influential social spaces as the only legitimate means of achieving

racially authentic black advancement, because traditional forms of cultivating human capital through education are perceived as “acting white.”

That is why, in my view, it is time to turn Cansler’s representation of my family’s history into a living history. Cansler’s work can play a role in facilitating the possibility of an alternative future for generations of black men and women, particularly for many black men who have such a limited understanding of perceptions of black masculinity and black leadership culture. For instance, in my family the Daves men were largely responsible for carrying on the Scotts and the Canslers local race legacies in a variety of black and white communities across the country.

Recently my father, Charles Warner Daves, became one of the caretakers of a local race-leader tradition which began at Princeton University in 1964. My father edited Carl A. Fields’ memoir *Black in Two Worlds: A Personal Perspective on Higher Education* (2006). Fields’ memoir chronicles his life as Princeton’s first black administrator and the first black administrator from outside Africa at the University of Zambia. My father relied on his experiences editing a book from a conference *The Uses and Misuses of Standardized Tests* and his published dissertation on the works of the 17th century English writer Samuel Butler and several articles.

Thus I know my father felt that beyond the editing process his most significant contribution to Fields’ story was convincing former Princeton (1957-1972) President Robert F. Goheen to write the Foreword for Fields’ memoir. He did not know Goheen, but he knew that having Goheen write the Foreword could verify the importance of Fields’ experiences and contributions to Princeton University since he was president when Fields was hired. Nevertheless, this request was a risk. What if Goheen’s Foreword

did not accurately reflect Fields' remarkable achievements at Princeton? In our conversations, I learned that my father was pleased. I learned why when I read Goheen's Foreword. The former President represented what Fields encountered at Princeton. He described how Fields aided the first critical mass of black students at Princeton while simultaneously making Goheen and his administration conscious of Princeton University's racist history. Fields' local racial-activist capabilities made it possible for Princeton administrators to begin the difficult process of deciding what needed to be done to make Princeton University a more inclusive higher educational institution. In March of 2006, my father helped organize a launching of the book in the Carl A. Fields Center at Princeton University. My father was pleased that current Princeton University President Shirley Tilghman and former President Goheen spoke at the event. Moreover, I learned that Fields' life as a local leader resembled my father's experiences.

In the 1960's, I discovered that Fields and my father were black pioneers in Princeton. My father was one of the first black executives at the Educational Testing Service in 1968, and in the 1980's he was the first black Chairman of the Board of Trustees at the College of New Jersey. Moreover, the two men took on roles as both educators and racial ambassadors for whites and blacks at their respective institutions. During their careers they witnessed both the progress and decline of the civil rights sensibility.

Thus *Raising Black Dreams* builds on Manning Marable's recent book *Living Black History: How Reimagining the African-American Past Can Remake America's Future* (2006). This dissertation responds to Manning Marable's call for producing scholarship that documents the existence of a living black history of black leadership

culture. *Raising Black Dreams* should be part of a much larger conversation about how to address the continued emphasis on organizing mainstream American history around the preservation of “the historical logic of whiteness.” Marable believes that mainstream American History is still largely taught from the perspective of manifest destiny and a series of conquests and military victories for freedom and democracy that are designed to establish uniformity at the expense of people of color’s counter narratives of American history. *Raising Black Dreams* speaks to the need to develop local living black histories that reveal the narrative gaps of mainstream American History and construction of a master narrative that continues to exclude blacks from America’s history and culture.

For instance, *Raising Black Dreams* takes readers back in time so that they can acquire a deeper understanding of the present and the need to facilitate alternative futures. As I mentioned earlier, blacks continue to be the most segregated minority group in American society, regardless of whether the primary reason for their isolation is society refusing to dismantle practices of racial exclusion or black communities’ decision to self-segregate and adopt thick forms of black self-consciousness. In either case, I hope this study provides readers with an opportunity to consider how a black family responded to central questions still facing contemporary black communities: how can families, local racial activists, and national race leaders aid the next generation in the development of positive self images, what can families, local racial activists, and national race leaders do to help the next generation gain vital cultural-currency skills so that they can emerge as healthy and productive citizens in-between divergent racial and social class environments.

 Notes

¹ William L. Andrews. "Narrating Slavery." *Teaching African American Literature: Theory and Practice*. Ed. Maryemma Graham, Sharon Pineault-Burke and Marianna White Davis. (New York: Routledge, 1998) 27.

² Andrews, "Narrating Slavery," 27.

³ Andrews, "Narrating Slavery," 27.

⁴ Debra Dickerson. "Chapter X." *African Americans Reflect on Booker T. Washington and Up from Slavery 100 Years Later: Uncle Tom or New Negro?* Ed. Rebecca Carroll. (New York: Harlem Moon, 2006) 86-88.

⁵ Kitwana, Bakari. "Chapter IX." *African Americans Reflect on Booker T. Washington and Up from Slavery 100 Years Later: Uncle Tom or New Negro?* Ed. Rebecca Carroll. (New York: Harlem Moon, 2006) 77-79.

⁶ Ronald Walters. "Chapter III." *African Americans Reflect on Booker T. Washington and Up from Slavery 100 Years Later: Uncle Tom or New Negro?* Ed. Rebecca Carroll. (New York: Harlem Moon, 2006) 26, 27.

⁷ Debra Dickerson. "Chapter X." *African Americans Reflect on Booker T. Washington and Up from Slavery 100 Years Later: Uncle Tom or New Negro?* Ed. Rebecca Carroll. (New York: Harlem Moon, 2006) 86-88.

⁸ Bill E. Lawson. "Chapter I." *African Americans Reflect on Booker T. Washington and Up from Slavery 100 Years Later: Uncle Tom or New Negro?* Ed. Rebecca Carroll. (New York: Harlem Moon, 2006) 9, 10.

⁹ Marlon B. Ross. *Manning the Race: Reforming Black Men in the Jim Crow Era*. (New York: New York University Press, 2004) 166, 167.

¹⁰ Ross, *Manning the Race: Reforming Black Men in the Jim Crow Era*, 166, 167.

¹¹ Ross, *Manning the Race: Reforming Black Men in the Jim Crow Era*, 166, 167.

¹² Ross, *Manning the Race: Reforming Black Men in the Jim Crow Era*, 166, 167.

¹³ Ross, *Manning the Race: Reforming Black Men in the Jim Crow Era*, 166, 167.

¹⁴ Ralph J. Bunche. *A Brief and Tentative Analysis of Negro Leadership*. Ed. Jonathan Scott Holloway. New York: New York University Press, 2005. (1-5)

¹⁵ Bunche, *A Brief and Tentative Analysis of Negro Leadership*, 2-7.

¹⁶ Bunche, *A Brief and Tentative Analysis of Negro Leadership*, 33, 34.

¹⁷ William Still. *The Underground Rail Road*. (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872) 1-5.

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- ¹⁸ Manning Marable. *Black Leadership: Four Great Leaders and the Struggle for Civil Rights*. (xi-xii)
- ¹⁹ Marable, *Black Leadership: Four Great Leaders and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, xi-xii.
- ²⁰ Marable, *Black Leadership: Four Great Leaders and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, xi-xiii.
- ²¹ Marable, *Black Leadership: Four Great Leaders and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, xi-xiii
- ²² Marable, *Black Leadership: Four Great Leaders and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, xi-xiii
- ²³ Marable, *Black Leadership: Four Great Leaders and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, xii-xiii.
- ²⁴ Marable, *Black Leadership: Four Great Leaders and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, xii-xiii.
- ²⁵ Marable, *Black Leadership: Four Great Leaders and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, xii-xiii.
- ²⁶ David E. Thigpen. "Topeka Kansas: An Elusive Dream in the Promised Land." *Time Magazine* May 10th 2004. (32)
- ²⁷ Thigpen, "Topeka Kansas: An Elusive Dream in the Promised Land," 32.
- ²⁸ Thigpen, "Topeka Kansas: An Elusive Dream in the Promised Land," 32.

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