ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE PROBLEM OF THE PRISM: RACIAL PASSING, COLORISM, AND THE POLITICS OF RACIAL VISIBILITY

DeLisa D. Hawkes, Doctor of Philosophy, 2020

Directed By: Professor Edlie L. Wong, Department of English

In *The Problem of the Prism*, I argue that activist writers challenged the normalizing of white supremacy and imagined black futurity within the intersections of racial visibility, nation, and culture by transforming and repurposing racist and colorist ideologies. Through a wide range of cultural materials, I recuperate overlooked discourses on race and color by broadening the parameters through which we understand the black-white color line. Focusing on neglected texts by understudied authors allows for a deeper consideration of how assumed ancestry and legal segregation impact America's construction of citizenship and social hierarchies. For this reason, I consider how critical attention to skin complexion and visible ancestry illuminates institutionalized feelings of inferiority. I call these the politics of racial visibility. In the first chapter, I consider Albion Tourgée's 1890 novel *Pactolus Prime* and the ways in which it offers readers an examination of how the black-white color line fosters notions of inferiority within both races. In chapter two, I argue that Sutton Griggs inspires the "New Mulatta," a revision of the "tragic mulatta" trope, that inspires race pride throughout the Black Diaspora by rejecting colorist ideologies. In chapter three, I recover the works of Olivia Ward Bush-Banks and Sylvester

"Chief Buffalo Child" Long Lance as critical lenses through which to deconstruct black separatism by considering African-Native American identities within New Negro philosophy. I argue that their works reconceptualize the "tragic mulatta/o" outside of the confines of the black-white binary while acknowledging the fraught relationship between African Americans and Native Americans. Thus, their works reveal a black-red color line that disables anti-racist and anti-colonialist collaboration. In the final chapter, I argue that 1940s and 1950s *Ebony* magazine articles shift readers' attention to racial anxieties within the "white" appearing spectrum of the black-white color line to critique internalized racism. By addressing social implications anticipated within racial ambiguity in the space of the home, this commercial magazine allows readers from all socioeconomic backgrounds to engage with pressing concerns over racial visibility. Ultimately, *Ebony* magazine's persistent focus on colorism and racial passing brings the efforts of nineteenth and early-twentieth-century authors full circle.

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by

DeLisa D. Hawkes

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Advisory Committee:
Professor Edlie L. Wong, Chair
Robert S. Levine
GerShun Avilez
Zita C. Nunes
Richard Bell

Dedication

For Cathy, Christine, Rosa Mae, Annie, Cora, and

all of my mothers.

"How simple a thing it seems to me that to know ourselves as we are, we must know our mothers' names." - Alice Walker

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Introduction

Spence Johnson, a man born free as a member of the Choctaw Nation during the 1850s, recalls when "de nigger stealers" captured him and his family while washing clothes along the river. In a July 5, 1937, interview, Johnson says the "stealers" hit his mother on her head, drove the family to "Boggy Depot," a trading center near the Oklahoma-Texas border, and sold the family to Riley Surratt, a Louisiana enslaver, for $3,000 (Nealy 228). Johnson reflects on his mother's trouble with adjusting to an enslaved black identity, stating "When Marse Riley bought her, she couldn' speak nothin' but de Choctaw words…My sister looked like a full blood Choctaw Indian and she could pass for a real full blood Indian. Mammy's folks was all Choctaw Indians… Dey was all known in de Territory in de ole days" (228).

Johnson's repeated focus on his mother's and sister's physical appearance, despite their actual ancestry, sheds light on the issue of one's supposed ability to visually decipher ancestry. A person might present a certain racial identity based on society's prejudices that it places within certain appearances; however, ancestries are not visible to the eye. In Johnson's case, white enslavers stole his family's freedom due to a racist white society's association of blackness with enslavement. The end of race-based chattel slavery in the United States only reinforced this phenotypically driven caste system used to maintain white supremacy. In the years immediately following emancipation, racial discrimination occurred as a de facto practice throughout the US. In 1896, US citizens witnessed the landmark *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision reinstate a race-based caste system on the basis of racial visibility and legally institutionalize, protect, and normalize alleged white superiority. The white supremacist political rhetoric would call this a solution to

the so-called "Negro Problem;" others recognized this decision as a horrific social injustice. Americans across the black-white color line, however, would experience race discrimination's social effects in the years to come. Black Americans experienced unfair treatment socially, politically, and economically, while whites benefitted from black subjugation for generations. *Plessy v. Ferguson* set the stage for how nineteenth and early-twentieth century activist writers depict race in their fiction and nonfiction, namely with sharp attention to physical indicators of race, the consequence of racial insecurities.

W.E.B. Du Bois encapsulates racial insecurities within his formulation of "the problem of the color line," or what he details in his influential 1903 text *Souls of Black Folk* as "the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea" (13). Du Bois speaks to white supremacy's global intricacies and its reliance on visible markers of race such as skin color.[1] Only one year after *Plessy,* Du Bois proposes without naming "the problem of the color line" in his 1897 text *The Conservation of Races* and voices opposition to US legal and cultural reliance on visual markers of race and pseudoscientific claims of racial difference. He focuses more on the cultural, political, and historical differences between the races rather than racial pseudoscience, thereby shifting racial discourse to the developing field of sociology. I argue in *The Problem of the Prism* that literature contributing to black political discourse from Reconstruction through the early years of the Civil Rights movement uses the tropes of racial passing and colorism (the preferential treatment based on color among people of the same race) to critique the shifting importance of racial visibility to citizenship in a similar light to Du Bois's foundational approach to race. Activist writers challenged the normalizing of white supremacy and imagined black

futurity within the intersections of racial visibility, nation, and culture by transforming and repurposing racist and colorist ideologies. More importantly, these activist writers tended to incorporate racially ambiguous figures, namely revisions of the "tragic mulatta/o," in order to achieve such goals.

Du Bois's humanistic training accounts for his focus on more apt differences between the races. He defines "race" as "a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together" (*Conservation* 7). His definition prompts the activist writers whose works I examine in this dissertation to question what are the differences between Black Americans, Native Americans, and white Americans if these groups drive the basis of what people assume to be US culture? Counter to white supremacist claims, Du Bois and other writers, including Olivia Ward Bush-Banks, Zora Neale Hurston, and publications, like the *Crisis* and *Ebony* magazine, declare that the US belongs to nonwhite groups. Du Bois leads the view of culture as a contributing factor to an "American race," stating that "We are Americans, not only by birth and by citizenship, but by our political ideals, our language, our religion" (12). He continues speaking about black Americans more specifically: "We are the first fruits of this new nation… people whose subtle sense of song has given America its only American music, its only American fairy tales, its only touch of pathos and humor amid its mad money-getting plutocracy" (12). Texts question how "race" functions in the US if black Americans are not fully integrated within society because of their appearance, full knowledge of their ancestry, and their relation to an enslaved past. What does black Americans' insecure citizenship status mean for other groups trying to integrate within society or for Native

Americans trying to assert their sovereignty? Does "American" suggest only a nationality, or can it also suggest race? All of these questions set the stage for thinking about the role of physical appearances and how they signify for intangible qualities. Yet physical appearances have the power to delineate one's social position and the position of her descendants for generations.

As various groups coexisted in the US and white supremacy purported a pseudoscientific account of biological differences among the races, "the problem of the color line" became inevitable during the period that Rayford Logan coins the Nadir. US society inscribed its racial anxieties and insecurities with white social dominance within physical appearance, and so a focus on skin color and other physical attributes accounted for even more social upheaval in the years from Reconstruction to the years following World War II. White supremacy attempted to classify everything it did not want to be identified with as "colored," therefore turning a blind eye to the cultural, political, and historical diversity present within the nation. Angela A. Gonzales notes that throughout the Americas, modern nation states have historically relied upon "statistics, averages, and probabilities" to determine race and to classify their citizenry (57). James Scott explains that these societies invented a system of 'surveyors and census takers' to categorize 'people's daily lives' as they became entrenched in 'state-created institutions that structure that experience' (qtd. in Gonzales 57). Du Bois points out that "race" took a negative turn when a black-white binary emerged, creating a racial hierarchy that resulted in the materialization of racial difference through the nation's institutions, including religion, education, freedom to name a few. Du Bois does not offer the reason for this change, but one can speculate that the horrors of the Transatlantic Slave Trade played a

major role in this shift in attitudes towards race. In response to Reconstruction's failure, Du Bois asks, "what shall be [race's] function in the future?" (*Conservation* 9). The answer seems to have been to create a power dynamic on the basis of physical appearances embodied by a relation to an enslaved past.

Chike Jeffers contends that Du Bois's outlook on "race is fundamentally political – that the substance of race, the only basis for the division of humanity into distinct races is the power dynamic separating people in dominant and subordinate groups" (409). That power dynamic, I argue, appears within the politics of racial visibility, or those institutionalized feelings of inferiority associated with skin color or any other phenotypical features, especially in cases that threaten white superiority. Shawn Michelle Smith argues that "the visual meanings of the color line…the visual theater of racist projection, and inscription, as well as antiracist resistance, [manifests within] the material meaning of the color line as the marker of social and economic divides" (1). The pivotal 1850 census marks this moment in US racial discourse given its role in establishing color as a formal marker within national institutions. According to Gonzales, enumerators were instructed to mark the enslaved with attention to color under heading number five: 'insert in all cases when the slave is black, the letter B; when he or she is mulatto, insert M. The color of all slaves should be noted' (61). The same instructions applied to free populations of color with the special note that enumerators make sure that 'these particulars be very carefully regarded' (61). The fluid application of these instructions in some instances, however, offers insight into how people's relationship with the black-white color line blurred the lines between white supremacy's influence over public and private aspects of individuals' lives. Gonzales continues, "The racial categories listed on

the census… reflect and help create political realities and ways of *thinking and seeing* [my emphasis]" (67). Not only did formal modes of white supremacy spur interracial divides, but it also influenced how nonwhite communities interacted with and saw each other.

Racial discourse most frequently references color lines, or those ideological divisions and hierarchies that rest on notions of race, within the context of a black-white binary. Color, frequently the most visible marker of one's race, acts as an important physical distinction that assigns interracial and intraracial social status to individuals as a result of white supremacist influence. Acknowledgement of the plurality of color lines pushes against the dominant black-white binary so frequently examined in scholarship and expands upon Du Bois's understudied investigation of the ways the black-white color line exists in plurality and influences relationships among and within the races. African American literature from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century examines how color lines create fissures in an interracial context, but more interestingly within black communities. *The Problem of the Prism* highlights the ways that literature addresses the oversimplification of the dominant black-white color line through various iterations of racial passing, colorism, and the "tragic mulatta/o" figure, thus revealing the many color lines present within US racial discourse and authors' uses of them to examine social meanings of race within the dominant culture and subcultures.

Interracial and intraracial fissures that rely on the politics of racial visibility occur through the racialized body. Du Bois's focus on visual interpretations of color lines calls for a prismatic approach to understanding the racialization of the body in a similar vein to what Zora Neale Hurston describes in her 1928 essay "How It Feels to be Colored Me."

Hurston's bag metaphor best illustrates a prismatic approach to racialization in the following passage:

> I feel like a brown bag of miscellany propped against a wall. Against a wall in company with other bags, white, red and yellow. Pour out the contents, and there is discovered a jumble of small, things priceless and worthless…. in your hand is the brown bag. On the ground before you is the jumble it held. So much like the jumble in the bags could they be emptied that all might be dumped in a single heap and the bags refilled without altering the content of any greatly. A bit of colored glass more or less would not matter. Perhaps that is how the Great Stuffer of Bags filled them in the first place? (829)

The bags stand in for the racialized body and color lines, highlighting the hyper-visible black-white color line. While Hurston situates difference between the individual bags and their contents, the colors matter most when they are placed against the backdrop of a wall—there for display, temporarily immobile, and for the enjoyment or practical use of the owner. The internal differences between the bags are completely overlooked, highlighting the issue of heterogeneity within the races. Hurston resolves that "the Great Stuffer of Bags" created all individuals the same except for their experiences and cultures—what she considers each bag's "contents." The only difference between the bags is their color and presumably the bits of glass the contain—what the holder of the bags, or dominant culture, considers racial difference. The social value attached to certain colors and sizes are the only part of the bag that the unaccounted-for hand cares about. The hand deems the bag's contents worthless and discards them onto the floor.

Hurston provides a metaphor for the racialization (and I would suggest the colorization) of bodies by the omnipresent hand. Laila Haidarali stresses that the glass "not only refracts light, but in its mirrored form, also reflects imagery… the racial identity of the bag (or 'subject' presented as 'object') emerges as one that has been constructed, internalized, [enacted, willing,] and open to reinvention at the hands of an omniscient power" (2). The omnipresent body in Hurston's essay constructs both the identities and values of the passive bags. Thus, I see a prismatic approach to the black-white color line described in Hurston's essay and in African American and American texts that reveals the many color lines present within US racial discourse. White supremacist culture assigns social status according to color lines, and therefore, the omnipresent figure depicted in the above lines decides which bag has the most value. The bag and glass metaphor illustrates that in a prismatic way, racial identities and attitudes towards certain complexions refracts a specific relation to whiteness. Literature provides the imaginative space in which to explain the concepts spun from the mainstream black-white color line and to uncover the many variations of color prejudices, or color refractions, in society.

Since ancestry is not visible to the eye, US citizens of all racial backgrounds relied on phenotypical features to determine a person's relation to an enslaved past. Smith's work on Du Bois and visual studies informs my examination of how late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century authors also question the aesthetics of the racialized body, or what M. Guilia Fabi might call the "histotextual" embodiment of history in visual markers deemed appropriate by the dominant culture (3). I am interested in literary works that engage with how certain histories are embedded into certain

identities that are connected to a particular physical appearance. For instance, why did the slave catchers overlook Spence Johnson's family's history and enslave them based on their physical appearances? Furthermore, I am also interested in how these figures challenge or adhere to notions concerning acceptance or rejection by society. Why and in what ways does the "tragic mulatta/o" automatically associate with a history of sexual violence? In the same way that Du Bois's photography collection at the 1900 Paris Exposition offered no explanatory texts or captions, bodies in everyday interactions do not offer explanations of a person's race or ancestry (and vice versa); the observer gazes upon the body and formulates her own assumptions about the individual. Some white Americans participated in the racialized gaze during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century to deny equal rights based on racial visibility, while some blacks sought to benefit from the racialized gaze and claim a higher social status outside of and within their communities through racial passing or colorism. Some black Americans who chose to pass for white or to subscribe to colorism did so in order to secure rights that were supposed to be granted to them as a part of the Reconstruction Amendments. In both instances, opposing sides of the black-white color line resort to racial visibility, those assumed or performed racial identifications, to decipher an individual's race and to control or seek access to materialized forms of racialization. Smith says that the racialized gaze authorizes who can look, what is seen, and what effects of the gaze become racialized (11). The racialized gaze occurs within and outside of minoritized communities since those communities exist within a racist culture. Racial passing and colorism directly resulted from white supremacists' attempts at securing a race-based

caste system, and consequently, this act and ideology has long complicated intraracial identity and community formation.

The Problem of the Prism examines how activist writers challenge and engage with the politics of racial visibility to dismantle racial hierarchies and their effects within and across color lines. As such, literary interrogations of the politics of racial visibility give immense attention to color lines at the turn of the century and in the years preceding federal civil rights legislation given literature's ability to change people's ideas. Once the way that people think changes, then true social improvement occurs. Social improvement then lends itself to changes in the nation's institutions. Du Bois explains that the best way to counter racism is, consequently, through institutional reform and racial solidarity. He says, "we need race organizations: Negro colleges, Negro newspapers, Negro business organizations, a Negro school of literature and art, and an intellectual clearing house. [These institutions are] absolutely imperative for negative defense" (*Conservation* 12). Only through a revision of existing social standards can readers consider race and racial tensions beyond the dominant black-white binary and their effects on collective and cross-cultural movements.

The texts that I examine push the boundaries of thinking about color lines in that they examine racialization on black bodies that appear "white" as well. These countertexts to white supremacist literary racial representations examine how individuals living within the US participate in the racialized gaze within and outside of minoritized communities. A shift in the focus from literary representations of race to color illuminates the intricacies of the mainstream color line and how authors writing within the African American literary tradition use color for the purpose of building community. Whereas

authors who promote white supremacy invoke race as a way of solidifying social and political hierarchies, black activist writers invoke color to destabilize those hierarchies and very consciously draw audiences' attention to the lack of precision in the word "race" and its sociological attachments. Hence, Du Bois names the multifaceted color line a "problem," and black activist writers use it as a method through which to critique some individuals' use of color to reinscribe nuanced versions of the same hierarchies promoted by white supremacists.

In his 1912 edition of *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, James Weldon Johnson exposes the extended psychological and sociological strains of the problem of the mainstream black-white color line and offers one of the earliest fictional examinations that considers connections between visual culture and the process of racialization on the body *within* an black community. Johnson discusses the problem of the dominant black-white color line through an unnamed narrator who reveals instances of colorism within black communities. The unnamed narrator remarks:

> [The color question] is evidenced most plainly in marriage selection; thus the black men generally marry women fairer than themselves; while, on the other hand, the dark women of stronger mental endowment are very often married to light-complexioned men; the effect is a tendency toward lighter complexions, especially among the more active elements in the race. Some might claim that this is a tacit admission of colored people among themselves of their own inferiority judged by the color line. I do not think so. What I have termed an inconsistency is, after all, most natural; it is, in fact, a tendency in accordance with what might be called

> an economic necessity. So far as racial differences go, the United States puts a greater premium on color, or, better, lack of color, than upon anything else in the world. (72)

Here, the narrator reveals to his white readers (while slighting his black readers for perpetuating colorism) that color lines crystalize borders between marginalized communities. The narrator also provides a glimpse into the process through which race ideologies become inscribed in skin complexion, making the very race ideologies that white supremacy aims to protect trivialized through the presumption of ancestry based solely on physical appearance. Johnson invokes Du Bois's contention that (skin) color, that which is visible and acts as a reflection of US culture, lies at the root of the race problem. Du Bois remarks in his 1915 essay "The African Roots of War", "'Color' became in the world's thought synonymous with inferiority…Thus, the world began to invest in color prejudice…. The resultant jealousies and bitter hatreds tend continually to fester along the color line" (711). Culture's association with a certain hue becomes synonymous with inferiority, thus the visual reflects ideas held within US culture. Du Bois's reference to multiple hues, prejudices, and ethnicities, alongside his signification on color, marks his understanding that color lines apply to more than just the black-white binary despite the approach that most literary scholarship takes with the topic.

In his lesser-studied 1928 novel *Dark Princess*, Du Bois notes intraracial divides based on the color line's continuous effects beyond the black-white binary. The narrator states, "Suddenly now there loomed plain and clear the shadow of a color line within a color line, a prejudice within a prejudice" (22). Additionally, Du Bois notes the many other non-Western cultures that adopt color lines, including those in Asia and Africa, in

the face of settler colonialism. Johnson's unnamed narrator precedes Du Bois's narrator in showing that the problem of the color line extends beyond a black-white dichotomy and haunts the inner workings of developing communities in the face of white supremacy; however, Du Bois's theories on race set the stage for Johnson's (and many other writers') literary examinations. Literary representations of race and color lines influence collective struggles towards racial uplift and social justice by refiguring the dominant black-white color line in relation to the lesser-studied complexities of intraracial tensions. Nineteenth and early-twentieth century authors signify on literary racial passing, colorism, and the "one-drop rule" with attention to Du Bois's anticipation of future generation's claims of a post-racial society.

In *The Problem of the Prism*, I examine representations of colorism and racial passing within the African American literary canon with two goals in mind. In the first, I examine authors' successes or failures at representing color lines' impacts on race relations. In the second, I assess these works' lesser-discussed abilities to explicate on relations between black communities and other nonwhite communities labeled as "colored," such as the recent surge in scholarship on African-Native American identities.[2] I consider the literary ruminations of African-Native Americans and their relationships with the colorist presence that sometimes resulted in race hatred or an individual or entire family choosing to pass for another race. For, as Theda Perdue notes of black and Native American relations more broadly, Native American communities kept their own racial boundaries, often times policing relations and refusing to share institutions with blacks but not necessarily with whites (25). Individual choices concerning self-identification could negatively impact collective civil rights and decolonization movements. Gender

and considerations of the role of women as the cradles of race pride formation and the home have particular importance in this dissertation as well, especially when questioning the rationale that guides individual choices to pass for another race or to subscribe to colorism.

I take an interdisciplinary approach that includes in-depth archival research to recuperate under-examined literary and public discourses on color as they pertain to and challenge race and racial visibility. These discourses have had lasting social and political effects that reached beyond and complicated the black-white color line, while fostering intraracial tensions. Yet many of the authors and texts that I analyze here have remained understudied. Texts written by African-Native individuals, such as Olivia Ward Bush-Banks and Sylvester "Chief Buffalo Child" Long Lance, illustrate marginalized authors and identities experimenting with racial ideologies to directly critique and challenge the dominant black-white color line and social movements such as the New Negro Movement. Legal cases like *Plessy v. Ferguson* illustrate how political actors envisioned race and color-based citizenship and challenged the limits of racial visibility. Periodicals like the *Colored American Magazine*, the *Crisis*, and *Ebony* expose the broader conversations concerning color and race as well as those within the more private, understudied intraracial color lines. Together, these cultural mediums highlight the complexities of the period's changing historical and sociological processes and reveal activist writers' literary usages of racial passing, colorism, and the "one-drop rule" to critique racial formation, social hierarchy, national belonging, white supremacy, and colonization in the US.

The texts represented in my dissertation, including obscure novels like Albion Tourgée's 1890 novel *Pactolus Prime* and popular photo-editorials from 1940s and 1950s *Ebony* magazine, lend more attention to the unconventional modes of literary representations of the color lines. However, these diverse texts are part of a longer literary tradition interested in exploring the visual significance of race in US culture. Take Dion Boucicault's 1859 play "The Octoroon." In the play, the main character, Zoe, is auctioned off at an astronomical cost based on her ancestry and "white" appearance. One bidder places a "Fifteen thousand dollar bid for the Octoroon" (Boucoult). However, the auctioneer ultimately sells Zoe for twenty-five thousand dollars. Zoe's character speaks to the histovisual aesthetic of enslaved persons with "whiter" complexions serving as visual markers of coerced sexual acts between enslaver and enslaved. Often times, enslaved persons of "whiter" complexions were treated with increased suspicion as they were a visible threat to white purity and supremacy. Therefore, while fairer-complexion enslaved persons may have received less physically exhausting work, Eugene Genovese notes that they nevertheless suffered from the enslaver's mental and sexual abuse while facing criticism from others who were enslaved and accusing them of conspiring with enslavers (331). Literature often examines these divisions based on racial appearances that provided people with certain skin complexions opportunities in "the Big House" and intimacy with the enslaver. Other examples touch upon miscegenation and the hypocrisy of US democratic principles through the "tragic mulatta/o" figure for a largely white audience. William Wells Brown's 1853 novel *Clotel,* the first novel published by a black author in the US, implemented this trope and inspired a host of others to do the same in their examinations of race and morality, including Frank J. Webb's 1857 novel *The*

Garies and Their Friends, the second novel written by a black author in the US. Many now-canonical texts of various genres within the African American literary tradition focus on the politics of racial visibility including Francis E.W. Harper's 1892 novel *Iola Leroy*, Charles Chesnutt's 1900 novel *The House Behind the Cedars*, Pauline Hopkins's 1900 and 1902-1903 novels *Contending Forces* and *Of One Blood*, Hurston's 1926 play "Color Struck," Langston Hughes's 1927 poem "Mulatto," Jessie Redmon Fauset's 1928 novel *Plum Bun*, Nella Larsen's 1928 and 1929 novels *Quicksand* and *Passing*, Wallace Thurman's 1929 novel *The Blacker the Berry*, and George Schuyler's 1931 satirical novel *Black No More*.

Much of the existing literary scholarship concerning racial passing, colorism, and the "one-drop rule" undertakes these topics separately and in interracial terms. Not much scholarship has considered these literary iterations of color lines together or how these topics impacted the formation of black communities beyond the black-white color line or social justice movements. Literary scholarship has yet to fully consider Du Bois's concept of the problem of the color line in its plurality, thereby failing to recognize the many color lines within US racial discourse. Additionally, few scholars jointly consider literary passing and colorism where authors use the tropes to critique larger societal issues rooted in concerns of race and nation. Elaine K. Ginsberg provides a start in her 1996 *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*, in which she argues that literary passing reveals "the political motivations inherent in the origins and maintenance of identity categories and boundaries demarcating race and gender" providing a creative space for self-identification (16). I extend Ginsberg's insights to ask whether characters who pass in an effort to challenge a proscribed racial identity therefore create an idealized identity

that does not end up merely separating or compartmentalizing her or his multiple identities for a specific social or material purpose. Harper's 1869 serialized *Minnie's Sacrifice* exemplifies this point. Although the main character facing the dilemma of choosing to pass for white ultimately decides to live openly as a black woman, the question of her complexion comes into play as her "whiter" appearance acts as a placeholder for education and refinement and becomes an asset for her wider community.

Gayle Wald picks up Ginsberg's argument in her 2000 *Crossing the Line*, asserting that "passing entails…not racial transcendence, but rather struggles for control over racial representation" (6). Wald is correct here, but neither she nor Ginsberg lend much attention to how or if the literature speaks to intraracial divides created by racial passing and colorism. Samira Kawash looks at literary representations of the color line in her 1997 *Dislocating the Color Line* to complicate the understanding of hybridity as it relates to the color line, but she also does not fully examine intraracial divides. She argues that racial transgression through racial passing occurs because an appeal to an "originary, authentic, [or] pure identity" can only be an appeal to a *mythical* identity (2). There are no experiences that essentially belong to a particular race; those experiences are all connected to the color line philosophy. "Such essentializing cultural divisions as the color line," says Kawash, "both distort and account for lived experiences; there is no realm of experiences of subjectivity outside or beyond the effects of the color line" (5-6). While this argument does add a critical perspective to understanding color lines in social terms, her readings of key works such as Chesnutt's 1901 novel *The Marrow of Tradition*, Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, and Larsen's *Passing* only examine those effects concerned with the binary of blackness and whiteness.

Werner Sollers offers perhaps the most comprehensive study of racial passing in literature in his 1999 *Neither Black nor White Yet Both*; however, he does not address colorism and intraracial divides. By focusing on what he calls "interracial literature," or literature that represents the lives of "black-white couples, biracial individuals, and their descendants," Sollers provides an understanding of race as a concept through these groups' denials of their legitimacy due to their indeterminate racial statuses (3-4). Sollers focuses on themes present in interracial literature such as the law, racial passing, and the "tragic mulatto/a" figure. He sees racial passing in interracial literature as a "modernization that may speak to people who move toward new identifications and may experience anxieties about giving up old localities, homes, families, and belief systems" (250). The social insecurity that underlies racial passing shows this phenomenon's concern with a plethora of social issues tied to race. Furthermore, Sollers is the only scholar to have done substantial work on passing narratives beyond canonical texts. Even with his comparative approach to racial passing and colorism that includes texts outside of the African American and American literary traditions, he tends to focus on black-white interracial divides, leaving out color lines concerned with African-Native or even African-Asian American identities. Sollers does not take into account those intraracial anxieties brought on by stereotyped approaches to blackness, racial passing, and colorism—anxieties surely important during the years dedicated to collective racial uplift where individual choices reflected upon the entire cultural group.

Despite these scholars' worthy contributions to conversations about literary representations of racial passing and colorism, how literary racial self-representation influences collective movements remains understudied. *The Problem of the Prism*

examines color lines present within US racial discourse as represented in various cultural mediums. History shows that racial passing directly resulted from racism and colorism. Therefore, studying literary racial passing and colorism together within various mediums proves necessary in order to better understand their intracultural effects. Fabi argues in her 2001 *Passing and the Rise of the African American Novel* that early black writers used racially ambiguous figures who passed to "[create] multilayered novels that can be read at a variety of 'histotextual' levels depending on the amount of historical, cultural, and literary knowledge on African America the reader possesses" (3). Johnson's unnamed narrator teaches readers that race's complexities should not be understood in terms of only black and white and reveals the color lines present in US racial discourse. Intraracial divisions based on color that have the potential to influence individuals' decisions about whether or not to pass deserve attention as well, especially since audiences tend to overlook the multiple color lines present. Johnson's novel ultimately argues that the problem of color lines remains inevitable since most issues in the US stem from concerns over color and the ability to easily maintain a visible ancestral marker via skin complexion (Johnson 3).

Each chapter in *The Problem of the Prism* examines authors' uses of literary racial passing, colorism, and the "one-drop rule" to probe the cultural, political, and/or "scientific" approaches to race at the turn of the century. In Part One comprised of one chapter entitled "The Politics of Racial Visibility in Albion Tourgée's *Pactolus Prime*," I consider the white American author Albion Tourgée's 1890 novel *Pactolus Prime* as a critical lens through which to examine the literary iterations of color lines in African American and American literature. Critical race theory's concept of legal storytelling and

narrative analysis helps to uncover Tourgée's perspectives on race and color that white supremacist culture attempted to either undermine or silence. According to Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, legal storytelling and narrative analysis reveal to the dominant culture otherwise absent perspectives since the "country's dominant racial group cannot easily grasp what it means to be nonwhite" (45). In other words, those considered "white" in the US lack what Du Bois calls "double consciousness." Tourgée invites readers and the court to witness a version of what Frantz Fanon later calls in his 1952 book *Black Skin, White Masks* epidermalization, or the internalization of an inferiority complex within skin complexions that stem from blacks' social and economic realities (11).The process of epidermalization and its impact on black and white bodies alike appear in Tourgée's novel through the remarkable transformation of the main character's and Homer Plessy's physical appearance and experiences with racial passing and visibility. The politics of racial visibility raises the stakes for whites to protect the presumed social value of whiteness. Additionally, Tourgée calls whiteness a form of property well before Cheryl Harris does in her famous 1993 legal essay, "Whiteness as Property." Doing so, Tourgée foresees contemporary debates over the hypervisibility of white supremacist ideology and affiliated fears of losing an assumed superiority rooted in phenotypical features.

Literary study of the tropes associated with color lines disrupt cultural hegemony and work to recast an image of society that inspires reformers to recognize the depths of the race issue beyond blackness and whiteness. People of different identities have different experiences with whiteness, and therefore, their communities' stories speak to the various iterations of the effects of the color lines. I draw from the concept of

historical and literary storytelling in the remaining chapters to uncover those more intimate color lines—those occurring within minority communities—that affect first, intraracial community building, and second, responses to interracial inequalities. The texts that I examine in Chapters two through four reveal and interrogate the overlooked human experiences within the color lines through revised perspectives of the "tragic mulatta/o" and other racially ambiguous figures in African American literature and print culture. For, as Joan Scott notes of storytelling, "the stories… reveal the complexities of human experience that challenge the categories with which we are accustomed to thinking about the world" (207). The texts that I analyze "worry the line," to use Cheryl Wall's concept, through their revisions of the tropes used to challenge the politics of racial visibility. Wall argues, "'worrying the line' is inevitably a trope for repetition with difference. It owes much to [Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s] 'Signifyin(g) because it is tropological and congruent with his assertion that black formal repetition always repeats with a difference'" (16). My analysis allows for a deeper consideration into how literary representations of physical appearance and racial self- and imposed identification mirrored US citizens' complex relationships with racial visibility, citizenship, sovereignty, and the connections between these concepts.

Part Two focuses on literary representations of color lines in color-struck black communities and socially labeled "Black" individuals in the years following the *Plessy* decision. In the second chapter, "Sutton Griggs's Inspiration for the 'New Mulatta' in *Overshadowed*," I argue that Griggs's 1900 novel *Overshadowed* features a "New Mulatta" who counterintuitively undercuts investments in the social and political values in whiteness to call on middle-class black leaders to reassess their adoption of social

hierarchies established by the white hegemony. Not only does Griggs's "New Mulatta" refuse to live according to racist social standards, she inspires the Black Diaspora to live according to a creed of black self-love and race pride developed with a focus on black families. Turn-of-the-century black leadership is often viewed as adopting the social standards set by the white hegemony in an effort to assimilate into the mainstream culture. I argue that rather than move up from enslavement towards freedom via racial essentialism, Griggs's "New Mulatta" prompts black communities to live according to their own social principles removed from color prejudices and the politics of racial visibility as an alternative strategy towards racial uplift. Thus, Griggs offers the earliest revision of the "tragic mulatta" that is more commonly seen in twentieth century literature while speculating on a post-racist/ post-colorist, society rather than a post-racial society.

In the third chapter, "Literary Approaches to African-Native American Identities and the New Negro in the Works of Olivia Ward Bush-Banks and Sylvester "Chief Buffalo Child" Long Lance," I argue that Bush-Banks's and Long Lance's writings and approaches to their Afro-Indigeneity complicates the US color line and New Negro philosophy. Their works reconceptualize the "tragic mulatta/o" outside of the confines of the black-white binary while acknowledging African-Native American identities and the fraught relationship between black and Native Americans. Thus, their works illustrate a black-red color line that underscores the black-white color line and disables anti-racist and anti-colonialist collaboration. The divergent ways that they write about their backgrounds offer new ways to think about indigeneity in the US.

Part Three assesses the politics of racial visibility in popular media as a representation of interactions with color lines in private spaces like the home. In the fourth chapter, "'One Nation, Truly Indi[Visible] and United': *Ebony* Magazine's Interrogation of Whiteness," I examine the prevalence of articles and letters to the editor featured in *Ebony* magazine from the 1940s and 1950s that are concerned with racial passing and colorism. Counter to more popular scholarly approaches that focus on establishing a black consumer market, I argue that *Ebony* magazine scrutinizes "white" appearing Americans' struggles with the color question, thereby shifting readers' attention to social anxieties within the underexamined "white" spectrum of the black-white color line. By addressing social implications anticipated within racial ambiguity in the space of the home and through articles that reflect on personal experiences, *Ebony* calls for readers to imagine black futurity and Americanness overall, not as post-racial, but as removed from color prejudice both scientifically and politically. The commercial magazine genre allows readers from all socioeconomic backgrounds to reflect on their own personal stories and engage with pressing concerns over racial visibility during this postwar era while purporting a large-scale interest in commercializing the politics of racial visibility. *Ebony* magazine's revision of the "tragic mulatta/o" in their exposés and features of family histories and historical moments led to public campaigns to disempower color lines across the globe. Ultimately, *Ebony* magazine's persistent focus on colorism and racial passing bring the efforts of nineteenth and early-twentieth-century authors full circle.

Although this dissertation is rooted in nineteenth and early-twentieth century literature, our contemporary moment's obsession with scientifically "proving" and

"verifying" ancestral claims begs for a cultural analysis of how racial appearances challenge self- and imposed racial identities and national belonging. Oral histories passed down from generation to generation are losing their viability with the trend in ancestry DNA testing, which, consequently, surveil family histories. Examining literary representations of color lines in a moment when society seems, yet again, obsessed with human categorization supported by quantitative data has never been more important, as individuals are once again turning to scientific study to qualify storytelling.

Chapter 1: The Politics of Racial Visibility in Albion Tourgée's *Pactolus Prime*

> We say…that, because slavery no longer exists as a legalized form of society, we may dismiss it from our thought, and no longer consider it as a factor of our civilization. In truth, the conditions it bequeathed are far more difficult and delicate than those attending its existence. It is a living force in the white man's thought and in the colored man's life. The lessons it taught to both races are ineradicable by law and are beyond the control of mere reason.
>
> Albion Winegar Tourgée
>
> "The Negro's View of the Race Problem," 1890

In the above speech to a group of influential white men interested in solving the so-called "Negro problem," Albion Winegar Tourgée – a white Radical Republican, lawyer, and under-studied writer–contends that slavery continued to haunt race relations between black and white Americans in the years following emancipation. Speaking according to his belief that black Americans were, in fact, United States citizens as the Reconstruction amendments claimed, Tourgée draws attention to the black-white color line's ability to subject both races to moral detriment due to obsessions over color.[3] Tourgée assesses the politics of racial visibility in his 1890 passing novel *Pactolus Prime*, offering readers an examination of how the black-white color line fosters notions of inferiority within both races. The fears of racial inferiority seen along the black-white

color line also appear within those lesser-studied color lines that manifest as a result of the black-white binary.

I begin this dissertation on the politics of racial visibility with an analysis of Tourgée's novel, life, and some of his nonfiction for two main reasons: First, it would only be right to consider the fictional representations of the black-white color line by one of the lead attorneys in the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, the case that reinstated a race-based caste system on the basis of racial visibility and legally institutionalized, protected, and normalized alleged white superiority. Contemporary scholars have focused Tourgée studies on mostly legal history, but his thought-experiment on the visual markers of race and their social effects prior to *Plessy* offer key insights into how society compartmentalized race and racial representation for certain bodies (namely black bodies). Second, his involvement in the actual day-to-day fight against the problem of the color line from the position of a white man sheds light on to how black authors would respond to his actions and fiction via their own actions and iterations of the passing novel. Tourgée's works provide the best lenses through which to uncover the discourse between black and white authors proactively responding to the politics of racial visibility.

Nineteenth and early-twentieth century black authors and activists regularly referenced Tourgée's works and ideas on race, which secured Tourgée's popularity within the African American literary and intellectual tradition. For instance, Tourgée and Frank J. Webb maintained correspondence with each other regarding their interests in race novels. Webb wrote to Tourgée asking if he would read one of his manuscripts "illustrating a phase of relations of the races… in the south" (Letter to Albion Tourgée [April 13, 1893]). Webb's letter shows that black authors appreciated Tourgée's critical

insight to interpreting black life in the US. I also wonder if by having a white man read his manuscript, Webb hoped to get a better sense of what readers on the opposite spectrum of the black-white color line thought of his perspectives on race. Webb's letter includes a request for Tourgée to share his manuscript with a publisher should he find it interesting; however, he wishes that Tourgée keep his racial identity a secret. Webb did not want publishers to praise his work simply because he was black but rather for its artistic quality. He also, probably, wanted to ensure that he had a better chance to get published. Webb's trust in Tourgée shows his underexamined influence within the African American literary tradition and late-nineteenth century black authors' desire for society to view their works outside of the so-called "Negro Problem."

Scholars should look to Tourgée's fiction to facilitate their understanding of the far-reaching effects of racism and colorism on infiltrated black and other nonwhite communities, resulting in internalized race hatred—one of the many effects of the politics of racial visibility. Audiences should not assume that representations of race can only be imaginable by black authors. Race influences everyone, and therefore authors wanted to appeal to broader audiences regarding the race and color question. More specifically, Tourgée's fiction and essays approach the race and color question with special attention to describing characters' physical appearances in attempts to critique claims of white superiority within the politics of racial visibility.

Black authors' engagements with the tropes of racial passing and colorism to illustrate that assumed identities overshadow actual ancestry clearly inspires Tourgée's assessment of the afterlives of enslavement in his fiction. However, counter to black authors who employ the passing novel, including William Wells Brown in his 1853 novel

Clotel and Webb in his 1857 novel *The Garies and Their Friends*, Tourgée turns to the passing novel to call on his audience to think about how the black-white color line stems from fears of inferiority in whites. At the same time, his passing novel illustrates that these fears about losing political and social value in whiteness also produces a sense of inferiority in some black Americans. Tourgée does not represent instances of racial passing and colorism to appeal to whites to question the state of black Americans in the US. Rather, he calls for both races to be more self-conscious about their relation to the black-white color line by focusing on the physical appearance of the body. Other authors that I discuss in this dissertation take similar approaches to scrutinizing the politics of racial visibility by focusing on characters' abilities to pass or not and their overall attitudes towards their own physical appearances.

Tourgée's 1890 novel follows Pactolus Prime, a visibly black man in 1880s Washington, D.C., who owns a successful bootblack stand that services mostly upper-class white men. While the men get their shoes shined, they also get unexpected mental stimulation when Prime engages in debates with them on various topics, including everything from religion to reparations. Consequently, Prime often relates all matters to concerns over race and color. Prime has a few deep secrets that inform his perspectives that the unnamed narrator reveals in media res form: Firstly, Prime has a "white" daughter, Eva, who he has sent North to be raised and educated as a white woman. She knows nothing about her father or her family's background. Eva only knows that she receives financial support from an unknown benefactor. Secondly, despite Prime's frequent critiques of white privilege, and most notably of what he considers white Christianity, he himself used to pass for white. Born an enslaved fair-complexioned black

man, Prime used his white appearance to escape enslavement and join the Union troops. He chose to maintain his disguise as a white officer despite the fact that he joined a colored regiment. Prime later sustains an injury that causes him to take a medicine that left him with a dark, leaden-gray complexion, what the narrator calls a cast-iron color. His skin appears "considerably darker upon the exposed surfaces such as the hands and feet" (*Pactolus* 248). No one ever suspects Prime's true ancestry or previous condition in enslavement even after the chemical reaction discolors him; his white racial identity remains undisrupted. Surprisingly, Prime decides to return to a black identity and spends his days counterproductively critiquing the black-white color line. He voices many seemingly pro-black opinions in his discussions with white men, while at the same time he expresses intraracist comments in his discussions with other men of his race. His complex experiences along the black-white color line account for his contradictory views regarding race and color. Nevertheless, all of his ideas are rooted in a critique of white Christianity and its connection to notions of race.

Although Tourgée does not directly mention that he receives inspiration for his novel from an actual person or event, the *Greensborough Patriot* (a newspaper printed just miles away from where Tourgée served as a judge in North Carolina's 7th district from 1868 to 1874) advertised a $50 reward for a runaway slave with striking similarities to the fictional Prime. Twenty-five-year-old George escaped from Caswell county on May 20, 1859, just four months before John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry. The advertisement describes George as what slave traders might have considered a "prime specimen." C. & D. Perkins, likely slave catchers, mention George's fair complexion, long hair, and notable personality traits, including the fact that he "laughs frequently and

loud when in conversation [and] is an unusually smart and fine looking [*sic*] Negro" ("50 Reward" 4). The authors indicate that George might have returned to his hometown in Yanceyville, North Carolina, approximately a four-day walk to Harper's Ferry, by the time the advertisement appeared in the January 1861 newspaper. George's former owners remained unsure about his whereabouts and requested that readers submit any reports about his location to "subscribers at Pactolus, NC." George and Prime's shared physical, biographical, and character similarities prompt one to wonder if Tourgée read this advertisement and conjured up a novel that speculates on George's fate. I have not been able to place George as having participated in the raid at Harper's Ferry; however, there are records of many North Carolina natives that did participate. Therefore, it is highly likely that George might have travelled to West Virginia within four months of his escape. Perhaps some change in George's appearance resulted in the inability of those who would have recognized him in Yanceyville to do so. Additionally, perhaps Prime's participation in the Civil War denotes George's possible participation at Harper's Ferry. In either case, the Pactolus Prime in Tourgée's novel alludes to the mysteries surrounding the case of the historical Pactolus George. Tourgée's possible fictionalization of this one man's story offers some insight into the historical processes surrounding racial identification and racial visibility along the confines of the black-white color line during Reconstruction.

Born on May 2, 1838, in Ohio, a region characterized by anti-slavery sentiment during the antebellum period, Tourgée voiced his defense of equal citizenship and racial equality throughout his political, legal, and literary careers. He expressed his then-radical positions on race relations through multiple cultural mediums, while state legislatures

rewrote their constitutions to include Jim Crow legislation. According to Mark Elliot, Tourgée "wrote fifteen political novels, eight books of historical and social criticism, and several hundred newspaper and magazine articles" (*Color Blind* 3). His column, titled "A Bystander's Notes," published in the Chicago *Daily Inter-Ocean,* captivated black and white audiences across the political spectrum and gave a voice to concerns that many black Americans held regarding the race problem. Tourgée included his correspondence with leading black activists in the column and provided an outlet for opposing sides, races, and classes to debate on key issues. Additionally, Tourgée published his analysis of race-related current events, descriptions of lynching, and his disappointment with the Republican Party's failure to follow through with its promises of Reconstruction well before his address that prefaces this chapter. Tourgée explains in his 1884 book-length exposition, entitled *An Appeal to Caesar*, that Reconstruction legislation, while good-faith attempts to grant rights and protection to black Americans, proved "utterly insufficient to accomplish such results either immediately or ultimately— in a decade or in a century" (94). His attitude stemmed from the heightened racial violence targeting black communities from white paramilitary organizations and their attempts at protecting white superiority through voter suppression, political intimidation, and racial violence.

Tourgée biographer Carolyn Karcher notes that like many other whites during the Reconstruction era, Tourgée once accepted stereotypical ideas about enslaved and newly freed blacks until his interactions with black soldiers fighting for the Union (3). These encounters would become the basis for his depiction of black life and culture in his literature and humanitarian efforts. The nineteenth century witnessed a lack of more positive, realistic depictions of black life in popular culture. Common imagery usually

offered degrading views of free and enslaved blacks. White authors such as Thomas Nelson Page, Joel Chandler Harris, and Thomas Dixon made a mockery of black life and culture and relied on caricatures to reminisce on an idyllic portrait of the Old South. These images, they hoped, would relieve white anxieties concerning the uncertainty of race relations in the US. The faithful black servant, caregiving plantation mammy, and mischievous pick-a-ninny entertained white readers and minstrel audiences in the North and the South from the mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth century. Southern narratives and imagery of quaint plantation life helped former confederates and southern sympathizers reassert their white superiority in the midst of black racial uplift. These stereotyped figures allowed white Americans to relieve their frustration with race relations and bolster their sense of superiority by casting their independent and strong whiteness against dependent and fragile blackness.[4]

After resigning from the Union army because of a service-related injury, Tourgée moved his family to Greensboro, North Carolina, and opened a nursery where he hired formerly enslaved people at fair wages. He also assisted freedmen to purchase land, built a school for newly freed blacks, attended black church services, and adopted a formerly enslaved girl who he raised with his wife and children (3). His wife, Emma Doiska Kilbourne, partnered with him in his humanitarian efforts by keeping track of his correspondence and teaching at the school that he built. In 1867, Tourgée joined the Union League and won the North Carolina delegate election the following year. As superior court judge in North Carolina's 7th district from 1868 to 1874, Tourgée practiced a "color-blind" application of the law, sat black jurists, and fined lawyers for saying "nigger" in his courtroom (5). Tourgée did not favor white complaints in his

courtroom on the basis of an assumed white unity. In contrast, he demanded strong evidence, regardless of race, and regularly called out juries that included Ku Klux Klan members who refused to indict or convict their affiliates (5). Tourgée lobbied for the passage of the Second Enforcement Act of 1871, or "the Klan Act," which gave the President authority to use military force against the Ku Klux Klan, declare martial law, and impose fines on terrorist and other hate groups (5). Unfortunately, Tourgée lost reelection as superior court judge due to a resurgence in white supremacist politicians who did any and everything, including threatening fellow whites, to win back their white supremacist political power (5). Similar stories of Republican Reconstruction politicians who were forced out of their seats by white supremacists echoed throughout the South.

Tourgée wrote fictionalized accounts of his experiences in working against the Red Shirts and the White League–organizations far more politically sophisticated and powerful than the Ku Klux Klan–in his more-famous novels including his 1879 *A Fool's Errand* and 1880 *Bricks Without Straw* (6). According to Karcher, *A Fool's Errand* won acclaim comparable to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, selling almost 150,000 copies within a year. Even though the novel was not a legal document, politicians referenced it in their political speeches and in Republican Campaign Committee materials printed during the 1880 election (6). Tourgée's *Bricks Without Straw* provides an intimate look into the experiences of Southern blacks' political responses to Reconstruction-era injustices and sold at an even faster rate than *A Fool's Errand*. However, sales peaked at only 50,000 copies. Karcher contends that *Bricks Without Straw* anticipates W.E.B. Du Bois's seminal 1935 text *Black Reconstruction in America* in that he reveals black perspectives on Reconstruction (6).

Tourgée reiterated his dissatisfaction with Reconstruction at the First Mohonk Conference on the Negro Question claiming that although the federal government had abolished slavery, its psychological and social manifestations continued through legal attempts to protect white superiority and other forms of racial prejudice. Tourgée believed that laws proved worthless where custom remained unchanged. Changing racist white Americans moral consciousness from fear of inferiority and black Americans internalized racism appears a central theme in Tourgée's fiction and essays. Tourgée's *Pactolus Prime* focuses on the "common man's" ability to see race through the phenotypes upon which US law and custom relies.

The reading public first encountered *Pactolus Prime* as a serialized novella entitled *Pactolus Prime; or The White Christ* released in the *Chicago Advance* from December 13, 1888, to March 14, 1889 (Elliot, *Undaunted Radical* 123). Karcher notes that the *Advance* abruptly stopped printing the story because of responses from an angry white readership that felt defensive about Tourgée's racial critiques (53). The editor threatened that if Tourgée did not make an attempt at "tying up loose ends," then the *Advance* would end his contract. Tourgée made clear that his goal was not to "merely please—and certainly not to instruct readers" (53). However, he eventually obliged his readers after giving them a year to contemplate possible endings. In March 1890, Cassell Publishing Company printed *Pactolus Prime* in the form of a novel (54). Tourgée hoped to engage black and white audiences with questions concerning color and race present in the story. In a letter to one of his reviewers, he admits that he wanted his readers to read in between and outside of the lines that he provided, and therefore he felt that he "left his novel not incomplete but suggesting" (53). Tourgée wanted his audience to develop the

critical insight necessary to fill in the novella's gaps for themselves in both the literary and the social world, and he hoped to provoke his audience to change their valuation of a white supremacist color hierarchy and dismantle the politics of racial visibility.

The narrator's playful yet intentional revelation of Prime's racial background and the mystery surrounding Eva's ancestry prompts a revised understanding of the "tragic mulatto/a" figure in American fiction. Tourgée's "tragic mulatto/a" goes beyond questioning the arbitrary nature of race. Instead, the figure challenges the singular understanding of racism's and colorism's subjection of only black Americans. Furthermore, by refusing to detail Prime's relationship with blacks and whites in his community all at once, Tourgée forces readers to question where Prime's allegiance lies with regard to his race pride. The unnamed narrator implies that Prime has a fairly good working relationship with his white customers at the bootblack stand who more or less respect him. Most white men call him either "Prime" or "Uncle Prime" (reminiscent of minstrel shows or plantation novels). However, Prime receives mixed sentiments from the black workers at the hotel who sarcastically call him "Mistah" Prime. The narrator says, "Though respected by all, [Prime] was very far from being popular with the colored element of the city's population. Indeed, he seemed to be shunned rather than sought by his own people, except in emergencies when the interests of the race were clearly at stake" (*Pactolus* 27). Prime's relations with either community suggest either a progressive or degenerative relationship depending on the viewpoint of the reader. How others view and choose to respect or not respect Prime comments on the status of race relations in the US. Nevertheless, when speaking with members of Washington D.C.'s black community, Prime verbalizes the idea that white appearances make for higher

social positions and better opportunities. Therefore, Tourgée unconventionally uses the passing novel to show intraracial prejudice and colorism affecting a "white" body. Prime decides to live as a black man, but society does not find out about his former racial imposture until after his death.

Tourgée invites readers to witness the remarkable transformation of the main character's physical appearance and attitudes about society based on his shifting complexions. Tourgée writes in his unpublished notes:

> I have no defense for [*Pactolus Prime*], don't know whether it is artistically or technically correct or not and don't care. It is a mere vehicle for thought. If it serves that purpose and jams home the idea like a wasp's tail [then] I am satisfied. If it does not [*sic*] I have missed. In other words [*sic*] if it holds attention and will be read, that is all I want. (*Pactolus* MS 4)

Audiences did read *Pactolus Prime*, although the novel's popularity never reached heights measurable to *A Fool's Errand* or *Bricks Without Straw*. Thus, on the basis of numbers alone, it remains unclear if Tourgée changed hearts and minds as he wished with this novel. On the one hand, white readers expressed anger at the ambiguity left in the serialized version, illustrating the notion that whites thought they had little, if any, responsibility for the race problem. White reviews tended to focus on Eva's fate and sympathize with the "white" character. For example, one review in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* laments more on Prime's "white" daughter's discovery of her African ancestry than with pressing arguments regarding reparations and racialized religion advanced in the plot. The review reads, "*Pactolus Prime*… pictures in vivid colors the consequences

to [a] sensitive woman of discovering that there is negro blood in her veins. The chief [character's] life is a tragedy growing out of the curse of slavery and human weakness and sin. It is a sad and, in many respects, skillful tale of the apparent hopelessness of the condition of the negro" ("New Publications" 6). On the other hand, some white readers critically engaged with the serialized version and novel in the ways Tourgée hoped. For example, Republican Congressman Harrison Kelly of Kansas wrote to Tourgée expressing his fascination with the novel's nuanced approach to unpacking race relations saying, "While I don't think [*Pactolus Prime*] will be devoured by the [masses?] as was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, I think its effect on the leaders of thought will be as great" (Letter to Albion Tourgée [May 10, 1890]). He closes by thanking Tourgée for all of his "efforts on behalf of liberty" (Letter to Albion Tourgée [May 10, 1890]).

Black American audiences regarded *Pactolus Prime* as a fine revelation of some blacks' thoughts on the race problem terrorizing the nation. For instance, Anna Julia Cooper praises Tourgée's literary and activist career in her 1892 *A Voice from the South*, in which she spends much time examining representations of black American life in American literature. [5] Cooper asserts that Tourgée does not offer readers a sensationalized account of black life and thought but that rather he "succeeded incomparably, we think, in photographing and vocalizing the feelings of the colored American" (188). To Cooper, Tourgée's fiction represents his own sentiments based on his experiences, but they more so provide a window into an overlooked perspective on race and other American institutions. When Tourgée writes fiction, says Cooper, he "does not create many men of many minds. All his offspring [or literary characters] are little Tourgées–they preach his sermons and pray his prayers" (188-189). Consequently, Cooper describes Prime as

"Judge Tourgée himself, done over in ebony" (189). Cooper reviews the novel more specifically:

> In *Pactolus Prime* Mr. Tourgée [provides] an impassioned denunciation of the Heartless and godless spirit of caste founded on color, as a scathing rebuke to weak-eyed Christians who cannot read the golden rule across the color line, as an unanswerable arraignment of unparalleled ingratitude and limping justice in the policy of this country towards the weaker of its two children, that served it so long and so faithfully, the book is destined to live and to furnish an invaluable contribution to this already plethoric department of American literature. (199-200)

William H. Anderson, novelist and founding member of the *Detroit Plaindealer*, reviews *Pactolus Prime:* "Pactolus's life, 'common to men of his race, … explains [his] cynicism,' his 'bitterness' against white Christianity, and his desire to 'keep the identity of his daughter a secret in order that she might escape the proscription placed upon all in whose veins courses one drop of African blood" (Anderson, "Tourgee's Book" 1). Both Cooper's and Anderson's reviews focus on Tourgée's critique of white Christianity and its ties to the color caste as being the root of the race problem in America. However, Anderson provides a more in-depth reading of *Pactolus Prime* that Cooper only hints at: the text's contribution to the "plethoric department of American literature." Anderson begins his review, "The race problem is by far the most important and complicated of all problems now before the American people. It lies at the very root of the basic principles of the Republic. Upon it hinges many other problems whose successful solution and the future peace and prosperity of the country depend upon the successful solution of this"

(1). Anderson does not focus so much on the passing plot present in the novel as much as he does on the universal effects of colorism and racism which Tourgée attempts to reveal to readers. In the first lines of his review, Anderson takes on the overlooked argument present in *Pactolus Prime*'s plot: regardless of one's race, regardless of one's ancestry, colorism has deplorable effects for the American people. Tourgée, as revealed in Cooper's and Anderson's reviews, anticipates James Weldon Johnson's claim that color is the root problem of all other social problems facing Americans. Therefore, the claim that a Negro problem exists is nothing more than a misrepresentation of the race problem in the US. Cooper's assertion that *Pactolus Prime* belongs in an American literary canon makes its contents applicable to all Americans. Anderson's claim that a solution to the race problem will determine the success or failure of all other problems in America makes race an American problem.[6] Thus, Tourgée's multifaceted revelations through the passing novel calls readers attentions to an understanding of the black-white color line that reveals a shared yet overlooked experience with racial inferiority and society's focus on color.

Authors writing within the African American literary tradition usually used the passing novel to examine the fate of a "tragic mulatta/o" figure who faces a dramatic death when trying to lay claims to her or his European ancestry. By laying claim to their European identity, they hope that they will escape racial violence and discrimination. Later chapters in this dissertation will show how black writers started to include traditionally viewed "Other" nonwhite identities for the same purpose. Prime's early decision to pass for white in order to escape enslavement is a choice examined in a wide range of texts including canonical works like Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel *Uncle*

Tom's Cabin, William and Ellen Craft's written account of their escape in 1860, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom*, and Charles Chesnutt's 1899 short story "The Wife of His Youth." For example, Webb's *The Garies and Their Friends* follows the interracial union between Clarence and Emily Garie who move to Philadelphia to escape prejudice in Georgia. Emily, legally Clarence's slave mistress, persuades Clarence to move them and their two children to Philadelphia after a visit from her cousin George, a young businessman who passes for white. To the Garies' surprise, they face more racial prejudice in the North than in the South. A white mob destroys their home and kills Clarence while Emily dies in childbirth. Clarence Jr.'s guardians, a wealthy black businessowner and a white lawyer, instruct him to pass for white so that he may have the best chance at having a prosperous life. Clarence Jr. becomes engaged to a white woman, Anne, whose family forbids them from getting married once they find out about Clarence Jr.'s background. By the novel's end, Clarence Jr. faces a lonely and bitter life; the narrator says, "he felt ashamed to seek the society of coloured men now that the whites despised and rejected him, so he lived apart from both classes of society and grew moody and misanthropic" (Webb, *Garies* 381). By the time Anne returns to Clarence Jr.'s side, he dies, and she dies soon afterwards. While readers witness the underexamined instances of racial prejudice in the North, the novel does not offer any interiority regarding Clarence Jr.'s experience of passing. In fact, few novels offer any revelation of the "tragic mulatta/o's" experiences of passing with regard to how their choice influences their thinking; readers only witness the shift from enslaved to free, or discrimination to material gain. In this case, Clarence Jr.'s previous experiences with racial violence while a child feature prominently in the novel. However, the narrative does not offer much in

regard to how he feels about his identity after having lived as an black child and then as a white man. The novel's focus on death as a consequence for interracial marriages overshadows differing perspectives regarding race and society experienced by one person.

Webb uses racial passing to show white characters changing their attitudes towards black characters to influence a white readership to rethink their racist ideologies. For instance, only after Anne receives word of Clarence Jr.'s deteriorating condition does she go against her family's wishes to meet with him one last time before he dies. Tourgée also attempts to show characters changing their moral beliefs in his fiction in hopes to change his readers' ideas about race. In contrast, though, *Pactolus Prime* offers a more in-depth depiction of the main character's complex experiences with the black-white color line given that his comments unpack the notion that both sides of the color line share a similar experience with racial inferiority. On one side, the novel engages with white fear of racial inferiority as expressed through racial discrimination, stereotypes, and violence. On the other side, the novel examines the practice that some black Americans internalize racial inferiority by acceptance of false notions of superior social and cultural standards. The only difference between those experiences is which acts as the catalyst (fear of white inferiority) and which is the result (internalized racism).

Tourgée compares his approach to the passing novel to "the old Greek Drama," stating that the genre provides for the artistic effect in "(a) the sensation of a disappointed lover and (b) the mental experience of a sinner when the devil is after him" (Tourgée, *Pactolus* MS 3). These two approaches allow Tourgée to imagine Prime's disillusionment with freedom and Reconstruction, the unsubstantiated love that results in his decision to

pass and provides him the opportunity to more thoroughly criticize whites, as well as his internalized racism, or what Tourgée might equate with the devil. Prime offers readers an interiority that traditional passing novels lack and reveals the darker beliefs held by individuals on both sides of the black-white color line. For, as Tourgée states of individuals trying to exhibit Christian Citizenship, they must not only adhere to the golden rule, but also, "study carefully the means by which his influence as a citizen be exerted" ("Christian Citizenship"). In other words, one must be aware of their own privilege in order to affect social change. Tourgée explicitly states in his notes that he aims to analyze experiences along the color line "from within" [*sic*] and that thus far "only the externals [*sic*] have been given" (*Pactolus* MS 3). Thus, Tourgée invites readers to examine their own prejudices through Prime and witness what Franz Fanon later identifies as the process of epidermalization but within both a white and a black body. Fanon argues that African descendants' social and economic realities stems from the epidermalization of an inferiority complex (11). In other words, in the US context, black Americans' assumed subjugated social position comes from the institutionalization of inferiorities associated with skin color. *Pactolus Prime* uncovers the process of epidermalization through the remarkable transformation of the main character's physical appearance and his ability to speak on behalf of both black and white bodies living within the politics of racial visibility.

Prime's experiences in living in both the black and white spectrums of the color line by way of both a visibly black and a visibly white body enable him to voice interracial and intraracial critiques and choose to enact racial prejudice or embody intraracial prejudice. Prime's dual experience in racial visibility and performing differing

social beliefs accounts for his complex relationship with color and race. In other words, Prime's race pride can remain intact; he can critique whites for their wrongs towards black Americans. However, his fixation on color from a white supremacist viewpoint negatively influences how he thinks black Americans should live. Prime obsesses over color and racial visibility to the point that he urges his fair-complexioned apprentice, Benny, to pass for white. He tells Benny to thank God for his complexion, but he also points out the awkward social position from which Benny's racial ambiguity leaves him. He says, 'You're known here as a nigger, an' the whiter a nigger is, the less a white man cares for him. As long as a man's black he only just despises him; but when he begins to grow white [*sic*] he hates him' (*Pactolus* 38).

Supporting the option to pass does not align with the pro-black views that Prime expresses when debating with whites. For example, when arguing for reparations for enslavement with a white minister, Prime says, '[Your] American civilization, American Christianity, sir, took our money, the honest wages of our toil, and no *shuffling* [my emphasis] or evasion can avoid the responsibility' (72). Such a complicated relationship with color and racial visibility illustrates the variety of identities and societal views available when considering race's fluidity; it also points to the dominant culture's history in choosing when to redefine races for the purpose of protecting social value in whiteness. Prime's preference for Benny to take advantage of his lighter complexion represents the color line's detrimental influence on black communities working toward racial uplift. We should remain skeptical, however, of Prime's explication here given that he understands from personal experience the privileges associated with whiteness and openly critiques the false narrative of white superiority reliant upon "religion" when

debating with his white customers. Prime uses language associated with minstrelsy to chastise the white customer for denying reparations and for placing the blame for black Americans' precarious economic stability on black communities. Calling out whites for using Christianity to justify racial discrimination commonly appears in African American literature, including Martin Delany's 1859-62 serialized novel *Blake, or the Huts of America*, Harriet Jacobs's 1861 fictionalized autobiography *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and Frederick Douglass's seminal 1845 *Narrative*. However, through the minstrel-inflected term "shuffling," Prime suggests that whiteness does not provide one with a safety net from the ills of a racist society. Prime suggests that whites too "shuffle" according to a racist society's determination of what certain races, identities, and classes have available to them, and most notably, *when* those advantages become available.

At first glance, Prime criticizes whites' claims that the US does not owe black Americans reparations for slavery, and so it appears that Prime associates blackness with poverty or limited opportunities for economic independence. Prime asks the minister, 'If the amount thus unjustly withheld from you had embraced every cent you had earned in your whole life, the entire earnings of your parents and their parents for two centuries and a half, depriving them of every luxury, every opportunity, every privilege, every right, everything in fact except the barest necessities of existence, would you think you ought to be called "impatient"?' (71). Prime's ancestors include enslaved people, so naturally he feels that supporting reparations may lead to some small justice owed to black Americans so that they may thrive economically. Had generations of enslaved Africans and their descendants been paid for their work, then they would be better situated to succeed economically. A more critical reading, however, suggests that Prime's central critique

focuses on white Christianity and its false claims to a superior, racialized version of religion—a version that does not fall in line with the obligation that every person who claims to live by Christian principles should. Tourgée notes: "the obligation rests upon… his power, his influence, his energy, to give to ach of his fellow sovereigns, and to their children forever, the best conditions that he is able to secure for them…. 'Whatever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them'" ("Christian Citizenship"). Consequently, detractors from true Christian principles often qualified their stance against reparations by citing religion. One of the more famous critiques of Christianity in African American literature comes from Frederick Douglass's Appendix to his 1845 *Narrative* in which he claims that American Christianity is not true Christianity but rather a "corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity…. I look upon it as the climax of all misnomers, the boldest of all frauds, and the grossest of all libels" (118). If white Christianity had not facilitated the suppression of Africans and their descendants in America, then religion would not hold so much weight regarding the race problem. In fact, Prime's claim suggests that there may not have even be a race problem. Prime argues that white Christianity holds full responsibility for the economic disparities targeting blacks and for whites not being able to fully live out the moral national identity it claims. Furthermore, whites' inhibited inferiority cannot be evaded through appeals to religion or reassigned to a so-called "Negro problem."

Rather than have Prime speak primarily in dialect, Tourgée allows Prime to voice blacks' concerns in standard English, yet not in an overly educated or upper-class tone. He speaks like an everyday, working class man, revealing Tourgée's attunement to false

narratives of white superiority usually implied through the use of racialized vernacular. The only times Prime speaks in vernacular are when his white counterparts cannot face the racialized truths that he presents. In these instances, Prime strategically uses a racialized voice or act to make bigoted whites feel comfortable enough to join the critical conversation. For example, when Prime debates with a white lawyer and criticizes white Christians' claims to Christianity and Christmas because of their role in slavery, or "devil's work," the lawyer expresses offense and stern disgust to be associated with such history. Prime responds in true minstrel fashion, "I beg your pardon, Mr. Phelps…I ain't a-meanin' you. If they was [*sic*] like you, I'd be a Christian too, I would I swear!" (68). Prime does a "minstrel code-switch" as a representation of black self-awareness that differs from William Dean Howells's understanding of realism, what Gene Andrew Jarratt positions "minstrel realism," or the cultural performance of black life that white audiences believed realistic as a result of blackface minstrelsy ("Entirely Black" 499). Howells most famously wrote the introduction to Paul Laurence Dunbar's 1896 poetry collection *Lyrics of Lowly Life* and gave special praise for Dunbar's dialect poems, noting Dunbar's ability to "feel the negro life aesthetically and express it lyrically" despite him not having white ancestry (xvi). Dunbar appreciated Howells's support but struggled with feeling that white audience's attention to his dialect poetry took away from the seriousness of his verse in standard English. In a similar turn, Prime code-switches to a minstrel dialect to take away from the seriousness his comments in order to make the lawyer feel less uncomfortable with his criticisms of white Christianity. If the so-called dominant culture believed in white superiority's natural hierarchy, then conscious acts to secure it, such as policing racial representation in literature, would prove unnecessary.

Prime's act in consciously vocalizing a racialized voice at a moment when whiteness feels threatened shows his character's understanding of the politics of racial visibility in everyday dealings with whites who consciously or unconsciously exhibit racist thoughts and actions. In his 1889 article "The Claim of Realism," Tourgée attests that the realist paints a pessimistic picture of everyday life that centers on "suffering and cowardice, duplicity and despair, but omits hope, aspiration, and triumph" (386). Whatever is exceptional and abnormal is unreal (386). For Tourgée, calling something "exceptional" in relation to race, like Howells's approach towards Dunbar's standard verse and Prime's ability to turn dialect on and off, sheds light on the prejudices inflected in calling something or someone "exceptional" because of their race. The narrator claims "the obligation that rests upon [an author] is to give a true picture of the life he professes to portray, and what he deems the truth depends on what he sees when he studies that life" (*Pactolus* 387). Prime exposes the falsehoods in white superiority by asserting that "exceptional" blackness is by no means "exceptional." The novel transforms Prime's white body into a blacker-than-black blackness to highlight white America's reliance on a minstrel reality to secure its assumed superiority.

"Shuffling" also implies that whiteness can lose its power and social value, thus value in whiteness can be wantonly increased and decreased based on society's treatment of color. Prime experiences this within his own person in that his white identity remains intact even when his body transforms into a color darker than visible whiteness. However, Prime decides to return to a black identity. Tourgée's focus on phenotypical traits in *Pactolus Prime* illustrates the limited and illogical extent to which a person can visibly determine ancestry. US laws have never had a static understanding of race that did

not rely on racial visibility to some extent. Anti-miscegenation legislation historically altered definitions of "nonwhite" for the purpose of protecting a false narrative of white racial purity and superiority. For instance, Jane Dailey notes that in 1705, Virginia's definition of "mulatto" included any person possessing at least one-eighth African ancestry (132). Eighty-years later, once racial mixing and intermarriage across the color line increased throughout the state, the percentage of African ancestry needed to be considered "mulatto" decreased to one-fourth. This pattern of defining the races according to the needs of the white dominant culture continued well into the twentieth century when Virginia and many other states began adopting the "one-drop rule," which asserts that anyone having at least a trace of African ancestry be considered black (132). The federal government also participated in race redefinition when ethnic European immigrants entered the US at the beginning of the twentieth century. Federal laws determined who was "white" according to how close a culture aligned with practices deemed European in nature (133). However, society's reliance on phenotypical traits advances the notion that the epidermalization of race means heightened social stakes for both black and white Americans.

In some respects, one can assume that Prime equates his new complexion with a phenotypical disability since no one impugns him for passing as white; they do not know his true ancestral background. Prime himself makes the decision to return to a black identity – a colorized debilitation – and thus refashions whiteness as an unsafe identity susceptible to changing societal associations. Prime finds himself victim to the color line even in a "superior" white identity that was created by what he calls a racist white Christian America. Skin color, says the unnamed narrator, "will continue to grow more

important…unless we make some radical improvement in our white Christianity" (*Pactolus* 107).

Tourgée also critiques white Christianity's responsibility for creating a race problem in many of his non-fiction works. For example, his lecture to the First Mohonk Conference on the Negro Question derived from ideas present in *Pactolus Prime*. Tourgée credits black Americans' assumed lower status to the twisted application of Christian principles by racist whites. Tourgée believed that religion and politics should not be separated since he saw Christ in the same light as a politician, leading the way for his followers. If the current politics failed US race relations, then society should review its religious practices. The unnamed narrator makes the point that "[t]o the Negro in the United States the race question is one of color only. He is what he is, and all his conditions are what they are merely because white Christian people have proscribed such conditions for him because he has more or less colored blood in his veins" (107). Skin color "is the prime factor in the Negro's view of the race question, and will continue to grow more important to him as he increases in knowledge, refinement, wealth, and sensibility [all entities that society attaches to racial visibility], unless we make some radical improvement in our white Christianity" (107). Whites' treatment of black Americans reflected their approaches to Christian principles. *Pactolus Prime's* serialized title, *Pactolus Prime; or the White Christ*, speaks to the view present in Tourgée's Mohonk lecture that "colored men [are missionaries] sent of God to the white people of the United States, to teach them the fundamental truth of Christianity" ("Negroes View" 109). Prime's experiences with color and his open dialogue with whites concerning the race problem show him teaching whites about racial issues that they have historically

overlooked. Not only does Prime hold credibility in speaking from the position of a visibly black man, but he also lived a large part of his life in a white body, physically and politically, proving his credibility to speak from the position of the oppressor.

Property in appearance centers heavily for Prime in two ways: First, he sees value in individuals' physical appearances via whiter complexions. Second, he acknowledges that US society tries to protect social value in a collective "Christian" image. In this way, Tourgée precedes Cheryl Harris in stating that whiteness (white physical appearance and ideological national identity) translates into a form of property. Tourgée utilizes his expertise in law to participate in a post-emancipation version of "moral suasion" aimed at ridding US society from the black-white color line. Harris establishes the importance of color in discussions of race and institutions built upon race (i.e. white Christianity). Referencing nineteenth-century legal cases, Harris argues that color-inflected social status exists because society has historically protected whiteness by law and regarded it as a valued property. Tourgée also makes this argument in *Plessy*. In many cases, racial visibility accounted for access to or denied rights and experiences within society. For example, the ability to vote or the experience of attending the best schools were often times granted according to one's racial visibility (read whiteness) or presumed ancestry. Harris echoes Tourgée's argument stating that "even as legal segregation was overturned, whiteness as property continued to serve as a barrier to effective change as the system of racial classification operated to protect" power enveloped in visible whiteness (1709). Tourgée offers the view that a false take on Christianity, namely one promoted by racist whites, protects the social value in white appearances through his characterization of

Prime. In order to rid both races from debilitating inferiority, white Christianity needs repair.

Prime's experiences with color and his open dialogue with whites concerning the race problem allow him to teach whites about racial issues that they have historically overlooked and black Americans how to maneuver through a white racist society, at least from the perspective of someone who has internalized racist ideas. Initially, Prime teaches Benny how to make a successful living in a business historically considered "black work" at his bootblack stand. Prime interesting position as both bootblack and financially comfortable owner of his bootblack stand, though, furthermore complicates the position from which Prime critiques blackness and whiteness. He challenges racialized notions about black Americans' economic status but does so because of his ownership of a stand usually associated with "black work." Not to mention, the key product used in his profession – shoe polish – has a minstrel connotation.

Prime teaches Benny the racist realities present in US society by echoing white-favored views concerning color. When Benny shares with Prime his decision to leave the bootblack stand and go to law school to fight for civil rights, Prime expresses extreme discontent with Benny's aspiration. He believes that color stigmas will always overpower formal education and profession. Benny tells Prime, 'I am not going to be a bootblack all my life just because I happen to have a *little* colored blood in my veins…. I'd rather be a man and black, than a mere money-bags and white' (*Pactolus* 42-43). Benny's choice to comment on his mixed heritage through references to blood quantum calls attention to the period's use of the "one-drop rule" and the era's racial visibility politics. The "one-drop rule" held that if a person had at least one drop of African ancestry, then society denied

them the right to a white identity even if they appeared white. Benny's having a "little colored blood" suggests that he has a better phenotypic claim to European ancestry; however, society's constraints deny him a right to whiteness and its privileges in a racially hierarchized society. Prime insists that Benny give up on his aspirations of becoming a lawyer, and therefore the possibility for Benny to take part in overturning legal manifestations of the "one-drop rule" and other precedents concerned with abolishing racial discrimination. Prime voices the opinion that to live openly as a black man, even with a lighter complexion and a formal education, results in nothing but more pain and disappointment. Prime chastises Benny based on his own personal experiences:

> 'You can't help the rest of the colored race by remaining a nigger, and you can do a good thing for yourself and save your children from an inheritance of woe by making yourself white…. You think it is the calling that makes one a nigger, not the color of the skin. Don't you know that if the most gifted man in the land was known to have a drop of Negro blood in his veins, nine-tenths of all the Christian people in the country would shun him as he were a monster? It don't [*sic*] hurt a white man to black boots and won't help a nigger to practice law. He'll be a nigger, just the same!' (42-45)

Prime feels comfortable speaking out on race matters at his bootblack stand, but his physical appearance–his darker than dark complexion–disables him from feeling empowered to make any real change in a society that places more value on whiteness. Therefore, Prime internalizes feelings of racial inferiority and tries to also impose them on Benny. He tells Benny, 'I've trod the wine-press, and I know what it is to live under

the curse of God and the contempt of man…Be as much of a man as you choose but be a white man' (45). Not only does Prime hold credibility in speaking from the position of a visibly black man, but his experiences in having lived a large part of his life in a white body, physically and politically, proves his credibility to speak from the position of the oppressor and the oppressed. Prime implies that while his current position along the color line prevents him from securing "white" opportunities, neither black nor white Americans can safely maneuver from one social position to the other. If that were possible, then Prime could have continued to claim a white identity even after his complexion darkens. Prime's experiences in 'trodding the wine press,' or walking along both sides of the color line, prove to him that the embodiment of racial inferiority occurs on both sides of the color line. He continues in his conversation with Benny that 'it is more tolerable to be a leper than to be a Negro in a Christian land' (42). Here, Prime reveals the contradictions in his decision to return to a black identity out of his fear of potentially having to constantly fend for his white identity after his discoloration and darkening. In short, Prime would have had to constantly prove his property in whiteness that is no longer visible.

Prime expresses the view that the only way that black Americans will receive a fair chance in the US is to take on a white identity. A second, although less-likely option, would be if the white race, or more explicitly white Christianity, finally gives black Americans the opportunity to live as equals. Prime implies that while the black-white color line prevents black Americans from "white" opportunities, it does remain permeable for those who appear white and take considerable measures to distances themselves from black communities. The local community already recognizes Benny as

Black; therefore, Benny cannot take advantage of his white appearance in Washington, D.C. Perhaps concerns over communal recognition accounts for why Prime decides to pass even while serving in a colored regiment.

In order to explain Prime's perspective on whiteness and blackness, the unnamed narrator first establishes whiteness as property–something to be gained, lost, and valued–revealing Prime's complicated history with color and racial passing. The narrator then draws readers' attention to the process of epidermalization that occurs when one encounters a racially indecipherable body. The narrator accomplishes this explanation through a reading of Prime's physical appearance in order to provide the reader with a sense of how individuals partake in epidermalization, or the process of investing phenotype with social value according to one's own insecurities. Prime's physical appearance offers insight into how black and white social positions stem from interchangeable social constructions that reveal notions of inferiority. Additionally, his body allows the reader to contemplate how racial visibility impacts conceptions of character. The narrator describes Prime's physical appearance as a metaphorical model of color as it pertains to race in the US:

> His appearance was very striking, full of incongruities that attracted attention yet were hard to define. At first sight and at a little distance, he seemed an old man; on closer inspection, one detected neither wrinkles nor muscular deterioration. In his prime he must have been above the medium height, slenderly rather than strongly built. He was stoop-shouldered, but his chest did not lack depth. His arms were long and his hands narrow, with white, hard nails that somehow seemed out of place

> upon the fingers of one in his condition. A racial expert one of the old slave-traders, for instance would have found it hard to reconcile those nails with the color of the hands, according to the theories that prevailed among the sagacious dealers in human flesh of a generation ago….
>
> [T]he countenances of the bootblack of the "Best House" was even more noticeable than his form. A narrow, almost pinched face, growing broad across the eyes, with a high forehead, a straight nose having that flexibility of nostril which is claimed to be indicative of the Caucasian, thin lips, and a peculiar leaden-gray complexion that seemed singularly pervasive of his whole being, were the things which first attracted the attention of a stranger. Closer observation showed that the same blue-gray tint seemed to be even intensified upon the lips, which lacked all trace of redness, so that the rows of short, even teeth showed with startling whiteness between them. (27-28)

The narrator's conflicting description of Prime works to challenge the audience's understanding of color and race. Prime's body, a metaphor for the current national racial climate, is "full of incongruities" that are "hard to define" because even the closest observer cannot pin down characteristics that, according to white racist ideology, are quite easy to identify. Tourgée's use of characteristics white authors used to describe black bodies do not match Prime's stature in the community nor do they pair with the attributes historically used to characterize white bodies. The illogic of racist theory exists on his person. Prime's racially caricatured "stoop-shouldered" appearance, commonly used to insinuate weakness, is matched with a high forehead, signifying intelligence and

social stature. Prime's exact color is undefinable making it nearly impossible for a voyeur, at first glance, to exactly tell Prime's race. The other racialized characteristics do not pair. For instance, while Prime has a pinched face opposite the round-jolly faces associated with a black male body in literature like an Uncle Remus-type, he has thin lips commonly associated with whiteness. While Prime does have short teeth, often depicted as big and crooked or gapped on black bodies in literature and caricatures, Prime's teeth are even. Even the racialized half-moon on the fingernails, historically meant to be a racial signifier, do not make Prime's race obvious in this description. The small amount of presumed whiteness in this description does not afford Prime a significant advantage in mainstream society; instead it confuses his racial identity for the observer. What does persist is the intraracial tension between Prime and the other black workers at the hotel. Prime represents a universalized version of colorism in that his white characteristics are overshadowed by the slightest appearances of blackness and therefore subject to colorism.

Prime repeatedly makes comments to Benny that if he decides to take on an black identity, then not only does he face a horrific life but so do his children. This warning appears in many other passing narratives, especially later texts such as Fannie Hurst's 1923 novel *Imitation of Life*, George Schuyler's 1931 novel *Black No More*, and William Lindsey White's 1941 memoir *Lost Boundaries*. The future of the black race matters to Prime whether or not future generations decide to change the public conception of blackness or subscribe to colorism. Prime reminds Benny:

> Remember, Benny, when you think of becoming a colored man by choice, or refusing to make yourself a white man, as you might, what a world of

> unmerited degradation you are bequeathing to your children and their offspring, God only knows for how many ages! Remember this, while you are thus lightly choosing debasement as your lot, that there are thousands of your race that would gladly lie down and be flayed alive, if they might rise up white the peers of white men and equal heirs of right and privilege with white Christians! (46)

Contemplating the fate of black children's public racial identities, Prime reveals the irony present in a white-favored colorism alongside his open critique of racism. If Benny decides to pass for white, then his children's racial identities would follow and so would their preference for lighter complexions and their associated social and economic privileges. Choosing to pass and then have children pass reflects the race's future in that children represent future generations as well as the continuation of past ideas or the creation of new ones. Prime's questioning Benny's future children's fate offers readers an opportunity to fill in the gap concerning what Benny (or society) should do concerning color and race.

Upon Prime's death, a conversation between a white doctor and attorney reveal his complicated battle with color amplifying the heightened interest in racial ethnography in nineteenth century US. Britt Rusert argues that nineteenth-century pro-slavery Southern doctors', scientists', and Northern academics' interests in racial ethnography was part of "a larger national project of reifying racial difference: separating the races into a series of 'types' [to verify] their containment from the white population" (68, 70). In the traditional fashion of the "tragic mulatto/a" figure, Prime's mysterious racial ancestry works to discredit science's ability to separate the races into types. His varying

experiences with racial visibility challenge his categorization into one particular racial genus. Born an enslaved fair-complexioned black man, Prime used his appearance to escape slavery by joining the Union army. Ironically, Prime successfully passes as a white soldier, yet he joins a colored regiment. Prime later sustains an injury causing him to take a medicine that resulted in agyria among other disabilities. Prime's decision to pass for white yet join a colored regiment represents a kind of intraracial colorism assuming that he was assigned a higher rank in the colored regiment as a white officer.

Tourgée offers a clear reference to scientifically and legally based disenfranchisement through an unidentified doctor's report on Prime's condition, the source for a conversation between the doctor examining Prime's body and Prime's lawyer. The doctor confesses in his report that he did not expose Prime's real name "because it might have endangered the man's life…the charge against him, of falsely pretending to be a white man was true" (*Pactolus* 251). The fact that Prime's racial background is revealed in a conversation between a doctor and a lawyer points to racist white Americans' attempts at qualifying racism through science and law during the nineteenth century. For example, the well-regarded southern physician Samuel Cartwright invented two mental "diseases" – *Drapeotemania* and *Dysaethesia* – to justify his claim that blacks were intellectually inferior to whites and, for the betterment of society, should remain enslaved. (Gordon-Smith 104)

Additionally, Prime's experience in passing illustrates colorism experienced by a visibly white body that masqueraded as having no claims to African ancestry. Although whites only discover Prime's African ancestry after his death, even after the chemical reaction, he decides that it would be easier for him to live as a black man. The report

notes that Prime still had lighter skin on more intimate areas of his body, suggesting that if he desired, he still had some proof of his whiteness. However, Prime could not imagine defending his dark complexion even under a disguise of European ancestry. That agryia affected the more visible areas on his body addresses racial visibility politics. Prime felt that the visible, darker areas outweighed his right to whiteness even with the minimal presence of some proof of his property in whiteness. Prime urges Benny to pass for white because he feels cheated from his property in whiteness and the opportunity to secure better opportunities for his family by sending his "white" daughter away to school. Prime does not want his visible blackness, even as a "white" man to taint his daughter's opportunities. The doctor further comments on Prime's choice: 'That a Negro should wish to be thought white is natural enough…And I indeed do not blame them. But why a white man should wish to be thought of as Negro, I confess I cannot understand" (*Pactolus* 255). The doctor's statement confirms that Prime successfully passed for white and suggests that had Prime decided to continue to live as a white man, although physically debilitated by discoloration, whites would have still potentially considered him white. Prime decides that any darkness on his visibly "white" person means a harsher life. Rather than live as a discolored, or even spotted "white" man, Prime decides to return to living as a black man without the worry of proving his whiteness on a day to day basis. Undoubtedly, appearing to belong to a specific race seemed much easier for Prime than remaining racially unidentifiable.

Prime's "white" daughter, Eva, represents the importance of women and the home sphere in changing society's understanding of color as it pertains to race. Rather than continue to live as a "white" woman after learning about her father's African ancestry

and enslaved past, Eva decides to live as a black woman and participate in the racial uplift movement. Tourgée's treatment of Eva provides a nuanced take on the "tragic mulatto/a" that resembles black American authors' treatment of the heroine in Frances E.W. Harper's 1892 novel *Iola Leroy* and Sutton Griggs's 1908 novel *Pointing the Way*. The "tragic mulatto/a" figures prominently in the race literature of this period where authors have characters meet dreadful ends in efforts to challenge the arbitrary nature of race. Brown's Clotel provides the most cited representation of the "tragic mulatta" by having its mulatresses meet their deaths or emotional dread. Racial identities and ideas about color are private concerns in the sense that they are perpetuated by an individual and taught in the home. In these novels, the home and actors within it hold full responsibility for the racial ideas that overflow into the public.

Tourgée alters literary uses of race, color, and custom in the context of the private to illustrate the very public reality that both blacks and whites are subject to colorist ideals in society that relies on racial visibility. His approach completely demolishes the presumed logic behind white supremacy and the view that black Americans are the only individuals that need to be "fixed" in order solve the race problem. African American and American literature of the nineteenth century often use a character's skin complexion to provide insight into the very "private" and personal attributes of a character's socioeconomic status, ancestral past, or moral customs. For example, in Hannah Crafts's 1855 novel *The Bondwoman's Narrative,* the narrator treats visible blackness as the normative and blankets suspicions of a character's ancestral past or trustworthiness in whiteness. Black and white authors usually employ the "tragic mulatto/a" figure to reference the "private," unspoken history of white masters fathering biracial children and

society's fears concerning interracial unions. Harriet Wilson's 1859 novel *Our Nig* which features a "mulatress" whose racial ambiguity causes trouble for her acceptance within the white household where she lives and works. In other instances, literature often shows black and white Americans struggling for racial survival by attempting to conquer social ills that society associates with specific races or skin complexions. In the US context, the solution to these ills appear only in a "white is right" perspective. William Marion Cook and Paul Laurence Dunbar's 1899 one act operetta "Jes Lak White Folks" best depicts this trend where a black family decides to better themselves by acquiring a family tree with European roots in order to claim a higher social stature.

Prime sends Eva away so that his blackness will not overshadow her property in whiteness; yet, he makes it clear that "[w]hile I wished her to be white, I could not bear that she be taught to despise the race with which she is even remotely allied" (322). Prime takes on the private responsibility to parentage albeit remotely because of his "disability" of black skin. Eventually, Prime's lawyer tells Eva that Prime is her father once she is faced with the choice to marry a white man. Timing is no coincidence here. The attorney's decision to tell Eva of her ancestry at the moment when she might marry a white man serves as a reference to the American legal system's attempts to prevent the interracial unions. Therefore, Eva decides to live her life as a black woman despite being visibly white. The attorney reads from a newspaper:

> A very interesting ceremony will take place in this city on Christmas Eve. It is understood that a wealthy young lady [Eva], formerly of Washington, will at that time take the vows of a novitiate of the order of "Sisters of Mercy," devoting herself especially [*sic*] to work among the colored

> people. Her fortune, which is said to be a large one, has already been placed in the hands of trustees to use for advancing the interests of that race…. It is rumored that the postulate will take the name of "Sister Pactola" (356)

When the attorney's assistant asks why he thinks Eva would do such a thing, he responds, "she sees no other way to avoid either deception or the confession of inferiority" (358). The newspaper is a public forum in which Eva expresses her private sentiment regarding race and color. Eva's decision serves as a hint to the engaged audience that the color complex needs to be changed by and for future generations. Eva embodies the domestic sphere, and her white appearance and choice to live as a black woman suggests that whites have a major stake in changing the colorist perception that threatens race relations.

Most scholars who study Tourgée focus on his attempt to defeat the 1896 Louisiana Separate Car Act in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. However, his earlier contemplation on the substantial social, political, and economic value on visible whiteness appears in *Pactolus Prime* through the novel's focus on color and Christianity. Perhaps Tourgée attempts an early instance of legal storytelling as understood by critical race theorists through his use of "perspective, viewpoint, and the power of stories" in fiction to come to a deeper understanding of how racial visibility impacts both black and white Americans (Delgado and Stefancic 44).

Tourgée counterintuitively uses the passing novel to touch the hearts and minds of not only to white sympathizers with the struggles faced by black Americans, but also to reveal the ugly horrors of colorism and passing in terms of what they meant for black and

white relations and for intraracial community building. As Tourgée's unpublished notes to the novel suggest with this line from Shakespeare's *Henry V*, "That, though the truth of it stands off as gross /As black and white, my eye will scarcely see it," the unstated truth regarding the black-white color line should be so obvious: the color line stems from a fear of racial inferiority and thus creates a sense of racial inferiority in those it aims to mark as lesser-than (*Pactolus Prime* MS). Both sides of the color line must realize this overlooked truth. Tourgée's nuanced approach to the passing novel precedes later innovative approaches to literary intraracial critique through not-so-likely figures.

Chapter 2: Sutton Griggs's Inspiration for the "New Mulatta" in *Overshadowed*

> Let us study what the white race has wrought and imitate it in every good point. Who knows but that God has put us here in America that we may catch the light of this great civilization and pass it to those of like blood across the seas? The white Americans are animated with the thought that they are divinely appointed to bless the whole world…. It will do us good to be inspired with a similar thought to the effect that we are to bless others.
>
> Sutton Elbert Griggs
>
> *Building Our Own: A Plea for a Parallel Civilization* (1913 or 1914)

Tourgée depicts the race problem as a shared responsibility between black and white Americans with regard to how they manage their anxieties with racial inferiority through his inventive use of the passing novel. Sutton Elbert Griggs, on the other hand, revises the "tragic mulatta" figure in his 1901 novel *Overshadowed*, turning the existing race hierarchy on its head. His "New Mulatta" suggests that black Americans already have the answer to resolving racial strife in the United States. In the epigraph starting this chapter, Griggs, a successful Baptist minister, writer, and publisher, satirizes whites' claims of manifest destiny and states that black America view itself in a divinely appointed light for the sake of guiding global black citizens out of oppression. Black

Americans, and ultimately members of the Black Diaspora, only need to change their degrading view of themselves in order to realize their greatness, suggests Griggs.

In *Overshadowed,* Griggs anticipates later twentieth century revisions of the "tragic mulatta" with a white appearing "heroic mulatta" who counterintuitively undercuts investments in the social and political values of whiteness. This figure takes up the task proposed by Alain Locke in his 1925 text *The New Negro*, where he writes that the New Negro rejects the "social mimicry" and "dependence" prone to the Old Negro and instead develops a more socially conscious and prideful view of herself and her race (3). Griggs's "heroic mulatta" inspires a "New Mulatta" that later twentieth-century authors implement to speak out against intraracial and interracial prejudices partaking in the illogic of the politics of racial visibility. Rather than replicate white supremacist-inspired racial fictions, Griggs responds to white supremacy's presence in black communities by counterintuitively having a "New Mulatta" call on black leadership to become ideologically self-sufficient and focus on the collective community rather than "imitate" or "ape" essentialized acts associated with whiteness. Griggs's novel examines the methods through which southern black communities established themselves politically and socially at the turn of the century while offering criticism of racial and color essentialism.

Set in Richmond, Virginia, *Overshadowed* follows the story of the parentless, phenotypically- "white" Erma Wysong. Like most mixed-heritage characters within this period's literature, Erma only guesses her father's "white" ancestral background since society viewed interracial relationships as taboo. Erma is a Richmond Colored High School and Tuskegee Industrial Institute graduate. Her darker-complexioned beau, Astral

Herndon, secures an opportunity to leave Richmond and attend medical school. Erma, however, decides to seek employment as a domestic in efforts to "undertake the task of self-improvement" despite her academic achievements and the local community's wishes. In response, Erma's community shuns her for not upholding the standards for racial uplift based on her choice to seek "lower-class" employment in the newspaper as an educated and lighter-complexioned young woman. Her community deems her actions disgraceful to herself and to the entire race. Furthermore, Lawson, a white man, secretly lusts for Erma and works with her aunt to influence who employs her so that he may see her whenever he wishes. The novel ends with Erma's death, however, the last scene depicts her husband and son going out into the world as "citizens of the ocean," telling black communities around world of Erma's legacy of rejecting racial and color essentialism. The plot illustrates a struggle between individualism and collective movements for racial and social equality troubled by the continued white patriarchal control over the black family—the cradle of the developing black middle class and the leaders of black racial uplift.[7]

Overshadowed illustrates black racial uplift through a breach from what I am calling the color contract. The novel highlights the importance of collective racial individuality in the face of traditional literary representations of black racial uplift that, consequently, sometimes reinforce colorist and sexist notions. I draw from philosopher Charles Mills's idea of the racial contract, or a rhetorical or theoretical social contract, that determines who holds power and who gets certain economic and social benefits within a society (11). Alas, the racial contract only acts as an agreement between visibly European-descended individuals. Sometimes nonwhites of a particular class, education

level, region, or those with specific phenotypical features might be allowed to enter the racial contract. The "color line within a color line" depicts one group's ability to *attempt* to join into the racial contract by adhering to a color contract.

In this chapter, I will explore how Erma suggests a break from the color contract as an alternative strategy towards racial uplift. Rather than replicate essentialized social practices and appearances as "white," the "New Mulatta" inspires her husband and child to take up the responsibility of spreading the message of black race pride to the Black Diaspora as a direct critique of Richmond's and other black communities' expectations of them based on their physical appearance and education level. Thus, the "New Mulatta" challenges the racially essentialized notions traditionally examined in passing novels, such as Tourgée's *Pactolus Prime*, and sets the stage for later iterations of the racially ambiguous woman labeled "Black" in African American literature. This "New Mulatta" voices the most critical views of the color line and reframes colorist notions that exist within some black communities.

Born on June 19, 1872, in Chatfield, Texas, Griggs examines and challenges internalized racism and classism in his writings with attention to imagining the future meanings of blackness in the US. His self-published literary oeuvre includes four novels, a series of political pamphlets, and several book-length expositions. Griggs established two of the first black-owned publishing companies – the Orion Publishing Company in Nashville, Tennessee, and the National Public Welfare League in Memphis – and sold his texts door to door in black neighborhoods (Chakkalakal and Warren). Clearly, Griggs wrote about and for black audiences, challenging them to reconsider their roles in remedying race relations as anything but reactionary to white supremacists. Instead,

Griggs's works prompts his readers to reflect on intraracial tensions that impede racial uplift at the turn of the century, asking them to consider how other authors represent the race. In the case of *Overshadowed*, I propose that Griggs writes to other black authors about their use of the "mulatta" figure in race literature.

Griggs's works have gained increasingly more critical attention in recent years with most scholarship focusing on his 1899 novel *Imperium in Imperio*. However, his "militant" approaches to addressing race relations have left him behind the ranks of his contemporaries like Pauline Hopkins, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Charles Chesnutt. Although Griggs welcomed interracial cooperation, his writings suggest that he strongly supported black intellectual and social independence free from assimilationist influence. Independent black community building features prominently in his works with special consideration for intraracial color prejudice.

As one of the few black activist writers who maintained his residence in the South for his entire lifetime, Griggs seems very much interested in how physical appearances and material wealth factored in relation to social mobility in the US. With the politics of racial visibility ruling the land via de jure and de facto enforcement, blacks' attempts at racial uplift from the stigma of enslavement owed special attention to racialized social standards. As a consequence, many black authors tailored their work to the growing interest in intraracial divisions based on phenotype by drawing on tropes of racial passing and colorism, including Harper's *Iola Leroy*, Chesnutt's *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories*, and Hopkins's *Contending Forces*. These novels and their counterparts often feature "tragic mulatta/o" figures who, as Teresa Zackodnik claims, "rhetorically transgress and contest a [color line] that attempted to police and secure racial identities as

they were interimplicated with class, gender, and sexuality" (xi). *Overshadowed*, however, offers readers a "New Mulatta." It asks its black readers to reject the dominant cultures' racialized notions of respectability and question why certain activities are associated with blackness or whiteness. In other words, just as Locke's "New Negro" rejected passive and offensive characteristics associated with blackness, Griggs's "New Mulatta" rejected colorist notions about blackness. Furthermore, the novel's plot touches on what racial essentializing says about a so-called democratic US. Erma inspires the next generation of the Black Diaspora—the up-and-coming New Negro— to live according to a creed of black race pride developed with a focus on the black family. Many later twentieth century representations of mixed-heritage women paint this portrait, or at least, that is the narrative surrounding their characters.

Erma joins the ranks of several other "heroic mulattas" who emerge in the African American literary tradition including Harriet Jacobs, Ellen Craft, Minnie (of Harper's *Minnie's Sacrifice*) and Iola Leroy. Nonetheless, by *Overshadowed's* end, Erma transforms into the heroic leader of the Black Diaspora; her revolutionary ideas regarding the intraracial color line extends far beyond her local community. Anticipating the New Negro Movement that sought to evolve blacks' views of themselves, their communities, and their blackness, Griggs's Erma offers a new purpose for the "mulatta" in the African American literary tradition. According to Carla Peterson, scholars often view turn-of-the-century black leadership as adopting the social standards set by the white hegemony in an effort to assimilate into the mainstream culture. Peterson says of Northern black elites specifically:

> Working, speaking, and writing out of a particular set of social institutions, this elite constructed a program of "racial uplift." This program has often been viewed as an attempt by the elite to replicate the values of the hegemony and assimilate into white middle-class culture by means of improved education, acceptance of Euro-American standards of civilization, and adherence to the dominant culture's ethic of hard work, self-help, and moral purity. (*Doers* 187)

Erma embodies traditional beliefs associated with middle-class improvement in the categories of education and labor. Yet, her subversion of these expectations that her community hold about her prompts readers to question the following: why do the politics of racial visibility influence how Erma's community evaluates her moral purity? Why are those traits associated with "Euro-American standards of civilization"? Is this practice a concern for only blacks living in the US, or does this issue require a transatlantic exchange of ideas? Griggs's novel extends concerns with approaches to racial uplift in the Progressive-era US to future generations and to black communities abroad. Erma's character challenges the framework of the politics of racial visibility given her choice to either critique white supremacist society's obsessions over racial visibility and color or to adhere to the traditional "tragic mulatta/o" trope.

Divisions based on skin color occur globally but vary according to a specific culture's racial and color contracts. When Du Bois describes the color line in *Souls of Black Folk*, he references multiple hues and backgrounds, encompassing Asia, Africa, and America, to illustrate his global understanding of the color line and its multiple effects. Therefore, Du Bois offers a global understanding of rhetorical contracts framed

within the context of race and color. In any case, the US color contract consequently maintains and reproduces white supremacy and requires that parties take legal, physical, and psychological measures to mark nonwhites as "second-class" citizens. These psychological measures then manifest ideological beliefs. Kevin Gaines argues that the nineteenth-century black middle-class's emphasis on class distinctions and patriarchal authority during a period of "legal and extralegal repression" propagated rather than alleviated racial pseudoscience philosophies. I would add that an emphasis on complexion and appearance also circulated these problematic philosophies within black communities. Conditions for economic social mobility were directly concerned with color and race and applied not only to blacks, but also to immigrant groups and to other racially marked individuals. "Elite blacks were replicating, even though they contested, the uniquely [US] racial fictions upon which liberal conceptions of social reality and 'equality' were founded" through calls for "uplift" and "self-help" (Gaines 5).

Francis E.W. Harper's pseudonymous "Chit Chat, or Fancy Sketches," published under the name Jane Rustic in the November 1859 *Anglo-African Magazine*, gets at the issue of replicating racial fictions through what she (and others) call "imitation" and "aping." I see these acts as those that society has essentialized as white cultural, social, and intellectual characteristics with regard to the posterity of black racial uplift. Jane's attention to appearances and phenotypical features offers an overlooked commentary on racially essentialized actions that Griggs engages with years later in *Overshadowed*. In the sketch, Jane Rustic – presumably a country dweller – attends a wedding with some of the city's black elites. Peterson notes that "Jane satirizes the ostentatious display of wealth by members of the black elite, suggesting that their extravagant lifestyle

represents a vain attempt to hide the commonness of their daily occupations" ("Literary Transnationalism" 194). While awaiting the bride and groom, the wedding guests casually discuss approaches toward black racial uplift with focus on if the race should "imitate" white civilization or make their own way. Immediately once the guests begin conversing with one another, Jane takes note of one man's "fair complexion [that] scarcely showed his identity with the negro race" ("Chit Chat" 341). This man voices the opinion that black Americans should stay in the US and fight for their civil rights. A lively exchange then occurs between the fair-complexioned man and a host of other wedding guests about whether or not blacks should "imitate," or "make patterns after [whites as] an example," in order to uplift the race (342). Jane suggests that some white cultural, social, and intellectual aspects could provide blacks with "cardinal source[s] of improvement" (341). It is "aping" – those gaudy embellishments and acts that some blacks choose to do only for show rather than to actually improve their communities – that Jane finds problematic. She observes some of the wedding guests who participate in "aping": "Fingers used to the wash-tub were glittering with jewels, women were vieing [*sic*] with each other in rich laces and elegant brocades; hands hardened by labor were encased in fine and delicate gloves" (341). These material relics of "uplift" only act as boosters for vanity and self-indulgence. Jane continues to give the reader additional examples of "aping" to include instances when a poor working-class family chooses to live outside their means and decorate their homes in the style of those on Fifth Avenue. She also mentions instances when a black man might choose to "isolate himself from colored society, and harp on the seclusion of himself and family [but turns] to associate with the dominant race" (342).

Overshadowed teases out the essentialized notions associated with "imitation" and "aping" and illustrates a "New Mulatta's" call on black leadership to become ideologically self-sufficient and focus on the individual. Griggs's novel offers criticism towards "aping" and shows improvement through unconventional modes that break from the color contract (i.e. the light-complexioned, educated domestic) to highlight the importance of individuality in the face of black racial uplift. For, as Jane suggests to the wedding guests at the sketch's conclusion, "*you* [my emphasis] are strangely gifted [with] the power to mould [*sic*] public opinion, to influence sway and direct…. Liberate the pent-up electricity of your life" (342-343). In other words, blacks, see your own contributions to society and do not feel that certain actions are deemed "white" or "Black" according to any one race's standards.

Breaking from the color contract urges blacks to look within their own communities and reject colorist values and an intraracial caste-system that sustains the social hierarchy which originated from US race-based chattel slavery. The social valuation of lighter complexions features prominently within this caste system, where the white hegemony essentialized certain attributes and opportunities, such as education and employment, as "white" and created social tensions and intraracial divisions within black communities. bell hooks asserts that, "To be born light meant that one was born with an advantage, recognized by everyone. To be born dark was to start life handicapped, with a serious disadvantage" (121). In *Overshadowed*, Erma critiques the black middle-class's assertion of difference via color and class and responds to turn-of-the-century black communities' unconscious reinstitutionalization of white supremacist ideals. This thought process discards the feeling that some blacks felt of needing to "fit" within a mold

created by a white supremacist society either by "imitating" or "aping" acts essentialized as "white" via the politics of racial visibility. Andreá N. Williams adds that since Jim Crow law treated all blacks as second-class citizens, black communities "turned inward to their segregated communities to orchestrate self-help initiatives and racial protests [that] often depended on social leaders asserting their difference from and responsibility to a larger black constituency" ("Moving Up" 94). Black leaders, says Williams, faced the challenge of deciding how to achieve "development and refinement" in order to promote racial uplift (94). Griggs shows racial visibility and its ties to class remaining a prevailing method for intraracial distinction.

Criticizers of the color contract include a long list of authors within the African American literary tradition. Williams lists "Elizabeth Keckley and Eliza Potter as two well-known authors [who] contest the premises of racial uplift through their value of labor that runs contrary to the rhetoric of racial advancement that denigrated manual and unskilled labor as 'drudgery'" (*Dividing Lines* 10). Yet Griggs adds to this long-standing tradition of refusing the color contract by devaluing light-complexions as a method for racial uplift, thus challenging a major aspect of racial uplift altogether—one that relies on racial visibility. In his preface to *Overshadowed*, Griggs explicitly calls out to his target audience to break from race and color essentialism. He says:

> He whose grandfather was a savage and whose father was a slave has been bidden to participate in a highly complex civilization on terms of equality with the most cultured, aggressive and virile type… the Anglo-Saxon…[T]he civilization in which [blacks] are to work out their respective destinies is *fitted* [my emphasis] to the nature of the Anglo-

> Saxon, because he evolved it; while, on the other hand, the nature of the Negro *must be fitted to the civilization*, thus necessitating the casting aside of all that he had evolved. (5)

The Anglo-Saxon nature that Griggs refers to here includes both the intense race pride to the point of manifest destiny that Griggs mentions earlier, as well as the physical in terms of appearances and the sociological in terms how blacks "imitate" or "ape" to "fit" within the mainstream, racially-essentialized culture. "Fitted" works especially well in the context of a racially oppressed people trying to find a place for themselves within a larger national community that was not created with them in mind beyond "second-class" citizenship. Yes, the Reconstruction Amendments granted formerly enslaved blacks' citizenship, but the white hegemony denied them those rights through laws and customs. Black America now claims freedom and should be able to make its own way, suggests Griggs. However, he expects black communities to actively revise racial uplift in the sense of ceasing to appeal to whiteness (or to bolstering claims that certain activities are associated with whiteness) and aspiring to fix *interracial* relations. Rather, Griggs suggests mending *intraracial* divisions that perpetuate phenotypical and classist divisions in similar ways that they simultaneously occur along the black-white color line. The lighter-complexioned Erma becomes the vehicle for this message when she asks members to reevaluate their habits of aligning with white patriarchal control that results in intraracial colorism, unconscious internalized racism, and classism.

Erma critiques intraracial adaptations of white supremacist ideology and acts as an example of someone who successfully rejects the color contract as a method towards racial uplift. According to Gaines, "uplift" has had multiple meanings throughout US

history that match the climate of race relations during a given historical period. Therefore, the terms of a given period's racial contract, to return to Mills's concept, shifted according to the mechanisms used to consider a person as "Other." During Reconstruction, and even well into the twenty-first century, "uplift" began to refer to the success of middle-class black elites carrying the entire race out from degradation by emphasizing "self-help, racial solidarity, temperance, thrift, chastity, social purity, patriarchal authority, and the accumulation of wealth" (Gaines 1-2).

Many texts within the African American literary tradition feature plots that contemplate blacks' exclusion from and attempts at securing acceptance within the mainstream dominant culture through aspirations to join the middle-class. Authors invested in racial uplift fiction include Charles Chesnutt's 1901 and 1905 novels *Marrow of Tradition* and *The Colonel's Dream* and Chester Himes's 1945 novel *If He Hollers Let Him Go*. Although these texts push their audiences to consider black bodies within the national mythos, none of these do so from the vantage point of a black community successfully building its own way *outside* of the racial or color contract. In *Overshadowed*, however, a phenotypically "white" body, rejects white supremacy-inspired racial visibility and refuses to enter the existing color contract. The "heroic mulattas" in other texts do offer methods towards racial uplift such as rejecting advances from white men in exchange for better economic situations or rejecting gendered expectations, however Erma—the "New Mulatta"— distinctly places focus on color as it pertains to racial uplift and refuses to feel devastated for not gaining acceptance into either a black or white community. Rather, she bids black communities around the globe address their role in bolstering rather than alleviating racial pseudoscience philosophies,

perpetuating colorism, and falling victim to internalized racism. Erma expresses her discontent with the black middle-class's approach to black racial uplift early in the novel in an exchange with her former classmate's mother, Aunt Mollie. Erma explains:

> Because our race has borrowed the white man's language, manner of dress, religion, ideas of home, philosophy of life, we have apparently decided that everything that the white man does is good for us to imitate. We do not stop to think that the white race has deep, ingrained faults as a race; and thus, we proceed to imitate faults and virtues alike, indiscriminately and instinctively. We unhesitatingly adopt even those erroneous traits in the white man's character that have oppressed us. […] being such an imitative people, we have accepted without question, their standard of what is honorable. (*Overshadowed* 43)

Here, Erma reveals white supremacist ideas held within some black communities and expresses a critique that is in direct contrast with ideas often expressed by the traditional "tragic mulatta" figure—a figure that both black and white authors have historically used to invite audiences to consider the arbitrary nature of race and the future of race relations and racial intermarriage. Brown's *Clotel* and Larsen's *Passing* are just two canonical texts that employ the "tragic mulatta" to these ends. Additionally, in efforts to either voice disapproval of racial intermarriage or to highlight the harsh reality facing the "new race," nineteenth and twentieth century authors traditionally used the "tragic mulatta" to address the dilemma of choosing to live openly as a black American in accordance with the "one-drop rule" or to yield to white patriarchy's phenotypical standards and masquerading as a white person.[8] The choice to self-identify as black or

white could potentially dismantle feelings of ancestral bonds or community that the character might have otherwise experienced. Consider Martin Delany's canonical 1859-1861 text *Blake; or the Huts* of *America*, for example. When Henry, the leader of the Black Diaspora rebellion, arrives in "the haughty South Carolina," the narrator criticizes an upper-class, free-black community infiltrated by white supremacy:

> [F]eelings [of an assumed superiority] engendered by the whites have been extensively incorporated with the elements of society among the colored people, giving rise to the 'Brown Society' an organized association of mulattos, created by the influence of whites, for the purpose of preventing pure-blooded Negroes from entering the social circle, or holding intercourse with them. Here intelligence and virtue are discarded and ignored, when not in conformity with these regulations… Oppression is the author of all this, and upon the heads of the white masters let the terrible responsibility of this miserable stupidity and ignorance of their mulatto children rest. (109)

This passage illustrates the type of internalized racism and race criticism towards racially ambiguous characters that are also present in Erma's community. Erma is expected to feel superior to other blacks because of her community's increased valuation of white appearances or actions deemed "white." Erma differs from the traditional "tragic mulatta" and from mixed-heritage characters in Delany's text in that her "heightened race consciousness" actually works to uplift the race to a more critical assessment of whiteness and its associated social politics in her reconfiguration of blackness. Delany's text suggests that some black communities suffer from intraracial divides based on the

same color line that racist whites use to discriminate against blacks. However, a closer look at the line, "let the terrible responsibility of this miserable stupidity and ignorance of their mulatto children rest" suggests that the demonization of mixed-heritage people, or those of lighter complexions, rests with white supremacist ideology. Erma's attitude towards her appearance frees her from this responsibility.

The evils of a phenotypically driven society make Erma a minority within a minority community since both black and white communities force her into a heightened race consciousness, a feature that is typical of the traditional "tragic mulatta." However, Erma expresses a heroic voice for the purpose of empowering not only herself but also a minority community. Erma breaks from the color contract in two ways: first, she disrupts the popular characterization of racially ambiguous figures as perpetuators of colorism and victims of internalized racism; and second, she becomes the voice of interracial and intraracial critiques. Erma calls upon Richmond's black community to look internally for guidance on securing racial and social equality and to live according to its own measure of achievement rather than merely replicate essentialized race and color-bound exclusivity. Rather than prove a racist white America's responsibility for failing race relations, Erma highlights the unconscious internalized racism present within her community, where leaders unwittingly perpetuate some of the same racist falsehoods that they claim to denounce. Erma's church members and former classmates attempt to police every community member's actions in an effort to foster a sense of collective "uplifted" identity over individuality or a collective individuality removed from white-supremacist ideas. Erma suggests that when a black community perpetuates discriminatory ideals similar to those held by the white hegemony, they will continue to hinder collective

social mobility and racial uplift. Erma's dialogue challenges and deauthorizes white supremacy's infiltration within her community and by the novel's end, within the Black Diaspora.

Additionally, Erma's ability to pass for white paired with her refusal to pass proves a pivotal component of her characterization given that characters with her appearance are usually shown succumbing to colorist ideology, promoting socially conservative values of traditional respectability politics [read white], or choosing to pass into white society. Erma chooses not to pass and instead voices the most radical opinions of all the characters in the novel. Erma attempts to enlighten her community to the fact that color remains just as interconnected and extremely pertinent to intraracial divisions as it does to the black-white color line. Erma's light-complexion and education level does not match with her community's opinion about her choosing to seek work as a domestic in order to provide for her household. She does not fit the southern "mammie" figure that authors such as Thomas Dixon and Joel Chandler Harris make popular nor does she use her formal education to aspire towards racial uplift. Her assertive voice works against her qualifications and stigmatized appearance; she speaks out against a presumed intraracial higher-social position of a "white" appearing body. Doing so allows Erma to challenge the status quo from within and outside of her community. Erma, a visibly white body, plays on the very common assumption that black audiences will only listen to "white" voices, "white" bodies, and "white" ideas and practices as models for racial uplift by voicing this critique.

Furthermore, by referencing specific acts and manners that society associates with white womanhood, Erma makes clear that a racist white America has essentialized these

practices – not black Americans aspiring to racial uplift; some blacks, however, have internalized these essentialized ideas and accepted them as means to achieve racial uplift. Erma challenges the belief that the black middle-class must perform these acts to establish itself as race leaders. Performing certain dress and manners under the assumption that doing so emulates whiteness instills a sense of racial divisiveness in black communities. The "siety" mothers in the novel exclaim, "Heroic soul! Perhaps no monument will ever be reared to those noble Negro women who, emerged from slavery, were at once enslaved again by their children and bore their heavy burdens uncomplainingly, in a vain attempt to build upon their poor bruised shoulders an aristocracy…their educated children to be the aristocrats" (*Overshadowed* 39). In so many words, these matriarchs suggest that aspirations to aristocracy that mimic white patriarchy is a form of enslavement that maintains white supremacy's continued control over black communities. Griggs echoes this idea in several of his nonfiction works. For instance, in his 1907 pamphlet *The One Great Question*, he argues that black communities face a new type of slavery in which some individuals have become slaves to a white race ideology. He argues against the opinion that blacks are only considered dignified based on their ability to mimic practices associated with whiteness and that furthermore, society equates those practices with whiteness in the first place (45). Ten years later, in his 1917 pamphlet *The Reconstruction of a Race*, Griggs states that "the Negro may learn all that [the white] system of education provides, but even after that has been done…it will be found that the most vital thing for the Negro race has not been touched [,] the white race possessing the instincts, traditions and principles that make possible social action" (26). Griggs's sarcasm appears yet again, and his message remains

clear. In order for black communities to excel, they must first stop partaking in white supremacist race and class essentialism which keeps intraracial tensions alive.

Erma's critiques bridge opposing sides of the debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois on race cooperation and dignity in labor as a way to place the focus on racial uplift back onto the individual but also for the collective community to distinguish itself outside of the notion that they should "imitate whiteness." Washington advocated for accommodation and self-help while urging black Americans to accept Jim Crow laws and practices as temporary realities in the US. He believed that if black Americans achieved economic success and proved themselves useful to whites, then civil rights would logically follow. Washington's philosophy urged black Americans to work as farmers, domestic servants, and manual laborers in order to prove to whites that they deserved equal rights. In the 1890s, Washington and Du Bois shared similar beliefs concerning racial uplift. For instance, Du Bois agreed with Washington that black Americans should engage in more self-help activities, moral improvement, and advancements in economic independence. Du Bois even wrote to Washington congratulating him on his famous speech at the Atlanta Exposition, calling it "a word fitly spoken" ("W.E.B. Du Bois to Booker" [24 September 1895]). However, by the early 1900s, Du Bois asserted that Washington's strategies would only further perpetuate white oppression. He began to advocate for full and immediate citizenship and for black Americans to pursue classical liberal education in the arts, humanities, and sciences. Furthermore, he believed that Washington's "Tuskegee Machine"–a national network of organizations and publications overseen by Washington–did more to advance Washington's notoriety than to benefit the race. In *Souls of Black Folk,* Du Bois includes

an essay entitled, "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington," in which he chastises Washington's actions and philosophy for doing more harm than good to blacks. Du Bois believed that a classical liberal arts education would secure civil rights and equal citizenship, and in turn, change public thought about blackness. Erma receives a classical education yet chooses to pursue employment in a service position, suggesting a compromise between opinions held by Washington and Du Bois. She posts the following ad in the newspaper: "SITUATIONS WANTED—Female Help. A young Negro woman, Erma Wysong, desires a position as cook, washerwoman, nurse or housemaid in a white family" (*Overshadowed* 32). Her post centers what she finds to be the best financial situation for her family at the time rather than for what the community has determined is beneficial to the race. By focusing on herself as an individual, Erma sees her actions as a means of uplifting the race.

Erma's career choice takes elements of both Washington's and Du Bois's positions to create her own individual path, and thereby presents an individualism that denies the white-supremacist color line and its associations of certain actions with particular races, complexions, and education levels that hinder collective social mobility. This act echoes the call that Griggs puts forth in the epigraph prefacing this chapter. Rather than perform acts and ideas associated exclusively with whiteness, Griggs sarcastically suggests that blacks model whites' enlightened perception of themselves and promote that race pride throughout the Black Diaspora. Erma's choice appreciates Talented Tenth leadership without reinforcing intraracial divisions. Furthermore, Erma later marries the darker-complexioned Dr. Astral Herndon, illustrating the joining together of two classes and complexions that nineteenth and early-twentieth century

African American literature often show as groups in conflict.[9] Griggs points out the importance of individuality to Erma and Astral's marriage as well when he inserts Robert Burns's 1795 song "A Man's A Man For A' That" when the community criticizes Astral for marrying a mixed-heritage woman who is determined to work in domestic labor. The unnamed narrator describes the following scene:

> Astral was criticised [*sic*] by some on the score that he had chosen a wife of mixed blood when there were so many girls in the city of pure Negro extraction. Others insisted that he had acted wisely, on the theory that each succeeding generation should be as far removed as possible from the original color which had so many ills chargeable to it. Still another group was found that bitterly opposed the union on the ground that class distinctions were highly essential to the welfare of the race, which distinctions Astral's course was calculated to obliterate, in that he, who was to earn his livelihood by mental exertion, was to marry a girl who had deserted that pathway and resorted to menial labor.
>
> Opposed to these were those who agreed with Burns in his teachings, to the effect that:
>
> "Rank is but the guinea's stamp;
>
> A man's the gowd for a' that." (184)

This passage reveals several issues relevant to Erma's and Astral's individuality and their decision to marry despite their community's contrary opinions. First, the narrator reveals the issue of keeping not only blacks and whites separate, but also skin complexions separate. Richmond's black community expects Astral to marry someone

closer to his complexion. Second, as previously mentioned, Erma's complexion and education does not pair with the standards for which she is expected to work. Considering these two issues together, the community believes that Erma's unusual approach towards self-improvement will bring down Astral's social position. Had she adhered to the standards set forth by the politics of racial visibility and adopted by the community, then Astral's marriage to an educated, light-complexioned woman would have uplifted his social position and the position of his progeny.

Margaret and Ellen, Erma's former classmates, represent the color and class status that the community believes Erma should likewise work to protect and comment on her choices throughout the novel. They are Erma's peers in education level and, presumably, phenotypical appearance. Margaret and Ellen read Erma's job ad and respond hysterically. They decide to reprimand their former classmate and try to influence the older community matriarchs into talking some sense into Erma. Margaret and Ellen exclaim to Margaret's mother, Aunt Mollie:

> "[Erma Wysong] is going to throw that education away in the washtub, in the kitchen, or rolling some white woman's baby about.
>
> "Why, we would then be no higher in life than our slave time mothers who did such work. White girls occupying the social station in their race that we do in our race would suffer themselves to be carried out of their homes dead before they would perform such menial tasks. [We] must hold up our race just as they do their

> race. Why, just think, if we educated girls go to work, it can be truthfully said that our race has no first-class society." (34)

Erma's advertisement provokes fears of destroying color and class divisions within Richmond's black community, the foundations upon which the leaders of racial uplift have asserted themselves and their moral principles as representatives of the race. Margaret and Ellen see themselves occupying the same social station as Erma and want to protect their presumed higher-social status. They give expression to communal fears regarding the fate of future generations if class distinctions between educated and lower-class blacks and color divisions between darker-complexioned and lighter-complexioned blacks are dismantled. To these women and others like them, Erma's lower-class employment reflects the degradation of the lighter-complexioned, educated black middle class. The hard work of generations before her has been done in vain. Erma becomes an example of an individualism that damages the community. These fears prompt Richmond's black community's efforts to police Erma. Consequently, their actions help advance the racist and classist ideas held by whites who claim white racial privilege and by blacks who perpetuate a racist white culture's social divisions. When Margaret compares the young ladies' stations in the black community to those of whites, she asserts a form of white privilege that she feels Erma should value and maintain. Margaret and Ellen believe that "uplifting" the race means holding the same principles and practices as a racist white America and following a color contract within the black community.

Overshadowed takes a nuanced approach towards what Brian Norman and Piper Kendrix Williams term "segregation literature," or literature that relies on narrative

strategies to expose how and to what social and political extents segregation works (2). Norman and Williams argue that "In segregation narratives…writers dramatize the process of Jim Crow and other kinds of segregation are naturalized. Each text must invent a geography of race to denote where certain bodies belong and the various sociolegal codes that attend such geographic inscriptions" (4). Take Chesnutt's *Marrow of Tradition*, for example. This novel's most cited scene explores the physical and mental barriers of segregation as two doctors—one black and one white—take a train ride South from Philadelphia. While the train approaches Virginia, the two men sit together in a first-class car. However, the train conductor eventually separates the two men once the train crosses into Virginia; the car transforms into a "whites-only" car. When Dr. Burns, the white doctor, observes the "Colored" placard in the train car, the narrator explains that it is "not merely enough…the passengers be separated by the color line, but that the reason for this division should be kept constantly in the mind" (*Marrow* 508). Williams notes that many early US sociologists, and Chesnutt too, believed that in order for a society to function, social divisions must exist. In this scene, Chesnutt depicts racial social divisions with the constant reminder via placards. Within the same year, Griggs publishes *Overshadowed* and depicts skin color as a metaphorical placard used to control interracial and intraracial interactions. The novel's focus on skin complexion and class offers an alternative view in which characters debate social divisions within black communities in order to foster a thriving society.

Overshadowed, like much segregation literature, considers the possibility of a post-racist society by focusing on race pride. However, race pride in much segregation literature often inflects some level of intraracial division. For instance, in Chesnutt's 1916

essay “Social Discrimination,” he writes “What we can justly ask of white Americans is not that they cease to practice social discrimination *against* colored people, but that they begin to practice social discrimination *among* colored people” (425). Dr. Miller, the black doctor in *Marrow of Tradition*, puts forth this same attitude that Chesnutt describes in his essay, expressing disgust and distaste towards the other blacks once the white train conductor forces him to leave the first-class, white car. The narrator describes the segregated car as ragged and subpar while repeating language similar to white authors of the plantation tradition. Dr. Miller labels the other blacks as “a jolly, good-natured crowd” as well as “noisy, loquacious, happy, dirty, and malodorous” (*Marrow* 511). After studying his new surroundings, Miller reveals the intraracial tensions present in the train that rely on racial visibility. Yet, unlike Erma, he does not speak out against those tensions. The narrator attests:

> They were [Miller’s] people, and he felt a certain expansive warmth toward them in spite of their obvious shortcomings. By and by, however, the air became too close, and he went out upon the platform. For the sake of the democratic ideal, which meant so much to his race, he might have endured the affliction. He could imagine that people of refinement, with the power in their hands, might be tempted to strain the democratic ideal in order to avoid such contact; but personally, and apart from the mere matter of racial sympathy, these people were just as offensive to him as the whites in the other end of the train. Surely, if a classification of passengers on trains was at all desirable, it might be made upon

> some more logical and considerate basis than a mere arbitrary, tactless, and by the very nature of things, brutal drawing of a color line. (511-512)

Dr. Miller's confession illuminates the complexities apparent within this developing community, like Erma's community in *Overshadowed*, in facing the challenge of transcending an identity forged in enslavement. Dr. Miller acknowledges that these are "his people," yet he also views their manners and actions as lower-class and unrefined. Sitting in the same car with these people he views as "lower-than" puts Miller in an unbearable position; their presence threatens the safety of his elite and educated-social position. Miller must protect his identity as an upper-class and educated doctor. He does so by distancing himself from the other blacks on the train, whether that distance be created physically by him stepping outside the car, or by him categorizing them as "Other." Erma, on the other hand, embraces some of these assumed "lesser-than" qualities and publicly seeks lower-class employment despite her presumed "privileged" phenotypically "white" appearance and formal education. Erma does not see race pride as segregationist according to skin complexion or class.

Erma embodies Du Bois's 1897 claim that distinct divisions of racial histories upholds race to distinguish between groups, but unlike biological claims of blackness and whiteness, no hierarchies exist.[10] Following this logic, race pride empowers black communities to create spaces for themselves within the national mythos. Griggs's texts ultimately explore the consequences facing black communities that fail to subscribe to an Afrocentric ideology—one that challenges assumed value in whiteness. Griggs's artistic choice to have Erma break from the racial contract is where his participation in

segregation and racial uplift literatures differs. His focus on the ways that the infiltration of white supremacist ideas normalizes colorism and racism within black communities and demonizes race pride proves unmatched.

In addition to showing how colorism has long complicated black identity and community formation, *Overshadowed* also depicts colorism's presence within social and economic institutions including marriage and education. Rev. Josiah Nerve, D.D.S. spends an extensive amount of time expounding on colorism within the Baptist church (an institution that ideally would join together and strengthen the community) in his conversations with Erma. He comments on the hypocrisy of colorism's presence within an institution that claims to welcome all members of the community and, following the tradition of the black church, provide guidance towards securing racial and social justice. black churches have served as political centers where activists publicly address their bases. Churches house voter registration drives and circulate news concerning communities throughout the Black Diaspora. Yet, Rev. Nerve depicts the church as a hotbed of intraracial tension. After the church singles out Erma for her newspaper advertisement, Rev. Nerve stops by the Wysong's home to offer Erma consolation. In the tradition of religious leaders visiting the home after a death, Rev. Nerve visits Erma to offer her some words of wisdom with regard to the struggle she must now face: social excommunication. The community now considers Erma an outsider, a person no longer included within the community, a person socially "dead" to the community. They punish her for throwing away her education and natural gift of a light-complexion–both assumed social benefits–for a life of "degradation." Rev. Nerve uses his own experiences with color prejudice in the church to relate to Erma. Hey says:

> [A]ll-of-the- mulattoes, whose-skins-are-such-that-their-blue-blood shows, -have-decided-to-form-an-aristocracy. If-you-are-yellow-and-don't-work-any- with-your hands, -you-are-all-right. That-is-condition number-one. If-you-are-black-and-don't-work any-with-your-hands-and-are-smarter-than-the whole-lot-of-them-blue-veiners-put-together, you-will-be-accepted-until-they-get-something on-you. That-is-condition-number-two. You-were-light-enough-for-them, -but-you-worked with-your-hands. I-did-not-work-with-my hands, -but-I-was-not-smart-enough. So,-being-black,-they-put-me-out. (*Overshadowed* 64)

Although most contemporary scholarship on colorism focuses on light-complexioned discrimination against those with darker-complexions, Rev. Nerve reveals that colorism within black communities occurs against people of both complexions. Some light-complexioned blacks perpetuate colorism against darker-complexioned blacks and some dark-complexioned blacks perpetuate colorism against lighter-complexioned blacks.[11] Additionally, not only does colorism affect those of differing hues, but it can also be used to discriminate against those who violate the social constraints put forth by the community, such as the case with Erma. Colorism is a double-edged sword. It is indiscriminate in its negative impact, and its consequences hinder the communal efforts toward political mobilization. Rev. Nerve continues:

> The-color line-is-drawn-tighter-within-the-race-than-ever-it-was-on-the-outside, -and-the-original-bony-fidy (bona fide)-members-of-the-race don’t-draw-the-line. It-is-the-first- time-that-I ever-

> knew-of-a-people-who-slipped-into-a-race through-a-back-door-sitting-on-the-front-piazza-and-hollowing-to-the-honest-born-chaps-to-stay in-the-kitchen. Well, -it-is-like-a-prison, -I-suppose. The-rascal-who-gets-in-there-for-committing-the-worst-crime-is-the-leader-and-hero of-the-prison. (65)

Rev. Nerve accuses the church members of internalizing the color line created by whites during slavery. He attributes intraracial divisions to light-complexioned blacks, or "people who slipped into a race through a back door," who believe that their white ancestry, regardless of its history of sexual violence, places them at a higher social position. Rev. Nerve, who "strikes a nerve" with black leadership, equates this racial ideology with slavery. Irony exists in the fact that these perpetuators of colorism and classism, according to Nerve, are the same people claiming to be the leaders of the race. The Black-middle class represented here is both the "leader and hero of the prison" of racial uplift ideology. A break from the color contract, then, begins with the community's race men and women. Rev. Nerve continues discussing the unsubstantiated accomplishments of race leadership within Richmond's black community stating, "The-whites-regulate-all of-our-tastes-even-to-telling-us-who-are-our greatest-men-among-us. We-just-won't-acknowledge-a-man-is-great-until-the-whites-have done-so" (71). It is important to note the form of Rev. Nerve's dialogue; he is the only character in which Griggs employs an excessive amount of dashes within his dialogue in order to emphasize Rev. Nerve's difficulty in trying to fit within a particular community standard. Nerve addresses his strange speech:

> You- always-speak-to-us-blacks-politely-and-never- snub-us. But-don't-you-tell- me-about-them-other-blue-veiners. I-knows-um, -I-know-them-thar- now, -see-how-my- tongue-gits,-my-tongue-gets-to-slippin',-to-slipping-sometimes. It-is-nothin'-but-plum- nigger-foolishness-to-keep-me-cramped-down-to-all-this- grammar-talk-I-am-doing. If- my-people-did-not-insist-upon-me-using-language-just-like-white-people-I-would-go-back-to-the-plain-nigger-dialect-just-suited-to-a-big-mouth-and-stiff-tongue-like-mine. (70)

Rev. Nerve's speech further highlights his exclusion from the black community despite his attempts at trying to conform to their standards. The dashes illustrate Nerve's discomfort with having to speak in a particular dialect and about the divisions within Richmond's black community. Rev. Nerve confesses that Richmond's black middle class attempts to control him for the purpose of keeping up appearances since he represents their community. He acknowledges the desire of the black middle class for him to earn letters of distinction behind his name in order for the church community to secure a collective sense of sophistication:

> My-people kept-on-growling-about-my-not-having-a- title. Of-course, -I-had-no-learning-. I-can-only-talk- straight-by-calling-one-word-at-a-time, -as-you must-have-noticed-already, -and-even-at- that-it is-as-much-as-I-can-do-to-keep-my-tongue-from twisting-back-to-the-old-time-nigger-dialect which-I-spoke-for-thirty-years, -with-much-more pleasure… my-church-conferred-upon-me-the-degree of-D.-D.-S. (70)

Here, Rev. Nerve reveals the superficial effects of appearances within some attempts at racial uplift. Titles and appearances do not reveal anything about a person's true self, and therefore, they do not prove anything for the individual or add anything to the community. Rev. Nerve questions the importance of the title "D.D.S." since he does not have any idea about what that title means. Griggs suggests that black leadership fully assess their reliance on external appearances rather than superficially rely on them for distinction. Furthermore, Rev. Nerve serves as an example to Erma showing her that her appearance should not determine who she is or what she can become. The start in this change in ideological thinking must come from a community leader in order for the idea to have weight, the community has silenced Rev. Nerve as well.

Lawson's obsession with Erma illustrates the notion that some black communities, in perpetuating internalized racism as a mode of uplift, remain under white supremacy's psychological control in a similar way to how some community leaders choose to lead according to white supremacist-inspired principles. Early in the novel, the narrator reveals that Lawson, then referred to as "Noral," has been in love with Erma ever since he laid eyes on her.[12] Upon reading Erma's advertisement, Lawson partners with Erma's Aunt Dolly to ensure that Erma only works at a residence he deems respectable. He pleads: "I wish for you to prevent Erma Wysong from becoming a servant girl; […] the atmosphere surrounding the Negro service girl…generates a great deal of immorality… the very atmosphere will breed insults for her. White youths will feel that she has no further claims to respectability and will proceed to deal with her accordingly" (48). Lawson knows that all of Richmond will perceive Erma as sexually immoral if she works in a household that includes men. Black servant women's associations with white

men stem from the sexual violence that enslaved black women endured at the hands of white men. hooks writes that in the US "racist white men have regarded the bi-racial white and black female as a sexual ideal [that became] the standard other black females are measured against" (127-128). Lawson knows that others will debase Erma's reputation based on the history of white men perpetuating sexual violence against black women. Aunt Dolly eventually reveals that Lawson and Erma are actually half siblings and that Lawson and Erma's father, the ex-governor, "had an affair" with Erma's mother. [13] In attempts to protect her reputation and to hide the affair and Erma's birth, Erma's mother chose to give birth away from town and in a place with substandard medical care. White supremacy's influence and violence touched nearly every generation of Erma's family, illustrating the generational extent and various levels of its influence over black communities.

Lawson only wants Erma working for Mrs. Turner so that *he* will not have to face rumors regarding Erma's fragile respectability. Likewise, Lawson wants to think of himself as being in love with someone pure and respectable. Society would surely call Erma's purity into question if she lived or worked as a single woman in a household with men. To counter those rumors, Lawson arranges for Mrs. Turner, a white widow who lives alone, to hire Erma without her knowledge of his interference. In a similar light, Mrs. Turner only develops a good working relationship with Erma in order to gain her trust for her own personal benefit. Mrs. Turner gets Erma to talk about the challenges that blacks face in Richmond and finds herself intrigued. The narrator explains:

> [Erma] so favorably impressed Mrs. Turner and has so elevated the opinion of the people as to the capabilities of Negroes that Mrs. Turner has

> decided to use a number of Negro girls to kill off inimical legislation relative to the Negro race …Mrs. Turner wishes to defeat these bills and desires to have the credit of the performance. Here is her idea. She holds that the social tie has been the assuager of all racial antagonisms in history and that what makes the Negro Race Problem so hard of solution is that the social factor is missing….
>
> She wishes to hold at her house a number of fetes at which no one shall be present but about twenty young Negro women of the very purest and highest type in their race, together with an equal number of the leaders in the Legislature. She wishes to bring you all together in this secret way. (136-137)

At first glance, Mrs. Turner seems have good intentions for Erma and for Richmond's black community. However, her parties draw attention to the ulterior motives behind white patronage of black lives in the novel. Her parties serve to bolster the positive public perception of whites and whiteness. Mrs. Tuner wants to assist the black community by facilitating conversations between the educated young women and legislators so that she can create a positive identity for herself as a charitable support of black racial uplift. However, these parties have striking similarities to eighteenth and nineteenth century "quadroon balls" held throughout the Gulf South. Hosts of the parties claimed to connect mixed-heritage women with white men of influence. On the contrary, the men proposed illegitimate marriages, essentially concubinage, in a system called plaçage.[14] The young women in the black community come to grudgingly accept Erma once they begin to see her as *the* person with connections to powerful white men. These

women believe that to "marry," or have a close influential relationship with white socialites, would be the ultimate mode of uplift. Erma invites her former classmates to the highly anticipated events, and unsurprisingly to the reader, the reputation of the parties and its female attendees are tarnished. Margret, the former classmate who judged Erma for her decision to work as a servant, is seduced by one of the white legislators. Margaret's illegitimate pregnancy ends the parties. The failing result of Mrs. Turner's involvement illustrates the notion that black communities must live outside of white patriarchal standards and without white control in order to fully thrive.

Erma and the other young ladies represent white supremacy's reliance on subjecting black women to an especially lower-social position, making the novel's focus on black women especially important. Griggs states in his 1909 text *The Race Question in a New Light* that "every interest of the white race…calls for the protection of the Negro woman," signaling the history of white men raping black women and escaping criminal repercussions for their actions (22). The legislators have the power to pass legislation to protect these women, which begs to reason why, on the surface, Mrs. Turner hosts these parties specifically with legislators. Yet the novel highlights white hypocrisy as a component of the racial and color contract. The legislators stand in for white men's sexual violence against black women and lynching of black men. Here, Griggs participates in the period's ongoing debate between Ida B. Wells and Rebecca Latimer Felton on "protecting white womanhood" via lynching and sexual violence. Such exploits result in the very dilution of the color line that white supremacists claim to denounce.

Mrs. Turner's parties fail to promote cooperation across the color line since her intentions are not genuinely and for the benefit of *both* races. White supremacy cannot survive without the continued negative perception of interracial cooperation. Griggs continues in *The Race Question*:

> All honor to the spirit of the white people of the South who are determined to protect at all hazards the white woman, but let Southern statesmanship devise some means other than the mob, for while one set of men are using it in an effort to protect the white woman, another set is taking advantage of its protection to engage in practices that mean the ultimate whitening of the race. (21)

Here, Griggs references the logic of racist whites to criticize white men's sexual violence against black women. Whites who fail to follow the strict social divisions of the color line that they created contribute to the disappearance of the color line, therefore threatening the possibility to clearly demarcate between the races.

The "New Mulatta" evaluates intraracial adaptations of white supremacist ideology and offers new ways of thinking about blackness globally and in the future. By novel's end, Erma has accomplished the task of educating Richmond's black post-emancipation generation on how to break from the confines of whiteness, and therefore, break from the color contract. Erma expresses a sense of heightened individuality that has the potential to promote racial solidarity. The last few chapters witness Erma's death; however, her son, Astral Herndon Jr., holds the keys to racial uplift as exemplified by his mother. Astral Herndon Sr. tells his son:

> Your mother has been buried in these domains, because here there abides no social group in which conditions operate toward the overshadowing of such elements as are not deemed assimilable. And now, I, Astral Herndon, hereby and forever renounce all citizenship in all lands whatsoever, and constitute myself A CITIZEN OF THE OCEAN, and ordain that this title shall be entailed upon my progeny unto all generations, until such time as the shadows which now envelope the darker races in all lands shall have passed away, away and away!
>
> Under the influences which this child of destiny shall generate, the Negro shall emerge from his centuries of gloom, with a hope emblazoned brow, a heart freighted with courage, and a chisel in his hand to carve…. Erma shall live again in the wondrous workings of the child whom she has brought to earth. All hail to Erma! (218-219)[15]

Astral refers to himself and his son as "citizens of the ocean" pointing back to the text's earlier claim that the US was not created for black bodies. Here, the novel addresses the "return to Africa" debate and prompts readers to contemplate the social and political spaces available to black bodies and their various hues. In suggesting a break from the color contract, Astral's monologue predicts that future generations will lead the race to "build its own highways," its own social and racial ideologies, in order to succeed in the US and to spread this empowering ideology throughout the Black Diaspora. By calling himself and his family "citizens of the ocean," Astral not only implies a rejection of

whiteness, but also of white conceptualizations of citizenship. He does not need land or nation to belong to a national identity. The ocean does not rely upon physical boundaries or visual borders. Furthermore, claiming to be a "citizen of the ocean" points back to the Middle Passage and a return to an ideology about oneself, one's family, and one's heritage during a time before white-supremacist infiltration. The novel's concluding lines hail Erma as the founding redeemer of the race for her start at re-envisioning racial uplift into an act that removes itself from the self-imposed color and class restrictions hindering black communities. These ideas harken back to those that Harper presents in her "Chit Chat" sketch when an "emigrationist" speaks up contesting everything that the unnamed fair-complexioned man supports saying:

> I do not want to purchase a right to sit at the same table with another man because his face is white; if he is too proud to eat with me I feel too much self-respect to force myself upon him; In fact, I do not like this American civilization so much as to wish to imitate every feature of it. Hence [*sic*] I go for emigration, where we can develop a civilization of our own, and model a character for ourselves, without taking a white man for our constant pattern. I would have our race live out their own individuality, and [*sic*] build up their own character. I do hate and despise this imitation. (341)

In Erma's earlier conversation with Aunt Molly and in Astral's lesson to his and Erma's son, these same ideas about the rejection of white supremacist ideas within black communities appear. Both Griggs and Harper end on a note contemplating the possibility of spreading such an ideology to black communities around the globe.

Although *Overshadowed* ends on an inspirational note, the novel's reviews around the time of its publication focus on its ability to teach both black and white audiences about the assumed value in whiteness and role in creating the race problem. *The Freeman* editor George L. Knox labels Erma's character as "full of trouble… if her education, beauty and fair complexion had not been so notable. [Griggs] reflects no credit on either race" (4). Another anonymous review in the *Dallas Morning News* entitled "A Warning Cry" summarizes comments that Griggs made during one of his lectures. The review reiterates the novel's central message: "the negro in the United States is not constructing a civilization but that his task is simply that of imbibing. 'The civilization which is set before him is not a perfect one and in his work of imbibing he should be careful not to take in its faults along with its virtues" (12). Both reviews accept Griggs's view that the conversations about race should not merely be about what blacks should do in *response* to racism or that racist whites should stop being racist. Instead, the reviews note the racist white denial of black American citizenship and the inadvertent adoption of this white race ideology by some blacks. The challenge remained, however, getting readers to embody that message and to see the constraints of the color line as not simply a black-white issue or as a solely US issue.

Griggs later includes critiques of the color contract as a part of his Science of Collective Efficiency in his 1923 non-fiction text, *The Guide to Racial Greatness.* The Science of Collective Efficiency draws distinctions between individuals and communities in an effort to shape the creation of civic institutions that foster social and economic uplift for the global black masses. These civic institutions revive black communities in partnership with academic institutions and religious centers. Furthermore, Griggs equates

the collective black community with the human body to illustrate that only when all parts of the body are healthy can the body properly function, otherwise, the body risks illness and eventual death. To break from the racial contract embodies one with existentialist qualities in that it urges individuals within black communities to live their lives without attention to the white supremacist understandings of themselves. The break urges people to see themselves as blank slates within a collective community, in this case, free from continued control by whites or those within black communities who uphold divisive ideas based on the black-white color line. Individuals, and in particular community leaders, will be empowered to reconstruct social standards uninhibited from the underpinnings of white supremacy once they refuse to assimilate to social standards that do not value black bodies. Individuals who exemplify existentialist qualities, those qualities that reject the imposition of white supremacy from the dominant culture from within the community and outside of the community, embody Griggs's antedated understanding of the New Negro. For, as Melvin Hill suggests, "before the New Negro [became] a collective consciousness, perhaps it [began] with an existential singularity of mind" (35). I would add that in altering existing literary depictions of racial uplift, Griggs developed a race ideology free from white supremacy through Erma. Her break from the racial contract places the responsibility of social change on the backs of her black community rather than on the dominant white culture. *Overshadowed* calls on black middle-class audiences to break from the racial contract that binds individuals to repurposing white supremacist views in their attempts at securing a more equal society.

Griggs makes clear that *Overshadowed* is by no means instructional in providing readers the tools necessary to figure out their own way. He writes, "*Overshadowed* does

not point the way out of the dungeon which it describes, but it clearly indicates the task before the reformer" (*Overshadowed* 8). The reformers represented in the novel are members of black communities across the US–not just in the South–and their goal should be to cease their reactionary responses to racial and social injustices. Griggs challenges members of black communities, especially black authors through their use of racialized characters like the "tragic mulatta/o," to craft solutions to addressing racial tensions without replicating racism or suggesting a superiority in appearances, tastes, and actions that the dominant culture has essentialized as "white."[16] Furthermore, his "New Mulatta" voices a race ideology that imagines black identities free from notions that replicate the valuation of whiteness.

Chapter 3: Literary Approaches to African-Native American Identities and the New Negro in the Works of Olivia Ward Bush-Banks and Sylvester "Chief Buffalo Child" Long Lance

> I seemed to have lost my identity regarding the distinctiveness of race, being of African and Indian descent.
>
> Olivia Ward Bush-Banks
>
> *Autobiographical Statement*, 1914

> All Indians have so-called red skin, but further than that one cannot generalize with safety…. Without the knowledge that Indian tribes differ just as white nationalities, many well-meaning writers have done more harm than good to the Indian race.
>
> Sylvester Clark "Chief Buffalo Child" Long Lance
>
> "Indians of the Northwest and Western Canada," *Mentor*, March 1924

In the preceding epigraphs, two distinct voices comment on the question of mixed-heritage within the context of the underexamined black-red color line. The Afro-Montauk Olivia Ward Bush-Banks declares that she has lost her identity regarding the "distinctiveness of race," thereby expressing her hesitation with having to choose which part of her ancestry to put forward as society followed a logic that adhered to the politics of racial visibility and so-called "racial purity." Her words depict an individual torn

between how she identifies and how society expects her to identify. Similarly, the African-Native American author and actor Sylvester Clark "Chief Buffalo Child" Long Lance, a man who by the age of 34 had successfully passed for a member of several Native American tribes throughout the US and Canada, challenges the dominant culture's reductive understanding of Native American identities. Thus, his words signal the unspoken secret behind his public persona and society's restrictive understandings of race, national belonging, and indigeneity.

In their personal lives and in their audiences' perceptions of their works, both of these individuals faced the issue of racial identity compartmentalization that features heavily in US society. Their works reconceptualize the "tragic mulatta/o" that Tourgée and Griggs engage with, but they do so outside of the confines of the black-white binary for the purpose of interrogating Afro-Indigeneity and how it complicates the US color line. The few scholars that remember Bush-Banks today might argue that her earlier works reflect on her African-Native American heritage, while her later works focus exclusively on her black culture (Grant). Similarly, the few scholars who study Long Lance tend to discuss him in terms of racial passing despite his actual ancestry. Both of their writings and lives acknowledge that some blacks justly claimed Native American ancestry in the face of a society that promoted a firm black-white binary. Additionally, both Bush-Banks and Long Lance address the commonly held belief that Native American ancestry could result in a higher social standing or provide for the opportunity to flee black racial subjugation and violence through racial passing. For, as Karina Vernon says of passing for a member of a Native American tribe over white, the act "demonstrates not only [an] ambivalence for blackness but also for whiteness, as well as

for the binary logic on which both categories depend for their meaning" (46). In other words, increased social value in Native American ancestry challenges the black-white binary embedded within the politics of racial visibility. Thus, a black-red color line underscores the black-white color line and disables anti-racist and anti-colonialist collaboration. The black-red color line also reinforces value in whiteness through a racialized yet romanticized view of indigeneity.

In this chapter, I read Bush-Bank's and Long Lance's literary works as lenses through which to critically study anti-blackness alongside anti-colonialism within the US. Considering scholarship from multiple fields within African American and Native American studies, I propose the concept of New Negro-Indigeneity, a political critique of anti-blackness and claims of racial purity that acknowledges black Americans' and Native Americans' separate yet intertwined histories. I discuss how New Negro-Indigeneity fits within the emergent pan-Africanism of the New Negro Movement and Harlem Renaissance, thus offering multiple historical, theoretical, and literary interventions with regard to racial passing and participation within race pride movements. Furthermore, their works offer representations of the mixed-heritage figure that exists outside of the black-white binary and comment on the literary and social implications of limited racial representation within marginalized communities.

Writing on Afro-Indigeneity during the New Negro Movement and Harlem Renaissance offers Bush-Banks and Long Lance the opportunity to take part in revising a US cultural history that insists on racial purity and racial stratification according to a black-white binary. Long Lance attempts to break the black-white binary subversively by rejecting his identity's complexity and putting forth yet another racial hierarchy—one

where he believes that his Native American ancestry offers a less stigmatized racial identity. His writings suggest a continued aspiration for whiteness and associations with white America through his Native American ancestry. Bush-Banks's writings, on the other hand, draw attention to the complex relations of black and Native Americans while deconstructing the ideology of black separatism. Likewise, her writings offer an understudied perspective on the emergent internationalism and pan-Africanism within New Negro philosophy and its literary renaissance.[17] Regardless of their starkly different approaches to their African-Native American backgrounds, both Bush-Banks's and Long Lance's works allow readers to consider New Negro-Indigeneity. Audiences can look to their vastly different recollections of their ancestral backgrounds to complicate contemporary approaches to defining "indigeneity," a term that has garnered renewed attention as peoples around the globe use it to foster a sense of belonging that distinguishes groups from each other with usually an attachment to geographic origin. Just as the concept of race is a social construction, so is the concept of indigeneity in that no universal definition or application of the term exists. New Negro-Indigeneity in Bush-Banks's and Long Lance's works responds as much to ancestral dispossession and white settler colonialism's debilitating effects to cross-racial and cross-cultural collaboration as to the complexities of racial identification.

Bush-Banks and Long Lance both differ from more well-known Harlem Renaissance authors like Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes whose works interrogate indigeneity in black communities through satire. For instance, Hurston chastises anti-black internalized racism and some individuals' anxieties in claiming a black identity in her 1942 autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road*. She writes:

> I began to laugh at both white and black who claimed special blessings on the basis of race. Therefore, I saw no curse in being black, nor no extra flavor by being white. I saw no benefit in excusing my looks by claiming to be half Indian. In fact, I boast that I am the only Negro in the United States whose grandfather on the mother's side was not an Indian chief. (731)

The common cultural reference to the "Indian grandmother" appears in Hurston's text as a way to simultaneously lay claims to and call into question mixed-heritage that exists outside of the black-white binary. Furthermore, Hurston questions some black Americans fascination with Native American ancestry. While Bush-Banks's writings show special attention to African-Native cultural connections, Long Lance's writings show the internalized racism and eventual trauma apparent within the politics of racial visibility and beliefs in racial purity. Thus, as individuals participate in racial compartmentalization, there remains the potential to actually turn into a "tragic mulatto," socially speaking. The African-Native American life that Bush-Banks's interrogates speaks to the life that Long Lance experienced and eventually succumbed to as a result of society's failure to accept his African-Native American ancestry. In different ways, both authors expand on Carter G. Woodson's 1920 claim that "one of the longest unwritten chapters of the history of the United States is […] the relations of the Negroes and Indians" (45). Their writings speak to how these groups' interactions with each another contributed to the debilitating realities present within the politics of racial visibility.

The societal classification of Bush-Banks and Long Lance as exclusively black is a practice too often overlooked in US history. Embedded within theirs and many other

families' legacies lies a hidden African-Native history that remains dominated by a black-white binary. Spence Johnson's family, as I mentioned in the introduction, offers another example. Many black Americans lived and integrated within Native American communities to escape enslavement and racial discrimination before emancipation and in the years afterwards. Some even intermarried within Native American communities, carrying on many mixed-race tribes' existence throughout the North and South. Once emancipation came, many African-Native Americans dedicated their life's work to asserting their multiethnic identities and to maintaining cultural ties to their African and Native American roots; they did so despite white supremacist attempts to preserve a false narrative of racial purity via formal systems such as the US Census and laws that enforced land redistribution and court proceedings that denied Indigenous nations their legal identities because of racial intermixture. For example, the General Allotment Act of 1887, more commonly known as the Dawes Act, authorized the federal government to divide and distribute tribal lands to tribal members and outsiders. The government only recognized individuals who accepted allotment offers as US citizens. Any lands not allotted were sold to private buyers. Of course, the government claimed to promote "civilization" among Native American communities through this law. The Curtis Act of 1898 and the Burke Act of 1906 followed and continued attempts at controlling Native American communities. The Curtis Act disbanded the tribal governments of the Five Civilized Tribes (the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, Cherokee, and Seminole) that were previously exempted from the General Allotment Act and transferred the authority to grant an individual membership into one of the tribes to the three-member Dawes Commission—all representatives of the federal government. According to Kent Carter,

the Dawes Commission approved less than half of the enrollment applications and processed those individuals' names on the "final rolls of the Five Civilized Tribes," or what is now referred to as the Dawes Final Rolls ("Dawes Commission"). Consequently, the Burke Act attempted to clarify any confusion on the part of local courts to grant individuals US citizenship after accepting the government's allotment offer. Again, adopting "the habits of civilized life" were essential to obtaining US citizenship.[18] The Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 granted all Native Americans citizenship in the US; however, the states granted the right to vote, denying many Native Americans, like black Americans, the right to vote for another several decades.

As cultural movements and race pride ideologies developed during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, including the New Negro Movement and the Harlem Renaissance, African-Native Americans found themselves at a crossroads with where to place their cultural allegiance. Bush-Banks's and Long Lance's works suggest that African-Native Americans felt uncomfortable with publicly asserting their mixed-heritage identities and felt forced to choose a singular ancestry according to the black-white color line. Bush-Banks expresses an aspiration for her full ancestry to be widely accepted. Long Lance echoes the sentiments of the "tragic mulatto" who suffers from internalized racism and aspires to be associated with whiteness.

Feeling the need to choose which ancestry to put forward, at least in the US context, partially stems from the New Negro Movement's attempt at redefinition following enslavement and the Progressive era's commitment to racial purity. Redefinition efforts, consequently, followed the dominant culture's focus on homogeneity. Gerald Early argues that "the New Negro Movement was a new phase of

the institution-building and collective-identity-construction work [that] had mixed motives, intending to be both assimilationist and nationalist" (14-15). Furthermore, World War I influenced black Americans to "think about the duties and privileges of citizenship and the issue of loyalty to a nation or to a set of communities" (10). As such, participants in movements like the New Negro Movement and its peripheral movements relied on racial visibility as one factor through which to define themselves out of identities crafted by white supremacy. Circe Sturm says that, "hegemonic notions of blood, color, race, and culture…permeate discourses of social belonging in the United States [while] racial ideologies have filtered from the national to the local level, where they have been internalized, manipulated, and resisted" (224). Scholarly discussions surrounding the Cherokee Freedman debate, for example, speak to mixed-heritage individuals' experiences with strict observations of blood quantum politics within Indigenous nations. At the same time, critical discussions concerning colorism within black communities highlight intraracial tensions that occurred on the basis of racial visibility. While some individuals turned to racial passing to escape racial discrimination within a racially hierarchized society, various groups within society, of all races and ethnicities, relied on inconsistent policing strategies such as blood quantum and phenotypical stereotypes to disempower nonwhite and nonwhite-appearing groups. Changing uses and definitions of "race" with regard to the black-white color line influenced collective responses to anti-blackness and anti-colonialism.

Bush-Banks's and Long Lance's writings speak to the social and racial struggle within the Progressive era as a *colonial* practice. Examinations of New Negro-Indigeneity within their works relies on an understanding of indigeneity that has less to do with

geographic origin and more to do with sovereignty that is, to use Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's words, "spiritual, emotional, and intellectual" ("The Place" 19). Maile Arvin adds that the term works "in articulation with raciality and coloniality" rather than determined by raciality and coloniality (121). Studying Bush-Banks and Long Lance together allows for the further investigation of the complexities of white colonial assault in the Americas and for reconceptualization of the social and political effects surrounding indigeneity and aspirations for inclusion and equality within the US. New Negro-Indigeneity rejects the white settler colonialist lens as a method through which to deconstruct national, racial, or cultural separatism. Furthermore, New Negro-Indigeneity acts less as a racial marker and more of a political critique embodied within Bush-Banks's and Long Lance's overlooked identities: the politically conscious, socially labeled "Black" African-Native American, faced with racially and culturally stratified political and social struggles.

New Negro-Indigeneity proposes a shift from the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century conceptualization of the "New Negro," and instead interrogates views of blackness in the US that does not consider its relation to colonialism. According to Locke, black Americans "had to appeal from the unjust stereotypes of his oppressors [and] subscribe to the traditional positions from which his case has been viewed [with] little true social or self-understanding" (3). Authors including Hughes in his 1920 poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" and Hurston in her 1928 essay "How it Feels to be Colored Me" pick up on Locke's call to challenge limited views of the black self and offer multitudinous ways to imagine black identities and experiences. Locke marks a lack in black historical and cultural knowledge as contributing to limited views of blackness.

The "unjust stereotypes" about both black and Native Americans crafted by the oppressors work to further the project of colonization in North America. For instance, while whites painted the picture of newly-freed blacks as lazy and uneducated, Laura Lovett notes that the image of the "noble savage" evoked "a heroic (sometimes savage) commitment to liberty, a connection to the land, or an aristocratic if doomed 'opposition to progress'" (206). These images helped to develop a black-red color line where distinction between these groups were based upon each group's perceived differences by and from whites, thereby hindering the ability for cross-cultural and cross-racial collaboration for decolonization and against white supremacy. Bush-Banks anticipates Locke's position in her August 18, 1907, article printed in the *Boston Daily Globe*, stating:

> The Negro has been forced to begin where the white man left off, and when he reaches the required stage of development [*sic*] his favored brother is far in advance of him… but he can, and he does and he will continually demonstrate the fact that he is equal to any man in perseverance, endurance, and untiring effort, under the trying conditions of injustice and misrepresentation. ("Mrs. Olivia Ward Bush" 30)

Here, Bush-Banks makes two claims in regard to black and African-Native American political thought, especially when readers take into account her mixed-heritage. On the one hand, she argues that black progress surpasses the constraints set forth by white supremacy. Regardless of the social and political situations that black communities face at the time, they continue to excel beyond the measures afforded to them by a white supremacist society. On the other hand, Bush-Banks directly addresses the issue of

blanketed racial representation within US society, global black communities, and Indigenous nations, as well as notions regarding the extent of black participation and mixed-heritage inclusion within Indigenous nations. That black Americans must "take up where the white man left off" hints at Bush-Banks's critique that blacks should be more critical of their position within white settler colonialism in the US while they aspire for equality and inclusion. Furthermore, her reference to "misrepresentation" speaks to the denial of many African-Native Americans' recognition by the state and by Indigenous nations due to racialized stereotypes. In a similar fashion to Du Bois, Hughes, Hurston, Bush-Banks and Long Lance challenge ideas about a monolithic black experience—specifically, one where African-Native American experiences have limited view within the larger context of white settler colonialism and post-Emancipation challenges to white supremacy.

New Negro-Indigeneity does not attempt to flatten differences between groups or promote a sense of universal sameness, as Ronald Niezen suggests of indigeneity more broadly (2). Instead, New Negro-Indigeneity inspires internal ideological changes while responding to external white supremacy-influenced ideologies and challenges to sovereignty; it does not solely focus on, for example, white discrimination against blacks or dispossession of Indigenous lands by white settlers. Rather, New Negro-Indigeneity questions black Americans' roles within the colonial structure and how African-Native Americans fit within the larger anti-colonial and anti-racist frameworks. For these reasons, New Negro-Indigeneity must not be confused with a turn-of-the-century equivalent to multiculturalism since it attempts to incite ideological shifts in not only the

state's notions about race and culture, but also in how groups see themselves and each other.

I hyphenate New Negro-Indigeneity to draw attention to the period's focus on the "one-drop rule" and hypodescent that may have caused intraracial tensions. Communities denied individuals who had "one drop" of black blood access to the full disclosure of their ancestry, thus constructing the act of racial passing entirely on the basis of so-called racial purity with no regard to individual's *actual* ancestry. Thus, individuals like Long Lance have their legacies tainted by claims of racial passing when they were actually trying to assert their full ancestry to the best of their knowledge. Additionally, New Negro-Indigeneity provides a space for an ideological position that promotes decolonized understandings of indigeneity, race, and culture within nonwhite communities and with regard to the full extent of white settler colonialism and the parties affected.

Bush-Banks's and Long Lance's literary works offer canvases for a framework that is both anti-racist and anti-colonialist, considering that they both speak to a loss of sovereignty with regard to racial identity. African-Native Americans found themselves restricted to the white settler colonialist practice of conflating the socially constructed concept of race with culture and nationality in the colonizer's attempt to usurp political power. During the Progressive Era, Indigenous nations committed anti-black violence against black and African-Native Americans. For example, the Cherokee Freedmen and Black Seminoles experienced (and continue to experience) marginalization by Cherokee and Seminole citizens who showed preference to individuals with mixed Cherokee or Seminole and white ancestry.[19] One might propose that Bush-Banks and Long Lance inflected their experiences with ancestral dispossession and society's adherence to the

"one-drop rule" within their works. Many Native American studies scholars agree that adherence to these practices occurred within nations as a way to fight against the idea of the "dying Indian." However, as Simpson suggests, if Native Americans stopped framing identity and membership policies around the fear of disappearance, and instead around being more inclusive, then these groups might be able to recognize racism within Indigenous nations as a continuation of colonization (*As We Have* 176-177). The same could be said about race pride movements within black communities. Ancestral dispossession manifests due to racialized stereotypes about blackness and services colonial interests. Bush Banks and Long Lance are two examples of authors depicting their struggle to position themselves within certain ideologies (i.e. New Negro philosophy) and to imagine their role within white settler colonialism in immensely different ways.

Born on February 27, 1869, in Sag Harbor, New York, to Abraham Ward and Eliza Draper, Olivia Ward Bush-Banks composed over 75 poems, 23 plays and sketches, numerous essays and newspaper articles, and a memoir between 1899 to 1942 (Blue 32). According to *Chicago Defender* reporter Cleveland G. Allen, radio stations even broadcasted her poetry (11). Early-twentieth century African American newspapers referred to her as "the grand dame of the literati" and listed her among Harlem Renaissance greats such as Zora Neale Hurston, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, and Wallace Thurman (Byrd A8). Bush-Banks regularly made reference to her mixed-heritage in much of her creative nonfiction and infused imagery associated with black and Native American life in much of her poetry and plays. Both the Wards and the Drapers were classified as free people of color in Suffolk County, New York, during the

years preceding the Civil War. Abraham lived with the Howell family, managers of Sag Harbor's whale fishery, as a young boy and interacted with people from various backgrounds including the Portuguese, Shinnecock, and Montauk.[20] In fact, Bush-Banks writes in an unpublished autobiographical statement that her mother was descended from the Montauk and her father "was a mixture of Portuguese, East Indian, and Negro" ("Autobiographical"). Bernice Guillaume, the only scholar to provide an extensive biography of Bush-Banks, reports that Bush-Banks's aunt, Maria Draper, raised her in Providence, Rhode Island, after Eliza passed away (Introduction 5). Maria instilled in young Olivia an appreciation for both African and Montauk traditions that she continued to practice into adulthood. She even maintained the tribal record for the Montauk (7). Many African American newspapers reported on her attendance at powwows.

In 1889, Bush-Banks married Frank Bush, a tailor from South Carolina, and had two daughters, Rosa Olivia and Marie. Olivia and Frank split in 1895, leaving her to struggle as a single working mother and caretaker for her aging aunt. She used her literary talents to supplement her income from menial work. In 1899, she published her first volume entitled *Original Poems* from which several poems were reprinted in the *Boston Transcript* and the *Voice of the Negro.* She also published reports on the Northeastern Federation of Women's Clubs in the *Colored American* magazine under Pauline Hopkins's editorship (6-8). While living in Boston, she worked part-time as an assistant drama director at the Robert Gould Shaw Community House (Grant). In 1914, she published her second collection entitled *Driftwood,* which Paul Laurence Dunbar, the famed author hailed as the Poet Laureate of the Negro Race, favorably reviewed. *Chicago Defender* reporter Maude Roberts George noted that *Driftwood* was the first

book by a "member of the Race" included in the Harris Collection of American Authors at Brown University (5).[21]

Around 1916, Bush-Banks married Anthony Banks, a Pullman porter, and moved to Chicago where they lived for approximately twelve years. There, she established the Bush-Banks School of Expression and taught drama lessons on the weekends and in after school programs (Guillaume, Introduction 8). She lived the rest of her life between Chicago and New York, mentoring and introducing now-legendary figures to the Harlem literary circle. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Boston Daily Globe*, the *Chicago Defender*, and the *Baltimore Afro-American* all regularly reported on Bush-Banks's community involvement, including her packed-house lectures on social service and programs featuring up and coming artists. One *Boston Daily Globe* reporter reflected on when Bush-Banks organized approximately "800 colored women" in Roxbury, Massachusetts, to protest against the 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation*, calling the event "one of the largest gatherings of colored women ever assembled in this city" ("Colored Women Form a League" 9). On other occasions, Bush-Banks recited her poetry at Ba'hai events in New York City and spoke on the same program schedules as leaders like the then-NAACP executive secretary Walter White.[22] Regarding Bush-Banks's artistic influence, *Pittsburgh Courier* reporter Frank Byrd comments, "there was a time when her salon was filled on a Sunday evening with 'promising' young playwrights, poets, novelists and others fired with ambition" (A8). In 1914, Bush-Banks served as literary editor for Boston's *Citizen Magazine.* From 1936 to 1939, she coached drama at the Abyssinia Community Center in Harlem, run by Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., as part of the Federal Theater Project of the Works Progress Administration (Grant). She also published her

mostly likely widely known "Aunt Viney's Sketches" during this time. Some scholars have compared "Aunt Viney's Sketches" to Dunbar's 1900 short story "Viney's Free Papers" and Hughes's mid-twentieth century "Simple" stories. Bush-Banks died on April 8, 1944. Her works did not witness much mainstream success after her death, but according to Nathanial Grant, her literary influence reached writers including A. Phillip Randolph, Julia Ward Howe, and Du Bois. She also published alongside authors such as James David Carothers and Daniel Webster Davis (Grant).

Despite her once high-profile following and influence among artists that contemporary literary scholars now regale, Bush-Banks is now relegated to the shadows. Perhaps the earlier mentioned reporter's ambiguous labeling of Bush-Banks as "a member of the Race" provides some clues into contemporary critics' failure to canonize her works and recognize their influence within New Negro and Harlem Renaissance studies. To date, only two substantial projects have attempted to recover her contributions to African American literary studies, and only a few scholars have written encyclopedia entries on her life and works.[23] Surely, a woman whose name was mentioned in nearly every leading African American periodical and who socialized with and mentored now-canonical Harlem Renaissance figures should receive more critical attention given how extensively her ideas speak to key issues regarding indigeneity, race, and culture. Bush-Banks's African-Native American identity and many other aspects regarding her personal life came to influence her participation in the Harlem Renaissance, specifically in how she chose to depict black life on colonized Indigenous lands.

Although Bush-Banks identified as "colored" in the nineteenth century context– "one who was either black or a mixture of African and Native American," she maintained

ties to her Montauk heritage and cultivated an African-Native American cultural expression that challenged the notion that a singular black identity would be more accepted in the broader effort towards racial uplift and the fight against white supremacy (Guillaume, Introduction 7). Her approach to her identity and political involvement highlights the issue of homogeneity within the New Negro Movement and the failure of leaders to connect white supremacy with white settler colonialism. According to Guillaume, by 1910 the Montauk community was totally fragmented with members dispersed between the Southampton Township and Green Bay, Wisconsin (Introduction 32). However, Bush-Banks continued to immerse herself in Afro-Montauk heritage even while she lived in Harlem. In her 1916 poem "On the Long Island Indian," published in *The Annual Report of the Montauk Tribe of Indians for the Year 1916*, Bush-Banks remarks on the Montauks' forced relocation by a white colonialist government—an experience similar to many other Indigenous nations and one that blacks could relate to as well. The speaker recalls:

> By [time's] stroke, great empires vanish
>
> Nations fall in swift decline.
>
> ……
>
> Once here lived a race of Red Men,
>
> ……
>
> But there came a paler nation
>
> Noted for their skill and might.

They aroused the Red Man's hatred,

Robbed him of his native right.

……

On these shores, they find no home,

Here and there in weary exile,

They are forced to roam. (129-130)

While obviously commenting on the forced relocation of the Montauk, this poem also speaks to many blacks' struggles during enslavement and their trying to find a place within the US social fabric following the failure of Reconstruction. The "roam" and "weary exile" gestures toward blacks traveling to establish new communities in urban centers throughout the South and in the North as a part of the Great Migration. Out of violence and racial subjugation, apparent through her focus on color, Bush-Banks develops a sense of exile where both black and Native Americans feel out of place and seek to assert their homeplace, either nationally or geographically. By asserting her African-Native American identity and invoking specifically Native American struggles against white settler colonialism in her works, Bush-Banks illustrates a New Negro-Indigeneity centered on shared challenges faced by both groups that make up her ancestry.

In addition to her poetry, Bush-Banks discussed Native rights during her drama lessons on what she called "Primitive Theater" and "Creative Expression Dramatics," which included a one-hour long lesson on Cherokee Rights. Guillaume argues, "Racial

ambivalence might have caused an identity crisis. But there is insufficient evidence to claim that [Bush-Banks] became 'black after a long struggle with her identity.' On the contrary, Mrs. Bush drew spiritual and intellectual strength from both [black and Native American] traditions" (32). For instance, in an undated program sponsored by The Dramatic Group of the Church of the Master, actresses and actors performed two of her short plays entitled "March of Time" and "Interpretation of Beauty" followed by dramatic readings poems including "Creation" and "God of Our Weary Years" by James Weldon Johnson and "The Appeal" by famed Bengali scholar and artist Rabindranath Tagore. The works that Bush-Banks chose speaks to her attempts at promoting an inclusive New Negro-Indigeneity.

By reconfiguring turn-of-the-century blacks' aspirations for equality and social justice into aspirations that African-Native Americans like Bush-Banks might have recognized as an attempt to enter into a white settler society, New Negro-Indigeneity combines a joint focus on ethnicity and indigeneity to recognize the US-specific struggle against white settler colonialism and white supremacy, and consequently, black bodies' roles in those systems. Take, for instance, Bush-Banks's 1899 poem "A Hero of San Juan [Hill]." A possible work of inspiration for Claude McKay's famed 1919 poem "If We Must Die," "A Hero of San Juan [Hill]" depicts the Buffalo Soldiers at the Battle of San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American War. Bush-Banks illustrates black soldiers' patriotism during a moment when their citizenship appears most validated only for the soldiers to feel, yet again, like "second-class" citizens once the battle ends. The unnamed soldier exclaims with great pride:

Not one brave boy was seen to lag.

Old Glory o'er us floating free,

We'd gladly died for that old flag. (31)

The line "Old Glory o'er us floating free" indicates a notion of freedom so close for the soldiers that the men feel the need to push through their exhaustion and perhaps their personal inclinations towards the war. The speaker then observes that the unnamed soldier's "dim eye brightened as he spoke" and recalls the soldier's appearance:

He seemed unconscious of his pain;

……

Of those black heroes, climbing up

To win fair glory for their race. (31)

These lines reveal irony in that although the soldier's citizenship has been technically validated through his being able to fight in the war–albeit it in segregated companies and in a war that resulted in the annexation of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the purchase of the Philippines – his unconscious pain appears in his countenance, specifically with regard to how society treats him once he returns home from battle. He also fights in what ostensibly becomes a move in US imperialism and an attempt to restore and protect white supremacy abroad. Amy Kaplan makes the assertion regarding the racialized politics and imperialistic nature driving the war that:

> The Spanish-American War [represented] a continuation and resolution of the Civil War, as its purgative final battle. Politicians and journalists represented the war… as a nostalgic recovery of the heroism of an earlier generation, and as an anecdote that could heal the wounds and divisiveness of the internecine war… Moreover, new battlefields abroad

> reputedly restored health and vigor to the [white] male body, so massively dismembered in the war between the states. (122)

In other words, the war abused nonwhite bodies for the purpose of strengthening white social, political, and physical presence. While the language in Bush-Banks's poem evokes the sentiment of uplifting the black race, the imagery paired with knowledge of the controversial history of the Buffalo Soldiers' defeat of the Apache Warriors gestures towards a tumultuous and violent Black American-Native American relationship. Black soldiers had to enact violence against Native Americans in their attempts at proving their rights to their citizenship while consequently having a hand in stealing Indigenous lands on the behalf of the US. In many ways, the Buffalo Soldiers' acts during the Spanish-American War anticipated those that black soldiers would call attention to during World War II and the Vietnam War. Buffalo Soldiers fought within these conflicting positions in their struggle for full citizenship in the face of disenfranchisement and racial violence. The poem's speaker continues:

> They fought for Cuban liberty.
>
> On Juan's hill those bloody stains
>
> Mark how these heroes won the day
>
> and added honor to their names. (Bush-Banks, "A Hero" 32)

Only by killing and conquering the Apache Warriors did the soldiers represented in the poem add honor to their names, thus trivializing the honor of their courageous acts and their patriotism. Bush-Banks offers a critique of black Americans' and Native Americans' livelihood and full inclusion within US society in her rendition of the Buffalo

Soldiers' experiences. Thus, the poem suggests that black and Native American futures in the US rely on these groups joining forces against white supremacy.

Literature and history show that the battle against racism only became even more fraught on the battlefield during the Spanish-American War. President Theodore Roosevelt's 1899 book *The Rough Riders* reveals his own racist treatment of black soldiers during the Battle of San Juan Hill. Kaplan summarizes Roosevelt's recollection of the end of the battle when "neither white regular nor volunteers were weakening, in contrast to the 'strain of the colored infantrymen'" (126). Roosevelt then claims that the black soldiers slyly merged with his troops but started to either return to their own regiments or tend to the wounded. He then recalls that he responded by threatening to shoot the soldiers if they left his regiment and claims that they 'flashed their white teeth at one another, as they broke into broad grins'" (127) Roosevelt then boasts that his threats dismissed any foreseeable insubordination by the soldiers (127). Kaplan argues that Roosevelt misrepresents this moment as one of racial unity in the face of war; however, the minstrel-like imagery suggests "the reassuring order of the domestic color line" abroad and the notion that the presence of armed black soldiers "raised white fear of armed insurrection and national self-representation," and consequently challenged white supremacy (127). Bush-Banks's poem, along with other depictions of black soldiers' rebuttals countering Roosevelt's rendition, illustrates the tensions clearly pulling black men to want to fight for their citizenship but pushing them from doing so under such racially strained conditions. The concluding stanzas read:

March on, dark sons of Afric's race,

Naught can be gained by standing still;

Retreat not, ‘quit yourselves like men,

And, like these heroes, climb the hill,

Till pride and prejudice shall cease;

Till racial barriers are unknown.

Attain the heights where over all [*sic*],

Equality shall sit enthroned. (Bush-Banks, “A Hero” 32)

Referencing “dark sons of Afric’s race” allows the speaker to call on audiences beyond just black Americans for racial justice. Furthermore, the phrase “to make racial barriers unknown” applies not only to the black-white color line but also to racial divisions between black and Native Americans. The speaker wishes to remove those racial barriers forged in colonization in order for the groups to collaboratively climb the hill towards racial justice. This poem’s underlying depiction of the tensions between black and Native Americans concludes by calling on the groups to come together and reject the black-red color line that divides them in their fight against white supremacy.

The Buffalo Soldiers’ battles with the Apache Warriors during the Spanish-American War represent classic “divide and conquer” tactics employed by white supremacist ideology against black and Native Americans. Bush-Banks follows up on her critique of “divide and conquer” between these groups in her poem “Honor’s Appeal to Justice.” The speaker states:

Unjust, untrue, is he who dares

Upon our honor to intrude,

And claims that with the sin of crime

The Negro’s nature is imbued.

Shall we keep silent? No; thrice No!

We stand defenseless in our cause.

If voices fail to cry aloud

And plead a right to justice's laws.

For who shall vindicate this wrong?

Who shall defend our perjured race?

We must speak out with one accord,

If we the stigma would erase//." ("Honors" 34)

Although this and other poems by Bush-Banks rely upon a specific black American historical context and invoke specifically "the Negro's nature," they also work to promote cross-racial collaboration against white supremacy and settler colonialism around the globe through their illustration of tensions between black and Native Americans.[24] In "Honor's Appeal to Justice," the speaker calls on black Americans of all backgrounds to join together in one accord to rid society of the stigma that these groups cannot work together. The poem also gets at the issue of homogeneity and the lack of acknowledgement of the actual diversity within black communities. Let the reader not forget Bush-Banks's background here. Bush-Banks's words offer an implied criticism of the expectation that black audiences expect her – an Afro-Montauk writer – to discuss black and Native American concerns separately. The phrase "our race" can be taken as both "Negro" and member of a mixed-heritage tribe. David Murray suggests that Native American authors' restricted conceptualizations of their cultural identities and writings rely on what a white supremacist culture understands to be "Indian" (74). US society did not understand indigeneity to include strands of African descent. The same can be said of

writers participating within the African American literary tradition during the period of racial uplift, when many believed that personal success and cultural achievement meant one's ability to mimic an essentialized white culture or to perform a certain standard of blackness that the period's leading race women and men found acceptable. In some cases, this meant adopting ideas about racial divisions within black communities, as Griggs shows in *Overshadowed*. Theda Perdue speaks on the black-red color line with attention to Native American perspectives, noting that some Native American communities in the South policed their own racial divisions between themselves and black Americans to maintain a sense of cultural individuality in the face of white supremacy. She says that these communities valued their identities as a free people and some even adopted the racial hierarchy of white supremacy with African descendants at the lowest level of intellectual ability and culture (29). Therefore, even as white supremacy and white settler colonialism executed "divide and conquer" strategies, race-conscious black and Native Americans who followed the traditional racial uplift model likewise compartmentalized ancestral backgrounds as they negotiated racial multiplicity for the sake of gaining equal rights to citizenship.

More popular writers, on the other hand, used satire to examine the fraught relationship between black and Native Americans by invoking a race-conscious African-Native American voice. Hurston, for example, comments on white supremacy's promotion of racially essentialized character traits that are inscribed within and divide minority communities. In her autobiography, Hurston recalls one of her co-workers, Logan, who accounts for his immense strength and anger by way of his Native American ancestry in an attempt to entertain a white customer. Hurston remembers, "One day,

while shining Mr. John's shoes, [Logan] told him what a fighter he was. He really was tough when he got mad, according to himself. "Logan was mean!" recalls Hurston, "Just couldn't help it. He had Indian blood in him" (*Dust Tracks* 676). He goes on to attach his Native American ancestry to his African ancestry; however, his self-demeaning self-portraiture as primitive or uncivilized develops. Hurston claims, "When he straightened out his African soup-bone (arm), something was bound to hit him" (677). After Mr. John hears this story, he signs Logan up to fight a bear at a local parlor. It is only then that Logan backs down from his earlier boasts and says he cannot fight "no big bear like that" (677). Hurston recounts John's compartmentalization of his Native American and African ancestries in these short scenes. First, he separates his Native American ancestry from his African ancestry by accounting for his strength through his Native American ancestry. Next, Hurston draws attention to Logan's African ancestry by referencing a racialized image of an "African soup-bone" to describe his scrawny arms. It is only once Mr. John challenges Logan to fight against a beast (again, Hurston is playing with stereotypes here) that he backs down. Hurston imagines Logan through satire to highlight white supremacy's influence on his racialized self-image.

Hurston satirizes racialized African-Native American characters when speaking about similar ideas concerning race that Bush-Banks also critiques, including essentialized traits, rights to multiethnic identities, internalized racism, and intraracial division. However, whereas Hurston relies on a tinge of folklore, Bush-Banks relies on her own personal history. The supposed-biographical Logan calls on his Native American ancestry in efforts to distinguish himself from others within his black community and to explain away certain negative character traits and claim other positive ones. He

accomplishes this task while still voicing his continual inclusion within a black community. Hurston and Bush-Banks signify upon an African-Native American identity in order to challenge then-popular racial pseudoscientific beliefs. However, Bush-Banks's approach challenges satire as the more popular approach to inserting indigeneity within the New Negro Movement and Harlem Renaissance literary era. Opposite Hurston, and even Long Lance's supposed-racial imposture, Bush-Banks's political critiques do not rely on or reproduce denigrating ethnic stereotypes. She simply, yet strategically, acknowledges African-Native American identities while emphasizing the contested black-red color line within US race ideology.

Bush-Banks comments on the cultural diversity present within black communities while highlighting the issue that their continued lack of communication with Native Americans and other groups hinders the type of cross-cultural and cross-racial collaboration necessary fight colonization and racism. In her 1920 unpublished poem "Harlem," she describes "colorful Harlem" as a place where "the mellow tones" are heard above "Dixie's sons and daughters" (158). This description aligns with Locke's characterization of the Manhattan borough as "the first concentration in history of so many diverse elements of Negro life, [a place attracting] the African, the West Indian, [and] the Negro American… The chief bond between them has been one of common condition rather than common consciousness" (*New Negro* 6-7). Yet, a lack of communication across these groups and with mixed-heritage individuals like herself to develop common threads of consciousness often kept their literary works separate and denied authors the opportunity to fully express their cultural diversity and cross-racial collaboration. The Universal Races Congress (URC), held at the University of London

from July 26 to 29, 1911, offers one example when multiple groups met to establish the necessary common grounds needed to act against white settler colonialism and white supremacy on a global scale. According to the URC's organizer Gustav Spiller, race men from around the world met "to discuss, in the light of science and the modern conscience, the general relations subsisting between the… so-called white and so-called coloured peoples, with a view to encouraging between them a fuller understanding…and a heartier co-operation" (v). Spiller continues in his preface to the reprinted papers:

> The writers—coming literally from all parts of the circumference of the globe—manifest a remarkable agreement on almost every vital problem with which the Congress is concerned, and support, as a whole, a view which must be very encouraging to those in every land who see a brother an equal, at least potentially, in every human being, whatever the colour of his skin. (v)

Du Bois and Charles Eastman both attended the URC to advocate for black and Native American rights, respectively. Kyle T. Mays argues that the men's attendance implies two things: one, black and Native Americans had a long-standing working relationship; and two, both groups sought to respond to colonialism on a global scale (244). However, neither man's paper observes each other's group's struggles. Du Bois's paper, "The Negro Race in the United States of America" attributes black Americans' subjugated position to "European nation-states [and] reasoned that Europeans were unable to exploit American Indian labor because of 'the weakness and comparative scarcity of the Indians'" (255). Eastman's paper, "The North American Indian," highlights Native Americans' "virtues of a 'simple' life and what a civilization that

purported to promote democracy could learn from Indians" (256). The men's failure to explicitly mention similarities between their challenges does not mean that they were not aware of the challenges facing black and Native Americans. For instance, Du Bois reported on the Congress in the September 1911 issue of the *Crisis* and included Eastman's portrait alongside other race men in attendance ("Some of the Delegates" 198-199).[25] However, they both missed the opportunity to jointly speak to their shared experiences in the colonized Americas.

Bush-Banks, on the other hand, explicitly directed her activism and writings towards developing New Negro-Indigeneity and shedding light on challenges faced by both groups and their responses to white settler colonialism in the United States. For example, on August 23, 1930, both the *Chicago Defender* and the *Baltimore Afro-American* reported on Bush-Banks's attendance at the annual Montauk powwow. One article reads: "Mrs. Bush-Banks, as a lineal and legal descendant of the Montauk tribe, whose ancestors lived in their wigwams on their Native soil, has an unquestionable claim to Montauk lands. [She] will present scenes from her own play entitled 'The Trail of the Montauk,' which is based on one of the happenings of [Montauk Point]" ("New York Society" 11). The line "as a lineal and legal descendant… whose ancestors lived in their wigwams on their Native soil" attempts to back Bush-Banks's proclaimed identity and provide witness to legal attempts to deny black Americans their Native American ancestry. Secondly, the article directs readers' attention to the 1910 *Wyandank Pharaoh v. Jane Ann Benson* ruling, which dispossessed the Montauk of their legal claims to its indigenous ancestry and land, features heavily in her 1920 play *Indian Trails; or Trails of the Montauk.* In the case, Montauk Chief Wyandank Pharaoh filed suit challenging the

legality of the Easthampton Trustees' sale of Montauk territory to the Long Island Railroad. New York State Supreme Court Justice Abel Blackmar argued that the Montauk nation had 'disintegrated [having] no internal government, [living] a shiftless life of hunting, fishing and cultivating the ground and often leaving Montauk [lands] for long periods to work in some menial capacity for whites' due to intermarriage with black Americans (Strong 1). Therefore, Blackmar claimed that the Montauk no longer had a right to their former lands. While the case denied Afro-Montauks their identity and land, it also denied them their sovereignty, attempting to place restriction on who citizens could marry and have children. The ruling essentially subjected the Montauk nation to the constraints of racial purity. In this case and many others, African-Native Americans' legal status shifted according to the needs and desires of the white settler colonialist society.

Indian Trails tells the story of O-Ne-Ne, a Montauk warrior, whose community choses him to visit the Great White Father to ask for him to return to the Montauk their lands. While O-Ne-Ne is away, the tribe suffers intergroup unrest. However, once Quashawan, the Montauk's Wish Woman, appears questioning, "Shall the Red Man slay his own brother?" (*Indian Trails* 192), then the Montauk begin to settle on one accord. O-Ne-Ne eventually returns with the great news that the Great White Father will return the Montauk's land.[26]

Bush-Banks's troupe performed the play throughout the South to predominantly black audiences at churches and schools in key urban centers such as Richmond, Norfolk, Newport News, and Roanoke throughout the early twentieth century. Maggie L. Walker, America's first female bank president, invited Bush-Banks to Richmond, Virginia, to

perform the play for an audience of more than 2,000 people during her literary tour of the Southeast (Guillaume, Introduction 16). African American newspapers including the *Richmond Planet* reported on *Indian Trails* on several occasions between December 1919 and January 1920, calling the January 12, 1920, performance at the Leigh Street Methodist Church "an enjoyable evening spent" ("The Y.W.C.A. Notes" 9). Members of the Phyllis Wheatly Branch of the Y.W.C.A. invited Bush-Banks to speak at several lectures and to put on productions of *Indian Trails* performed by Richmond's local actors, actresses, and race women and men.

Although *Indian Trails* features a Montauk-specific experience, the play addresses black audiences making them aware of the challenges faced by Native Americans, including unfair treatment by a white supremacist society and intraracial tensions that stemmed from disillusionment with mainstream society. The social implications emphasized in the play suggest that the New Negro-Indigenous literary voice embodies postmodern ideas of reinvented identities that go against ideas of "pure whiteness," "pure Indianness," and "pure blackness." Kiara M. Vigil and Tiya Miles argue, "Rather than the 'double-voiced' discourse found in African American literature and the 'hybridized dialogue' attributed to Native literature, an Afro-Native literary tradition speaks in a triple voice" amplified by these groups "regional, tribal, and racial experience[s]" (33). *Indian Trails* welcomes outside communities into African-Native American cultures and struggles not as a moment of spectacle, but as a moment for cross-cultural understanding, collaboration, and reflection.

The *Chicago Defender's* and *Baltimore Afro-American's* focus on Bush-Banks's presence at the powwow brings awareness to injustices faced by overlooked minorities

within the New Negro and Indigenous Rights movements. Guillaume says that Bush-Banks's "refusal to be dominated by the Washington or Du Bois schools, and her ethnic orientation," allows readers to "judiciously interpret the aspirations and actions of yesteryear's black intelligentsia" when it comes to group organization and identification ("Olivia Ward" 34). Daniel Heath Justice declares of Native American communities more specifically, "As long as 'whiteness' remains the unspoken standard against which all other peoples and communities are compared, the necessary work of dismantling corrosive stereotypes about [Native Americans] will fall short, as all these indigenous communities and other immigrants of color will continue to be seen through the lens of 'Other'" (258). Hurston says something similar in her pivotal 1928 essay "How It Feels to be Colored Me," expressing, "I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background" (828).

Bush-Banks's experimentations with New Negro-Indigeneity challenge the idea of compartmentalized identities and examines ancestries as parallels rather than as opposites. Her consideration for the relations between black and Native Americans supplements the more nationalist and racially homogenous aspects of New Negro philosophy with a more inclusive consideration for Indigenous experiences. For instance, in her 1914 collection *Driftwood*, Bush-Banks uses imagery of separate pieces or the stages in which driftwood from the sea becomes part of a larger communal activity among sea-goers. Witnessing the driftwood come together evokes a sense of unity created by nature. Bush-Banks states in the introduction, "These verses are but bits of driftwood cast up by the landward-surging and receding waters of adversity and prosperity, and the author has gathered them with the fond hope that some light shall

gleam from these pages far out into the night of human perplexities" (*Driftwood* 49). The collection's individual sections include titles such as "Bits," "The Tide Surges," "The Moaning of the Tide," and "The Burning Logs of Memory" to name a few. Each section serves as a metaphor for individual pieces of wood coming together to contribute to a final bonfire. The driftwood stands in for people of different ancestral backgrounds coming together as parts of the human race. The fire engulfs the separate pieces of wood, transforming them into one inseparable mound of ashes, however, ashes that have all been burned by the same flame.

The introduction and title of each individual section gestures to the reality that colonized peoples' experiences are shaped by their specific histories with settler-colonial violence and white supremacy. However, in the spirit of an indigeneity that focuses less on land rights and more on spiritual and intellectual connections, decolonized thinking does not blanket experiences. Bush-Banks's poems address the issue that authors who identify with multiple ethnicities and who speak out against various identity-based injustices within a single poem or novel might have been viewed as transgressing what society considers her or his primary allegiance. In an October 20, 1912, letter to poet and author Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Bush-Banks admits that *Driftwood* is very much autobiographical. She says, "I have called my collection *Driftwood*, because they are 'bits' of experiences cast upon on the shore of my own life" ("Excerpt" 311). On the question of all of her works' purpose she says, "While I am a colored woman, I feel strongly that I have by Divine direction been placed among my group of people for a specific purpose. [I] feel as if I am but renewing the experiences of some former period" (312). Perhaps that former period is one that precedes the white settler colonialism that

divided people according to color and race and that assigned people their allegiances. In other words, Bush-Banks writes against literary hypodescent.

Jonathan Brennan draws attention to the issue of literary critics who tend to examine mixed-heritage writers who claim African ancestry solely within the realm of an African American literary and cultural tradition. He asserts that "in order to really understand the tradition from which these writers create their literary works, one must also examine their parallel heritage without denying either one" (*Mixed Race* 19). Brennan lists the shared features and themes present in African-Native American literature that critics should pay attention to when conducting a comparative reading of such texts, including works by Bush-Banks: "the narration of African-Native subjectivity; strategic discourses and situational identities; a literary hybridization of elements derived from both African American and Indigenous literary traditions; newly acknowledged identities accompanied by linguistic transformations; a sustained focus on African and Native American politics and history; and the engagement of dual histories in an attempt to repair a state of narrative rootlessness" (*When Brer Rabbit* 35). While these characteristics appear in African-Native American literature, critics should be cognizant that each group's experiences in working against white supremacy and white settler-colonialism not get lost in their analyses of this hybridized literature.

Bush-Banks's writings acknowledge how US society compartmentalizes racial identities for various political purposes when referring to how her own identity shapes her work. Her works push the boundaries of race pride in that they welcome cross-cultural understanding and mixed-heritage self-identification that is not limited solely to African and European mixed-race ancestry. She states in her 1914 autobiographical

statement, “I am [fully] conscious, that [my works] will, in however small a degree, tend toward the uplifting of the dark-skinned race, known as the colored people of America, *among whom I am identified* [my emphasis] and who at the present day feel so keenly the pangs of prejudice and injustice” (*Autobiographical* 314). Here, Bush-Banks addresses society’s imposing upon her a sweeping “colored” identity that summarizes the dominant culture’s intervening and irresponsible muddying of her Montauk and African ancestry.[27] “I am identified” suggests that she does not freely choose this identity; rather, it suggests a preference for a society that accepts the idea of a distinctly merged African-Native American identity and a larger community of “dark-skinned peoples” of multiple heritages. Her use of the phrases “dark-skinned race” or “colored people” in this passage appears all the more striking given that she does not include the terms “Black” or “Negro” when discussing the race “among whom [she’s] identified.”

“Dark-skinned race” also appears in Bush-Banks’s works and refers to injustices done against black and Native Americans. In the first stanza of Bush-Banks’s poem “Heart-throbs,” the speaker proclaims that the dark-skinned race has no responsibility for its suffering. If one wants to know anguish looks like, she need only to “ask of the dark-skinned race” (“Heart Throbs” 23). Bush-Banks does not follow “dark-skinned race” with “colored” as she did in her autobiographical statement. “Dark skin” here has a generic tone, but the focus on color and racial visibility shows that a white supremacist society has formalized a color line between whiteness and other nonwhite peoples. Bush-Banks goes on join both groups—in the spirit of Harlem and the New Negro—yet, she pays careful attention to the different experiences of black and Native Americans. The narrator continues: “Then pleas as he has often pled/ For manhood among men, / And feel the

pain of rights denied//" (23). Again, the denial of rights can be read as denial of rights to land experienced by Indigenous peoples or to civil rights experienced by black Americans. The narrator sums up, "Let knowledge cultivate, refine, / Let culture feed the mind…// Then learn the cause of this defeat, / The color of the skin" (24). Here, Bush-Banks signals Du Bois's global conception of the problem of the color line. Color prejudice continually targeted people of the "darker races," and according to Du Bois, Locke, and others, only cultural knowledge and appreciation had the potential to break that cycle. Bush-Banks advocates for cross-cultural education and appreciation in order to defeat race and color prejudice.

Bush-Banks's goal in uplifting an African-Native community, even if the larger society does not to understand "dark-skinned" to mean multiple ethnicities, aims to assist all peoples living under the constraints of white settler colonialism that produces race and color prejudice. By placing emphasis on "darker-races" and other stereotyped signifiers, Bush-Banks denotes nonwhite peoples to illustrate the merging of her two identities within single works and programs.[28] She crafts an African-Native American literary self, and thus, a blurring of the ideological lines between anti-racism and anti-colonialism. Although, she remains careful not to blur the racial, cultural, and national differences between these groups. Bush-Banks's ideas align with Du Bois's 1897 definition of race as a "vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life" (*Conservation* 7). Her works follow the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century shift in understanding race in terms of culture and history rather than by scientific

racism. There remains a sense of collective identity within Bush-Banks's call for individual self-identification within this "vast family" that Du Bois marks. To understand Bush-Banks's references to people of color more broadly requires that audiences read her works with both black and Native Americans in mind.

Bush-Banks's renditions of New Negro-Indigeneity rejects racist white identity formation within and outside of nonwhite communities, and therefore, within New Negro philosophy. Thus, she asserts that one's blackness should not be contingent upon the suppression or occlusion of mixed-Native American heritage. Bush-Banks illustrates black Americans and Native Americans intertwined experiences while calling for a more comparative reading practice that seeks to understand the constraints of race identifications in racial and social justice movements. In this way, Bush-Banks promotes Du Bois's idea of "Human Brotherhood," which acknowledges the differences among the races based on historical and sociological experience but does not insist upon inherent qualities proposed out of scientific racism. Du Bois explains, "The history of the world is the history, not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of races, and he who ignores or seeks to override the race idea in human history ignores and overrides the central thought of all history" (*Conservation* 40).

In other instances, Bush-Banks creates characters who only have partial knowledge of their ancestral background for the purpose of promoting resurgent organizing in the face of a period hard-pressed on identity compartmentalization. For example, in her 1933 unpublished essay "Black Communism," Bush-Banks uses a black man to discuss some Harlem activists' radical or segregationist responses to race discrimination across the US. The narrator describes Wyatt Hendricks as "an attractive,

dark brown Harlemite" who wanders the city witnessing busy soup kitchens and job lines prevalent during the Great Depression ("Black Communism" 247). Out of nowhere a communist group appears and starts overturning boxes filled with sandwiches. This prompts Hendricks to recall another encounter he had with communists carrying signs saying, "Lynching in America must go!" and "Labor knows no color line!" (247). Hendricks questions why his people should endure injustices. "Were his people cowards of the basest sort? Did they really have *red blood* [my emphasis] in their veins?" asks the narrator (247). Bush-Banks's language seems to appropriate Hendricks's imposed black identity to challenge a singular identity. "Red blood" implies connections to Native American ancestry via the stereotype of supposed red skin and to the slur used for a socialist or communist in US popular discourse. Hendricks remembers that when he started to join the Harlem protesters, he felt restrained by his preference for a "bloodless victory" (248). Perhaps, Hendricks felt that the Harlem protesters had a limited scope of who could join their movement. "Bloodless" suggests a removal of segregationist identity politics from social movements which would work against the central idea present in "Human Brotherhood": that each race maintains its own unique histories in the pursuit of racial and social equality.

The narrator goes on to mention race without explicitly referencing any particular racial group in an effort perhaps to acknowledge Hendricks's mixed-heritage background even though it is not explicitly stated in the text. Readers witness Hendricks's inner thoughts, "Should he besmirch the stainless records of dark Americans, who had so heroically maintained their standard of loyalty to law and order during two hundred years of mockery of American freedom?" (248). The two hundred years Hendricks speaks of

are the years during which chattel slavery thrived within the US. Slavery, of course, included Native Americans as enslavers and as the enslaved, yet the enslavement of Africans dominated the latter two-hundred years. Here, Bush-Banks references a black American experience, yet consideration for her ancestral background and how she wants readers to understand her work forces a consideration for how Native American histories might be embedded within these lines. Later, passersby say to Hendricks, "Say, young fellow, you're doing a good work" "God bless you" "You've got red blood in your veins" (248). Hendricks's "red blood" implies the history of intermarriage between black and Native Americans resulting in mixed-blood tribes. The essay concludes with the lines, "His humanity had proven as strong as the 'New Democracy' that 'is to be' yes, even stronger than his bitter hatred of his Country's infidelity" (248). Hendricks's humanity is a mixed-heritage humanity that society has yet to fully recognize. His "bitter hatred of his Country's infidelity" is a coming-together of both black and Native Americans' experiences within a white supremacist society. It does not matter which group of "dark Americans" is invoked. "Red blood" becomes a common characteristic of all dark Americans and their grievances against a white supremacist culture.

"Red blood" also references humanness and the commonalities shared among all races in the attempts to challenge white supremacy. Bush-Banks proposes an idea of "Universal Brotherhood" in her unpublished memoir *The Lure of Distances* (c. 1935-1944), stating that her entire life had been surrounded by "the seeming distances between human varieties with their distinctive types, shades of coloring and engaging personalities, always revealing and emphasizing the nearness of relationships held in common" (272). She goes on to state that her African and Native American ancestry,

along with her friendships and acquaintances with people of all different races and backgrounds, are what allowed her to see the distinctive yet common characteristics among the races. Bush-Banks's assertion of African-Native ancestry speaks to the distinct legal and cultural experiences of black and Native Americans, especially as it pertains to one's right to assert an identity via blood quantum or racial appearance.

Bush-Banks makes the conscious effort to proclaim her Afro-Montauk heritage while writing seemingly "Black" works. She includes African-Native American themes in her works as a method through which to challenge the politics of racial visibility within a black-red color line. Bush-Banks faced backlash in response to her attempts to express the full complexity of her identity and to advance black and Native American challenges against white supremacy within singular works. For example, in a response letter Carter G. Woodson wrote to Bush-Banks regarding publishing her poetry in the *Negro History Bulletin* he writes that he likes her work very much, but "We have nothing we can give you in compensation, but we may return in kind. This is a struggling cause and it cannot pay for contributions" (Letter to Bush-Banks). Even though the *Negro History Bulletin* did not publish her poem, Bush-Banks's creative works continued to call on future generations to overcome the intraracial strife that makes cross-racial or multiethnic collaboration difficult or, in some cases, impossible.

Long Lance's writings, on the other hand, show him completely denying his blackness in his efforts to fight for social justice, albeit only for Indigenous Rights. While Griggs's Erma counterintuitively challenged whiteness through her "white" appearance and her community's expectations of her based on racially essentialized ideas, Long Lance's writings show him aspiring towards whiteness through his Native American

ancestry and racially ambiguous appearance. Many nineteenth and early-twentieth century authors depict black and white Americans claiming Native American ancestry and examining what those conscious decisions mean for race relations and the national mythos. For example, in Edgar Allan Poe's 1836 novel *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, the Native American-European Dirk Peters's racial identity shifts to suit the needs of the only other surviving character on a stranded whaling ship, Arthur Gordon Pym, who just so happens to be a white man. Walter White's 1928 novel *Flight* offers another conceptualization of Native American ancestry benefiting the dominant culture through an examination of Creole life in New Orleans during the nineteenth century. In the novel, the main character's father, Jean, discusses how society constructs race to benefit a white supremacist ideology. Because Creoles contributed so much to building Louisiana culture, says Jean, "the white Louisianan will tell you the Creole is white with" a specific strand of European or West Indian heritage. Most Creoles, [however,] are a bit of everything" (40).

Long Lance's life and writings provide a counterpoint to Bush-Banks's illustrations of New Negro-Indigeneity and instead offer a glimpse into the effects of ancestral dispassion at the intersection of black and Native American relations. Little scholarship on Long Lange considers his essays and articles published in popular magazines. These writings reveal his struggle with racial identity and offer a comment on his and others' decisions to "pass" for a Native American while rejecting their blackness. Long Lance expresses a far more ambivalent and problematic relationship to his African-Native American ancestry. He embraces the denigrating racialized "Indian" stereotypes in a convoluted effort to enter into whiteness.

In many of his essays, Long Lance reveals his intentions to study racial essentialism during Jim Crow for the purpose of entering into a US national identity. Long Lance's "passing," then, is not a practice in racial imposture but rather a study in racial essentialism and the strict binaries society uses to maintain white supremacy white settler colonialism. Long Lance's apparent fascination with whiteness and "white civilization" in his essays suggest that he wants to write himself out of "Indianness" and into whiteness, and after a deeper interrogation of his background, ultimately out of blackness and eventually the US.

Born on or around December 1, 1890, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Long Lance was born Sylvester Clark Long to Sallie and Joe Long. According to Donald Smith, both Sallie and Joe had ties to Native American cultures (22). Sallie claimed mixed Native American, European, and African ancestry and would have been a member of the tribe now recognized as the Lumbee. Joe probably had African and Catawba ancestry; however, his family's enslaved past made his background more difficult to ascertain (22). The Longs lived in Winston-Salem's black community and maintained ties to their Native American cultures. Winston-Salem's racial climate did not allow for mixed-heritage individuals to be legally recognized as such. Racial binarism and the state's adherence to hypodescent and the "one-drop rule" governed North Carolina state law and classified Sylvester and his family as "colored."

Realizing that one's racial appearance played a major role in crafting a racial identity, the racially ambiguous Long Lance made every effort to learn and mimic Native American cultures while passing for full-blood Cherokee, despite the fact that both of his parents actually were of Native American ancestry. In 1904, young Sylvester took it upon

himself to take advantage of his "Indian" appearance and left North Carolina to perform in various wild west shows and the Robinson's Circus as a "full-blood Indian." In 1909, Long Lance returned to Winston-Salem and took more formal steps to legitimizing his crafted Native American identity by applying to the Carlisle Indian School. His parents supported his decision to selectively highlight his Native American ancestry in his admissions application and even helped him to secure testimonies from neighbors vouching for his identity since they could not pull from the tribal register (38-42). Long Lance's experiences at the Carlisle School mark his long journey towards crafting an identity that would shift according to his needs and the white supremacist culture's desires at the time. His former teacher, E.H. Foster, remarks on Long Lance's devout, yet seemingly unusual, interest in learning about Indigenous cultures. He writes:

> As a pupil at Carlisle [Sylvester] was studious, very fond of literature and history, especially Indian history, its myths and legends as related to him by the old chieftains. He sensed the spiritual meaning of myths and applied it to his religious code in conformity with Indian ideals of religion. He read good books intelligently and, occasionally, wrote a review of one not prescribed in the course of study and handed it in for criticisms. (71)

Foster speaks of Long Lance as a model student, but Long Lance's actions seem to represent his earliest attempts to perfect a performance that he could later use to appeal to the white dominant culture. Long Lance drew from his experiences in the circus and at Carlisle and included them in his nonfiction and political writings in which he advocated solely for Native American rights. Thus, what society labeled as his literal racial passing transformed into an act of *literary* racial passing, or the practice of him writing from an

imagined perspective that he based on his perceptions of the identities that he performs. In other words, Long Lance creates a literary voice based on the stereotypes that he acts out in his day to day life rather than his actual experiences. He then uses that voice to speak on actual issues present in the social world.

A self-proclaimed Cherokee, then Blackfoot, then Creek Indian at various points of his life, Long Lance performed various Native American identities in efforts to escape black racial violence and capitalize on the romanticized image of the "noble savage." A figure that the dominant culture found necessary to maintain the racial distinction between Native Americans and white Americans, the "noble savage" plays an important role in crafting a white-red and a black-red color line. Lovett argues that "noble savage" characteristics include "a heroic (sometimes savage) commitment to liberty, a connection to the land, or an aristocratic if doomed 'opposition to progress'" (206). By perfecting a performance of the "noble savage" figure in American popular culture, Long Lance asserted his "Americanness," or inclusion within the North American identity, that was otherwise denied him in his legal racial identity of "colored" based on North Carolina's Jim Crow-era racial classifications.

Phillip Deloria notes that the first theatrical enactment of "us versus them" relied on the racial stereotype of the savage Indian – a performance in red face – which American colonists used to set themselves apart from the British during the Boston Tea Party (2). Citing D.H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*, Deloria reports that Lawrence and other authors adopted the image of "the Indian" to create a defining image of Americanness that represented "instinct and freedom" (2). At the same time, "savage Indians served Americans as oppositional figures against whom one might

imagine a civilized national self" (3). The "noble savage" "both juxtaposes and conflates an urge to idealize and desire Indians and a need to despise and dispossess them" (4). Considering Deloria's and Lawrence's points of view, Long Lance's selective racial identification was his attempt to craft an identity that he deemed most represented himself and that he believed would best serve his interests (although, he did so through performances of racial stereotypes). For, as Deloria claims of disguise more generally, it "readily calls the notion of fixed identity into question" and "makes one self-conscious of a *real* 'me' underneath" (7). Deloria calls this experience both "precarious and creative," pointing out that "it can play a critical role in the way people construct new identities" (7). Long Lance's performance of the "noble savage" moved him closer to acceptance within the dominant culture but only from the standpoint of another racialized identity dependent upon stereotypes. Although he attempted to break racial binaries manifested in strictly "white" or "colored" classifications, his "noble savage" disguise only further perpetuated racial essentialism and bolstered white supremacy.

Long Lance did not pass, ancestrally speaking at least; however, his writings depict him playing on the dominant culture's fascination with the "noble savage" and fetishization of the notion of manifest destiny. He relies on native primitivism in order to pander to the dominant culture, even if his image reflects only an ancient relic of so-called "American" characteristics. Deloria explains that Europeans once relied upon images of the "noble savage" to "represent instinct and freedom," while they used "savage Indians" to represent negative qualities (3). The image of the African, however, came to represent everything that Europeans did not want associated with Americanness, including laziness and impulsivity. White Americans' starkly different approach towards

these two caricatures have continued from the founding of the US well into the present. As a result, US cultural history tends to discuss separately the image of the "noble savage" and the variously caricatured African, including their struggles against white supremacy.

Performing various varieties of "the noble savage" provided Long Lance a successful career in film and publishing in which he wrote about his "authentic" experiences in popular magazines such as *Good Housekeeping* and *Cosmopolitan*. In 1928, he published his widely popular *Long Lance: Autobiography of a Blackfoot Indian Chief* which secured his celebrity status and led to an endorsement with B.F. Goodrich sneakers. In 1930, Long Lance performed the leading role in the film *The Silent Enemy.* His autobiography eventually received much criticism once speculation about his racial authenticity came into question. Many critics classify the work as fiction since Long Lance based his reflections on those that he collected while on the road. He never actually experienced or heard about these experiences in his own home when growing up in North Carolina. Unable to explain gaps in his knowledge of the Native American cultures that he claimed, Long Lance eventually committed suicide on March 20, 1932, once the public found out about his racial imposture.

At most, one could agree that Long Lance passed for a member of various tribes. However, another could argue that his actions were a result of his ancestral dispossession. The only way for Long Lance to assert his Native American ancestry was for him to perform stereotypes, suggesting that he only had access to his Americanness via racial performance. Michelle H. Raheja argues that the stereotypes that the dominant culture has accepted as "authentic" representations–what Umberto Eco calls "hyperreality –

become the canvas upon which "Europeans and European-Americans… project their fantasies" and "create the 'absolute fake' Indian… sometimes compelling [Indigenous peoples] to play these roles as well" (137). Working from within the framework of "the vanishing Indian," Long Lance pandered to the white dominant culture's fascination with "primitive Indian" life via the "noble savage" figure in order to claim a space within the dominant culture rather than use his identity to disrupt white supremacy and white settler colonialism.

Long Lance's life and writings offer a more complex understanding of the act of racial passing and literary racial representation towards the end of the Progressive era—a moment in American literary history where texts spoke to issues regarding social activism rooted in racial representation. While Griggs's Erma refused to pass and attempted to act out against racial and color stereotypes, Long Lance adhered to them as parts of his daily life. Early in his autobiography, he comments on his notion of a triracial color line in which whiteness is associated with education and enlightenment while blackness does not figure into the relationship between Native Americans and whites. He writes, '[we heard that there were] thousands of White People living in another world across the big waters where there were no Indians at all. They travelled in 'big houses,' which swam the waters like fish… These things came to us from other tribes. They even told us of 'black white men' who lived under the sun… and who were 'scorched' until they were black" (*Long Lance* 4). His calculated performance upholds racial essentialism despite his attempt to show his similarities with and appreciation for the white dominant culture. Raheja might call this appeal to whiteness through racial essentialism and "us versus them" rhetoric an appeal to "the politics of buckskin," or "redface minstrelsy."

This notion supports the idea that a person's daily life and on-screen personas ultimately "inform our understanding of the full range of [Indigenous] identities and identifications" mediated through white privileged discourses (127). In his 1926 article "My Trail Upwards," Long Lance adheres to the same restricted racial and cultural approaches to indigeneity by claiming only his Native American ancestry and bolstering a black-white binary. He writes:

> I'm proud to be as much like a white man as I am—but I'm proud too, of every drop of Indian blood that runs through my veins. I'm proud of my Indian heritage—and I'm proud, too, of the land and people of my adoption. I have reached no dizzy heights of material success, but I have succeeded in pulling myself up by my boot straps from a primitive and backward life into this great new world of white civilization. ("My Trail Upward" 21)

This passage hints at Long Lance's literary racial passing in order to escape black racial violence. He highlights his ties to whiteness, culturally and ancestrally, and considers his Native American ancestry as a highly valued but second thought; nowhere does he make mention of his African ancestry or his father's ancestors' pasts in enslavement. In this way, Long Lance exiles himself from his North Carolina roots and from his family history. Furthermore, his act represents the larger social practice in ancestral dispossession that denies African-Native Americans their full identities.

"Boot straps" marks Long Lance's unconscious revelation that he has created an identity out of racialized subjugation to enter into a "great new world of white civilization." Booker T. Washington's infamous 1901 autobiography *Up From Slavery*

most famously marks “boot straps” alongside countless other texts written by black activist writers during the early twentieth century. However, Long Lance employs the reference as a way out of an African-Native American identity. In his 1912 valedictory address he states this view remarking, “we do not wish to be designated as Cherokees, Sioux, or Pawnees, but we wish to be known as Carlisle Indians… speaking the same language and having the same chief – the great White Father at Washington… for the day will surely come when the white man and the Indian shall become one nation” (“Valedictory Address” 74). His appearance and society’s essentialized notions of what “Indianness” looks like appears to be the only factor that inhibits him from passing for white since his primary goal is to be accepted within white society. His complete disregard for his African ancestry clearly denotes internalized racism and an interesting approach towards challenging the dominant racial binary in the US.

Long Lance expresses frustration with his fraught relationship with his mixed heritage while also suggesting a rejection of racial and cultural complexities enveloped in his denying his blackness. Take for instance his essay published in the March 1924 *Mentor*. He writes:

> It is true that Indian blood mixed with certain foreign bloods produces individuals that are too crooked to trust themselves; but these disreputable characters are more Indian than they are white. They are mixed breeds. Scotch blood mixes better with Indian than any other. Irish, English, and French come next in their order. I have no experience with the Spanish mixed bloods…. But it is hoped that they will hold on to the true Indian character which is still possessed by their old people, and which is so

> easily lost, once an Indian has mixed with the lower elements of other races. ("Indians of Northwest" 2)

His critique of mixed-blood tribes and a consistent admiration for "white civilization" depicts an embrace of a racial hierarchy in which Native American cultures prove superior to all other nonwhite groups but only in the sense that it provides the easiest route through which to enter into the white social sphere. The passage essentially adheres to a white supremacist color line that considers African ancestry included within "the lower elements" while still allowing for some social value within other European identities. Ostensibly asserting a purely Native American identity in his writings supports white supremacy. Furthermore, his writings consistently express the idea that race harbors inherent differences. Irony exists in the fact that his writings perform a denigrating racialized "Indian" stereotype in his attempt to enter into white American culture. Long Lance's writings and racial passing, therefore, invoke Native Americanness as performable identities available to racially ambiguous persons looking to escape racial violence at the turn of the century. His essays and articles illustrate his reliance on the "noble savage" stereotype to support his persona, his expatriation from North Carolina, and his temporary flee from the US to Canada. In this way, Long Lance is fetishized not only for his racial appearance and presumed sexual attractiveness, but also for his presumed ideology in that he represents the "noble savage" that aspires towards whiteness—a similar aspiration for the "tragic mulatta/o" figure. Raheja asserts that "primitivism moved Indigenous peoples outside of history at the same time it made them available as sexual objects as an effect of modernity" (58). While Long Lance's words do not appear sexualized here, the images of him used in various promotional materials are

overtly sexual. Take for instance his appearance in *The Silent Enemy*. Not only is Long Lance starkly naked, he is put on display with bulging muscles and minimal (not to mention racialized) attire. Long Lance appears as a sexualized object, like the "tragic mulatta/o" who can be overtaken for the purpose of being accepted into mainstream culture and subject to the white gaze for leisurely entertainment.

Long Lance's complete disregard for his African ancestry clearly denotes internalized racism that is typical of the "tragic mulatta/o" figure and that should not be a surprising result of ancestral dispossession. In his 1927 article "Coming East," Long Lance provides a fictionalized account of his life on the Great Plains while revealing his fascination with white civilization. He states, "I resolved when I was about fifteen to go out into this white man's world and learn to understand everything he knew; to fathom the very roots of this mysterious thing called civilization ("Coming East" 43). He goes on to reveal his fascination with essentialized notions of learned culture—what he calls the "*romance*" of white civilization— and notes that while white Americans swoon over the primitive "Indian" or "noble savage," he feels inspired to seek adventure in the white world that he assumed was imbued with scientific discovery and technological advancements. In both perspectives, romanticized and essentialized ideas guide both group's perception of the other. However, Long Lance was not a legally recognized member of an Indigenous nation. In this way, Long Lance critiques both color lines despite that fact that he decides to appeal more to the white spectrum. This passage unconsciously reveals his act in performing indigeneity to enter into the white social world from what he considers a less-stigmatized racial position. His words suggest he is manipulating the black-red color line, where "Indianness" is perceived the better in an

effort to move closer towards (and eventually within) whiteness. Self-advancement appears to be Long Lance's ultimate goal. He merely uses his racial ambiguity to the best of his abilities "to fathom [his] very roots" rather than challenge white supremacy for its denigrating social effects.

Long Lance's failure to address his African ancestry in any of his texts sheds light on tensions between Native American identities and black American identities based on a white supremacist color line. Gerald Vizenor suggests that individuals that society assumes are racial imposters "may gain access to opportunities otherwise denied to them, but they also may çlose… some doors on honest tribal people who have the moral courage to raise doubts about identities'" (qtd. in Raheja 136). Johnathan Brennan argues that Long Lance's "deliberate shift in cultural and political affiliation [is] perhaps due in part to his heritage and in part to the prevailing argument that Black Indians were 'degraded' Indians or not Indians at all" (*When Brer Rabbit* 30). Long Lance's writings – particularly those in which he advocates for Native American rights – reveal his struggle with racial identity and his anxieties concerning blackness and whiteness. Moreover, they shed light on his decision to only assert his Native American ancestry while rejecting his blackness. Thus, Long Lance's writings reveal a "safe space" of sorts in traditional conceptualizations of indigeneity through which racially ambiguous figures might negotiate their relation to an imposed racial identity and to the social politics that demand clearly marked racial lines.

Long Lance states in his autobiography that his earliest memory was of a fight between his people, the Blackfeet, and his people's enemies, the Crows, in Northern Montana.[29] He does not reflect on his actual past in Winston-Salem but notes how

mystery pervaded nearly every aspect of his life. The biggest mystery he admits to facing was "the mystery of the future in relation to the coming of the White Man" (*Long Lance* 3). "The White Man," and archetypal description of the white supremacy that thrived in not only Winston-Salem but across the US, appears throughout his writings and especially at moments when he tries to construct a memory that reflects his constructed identity. That mystery of "the White Man" would remain for the rest of his life as an identity crisis rooted in internalized racism and white supremacist ideas regarding, specifically, his African ancestry and uncertain Native American ancestry in his homeplace of North Carolina. Lovett adds that many literary traditions depict characters living within oppressed communities, making efforts to assert all known parts of their ancestry and to "use their personal experiences to address the larger social, political, and economic context for their place in a segregated society" (205). Long Lance's language addresses the larger social and political effects of race as a social construct, but he does so from the vantage point that individuals can use race and culture to survive in segregated societies. Long Lance's writings invoke the "noble savage" in his attempts to escape racial violence in Jim Crow North Carolina.

In Long Lance's interrogation of the black-white color line and racial essentialism, he reveals his desire to ultimately "fit" within a white supremacist culture rather than a desire to entirely dismantle it. Thus, Long Lance manifests into a real life "tragic mulatto" figure that scholars more frequently associate with passing narratives of the nineteenth and twentieth century. His ultimate demise seems to be his not being able to fully take advantage of the stereotyped "noble savage" disguise. However, to read Long Lance's texts as passing novels and the majority of his life in passing denies his

ancestral truths and the complexities of his racial identity, thereby bolstering notions of racial essentialism and racial binaries. Rather, Long Lance puts forth a story of selective racial identification that speaks to ancestral dispossession. Long Lance's life and writings bring critical attention to the issue of the lack of consensus regarding racial representation in Progressive-era literature and, more broadly, regarding what constitutes racial passing in literature and US culture if more consideration is given to actual ancestry.

A return to Bush-Banks's works demonstrates an effective approach towards New Negro-Indigeneity that Long Lance fails to accomplish due to his "passing." In her 1899 poem "Morning on Shinnecock," Bush-Banks relies on contrasting stereotypical Native American and European imagery to critique society's compartmentalizing of identities and to express a yearning for both black, Native American, and white communities to welcome African-Native American identities and for black and Native communities to collaborate in efforts to bring about decolonization. Although Long Lance succumbed to the marginalization of white settler colonialism and white supremacy by aspiring towards whiteness, it appears that he really just wanted to be accepted into mainstream society for the actual ancestral ties that he had. The poem's speaker imagines standing in a "leafy grove" crowned by the rising sun and awe-inspiring blue sky that stretches from sea to shore. The sun and sky's grand reach suggests the universal experience with nature and a relationship with God that all people have a right to regardless of race, color, or ancestry. Everyone is ruled by the same God and experience the same natural world. The speaker then contrasts the sky, sea, and grove through imagery commonly present in Native American and European literatures. The speaker says:

> Far as the human eye could see,

Were stretched fields of waving corn.

……

While here and there a cottage quaint

Seemed to repose in quiet ease. (“Morning” 27)

The speaker witnesses both distinctly Native American, or what white settlers would call “uncivilized” imagery (corn fields) and European, or so-called “civilized,” imagery (cottages) within the same view, illustrating two groups and perspectives experienced simultaneously by one person. The corn fields and cottages also represent the merging together (though forced merging) of Native American and European cultures once the Puritans settled in the “New World.” Although these images read cultures in a reductive manner, perhaps that is Bush-Banks’s underlying point: that US society reductively understands nonwhite peoples, thus disabling mixed-heritage individuals from being fully accepted and understood. The speaker wishes that she might be able to view both the corn fields and cottages together in harmony, but this image quickly fades. Bush-Banks then inserts her own experience in the last stanza:

’Twas this, —how fair my life began;

How pleasant was its hour of dawn;

But, merging into sorrow’s day,

Then beauty faded with the morn. (28)

Each poem in *Original Poems* from then on relies on the phrases “dark-skinned race” and “colored race” to discuss the ways society views ancestries separately according to the laws and practices put forth by white supremacy. Racialized references to blacks in the

context of pre-colonial images of Turtle Island also invite readers to reconsider black bodies' roles in the process of colonization.

The New Negro-Indigenous literary voice reveals a tension that exists between a long-standing "mixed-blood" tribal presence and binary approaches towards race and social justice movements within the US. Racial purity myths based on a black-white dichotomy proved important for white supremacists and the white colonizer in regard to not only censoring white and black interaction, but also in their attempts to retell Native Americans' histories. White supremacy viewed "mixed-blood" tribes as racially inferior to "pure-blood" tribes, and therefore, any claims stating otherwise needed to be denounced. Guillaume points out that after 1890, Indigenous nations continued to thrive despite white researchers' claim that "true," or "pure," Indigenous nations died out due to intermarriage with African descendants ("Character Names" 48). "The refusal of researchers to acknowledge the cultural validity of mixed-[race] or triracial groups," says Guillaume, "is part of that mental process [Melville Herskovits] dubbed 'negative restructuring.' That is, scientists refuse to objectively examine a New World society, assuming that it has little or nothing to offer due to the infusion of African blood" (49). Researchers who fail to study "mixed-blood" tribes invite hypodescent and the "one-drop rule" into literary, sociological, and historical studies of Indigenous nations. David Murray argues that literary critics who fail to read the "mixed-blood" voice in Native American literature as a challenge to tribal "extinction" only corroborates the "dying Indian" stereotype and follows a white patriarchal perception of history (73). I would add that the failure to holistically read the New Negro-Indigenous literary voice corroborates the false narratives upheld by the "one-drop rule" and hypodescent within the black

intelligentsia circle. African-Native American ancestry often remains understudied in literary studies and bolsters false narratives of racial dilution and extinction according to the existing racial hierarchy. A similar reading practice is often brought to bear upon literary texts that feature multiethnic characters who evoke an enigmatic, apologetic, or negative connotation with sexual violence. Bush-Banks writes about her African-Native American heritage outside of these prevailing perspectives while Long Lance writes as a victim of these circumstances.

New Negro-Indigeneity challenges the full impact of white settler colonialism on all peoples. Yes, men like Du Bois, Eastman, and others who attended the Universal Races Congress sought to foster a sense of collaborative efforts against colonialism, but the reality of cultural intermixture and shared histories appear to be removed from their efforts. Furthermore, racial separatism in such early political collaborations denied the legitimacy of interracial relationships that occurred among groups that white colonialism tried to keep separate. Like many other Harlem Renaissance figures, Bush-Banks approved of interracial collaboration to combat hostile race relations.[30] However, at the same time, being of African ancestry and being of Montauk ancestry mattered to her. One can assume that Long Lance might have had a similar outlook given his participation in racial and social justice movements for Native American rights, but he could not withstand the hostile racial climate into which he was born that turned him away from his blackness. New Negro-Indigeneity challenges readers to understand identity politics with connections to blackness as part of the white colonial structure in the US.

Chapter 4: "One Nation, Truly Indi[Visible] and United": *Ebony* Magazine's Interrogation of Whiteness[31]

> Color, the main determinant of race, is the most perfidious trait of them all. A very black Negro is much more rare [*sic*] on our city streets than is a very white 'Negro,' and there are more browns and yellows across the tracks than white or black…. The Negro, as well as the German and the Filipino and the Arab, should be proud of his race and his ancestors—and he would be were it not for the white-imposed stigma attached to black blood…Very soon there will be in America, no white world and no black world, but one nation, truly indivisible and united.
>
> "This Crazy Mixed-Up Race," *Ebony*, August 1954

The above article's title says it all: the conceptualization of race in the US appeared all the more "crazy" and "mixed up" well into the twentieth century, especially when considering the actual visual manifestations of race. The unnamed writer signals that relations across the color lines thoroughly dismantled any claims of racial purity, much to white supremacists' concerns. The "browns and yellows" from interracial unions crossed the tracks, or the color lines, that a white supremacist society tried to maintain; the reference to "the Negro" and two other ethnic identities in comparison to a European identity gestures towards the internalized racism present in some black and nonwhite communities due to outrageous and debilitating ideas about race and culture. Nevertheless, the writer ends on an optimistic note, pronouncing that eventually, color

and race will no longer factor into an American national identity. Therefore, the temptation to pass for another race and the desire to discriminate based on skin complexion and other phenotypical features will soon fade. Imagining a "truly indivisible and united" nation means to envision a post-racist society that welcomes difference free from notions of racial superiority and attention to phenotypes. Much like Bush-Banks's "Morning on the Shinnecock," racial differences can exist, but they do not have to denote superior or inferior claims of difference. This article and a host of others featured in *Ebony* magazine during the 1940s and 1950s essentially call for a revised national identity free from the politics of racial visibility. However, the magazine's continued representations of racially ambiguous women and readers' responses to these images in the "Letters to the Editor" section blur the lines between what is private and what is personal when it comes to racial identification. The magazine offers a window into personal experiences, family histories, and historical moments that led to public campaigns to disempower color lines.

Numerous literary texts centered on racial passing and colorism and published during the interwar period (1918-1939) speak to the public's growing interest in debates concerning crossing the black-white color line. These years witnessed the advent of numerous attempts to desegregate public spaces. Now canonical texts within the African American literary tradition, Fauset's *Plum Bun*, Larsen's *Quicksand* and *Passing*, Thurman's *The Blacker the Berry*, and Schuyler's *Black No More* all inspect the dominant culture's beliefs in the inherent inferiorities associated with blackness. [32] Very rarely do passing and colorism narratives depict the protagonist overcoming his or her antagonisms with their blackness. White authors also frequently wrote about racial

passing and colorism, even if only with superficial examinations. These include texts such as Edna Ferber's 1926 novel *Show Boat* and Fannie Hurst's 1933 novel *Imitation of Life*. The twentieth century brought about a growing interest in visual culture with Hollywood producing a plethora of passing films and commercial magazines printing pictures to supplement their articles, thus providing viewers with a new engagement with racial visibility paired with entertainment.[33] During World War II (1939-1945) and its immediate postwar period, the film and magazine industries increased their production of popular media that took on not only the race question, but more specifically, the color question.

Films and commercial magazines allowed audiences to critically engage with the visual politics of race more intimately. *Ebony* magazine, however, offered an additional level of engagement through its dedicated space for reader-response, in which the general public aired its support for or grievances with society's adherence to color lines. Additionally, commercial magazines appealed to readers with limited leisure time. Margaret Beetham notes that the commercial magazine's ability to welcome selective reading makes it particularly popular among casual readers. Each article appears self-contained and does not require the reader to read from cover to cover (98). Neither novels nor films allow for such flexible engagement. To uncover an examination of racial passing and colorism in any other genre requires that the audience engage with an entire text. Commercial magazines also prove more economically efficient for publishers given the genre's ability to spread information from a diverse set of voices quickly and cheaply (96-97). Publishing novels and producing films usually requires more money, time, and an established reading or viewing audience.

Articles featured in mainstream commercial magazines, like *Reader's Digest, True Confessions,* and *Collier's*, engaged with audiences' growing interests in racial passing to address the actual "lost half million" individuals who passed to escape racial violence during the height of US domestic and international conflict. By doing so, these popular media underscored society's reliance on visible markers of race in order to engage readers with social issues inflected by racism and transcribed into an American national identity. Gayle Wald argues, regarding white-authored magazines, that articles on racial passing did not necessarily discuss individuals who refused to pass in a way that imagines blacks no longer needing to rely on social implications embodied within whiteness (119). Rather, these publications often spectacularized racial passing and colorism. Take, for instance, William Lindsay White's piece on Albert Johnston Jr. and his family's passing for white in the December 1947 *Reader's Digest.* White unfolds the drama behind the entire family's racial imposture and takes careful consideration to describe the "psychological difficulties" that Albert Jr. met upon finding out about his "colored blood" on both his father's and mother's sides of the family.[34] Articles on racial passing and colorism in black commercial magazines, however, warrant readers to reconsider society's reliance on racial difference and hierarchy since physical appearance does not actually suffice to distinguish racial identity.

While white-authored commercial magazines discussed crossing the black-white color line in a melodramatic tone, *Ebony*, one of the most popular black-owned magazines, examined the renewed public interest in racial passing and colorism with an innovative approach and goal: Articles published in *Ebony* from the 1940s and 1950s scrutinize "white" appearing Americans' struggles with the color question, thereby

shifting readers' attention to social anxieties within the underexamined "white" spectrum of the black-white color line.[35] In other words, rather than address the race and color question from the perspective of visibly discernable "black" Americans, articles in *Ebony* features the perspectives and experiences of "white" appearing yet black-identified persons to highlight the politics of racial visibility. By addressing social implications anticipated within racial ambiguity, *Ebony* argues for a revised view of "Americanness" that erases the politics of racial visibility for nonwhites' full inclusion within US society. For, as Simone Brown argues of US cultural logic more broadly, "it sees whiteness, or lightness, as privileged in enrollment, measurement, and recognition processes…reliant upon dark matter for its own meaning" (162). Put in the context of continued attempts at black racial uplift well into the twentieth century, *Ebony* translates whiteness, or lightness, into "dark matter" for black communities to use as a defining basis for which to examine blackness in the American national identity which relies upon the politics of racial visibility.

To be racially indecipherable, however, troubles the social surveillance of US color lines, even in intraracial contexts. Wald's study on *Ebony* magazine in her influential work *Crossing the Line* focuses on the magazine's publishing of what she calls "postpassing narratives," or those articles that bridge the public and private discourses on racial passing with attention to instances where light-complexioned individuals choose not to pass. She argues that written accounts for public audiences on choosing not to pass acts "as a means of giving voice to aspirations regarding blacks' economic, political, and social well-being" (118). "Postpassing narratives" take an individual's experiences and turn them into a moment for collective reflection. "By invoking a 'past,'" temporally

speaking and as a rejection, Wald contends that the "postpassing narrative" "imaginatively [projects] a future in which racially defined Americans will no longer have any impetus or need to pass" (119). She continues that these articles promoted "proper" (read white) modes of citizenship that depicted notions rooted in gender and class (121). "The articles often minimized the effects of racism and color hierarchy while downplaying class and gender divisions within apparently stable and homogenous 'black' communities" for the purpose of imagining a color-blind marketplace, says Wald (121).

I find Wald's argument compelling, but I want to unpack the relevance of intraracial community building taking place through *Ebony* magazine's focus on racial ambiguity. Surely *Ebony* magazine's community of interracial editors, photographers, and staff writers used the "postpassing narrative" to imagine a post-racist society. However, I believe that *Ebony's* choice to include intraracial critique regarding racial visibility within its "Letters to the Editor" section, coupled with the magazine's continued inclusion of advertisements for skin whitening and hair straightening products, speaks to an even more complex probing of the politics of racial visibility in connection with notions of "Americanness" within black communities. *Ebony* continues the discourse on black racial uplift from the early-twentieth century yet re-centers readers' attentions to the politics of racial visibility through "white" appearing black Americans. The magazine invokes the stories of individuals, families, and specific communities in order to get at the core of illogical and fluid ideas concerning intraracial prejudices. Taking an intraracial assessment of the black-white color line in conjunction with black communities' approaches to performing "Americanness" extends beyond solely combating racial injustice across an interracial black-white color line. At the same time that *Ebony* created

community through a vast network of black and white readers, its interrogation of whiteness and "Americanness," calls for its audience to imagine black futurity not as post-racial but as removed from color prejudice both scientifically and politically.

Segregationist ideals influenced US print culture during the 1940s and 1950s and perspectives on the black-white color line and tended to highlight redundant views that did not welcome much critical audience engagement. According to Bill Mullen, "attempted repression of the black presses' more militant voices had begun as early as 1942 when… the Office of Facts and Figures for the Roosevelt Administration, convened a conference of black newspaper editors to ask that they tone down calls for racial reform in respect for national wartime unity" (940). John H. Johnson, then an aspiring businessman, responded by inserting a variety of perspectives on the color lines and American identity into the commercial magazine scene through the subversive application of the racially ambiguous figure and its associated tropes, including racial passing, colorism, the "one-drop rule," and in some cases, African-Native American sovereignty.

Born on January 19, 1918, to humble beginnings near Arkansas City, Arkansas, Johnson owned the world's leading black publishing company in just a matter of years. In his autobiography, Johnson names the *Chicago Defender* as a leading inspiration for his pursuit of a career in journalism (47). John's mother, Gertrude, faced limited opportunities to educate him beyond the eighth grade due to school segregation in Arkansas, so she saved money while working as a cook and laundress and moved her family to Chicago during the Great Migration. Johnson eventually registered at an all-black high school on Chicago's south side and graduated in 1936 (44-54). During his

senior year, Harry Herbert Pace, president of Supreme Liberty Life Insurance, one of the largest Black-owned insurance companies at the time, heard Johnson give a speech at an Urban League dinner. Pace offered him a job, and by 1939, Johnson became assistant editor of the company's publication, *The Guardian* (93). Pace eventually promoted Johnson to editor after only three years of exceptional performance.

Gathering news clippings concerning black Americans' fight for racial justice sparked the career venture that established Johnson's dynamo status in publishing. Johnson found hardly any positive portrayals of black life or the Black Diaspora in the white-controlled press. Therefore, he looked to local and national black publications including the *Pittsburgh Courier* (where George Schuyler worked as the editor), the *Negro History Bulletin,* and the *Opportunity* for more representative content (114-115). Despite these publications' quality coverage of World War II and various other moments pertaining to civil rights, federal attempts to silence the publications' criticisms of the government's slacking pace toward racial equality meant that black publications had limited national distribution. Johnson grabbed at the opportunity to start his own national publication featuring positive portrayals of black life since many black newspaper editors acquiesced the government's call to tone down its militant rhetoric. With a $500 loan and the Supreme Life Insurance Company's mailing list, Johnson solicited subscriptions and collected the $6,000 needed to publish the initial pressrun of 5,000 copies of the precursor to *Ebony* magazine, The *Negro Digest*, on November 1, 1942 (117-120).

The *Negro Digest* printed more explicitly political and intellectual material than would the later *Ebony* magazine. Johnson describes the *Negro Digest's* editorial purpose in the inaugural issue as "dedicated to the development of interracial understanding and

the promotion of national unity" ("Editorial Statement" 2). From the very first pressrun, Johnson's publication regularly featured articles by a diverse community of intellectuals on race relations across the globe. These include original or reprinted articles and essays written by Paul Robeson, Roi Ottley, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Arthur P. Davis, Ralph Ellison, Fannie Hurst, George S. Schuyler, and Carl Sandburg to name a few. James Hall notes that within three years of the publication's initial issue, Johnson listed leaders within the African American literary canon as "advisory editors," including "Arna Bontemps, Sterling Brown, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Alain Lock, and Saunders Redding" (192). Once the *Negro Digest* achieved groundbreaking success with earnings of more than $15,000 per monthly issue, Johnson set out to create *Ebony*, a magazine tailored to a more casual audience that also promoted race consciousness but from the vantage point of "the happier side" of black life. Both the *Negro Digest* and *Ebony* magazine witnessed immense success, but *Ebony* championed as the nation's leading black commercial publication and boasted a paid circulation press-run of over 300,000 copies within a month of its inaugural issue .[36] The magazine's readership spanned across the US and even reached international audiences in countries like Korea, Ethiopia, Austria, Germany, Panama, Curaçao, and Canada.[37] Readers from all spectrums of the social strata and black-white color line read and contributed to the magazine's robust "Letters to the Editor" section regarding its frequent features on racial passing and colorism. Johnson details his decision to enter publishing in the following passage:

> Black newspapers were doing a good job of reporting discrimination and segregation and that we needed, in addition to all that, a medium to refuel the people, and to recharge their batteries. We needed, in addition to

> traditional weapons, a medium to make blacks believe in themselves, in their skin color, in their noses, in their lips, so they could hang on and fight for another day. Last but not least, we needed a new medium—bright, sparkling, readable—that would let blacks know that they were part of a great heritage…. [W]e wanted to focus on the total black experience—something no one else was doing then. (157)

Ebony sought to merge the gap between the Hampton intellectual and the Chicago city slicker to reflect what Johnson calls "the total black experience" and its contributions to "a great heritage" that is American heritage. By focusing on blacks as "Americans," Johnson highlights the very obvious connections between blacks' experiences in the US and the national identity's preoccupations with race. Ironically, Johnson and his editors usually made the connection between race and "Americanness" apparent through the image of the "white" appearing, black-identified body. The strategy to focus on racial ambiguity within a black American context allowed Johnson to counterintuitively show that color prejudices exists across the color lines. Thus, in order to imagine blackness within the developing modern American identity, blacks and whites needed to witness the complete absurdity present within the color lines and racial hierarchies. Johnson needed to show how social constructions had the power to inflict strife within the communities that white supremacy aimed to keep separate from the dominant culture. *Ebony* magazine's content needed to educate the masses on contemporary issues impacting black lives globally, and yet also appeal to a broad, multiracial audience. Therefore, Johnson and his interracial team employed the racially ambiguous figure in a similar way that nineteenth-century authors use the "tragic mulatta"—in an effort to draw sympathy

from white readers and to call out black communities for intraracial discrimination while ruminating on a post-racist society. However, while this figure garnered sympathy from whites, it also reflected the goals of the "New Mulatta" that Griggs and Bush-Banks inspired in that it represented an uplifting message to black audiences to reject negative and singular views of the black self.

"To hang on and fight for another day" suggests focusing on a future that portrays blackness in more positive light with regard to interracial and intraracial relations than what the media historically promoted. Thus, *Ebony* participated in an act of storytelling. Using the white-owned *Life* and *Look* photo-magazines for inspiration, Johnson concluded that blacks wanted to read about and see images of themselves in a more optimistic and prideful lens. This meant a nuanced approach to the color question within black communities. In addition, he thought that some white Americans thirsted for more realistic representations of black life removed from minstrel-like undertones; white-owned magazines had not provided such content. Johnson concluded that "younger and better educated Whites used their education to create more acceptable and sophisticated ways to justify racism" including imagery imbued with covert racist sentiments (184). *Ebony* magazine's content had to subversively infiltrate white America, and what better way than through the apparent "spectacle" of "white" appearing black bodies.

Ebony magazine's frequent features on racial passing and colorism welcome a literary analysis interested in interrogating whiteness in public and private contexts during a time when blacks started to more fully imagine themselves within an American national identity. Consequently, the American national identity that black Americans imagined themselves entering rested upon idealized notions not yet fully recognized.

Philip Gleason asserts that society had popularized the expression "American identity" only around World War II. Up until that time, elements of ideology, ethnicity, and religion remained key factors in forming American nationality or character (483). Nevertheless, elements such as race, religion, language, culture, and I would add color, gained their most importance during the years between 1890 to the mid-1920's—the height of American nativist thinking (484). Gleason continues, "When ethnicity was most recessive (from 1940 to the early 1960's) the ideological aspect of American identity was given greater emphasis" (484). However, segregationist laws and practices show that ideological conceptions of American identity were very much still imbued with concerns over ethnicity and racial appearances and, in fact, excluded black Americans and other racialized groups from certain elements of American democracy.

Exclusion and limits to social unity and justice in the US rested upon racial visibility and bolstered a warped national identity that contributed to national and international conflicts. Benedict Anderson proposes that "since World War II every successful revolution has defined itself in *national* terms" (2). However, nations fall in line with imagined communities since the vast majority of individuals who consider themselves members of the community, or nation, never really know each other (6). Instead, they align themselves with an idea that unifies them. These ideas translate into "nationality" or "nation-ness" and become "'modular,' capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains" (4). In other words, self-alignment with ideas of "nation," including racial identities, starts to mean certain things during certain historical moments and benefit certain factions within the larger community, or nation, at varying moments. Black American communities after

Reconstruction form a "sub"-nationalism and express their desires for the legal right to be wholly included within the nation and an American national identity. The politics of racial visibility continue to hold meaning in this process even though individuals work to dismantle those social constraints across the black-white color line. *Ebony* responds to these complex connections between race and nation by attempting to redefine approaches to blackness in national terms. Mullen notes that the "ideological tension between wartime patriotism and black social reformism" characterizes black American writing during the 1940s (939). Since the nation exists only as an imagined community where the color lines failed to encompass a democratic philosophy, *Ebony* magazine's focus on skin color within black communities and across color lines allows readers and editors to imagine black futurity and American national identity that fulfills a democratic philosophy within a post-racist space.

Ralina Joseph's theory on postraciality and Maren Stange's take on Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s "signifyin'" informs my approach to analyzing *Ebony* magazine's editorial choice to represent an imagined black future and American national identity through images of racially ambiguous subjects. In his influential essay "Writing, 'Race' and the Difference It Makes," Gates takes a poststructuralist approach to African American literature and argues that race conveys "irreducible difference between cultures, linguistic groups, or practitioners of specific belief systems" (1579). Previous chapters in my dissertation rely on Du Bois's 1897 definition of "race." However, for this chapter, I would like to consider Gates's rhetorical understanding of "race" and "signifyin'" to evaluate *Ebony* magazine's inclusion of the tropes of racial passing, colorism, and the "one-drop rule" through which to: first, inform its audience about the arbitrary optics

embedded within the politics of race visibility; and second, educate a global audience on US society's shifting application of the color line and its effects on the nation's idealized identity. In *Signifying Monkey*, Gates explains "signifyin'" to be "a trope that embodies cultural meanings and represents a complex set of social interactions" (1545). In other words, the cultural context from which those who engage with the trope enters the discourse determines its meaning. *Ebony* magazine's rhetorical uses of racial passing, colorism, the "one-drop rule," and indigeneity demonstrate a complex interaction between racial visibility and racial signifiers that relies upon one's cultural vantage point.

Stange sees *Ebony* magazine's photography working to dismantle racial signifiers of what Gates call the "Public Negro," saying that "*Ebony's* images would detach, or disarticulate, racialized icons—that is, the recognizable black face and body—from the familiar markers of degradation, spectacle, and victimization; the pictures would, instead, reproduce iconic blackness articulated to…American national identity" (208). Not only does race signify one's relationship to Americanness on the physical body, but the language used to describe and inscribe race signifies difference, particularly to establish a subordinate and dominate group (Gates 1580). Thus, white supremacy thrives within the US and American national identity given that the racial meanings embedded within both physical appearance and language remain influential.

Ebony interrogates whiteness from the perspective that the visual and themes used to challenge or concretize conceptions of race, such as racial passing, colorism, and the "one-drop rule," must speak to some aspect of an idealized American national identity or creed in order to qualify one's citizenship. In other words, since the American national identity places so much value on racial visibility, to imagine oneself within that identity

requires one to consider how their racial appearance works with or against the collective national identity recognized by the dominant culture. Thus, the magazine challenges its readers to engage with those bodies and appearances upon which society projects its anxieties over the black-white color line: "white" appearing black bodies. Noliwe Rooks claims that black magazines sometimes "refute [or] rework the cultural understandings of [certain] narratives [and] often bears a striking resemblance to that which they claim to challenge" (5). In the case of *Ebony*, its editors and writers reimagine the light or "white" appearing visual aesthetic for similar purposes to the dominant culture in which it simultaneously aims to speak against but become a part of.

Joseph notes that contemporary shifts towards linguistic and visual racial ambiguity in popular media aims to create a narrative of postracial inclusivity, what she calls "strategic ambiguity," or "a way of pushing back against [discrimination] through a coded resistance [that] entails foregrounding crossover appeal, courting multiple publics, speaking in coded language, and smoothing and soothing fears of difference" (3). She notes that "strategic ambiguity" occurs when a "privileged minoritized person [fails] to *name* racism [in order to] claim a seat at the table" [and refuses] to respond to racism with more "militant" tactics like sit-ins and protests (3). Although "strategic ambiguity" finds its roots in twenty-first century claims concerning postraciality, *Ebony* magazine's approach to "signifyin'" engages with Joseph's perspective but from the standpoint of arguing for a post-racial society. *Ebony* articles use tropes rooted in racial ambiguity and photographs of racially ambiguous individuals to critique the white supremacist black-white color line's reach within black communities and to promote black race pride through racially ambiguous individuals' rejections of passing or chastisement of

colorism. In this way, Ebony directly counters the white-owned presses' Johnny-come-lately fantasy presentation of racial unity in the context of warfare abroad.

Furthermore, *Ebony* magazine attempts to disrupt whiteness and foreground American anxieties over the possibility of the black-white color line's deterioration during the height of domestic and international conflicts.[38] Despite the nation's claims to promote a more egalitarian philosophy, apprehensions over race and color remained intense abroad and on the home front during the post-World War II period. Racialized phenotypical traits, including skin complexion, hair texture, and facial features, no longer sustained the black-white color line in the ways that white supremacists had originally hoped, not to mention interracial relationships occurred more openly and more consensually. The nation's streets started to mirror the social reality that less distinction existed between "black" and "white" appearing bodies. Concerns over these "unorthodox" liaisons overwhelmed many Americans once the federal government announced desegregation in schools with *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 and in the defense industry and armed forces with Executive Orders 8802 and 9981 in 1941 and 1948, respectively. Despite advancements towards race equality, US society's overall value in whiteness and devaluation of blackness remained. "Black" blood's supposed ability to "taint" white ancestry also remained a widely held belief. By incorporating photos of themes rooted in concerns over crossing the color line or of racially ambiguous persons in articles concerned with racial injustice, *Ebony* was able to comment on the discrepancy between de jure practices and de facto laws targeting black Americans and how the color question produced considerable anxiety within black and white

communities alike. One photo-editorial featuring a picture of Eartha Kitt and her interracial family remarks:

> Slowly, but certainly, the Negro is at last being assimilated into the great melting pot that is America. Like the mulatto whose changing color and features permit him to pass…into the big free world, so must the thinking of the Negro, as his rights increase, his freedoms grow, pass from self-concentration to national and international concern. This does not mean that he should neglect his fight for complete emancipation from racial prejudices, but that to his own problems must be added those of others. ("Full-Time Negro" 76)

The writer's comparison of all black Americans to "the mulatto" allows readers to imagine the plight of race relations in the context of the ever-changing social status of racially ambiguous persons and the fluid definitions of race and "acceptable" racial appearances. Relying upon imagery rooted in sexual violence and racial ambiguity, *Ebony* interrogates whiteness and the color question for visibly "black" and "white" appearing black Americans while contextualizing anxieties over losing the privilege of whiteness associated with light complexions. To "think like a Negro" in America's changing national and international identities means to have one's two-ness, to use Du Bois's phrase, one's blackness and one's Americanness, merge for the purpose of promoting a racially inclusive American identity. The caveat persists, however, in that if national and international concerns really invested much interest in racial equality, then there would not be a need to "fight for complete emancipation," as the writer suggests. "Being a part-time Negro," continues the writer, "does not mean the denial of racial

heritage [,] the rejection of racial traits or the loss of valued traditions. It does mean, however, that he who demands first class citizenship must be prepared to put citizenship first, race second" (76). Here, the writer uses the analogy of a black person in passing to argue that black Americans should be more concerned with claiming American citizenship rather than asserting some form of racial deference in order to secure a higher social position. The writer seemingly overlooks the paradox between claiming American citizenship and the politics of racial visibility. However, at the article's conclusion, the writer provides the remedy by calling the "part-time Negro, one fully emancipated from his obsession of race" (76). By invoking the racially ambiguous figure within a meditation on national identity, the writer forefronts society's obsession over racial identities and appearances regardless of a collective American identity. Thus, the writer gets at the issue of intersectionality for black Americans through the trope of the racially ambiguous figure. This approach draws readers' attention to the social implications of racial visibility in a revised approach to Americanness.

Shifting the focus of the color spectrum to "whiteness" and "lightness" when imagining blackness and Americanness in the future invites *Ebony's* readers to contemplate how not only interracial divisions, but also how intraracial color divisions challenge America's so-called democratic values. *Ebony* illuminates intraracial race hatred while reiterating the opinion that white supremacist-inspired beliefs about color counter those democratic principles that the US promotes to an international audience. In a photo-editorial boldly titled "Negroes Who Hate Negroes," one writer castigates some black Americans choice to uphold anti-democratic principles through their internalized race hatred and persistent colorism. The writer states:

> The Negro has been taking vituperative comment from whites and telling it back to himself so long that he often believes that it must be true what they say about Negroes. Inasmuch as Negro thinking is almost always determined by white opinion, it is little wonder that many a Negro may have learned to hate other Negroes…. Negroes who openly display their hate for other Negroes are not only traitors to their own race but also to every concept of democratic Americanism. (112)

Two critiques occur in this passage: First, the writer denounces blacks who hate other blacks based on white supremacist inspired beliefs about African-descended peoples. Second, the writer subversively condemns "democratic Americanism" by drawing attention to the fact that some black Americans who aspire to Americanism do so by inflicting hatred towards members of their own race. "Vituperative comment from whites," the color and "race" that society has made synonymous with American identity without refute has informed the charged black person that race hatred proves the unequivocal method through which to become "American." Therefore, the writer challenges the very model of "democratic Americanism" that some black Americans aspire to enter. Mullen notes that "the social unrest of wartime blacks' internal subversions threatened to destabilize not only the war effort but also the racist social order upon which its militant nationalist psychology depended" (939). In this sense, *Ebony* magazine serves as a forum in which a broad, multi-racial readership participates in the discourse on intraracial and interracial color lines and its potential ability to foster or dismantle an imagined nationality removed from concerns over race and color when internalized racism persists.

While addressing internalized racism and what it reveals about American identity, *Ebony* also addresses anxieties within whiteness and its ties to conceptualizations of the imagined community, or nation. On the one hand, *Ebony* examines white Americans' fears with possessing African ancestry and "white" appearing black Americans' anxieties over utilizing their fairer complexions to enter into mainstream society via the color contract or to maintain allegiance to black race pride. Roi Ottley writes in an article published in the March 1948 issue that during World War I, officials had to temporarily abandon the race question on forms since many southern whites literally committed suicide upon discovery that they had African ancestors (23).[39] He also mentions that "between 5,000,000 and 8,000,000 persons in the United States, supposed to be white, actually possess a determinable part of Negro blood" with a sizeable amount who pass for white (23). On the other hand, *Ebony* articles recurrently feature "white" appearing bodies speaking out against race hatred in an effort to promote a renewed interest in black race pride and to disrupt both the interracial and intraracial color lines while offering readers a glimpse into an imagined community where society temporarily defeats pseudoscientific racism. Thus, these voices echo approaches to color and race first introduced by Griggs's Erma. Rooks suggests that black periodicals offered readers a cathartic space for racial imagination stating that "Magazines contextualized, portrayed, communicated, [and I would add, challenged] societal expectations" to audiences and invited individuals to "rethink what [they were sure they knew] about relationships between African Americans in different regions" (4). The intraracial color line becomes a point of contention through which *Ebony* depicts the discourse concerned with the intraracial color line from various historical periods and geographic regions.[40]

To counter the absent photographic representation of black life in white-authored magazines and to inspire a sense of race pride in the face of racial discrimination at home and internationally, Johnson pledged to visually portray *all* aspects of black life, including all phenotypic manifestations of blackness that remained restricted by the color lines in other venues. According to Korey Bowers-Brown, photo-magazines during the postwar period changed American journalism by providing images for audiences to interpret the world. Black publications could not yet afford to print high-quality images, and white publications did not include a variety of black subjects, if any at all (34). *Ebony*, on the other hand, provided quality, thought-provoking, diverse images and content. According to Jason Chambers, the initial print of 25,000 copies sold out within the first couple hours. Within a few weeks, circulation reached 100,000 per issue (58). While many white-published photo-magazines experienced declines in their circulations and advertising, notably with the advent of television, *Ebony* magazine's profits and distribution continued to expand exponentially possibly due to its nuanced visual representations and interrogations of "the visual" in its pages. Major corporations took note of *Ebony's* popularity among black readers and drew on their innovation to target a black consumer market. In 1947, only two years after the first issue, Johnson secured an advertising deal with Zenith Radio, a major white-owned corporation. Many other major corporations followed and contracted with *Ebony* to increase profits from black consumers, including Libby's Canned Meats, Florsheim Shoes, Frederick's of Hollywood, and Dr. Scholl's. These accounts demonstrated corporations' beliefs in the magazine's appeal to black audiences with enough income to purchase leisure reading, and potentially, various other goods and services.[41] Black-owned corporations also

advertised in the magazine, including the famous Madam C.J. Walker Cosmetics. Small mail-order businesses printed ads promising aspiring entrepreneurs the opportunity to earn cash from the comfort of their homes. Securing a vast amount of advertising contracts, particularly those from major corporations, proved a substantial business achievement for any black-owned publishing company when white corporations usually refused to advertise in black publications.

Advertising contracts directly correlate with how Johnson and his editors chose to address the race and color question in that white companies appreciated the fact that *Ebony* magazine was not tied to an institutional mission such as the NAACP's *Crisis* or the Urban League's *Opportunity*. Appealing to what Mullen calls, "popular front" politics, *Ebony* reassured white corporations that "it was not a 'protest organ' but a magazine that provided 'positive, informative, and entertaining' coverage of black life" (Bowers-Brown 60). *Ebony* articulated through its seemingly politically neutral position that America, and in particular its capitalist economy, valued black Americans.

Because many black fiction and prose writers endorsed the idea that black Americans lived better lives in Europe, Johnson felt the need to make white companies and readers feel that *Ebony* stood for black Americans *in* the US. The challenge was just to make white readers and corporations feel comfortable enough to enter into conversation with the black public in order to create a sense of community between the races. No radical or seemingly anti-white ideals would appear in his magazine's pages. In fact, several articles promote the idea that the US remained the best place for black Americans despite its persistent racism and segregation. One article estimates the influx of African descended peoples immigrating to Britain during the postwar years to be

around 50,000. However, the article explicitly depicts race relations in Britain in a negative light to boost a progressive image of the US racial climate. The article reads, "the English Negro is far worse off than the American, because he is confined in the main to low-paid dock and ship work and as rag pickers… Since the war the job picture has brightened a little—but English Negroes are still far behind American Negroes" ("Britain Faces the Race Problem" 92-93). Consequently, another article explicitly places the blame on dismal race relations in the US on white Americans rather than on the national identity stating:

> It is about time white folks got to know their Negro brethren a little better. The facts are that no segment of the American population is more loyal to his country than the Negro. *Ebony* honestly feels that it is reflecting the heart-felt love of country of most Negroes when it speaks of the loyalty of the race to America [and] it is precisely because America is great that Negroes will continue to uphold, protect and fight for their native land as unceasingly as they battle to correct the flaws in the democracy they cherish. ("Where Ebony Stands Today" 94)

Although this article does not engage with the tropes of racial passing and colorism, it does illustrate *Ebony* magazine's commitment to asserting black Americans' right to the US and to an American identity despite racialized allotments of US citizenship. The writer motions towards an issue with white Americans rather than with democratic Americanism, opposite of what an earlier article suggests. The writer inflects the "one-drop rule" here to draw readers' attention to issues of race and the right to the nation state via shared culture, language, and consequently, heritage given the falsehoods

of racial "purity." *Ebony* magazine's patriotic endorsement of the US, yet its subversive criticism of the dominant culture, garnered its status as the first black publication to earn substantial revenues from its advertising schedule. Johnson secured creative control over the magazine's content enabling him to publish multifaceted representations of black life that maintained an air of patriotism and signified complexly on the race question. For instance, the editors' signifyin' on colorism reveals a shared responsibility between *Ebony* magazine's black and white audiences for the black-white color line's detrimental effects within black communities. When a white reader responds negatively to reports about colorism within black communities, then they inadvertently voice anger against the white spectrum of the black-white racial binary. Upholding Johnson's "middle of the track" approach towards the race problem, one writer holds black and white audiences accountable. The article reads:

> For some reason these self-appointed crusaders for racial justice expect victims of prejudice to be above prejudice, feel that he who is hated should not hate himself. Why they see color and caste discrimination rampant among Negroes, they are not only surprised and pained but highly indignant… Basically what distresses [white-owned presses] is that Negroes have seen fit to follow the racial attitudes and dictates of the majority of the U.S…. They seem disturbed to find [some blacks] a pretty good imitation of the white man in every respect so much that many Negroes take over the very opinions and attitudes of the white majority. ("Do Negroes Hate Themselves?" 52)[42]

Here, the article offers the unimaginable situation where a black person can perfect whiteness so well, ideologically and physically, that she or he can also learn to hate other blacks. This passage challenges colorism not only as an intraracial divide but urges white readers to consider race as performance rather than inherent difference. The writer appeals to sympathizers with blacks by flipping the lens onto internalized race hatred so that readers can see just how embedded white supremacist thought influences interracial and intraracial relations. People learn color and racial attitudes, and therefore, *Ebony* turns towards the "white" appearing body–a body associated with intraracial hatred in this context–to examine racialized ideas' learnability. As a result, black and white readers find themselves enlightened not only on race's arbitrary nature, but on the shared responsibility in upholding the white-supremacist color line.

Ebony supplemented its text with more scathing photo-editorials to add more direct commentary on color, race, and society's reliance on visible assumed-ancestry. For example, in the September 1957 article "Mystery People of Baltimore," *Ebony* includes pictures alongside its textual description of the city's African-Native American community as "neither red nor white nor black" but as a "strange 'Indian' tribe [that] lives in [a] world of its own" (70-71). The article includes several pictures that reflect African-Native Americans participating in everyday activities such as playing basketball, relaxing at the park, or even going on dates with Italians and other European-descended persons. However, the article carefully makes it clear that this community of Croatan, Lumbee, and Cherokee peoples do not associate with Baltimore's black community for fear of being assigned a black identity, thus they fear loss over their sovereignty with regard to how to socialize. One caption to a photo titled "Brown-skinned," reads "Susie

Locklear finds life in Baltimore to be a trifle lonely. Back home in Pembroke [N.C.] she dated [an] Indian boy… Croatans say they are descendants of early white N.C. settlers who married Indians" (71). Here, Locklear bases her racial identity on her white ancestry in North Carolina as a barrier from being associated with blacks in Baltimore. In another caption, Jackie Smith remarks, "I don't know exactly what I am, but I have some Indian in me" (70). The caption then goes on the describe how Smith does not find trouble dating simply because of her fair complexion.

Several articles address racial passing, colorism, and the "one-drop rule" in a similar way to "Mystery People of Baltimore" in their efforts to examine racial assumptions based on appearance and community formation within larger black communities and, of course, the nation. Only eleven months into the magazine's existence the article "Charleston Snobbish Negro Aristocracy 'Passing' Out of Existence" uses the passing trope to condemn colorism within a historically mixed-heritage community that maintained its class and color exclusivity well into the twentieth century. The 1946 article describes the historically elite "mulatto" community as "passing" into a community of "civic-minded folk… ignoring skin shades to take their place in the upsurge of all Negro America" (17). Within the writer's word choice "passing," they simultaneously associate "passing" with mixed heritage. However, "passing" appears as a word play where comments on passing becoming passé for those who possess the necessary complexions usually required to move into an economic and social position historically protected for whites. The writer suggests that more "mulattoes" find solace in joining arms with Charleston's visibly black community rather than passing into "white" existence. *Ebony* acknowledges passing and colorism's continued practice within black

communities but demonstrates that this practice and ideology no longer offered the best option for personal success as they might have in earlier years. An individual's choice to utilize their racial ambiguity to align with individuals usually viewed as phenotypically "different" interrogates the value in whiteness for those of African descent. In the 1951 photo editorial "I'm Through with Passing," an anonymous woman recalls her 12 years living as a white woman by way of accidental passing on a white employer's account. The woman reveals that she got a secretarial position by listing her race as "American" rather than white (23). Here, the woman signifies on "American" to gesture towards the nation's attempt to assert a unified, international identity in the face of communism and other threats to American democracy. By passing via nationality, the woman interrogates whiteness's associations with an assumed color identity tied to ideas about nationality and citizenship. Another article details a woman who simply let her potential employer fill in blank that asked about race stating, "many light-skinned Negroes who pass on the jobs did so at first without thinking about it. They applied for work and when no one asked about their race, they said nothing accepted the job as a matter of course" ("White By Day" 34). The "safety net" that *Ebony* disrupts for its white reader is their ignorance regarding the depths of the color issue as it pertains to race. While on the one hand, these articles incite race pride for the black reader by featuring "white" appearing bodies that refuse to pass (at least on their own account), on the other hand, white readers gain insight into the how the color line manifests within black communities and how racists find themselves dumbfounded by the value they place on race visibility.

For black readers, however, the "white" appearing black body highlights how much racial visibility is embedded within the American national identity. Thus, an

examination of the tropes associated with the politics of racial visibility influence black readers to consider how much, if any, value they will place on color as blacks continue to achieve inclusivity within the national sphere. *Ebony* magazine's inclusion of pictures, investigative reporting, and confessional pieces offers a space for interracial and intraracial cultural explication. Stange argues that "*Ebony* editors deployed photography that would not only uphold familiar journalistic objectivity but also detach images of African Americans from their pervasive association with equally familiar cultural representations as spectacular and/or degraded Others and victims" (208). She continues that these images – and I would add, these nuanced textual and visual representations of racial passing, colorism, and the "one-drop rule," – "'rebel against' sanctioned representational conventions [of] Eurocentric [aesthetics] thus… [helping] to draw its 'wider circle' of readers especially because the[offering readers] graphic features connected the magazine's representation of current African-American life to older, valued family practices" (214). Social value in whiteness and light complexions translates into those "older, valued family practices" in that colorism, as branch of racism and white-supremacist color hierarchy, thrived throughout many black communities. *Ebony* took on the intraracial color line to urge blacks to stop hating each other based on skin complexion in order to enjoy the freedoms they were slowly but surely gaining.

Photographs of racially ambiguous persons aimed at challenging the politics of racial visibility moves towards a more racially inclusive representation, rather than a monolithic representation of the same colorist opinions that whiteness or lightness holds more value. In addition to printing photographs, *Ebony* also reprinted letters from its audience allowing readers to have a hand in directing the discourse on the insistent color

lines. Beetham attributes the commercial magazine genre's distinct "open" form to its appreciation of reader response in that it "refuses the closed ending and allows for the possibility of alternative meanings, is associated with the potentially disruptive, the creative, [which] can be read as a sign of its strength as a potentially creative form for its readers" (98). *Ebony* shows race and color as additional identities through which "the reader is addressed as an individual but is positioned as a member of certain overlapping sets of social groups [including] class, gender, region, age, political persuasion, religious denomination" (99).

The "Letters to the Editor" section consistently highlights readers' responses to the articles on racial passing and colorism and represent the magazine's first steps at ridding society of a monolithic representation of black experiences for an expansive and global audience. Additionally, this space offers readers the chance to collectively share and develop strategies towards building a post-racist society. Take, for instance, R. Russo's plea in her letter to the editor. Russo voices concerns with having a presumed privilege of complexion—whiteness or lightness—yet she still experiences color prejudice from both spectrums of the color line. She writes to the editor ending on a plea for guidance:

> My mother was a Negro and my father an Italian. I, myself, am not dark. In fact, no one can suspect I have Negro blood in me, but I don't want to deny it. Yet, if I don't, I can't make a living. You see I find it hard to get along with both races. If I am with whites, they resent me because of my mother. The Negroes don't always accept me as one of them… If a Negro asks me to dance and I accept, he immediately thinks I am no good, just

> ‘white trash’ out for a thrill. What am I supposed to do? Go around with a sign on me saying I’m half white and half black? I wish someone could help me… Please won’t you tell me what to do? (6)

Russo’s letter acts as a rhetorical device to directly engage readers–black and white–with questions concerning racism and colorism. The letter solicits a rely and receives several through the magazine’s editorial features that address the illogical nature behind discrimination based on presumed racial identities. Russo’s request for a solution to her problem allows the editors to establish that changes can occur but only through the reader. In so many ways, the editors pick up on Tourgée’s writing style to inspire the reader to enact social change by providing readers with a thought-experiment to do so. Russo’s letter suggests that she sees *Ebony* as a community to which see can seek guidance on her identity crisis. Oskar Heim, presumably a white reader, writes to *Ebony* thanking its editor and staff for their multifaceted representations of black life stating, “I have been reading your extremely interesting magazine for some time. As a result, I have gained a better insight into the various aspects of life of colored people” (9). These letters signal to the understated politics of racial visibility, as well as the generally diverse representations of black life removed from disgraceful imagery. Readers like Russo and Heim express their support for content not just on the race problem, but more specifically on racial passing, colorism, or with concerns over ancestry to determine race debunking a monolithic black experience with racial visibility and the black-white color line. In another example, William Porter of Washington D.C., presumably a black reader, comments on the aforementioned article “Negroes Who Hate Negroes”: “I want to add special praise for [this editorial]. It is one which I wish every colored person in America

could read" (7). Here, Porter offers the simple observation that intraracial hatred remains a taboo topic for black communities, and so, intraracial race hatred thrives alongside racism. Porter appreciates the magazine's epistemological qualities in complexifying and deconstructing the white supremacist color line and feels that all blacks should read the article as they question their relation to the nation. On the contrary, Willfred Callender expresses outrage with the September 1959 article "I Never Want to Pass" accusing *Ebony* of having a "disgusting preoccupation" with passing, and exclaiming that "Not only do these articles betray gross misconceptions about race, but they unwittingly give sanction to the distorted and discredited preachments of the southern radical bigots" (14).

In so many words, Callender calls *Ebony* magazine's interrogation of whiteness and "white" appearing bodies in alignment with southern racists. Callender misses the magazine's signifyin' qualities and instead reads these articles as reinscribing the very "discredited preachments of the southern radical bigots." As with any rhetorical situation, audiences and their expectations vary according to a particular setting. Thus, Callender's comments offer a glimpse into the potential failures that come with any rhetorical choice. The passing figure or the perpetuator of colorism could potentially be misconstrued as being in agreement with underlying white supremacist sentiment rather than in opposition to such views.

Every *Ebony* article and letter to the editor that responds to the magazine's invocation of racial passing, colorism, or the "one-drop rule" works to create solidarity for the magazine's audience with regard to interracial and intraracial relations, as well as with regard to a revised American identity. The articles first introduce these topics in a sociological sense; they then signify on the trope's cultural context to make a larger

social argument in an effort to come to a collective agreement that all readers will reject the politics of racial visibility and embody race and nation pride removed from comparisons to or praise for whiteness. For instance, *Ebony* highlights a number of social clubs created by husbands and wives in interracial marriages that worked to foster a sense of community outside of the color line's constraints. These clubs included the Manassas Society, Club Miscegenation, and the Penguin Club. One Club Miscegenation member, Clarence Tumlin remarks, "We've got to teach our children Negro history and white history and Mexican history. They've got to be proud of every part of their background" ("Mixed Couples" 52). *Ebony* magazine's popular media quality makes it suitable to build alliances across the color line and as a method in which black communities persuade black and white audiences on topics concerning race visibility.

Most scholars who study *Ebony* magazine from any period have undertaken a non-literary approach and have tended to focus on the various ways the magazine outlines race pride. Scholars in communication studies and psychologists have allotted immense attention to the magazine's frequent advertisements for skin whiteners and hair straightening treatments to trace trends in black cultural pride. For example, Michael Leslie analyzes advertisements included in *Ebony* over three decades to show more variety in products and models' appearances feature in the magazine over time. However, by the late 1980s, *Ebony* started to photograph more fair-complexioned models over darker-complexioned models (426). In 1972, A. George Gitter, Stephen M. O'Connell, and David Mostofsky found that *Ebony* advertisements from 1945 to 1966 progressively feature more male models with "negroid features" but not so for female models (547). Both studies analyze the fair-complexioned female figure that stands in for society's

gendered interest in racialized beauty. None of these scholars address this figure as a literary trope–one that repeatedly appears in the magazine as a signifying figure on issues of color and race–and rather analyze it in more sociological contexts.

More recently historians have examined these same advertisements to make arguments about class aspirations and their connections to black race pride.[43] For instance, Jason Chambers argues that despite the standard assumption that commercial periodicals offer readers a guidebook of particular lifestyles and beliefs, "Ebony politicized consumption as a lifestyle activity among African Americans… and urged African Americans to not only display their consumer potential, but also to press for equality as consumers" (56). While humanities scholars and social scientists appreciate the cultural value present within *Ebony* magazine's pages, not much attention has been given to the magazine's use of literary racial passing, colorism, and the "one-drop rule" in their reassessment of the changing visibility that denotes cultural difference during America's evolving racial climate via legal desegregation. Literary analyses can decipher the value in *Ebony* magazine's content that forefronts racial passing and colorism and illuminate intra/interracial discourses interrogating whiteness in popular media.

In *Ebony* magazine's 1946 article "Skin Wizard of the World," an anonymous writer describes Doctor Theodore Kenneth Lawless, a Southside Chicago dermatologist who treated both black and white patients, as *the* ground-breaking "race man." Despite all of the racist stereotypes attached to Lawless's intellectual capabilities, he has mastered dermatology—the science of skin, hair, and nails, the visible markers on which white supremacist notions of culture embedded in race rely. "Skin to the racists," reads the article, "is the membrane that tells what's in the brain, what room you rent, what

profession you enter, what seat you take in a train [and] Yet the world's foremost expert on the subject of skin is a man whose membrane is black" ("Skin Wizard" 7). *Ebony* considers the irony in whites seeking Dr. Lawless's services, commenting, "the ex-Talladega College half-back, now a world-famed… figure in the field of dermatology, patches and repairs the diseased derma of thousands of white patients who have found no doctor of their own race capable of healing them… Yet according to all the rules and theories of the 'American way' of life, Dr. Lawless should be inferior because he has one-half gram of melanin in his skin tissues handed down by [his] mother" (7). In this passage, the writer embeds commentary on the stereotype of the black male's superior athletic ability, society's belief in the "one-drop rule," and the antebellum practice that an enslaved child's social status follows that of her or his mother. These ideas work towards sustaining white supremacy on the basis of physical appearance and supposed ancestry. Nevertheless, the article's main subject, Dr. Lawless, surpasses these stereotypes and proves himself the expert on treating skin that belongs to the very individuals who typically uphold anti-black premises.

"Skin Wizard of the World" is one of numerous articles printed in *Ebony* magazine that illustrate its treatment of racial passing, colorism, and the "one-drop rule" as literary tropes that interrogate color as it pertains to "white" appearing bodies. The article does not depict Lawless as a passing figure; although, it is visually apparent that Lawless could have chosen to pass. On the contrary, the writer relies upon Lawless's racial ambiguity and the fact that he is a dermatologist who services clients across the black-white color line to bring readers attention to the politics of racial visibility. Lawless, a "white" appearing man, medically treats the prominent organ of the color line:

skin. *Ebony* turns readers' attention from the "scientific" interrogation of whiteness to more practical yet subversive interrogations in its July 1952 photo-editorial entitled "White No More." In the editorial, an anonymous staff writer interprets the new fad in tanning that George Schuyler references in his 1931 novel *Black No More*.[44] The novel follows the story of Max Disher, a black Harlemite frustrated with racial discrimination in the North and infatuated with the white Helen Givens. Max undergoes a scientific skin-whitening process, developed by the visibly black Dr. Junius Crookman, in pursuit of racial equality and his newfound love interest. The procedure gains extreme popularity, and Dr. Crookman turns his patients whiter than "real" white people. What gives this later iteration of the color line its literary quality is that the writer does not explicitly make this argument. Tanning, a practice that someone of any financial means with access to the outdoors can achieve, invites *Ebony* readers to question skin complexion's importance to race identity and cultural affiliation with regard to European-descended individuals; those of African ancestry are no longer centralized in the race and color debate. The editorial reads: "this sudden passion for pigment not only has the Negro bewitched and the racists bothered, but it is most bewildering to innocents of both sides who are caught between the changing tides of color" (80). One interviewee complains about whites who seasonally cross the color line stating, "the white folks [on vacation in Miami] were so sunburned I didn't know when to be friendly and when to be afraid" (80). Through referencing Dr. Lawless in the 1946 article, *Ebony* depicts a "real-life" Dr. Crookman who uses science to deconstruct the white supremacist color line.

Ebony magazine repeatedly publishes articles dealing with racial visibility to gesture towards signification. The magazine's vast platform allowed it to disrupt

whiteness and the politics of racial visibly through the imagery of fairer complexions while speaking to black, white, and international audiences. Since popular media during this period carried massive reach and tended to perpetuate racist imagery through the "mammy" and "tragic mulatta" tropes in print and film, then widely-read commercial magazines matched the potential to disrupt whiteness and the color lines, or at least begin the conversation for their audiences to do so. *Ebony* magazine asserts, "we see the function of this page mainly as a prodding iron to make people think—and we mean white as well as colored people" ("Where *Ebony* Stands Today" 94). Pushing audiences to think about the color lines requires readers to consider the frequency of certain articles, the imagery and voices invoked, and the magazine's thematic use of the color lines as stand-ins for larger social issues. *Ebony* magazine "signifies" on the color lines in its critique of the nation's fixation with the threat of interracial relationships to white supremacy. As a popular media source, *Ebony* allows readers to see the color line's effects through "white" appearing bodies so that readers can truly witness the damaging effects of the color lines and work to dismantle race discrimination and color prejudice in their everyday lives and in their American identities.

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[1] Du Bois often gestures towards the "problem of the color line" in his earlier works such as his 1897 text *Conservation of the Races*. However, most scholars reference his *Souls of Black Folk* due to its widespread reception and immense popularity in American letters.

[2] I use the term African-Native American to refer to mixed-heritage individuals of African American and Native American descent, following Gabrielle Tayac's suggestion that the term most accurately "represent[s] the lived realities" of those individuals (16).

[3] An aspirational moment in US history, Reconstruction served to peacefully reenter the eleven states that seceded from the Union during the Civil War with the help of federal troops throughout the South. From 1865 to 1877, the federal government passed the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments which, respectively, ended slavery, granted citizenship and equal protection of the law to those born in the US, and guaranteed citizens the right to vote regardless of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

[4] Literary representations of stereotyped black Americans carefully describe these figures' appearances in an effort to unmistakably denote an Uncle-Remus type, mammy-type, and etc. However, in minstrel shows, the practice of burning cork and rubbing it on actors' faces established a uniform complexion to denote blackness known as "blackface." According to Eric Lott, blackface masking "offered a way to play with the fears of the threatening black male while having symbolic control over [him]" (13). As minstrel shows expanded their criticisms of not only black Americans of also other races and ethnicities, white actors continued to use blackface to symbolize black types. By transporting all negative images and threats to black skin, whites set blacks apart from society by giving blacks mentally inferior and immature traits.

[5] Cooper's *A Voice from the South* argues that uplifting the status of black women would ultimately uplift the race as a whole. The book also spoke on race as a concept, racial discrimination, women's rights, the socioeconomic status of the black family, and critiques of the Episcopal church. Her views on the importance of uplifting black women in order to uplift the entire black race were shared among many prominent black male leaders including Martin Delany.

[6] According to Karcher, Anderson responded critically to traditional uplift ideology, or the idea that upper-class blacks must be the example to lower-class blacks by adopting class distinctions through material wealth and morality to earn the respect of whites. Anderson places the race problem's blame upon white ignorance: 'My theory is that while each Afro-American should do what he can to uplift his fellows, the whites likewise need educating on certain lines, and…this work… should fall on those best fitted by circumstances to do it' (31). Upper-class blacks should be educating both the rest of their race as well as whites under this view.

[7] Mary P. Ryan offers an in-depth study of the connections between domesticity, capitalism, and the development of the middle-class family in Oneida County, New York, from 1790-1865 in her book *Cradle of the Middle Class.* Her text inspires my phrasing here. Griggs is obviously concerned with these connections as well with regard to the black middle-class family given his focus on employment in the novel's plot. For more on the economic stakes described in *Overshadowed* see Andreá Williams's chapter in *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*.

[8] Several nineteenth-century scholars referred to biracial people as a "new race" capable of solving interracial tensions by eliminating the color line between the two races.[8] In the late-eighteenth century, Thomas Jefferson suggested in *Notes on the State of Virginia,* all be it in a derogatory way, that white and black intermixture benefitted enslaved blacks. He writes, "The improvement of the [African-descended peoples] in body and mind, in the first instance of their mixture with the whites, has been observed by everyone, and proves that their inferiority is not the effect merely of their condition of life." See Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Philadelphia: Prichard and Hall, 1788), 151.

[9] See Frank Webb's *The Garies and Their Friends*, Chesnutt's "A Matter of Principle," or *The Marrow of Tradition* as examples.

[10] In 1897, Du Bois used the language of science to view the resolution to racism as a return to a collective black history and identity. In *The Conservation of the Races*, Du Bois argues that race is inevitable based on groups' different histories and cannot be dismantled. He writes, "We must acknowledge that human beings are divided into races; [H]e who ignores or seeks to override the race idea in human history ignores and overrides the central thought of all history" (38-9). The different experiences of black Americans cannot result in an American race simply because of their experiences in enslavement based on a color line; enslaved blacks had different experiences than white masters and so did their descendants in the years after emancipation. Differences that especially matter concerning race are spiritual and psychical. See *The Oxford W.E.B. Du Bois Reader,* ed. Eric Sundquist (New York: Oxford UP, 1996).

[11] See D. Channsin Berry and Bill Duke's 2011 documentary *Dark Girls* and 2015 follow up *Light Girls*.

[12] The ability to swoon white men is also a characteristic of the "tragic mulatto" that Griggs uses.

[13] To say "had an affair" only points towards the sexual violence that enslaved black women experienced at the hands of white men who enslaved black bodies.

[14] Several canonical nineteenth-century American works include integral depictions of plaçage in their plots. These include several short stories in George Washington Cable's 1880 collection *The Grandissimes, A story of Creole Life* and William Faulkner's 1936 novel *Absalom, Absalom!*

[15] See Robert Levine's essay "Edward Everett Hale's and Sutton E. Griggs's Men without a Country" in *Jim Crow, Literature, and the legacy of Sutton E. Griggs* for a comparative reading of Hale and Griggs and turning away from the nation as an act of patriotism.

[16] For more on Griggs's Science of Collective Efficiency see Sutton Griggs, *Guide to Racial Greatness* (Memphis: National Public Welfare League, 1923) *and* Finnie Coleman, "Social Darwinism, American Imperialism, and the Origins of the Science of Collective Efficiency in Sutton E. Griggs's *Unfettered*" in *Jim Crow Literature and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 2013).

[17] Brent Hayes Edwards comments on George Shepperson's 1962 distinction between capital P "Pan-Africanism" and lower-case P "pan-africanism," stating that the two are essential to understanding diaspora (49). He quotes Shepperson: "'Pan-Africanism' (capital P) indicates the history of the transnational movement itself, the limited parameters of the Pan-African Congress from 1900 on'" (50). However, small letter "pan-africanism" includes many episodic movements that did not reach the masses. "For Shepperson, the 'cultural element often predominates' in this diverse grouping of pan-African movements, but these formations are not at all limited to this focus (this is not a split between 'political' and 'cultural' versions of Pan-Africanism, as it sometimes has been misread). Shepperson considers the small 'p' term to cover both aesthetic evocations and political institutions, such as church organizations, academic conferences and associations, lobbying groups, and various radical pressure groups" (50).

[18] According to M. Kaye Tatro, the Burke Act "withheld citizenship until the end of the twenty-five-year trust period or until the allottee received a fee patent from the secretary

of the interior" ("Burke Act"). See the Oklahoma Historical Society's *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture* for more details concerning the Burke Act and other laws geared towards policing Indigenous communities.

[19] See Circe Sturm's chapter "Blood Politics, Racial Classification, and Cherokee National Identity" in *Confounding the Color Line*, Susan A. Miller's article "Seminoles and Africans under Seminole Law: Sources and Discourses of Tribal Sovereignty and 'Black Indian' Entitlement," and Arica L. Coleman's book *That the Blood Stay Pure: African Americans, Native Americans, and the Predicament of Race and Identity in Virginia* for differing opinions on anti-blackness within Indigenous nations.

[20] According to Evan Pritchard, the Montauk played an essential role in establishing New England's whaling industry. He notes that Sag Harbor's productivity numbered second only to New Bedford, Massachusetts, and that "in the winter of 1845-1846, Sag Harbor weighed in over a million dollars in whale oil and bone from a fleet of sixty big ships manned by Shinnecock, Montauk, Nissequogues, and Wampanoags" (324).

[21] Today Brown University calls the collection the Harris Collection of American Poetry and Plays.

[22] See "Pretty Bride Songbird of Prominence: Reuben B. Reeves Wins Magdalene De Acklin" in the *Chicago Defender*, 28 November 1931, p. 6, "Economic Crisis Pictured in Walter White's Speech" in the *New York Amsterdam News*, 23 December 1931, p. 9, and an Undated Program schedule in the Bush-Banks Papers housed at the Amistad Research Center.

[23] Guillaume's edited collection of Bush-Banks's works offers a detailed biography, and Bennis Marie Blue studies her works in her dissertation.

[24] Bush-Banks arranged three poems, all dealing with African America and cross-racial collaboration, in a neat series in *Original Poems*. "A Hero of San Juan Hill" appears first in the series followed by "Crispus Attucks" and "Honor's Appeal to Justice." "Crispus Attucks" depicts Attucks's heroism during the Revolutionary War while questioning why heroic acts must always occur upon the backs of black bodies.

[25] Du Bois also maintained correspondence with F.A. McKenzie, founder of the Society of American Indians (SAI), and Joseph F. Gould, a white associate member.

[26] Only Act 1, Scene 1, and Act 3, Scene 2 still exist in print.

[27] "Colored" could generally mean black or a mixture of African and Native American ancestry during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

[28] Bush-Banks anticipates the subtitle of DuBois's famous magazine, the *Crisis: A Record for the Darker Races*.

[29] Scholars have written about the controversy surrounding calling this text an autobiography since it is a fictionalized account. For more on the controversy surrounding classifying this text as an "autobiography", see Karina Vernon's 2011 article "The First Black Prairie Novel: Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance's *Autobiography* and the Repression of Prairie Blackness."

[30] See "Johnstown, PA" in the *Pittsburg Courier (City Edition)*, 16 March 1912, p. 2 and "Unique Social Gathering" in the *Chicago Defender*, 12 July 1919, p. 15.

[31] I draw from the title of Tayac's edited collection *IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas* in the title of my fourth chapter to highlight Ebony magazine's influence on visual culture with regard to racial ambiguity.

[32] *Ebony* published a letter from Schuyler and quoted him in an article once, both on the topic of interracial marriage. See "Letters to the Editor," February 1953 and "Why I Married Julie," by Harry Belafonte in the July 1957 issue. Schuyler's biracial daughter, Philippa Schuyler, was a regular feature in the magazine for her artistic talents during the 1940s and 1950s. However, contrary to the message against passing that was frequently transcribed in *Ebony*, Philippa eventually chose to pass. According to Danzy Senna's introduction to the 2018 Penguin edition of *Black No More*, Philippa passed "as an Iberian-American named Filipa Montera" and lived abroad for the majority of her life (xvii). She died in a helicopter crash in 1967 attempting to help orphans escape from Vietnam (xvii).

[33] The film industry released approximately eleven films (one of which was produced in Britain) from 1930 to 1959 specifically dealing with racial passing and colorism. This total includes adaptations of Fannie Hurst's 1933 novel *Imitation of Life* in 1934 and 1959. In 1936, Universal Studios put the subtle passing narrative from Edna Ferber's 1926 novel turned 1927 Broadway musical *Show Boat* on the big screen; in 1951, MGM remade the film.

[34] White chronicled the Johnstons' experiences in his 1948 book *Lost Boundaries* which was eventually made into a film. The film received critical acclaim and won the 1949 Cannes Film Festival for Best Screenplay.

[35] Wald places focus on *Ebony* a being "Black-owned" rather than "Black-authored" magazine. John H. Johnson, founder of *Ebony* hired an interracial staff of editors, photographers, and writers at various periods. However, it is impossible to tell which articles were written or which photographs were taken by black or white authors since

their names were not always included. Ben Burns served as the founding editor for both the *Negro Digest* and *Ebony* magazine and writes about his experience in *Nitty Gritty: A White Editor in Black Journalism*. See Wald n7.

[36] Many scholars consider *Ebony* magazine's vast commercial success an anomaly given many other African American newspapers experienced a decline in subscriptions and printing during the postwar period.

[37] Of course, some of these countries include places where the US had international interests.

[38] Megan Williams argues that "the white press used the image of [Lena Horne, a famed and fair-complexioned black woman singer and actress] to present the image of an interracial America, true to its democratic values" (13).

[39] Roi Ottley was one of the most widely published American journalists and radio correspondents of the period having published in national and international venues such as the *Amsterdam News, Pittsburg Courier*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Liberty*, *PM,* and aired on *CBS* and *BBC* radio. He also published several books including his 1943 text *New World A-Coming: Inside Black America* which won a Peabody Award.

[40] One of *Ebony's* earliest articles from 1946 focuses on the intraracial color line present in the historically mixed-heritage Charleston, S.C., while a later 1957 article focuses on the mixed-blood Native American communities in Baltimore, M.D.

[41] For more on white advertisers using *Ebony* magazine to reach black consumers see Paul M. Hirsch's "An Analysis of *Ebony:* The Magazine and Its Readers" and Jason Chambers's "Presenting the Black Middle Class: John H. Johnson and *Ebony* Magazine,

1945-1974" in *Historicizing Lifestyle: Mediating Taste, Consumption and Identity from the 1900s to 1970s.*

[42] For more on colorism as a literary trope see "Are Mulattoes Ruling the Race," *Ebony,* October 1954.

[43] See the recent dissertations: James West's 2015 dissertation entitled "*Ebony* Magazine, Lerone Bennett, Jr., and the Making and Selling of Modern Black History, 1958-1987"and "SOULED OUT: *Ebony* Magazine in and Age of Black Power, 1965-1975," by Korey Bowers-Brown.

[44] In George S. Schuyler's dedication to his 1931 novel *Black No More*, the noted author and cultural critic pokes fun at racist white Americans and their belief in race purity and white supremacy. He dedicates the novel to all white Americans who believe that they can "trace their ancestry back ten generations and confidently assert that there are no black leaves, twigs, limbs or branches on their family trees" (Schuyler). Max eventually works for the Knights of Nordica, a fictional Ku Klux Klan-type organization, and attempts to undermine white supremacy from within. After a series of events, the Knights eventually discover that they too have African ancestry, and suddenly, having a darker complexion is the new way to visually prove one's Caucasian roots. The narrator contends, "those of the upper class began to look around for ways to get darker. It became the fashion for them to spend hours at the seashore basking naked in the sunshine and then to dash back, heavily bronzed… preening themselves in their dusky skins" (178). Readers have delighted in Schuyler's satiric examination of race as culture, racial passing, and the color question for decades. The novel's speculative approach to race identification, unlike the few other novels from this period that deal with this topic,

deeply probes the ideological shift in societal value according to skin complexion that would later inspire the mid-twentieth century "Black is Beautiful" movement.

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