

**BENEVOLENT DESIGN AND THE BELOVED COMMUNITY:
LEGACIES OF TECHNOLOGICAL DISCOURSE, PROGRESS,
SANCTUARY, AND SUPPORT IN AND AROUND
HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES
AND UNIVERSITIES**

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Jason B. Esters
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Examining Committee Members

Eli Goldblatt, Advisory Chair, English

Roland Williams, English

Shannon Walters, English

Marc Lamont Hill, Media Studies & Production

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an interdisciplinary rhetorical project that explores the discourse of race and technology in the African-American experience, particularly at HBCUs. It examines HBCUs as a site that historically and actively embodies the African-American rhetorical tradition, resists American racial animus, and works as a conduit and a corrective for the discourse of race and technology in America. The first argument this dissertation makes is that there has been an ongoing discursive tradition of technology within the institutional framework of HBCUs that long prefigures “the digital divide” debate. These conversations not only envision how best technology can be used, but also how HBCU leaders envisioned an approach to technology in order to accomplish community goals. The second argument that this dissertation attempts to make is that this persistent discourse within HBCUs is infused with an ethos of community well-being and support. I am referring to this notion of support as a “techno-ethos”: something hardwired into the DNA of HBCUs since their inception, and, when ignored, can have disastrous, embarrassing, or counterproductive results. Finally, this dissertation acknowledges the value of applying theories of technological discourse to the study of HBCUs and offers avenues of practical application for the successful use of a techno-ethos of support for HBCUs on a programmatic and institutional level.

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PROLOGUE

I went to my church one weekday evening to attend a bible study being led by a man named Reverend Walter Mitchell. Mitchell was eighty-three years old at the time, and the years had been unusually kind to him. He was a handsome man, whose wrinkles worked more as character lines, and I'm sure no congregant would have placed his age above sixty-five judging him solely by his face, especially while he was sitting down. There is an old adage in the Black community that, "good Black don't crack," and it aptly applied to Mitchell because when he stood, he looked even younger. He had a distinctive stability about him: lean and strong. When Mitchell stood, he stood straight, almost at attention, but without the militaristic tension in his back and shoulders. His shoulders, neck, and face were relaxed, but his chest and torso were taut and at the ready, like a concert baritone. Not surprisingly, he sounded like one. He had a rich, sonorous, leathery voice that was full of time. Time watching and learning and doing and thinking.

Mitchell was both theologian and historian and had dedicated his scholarship to uncovering and preserving the foundations of the traditional Black church. When discussing these Black church beginnings, Mitchell also gave the congregation a brief, but illuminating, primer on history. No one, he said, gives the same version of history or event. History is skewed to the interests and agenda of those writing, or recording that history. History then, he argued, is a matter of perspective. For instance, Carter G. Woodson is considered the "Father of Black History," but he also wrote a history of Black elites. In retrospect, Mitchell's contention was that "you should teach history like you teach out of a family album. The truth of the matter is, we can't just know our

history, we need to own it.” Mitchell challenged all of us in the congregation that night to confront what he called our “inbred shame about our history.” The appeal and charm of individualistic, materialistic culture disappear once we know our destiny, our God-given purpose. He reminded us that it is those with power that determine normalcy. It is power that determines what is acceptable, and it has been African Americans that have been the victims of such power arrangements.

What I remember most from Reverend Mitchell is a story he told of a visit to East Africa. After touring Uganda, he crossed over into Kenya with a group of guides and ministers from Kenya and the United States. One of the Kenyans, an avid musician, a percussionist, began to talk to the group about Kenya’s history of “the talking drum.” He began with preslavery ritualistic beliefs about the drum, that it carried not only messages in its rhythms, but also souls and spirits. He told of how African slave traffickers from other countries were the ones to first reveal to Western slave traders that the drum was not only a musical instrument, but possessed communicative powers in this world and the next. He explained that though these African traffickers knew the power of the drum, they could not decipher the messages or significance of the Kenyan drum. Most drums produce duotones, a low and a high pitch that can be varied; the Kenyan drum produces a third tone, a tritone that enables the drummer to create complex polyphonic syncopations and tones. It was an art, a skill, a feat of technical expertise that was never really snuffed out. “Our drums,” the Kenyan percussionist claimed, “can say anything.” One of the American ministers in the group was a little skeptical and doubted that in the twenty-first century there were still enough people fluent in this “drum cipher” to really be able to say *anything*.

So the percussionist made this offer: The American minister would give him a message to convey by drum to a drummer in another town. Since the group would be visiting a village the next day that was home to a cousin of his, the percussionist would stay behind and, once given a drummer's signal, would convey the American minister's message to his cousin, who would give it back to the minister in front of the entire group. The minister agreed. The next afternoon, when the group made it to the next village on their tour, they were immediately taken to the home of the percussionist's cousin. Once he was told of the arrangements, he smiled a little bit, got his drum, and asked the minister for the message. The minister smiled a little and asked the man to walk outside for a moment. In front of a room full of witnesses, he pulled out a small, black, crank-operated radio from his bag, went to the back of the man's house, and placed the radio on a chair. He then took his bag and placed it at the front door. *Surely*, he must have thought, *it's going to be tough to convey the words transistor radio by drum*. He then asked the man to come back inside and contact his cousin for the message. The percussionist's cousin began to play a very short syncopation, like a jazzy S.O.S. All of a sudden, the beat was picked up by other drummers and echoed through the distance. And in short order, frenetic series of drum beats, rhythm and life came back to the group. After about three minutes, the percussionist's cousin looks around, goes to the back of his house, rummages about, finds the radio, shows it to the group, and puts it in the bag. The American minister, bewildered, exclaims, "That's exactly what I told your cousin to tell you to do! Did he just tell you 'find the radio and put it in the bag'?"

The percussionist's cousin said, "Well, in a matter of speaking. What he told me was to find he who sits without being invited, who speaks but never listens, and take him, and put him in his home." With that, he grabbed his drum and called his cousin to come to the village to eat dinner with them.

My hope is that this dissertation helps to bring (and place) some of the notions about technological discourse, progress, historically Black colleges and universities, and the African-American experience back home.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Spectre of Technological Discourse in Today's Conversations about HBCUs

The year 2017 was when the public intersection of technology and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were placed on full display for the first time in a very long time. It is not often that an issue concerning HBCUs has been anything close to front page news, yet in 2017, there were two notable instances that garnered national attention and exposed the complex discourse of HBCUs and technology in unexpected ways.

The first occurred on Monday, February 27, 2017, at The White House. In one of his first public engagements on the topic of education in America, the newly elected President of the United States, Donald Trump, invited the presidents from all 103 of the federally recognized HBCUs to meet with him and members of his executive team, including Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, and be present for the signing of Presidential Executive Order 13779 entitled, “The White House Initiative to Promote Excellence and Innovation at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.” This executive order was to supersede Executive Order 13532, which was signed by President Barack Obama on February 26, 2010. Since President Jimmy Carter issued the first executive order on HBCUs in 1980, the executive order has been a tool for U.S. presidents to attempt to appease a constituency of middle-class Black America without having to do any of the heavy lifting that is required to affect education policy on

the federal level. The executive order has also allowed each subsequent U.S. president to avoid being put at political risk by addressing the “savage inequalities,” as Jonathan Kozol termed it, that exist in America in general and Black America in particular.

Anticipating such a move on the part of the Trump Administration, a consortium of HBCU presidents met in December of 2016 and, in conjunction with the United Negro College Fund, developed a ten-point plan outlining particular ways that President Trump could add the concerns of their institutions to his national agenda. In addition to reissuing the presidential resolution on HBCUs, the ten-point plan identified other high-value investments in HBCUs: providing avenues for building infrastructure, restoring and protecting Pell grants, and convening a White House summit on HBCUs were all investments they hoped the President would make to honor his vocal commitment to the institutions. With The White House meeting and signing of the executive order, many of the more than ninety university presidents in attendance hoped to articulate the importance of these goals and build a stronger connection, both politically and financially, with the Trump White House than they had under President Obama, where HBCUs had seen their funding levels fluctuate greatly.

Given President Trump’s inflammatory, xenophobic, and racist remarks on the campaign trail to the presidency, many of the HBCU presidents approached the meeting with apprehension tempered with a small measure of cautious optimism. Originally, the meeting’s agenda had called for the college presidents to engage a small audience of the President’s staff, including Pence and DeVos; the HBCU presidents would share prepared remarks and speak on issues that were important to HBCU growth and development. Afterwards, there would be time for discussion and planning for the future.

Some of the presidents were able to speak for a few minutes: Florida Memorial University President Dr. Roslyn Clark Artis emphasized the importance of training and developing more science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) graduates. Spelman College President Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell defended the role of HBCUs in revitalizing communities. Claflin University President Dr. Henry N. Tisdale described the necessity of funding Title III programs (Sands). Yet, after some brief formalities and introductory remarks, the group was surprised by a seemingly impromptu summons from The White House Chief of Staff for a photo op with President Trump. Unfortunately, most of the prepared comments and discussion were cut short by pressing calls from the Oval Office. The discussion with the HBCU presidents and their prepared remarks were summarily dismissed as the entire group was whisked to the Oval Office for said photo. This was disconcerting to many of the university presidents in attendance. As Walter Kimbrough, President of Dillard University, described:

The goal was for officials from a number of Federal agencies (about 5 were there including OMB) and Secretary DeVos to hear about HBCUs.

That all blew up when the decision was made to take the presidents to the Oval Office to see the President. I'm still processing that entire experience. But needless to say that threw the day off and there was very little listening to HBCU presidents today—we were only given about 2 minutes each, and that was cut to one minute, so only about 7 of maybe 15 or so speakers were given an opportunity today. (medium.com)

This impromptu photo op raised the ire of many. It denied the HBCU presidents an opportunity and a platform for discussion, which had been the main reason why so many HBCU leaders came to The White House in the first place. It also troubled several members of the HBCU delegation that the focus of the day for the administration had shifted from discussion to photograph, from substance to appearance. As Jelani Cobb of

The New Yorker points out, “It confirmed the meaningful role that photographic evidence has in Trumpism: He accessorizes with crowds and possesses an unyielding appetite for photography as validation.” The photo op was, as Cobb described, “the price of admission,” and after being brought to the table through the front door, there was an expectation that there would not/should not be any complaints about getting the proverbial crumbs from the master’s table.

To complicate matters, the problems inherent within the so-called photo op would take a backseat to the controversies that surround the actual photo. African-American media outlets like *TheRoot*, *HipHopWired*, and *TheGrio* took umbrage with the photos of seemingly jovial, cordial, happy college presidents encircling the President of the United States. Several articles saw the photo as a performance in bad taste and accused the HBCU presidents of “boot-licking,” “shoe-shining,” and other terms associated with minstrelsy and subservience (Figure 1). The social media response was even harsher. Part of the reaction was tied to the lack of formality to the photos; there was an obvious attempt to create a sense of trust and familiarity through the visual image that struck a discordant tone with many African Americans. This view was further confirmed when one group shot surfaced of the presidents encircled around President Trump at his desk, with presidential aide Kellyanne Conway positioned haphazardly in the center of the photo on the couch, casually kneel-sitting, on her cell phone (Figure 2). The HBCU alumni community found the photos unprofessional at best. They thought they showed a total lack of respect for these school and community leaders who, each individually, hold an incredible amount of social, political, economic, and educational capital within their

own communities, as well as nationally, and suggested that the photos spoke to the true lack of concern the administration had for the plight of HBCUs.



Figure 1. Photograph. HBCU presidents meet with President Trump.



Figure 2. Photograph. HBCU presidents with President Trump and Kellyanne Conway.

Suffice to say, the photo op was a fiasco. It was widely panned as a blatant attempt from the Administration to gain favor from a constituency that voted overwhelmingly against Trump in the election. The *New York Times* offered the opinion that President Trump had squandered and “negated” the opportunity to project a “message of unity” with its lack of formality and decorum (Rogers). The *Washington Post* called it a “swing and a miss” for the administration (Bump). The *Los Angeles Sentinel* reported that the photo op was a “debacle,” with many of the HBCU presidents

leaving the event with “mixed emotions.” On several media platforms including twitter and NPR, Kimbrough indicated that in his prepared statement to the group, he wanted to talk about the importance of the Pell Grant Program, which funds over 70 percent of students at HBCUs. In his prepared remarks, Kimbrough wanted to let the Administration know that “Pell is a great investment especially at HBCUs where new studies indicate we do the best job, as Brookings noted ‘vaulting lowest-income kids into the top quintile as adults’ (medium.com). Johnny Taylor, President of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, who had expressed a sense of positivity before the event, even with the acknowledged suspicions, noted that the Administration’s posturing was “unprecedented” and “bizarre” (Svrluga). Tashni-Ann Dubroy, President of Shaw University, posted on Facebook that the most important thing to come out of the meeting was the gathering of ninety HBCU presidents who were all “called to serve” and who stood in solidarity with the other HBCU presidents who declined their invitations, noting that they were “all in the good fight together.” Other HBCU presidents would take her lead, finding other avenues to deliver the prepared remarks they were unable to give, inform their constituencies of what had happened, and give commentary to the events of the day.

Interestingly, the images from the photo op, all showing slight variations of the HBCU presidents informally standing and smiling with the POTUS were all being used to give context to competing narratives around that Monday’s meeting. Articles published in print or on the web before 9:00 p.m. on Monday tended to use the photo as the backdrop for optimism in the Administration’s outreach or suspicion of its motives. Some used the image to project a quality of shrewdness on the part of the college presidents, while others focused on their shameful gullibility. Articles used the image to discuss The

White House's (and by association, Conway's) momentary lack of decorum or decried it as systemic disrespect of people on the margins. A few used the images as commentary on the media's hypersensitivity to occurrences that were nonstories in The White House, while others thought the media was not sensitive enough to the struggles of HBCUs. The point here is that the meanings generated by photos themselves ushered in a host of narratives that were in flux on Monday evening.

Even with the mellifluous voices giving meaning to the photos, they are best seen as rhetorical acts of marginalization. The photo op was a passion play of silencing; it embodied a kind of rhetorical violence that destroyed much of the intentionality of the moment in the HBCU constituents' point of view. And it was an act of subjugation through definition as much as it was a deliberate act of silencing. In "Can the Subaltern Speak?," Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak surmises that intellectual pursuits in the Western world are always produced for, subjected to, or in support of the economic interests of the Western world. Spivak questions the legitimacy of Western institutions when they engage in the representation of marginalized groups or individuals. Spivak's examination of the way Western culture simultaneously represents the culture of "others," even as it seeks to define that culture, is an appropriate consideration in this case. Western culture defines those who are marginalized according to its "hegemonic vocabulary" (4). As one reviewer of Spivak's work explains:

Spivak points to the fact that the west is talking to itself, and in its own language, about the other. Like other commodities, data or raw material (ethnographical, for example) is harvested in the third world country and taken back to the west, to be produced and sold for the benefit of the western readers and especially the western writer....She believes that the

west is obsessed with preserving itself as subject, and that any discourse is eventually about the discoursing agents themselves. (*Cultural Reader*)

The way the general public receives and perceives marginalized cultures is always tainted by the political and economic interest of those in power. It is one of the dominating characteristics of representation in Western hegemony. The West, as Spivak believes, will only examine, and ultimately present, “the other” under the auspices of its own paradigm. To relate to the other on any other terms produces moments of flux, of disjointedness. In this way, American institutions, for example, avoid scrutiny whenever they represent the other (in this case, HBCUs) because Western culture validates its representation through the auspices of inclusion, which subjugates the other.

And it was here, just as social media began to turn its attention to this once-routine presidential formality, right in the midst of a photo oscillating between its doubled narrative, and on the heels of African-American educational leaders, who now inhabited an unexpectedly restricted space, weighing the consequences of telling their own stories with fulfilling the economic needs of their institutions. It was at this particular disjunction where Betsy DeVos made arguably the most infamous tweet of 2017.

In order to get control of the undercurrent of building bad press before the actual signing of the executive order by the President on the next day, DeVos put out a press statement through her office in support of the meeting, a statement that generated yet another level of controversy. I have reproduced the statement here in its entirety:

A key priority for this administration is to help develop opportunities for communities that are often the most underserved. Rather than focus solely on funding, we must be willing to make the tangible, structural reforms that will allow students to reach their full potential.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have done this since their founding. They started from the fact that there were too many students in America who did not have equal access to education. They saw that the system wasn't working, that there was an absence of opportunity, so they took it upon themselves to provide the solution.

HBCUs are real pioneers when it comes to school choice. They are living proof that when more options are provided to students, they are afforded greater access and greater quality. Their success has shown that more options help students flourish.

Their counsel and guidance will be crucial in addressing the current inequities we face in education. I look forward to working with the White House to elevate the role of HBCUs in this administration and to solve the problems we face in education today.

Her official statement was troubling on many levels. For starters, it trivialized America's legacy of racial discrimination and minimized the role of HBCUs in combating that reality. DeVos's eagerness to use HBCUs to leverage support for her political agenda by suggesting that the creation of HBCUs were sparked by the ideological bent that informs the increasingly divisive notion of school choice in public education was shamefully transparent and roundly criticized for its lack of historical context. In all honesty, historically, it was just . . . wrong. It was inaccurate and misleading, almost laughably so, to the many who have attended or have served HBCUs. Even to those with only a passing understanding of the history of HBCUs could see something amiss in DeVos's commentary.

This leads to the second troubling concern: the consequences of misguided history. According to Matthew Desmond and Mustafa Emirbayer's understanding of racial domination, DeVos constructed a "soft version" of an ahistorical fallacy, where the allusion to inequalities in education are positioned as a product of a modern-day

phenomenon as opposed to part of a long legacy of American racism (344). To make matters worse, she presents this suggestion within the framework of the school choice argument, which has been divisive among African-American educators at all levels of public education, as if it were a foregone conclusion. “School choice” is not just a premise for an argument about education. It is a rhetorical gambit to shift the perceived locus of agency that HBCUs possess away from the embattled legacy of racism, discrimination, toil, and hard-fought persistence to an anesthetized, simplistic, and politically expedient narrative of agency that is supposedly a direct result of HBCUs’ collective freedoms.

It also points to an argument about the structure and function of HBCUs that exploits a gap in our understanding of technological discourse. That gap is mirrored in the ways we are taught or encouraged to think about innovation. The framing of HBCUs as an early example of “innovation in education” plays dangerously on the deficit American culture, history, and identity has created when it comes to the struggles of African Americans in the American system of public education. In their article “The Rhetoric of Technology as a Rhetorical Technology,” John Lynch and William Kinsella establish one of the principal components of both rhetorical and technological discourse as the priority it gives to invention or innovation. They argue that notions of invention and its processes are at the heart of rhetorical discourses of technology. Similarly, those discourses can be seen as investigations into how one builds, how one uses, or how one is used by agency. In this way, “[a] rhetorical study of technology, then, is about how agency is reconfigured by the rhetorical strategies that attend the steps in inventing and disseminating a new technology” (4). Most of the innovation presented by discussions

and conversations of HBCUs presents an innovation that is reactionary. It is an innovation that is shown to appear almost in spite of creativity. It is the innovation of survival, of secondhand, of limited resource but fertile minds and resilient mindsets. That kind of innovation has its value, but it is often described to Black people and Black institutions as the hallmark of our ingenuity. DeVos posits HBCUs are an embodiment of and a mechanism or apparatus for school choice, which not only removes the agency of resistance that has defined those institutions for generations, but also undercuts and delegitimizes the advocacy for the role of HBCUs articulated by the college and university presidents earlier that day. Innovation, in this case, is not an apparatus of creativity; it is a methodology of the state.

The critical response to the meeting, and specifically to the coda that was DeVos's statement, was swift. DeVos was roundly criticized by national media and the HBCU community. Withering critiques came from all sides of the previously ignored end of the political spectrum. This was one of those rare instances where the public could see how the sausage was being made, as DeVos positioned a rhetorical suggestion in the guise of a historical truth in order to further her (and by proxy the Administration's) political aims. Many critiques used the rhetorical structure of the "meme" on social media to castigate DeVos's obvious blunder as a rhetorical misappropriation (Figures 3, 4, and 5).

Remarkably, The White House's mishandling of the HBCU presidents continued into Tuesday when, instead of providing the opportunity for the conversation that had been prematurely aborted the previous day, the administration scheduled yet another photo op. During the photo, President Trump signed his executive order, which moved the HBCU

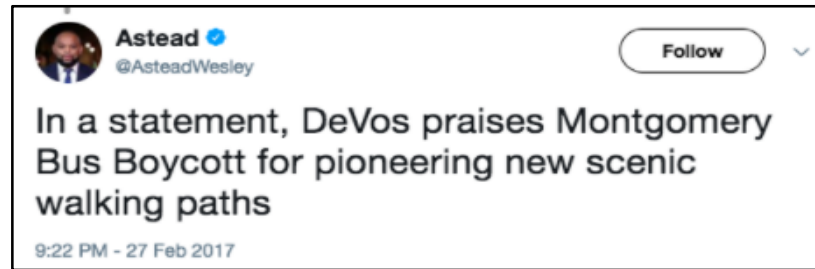


Figure 3. Twitter post. Astead.

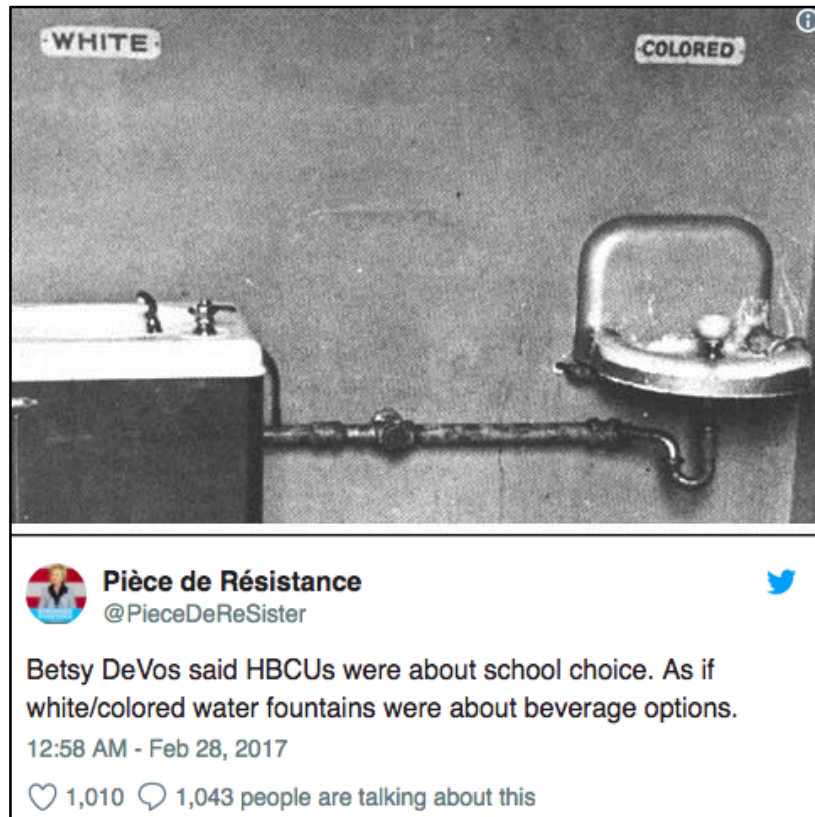


Figure 4. Twitter post. Pièce de Résistance.



Figure 5. Twitter post. Marybeth Gasman.

White House Initiative from the Department of Education to The White House.

Obviously, social media provided a revealing medium for this event; however, what is more revealing are the rhetorical acts at play to control a narrative of technological discourse about history, structure, reform, and innovation. A clear pattern of subversive practices is evident here, practices which depict how the photograph was being used to silence the voices of HBCU institutional leaders, and how the discourse of “innovation” was being used in an attempt to co-opt an important aspect of the historical narrative of HBCUs.

In this moment, the HBCU community was in the crux of resistance. Considering how these particular photos came to be, HBCU leaders resisted allowing the photo to speak for them. This is especially important when considering that university presidents today are rarely, if ever, the face or voice of their institutions in the public sphere. The presidents themselves, by making their uncertainty public and allowing their humanity be exposed through the veneer of the photograph, were able to acknowledge some of the events leading up to the photograph that was causing them to question the commitment of the administration. By revealing their tension, they destabilized the meeting and photo op as an apparatus of The White House and refashioned it, in the moment, into a tool of resistance.

Ultimately, many HBCU leaders and advocates expressed a measure of disappointment with the executive order, which fell short of offering the wide-scale improvements that many had sought. Several were of the opinion that the executive order lacked any substantial revision from the Obama-era order, which was considered tepid at

best. Though HBCU presidents had championed the move from the Department of Education to the Office of The White House in order to avoid bureaucratic red tape, the move did not come with any additional funding. David Wilson, President of Morgan State University, criticized the executive order for, at best, maintaining the status quo, noting that it was not “substantially different than what has been in other HBCU executive orders.” Morehouse President John S. Wilson, Jr., echoed those sentiments, circulating a statement that concludes that, even with

advance talk of changes like an aspirational goal of 5 to 10 percent for federal agency funding to HBCUs, a special HBCU innovation fund, large boosts in Pell Grant and Title III funding, and extra tax breaks for those in the private sector who contribute to HBCUs. But, instead of the long-awaited executive order containing or signaling any of those outcomes, the shift of the White House HBCU Initiative from the Department of Education to the White House was largely symbolic. (Morehouse College)

In an incident full of technologically mediated representations, The White House seemingly lost the battle of optics and rhetorical framing.

Instead of taking their lumps and moving on to other pressing issues, DeVos and the Trump Administration decided to double down. DeVos accepted an invitation from Dr. Edison O. Jackson, President of Bethune-Cookman University, to make the commencement address at its graduation ceremony in May, to the chagrin of many. Although many Bethune-Cookman faculty voiced their displeasure with the selection of DeVos, most did not air their disagreements in public. Bethune-Cookman alumni attempted to address the ill-timed and potentially disastrous choice through its Board of Trustees, perhaps recognizing that taking the matter public would stoke the growing derision. But the fire had already been lit, and Bethune-Cookman students had no qualms and utilized social media, radio, pamphlets, and flyers to air their grievances and plan for

appropriate action to be taken. On graduation day, DeVos's speech was met with "hundreds of students standing and turning their backs" to her as she gave her speech. Amid what the media described as a "chorus of resistance," the faculty issued a letter of no support to the administration, and many students, who expressed their dissatisfaction with the culminating moment of their college careers being hijacked by politics, expressed their disappointment and frustration across the media spectrum. It was student and alumni reactions that dominated the coverage from traditional news media, cable, Internet news sites, and social media for the twenty-four hours immediately following the commencement ceremonies.

There is more to this story, but for the moment it is important to recognize one thing: The President's meeting with HBCU presidents, Betsy DeVos's follow-up comments on Twitter, and her commencement address at a HBCU provided a glimpse into the complex discourse of power, race, historicity, technology, and resistance that has always been a part of the HBCU institutional experience. And it still has incredible resonance today.

The second public intersection of race, technology, and HBCUs received a lot less publicity, but is equally important in terms of its impact, though on a smaller scale. On March 23, 2017, several national media outlets ran a remarkable story about Howard University, one of the most prestigious HBCUs in the United States. *USAToday*, *CNNMoney*, *NBC News*, tech news sites like *Engadget*, *The Verge*, and *Recode*—even National Public Radio—all ran the story of how *Google* was going to open Howard University West at its national headquarters. The article was notable because of a few reasons. First, it was unquestionably positive. The sum of the articles surrounding The

White House meetings in February had a positive spin; they were still tainted by the overall controversies. In fact, since 2009, the only articles reaching national distribution that have had positive overtones in regards to HBCUs were articles that profiled appearances of famous scholars, politicians, dignitaries, or celebrities (most often for graduation). Until this piece in 2017, almost all other articles (excluding the ones reporting the meetings at The White House or the executive order) that reached the national wire dealt with the loss of accreditation or the threat of school closure, a crisis in school infrastructure, alleged misconduct of school officials and students, or animosity between faculty, students, or staff. Suffice to say, much of the national coverage has been negative and the subsequent public perception of HBCUs have relegated them to third-rate institutions.

Second, the partnership between Howard University and *Google* established a Howard University satellite campus on *Google's* campus in Mountain View, California. Howard University would have its own space *within* the Googleplex. Not a kiosk. Not an intern. But a *campus*. This is significant. The discrepancies between the allocation of technological resources between predominantly White institutions and minority-serving institutions have been at the heart of the technology question since the mid-nineties and the coining of the phrase “the digital divide.” What many people realized then, and still wrestle with now, is that even when President Bill Clinton was advocating for “a computer in every classroom,” the implementation of technological infrastructure in underserved communities was often haphazard or poorly thought out. In addition, if someone wanted to experience a community that was immersed in technological innovation, they would have to go somewhere else, probably to a location that was

culturally isolating or foreign. The revelation of the Howard University/*Google* partnership opened up a host of possibilities—and questions. What does it mean for a historically Black college to be embedded in a business and technological subculture such as *Google*? How does it mitigate those thorny distances between institutions of higher learning and enterprises such as affirmative action, tokenism, and institutional discrimination? Will the two institutions be too close for comfort? Is this the answer? Can Howard remain culturally distinct and culturally relevant in the midst of *Google*'s influence? The ideas and aims of a partnership like this aren't new, but the way it carries out its mission through this unique rhetoric of space is exciting and warrants more investigation.

The final reason why this story is so remarkable is how the news outlets reported it. When the story broke on March 23rd, no outlet that reported the partnership quoted a source from Howard University. Every outlet that day, except for Howard University's own press release, utilized *Google*'s statement on the partnership, interviewed a *Google* spokesperson or executive or profiled *Google*'s other acts of diversity and inclusion. Nor were any Howard voices added to the conversation on March 24th, when additional outlets picked up the story. On March 27th, *BusinessInsider* reported the story and provided a brief quote from Howard University President Dr. Wayne Frederick. *BusinessInsider* would go on to do a feature story on the construction of the campus for its tech section on June 28th, which provides an inside look at the design and functionality of the space. The article focuses on the head designer, Danish Kurani, CEO of the design firm and an import from *Google*, who has been embedded in Howard's

engineering department as an adjunct professor. Even so, there is a notable absence of voices from the greater Howard University community.

Howard University and *Google's* potentially groundbreaking partnership illustrates a notion of technological access that is both familiar and strange. By inverting the trickle-down economics that often accompany technology acquisition and access in minority communities—building community inside where it is as opposed to the tech going to where the community resides—the partnership opens up new possibilities for both creative control and innovation. However, the lack of perspective on the initiative from Howard's point of view in the media coverage (which was *overwhelmingly positive*) raises some important questions about who gets to tell the story of innovation and how one can build a culture around technology in the midst of a technoculture that already seems so dominant, so demanding, and oftentimes so different than what one could imagine.

I share these stories because they illustrate the landscape of discussion around technology, progress, and African Americans that this project seeks to explore.

When we think of technology, we generally think about the computer. Or the Internet. Or social media. Or our phones. We are sucked in, seduced by these things, to be sure, but we are not drawn to technology because of the intimacy we share with these particular inventions. We are drawn to technology, in part, because we have been socialized to perceive the importance of technology, its influence, and its potential. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, we have become increasingly intimate with our inventions. However, throughout American history, technology has had one particular meaning within the Western world: progress. One reason why technology is always

associated with a certain forward trajectory is because it is always associated with access—not just access to more (and better) information—but access to more geographic locations, to social interaction and mobility, and to ingenuity, determination, and even God’s providence. In America, technological innovation has been central in carving out our national identity as one of the most advanced nations in the world. In his work, *They Made America*, Harold Evans suggests that it is not the technological innovations that America created that made it the most progressive nation in the world, but the way technology was integrated into its national identity. David E. Nye confronts head on the question of national identity and technology in his essay, “Technology and Cultural Difference.” These conversations about American machine making and inventiveness conjure up a difference between the use and creation of technology in America and Europe. Nye suggests that, in actuality, American creation of technology wasn’t really unique, noting that there was often “free exchange of technical information throughout international networks” (95). What was unique, however, was the service of technology in formulating a national character and agenda. In fact, Nye postulates that though cultural, social, and economic forces played significant roles in forming American national identities, even to the extremes of exceptionalism, the adoption and adaptation of technology in America produced a nexus for the reinforcement of identity formation and the exploration of the impact of technology on diverse cultures. Nye classifies American attitudes towards technology as distinctive moves motivated by American exceptionalism; that is, the idea that America is uniquely situated not only as a growing global force, but as a country that exemplifies and models global leadership and behavior. In effect, the United States is the chosen, the righteous among nations, with autonomous

political, social, and even spiritual authority which grants American citizens the self-perception of being both fundamentally different and tacitly superior to denizens of other countries.

Equally important here is the move made by many Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to quantify a distinctive technology that was “fundamentally different from that of Europe” (Nye 94). Nye attributes John Atlee Kouwenhoven with identifying a specific purpose in American design: American technological artifacts, such as the Model T, the American ax, and the clipper ship, “were characterized by simplicity, plainness, efficiency, and a functional aesthetic. Furthermore, Americans began to build machines designed to last only a short time . . . [emphasizing] immediate practical results, and assumed that the machines would be replaced frequently” (130-132). It is this same deterministic “engine” that reductively, seductively builds the case for technology’s role in American culture, while at the same time easily reinforcing nationalistic dogmas, such as racism. It is technology, in this way, that is presented to the American public as the fulcrum for “progress.” Technological innovation has always been a unique characteristic of America’s national identity; however, technology is not just about more efficient and economical means towards American progress. It is also about access, representation, identity, innovation, implementation, systems of value delivery, and oppression.

Technology then, within the framework of American culture, is more than a collection of artifacts, but a system of narratives as well. The causal narrative of technology as “an independent entity, a virtually autonomous agent of change”

. . . informs the popular discourse of technological determinism. It is typified by sentences in which “technology” or a surrogate like “the machine” is made the subject of an active predicate: “The automobile created suburbia.” “The atomic bomb divested congress of its power to declare war.” “The mechanical cotton picker set off the migration of southern black farmworkers to northern cities.” “The robots put the riveter’s out of work.” “The pill produced a sexual revolution.” In each case, a complex event is made to seem the inescapable yet strikingly possible result of a technological innovation. Many of these statements carried the further implication that the social consequences of our technical ingenuity are far reaching, cumulative, mutually reinforcing, and irreversible. (Smith et al. xi)

This dissertation defines technology as a systematic enactment of scientific or sociological ideas in material, physical, or rhetorical space. As such, this dissertation does not examine any one particular technology—no singular artifact, apparatus, or appropriation is its focus. Rather, this dissertation endeavors to explore technological discourse, or the conversations around technology, as a systematic enactment of scientific or sociological ideas in material, physical, or rhetorical space. Often our default operating assumption is that technology is an *artifact of culture*, while language is a *conduit* for culture. This project examines the space within the African-American experience where technology and language intertwine. Thinking about technology as part of the rhetorical system within and the articulation of African-American communal, social, and political advancement is directly connected not only to philosophical ideas of technology and discourse, but also the sociolinguistic ones that imagine the linguistic sign as a key marker for the human condition and ones that are encoded within cultural artifacts and systems. In other words, speech—the word—will always have its power, but a greater emphasis should be placed in thinking about how technology fits into the major questions African Americans have faced regarding collective freedom, equality, and socioeconomic

mobility. Are the signs and symbols embedded in technology actualized or realized? Do they share the same meanings with the larger culture?

In addition to exploring technological discourse, this dissertation also explores the notion of a “technoethos” as it relates to those subsequent discourses. Theresa Enos and Shane Borrowman in their article, “Authority and Credibility: Classical Rhetoric, the Internet, and the Teaching of Techno-Ethos,” use ancient thinkers to reinforce ideas of ethos. When considering the authority and credibility of information from the Internet, they utilize the notions of ethos from the works of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian in order to ground their students’ contemporary understanding of ethos. “With this beginning, it becomes easier to move students into a critical awareness of the importance of those in cyberspace and in their own writing” (96). Here, contemporary compositionists are using the past to teach students today. This not only illustrates how the same rhetorical issues continually resurface in new forms, but also how attention to the ethical aims inherent in using and inventing technology can help bring students to an awareness of where they fit within the discourse about technology. Interestingly enough, both Joel Dinerstein (*Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology and African American Culture between the World Wars*) and Enos use variations of the term technoethos to ground their discussions. For Dinerstein, it is the fusion of intrinsic value placed within a newly minted and mechanized American culture which dictate both a “pace of life” and—to use a jazz metaphor—determines which players play what changes. For Enos, the technoethos she refers to is much subtler, more individualized. It is the value that one adds or accepts when engaged in the social milieu of modern technology. Both see the conversations, the rhetorical acts, shaped by technology as key

to understanding its potential value. For this project, I am considering technoethos to be the rhetorical expression, political agency, and social values embedded within a particular technological discourse.

Both of the instances that I present earlier in this introduction are unique in terms of the technological discourses about HBCUs that they present and the “ethos” that motivates that discourse. The first presents a discourse of resistance, one that is often ignored in the conversation, and justification for the existence of HBCUs. This is a counternarrative to the most prevailing discourse around HBCUs: that of inferiority. It also shows the tension within a present technological discourse, in this case, the discourse around innovation. The other raises questions around the conception and perception of how to create sites of innovation, how sites of innovation can come into being, and for what purpose. It presents a discourse that is slightly more familiar, but notable nonetheless for its rare presentation of proactive innovators who design, but who are African American, and remain culturally distinct as they do so.

This dissertation is an interdisciplinary rhetorical project that explores the discourse of race and technology in the African-American experience, particularly at HBCUs. It examines HBCUs as a site that historically and actively embodies the African-American rhetorical tradition, resists American racial animus, and works as a conduit and a corrective for the discourse of race and technology in America. It also examines how HBCUs, its leaders, and constituents work to build, engage, and critique the discourse of technology and progress and consider what impact that dialogue has on HBCUs and other African-American institutional frameworks. African-American leaders and thinkers have struggled with a particular tension, deciding how to gain access to the technology that

figures into the American dream of progress, ensuring that the systems that make that particular use of that technology a viable means of progress are, in fact, in place, while also considering ways that said technology can be reconfigured to address the distinct role and challenges African Americans face in America. This tightrope walk has produced moments where technology has played different roles in the formation of African-American identity in the past century or so, especially in the development and social relevance of HBCUs. Sometimes these roles attempt to coincide with what we have come to expect within the American narrative of progress: self-determination, exceptionalism, free-market capitalism. Yet at other times, technology seems to work in a decidedly different manner from the great orchestrations of the American dream machine. African Americans have had to write and fight their way back into American discourses of history; reclaim their part of the institutional framework of America, not just as beasts of burden, but as creators, interpreters, and challengers of American culture, ideology, and institutional networks.

This project also attempts to examine technology as an American cultural product of power which resists clandestine cultures from disrupting its systems of domination. In turn, that technology can become a real or imagined *force de resistance* for those who seek advancement without accepting the status quo. We often think of technology as a domineering force, either as an unassailable juggernaut that leaves a changed landscape in its wake or even as a beast to be tamed that, left unchecked, would devour and destroy the essence of human endeavor. This dissertation works to analyze how African-American leaders and writers have articulated technology's role, map out the persistent discourse of how technology has affected African-American experience, and describe

how African Americans have viewed technology's role in the attempt to rectify, reify, and recognize their place in America.

I do not mean to suggest that the phenomenon of today's computerized and digitized technological marvels are not unique in space and time. However, I would like to attempt to situate the discourse within a larger context of nineteenth- and early- to mid-twentieth-century notions of African-American progress and how those ideas could possibly shed light on the various instances of apprehension, disdain, and expectation toward technology. In a sense, this dissertation is a reclamation project. The purpose is not to establish the contribution of African Americans to American ideals, technical or otherwise, but to puzzle together attitudes and ideas about technology as a tool for advancement or uplift. Though this project draws from a variety of disciplines, I envision it primarily as a rhetorical and evaluative one where I can explore the sociopolitical import of technology through rhetorical readings of well-known and lesser known works of African-American leaders, while at the same time examining their platforms for racial uplift. My goal is to show a line of continuity between the meditations about technology presented by our intellectual forefathers and current discussions regarding technology and progress, particularly in HBCUs.

There is a tendency to want to place the narratives of HBCUs within frameworks of domination, deficit, and intolerance. American technological discourses have often affirmed those approaches to HBCUs. However, HBCUs have shown that part of their struggle has been to find liberating spaces within those discourses, while at the same time resisting the urge to be consumed by them, offering narratives, rhetoric, programs, and

opportunities that are distinctly their own and work for the personal, professional, and psychosocial well-being of their students in particular and the institutions at large.

My dissertation makes two principle arguments that are revealed within the fields of intersection that are clearly in operation in the two examples discussed earlier. The first argument is that there has been a discursive tradition of technology within the HBCU community since the founding of the first HBCU in 1837. These conversations not only envision how technology can best be used, but also appropriates technology in order to accomplish community goals. This discursive tradition reveals successes and failures, trials and taboos. Part of the conversation around technology and HBCUs is wrapped up in ideas about community. This seems very familiar to us within the context of higher education today. Much of the studies of digital media, technology, technology culture, social networks, game theory and computing revolve around the idea of technological artifice as an addendum, substitution, catalyst, or disturbance to community. Thus, the second argument that this dissertation attempts to make is that this persistent discourse within HBCUs is embedded with an ethos of community well-being and support. I am referring to this notion of support as a technoethos: something hardwired into the DNA of HBCUs since its inception and, when ignored, can cause malignancies in the institution. It is source code that is buried in the framework of design within African-American institutions of higher learning and, when not executed, can have disastrous, embarrassing, or counterproductive results.

Chapter Overview

Much of my research focuses on particular historical moments that provide windows into this discourse: In my introduction and first chapter, I used two incidents, the invitation of HBCU presidents to The White House for the signing of Executive Order 13779 and the Howard University-*Google* Partnership that will produce Howard University West to explore questions around the intersection of technology, progress, and the African-American experience within the context of HBCUs. Both incidents, I argue, open up intriguing lines of investigation around the discourse of technology that has a long history within HBCUs. In Chapter 2, “HBCUs and Reading the African-American Technological Experience,” I argue that there is a nuanced (though often ignored) tradition of debate, engagement, and application of technology within the African-American tradition. Although the contributions of African-American inventors, scientists, and technologists have traditionally dominated the technological discourse of race and technology in the public sphere, the excavation of lost histories in the African-American technological tradition and contemporary intersections of race and technology have grown significantly. This chapter outlines threads of scholarship around this intersection of African Americans, technology, and educational space, specifically as it relates to HBCUs. I suggest that Adam Banks’s taxonomy of technological access from his book, *Race, Rhetoric and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*, is especially useful in examining the relationships between HBCUs and the rich legacy of technology within the African-American experience.

In Chapter 3, “A History of Violence and the Institute of Colored Youth, 1832-1852: The Origins of Technological Discourse at HBCUs,” I describe how HBCUs have

been influenced by American technological discourse from the beginning. I argue that the creation of the first institution of higher learning for African Americans—The Institute for Colored Youth (ICY), which in time would become Cheyney University—demonstrates the way American technological discourse intersected with African-American progress, an intersection that presented the framework for a discourse of technology and the African-American experience that is bodied and racialized. As HBCUs in general, and ICY in particular, emerged as a training ground for “the mechanical arts” and a refuge from violence, the institution and its stakeholders struggled to construct language and practices to navigate the rhetorical and physical tensions that threatened their survival. This chapter also reveals how Black leadership built on those echoes of discourse to frame their visions of technology, a vision of technology that helped to influence, shape, and encourage the growth of HBCUs at the turn of the century. I argue that Frederick Douglass’s attention to the potentials of the telegraph and the necessities of industrial education illustrate a strategy for how Black leaders appropriated technological discourse for the purpose of institution building. I suggest that, though a role that has been destabilized today, Black leaders of HBCUs are still relevant as the “mouthpieces” of the community through the unique rhetorical position of the HBCU as cultural communicator.

Chapter 4, “From Photograph to Factory: Du Bois and Washington’s TechnoDialectic Failure during the Great Migration,” looks at W. E. B Du Bois and Booker T. Washington as influencers and products of HBCUs in order to examine how the discourse of technology functioned within their sociopolitical imaginations. I suggest that Du Bois and Washington’s views of technology influenced the discourse around

identity politics and social mobility during the apex of the Great Migration era. The juxtaposition of “technical education” and a “liberal education” as the education stances of Du Bois and Washington is oft interpreted as a statement of their attitudes toward the role of technology in African-American progress during the first quarter of the twentieth century. In actuality, this accepted binary is a bit misleading in this case: Du Bois and Washington shared rather complementary ideas of how technology fit into the equation of racial uplift, especially in demonstrating the legitimacy of the HBCU at the turn of the century. What is even more interesting is that these same ideas expose a climate of tension between how prominent African-American leaders see technology usage and the desired appropriations of technology by the influx of working class African Americans placed front and center by the Great Migration. The reality was that as scientific and industrial technologies developed throughout the Second Industrial Revolution and through the Progressive Era, Du Bois’s fascination with eugenics and Washington’s unwavering focus on agriculture and domestic labor as technologically solvent practically ignored new approaches in science in favor of conventional and comfortable wisdom, an approach which had an adverse effect on HBCUs.

Chapter 5, “Disruptive Technologies and Vernacular Insurrections: Developing a Technoethos around HBCUs during the Transition from Civil Rights to Black Power,” explores the discourse of technology in and around the climate of student protests during the transition between the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements. This chapter looks at HBCUs as not only a site of contested social power, but also as a site that embodied engagements with technology emblematic of the time and prompted a reevaluation of technological discourse. Technological discourse in the Black community was shifting

from the appropriation of technology for the purposes of representation, which was key in the Civil Rights Movement, to technological liberation, which was a major theme in the polemics of the Black Arts/Black Power Movements. I argue that the often ignored and misunderstood student killings at Jackson State University in 1970 marked a shift in communal ideology for African Americans politically, intellectually, and geographically. Moreover, it served as a catalyst for a new direction in African-American technological discourse, one focused on creating sites of technological promise and security that would better address what Huey P. Newton called “the technology question.”

My conclusion and final chapter, “The Beloved Community and Further Opportunities for Research,” presents three follow-up opportunities for study that I believe this dissertation encourages. The first, entitled, “How HBCUs theorized a Black technoethos before Al Gore invented the Internet,” examines some of the intellectual debate around the digital divide and situates it within the marginalized, but historically persistent, conversation of the role technology will play in the quest for racial uplift and socioeconomic progress. I argue that before the term was popularized through presidential address and national policy initiatives in the mid-nineties, HBCUs responded to the growing technological discourse that would become the digital divide. I suggest that HBCUs theorized how to address some of the most pressing issues of the digital divide by positing a technoethos that countered the rhetoric of deficit that surrounded technology acquisition and imagined technological innovation and racial uplift as a result of an atmosphere of love and support. The second is entitled, “Assessment and the perils of not paying attention.” It describes my desire to investigate further how the conversation around digital portfolios was an opportunity lost to many HBCUs because

of the battle against the larger narrative of assessment culture. Here, I outline how external forces within the culture of higher education can have a detrimental effect on the technoethos of the “beloved community.” I argue that the culture of assessment on the program level and the narrative of accreditation on the institutional level has had the unintended consequence of shifting HBCUs away from developing core institutional values around technological creativity and utilization, even as they attempt to meet those critical pedagogical goals. In my final opportunity for study, “Discourse, STEM, and a culture of support,” I maintain that the success of STEM education in HBCUs is a direct result of embedding a culture of support for the beloved community within its programmatic framework.

In this study, I hope to add to the current research in African-American rhetoric. African-American rhetors such as Raymond Keith Gilyard, Molefi Kete Asante, Elaine Richardson, and Ronald Jackson all call for greater attention to contemporary sites of language and resistance. In addition to acknowledging an overlooked part of its long story and history, I hope this project helps to legitimize HBCUs as a site of interdisciplinary study within the African-American rhetorical tradition, particularly in the way it applies the theories of technology to the discourse of an African-American institution with a long legacy of trials, triumphs, tragedies, and tribulations. Finally, this dissertation is designed to offer avenues of practical application for the successful use of technoethos for HBCUs on a programmatic and institutional level.

CHAPTER 2

HBCUS AND READING THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN
TECHNOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE

There are some common stories that link the African-American experience to technology, but those stories also raise questions about the public's common understanding of that relationship. The most familiar association of HBCUs and technology is through its long history of industrial education within its institutions. Unbeknown to most, the profile of the first HBCU was much more diverse than just industrial education. Although there was no former path for the higher education of African Americans before Reconstruction, the genesis of the first HBCUs date back to well before the Civil War. The first HBCU and the subject of this dissertation's next chapter, Cheyney University, was established in 1837 in southeastern Pennsylvania. Though it was not a degree-granting institution until 1932, it is credited as the first of its kind. What is interesting is that Cheyney achieved most of its success as an institution that found a balance between the liberal and industrial arts. The first degree-granting institution, Lincoln University, would be founded in 1854, about twenty miles away, as an institution to train Black teachers in the region and was not industrial at all, gaining the reputation as "the Black Princeton." In 1863, Ohio's Wilberforce University, was the first institution of higher learning established by free African Americans and is recognized as the first private HBCU.

Most treatments of the origins of HBCUs acknowledge their establishment before the Civil War, but generally attribute most of the significant developments in the history

of HBCU development to the period after the Civil War between 1865 and 1880 and after the Second Morrill Act in 1890, the time when industrial education became a focal point for the education of former slaves. During Reconstruction, there was an outpouring of public support for higher education for African Americans, which led to important social reforms. Among them was the Freedmen's Bureau, an organization of mostly White Northerners who believed that former slaves could be a vital part of the American economy as free labor and, with help, could be full participants in American society. The Freedmen's Bureau did not allocate funds directly to African Americans to establish schools; they funneled money to the many Christian philanthropic organizations that possessed a missionary zeal towards building institutions of learning for former slaves in America. Organizations like the American Baptist Home Mission Society, the American Missionary Association (AMA), the Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Presbyterian Board of Missions for Freedmen accounted for the formation of many Black colleges and received over \$10 million in funding from the Freedmen's Bureau before 1870 (Obas; Watkins). Because tensions in the South were still high after the Civil War, the Freedmen's Bureau was met with both resistance and violence. In response, the Bureau fell back to advocating a more compromised position: to leverage the agricultural expertise of former slaves, while also looking for ways prop up the American economy, an economy that was based in slave labor. Their programs sought to impact land acquisition, agricultural enterprise, and education. By underwriting the philanthropy of other organizations, the Freedmen's Bureau played a significant role in the creation of HBCUs such as Howard, Hampton, Atlanta, and Fisk. From June 1865

through August 1871, more than \$5 million in Bureau funds were spent on Black schools, contributing to educational opportunities for more than 149,000 students (Obas 19).

Obas points out that “while on the surface these actions appeared altruistic many missionary organizations held racist views and felt that blacks were scientifically incapable of comprehending and engaging in intellectual discourse” (2). Christian organizations supporting the foundation and construction of institutions spoke interchangeably of opportunities to “Christianize” and “civilize” the nation’s Blacks. A mantra for many Black schools at the time that engaged in industrial education, including Hampton, Tuskegee, Fisk, was that their purpose was to teach “the dignity of labor,” a notion that provides the overarching theme in the latter half of Booker T. Washington’s autobiography, *Up with Slavery*. It was not a philosophy he coined, but one that he adopted from those first White architects of the early HBCUs (particularly Samuel Chapman Armstrong, principal of Hampton Institute); Washington was just their most ardent proselytizer. It was the persistent view of African-American intellectual inferiority which led White philanthropists to focus Black education on areas of expertise that would build on industries that relied on manual labor. Relegating Blacks to programs of study that focused on agriculture maintained the position of social “indentureship” that they had in slavery. It also reinforced equality as a social taboo, even in the midst of a shifting socioeconomic order. Arguably, American society was most accepting of the education of a multitude of emancipated Blacks because the proposed instructional aims of many of the HBCUs built during this time reinforced the social norms of racial discrimination. To participate in the new America, African Americans would have to follow the old rules (Obas; Williams; Parillo; Watkins; Allen and Jewell). At this time, industrial education

was more of a state-sanctioned apparatus for economic recovery than it was a pathway for educational attainment.

This perspective is an important one to consider when examining the impact of the Second Morrill Act. The institutions most associated with the origins of the HBCU are the ones that were born out of this legislation. The Second Morrill Act, which Congress enacted on August 30, 1890, “required states with racially segregated public higher education systems to provide a land-grant institution for black students whenever a land-grant institution was established and restricted for white students,” according to the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights. After the passage of the act, public land-grant institutions specifically for Blacks were established in each of the Southern and border states. Because the Morrill Act specifically earmarked capital resources for training in agriculture and related fields, the institutions of higher learning that took advantage of the Second Morrill Act had a clear focus on industrial, agricultural, and mechanical fields of study. The problem, as Walter Allen, Joseph Jewell, and Kenneth Redd suggest, is that the allocation of the Second Morrill Act has rarely, if ever, been distributed fairly. A policy brief created by the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities’ (APLU) Office for Access and Success explains that under the Morrill Act of 1862, which created the vast majority of land-grant institutions, and the Second Morrill Act, which established eighteen Black land-grant universities, the federal government committed to providing financial support to schools so long as states matched that level of support. Most states have not, prompting the APLU to reprimand states for “failing to provide the nation’s 1,890 historically Black land-grant universities the same level of one-to-one matching dollars they provide other land-grant institutions

that receive federal funding” (5). Inherent in the land-grant funding process was an institutional bias that shifted the enforcement of equitable distribution of funds to States—which, given the attitude of most states towards former slaves at the time, was an egregious oversight—and allowed Congress, Pontius Pilate-style, to wash their hands of any responsibility for the racism that may affect the handling of those funds. Even so, several private African-American institutions found it hard to resist the impact of the government funding provided through the act and placed their schools under public control to take advantage. However, the Black schools that were established as a direct result of the Second Morrill Act—Alabama A&M University, Alcorn State University, Central State University, Delaware State University, Florida A&M University, Fort Valley State University, Kentucky State University, Langston University, Lincoln University, North Carolina A&T State University, Prairie View A&M University, South Carolina State University, Southern University, Tennessee State University, Tuskegee University, University of Arkansas Pine Bluff, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Virginia State University, West Virginia State University—had an even greater impact on the spread of industrial education.

The point here is to highlight this forgotten element of the HBCU industrial narrative which is that during Reconstruction, many HBCUs that engaged in industrial education were not free to deliver education as they saw fit and had to guard against the state-sanctioned institutional aims and the material resource deficits that were embedded in their creation. In this case, the American public responded well to a narrative of industrial education that limited educational and social economic attainment for African

Americans while at the same time paving the way for a new order of social interaction reminiscent of slavery, except this time it would be wage slavery.

On the other hand, the reality of new schools and new opportunities provided African Americans with a narrative of progress that had been longed for and was long overdue. This latter narrative is an important aspect of the ongoing discourse that is germane to HBCUs, demonstrating that it is the one that is often acting in passive resistance, akin to musical counterpoint, to the American culture's dominant discourse of technology. Perhaps it is those forgotten elements of the HBCU narrative that have led to a generally negative mainstream perception of HBCUs. In the history of the United States, there have been 135 institutions of higher learning for African Americans. Of those, 103 still exist today. Some were subsumed and consolidated into other institutions. Some suffered because of financial hardship or administrative failures that proved to be insurmountable. Others were victims of the country's current thrust toward assessment and had been sanctioned into extinction by accreditation bodies. These kinds of stories about HBCUs are the ones that most frequently appear in media and often add to the common misperception that HBCUs are inferior institutions of higher learning. At the same time, media often fails to account for the effects of segregation on the historical legacy on these schools. HBCUs are often accused of being sites of being racially essentialist in regard to its culture and "monolithic" in regard to its student population. Yet, this charge seldom acknowledges that HBCUs have never barred a student from admittance because of race or creed. As of 2013, almost one fourth of the student body in America's HBCUs is not African American (Gasman et al. 3). Their diversity also extends to the students' socioeconomic status and its faculty (Gasman and

Commodore 1). HBCUs are criticized for financial mismanagement, a signal that foreshadows the argument that their lack of resources is a result of their own undoing. However, for 150 years, the federal government, through the rule of law, ensured that HBCUs would never receive the same amount of funding as predominately White institutions. In fact, “Historically, HBCUs have always been underfunded in comparison to their PWI counterparts” (2). The leadership of HBCUs is also under suspicion.

Gasman finds that

HBCU leaders are considered the face of their institutions—a living log. HBCUs have found their leadership to be victims of stereotyping. The constructed narrative around HBCU leadership is that it is autocratic, rampant with money management issues, and ill equipped to navigate the spaces of those who create policy. (3)

In a recent op-ed piece for *Inside Higher Ed*, Alvin J. Schexnider identifies several reasons for the decline of HBCUs in the latter half of the twentieth century, his principle contention being that it was desegregation that first “devastated” the stability of the HBCU, and there is corroborating evidence to support this view. The Thurgood Marshall College Fund reports that only 9 percent of African-American high school graduates choose to attend HBCUs, compared with 80 percent during the Civil Rights Movement. They also predict that the number of HBCUs in the U.S. will drastically fall from 103 to about 35 by the year 2035. Schexnider does offer several solutions for HBCUs to regain traction and thrive in the twenty-first century: importantly, commitments to creating new business models, fashioning strategic partnerships around a new vision for the institutions, a renewed spirit of communication and shared governance among its shareholders, and hiring fresh talent in administrative and other high-return positions. But he lists these worthwhile pursuits as a kind of to-do list for stability and

offers no examples of the many HBCUs that do this kind of necessary work and have had sustained success. These kinds of narratives have damaged the credibility of HBCUs and the education they provide.

These narratives are familiar to the cursory knowledge of HBCUs possessed by most Americans, but there are other stories, too. Some HBCUs were victims of the social and political climates of their day, while others could not stand against the tides of violence that threatened the very existence of its stakeholders.

And still, some thrived and thrive still.

Thomas Garner and Carolyn Calloway-Thomas suggest that “an innovative rhetorical posture develops when African Americans are elevated as subject (foreground) or represented as main characters in the dramas of cultural life rather than relegated to the status of the other (background) or supporting actor”(45). As a result, African-American rhetors can pinpoint Black rhetorical perspectives within overarching social and cultural spheres without having to justify a Black presence or overall relevance. Quinton Stroud presents the concept of counterstory as a means of combating negative and racist narratives that are often propagated by the media. The counterstory, Stroud explains, is a means to “build community, challenge perceived wisdom, open new realities for those often found voiceless in dominant discourse, and teach others the possibility of creating a richer, more complex narrative than the ones that dominate the dialogue surrounding HBCUs” (47). Counterstory effectively combats anti-HBCU media bias by combining contemporary understanding with data-driven evidence and personal/professional experience. Stroud examines the media responses of three HBCU presidents, Dr. Walter Kimbrough, Dr. Larry Robinson, and Michael J. Sorrell, in order to demonstrate how

HBCU leaders can be instrumental in using counterstory to combat complacency, challenge dominant discourse, and further the struggle for reform.” Stroud concludes that the power of counterstory does not rest in its utility as a reactionary defense. Rather, its true power resides in its capacity to create “edifying” narratives and discourses to convey the history, legacy, reality, and potential of HBCUs. The goal, as Stroud sees it, is for HBCUs to build their stories, not from the individual exigence of their own institutions, but from the fabric that overlays the collective experience of HBCUs across the country. Counternarratives, in this fashion, are a necessary tool in creating a corrective narrative framework to examine and discuss HBCUs.

This kind of counternarrative exists within the sphere of confluence with HBCU and technology. Though HBCUs received 9 percent of Black high school graduates in 2009, they still award 20 percent of all degrees received by Black Americans. By 2011, that number had risen to 25 percent. Part of that increase is due to HBCUs’ investment in science and technology education. In the last twenty years, HBCUs have been stellar in the fields of STEM. In fact, the one area that has seen incredible growth, development, and success has been in the area of STEM education. Even though our nation’s HBCUs make up just 3 percent of colleges and universities, they produce 27 percent of African-American students with bachelor’s degrees in STEM fields. Xavier University, an HBCU, awards more undergraduate degrees in the biological and physical sciences to African-American students than any other university in the nation. A recent report from the National Science Foundation revealed that twenty-one of the top fifty institutions for educating African-American graduates who go on to receive their doctorates in science and engineering are HBCUs. HBCUs have implemented proven practices to assist

students in STEM fields to obtain rich professional experiences, research opportunities, and mentorships; navigate through courses and financial challenges; and drive students to postbaccalaureate success. STEM in HBCUs have provided a powerful counternarrative to the often dire broadcasts and predictions of the present and future of HBCUs. This chapter is an exploration of narratives and counternarratives within African-American technological discourse.

In Chapter 1, I argue that there is a nuanced (though often ignored) tradition of debate, engagement, and application of technology within the African-American tradition. Although the contributions of African-American inventors, scientists, and technologists have traditionally dominated the technological discourse of race and technology in the public sphere, the excavation of lost histories in the African-American technological tradition and contemporary intersections of race and technology have grown significantly. This chapter outlines threads of scholarship around this intersection of African Americans, technology, and educational space that are specifically relevant to an investigation of technological discourse in HBCUs. I suggest that Adam Banks's taxonomy of technological access and his emphasis on an African-American rhetoric of design from his book, *Race, Rhetoric and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground*, is especially useful in examining the relationships between HBCUs and the rich legacy of technology within the African-American experience.

Is It for Us?: What Troubling Questions about Technology Reveal to Us

Many years ago, I was in an office-supply store to pick up a few items for a course I was teaching that night. While at the checkout, I happened to see one of my former writing center colleagues and a fellow HBCU graduate, whom I had not seen in

years. To the ire of the people in line with us, we excitedly began catching up, talking about our families, old friends, and most of all, our graduate studies. She was just about to begin her second semester of graduate work and I was beginning my own research into the various manifestations of technology in African-American literature. As I recounted my discoveries of some of the more interesting places where technology intersects with African-American literature and lore I had found and began to sort through some of the (what I thought were) the most intriguing avenues for possible research, my friend interrupted me in midsentence and plainly asked, “So, is it for us?”

My colleague was not asking this question because she thought, as a Black woman, she was restricted in her ability to use any form of technology she deemed useful or prudent to her activity or happiness. Any casual observer can see that today there are fewer barriers of access to the use of personal technologies than ever before. Everyone has a smartphone. Personal computers and netbooks can be bought at a fraction of the cost of even five years ago, making them affordable across socioeconomic lines. However, my colleague’s question brought attention to an aspect of technology’s role in the African-American experience that was more than personal. She did not ask, “Is it for me?” She asked, “Is it for us?”, firmly making an inquiry that was not about the personal and individualistic. This was not a question driven by individual agency; the individual agency of the end user was never in question then, nor is it in question now. This was an inquiry that has more to do with systems, institutions, policies, and widespread beliefs and practices than singular instances of technoconsumerism. She was drawing attention to a checkered past, and her question, for me, offered a glimpse into the ways Black people have internalized the historical tension between Blacks and technology. Even as

the American public often imagines emerging technologies as wells of limitless potential, the hard truth is that in the battle for equality against racism, color consciousness, socioeconomic disparity and Eurocentric hegemony, the technologies that have been erected through these impulses retain traces of their regime's genius and intentions, exacting sometimes striking, sometimes terrifying penalties for transgressions against its code, its binaries.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, many subscribed to the myth that, as we moved further into the digital/information age, America would become increasingly more color-blind. Technology would lead the charge into a postracial America. And yet, in many ways the opposite has happened. America is as divided along its racist fault lines as it ever has been, if not more so. Why? It is true that technology is one means of erasing the visible markers of racism, but that is what makes it so potentially dangerous; it keeps intact its subtlety. It keeps intact the discrimination, the underlying prejudice. Though it becomes limited in its visibility, it is not limited in its *visuality*, its ability to conjure racial epigraphs and images because it operates *indirectly*. It keeps intact the sideway looks, the silent glances. The little deaths. It has the ability to center within its confines the tugs and pulls that keep racism alive. And those are the mechanisms that keep institutionalized racism in play.

Grappling with this kind of race-tinged public discourse of science and technology can lead to very real, very uncomfortable encounters with the overt kind of prejudice and discrimination that used to be considered out of time and out of place today. An instance of this was prompted by an incident that happened in my third year of graduate school. I was working as a teacher's assistant and, while talking about student

papers with two of my fellow TAs, one of them goes into a story about a friend who was teaching mathematics in an inner-city high school. He goes on to say that his friend, a math teacher, had a student, an African American, in his class who was doing horribly. When he talked to the child's mother, she flat out said that she did not want her child to learn math. Shocked, the TA's friend asked why. The mother allegedly responded that she "didn't want her child learning the White man's magic."

Now it was my turn to be shocked.

The comment turned my stomach into a knot and provoked quite a bit of ire in my response, not so much because this colleague had repeated what he had heard, but because of the eagerness with which he retold his tale. My White colleague seemed to easily and readily accept two premises that disturbed me. First, that there is a prevailing sense in the lower-income portion of the Black community that looks at mathematics, and to a larger degree, the applied sciences and technology, as the sole inheritance of White (mostly male) people, a "White magic" under the proprietary and mysterious function and whims of White people. This proclamation of mathematics and magic juxtaposes two subtly familiar—yet often inaccurate and misleading—racial paradigms for understanding the known and unknown world. It creates/reinforces a divide between the presumption of scientific discovery and inquiry as the foundation of Western thought and civilized society and the African diaspora's (at least America's) unwavering rejection of technological innovation and exploration. The known world is translated in terms of the primitive, while the unknown or unexplored world is considered the realm of the "supernatural" (the mother's alleged rejection of the teacher's attempts to teach her child algebra and her subsequent description of higher-level math as "White magic").

Secondly, that as a member of the Black intelligentsia, the token “making good” of his opportunities, and a former statistic who “beat the odds,” I would cosign my colleague’s amazement and disdain for that mother’s lack of hunger for a good education for her child, and I would lament with him about the state of urban Black America without questioning the source, intent, language, and implicit meanings in what my colleague said he heard and what he repeated to me.

Though I admit that it is possible that my colleague was relating to me what his colleague had experienced verbatim, in my experience working with local junior high and high school students within the public school system, I encountered parents with fears for their children; distrust of administrative and school district policies and procedures; frustration with lack of communication between teachers and students; guilt and self-loathing over lacking the requisite skills, knowledge, practice, and time to better assist their children’s education—yet still full of the desire that their children should have every educational advantage possible—I find the conversation to be unlikely. What is more likely is that I found myself in a rhetorical situation that embodied some of the racial fantasy and myth that underscores many of the assumptions concerning African-American attitudes towards technology.

To categorize African Americans as technophobic or spectacularly unsophisticated when it comes to new technologies are gross generalizations, and I certainly do not want to imply that either are true; however, both of these racialized notions are undercurrents of the two aforementioned conversations and harken back to earliest days of higher education for Blacks in America. At the heart of both of these

anecdotes is a pressing counterweight to conceiving technology as totally accessible to the African-American agents in question: fear.

The fear of what human beings could become as a result of all-encompassing conquering technology is lived out in the historical conundrum that is American slavery. Henry Louis Gates argues that as early as 1573, in the life and body of the African slave, “literacy was both a technology and a commodity” (44). It was a commodity in that it was the currency by which a slave’s intellect (and thus, humanity) could be weighed and measured. It was also the standard by which a slave could engineer his or her own freedom. According to Gates, literacy, in this case formal writing, was a technology that not only served as a system of communication, but as a gatekeeper or gauge for humanity as “Europeans sought to measure the ‘sublimity’ of the Africans by their progress in the so-called arts and sciences” (49). Gates goes on to show that the provenance of formal writing could raise an African to a status akin to personhood, but also reveals the careful manufacturing of a mythos that sought to deny the arts, writing, and letters (again, the technology, measures, and currency of uplift) from the histories and narratives of African people. Some, such as Gillian McIver, argue that the first border crossing of technology and man occurs in the body of the slave. The slaves

. . . were treated not so much as animals but as man-machines, semi-human but undeserving of human status [which] engendered a fear and anxiety in colonial-antebellum society that is mirrored in the unease and anxiety toward the Cyborg man-machine in 20th century culture. (“Framing the 20th Century”)

These considerations suggest that the history of technology and the African-American experience is interwoven with the presence/absence of embodiment, even in its earliest years. This apparent amalgamation of man and machine feels like a modern phenomenon,

but it is not. It is one that has early roots in African-American slaves, whose cultural value in America was directly tied to their ability to work and work more efficiently, without any consideration for their humanity.

One need only to look to the myth of John Henry to get a glimpse of the fundamental and profound distrust for the returns of technological progress. The Reconstruction Era, coupled with westward expansion and industrialization, marks the appearance of the John Henry myth, a steel-driving slave who lost his life racing against the steam-engine locomotive that would replace his labor and identity. It is the early twentieth-century recapitulation of John Henry and Casey Jones. Both masters of the railroad, but one toils from the outside of the seat of power, hammer in his hand, proving, striving, testing his mettle, punishing his psyche, seeking to affirm his identity until it kills him. All the while, the other rides the rails into infamy, self-assured in controlling both the machinations of progress and its direction.

It is true that the place of African Americans within the discourse of technology in America (and the discourse of writing, for that matter) at times expresses a tension between possessing fully human identity and the traditionally much-lower status as a social construct. Yet, we cannot divorce the discourse of technology around African Americans from the legacy of violence, racism, bodily harm, and bodily coercion. To discuss the role of technology in the lives of African Americans without acknowledging the legacy of violent intersection between technologies and the African-American experience is one dimensional and shortsighted.

That violence, whether it be physical, emotional, or rhetorical, is often embodied and carries with it a hint of visceral consequence that can be seen throughout the African-

American tradition. There has been a line of cautious investigation that is almost sporadic, ephemeral in the way it haunts and probes the linkages of technology to the very beginning of the African-American experience and the traditions of African-American literary criticism and theory. They are the questions that beg for answers. In many ways, these momentary explorations can seem almost like offhand remarks in otherwise significant works. These incidences, taken separately, do not possess a singular argument for the role of technology within the African-American experience, but together they uncover underlying truths that have often been ignored.

The intersections of embodiment and technology continue to make strange appearances in the lore, letters, and literature of the African-American experience. After slavery, the periods of Reconstruction and Industrialization mark the appearance of the John Henry myth that would replace his labor and identity. The Black body becomes a site of medical and anthropological investigation at the turn of the century, which becomes commentary for W. E. B. Du Bois's essays and fiction, Walter White's *Fire in the Flint*, and various physicians in early twentieth-century medical journals. In the Harlem Renaissance, George Schuyler satirizes some of the issues and aspirations of the "new Negro" through the guise of technology in *Black No More*. A decade later, the focus turns to the effects technology has on the African American in the urban environment. Ellison's nameless protagonist in *Invisible Man* laments in confusion as he is encased in a technologically sound medical examination tomb. At one point, when asked his mother's name, he begins to wonder if the machine is his mother, a move that technically undercuts the protagonist's humanity even further. A similar process befalls the steel-working brothers at the heart of William Attaway's *Blood on the Forge*. During

the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and early- to mid-60s, television brought into unsuspecting homes the images, sounds, and sound bites of social inequality. Television was the medium that delivered reality and persuasiveness to the prophetic rhetoric—what Bradford T. Stull would call the brilliant “emancipatory composition”—of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X (who some credit with the first sound bite). During the rise of Black Power and the Black Arts Movements, the advent of war technology issues in an era where technology becomes a tool for revolution in the midst of racial unrest, as evidenced by the poetry and drama of Amiri Baraka, Haki Madhubuti, Sonia Sanchez, and the satire of Ishmael Scott Reed. The “newly discovered” Afrofuturism present in Black science fiction and speculative fiction highlights writers such as Octavia E. Butler, Samuel Ray Delany, Jr., Nalo Hopkinson, and Steven Barnes, who imagine a technology steeped in the Afrocentric tradition without the interpolation of Eurocentric hegemony or as something that could possibly transcend traditional boundaries of race altogether. Still other emerging writers, such as Colson Whitehead and Reginald McKnight, critically engage notions of technology in their fiction and use them as a backdrop to ask introspective questions about what it means to be African American in today’s information and digital age.

These writers/scholars expose a tension between African Americans possessing a fully human identity and the role technology plays in constraining those basic aspirations and consigning them to the much-lower status as a social construct. They are important to note, not only because they chart the traces of technological discourse throughout familiar places within the African-American tradition, but also because of their impact on Black life. The Black community does not hold them in high esteem simply because of

their scholarly pursuits. They are our warriors, our standard-bearers. Our philosopher kings and queens. They and their writing embody the strength and the struggle of the African-American experience and, as such, are exemplars within the African-American rhetorical tradition. HBCUs, as well as other institutions of learning in the Black community, use them as foundations for their intellectual strivings and epistemology of social justice and racial equality. So when their voices speak of the spectre of technology, it is worth paying attention.

Investigations into African-American Culture and Technology

There are three main lines of investigation in the study of African-American culture and technology that impact this study of technological discourse in and around HBCUs. They are: 1) the contributions of Black scientists, technologists, and inventors; 2) lost or forgotten histories that catalogue African-American interactions within a framework of technological culture; and 3) intersections of race and technology that resonate within the twenty-first century African-American experience.

It is no secret that African Americans have had to write and fight their way to being recognized as important players in the American discourses of history. However, part of that reclamation positions Black people not as beasts of burden, but as creators, interpreters, and challengers of American culture, ideology, and institutional networks. In response, the first line of investigation into the complex relationships of African Americans and technology—exploring the contributions and achievements of African-American inventors and scientists—is the most popular in the public sphere. These contributions are often the first pieces of evidence that we offer to the Black community

of the Black presence within the narrative of American technology. Works like Robert Hayden's *7 African-American Scientists* and Raymond Webster's *Firsts in Science and Technology* are characteristic of these worthwhile, but often cursory, explorations into the African Americans whose individual technical brilliance is ignored.

This line of investigation does present some complications, however. The idea of purging our national conscience, national history, and national presence of the observable Black presence is nothing new or unique in America or anywhere else. However, selectively isolating individual technologies/technologists as hallmarks of an essentialistic African-American expression of technology is a problematic approach, precisely because its isolation removes it from a more fruitful narrative of the collective role African Americans have played during the drumbeat of technological progress in America. It is an issue that is made apparent in Black communities every February during Black History Month, when well-meaning teachers, parents, and community activists post their "Black History Facts" on billboards and posters; what used to be part of a series of chain e-mails have now taken on a new life as social media posts featuring short videos or memes.

One such message that has been traveling around Black America in cycles that speak to this idea with regard to technology is entitled "A World without Blacks." In its most recent incarnation as a social media video, it points to the imaginative and inventive role African Americans have had in the creation of these "yet-to-be" United States. The video starts just as the chain e-mail had fifteen years ago: It begins with the premise that a group of White Americans—tired of the shiftlessness, lasciviousness, and utter futility of the Black race—come together and, through sheer will and thought, "wishes" African

Americans away. The power of the collective mind of this group erases the presence and contributions of Blacks from America's past, present, and future. This incarnation of genocidal fantasy is almost quaint in its violence (as most fairytales are). The innovations lost in a world without Blacks—no stoplights (Garrett Morgan), no elevators (Alexander Miles), no widespread agriculture (George Washington Carver), no automatic gear shift (Richard Spikes), no lamps (Lewis Latimer), no air conditioners (Frederick McKinley Jones)—throw the world in the video into chaos, yet in reality they constitute a figurative drop in the pan of American ingenuity. The Black history ties are supposed to bind our contributions to a much larger legacy of American inventiveness. The e-mail works as an announcement and reclamation that we, too, sing America through the careful, artful manipulation of gear clicks, lever pulls, and combustible engine bangs. This has less to do with creative capacity and more do with cultural expectations of progress. The African-American inventions and inventors noted here have not only shaped America with their dignified labor, but have also fashioned new ways for us to experience the world.

As a signature to some of these forwarded e-mails, there is often a quote attributed to Martin Luther King, Jr. that states, “by the time we leave for work, Americans have depended on the inventions from the minds of Blacks,” and that “Black History includes more than just slavery, Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, and W. E. B. Du Bois.” The e-mails reveal an oft-assumed and subtly presented notion that, though Blacks have always demonstrated the necessity and capacity for invention, the full agency of utilization lives most vigorously in the White mind. What is interesting to me is that there are entire websites dedicated to

debunking the “myth” of these inventions being products of African-American ingenuity. What these sites are conspiring to do is control the possible associative identities of Black netizens by debunking the possibility of a history of invention beyond creative linguistic moves.

Rayvon Fouché argues that much of the discussion of Black inventors is predicated on the myth of the Black inventor that fits within the bifurcated framework Americans have built to discuss and historicize the African-American experience. That, first and foremost, their mere existence makes them “race-champions” or “technoheroes.” Their feats of ingenuity allow them to project a positive image, embody intellectual equality (and sometimes superiority) to the White man, achieve eventual accolades for critical achievements—even when financial success was denied or unobtainable. Many Black inventors did not see their scientific work as exercises of racial uplift or see themselves as part of the upper echelon of African Americans pushing for racial progress. In fact, Fouché finds that several of the most notable African-American scientists actively worked against being characterized as African American, preferring to allow their work to speak for them. All patents or inventions by Blacks did not constitute an artifact that was “first” of its kind, nor did patents equal financial success. And finally, all Black inventors dealt with racial oppression differently and on their own individual terms (5-7). Unfortunately, as Fouché points out,

[T]his evolution in the representation of black inventors has produced conveniently packaged mythical heroes for public consumption . . . As a result, the realities of their lives—their achievements, accomplishments, and failures—are twisted and stretched to no longer correlate to their actual existences. (4).

In response, several scholars have conducted engaging, in depth explorations and profiles of African-American inventors, scientists, and technologists. Fouché's *Black Inventors in the Age of Segregation*, Patricia Carter Sluby's *The Inventive Spirit of African Americans: Patented Ingenuity*, and Portia P. James's *The Real McCoy: African-American Invention and Innovation, 1619-1930* all make worthwhile contributions to this endeavor.

Fouché confirms this approach. He notes:

By probing the connections between African Americans and technology, we can understand a great deal about the ways in which African Americans have negotiated an adversarial American society that has been strongly influenced by the ideological agendas mediated through technology. By looking more closely at the relationships between communities of black people and technology, we can observe how technology can subjugate African Americans. But at the same time, we can identify how African Americans consume and use technology and produce meanings for technological artifacts, practices, and knowledge that regularly subvert the constructed meanings of these technological products. It is in this counterhegemonic way that the relationships between African Americans and technology are sites where African Americans have gathered resources during their struggle for racial equality in past centuries. (3)

The second line of investigation has been the excavation of encounters of African-American society and culture with technological progress and niche technologies themselves. These accounts have provided rich narratives that reveal a depth and complexity to the historical relationship between technology and the African-American community. Bruce Sinclair observes that most scholarship on the history of race ignores the presence and impact of technology they have had on racial prejudice and discrimination in America. At the same time, scholarship that investigates the history of science, technology, and innovation present histories that are “utterly innocent” of race,

giving scant attention to the ways in which the realities, complexities, and even the perilousness of racism has affected American perceptions and usage of technology (1). In recent years, there has been an interdisciplinary push to uncover what I am calling “lost histories,” which foreground the historical, cultural, and ontological relationship intersections of race and technology. These lost histories often take what was once considered aberrations in the research findings, or tangential matters in the midst of larger academic concerns, and works to produce a counternarrative that begins with the perception that race and technology are inextricably bound together. Ron Eglash broke new ground with his “African Influences in Cybernetics” and his interdisciplinary study of fractals in African craftwork, architecture, weaving, and engineering structures, positing that the structures were not incidental, but were the product of community legacies and intentional structural practices. Eglash’s study prompted the search for other connections between race, the African-American experience, and technology. Sinclair’s *Technology and the African-American Experience: Needs and Opportunities for Study* and Carroll Pursell’s *A Hammer in Their Hands: A Documentary History of Technology and the African-American Experience* are important collections that archive important moments of racial and technological intersection throughout American history and culture. David McBride’s *Missions for Science: U.S. Technology and Medicine in America’s African World*, Clarence G. Williams’s, *Technology and the Dream: Reflections on the Black Experience at MIT, 1941-1999*, and Venus Green’s *Race on the Line: Gender, Labor, & Technology in the Bell System, 1880-1980* examine the impact of race in technological spaces of innovation that have global implications. Histories of this kind have made their way into the general public’s consciousness through works like

Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women

Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race by Margot Lee Shetterly and *The*

Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks By Rebecca Skloot, which interrogates the role of Black women's subjectivity and their role in technological innovation as the producers of that technology in concrete and visceral ways.

Unfortunately, this heightened attention to these lost histories of technology within the African-American experience has not extended much to the study of HBCUs. Though this is a gap in the literature that this project seeks to explore, there is some notable research that has addressed the historical connection between race, technology, and HBCUs. Nina E. Lerman's work provides perhaps the strongest example and the one most relevant to this project. She examines how ideologies of technology and race shaped the industrial education models of the earliest institutions of higher learning for African Americans, arguing that:

[W]e have tended to easily to view industrial education as a monolithic and standardized educational alternative to what might be called the black college model, treating it as an unexamined 'other,' a foil rather than a phenomena in need of exploration. (100).

Lee A. Craig's study of Black educational attainment and the Second Morrill Act of 1890, as well as other researchers, focus primarily on the development of industrial education in HBCUs as a social necessity carried out in various early Black institutions, including Cheyney University, Tuskegee University, and Hampton University, and chose not to examine the rise of industrial education through the lens of the scientific, technological, or racial discourse.

Arguably the most useful investigations for this project have been those that explore the intersection of race and technology by examining cultural communities. Some of these works are broad explorations of American national identity, like the works of Leo Marx, (*The Machine in the Garden*), David E. Nye (*Electrifying America, American Technological Sublime*), which offer a lens to begin contextualizing the African-American experience of technology. Cultural histories, like Sarah E. Chinn's *Technology and the Logic of American Racism: A Cultural History of the Body as Evidence* and John T. Barber and Alice A. Tait's *The Information Society and the Black Community*, argue for more nuanced portraits of race and the digital age. Other collections, such as Lisa Nakamura and Peter Chow-White's *Race after the Internet* and Thuy Linh N. and Alondra Nelson's *TechniColor: Race, Technology, and Everyday Life* examine the shifting attitudes of technology in consumer and material culture and how myths of "racelessness" in cyberspace and American culture have fractured. The approach of exploring the presence of race, particularly African Americans, within subcultures of American technology have extended to studies of particular institutions, which is evident in Cecilia A. Conrad's *Building Skills for Black Workers: Preparing for the Future Labor Market*, John T. Barber's *The Black Digital Elite: African American Leaders of the Information Revolution*, and Catherine Squires's *African Americans and the Media*.

Theoretical foundations that are important to acknowledge in my exploration of technology, such as Louis Althusser's theory of the ideological state apparatus and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of fields, along with works that build a theoretical frame for understanding the politics of the "other," like Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and the aforementioned Spivak's "Can the

Subaltern Speak?” serve as reference points for these intersections. Equally important to African-American discourse communities that are actively engaging issues of technology and agency is the field of composition and rhetoric. Composition studies that determine how technology informs different discourse communities are invaluable. Most importantly, composition gives me a critical approach to observe African-American writers immersed in different rhetorical practices and traditions interacting with technology on very personal levels. It gives me means of interpreting how to negotiate and mediate technology as tools (to write or progress), symbols (of status or access), and subject (what they think). Cynthia L. Selfe’s work, *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-First Century: The Importance of Paying Attention*, offers critical paradigms for examining the uses of technology in the fields of composition and literacy learning and gives some timely insight into the effect computer-based technology has on student writers, particularly African-American students. There are works in cyberspace studies, composition studies, and computer literacy that also explore the myth of objectivity often associated with technology, such as Lisa Nakamura’s *Keeping it ‘Virtually’ Real*, Donna J. Haraway’s *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, and Sherry Turkle’s *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit*, respectively. The works of Geneva Smitherman, Keith Gilyard, along with Beverly Moss’s *Ethnography and Composition* and Elaine Richardson’s *African American Literacies* help me situate each rhetorical community within its proper context. These texts provide me with critical paradigms for examining the uses of technology in the fields of composition and literacy learning and gives some timely insight into the effect computer-based technology has on student writers, particularly African-American students.

Some of the most fruitful and innovative work has been geared towards exploring the intersections between music, race, and technology. In *Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology and African American Culture between the World Wars*, Joel Dinerstein describes the period between the World Wars as the “machine age” and that it was paced by the African-American rhythms and syncopations of jazz and the blues aesthetic. He identifies these musical expressions as “survival technology” in African-American culture. These innovations in Black music are at the heart of Alexander Weheliye’s call for new narratives in Black culture and technology. Numerous scholars contribute to the body of literature that connects hip-hop and hip-hop culture to Black cultural practice, the rhetorical tradition, and technological innovation.

Weheliye notes that popular music has been a domain where African-American culture in particular has been the site of numerous technological innovations and the dissolution of stereotypes between Black culture and the role of technological expertise within it. But even that begrudging acknowledgement by some can seem condescending when accompanied with a certain prejudicial, racial logic that says that it would only be natural for those of African descent to make their seemingly few technological contributions in the field of music. Though music has been one of the few sanctioned areas where African Americans have been allowed the freedom to develop our own creative expressionism and carve out distinct technological spaces and uses, it is by no means the only technological space we have carved out of American culture. As Weheliye surmises:

As a result, both the long history of technological innovations in Black popular music and the global spread of hip-hop show that Black culture and technology are not always at odds but can fruitfully enhance each other. Rather than replaying that all too well-known track—the “digital divide”—we might do well to find a new groove, which will enable the emergence of different narratives about the intermingling of technology and Black culture. (39)

This is especially the case with hip-hop culture. Yusuf Nuruddin offers that hip-hop, because of its linkages to the ethos of Black power and the Black aesthetic movement, can act as an intergenerational bridge for students, alumni, faculty, and administrators of HBCUs. Tracy Hall and Barbara Martin demonstrate that hip-hop is a “culturally relevant pedagogy” and can be a useful tool in improving student engagement and retention (94). Emery Petchauer, Carmen Kynard, and Adam J. Banks present sampling practices and DJing as practices that embody the principles and aesthetics of the African-American rhetorical tradition on college campuses. Banks, in particular, is interesting because in his work, *Digital Griots: African American Rhetoric in a Multimedia Age*, he reveals how the DJ functions as technological innovator and rhetorical practitioner and how the remix, a staple of hip-hop music and culture, functions as a site of affirmation, reclamation, and transformation. As Lisa Corrigan observes, “Like Alondra Nelson, Alexander G. Weheliye, and others, Banks argues that as digital griots, DJs project an Afrofuture where they imagine future spaces populated by Black people pursuing passionate, positive rhetorical projects” (379). Like Dinerstein, Banks sees the digital/lyrical mash up of the remix as a “survival technology,” one that is rhetorical in its operations.

There has been a thread of scholarship that has explored how the music of the African-American experience demonstrates the multifaceted interplays of this kind of Black technology. The layers of tensions of historicity, legacy, and subterfuge; the

dynamic interplays of undeniable ingenuity and expressions of Black identity; and the music that stems from Black life is that patchwork quilt, that tapestry, but it is also that which lies underneath. My grandmother, my mother's mother, Big Mama, we called her, stitched quilts by hand. She made those quilts from scraps of fabric she bought and she borrowed; some scraps were given to her and others she repurposed from the tattered edges of the family's clothes, even the curtains. In her lifetime, Big Mama had one man, one husband, nine children, and sixty-nine grandchildren and all of us have a quilt made by that woman's hands. I received my quilt when I was about two years old and I still have (and use) my quilt to this day. And I love my quilt. Now, I do not know the story of my quilt: where its patches come from, which ones were bought, which ones were from Big Daddy's favorite pair of overalls, which ones were from the curtains that hung in the room my mother shared with her four sisters, or which squares were from something Big Mama had made before. I just know that it was made by her hands, for me. And in the nighttime, I would pull it over me, tamp down the edge of the quilt under a pillow, lock out the cold and the noise and the oxygen and would hear myself breathe—slowly, heavily—that rarefied air in Big Mama's quilted cocoon, and I would imagine myself being whatever I wanted to be. I loved the quilt because it was warm, and Big Mama made it, and made it for me. But I also loved it for the atmosphere of experience that it allowed me to have under its worn and colorful patches at night. It is this atmosphere of experience, that warm inviting space, that provides the kind of furtive environment that is at the heart of this study. With that said, though this dissertation does not focus on how Black musical expression like polytonal drums, jazz, DJing or rapping functions as a kind of Black technology, it does constantly acknowledge its presence and influence in

creating the atmosphere of experience that allows institutions and its stakeholders to wrestle with the technology question in terms that are increasingly their own.

Adam Banks's Taxonomy of Access and Rhetoric of Design

I believe that here it is important to turn back to Adam Banks because it is his earlier work that deepens an investigation into the agency of African Americans when it comes to technology. The issue that arises consistently in the scholarship that studies these intersections of race and technology is not rooted so much in progress as it is in access. Banks problematizes this concept of access and develops a rhetorical lens that not only examines the African-American experience from the standpoint of technology, but it also broadens the scope of what technology means. With that said, I would like to take a moment and discuss what I consider to be the Banks's most intriguing and useful ideas. Banks's taxonomy of access and theoretical framework for understanding discourses of race and technology from a rhetorical perspective are critical to better understanding the role of technology within the institutional legacy of HBCUs.

Banks points out that technological systems in America are embedded with and infected by an "exploitive impulse," a tendency that has its roots in the racist underpinnings of America's history and its present. This reality exists in tension with the driving narrative of possibility and unfettered access that often accompanies technological gain in America. For Banks, the African-American rhetorical traditions—the traditions of struggle for justice and equitable participation in American society—exhibit complex and nuanced ways of understanding the difficulties inherent in the

attempt to navigate through the seemingly impossible contradictions . . . ” (xi). Banks questions the tendency to essentialize issues of technology as either/or propositions of

. . . whether technological advancement and dependence leads to utopia or dystopia, whether technologies overdetermine or have minimal effects on a society’s development, or whether people (especially those who have been systemically excluded from both the society and its technologies) should embrace or avoid those technologies. (2).

Instead, he counters, it is the African-American rhetorical tradition that best reflects groups of people who consistently refused to settle for the limiting parameters set by either/or binaries.

He suggests that African Americans have always looked for a “third way,” a means of situating African-American uses of and purposes for technology that are distinct from strictly Western appropriations and understandings of technology and unencumbered by racist assumptions inherent in those understandings. Banks uses the concept of “The One”—a founding philosophical and musical principal exposed by the funk masters of Parliament/Funckadelic in the 70s—as a metaphor for the purposeful occasions of unity within the African-American rhetorical tradition among the cacophonous voices and methodologies that have added to that tradition. Banks sets up his exploration of rhetorical practices much like Houston Baker describes in his examination of the “blues matrix.” Both studies intrinsically follow a “rhetoric of design” rooted in both African and African-American communicative and social interactions, and both have a similar trajectory: Baker’s blues matrix seeks out the almost transcendental liberation from hardship and emotional pain cataloged in blues music, literature, and speakeasies; the “higher ground” Banks searches for is the record of transformative unity

sought after by scores of African Americans looking for equality, opportunity, and, above all else, access.

In Chapter 2, entitled “Defining Access,” Banks conceptualizes technology as both a means to an end and human activity. He opens up this definition by applying more nuanced categories to the technological issue that centers the digital divide, that of technological access. Banks’s taxonomy for understanding technological access in *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology* is one that not only expands the definition of technology, but also serves as a valuable lens to observe moments in African-American rhetorical history.

Banks divides technological access into five categories: material access, functional access, experiential access, critical access, and transformative access. Material access refers to the proximity to, ownership of, and ability to use the most relevant communication and creative technologies available for community and individual benefit. Banks maintains that the conditions for material access are hugely affected by the economic disparities in our society. And yet, even the fundamental reworking of wealth and digital equity advocated by those within the discourse of the digital divide does not fully address the complexity of the inequalities centered on technology or the new directions where the conversation must go. Though material access dominates discussions about technology access, Banks rightly indicates that the way we approach issues of technology in the public sphere—like the digital divide, for example—are rhetorical problems as well as material issues because “technology issues have always functioned as a metaphor for imagining collective Black futures” (39). Ultimately, arguments for material access dominate public and political discourse, but often fail to address the deeper, systemic concerns that are a part of America’s technological identity.

Functional access pertains to the knowledge and skills necessary to use technologies, tools, and systems effectively. It is the faculty of knowing how to best use those artifacts that constitute material access to reach desired benchmarks and goals. However, Banks cautions that “just like functional literacy, it is insufficient for economic or political power or for many kinds of participation in the nation’s social or cultural structures” (41). This alludes to the idea of various degrees of functional access as a measurement of utility and benefit: Functional access maybe the ability to work with technologies without full awareness of the implications and without a developed sense of agency, but it may also be the activity of working to achieve that agency.

Experiential access recognizes that people must actually use the technology in ways that are both relevant and holistic in their lives. Banks emphasizes that experiential access also includes the “involvement in spaces where technologies are created, designed, and planned and where policies and regulations are written” (42). This leads to another aspect of this that Banks delves into in much greater detail later: an understanding of the undergirding utility of design. In his chapter entitled, “Through This Hell into Freedom: Black Architects, Slave Quilts and an African American Rhetoric of Design,” Banks uses African-American slave quilters as an example of a “rhetoric of design” that is more than just a visual aesthetic, but one that sees a

. . . set of principles for design taken from the work of people who used their work to aid some sense of collective struggle, a kind of heuristic that can be applied to design processes regardless of the different aesthetic choices one might make. (107).

Although this way of thinking about design and its future applications may fit better within some of Banks’s other classifications of access, I wanted to point out an important

connection Banks makes between a technological artifact use and its *usefulness*; what a thing is designed to do and what it is designed for are both components of its function.

Critical access is the ability to understand, critique, augment, and “resist or avoid” technology or technological discourse in response to one’s position as an agent. It is the capacity to weigh the benefits and consequences of utilizing a technology and having the authority to act on that decision. It is here, most often, where the rubber meets the road, so to speak, and paths to access are massaged, manipulated, or broken down entirely. Those who engage in critical access have an understanding of how systems of technologies work within larger sociopolitical agendas. They also understand how language structured around those agendas and technologies affect their constituencies. When it comes to their own agency, critical access requires practitioners to strike a balance between strategic, pedagogical, and budgetary goals during implementation of new technological innovations. To illustrate further, Banks produces a wonderful analogy to supermarket discount cards:

Supermarket savings cards provide a more relevant—and seemingly ubiquitous—technological example. These cards, offered by large supermarket chains, are used to track consumer purchases. These chains then use, sell, and trade the information with many other corporations in order to create demographic profile of communities and make decisions on whether to expand or withhold products and services to them, just as credit card companies and other corporations do...African Americans and many other groups of people face important decisions about whether or not they should own or use these cards, and if they do, under what terms. Just as Operation Breadbasket organized consumer education and boycotts in the 1970s to encourage Black consumers to withhold their business from companies that did not hire Black people, it is past time for African Americans to engage in targeted and mass protests and boycotts of supermarkets, science and technology departments in universities, and corporations in the technology sector that fail to recruit, hire, or promote African Americans and members of other underrepresented groups while

they spend billions of dollars on myriad programs (including the H 1B visa program) to recruit technical talent from overseas. (42)

In sum, it is during considerations of critical access that many of the cultural, social, and socioeconomic questions are asked. This is also the place where philosophical and ideological battles around technology use come to the fore. When these battles are won, the spoils of the battle should enable occasions for transformative access.

Transformative access is and has been the goal for those African Americans engaged in the technology question. It is also the most difficult form of access to actually achieve. Banks describes it as an ultimate objective, one where African-American rhetors not only argue for and work towards “genuine inclusion in technologies and the networks of power that help determine what they become,” but also

. . . call attention to the ways that the interfaces of American life, be they public facilities, education, employment, transportation, the legal system, or computer technologies, *have always been bound up in contest over language, and have always been rhetorical—about the use of persuasion, in these cases, towards demonstrably tangible goals.* (italics mine) (45)

Banks illustrates how Malcolm X’s speech “Ballot or the Bullet” and King’s “Remaining Awake through a Great Revolution” are compelling examples of how “transformative access can serve as ”the one” around which African Americans can engage in a unified, collective struggle, while appreciating the many differences that come together in African-American identity.

Even as Banks expertly makes his case for reexamining technological access, one of the tensions that exist in Banks’s work is that this access works primarily as a means of reading technology within the African-American experience and does not emphasize ways to excavate, to build, or to extend technology within the experience. Wendy Olson

points out many noteworthy critiques in *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology* and sees Banks's work as a significant contribution to fields of African-American rhetoric, literacy studies, and technical communication, but also wishes that Banks would have provided more discussion on ways African-American rhetorical strategies can be used to "counter other racist technologies." Asao Inoue observes that although *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology* does show a concern for how institutions can address racism and educational access, and "[w]hile Banks doesn't address this issue directly, he offers theoretical possibilities in [his chapter on soul and pedagogy]; however, he mainly stays at the classroom level, not the institutional one" (Kairos). Banks "returns to 'The One' as a way to understand and critique technological access and transformation, providing a few brief pedagogical suggestions for 'making access real' and a 'technological agenda for African American rhetoric.'" One of the weaknesses of "The One" is that it is an ideological statement, more of a state of being than a means of getting somewhere. The generous theoretical space that Banks creates invites us to be critical and expansive, and the notion of access gives us a language for examining the import of technology in a wide array of African-American rhetorical spaces. But in some way there has to be a spark, a catalyst, something to enact the transformative quality that Banks seeks at the end of his taxonomy and at the end of *Race, Rhetoric, and Technology*. There must be some animus to bind the word to its promise of transformation, to give it life.

Banks's understanding of access successfully presents technology as a site where, as Elaine Richardson says of other Black literacy practices, African Americans "carve out free spaces in oppressive locations such as the classroom, the streets, the airwaves" (46). However, it only marginally addresses how African-American rhetors, leaders, and

freedom strugglers have succeeded—and at times failed—to achieve a level of transformative access. It only scratches the surface of concerned pedagogues like Inoue and his students, institution builders like my concerned HBCU colleague and myself, who stand at this juncture looking for answers, wondering, muttering some combination of “What in the hell happened?”, “Who’s responsible?”, and “How in God’s name am I going to fix it *now*?” Banks is astutely aware that these considerations, as important as they are, are “barely first steps,” noting that

[t]here are many projects that remain for students, teachers and scholars who are interested in the relationships that exist between communication and the technologies that enable us to speak, write and share thoughts with each other, and to eliminating both the Digital Divide and the lack of important dialogue about it that I’ve called the Digital Discursive Divide. (106)

Banks goes on to encourage minority scholars in rhetoric and composition to develop their own frameworks of understanding and carry out their own projects, declaring that “we must insert ourselves, however that has to be done, in dialogues that have begun without us.” Banks admonishes us for becoming close minded as we retreat further into the specialization of our disciplines, imploring us to “become interdisciplinary again” so that we can understand the connections between discourses, literacies, and technologies. By investigating the paths towards transformative access in HBCUs, I see myself answering this call to connect interdisciplinary research and rhetorical practices in African-American culture.

To these ends, Banks’s discussion of access works as a point of departure for the pressing issues that HBCUs have had to contend with since their inception: How do we construct pedagogy, programs, and institutions that respond to needs of African

Americans and their larger communities? Is affluent in technology usage and the multiplicities of access, and most importantly, builds upon and extends a legacy of transformation for those who enter its midst? How do we use the tools we have? How do we begin in our planning? In our design? How can we measure our success? What steps do we have to take to build environments that encourage and promote “transformative access”? How do we take the next steps alluded to by Banks to move from reading rhetorical situations as enactments of transformative access to actively constructing, by hook or by crook, our own liberating spaces that consider the defining technologies of our time and circumstances? These are the questions that haunt many of the texts that have been discussed in this chapter, but exist as a constant source of momentum for the existence and efficacy of HBCUs.

Banks does provide a possible avenue for answering these kinds of questions when he conceptualizes a “rhetoric of design” within the African-American tradition. Banks emphasizes the role of Black designers who are engaged in the work of “collective struggle” through their rhetorics of design. These rhetoricians not only fit squarely into the African-American rhetorical tradition, but also design into their tools, texts, and spaces the sets of codes—the sign systems—that can help people navigate through the hell of any physical or virtual landscape (123). When describing the characteristics of such rhetoric, Banks is quick to point out that this rhetoric is

. . . not public work—at least it should not be entirely public for African-Americans. It is not for those who represent the public faces of black struggle, whether they be Malcolm, Angela Davis, Al Sharpton, David Walker, or Ida B. Wells. Those public figures, at least in their public roles of demanding that the codes and in the faces of America and his technologies be changed and made just for all its citizens, cannot be asked to then go right to laws, design the freeways and buildings, plan new

urban communities, and transform the computer industry. Critique can clearly be transformative, but the actual work of planning and designing transformed spaces and technologies has to be underground work, even when public figures participate in it. (108)

It is a simple point that Banks makes, but a critical one. Institution building does not happen through the charismatic utterances of black leadership; it is forged in the trenches where the entire strata of stakeholders work together through collaboration and conflict to bring together the vision and praxis that polemics of design are different than that of representation.

Banks reminds us that “critique alone will not interrupt these practices” of systemic oppression (118). Rhetorical and intellectual analyses are necessary for a proper examination of the ways technological discourse has been used to enslave and marginalize African Americans. However, there needs to be attention to the patterns and structures of resistance that Black people have created in order to combat this oppression.

As Banks suggests:

In other words, this approach to design would challenge its “practitioners to, like the slave quarters, design the signs and sign systems to lead people to freedom into the artifacts themselves, and like black architects attempted to do, design and build spaces and technologies that take freedom for granted, creating spaces in which black people, once free, can live, work, play, worship, and communicate as free people, no matter how far off a genuine freedom might seem to be. (107)

One feature of an African-American rhetoric of design is that it privileges the work of lay people, Black coders, who appropriate, innovate, create, and build in order to combat oppression and achieve a measure of collective freedom. Black quilters, for example, who have had their artistic production and craftsmanship marginalized, created intentional artifacts of resistance. Jacqueline L. Tobin and Raymond G. Dobard argue

that Black women systematically designed their quilts with specific patterns of symbols, stitches, designs, and cyphers that helped former slaves navigate the Underground Railroad (123). Banks remarks that Tobin and Dobard's account suggests ways that even the most seemingly innocuous artifacts and the most routine examples of design can help counter highly organized systems of power and help people find "freedom" (123).

Banks is astute and just to explore the rhetoric of quilts as Black technology here. Tobin and Dobard present an excellent example of the way African Americans have used quilts as an embodied rhetoric that fulfills all of Larry Neal's requirements for Black art (functional, collective, revolutionary), an African-American rhetoric of design to battle against the forces of oppression from the bottom up. When one understands the notion of an African-American rhetoric of design and then experiences the works of a quilter and visual griot like Gwendolyn Magee, it opens up an entirely new world of experience. Even so, Houston Baker, in my opinion, is a kindred spirit in theorizing an approach to African-American rhetorics of design.

One of the reasons why Banks is dead-on about moving away from the materiality of access and moving closer to culturally relevant critiques of an African-American rhetoric of design is because, as Houston Baker notes in *Blues, Ideology and Afro-American Literature*, "the 'material' is shifty ground" (3). Baker recognizes that, in expressing critiques in, say, political economy, where "production as well as 'modes of production' must be grasped in terms of the sign" or "as a *code* existing in a relationship of identity with language," that which can normally be interpreted symbolically or semiotically can also be seen or defined as *text*. However, Baker also wants to extend his view past text laden semiotics to the lived experiences and "labor conditions of people

designated as “the desperate class.” The people, for him, are the word made flesh: They “constitute the vernacular.” It is the lifeblood of their daily existence that reveals, scripts, and utilizes *the code*. When we think about the meaning of the vernacular, our first thought is of the indigenous language of a people and not the word’s meaning in reference to the human condition, that of “a slave born on his master’s estate” (5-8).

That Baker is confronted with these thoughts while searching for a distinctive African-American subjectivity and while considering the place of the modes and means of production is no coincidence. The harsh physical trails and conditions of African-American slavery, their materiality, so to speak, and “the rhythms of Afro-American blues” began to transform Baker’s conceptions of that material state, causing him to see the intermingling of the material and vernacular expression as a kind of Hegelian phenomenology of Spirit, one that produced an “ancestral matrix that has produced a forceful and indigenous American creativity” (2). In this context, examining the progress of HBCUs through the rhetorical framework of access makes sense. Access is a term that explicitly confronts struggle with external forces; when considering progress, this is not necessarily so, for while progress is necessarily affected by current trends, social conventions, and the significant events of history, its measure is regulated by an internal sense of trajectory, accomplishment, and purpose set by the striving party.

This dual determinism creates a more accurate barometer—or compass if you will—for tracking the significant, if not sweeping, movements and small revolutionary acts that lead to specific considerations within the legacy of HBCUs. Just as Baker’s blues matrix lays the African-American experience on an axis of tension and conflict,

pinpointing rhetorical and literary moments that express the hardships, inequalities, and fleeting escapes from a lovelorn life, my hope is that my exploration of African-American technological discourse within HBCUs functions as a kind of institutional matrix as well, locating moments of invention and inventiveness, transcendence and transformation, amid the struggles, successes, and failures that the HBCU community and its stakeholders have gone through as they have operated on the margins of American culture, history, and education. Banks's taxonomy of access gives those and other similar experiences a trajectory towards transformation. What we now need to do is identify stepping stones from our collective past and carve out the path—the steps—that will lead to that transformation.

CHAPTER 3

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE AND THE INSTITUTE OF COLORED YOUTH,
1832-1852: THE ORIGINS OF TECHNOLOGICAL DISCOURSE AT HBCUS

During the first week of October 1937, The Cheyney School for Teachers held an exciting week of activities, celebrating its centennial anniversary. This was a milestone, not only because the institution had persisted for one hundred years, but also because of the toils that the school had to labor under in order to survive and thrive as the first institution of higher learning for Blacks in America. The campus that week was full of alumni, former teachers, well-wishers, students, and the Black elites of the city—Philadelphia’s finest. Notables of the African-American political and academic communities were there as well to share in the moment and to appreciate Cheyney’s accomplishments. On the first day of festivities, there was a panel discussion on the institution’s legacy and humble beginnings. The keynote speaker of that panel was W. E. B. Du Bois.

As Du Bois observes in his address, the creation of an institution of higher learning for Blacks was novel in 1837, but it was a project that did not exist in a vacuum. Du Bois takes time to outline the scores of individuals and institutions that acknowledged the inhumanity and incongruity of slavery, as well as the trust to educate Blacks in America before the end of the Civil War. Some of these individuals were Quakers of lore, like George Fox, William Penn, and Anthony Benezet, but others were Catholics and Methodists. More importantly, Du Bois emphasizes the role of strong Black leadership in the education of African Americans in America long before the founding of Cheyney in

1837. He asserts that his paper that morning was “interested not so much in what Quakers and others did for Negroes as in the response which their efforts inspired among the Negroes themselves” (125). He lauded men like Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, former students of Benezet who would eventually found the African Methodist church, as “men of intelligence and real leadership” (126). He charted a brief history of free schools for Blacks dating two hundred years before the founding of Cheyney that stretched geographically from the West Indies to Louisiana. There were several Black schools in Philadelphia at the time of the founding of the Institute of Colored Youth. There were at least six private schools for Black children that were owned and operated by Blacks and at least that many schools that were established by White religious or antislavery organizations. These schools had a rich history. The city’s first school for Blacks was established in 1758 by the Bray Associates, an Anglican philanthropic society, despite opposition from White Philadelphians. Bethel Church began a Sunday school in 1795. Absalom Jones enlarged one school and opened another in 1804. Public schools for Blacks were established in 1829 and another in 1832, almost fifteen years after the legislature passed “a comprehensive plan for educating poor children” that excluded Blacks (“Historical Society of Philadelphia” 3h582). “Everywhere,” Du Bois declared, “Negroes helped in their own education, cooperated with those who were working for them and even beyond this, established in many cases and financed their own schools early in the 19th century” (126). In this, Du Bois situates the founding of Cheyney not just in the minds and desires of paternalistic Quakerism, but nestles it within a surprisingly long tradition of Black agency and accomplishment in education here in America.

Du Bois goes on to identify other conditions of redress that had a hand in shaping the inception of an institution like Cheyney. He details the importance of the First National Convention of Negroes, which had its first conventions in Philadelphia in 1831 and 1833. This first convention, as Du Bois explains it, had two primary items on its agenda: The first problem was to figure out a response to the racial violence against African Americans that had become commonplace in the northern cities, particularly Cincinnati, Boston, and Philadelphia. The second was to better educate the increasing number of Blacks that were coming into these cities. Du Bois maintained that although Blacks “. . . had schools scattered here and there . . . they were especially weak in trade schools and means of training young Negroes to earn a living. The convention sought to establish such a school” (129). At this moment, Du Bois presents the history of the institution that was probably most familiar to his audience that day:

Richard Humphreys, a West Indian ex-slave owner, living in Philadelphia at the time, bequeathed at his death in 1832, \$10,000 to found an institution “having for its object the benevolent design of instructing the descendants of the African race in school learning in the various branches of the mechanical arts and trades and in agriculture. In order to prepare, to fit, and qualify them to act as teachers.” The institution was founded in 1837 and at first taught farming and shoemaking to boys on a country tract of land. In 1842, it was incorporated and Jonathan Zane another Quaker added \$18,000 to the endowment. An evening school was added and then a day school in 1852. Finally a building was erected on Lombard Street known as the Institute of Colored Youth with Charles L. Reason of New York in charge. (130)

This brief summary of the first years of Cheyney, from here on referred to as the Institute of Colored Youth, or ICY, was common in promotional materials distributed by the school and would be repeated time and again by other speakers and administrators during the week of celebration, almost like a mantra. However, what is uniquely

intriguing here is the way Du Bois frames the creation of the Institute of Colored Youth as not only an exercise of Quaker philanthropy, but as intentionality spawned from a continuous legacy of Black educational agency, especially in the midst of physical violence and socioeconomic disenfranchisement.

Du Bois's contextualization for the catalyst and purpose for ICY serve as a launching point for this chapter. This chapter describes how HBCUs have been influenced by American technological discourse from the beginning. I argue that the creation of the first institution of higher learning for African Americans—ICY, which in time would become Cheyney University—demonstrates the way American technological discourse intersected with African-American progress, an intersection that presented the framework for a discourse of technology and the African-American experience that is bodied and racialized. As HBCUs in general, and the ICY in particular, emerge as a training ground for “the mechanical arts” and a refuge from violence, ICY and its stakeholders struggled to construct language and practices to navigate the rhetorical and physical tensions that threatened their survival. This chapter also reveals how Black leadership built on those echoes of discourse to frame their visions of technology, a vision of technology that helped to influence, shape, and encourage the growth of HBCUs at the turn of the century. I argue that Frederick Douglass's attention to the potentials of the telegraph and the necessities of industrial education illustrate a strategy for how Black leaders appropriated technological discourse for the purpose of institution building. I suggest that though a role that has been destabilized today, Black leaders of HBCUs are still relevant as the “mouth pieces” of the community through the unique rhetorical position of the HBCU as cultural communicator.

The Climate of Technological Discourse and Racism in Antebellum Philadelphia

Considering that the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the first HBCU can grant insight into the beginnings of the discourse of technological or scientific proficiency in HBCUs and the effects a climate of apprehension, fear, and violence on developing an institutional ethos of protection and uplift. With this in mind, in order to better understand the circumstances that influenced the trajectory of ICY in its initial years, it is helpful to understand the climate of technological discourse in America in during the 1820s and 1830s, particularly in antebellum Philadelphia. Antebellum America saw the invention of the steam engine, the expansion of railroads, the rise of the telegraph, and the popularity of the photograph. Steam-powered printing and the rotary press dramatically decreased the cost of print media, which precipitated the rise of newspapers, pamphlets, and flyers. James Marten of “Scientific American” reports that:

. . . by the 1830s and 1840s newspapers such as the trio of New York papers founded during this time—the Tribune, the Sun and the Herald—were sold for a penny . . . these communication technologies facilitated the anti-slavery campaign that started in earnest in the early 1830s, allowing abolitionist broadsides, brochures, books and newspapers to be distributed cheaply and widely throughout the North. (Marten)

Society was transformed, seemingly overnight, and the period ushered in an expectation for continuous progress and excited the public imagination. Americans viewed industrialization and the promise of these and other inventions as the tools that would enable lives destined for prosperity. Technological innovation was part of the American national identity. Founding fathers Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin were famous inventors. Samuel Morse and Robert Fulton became mythic figures. Nathaniel Hawthorne captured the imagination of nineteenth-century readers in his novel,

The House of Seven Gables, which through the character of Clifford expresses the starry-eyed wonder of the technical marvels of his day. His quotable musings of utopian zeitgeist have moved readers ever since. However, not everyone shared in the excitement. Writers such as Thomas Carlyle and Henry David Thoreau derided the mechanical age from distancing man from his humanity. Innovations in farming, agriculture, and manufacturing were beginning to allow countless individuals to harness the natural resources the vast expanse of America had to offer.

The term “technology” as we use it today is often attributed to a popular 1829 textbook entitled *Elements of Technology*. In it, the author, Harvard professor Jacob Bigelow, presents technology as a critical component of nineteenth-century progress and ideology. But he also places an emphasis on the original Greek meaning of *techne*—the Greek root of technology—to refer to “the techniques and bodies of knowledge for manipulating the world around us” (Kassum, Leo Marx). He suggests that: “The application of philosophy to the arts may be said to have made the world what it is today” (Bigelow 4). By the end of the antebellum period, the more common modern meaning of technology as the useful application of scientific knowledge to material ends will dominate, but for Bigelow, technology is not merely a means to an end; rather, technology is an art, one to which a philosophy of existence and achievement are applied.

Bigelow was not alone in this more nuanced, rhetorically sensitive, view of technology. At first glance, Alexis de Tocqueville seemingly ignores the critical import of these innovations and the seismic shift they engendered in American culture and society in his most well-known work, *Democracy in America*. However, Benjamin Storey reads Tocqueville’s attention (or lack thereof) to technology differently. Storey suggests

that Tocqueville did not presuppose that industrialization was “an independent material cause” of American progress. Rather, he saw that

. . . technology is at the heart of how we understand ourselves; it is democratic America’s poetic self-image. His analysis of technology is in the first place focused on why we see ourselves and our world . . . To read Tocqueville on technology, then, is to seek a better understanding not only of technology, but of ourselves. (49-50)

Michael Sacasas echoes this sentiment, observing that Tocqueville, in the tenth chapter of volume two, “Why the Americans are More Addicted to Practical than to Theoretical Science” explores the essence of technology through the guise of “practical science.” Sacasas explains:

In Tocqueville’s day, the word technology did not yet carry the expansive and inclusive sense it does today. Instead, quaint sounding phrases like “the mechanical arts,” “the useful arts,” or sometimes merely “invention” did together the semantic work that we assign to the single word technology . . . [I]n Tocqueville’s case, “practical science” was often opposed to “theoretical science.” (“Technology in America”)

The two phrases captured the distinction we have in mind when we speak separately of science and technology.

Interestingly, “mechanical arts” is a term that embodies some fluid meaning as well. The term was originally conceived in the Medieval period as *artes mechanicae*, which was a division of labor and practice seen to be inferior to the liberal arts. The mechanical arts, including trade, cooking, agriculture, architecture, weaving, and blacksmithing were considered as “servile” or “base” occupations and unworthy of a freeman’s status. That perception of the mechanical arts endured until modern times, especially in the agrarian American South. However, by the nineteenth century, the mechanical arts had become the term that the general public in cities like New York,

Philadelphia, and Boston associated with the industries of technological progress and invention: engineering, construction, craftsmanship, metallurgy, architecture. The mechanical arts were a pathway of possibilities for those who were industrious, hardworking, and possessed talent and ingenuity—all qualities that were considered a part of America's growing national character.

Of course, the sites for the mechanical arts were also stained with another aspect of America's national identity: systemic racism. Benjamin Banneker, an African-American inventor, astronomer, and surveyor who constructed the first clock in America, was a contemporary of both Franklin and Jefferson, but it is clear in Banneker's correspondence with Jefferson that Jefferson did not believe in the intellectual capacity of Black people for invention, even as enslaved people of the African diaspora were exploited for their brilliance (Banneker, "Notes on the State of Virginia"). "Let yr negroes be taught to be smiths, shoemakers & carpenters & bricklayers: they are capable of learning anything," writes Edmund White in a letter to the governor of the Carolina colony in 1688 (Sinclair 8). Still, slave owners in America "linked the supposed endurance for hard, menial labor to brutish intelligence, and then justified enslavement on the grounds of such limited capacities" (2). The Franklin Institute, founded in 1824 specifically for the purpose of exploring the mechanical arts, did not permit African Americans to attend its lectures or classes. Subsequently, this was an attitude that haunted not only plantations and other agricultural centers, but also other spaces where the mechanical arts were practiced or developed.

Clearly, technology had a special place in the American imagination, but so did race, and there was a confluence of those cultural totems, especially in the White

imagination. One had within it the societal strivings of a nation; the other drew up perceptions of a people trying to hold them back. One was majestic in its increased visibility and was lauded. The other was mocked and denigrated for its increased visibility. American society sought to limit the status of African Americans, ignore their contributions, and minimize their plight, especially in the midst of the growing abolitionist sentiment. The Black presence was always threatened with erasure, and the strivings of African Americans were, in every aspect of life, seen as something separate from the broader spectrum of progress igniting the fervor of “ordinary” Americans.

Even as African Americans contributed a significant portion of the skilled labor in mid-nineteenth century Philadelphia as “caterers, mechanics, seafaring men, coachmen, carters, shopkeepers and traders, waiters, cooks and barbers . . . washerwomen and domestic servants . . .” Du Bois in his work, *The Philadelphia Negro*, finds that racism against Blacks proliferated the industrial centers. So much racial discrimination and animosity existed that it threatens to derail the gains that Blacks had made as a community in Philadelphia. Du Bois identifies that

. . . three major contributory forces were to undermine and practically disrupt the progress that the free Negroes had been making. They were the rapid increase of foreign immigration, the increase in numbers of free Negroes and fugitive slaves, especially in Philadelphia, and the rise of the abolitionists and the slavery controversy.

Although, for the most part, in a low and degraded condition, and thrown upon their own resources in competition with white labor, they were nevertheless so inspired by their new freedom and so guided by able leaders that for something like forty years they made commendable progress. Meantime, however, the immigration of foreign laborers began, the new economic era of manufacturing was manifest in the land, and a national movement for the abolition of slavery had its inception. The lack of skilled Negro laborers for the factories, the continual stream of Southern fugitives and rural freemen into the city, the intense race

antipathy of the Irish and others, together with intensified prejudice of whites who did not approve of agitation against slavery—all this served to check the development of the Negro, to increase crime and pauperism, and at one period resulted in riot, violence, and bloodshed . . .

. . . [W]hite citizens themselves made no distinction between Negroes already well established and leading reputable and productive lives and the newly-arrived Negroes, and soon a definite tide of ill-will turned against all the Negroes . . . Racial hatred [had] become so intense among the lower classes that with the upper and middle classes doing nothing to lessen it, in 1829 a series of violent riots erupted which were directed chiefly against the Negro, and which continued until after the war. (39)

The tensions that Du Bois describes here was a northern phenomenon, but had particular import in Philadelphia. In response to the growing sense of prejudice, discrimination, and violence, and to foster a sense of worth and well-being, African Americans founded their own voluntary associations, especially “African” churches, Episcopal, and Methodist. Major cities had an African Society that provided philanthropic assistance and moral uplift for the poor and deprived and published pamphlets, sermons, and speeches defending rights of citizenship (Lewis 45). That sense of community cohesion took tangible form in street processions commemorating the ending of the African slave trade. A parade that culminated in addresses at Boston’s African Meeting House on July 14, 1808, became the starting point for annual processions on Bastille Day, which Blacks celebrated as their own Independence Day (46). One of the most radical documents of Black protest ever published was *Walker’s Appeal . . . to the Colored Citizens of the World But in Particular and Very Expressly to Those of the United States of America*. In this document, which was first printed and distributed in 1829, David Walker analyzed slavery as the manifestation of the larger American evil of racism. It was also a call to action for Africans and their descendants in America. Between 1831 and 1837, African

Americans in the Philadelphia area had already established almost one hundred social and charitable organizations; over half of these organizations were women's societies.

According to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, by 1837, these organizations were distributing \$14,000 every year for the relief of the sick, disabled, or distressed.

Scornful of all this "African" agency, opposition to the public celebrations and the social activity took the form of anonymous "bobalition" broadsides published first in Boston, and later internationally, and were written in what David Waldstreicher terms "literary blackface," which was ungrammatical or nonsensical language, a curious dialect that portrayed African Americans as incapable of rational speech and logical thought (15). Broadsides were the pop art of the 1820s; Robert Michael Lewis defined it as "nonsensical dialogue that ridiculed the intelligence and citizenship rights of African Americans (43). Douglas A. Jones, Jr. adds that the broadsides acted as "performative texts," which "became the lexicon with which white northerners both heard and saw black speech in the early nineteenth century," especially when paired with the equally popular racist minstrel songs of the early 1830s, such as "Jim Crow" (c.1830) and "Zip Coon"—known today as "Turkey in the Straw" (c.1834).

The minstrel music, along with the broadsides, mocked the enthusiasm for abolition. African Americans, the broadsides declared, were:

. . . ill-educated, over-dressed, overbearing, and overassertive in demanding equal rights. Crude woodcut illustrations showed women with huge hats and veils and fans inappropriate for their low social standing, and men with pseudo-classical names clad in gaudy militia uniforms and bearing huge swords or broomsticks, or sporting the fancy hats, canes, and tail-coats of gentlemen.

Those who celebrated abolition were depicted as “vain,” “pompous,” and “incapable of restraint and industry (46).

Music as a technological discourse, especially with regard to the African-American tradition, is an argument that has been substantiated and does not bear repeating. What I want to suggest here is that minstrel music of the antebellum period provided a base block on which others would construct and deliver subtle messages about the ingrained incongruity of African Americans as informed, willing, and capable participants in technological progress and the mechanical arts. Minstrel songs like the “bobalition songs” had deeper roots than the songwriter’s creative imagination. The title, and title alone, appears in several of the bobalition broadsides. In “Bobalition of Slavery!!! Grand Selebrashum by de Africum Shocietee!!!!”, issued from Boston but printed in Greenfield, Massachusetts on July 14, 1818, the song “’Possum Up a Gum Tree” accompanies the spoof toast, “Massa [Henry] Clay—If he want brack man go lib in Africa, why he no go show him de way heself.” In “Grand Bobalition of Slavery” (1819), the nonsense toast to “De land of our faders; where dey catch elephant in a rat-trap—dough he good ways off, we find him in Bosson to-day,” is followed by “Moosic—’Possum Up a Gum Tree.” In “Grand Bobalition” or “Great Annibersary Fussible” (1821), the “De Tate of Maine” toast that receives “60 cheer, 100 laugh” precedes “Moosic—’Possum Up a Gum Tree” (49).

These themes would be picked up and magnified in the art of Edward W. Clay. Clay’s late 1820s print series, *Life in Philadelphia*, was a grotesquely racist portrayal of Philadelphia’s Black upper class. Clay began the series in 1828 after returning from overseas trips to London and Paris, where he was greatly influenced by George and

Robert Cruikshank's *Life in London* drawings. His depictions of African-American social mobility, formal attire, organizational and institutional life, and everyday interactions catered to most of the negative stereotypes associated with African Americans during the antebellum period. His renderings reified the social separations that defined antebellum race relations in the White imagination, even as several of those barriers in Philadelphia had begun to weaken because of its vibrant community of free Blacks who were well educated, built institutions, owned property, participated in local government, and conducted their own affairs. *Life in Philadelphia* consisted of fourteen engravings that lampooned African Americans for "[taking on] the trappings of bourgeois urban life" and who "were overreaching and out of place." The African Americans illustrated by Clay were always free men and women engaged in social striving, but always buffoonishly confused and misinformed: They can try to imitate civility and culture, but they will never fully possess it. Though they aspire—as Clay uses one of his characters, Miss Chloe, (Convers) to say — they "aspire too much" and will ultimately comically and tragically fail ("Color Lines").

The images not only satirized Black life, but also delivered its racist messages in other rhetorical ways, particularly in the way it depicts Black bodies and Black language. The juxtaposition of exaggerated anatomical positions, with Clay's satirical gaze trained on colorful, outlandish attire worn by the African Americans in his sketches, create scenes of genteel monstrosity. The language is a gross misappropriation of Black dialect, a comic styling that Clay is given credit for popularizing and that would remain popular in some form for the next century. What's interesting here is that Black dialect, the language of newly freed slaves trying to acclimate themselves to life as free people of

color, or the common street language of Philadelphia's bars, brothels, and street brawls was frowned upon, even despised by the Black elite of Philadelphia. This was a fact which exposed some of the burgeoning class consciousness and intraracial divides that would continue to grow with the influx of African Americans into Philadelphia after the Civil War (and a second influx during the Great Migration) and plague the Black community well into the twentieth century. And so, for the upper echelon of the country's Black free men and women—men and women who were teachers, philosophers, doctors, lawyers, ministers, members of organizations (e.g., the Links, the Freedmen's Bureau, and the Freemasons)—to be misrepresented in a speech that was nigh barely legible and scantily intelligent was galling to many African Americans in the city. Rhetorically, the depictions stripped away the voices (and the genius) of Philadelphia's upwardly mobile Black community, not by muting them, but by transmorphing their language into nonsensical artifice. In Clay's vignettes, African Americans were never shown as slaves, they just sounded like them.

In Clay's version of the bobalition broadside, he repeats many of the racist toasts and tropes of earlier versions, but adds a few personal touches to reflect the tensions in Philadelphia at the time. His engraving entitled, "Grand Celebration Ob De Bobalition Ob African Slabery" shows a raucous celebration of drunken African-American men dressed in their colorful finery, several of whom give toasts. The supposed joke for the readers is the apparent lack of intellect and understanding around social issues that mark each man's toast. Along with repeated toasts about William Wilberforce, "De Orator ob de day" (*When I jus hear him begin he discourse, tink he no great ting, but when he come to de end ob um, I think he like de scorch cat more better dan he look*, "Moosic—

Jenna M Gibbs observes that life in Philadelphia “became a standard phrase to refer to fashions, trends, and—most especially—Black Philadelphians’ social practices and sartorial choices” (137). It is no wonder that *Life in Philadelphia* became immensely popular, not only in America, but also in Europe. Clay visited London in the 1820s at the height of the *Life in London* craze and then emulated the new genre in his 1828 cartoon series *Life in Philadelphia*. Clay, however, transposed the class-based divisions of London to race-based stratification in Philadelphia. He burlesqued free Blacks’ aspirations to a middle-class lifestyle and inclusion in the body politic: The urban white dandy of London was now an overdressed Black American. By the 1830s, the transatlantic flow was reversed when London cartoonist George Tregear reworked Clay’s racist cartoons under the title *Black Jokes* and used his new versions of *Life in Philadelphia* to disparage not only America’s “great experiment” but also Black freedom in the British West Indies (119).

Clay is arguably one of the most memorable visual artists of the period, precisely because of his ability to capture the trepidations of Philadelphia society as the call for the abolition of slavery became louder, more widespread, and more fervent. To put in contemporary terms, Clay isolated the fear of a Black planet in the imagination of the White mind. Clay’s images became part of the popular imagination and the social fabric of antebellum America. They were on sheet music covers, figurines, and book and magazine illustrations. Countless numbers of nineteenth-century engravers, lithographers, cartoonists, and illustrators adopted Clay’s visual strategies to transform what began as a local look at Black life in Philadelphia into a national taxonomy of race. His ideas, ones that wove social, political, and corporeal commentary on blackness, dominated American

visual culture's contribution to national debates over race and power. Just as the telegraph was a central component of communication in the nineteenth century, so too were Clay's depictions of the Black community in *Life of Philadelphia*, which was a trans-Atlantic communication device that conveyed, disseminated, and normalized the racist ideology of antebellum America.

The race riots would continue for the next decade, the popularity of minstrel music would continue to rise, as would the transatlantic success of Clay's racist portrayals of the Black middle and upper class, all of which would carry an undercurrent of technological discourse that rejected the participation African Americans in the building towards industrial and technological progress. Ultimately, this rejection was spoken and unspoken, violent and subtle. Whatever the medium, it was entirely based on the assumed moral and intellectual inferiority of Black people. It was in this climate that Richard Humphreys made the decision to assist African Americans in their quest to educate thousands of their race in the mechanical trades as a measure of social equality and gainful employment in a society that had placed an increased social significance in technological arts.

Violence and the Vision for the Institute of Colored Youth

Richard Humphreys was born to a slaveholding family on Tortola in the British Virgin Islands. As a young man, his religious and social sensibilities began to change, and he began to associate himself with the Religious Society of Friends, also known as Friends or Quakers. Like many other North American offshoots of Protestantism, the Quakers have their roots in the religious and political dissent of Christians in the mid- to

late-1700s. What made the Quakers distinctive were their relatively progressive social views and their rejection of slavery. It was to this cause that Humphreys, a gold and silversmith by trade, moved to Philadelphia in 1764. After witnessing the “crisis of violence” against minorities that plagued several northern cities, including Philadelphia, along with the mounting tensions brought about by an influx of immigrants, a skilled workforce which often displayed as much animosity towards Blacks as most White Americans during the time, Humphreys dedicated himself and his philanthropy to addressing the economic disenfranchisement of African Americans.

Humphreys was reportedly spurred to action by the race riots of 1829. Whether it was the local rioting caused by the emancipation speeches and calls for social equity delivered by Frances Wright Darusmont in June and July of 1829 or news of the two weeks of racial carnage that ravaged Cincinnati, killing and displacing hundreds of African Americans in August of that year, is impossible to know. It is important to note that the catalyst and the development of the first historically Black institution for higher learning grew out of this climate of racial violence and hostility, especially in Philadelphia. Not long after the riots of 1829, Humphreys changed his will to reflect what he hoped would be an ongoing commitment to young Black men and women in Philadelphia. According to the foundation created to manage his affairs, upon his death in 1832, Humphreys “left an estate of over \$90,000, \$10,000 of which he bequeathed to thirteen members of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends for the purpose of establishing a school for

. . . instructing the descendants of the African Race in school learning, in the various branches of the mechanical arts and trades and in Agriculture . . . in order to prepare and fit and qualify them to act as

teachers in such of those branches of useful business as in the Judgment of the said society they may appear best qualified for . . .

On June 17, 1832, the trustees met with the executors, signed the receipt, and received \$9,750.00, the amount after the inheritance tax. Five years would pass before the trustees would meet again.

No records have been found that give an explicit reason why the trustees did not meet again for such a long time to discuss the prospects for creating a mechanism for fulfilling Humphrey's dying wishes. Nevertheless, there is evidence that suggests that they may not have felt safe to do so. Several race riots had put the city on edge and made entrees into improving the social welfare of Blacks in the region incredibly uncomfortable, if not outright dangerous. The school proposed by the National Convention of Negroes in 1831 was to have been a college established in New Haven " . . . for the liberal education of Young Men of Color, on the Manual-labor System . . . by which, in connection with a scientific education, they may also obtain a useful Mechanical or Agricultural profession" (Convers 59). Unfortunately, the citizens of New Haven vehemently rejected the idea. The school faced similar opposition from the town of Canaan, New Hampshire. Charlene Convers, in her history of Cheyney University entitled *A Living Legend: The History of Cheyney University: 1937-1951*, deduces that "It is reasonable to assume also that even the more broad-minded whites who might have wanted to sell preferred to avoid the censure or even violence that could possible [*sic*] ensue upon such a sale." This attitude was confirmed in the annual report from the following year, where the managers admitted that "there were those openly opposed to [the institute]. . . ." (61).

In addition to a lack of White public sentiment for African-American education, the race riots had increased in their ferocity and had put the city on edge. In 1833, a demonstration against the abolitionists took place, and, in 1834, arguably the most serious riot occurred. Of the race riot in Philadelphia in 1834, John Runcie reports that America was besieged by a crisis of violence that was tearing away at the social fabric of its northern cities, from the “ungentlemanly deportment” of Congress to the antiquated public pistol duels on the streets. Runcie quotes evangelical firebrand Lyman Beech who bemoaned that “the whole land [of America] is defiled with blood . . . We are Murderers, a nation of Murderers.” Many newspapers in Philadelphia during the time saw this violence as a repudiation of the North’s perceived moral superiority to the South, which many people believed was full of savages, both Black and White. Runcie remarked, “As newspaper editor Joseph Chandler put it, ‘Let no one lift up his eyes and groan against the South. Bowie knives, dirks, and pistols are worn shown and used in Philadelphia as well, if not as much as they are in Mobile.’” (187-88). Runcie observes that:

What really alarmed many Americans at this time was the rapid growth in the amount of mass or collective violence. “Their Majesties the Mob” were active on many different fronts, lynching thieves and gamblers, disrupting elections, and persecuting Catholics, Negroes, Mormons and Abolitionists. These were years which were filled with labor riots, race riots, and nativist riots. Some of them were mere incidents, others lasted for several days at a time and required military intervention and the imposition of martial law before peace was restored. People died in these riots; convents, churches and private property were burnt and destroyed; martyrs were created. (189)

The riot, which would come to be known as the Flying Horse Riot of 1834, began when a mob, some numbering of several hundred people, attacked a popular amusement attraction on South Street, a carousel machine known as the flying horses. “It was an

attraction that was popular with both Negroes and whites living in the neighborhood.” The mob, which, according to reports, was mainly young White immigrants and mechanics/skilled laborers, destroyed the building that contained the carousel and quickly overran the Blacks who were trying to stop them. Growing larger, the mob quickly moved in mass several blocks west of the city into the Black neighborhood of Moyamensing (currently East Passyunk in South Philadelphia) where they “began an orgy of destruction, pillaging and intimidation, which was repeated on the following two evenings” (Runcie 190). During three consecutive nights, Negro homes were torn down or burned, churches were wrecked, people were assaulted on the streets, and several persons were killed. The police had great difficulty in quelling the mob. Violence would continue in 1838 when a mob assembled in front of Pennsylvania Hall—which was built especially for abolitionists to hold their meetings—and burned it to the ground on the day of its dedication, while firemen, who were detained by the crowd, stood helplessly and watched.

Perhaps it was the racial violence of the city that caused the twelve Quaker executors of Humphrey’s will to lay low for five years after his death. Whatever the reason, the committee committed to planning the institution at the beginning of 1837. On Saturday, February 25, 1837, a large group of the original committee, along with other interested Friends (Quakers) met in order to ratify the institution’s Preamble and Constitution:

Article 1st

The association Shall be styled ‘The African Institute,’ and its object shall be the education and improvement of the Children and youth, of the African race, by instructing them in literature, Science, Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts.

Article 2nd

The Association Shall always consist of Members of the Religious Society of Friends; and every person being and continuing a member of that Society, who Shall pay to the Treasurer, the sum of Twenty Dollars or upwards in one payment, or of Two Dollars or more annually, Shall be a member of this Association.

Article 3rd

The Officers of the Association, Shall be a Secretary, Treasurer and Thirteen Managers, all of whom shall be chosen annually from among the members; but in case of failure to elect Officers at the Stated time, those in Office shall continue until others are chosen. The Secretary and Treasurer shall be ex-Officio members of the Board of Managers.

Article 4th

The management of the concerns of the Association, shall be entrusted to the Board of Managers, who shall have power to appoint and employ Officers and Teachers under them, and to make such rules and regulations for their own government and that of the Institution which may be founded, as they shall deem proper and expedient, provided such rules and Regulations are not inconsistent with these Articles.

Article 5th

The Association Shall meet Annually, at Such time and place as it shall determine, and fifteen members shall be a quorum for the transaction of business. At these meetings the Board of Managers shall present their minutes, and a report of their proceedings during the preceding Year, of the State of the Institution and of the Treasurer's account.

Article 6th

The Board of Managers shall have power to call Special Meetings of the Association, when they deem it expedient, and also to fill any vacancy which may occur in their number, by death, resignation or otherwise.

Article 7th

So much of the preamble, and of the first two Articles of This Constitution as declares the objects of the Association, and that its members shall always be members of the Society of Friends, shall not be changed. (Board of Managers, February 1837)

The first two articles of the new association are important because they set the groundwork of intention for the newly named "African Institute." Naming the new school the African Institute placed it within the continuum of the aforementioned Black schools,

churches, and organizations already engaged in the teaching and uplift of African Americans in Philadelphia. It also meant that the Quakers involved in establishing the new school and who were acting as executors of Humphrey's will were likely aware of the then contemporary use of the moniker of "African" as a sign-symbol of racial uplift. The vision for the subject matter that would be taught at the school was also consistent with the programs of study (liberal arts) in Black schools at the time and the desire to expand that education to include science (which would be scientific theory, mathematics, and physics) and the mechanical arts (the employable trades). Notably, agriculture is identified as a separate area of study, a detail that resists the conflation of agriculture as the site of the mechanical arts, which would become the dominant narrative of industrial education in the African-American experience decades later. The second article designates the Society of Friends and its members as the source of stewardship of this endeavor. In and of itself, this stipulation was not an uncommon one. Religious organizations would often require in their charters that members of leadership must subscribe to that denomination or house of worship.

At the next meeting on April 19, 1837, the committee changed the name of the African Institute to the "Institute of Colored Youth." There is no information given to suggest why the change in name was made or that any vigorous debate was had. Given the violence of the time, the managers may have felt that the name change helped to insulate their efforts from possible attack. Places that had "Africa" in the name were being attacked for their bold stances on social equality and abolition. An "institute" for colored youth could be a school or an orphanage—or a labor camp. They may have agreed that the change was warranted to avoid further delays towards their efforts in

building a school. The next month, the managers met at Arch Street to approve the circular that would be used to advertise their new initiative and obtain subscriptions.

Convers provides an excerpt from the circular below:

Should sufficient funds for the purpose be procured, it is designed to obtain a farm in the vicinity of the city where a portion of the day shall be spent by the children under the care of suitable superintendents and teachers in acquiring school learning and a part also in agricultural or mechanical labours by which they may be trained to industry and obtain a knowledge of some useful trade or business. (57)

Within the year, the association and its members selected amongst themselves managers, who would form various committees to plan the construction and work of the institution and Trustees who would manage its finances. By January of 1838, the association had accumulated \$13,000 for the purchase of a farm for the school (ICY-Corporation Minutes, January 1838).

Yet, more than two years after the adoption of the Constitution of the Institute of Colored Youth, the institute still did not have a home. Nor did it have any teachers, students, or classroom materials. In fact, the Board of Managers scarcely met over that two-year period to move the school forward. As Convers details:

In their March 1838 Annual Report, the Board admitted not yet having realized their aim of improving the lot of colored youth, but their failure was not due, they said, to a want of exertion of their part. It was due rather to difficulties “. . . and embarrassments which require time and perseverance to remove.” (60)

There is no indication within the annual reports of the exact nature of these “difficulties” and “embarrassments.” Convers speculates that the financial crisis of 1837, which would last for almost a decade, was a consideration for why the managers were not zealous with

their solicitation of subscriptions, but the greater obstacle may have been the climate of animosity towards Blacks that had reached a fever pitch in the city.

From the annual reports and committee reports dating from 1838 to 1840, the most important topic of discussion in the records is centered on the procurement of a farm for the school. The first order of business for the managers was to procure farmland. The farm committee called a special meeting on June 1, 1839, to report that they had found an owner, Oliver Wilson, who had a farm of 136 acres about seven miles from the city on Old York Road to sell. On June 11, 1839, the farm committee confirmed that it had drawn up a contract with Wilson and made a down payment on the farm. Six of the managers' names were added to the deed, and the group formally created a committee which would operate the farm.

In a report dated August 1839, the committee made recommendations that would act as a strategic plan for the school's operation for its initial years, and they reveal some interesting details about the Institute of Colored Youth at this time. The farmland on which the school resided would largely remain farmland. Hopefully, the managers could find the right family to cultivate it so that it could become an economic driver for the school in time. The students would be boys from the local orphanage a few miles away. Furthermore, the students were young; managers took the unique step of taking "exclusive control" of the setting up a conservatorship for the students that for some students could be a decade of guardianship. The students' initial education would not be revolutionary. There was no mention of the trades, sciences, or mechanical arts at this point and no mention of forthcoming efforts to move in that direction. In the first year, students would take on "the ordinary branches of education." The rest of their time would

be dedicated to housework, gardening, and farm work. In the institution's second and third years, they would double the number of students from the preceding years and introduce those students to the same program of study. During the first three years, the managers believed that "not many mechanical avocations could be introduced, yet the children would be well employed in getting a sound English education and cultivating habits." The managers hoped that by observing the students over the years, they could better determine which students had aptitudes for particular kinds of trades and "different mechanical pursuits which might be advisable to be introduced into the establishment." How they would arrive at those conclusions, given the lack of expertise the managers had in the mechanical arts and trades, is unclear.

According to the January 1840 Board of Managers meeting, the Farm Committee reached a contract with Issac Jones on January 20, 1840, a local farmer, to farm the land, but there was still a pressing need to find a teacher, a gardener, and a superintendent for the school. By April 1, 1840, the previous tenants had vacated the farm, but it was unprepared for school operations. No pupils could be taken as the managers lacked plans of action for the administration of the school. They had neither an admissions process nor any real sense of an appropriate curriculum. The Teaching Committee had not been successful in finding a suitable person—one who could both superintend the garden and teach, so the managers decided to let the farmer do all of the gardening and find a female teacher for the students. Though the committee of managers had a few candidates, they had no teacher for instruction in August of 1840.

The school's farmland had been idle for months, which, as Convers opines, probably drew the ire of the Quakers. So, the managers "determined to get started one

way or another” and held a special meeting on September 26, 1840, where the Teaching Committee submitted that Cyrus B. Bean, a young man qualified to serve as the caretaker and instructor of the children, be hired. Now that a teacher had been finally secured, the managers went ahead with plans for the actual opening of the school. The Committee of Instruction, formed in February after the purchase of the farm, “was directed to be present at the opening of school to convey the lads to the farm and furnish the teacher with books, slates, and other necessities, while the Committee of Admissions was authorized to send to the Institute “on trial” such boys as they thought proper on and after October 5, 1840” (Convers 75). On that day, the nearby Shelter for Colored Orphans relinquished five boys to the Institute for instruction: Robert Fulton, George Thomas, George Farmer, Jacob Hegedore, and Augustus Bolivar, all between the ages of eleven and fourteen, enrolled in the Institute.

The Institute of Colored Youth received good students. The managers were pleased that the boys “were found able to read, write, cypher and spell, having some knowledge of geography as well” (Board of Managers Minutes, November, 1840). The boys were also found to be well-behaved and mannerly, attending to their studies with enthusiasm. They spent much of their initial time on the farm working the soil, attempting to make the most of a growing season that would now be incredibly short because of their late start. Education in the area of trades, sciences, or mechanical arts was virtually nonexistent; Convers acknowledged that “the boys had made a number of articles, of clothing and bedding,” but these were “items for the house” (76). They did not make shoes; they fixed them. They did not make clothes; they mostly mended them. In the Annual Report of 1841, the boys’ meager production from the garden was attributed

to their small stature and size, but the yields per person were perfectly acceptable for subsistence farming. From the descriptions given in the managers' monthly and annual reports and the commentary added by Convers, much of the manual activity completed by the boys seemed to be not the industry of trade, as Humphreys' original will and the institution's original constitution had outlined, but it was the industry of survival.

The dual missions of running a farm and running a school began to take its toll on the operations of the fledgling institute. On January 18, 1841, the Farm Committee—now renamed the Visiting Committee (all of the members were the same, and since the farm had been purchased and had tenants, the Committee turned its attentions to the staffing of the Institute and its property)—reported that Cyrus Bean was leaving the Institute. He had apparently grown tired of having to wear multiple hats there. It was just as well as Bean at that time had been leaving the boys unattended, had not been accompanying them to meetings, and had been derelict in his duties. On February 12th, one of the managers reported that “two boys were absent from the house and others not in school.” The next teacher, William A. Steer, began to teach the boys in March, but was gone by the end of May (Board of Managers Minutes, February, 1841). Convers hypothesizes that “the difficulty seemed to lie in the insistence of the managers that the teacher be not just a teacher, but all things to all people, especially a gardener” (76). Meanwhile, the students continued to farm, cook, clean, wash, iron, and mend. The annual reports of 1841 and 1842 commended the boys on their behavior and their proficiency in “manual labor.”

The Institute reached a measure of stability after the September 10, 1841, hiring of Eliza Hinchman as a teacher with the boys' “time about equally divided between manual labor . . . and attention to studies with their teacher” (78). In December, the

Committee of Managers had found John Healy, who accepted the position of superintendent of the school, but they also began to chart a new mission. Though he was hired as superintendent, Healy and his wife's first responsibility was to organize manual labor for the productive cultivation of the farm. In an effort to make the school self-sustaining, the managers decided that the literary education of the boys would have to take second place, stating that "the literary education of the pupils of the Institute shall also be attended to by the said . . . at such times and in such manner as the Managers may from time to time direct." This approach was designed to improve the bottom line of the Institute, but it was entirely at the expense of the education of the Institute's students.

The Annual Report of 1842 seems to identify the most important criteria of the Institute's success as the amount of labor the students produced. The Institute received new pupils, including a 21-year-old, Albert Morris, who had previously lived on the farm. Unfortunately, Hinchman's contract ended in March of 1842, and again, there was instability with the teaching position. The lack of planning and attention to the details of the curriculum, along with careful consideration of who would administer it, had begun to negatively impact the students, especially the new arrivals. The lack of a permanent qualified teacher and no on-site administrator for the educational component meant that the student's studies lacked consistency, which had quickly taken a back seat to the realities of running a farm.

Prioritizing farming had another unintended consequence: cost. The lack of planning around the needs of the students and the facilitation of an operational farm caused the expenses of the Institute to increase substantially. By the end of 1842, the managers were constantly seeking new streams of revenue. The managers petitioned the

Arch Street Meeting House and the courts to give them access to the funds of like-minded Quakers. Some of those streams of revenue were from additional legacy funds that coincided with Richard Humphreys' original mission for the Institute. A more questionable "scheme" (as Convers would call it) was the managers' attempt to provide quarry stone for the turnpike company. The managers hired a person to be in charge of extracting stone from the Institute's property. Again, the students of the Institute were made to be a part of that work, but only "during good weather"(84). In the September of 1843, the Institute's priority was again made clear when the visiting managers closed the daily school of the ICY in order that the students devote all their time to the farm.

Any pretense of having an institution dedicated to the formal education of African-American boys was broken and the Quakers admitted as much in their December meeting of managers. They admitted that they had failed in their original mission and were called

. . . more fully to carry into operation the original design of the Institute than they have yet been able to do; it was concluded that it would be a favorable time to endeavor to introduce into the school some of the simpler mechanical arts such as shoe and mat making, broom making, etc." (Board of Managers, February 1844)

Convers would go on to point out how, in their March 1844 report, the managers " . . . expressed regret that the boys had had to be occupied mainly on the farm, in the garden and in the household, and not in ' . . . employment contemplated in the original design of this establishment'" (87). The managers would go on to express an interest in procuring equipment necessary for real manufacturing or mechanical work: fabrication, extraction, welding, sewing—but the record gives the impression that it was more of a stream-of-consciousness desire and not a true avenue of planning. In fact, the managers

began to soften their position on their missteps and subsequent need for correction by emphasizing the boys' current industriousness, claiming that they had been knitting, sewing, "manufacturing cornbrooms," and slaughtering animals. The managers continued to defend their approach (the same approach they had lamented earlier in the meeting and earlier in the year) and justify that the "[p]roper instruction in such manual labor as may be useful to them in the future" (Board of Managers, March 1844). Even though this sentiment seems to run counter to their earlier expressed regrets, the managers justified their decisions by reminding themselves that though "various other proposals have been offered . . . for significant reasons [they] have not been adopted" (Convers 88). In June and July of 1844, lessons were discontinued so the students could focus on farming and repairs to the barn and outbuilding. In August, Superintendent John Healey and his wife put in their resignation, which would take effect in the spring of 1845.

In September, one of the outbuildings caught fire "under suspicious circumstances." The Visiting Committee would investigate, and though it is unclear what came out of their investigation, the Board called a meeting on October 7th to address the departure of Elias Montgomery, a student who had apparently run away and whom the Board had previously tried to have arrested "for safe keeping." They would later learn that Montgomery "was working for a physician in the city with the knowledge of his mother" (89). In the fall of 1844, a committee was appointed to find a new superintendent, yet the students were still without a teacher. It is safe to assume that the formal education given to the remaining thirteen boys was haphazard at best. This unfortunate state of affairs would get worse. Convers finds that:

. . . in March, a new set of rules and regulations was submitted by an appointed committee which made no provision at all for instruction in the classroom. The boys were to rise at 5 o'clock and do their chores; have breakfast at 6 o'clock, followed by devotion; start manual labor at 7 o'clock (except during haying and harvest when it commenced before breakfast when occasion demanded it); have dinner at 12:30 followed by manual labor starting at 2:00 (again except in emergencies when it began earlier) and lasting until 6:00; have supper at 6:30; and engage in "necessary duties" from supper till bedtime at 9:00. (90)

As a result, two more boys, Andrew Parker and Daniel Yeoman, ran away. Parker was found and returned to the Institute, while Yeoman began working various trades in Philadelphia. A new superintendent, Caleb Cope, expressed interest in seeing a smithery built at the Institute for the boys to learn that trade, but no real effort was put towards that endeavor. The Committee announced that since the boys had at this time gained sufficient knowledge of farming and farm tools, that they would "dispense with hired help on the farm, excepting occasional necessity may require it."

This seems to be the final straw. The remaining students, understandably, voiced their displeasure, enough so that it was mentioned in the meeting minutes. The managers described their difficulty in controlling the boys, and surmised that it was not a good idea to bring in a teacher for that reason. It is important to note here that at this point, ICY had not had a full-time teacher for over a year. On May 31, 1845, the barn at the Institute was partially destroyed by fire. Upon arriving at the farm, the managers "found a feeling of general ill will being manifested by most of the pupils" (91). They discovered the culprit to be George Harmer, a student who had confided his planned act of rebellion to a fellow student, Jacob Hegedore. Both students were removed from ICY. Harmer was imprisoned for a brief time and was placed on a whaling ship, while Hegedore "was bound" to a farmer in New York until he was twenty-one. The fact that ICY would release students

into the custody of a merchant ship and a labor farm is alarming and appalling, especially given the agreement it initially made with the orphanage to take care of the students until they reached adulthood.

More deserting students, or “elopements,” would follow and ICY lost several potential students once its present condition and calamity were made known. A special meeting was called on December 15, 1845, to formally suspend operations at ICY, and it was subsequently closed, its assets sold, and the students transferred to homes that would have them. Many more students had run away at this point; the last former student of ICY was removed to live with a widow in Philadelphia on April 3, 1846.

The Failure to Reconcile Race and Technological Discourse

Quaker aesthetics had always been known for its fiscal responsibility, its careful deliberation, and its effectiveness with institution building. Yet, these seemingly foundational characteristics of institution building and institutional development seem to be sorely lacking at ICY in its most critical initial years. So what happened? What might have caused the managers and executors of Humphreys’ will to be so limited, even racist, in their initial foray into establishing ICY?

The most damning factor was the Quakers’ own unacknowledged racism. Though Quaker men and women led the charge for the abolition of slavery and invested substantial resources into the education and well-being of African Americans during the antebellum period, many of them simultaneously saw Blacks as inferior creations, worthy of freedom under God’s providence, but undeserving of equitable social standing to the status of Whites. Sarah Mapps Douglass was no stranger to Quaker ideology or

philanthropy. She was also no stranger to the discrimination and racial prejudice of the Quaker meeting house. In a December 1837 letter to William Basset, a friend of her “beloved sisters Sarah and Angeline Grimke,” Mapps Douglass details the racism she and her family experienced at the Philadelphia Arch Street Meeting of the Society of Friends. Saddened and distraught, Mapps Douglass acknowledges the presence of discriminatory practices within the Quaker sanctuary, the meeting, admitting “that the Negro Pew or its equivalent” exists in Quaker meeting houses throughout the region

. . . where men and women brethren and sisters by creat[i]on and heirs of the same glorious immortality are seated by themselves on a back bench for no other reason but because it has pleased God to give them a complexion darker than our own.

She recounts her own heart-wrenching story of attending the Arch Street Meeting and being made to sit on the segregated bench with her mother. She remembers that:

. . . even when a child my soul was made sad with hearing five or six times during the course of one meeting this language of remonstrance addressed to those who were willing to sit by us. “This bench is for the black people.” “This bench is for the people of color.” And oftentimes I wept, at other times I felt indignant and queried in my own mind are these people Christians . . . there would have been no necessity for the oft-repeated and galling remonstrance, galling indeed, because *I believe they despise us for our color* (italics are Mapp Douglass’s).

Mapp Douglass goes on to refute a popular self-justification that Blacks like to sit apart, stating plainly, “[t]he assertion that our people who attend meetings prefer sitting by themselves, is not true.” She corroborates her experience with that of other African Americans who stopped attending the Arch Street Meeting, submitting their accounts of scorn, contempt, and mistreatment as evidence of their hypocrisy. In this moment, the letter shifts from her personal account of one who has been afflicted with racial injustice in her house of worship, an event which in her recollection throws her in a kind of

existential crisis, to a display of qualitative inquiry. She is not dispassionate, but she is decidedly scientific in her questioning:

Conversing with one of them today, I asked, why did you leave Friends. “Because they do not know how to treat me, I do not like to sit on a back bench and be treated with contempt, so I go where I am better treated.” Do you not like their principles and their mode of worship? “Yes, I like their principles, but not their practice. They make the *highest* profession of any sect of Christians, and are the most deficient in practice.”

Her final assessment is a critical observation, as she finds that “in proportion as we become intellectual and respectable, so in proportion does their disgust and prejudice increase.” The Quakers were not immune to the racism that permeated American society during that time, and it would be a factor in the creation of what would become the Institute of Colored Youth. The trajectory of development set upon by the executors of Humphreys’ will and the managers of the Institute were steeped with the increasingly antiquated but still accepted racialized connotations of what it meant for young Black men to engage in the mechanical arts in antebellum America. Even as the mechanical arts in Philadelphia were embedded within the skilled trades, industrial factories, and sites of scientific exploration like the Franklin Institute, the managers of ICY too easily slipped into the racialized narrative of agriculture and farm work as the appropriate site for the mechanical arts for Black people. It would be one thing for the managers to explicitly plan an institution that worked to promote the ICY as such an institution. That they set out to create a dynamic, revolutionary, and emancipatory school only to end up with an institution that probably looked and felt like a slave plantation, a passion play that the Quakers seemingly saw themselves enacting, but in some ways saw themselves as powerless to stop, demonstrates the pervasiveness of the dominant technological

discourse. The Quakers here, though well-meaning in their intentions, were still acting on the racist notions of technological work that were popular, degrading, and demeaning to African Americans during the time.

The shame in this is that the early years of ICY are awash with missed opportunity. There is no question that this was a difficult endeavor, but in many ways the Institute had all the resources necessary for success and then some. It had a substantial endowment and astute managers to improve the financial stability of the school from the very beginning, it had a team of stakeholders who could and did divide up the responsibility and delegate the responsibility of building the school. The school itself addressed a pressing need in the Black community for higher education, a need expressed by others, not just the Quakers involved. The school was being established in close proximity to arguably the greatest community of free Blacks in the country at the time—free Blacks who owned property, who had resources, who were educated in academic, occupational, and vocational trades. Yet, much of the financial attention was given to the farm and basic care of its tenants instead of the education and resources needed for the school's wards. As Banks might put it, the early focus on material access to the tools of potential economic stability overshadowed the need to design a process and program of study that would circumvent, resist, or destroy the yokes of oppression that had created the conditions that required a school like ICY in the first place. Additionally, it may have been the Quakers' own racism that prevented it from tapping into its most valuable resource—the Black community of Philadelphia. None of the managers, teachers, superintendents, or farm supervisors were Black, and there is no evidence that the managers reached out to the Black community in any phase of the

school's planning from the death of Richard Humphrey in 1832 up until its demise in 1846. The only unconfirmed interactions that existed during this time with the Black community seem to be in the apprenticeships of the wayward or runaway students who left the Institute between 1842 and 1846. All evidence points to those placements being with Black professionals and tradesmen in Philadelphia. Stigmatized as boys with questionable character or motives after they left, it is interesting that upon leaving they were able to be placed in fields that had been the aspiration of the original design of the school; the boys in question were orphans, not juvenile delinquents, and most mentions of the students in the meeting minutes portray the boys in a positive light. The failure of ICY's first attempt at educating young men of the African diaspora was in great part to the fact that they were still bound by social conventions and social attitudes. In all likelihood, it was the racism of the managers that prevented them from reaching out to the Black community for financial, administrative, and instructional support before 1848.

The managers, in effect, had unwittingly succumbed to the racist and distinctly American exceptionalist rhetoric of the mechanical arts, a rhetoric that permeated the ether of experience in nineteenth-century society. Even though the sentiment growing in the 1840s in Philadelphia pointed toward a more liberating notion of progress for African Americans through the mechanical trades, the managers did not actively work against conventional ideology, perhaps believing that their intention and hard work would bring their mission to fruition. The reality is that they had not occasioned to confront their own racism in developing the tools and infrastructure of the school; without that deliberate kind of antiracist work, the technology they encouraged at every turn was only the kind sanctioned through oppression, not liberation, as was the originally chartered goal.

A New Hope and a Fresh Perspective

After the closure of the school, the corporation's activity lay mostly dormant until January 1848, when members began considering opening a smaller school closer to the city. As Convers recounts, "The Managers were not sure that the time was ripe for such action and expressed their doubts," but they appointed a committee to explore the endeavor (98). There was still some uncertainty about how best to fulfill Humphreys' intentions and they debated the legality of starting a school within the city limits and financing students to attend out-of-state institutions.

Many of the same voices of dissent were in place, though arguably those voices had reached even greater heights. One of the most illuminating connections that Paul Gilroy makes to this idea with regard to the telegraph is in Stephen Foster's popular minstrel ballad, "Oh! Susanna."

I come from Alabama with a banjo on my knee,
I'm going to Louisiana, my true love for to see
It rained all night the day I left, the weather it was dry
The sun so hot I froze to death; Susanna, don't you cry.
Oh, Susanna, don't you cry for me
I come from Alabama,
With my banjo on my knee.

The initial verse is quite familiar to modern day audiences; However, Foster's song also included another verse during its heyday that is rarely heard today:

I jump'd aboard the telegraph and trabbled down de ribber,
De lectrick fluid magnified, and kill'd five hundred Nigga.
De bulgine bust and de hoss ran off, I really thought I'd die;
I shut my eyes to hold my bref—Susanna don't you cry. (804)

Gilroy concludes that the telegraph in "Oh! Susanna" conjures up an image (and the possibility) of transmutation and the intermingling of

. . . blackness and whiteness already at play in blackface and thus renders the telegraph all that much more powerful and all that much more threatening and attractive. Through its staging of white men taking on blackface, the song suggests the kind of cross-cultural, possibly “lattice” shattering effect that the telegraph could have, the possibility of uniting whites and blacks into essentially one body. But in their attempt to “trabbel down the ribber” via new technologies, blacks do not get to see their “true love[s]”; rather they are electrocuted, rendered permanently impotent and immobile by white technology as punishment for their own excess sexuality and desire for mobility. (824-825)

From Gilmore’s work, it is quite clear that there is something innately spiritual and frighteningly limiting about technology when confronted by the social boundaries constructed through race and racism.

However, there were stronger voices within the diaspora that sought to reconcile the African-American struggle for progress with the mechanical arts of the day. I would like to use Frederick Douglass as my first example of this intriguing crossroads between defining technologies and African-American leadership. Douglass is a reasonable, if not obvious, starting point for this discussion for several reasons, the most important probably being that he left such huge shoes to fill. As an orator, polemist, abolitionist, lecturer, apologist, politician, and writer, Douglass provided the blueprint for African-American leadership for generations to come. As one of America’s most respected abolitionists, he held the distinction as an incredibly effective orator and a statesman who had the ear of then President Lincoln. He was, as Bradford Stull would say, an emancipator compositionist: He wrote and revised three versions of his amazing autobiography and slave narrative, arguably the most influential slave narrative ever published, which bore witness to the horrors of slavery, the resiliency of African Americans, the comeuppance of Black male agency, and the power of authorship. As an

orator, Douglass is credited with initiating the African-American jeremiad, a critical trope in African-American polemics. His bearing, his story, and his reputation as a man's man added to his influence and mystique. As many scholars more numerous than these pages will allow have argued, W. E. B Du Bois and Booker T. Washington—the principle subjects of the next chapter—along with countless others, saw themselves following and fulfilling Douglass's legacy of racial uplift and leadership. Most importantly in this context, Douglass was always interested in structuring narratives and plans for uplift that were both visible and viable, but was also keenly interested in technologies, like the telegraph, that could not just mask the realities of race, but would transcend them, even ultimately destroy them. As Bruce Sinclair notes, Douglass was acutely aware of the opportunities for Blacks to improve their socioeconomic station through emerging vocational trades and new technical skills. In an 1853 letter written to Harriet Beecher Stowe, Douglass affirms that Blacks

. . . must become mechanics—we must build, as well as live in houses—we must make, as well as use furniture—we must construct bridges, as well as pass over them—before we can properly live, or be respected by our fellow men. (Rochester, March 8).

Douglass puts it more bluntly in his 1853 paper, “Learn Trades or Starve.”

Douglass argues that “the elevation of the masses . . . can only be done by putting the mechanic arts within the reach of colored men” (390). It is command of the mechanical arts that will bring the colored man out of isolation, and that, given a choice, a man should choose learning a trade or skill over a formalized education, principally because a skill or technical expertise induces a man to build community with his fellow man.

Douglass pragmatically reasons that “with the trade we could get the education while

with the education we could not get the trade” (390). He posits social and economic empowerment within the context of industrial education because it allows a man to build his own self-sustaining institutions of empowerment, whether it be a home, a church, a school, or a road. Douglass does not eschew the liberal arts, the social sciences, or any traditional form of formal education. He maintains that in the continuum of self-sufficiency, trade knowledge will allow the people of African descent to control their acquisition of formal education.

At the same time, Douglass argued vigorously for the inclusion of African Americans in the pursuit of new technologies and scientific endeavors, criticizing both the racism inherent in the practice of science during the time and the exclusion of African Americans in the sciences. Gilmore shows how a year later, Douglass meticulously refutes the arguments against the Negro race based on populist pseudoscience in his speech, “The Claims of the Negro: Ethnographically Considered.” Gilmore takes care to note how Douglass, in his oratory, specifically addresses the work of “scientists” like “the Notts, the Gliddens, the Agassiz[es], and Mortons,” and isolates an especially revealing moment when Douglass seemingly invokes the development of new technology as a marker of the inevitable falling away of racial distinctions and the unity of Blacks and Whites underneath the banner of mankind and identified the telegraph as a defining technology.

It is somewhat remarkable, that, at a time when knowledge is so generally diffused . . . *when time and space, in the intercourse of nations, are almost annihilated*—when . . . a common humanity can meet in friendly conclave—when nationalities are being swallowed up—and the ends of the earth brought together . . . that there should arise a phalanx of learned men—speaking in the name of science—to forbid the magnificent reunion of mankind in one brotherhood. (Italics Gilmore’s 47)

Furthermore, he actively articulated the telegraph as not only a tool for social and racial uplift, but also as a means for transformational, even transcendental understanding.

Decades later, in an oration delivered at an industrial school in Manassas, Virginia in 1894, Douglass affirms his desire for all Blacks to be engaged in not just the apprenticeship trades, but to be a part of technological innovation by applying their efforts to new technical fields, proclaiming that this is “the work which requires the most thought, skill, and ingenuity, will receive the highest commendation, and will otherwise do most for the worker” (8). Douglass believes that this engagement with innovation was integral to racial uplift, economic empowerment, and demonstrated manhood:

I saw even then, that the free negro of the North, with everything great expected of him, but with no means at hand to meet such expectations, could not hope to rise while he was excluded from all profitable employments. He was free by law, but was denied the chief advantages of freedom; he was indeed but nominally free; he was not compelled to call any man his master, and no one could call him a slave, but he was still in fact a slave, a slave to society, and could only be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water. It was easier at that day to get a black boy into a lawyer’s office to study law, or into a doctor’s office to study medicine, than it was to get him into a carpenter’s shop to push a plane, or into a blacksmith’s shop to hammer iron. (6)¹

It is men who invent; technological innovation provides the kind of work that leads to a through invention and provides a stable, sustainable economy for a man, his family, and his community. Imagining Douglass deciphering ways to use technology to become more technical in the midst of a social climate that moves comfortably to the tune of niggers being electrocuted in “Oh! Susannah,” makes the fear of technology much more believable, even palpable under the overt threat of violence. That Douglass himself worked to break through the social norms concerning technology that are circumscribed

¹ The Fredrick Douglass Papers at the Library of Congress Digital Collection, An Oration Delivered at the Manassas Industrial School, Manassas, Virginia, Monday, September 3, 1894.

by White power sets a precedent for the difficulty African-American leaders will face in the future.

Douglass's rhetoric, which suggests that African Americans can author their own progress through the agency they forge from technological access to trades and resists the cog-in-the-wheel metaphor that rarely sees the African-American community as more than bastard sons and daughters of toil, is important as a rationale for the goal of empowerment in higher education. It is also an argument that the Quakers in Philadelphia are sure to have heard from him. Quakers, who mostly limited their interactions with African Americans to the rigidly outstretched hand that delivers philanthropy, saw Douglass as a paragon of God's hope for the slave and a source of inspiration and justification for their cause. His letters, speeches, and broadsides could often be found around Quaker meeting houses across the East Coast.

It may well have been the influence of Douglass in 1848 that helped press the managers to reconsider their endeavor to educate Black children comprehensively. Douglass's example may also have encouraged the Quaker Meeting House to see the contributions of the Black intelligentsia differently. Believing that financing the student's education at another institution was the most cost-effective and expedient option, several of the managers pushed the committee in that direction. However, a few managers wanted to explore the option of apprenticing boys in various trades to both colored and white artisans and masters of trades in the city of Philadelphia. In order to gauge the feasibility of an apprenticeship program like this, the managers resolved to discuss the matter with members of the Black community. Convers describes the account this way:

In November 1848 some of the Managers submitted a list of colored mechanics in the city, and a committee was authorized to interview these men to find out under what terms they would take apprentices. On November 29, Peter Lester, a colored mechanic, attended the meeting of the Board the result of which was a definite decision to invite “. . . the attendance of a committee of coloured men to consult on this subject. . . .” Such a meeting was held on December 6, 1848, there being present men who represented the trades of shoemaker, plasterer, barber, and tailor. These men, by name, Stephen H. Gloucester, William Douglass, James M. Bustill, John P. Burr, Morris Brown, Nathaniel M. Dupree and Peter Lester, were in agreement with the proposal and indicated their willingness to lend aid wherever possible. They pointed out, however, that most masters could not afford to teach trades to lads and maintain them as well, whereupon the Managers voted to allow \$50.00 per annum for each apprenticed lad.

Then the visitors made a suggestion which was to have far reaching results. They indicated that the matter of literary education was as important to Negroes as that of learning a trade and suggested that the apprenticed lad would be better qualified if they also had a “. . . knowledge of the higher branches . . . which would enable them to carry on their business more successfully and eventually to be prepared to instruct others in like manner.” They then proposed that an evening school be established, manned by well-trained teachers. This proposal appealed to the Managers and before the meeting was adjourned they had given the colored men the responsibility of making recommendations, selecting a teacher and the pupils, as well as the authority to supervise the whole enterprise, should the proposal materialize. (100-101)

Beginning in December 1848, the African-American masters became an administrative body of the corporation named “The Board of Education Auxiliary to the Guardianship of the Estate of R. Humphreys [*sic*] Bequeathing a Legacy for the Instruction of Colored Boys in Trades, Literature and Agriculture” (Education Auxiliary). As Convers details, they elected officials and organized committees to prepare for the work of the evening school and apprenticeships (101). The recruiting and planning efforts were incredibly successful. On September 25, 1849, the managers held a meeting with “the colored committee” and made the decision to open the school that fall. On

October 22, the Board agreed and on November 5, 1849, the evening school opened in a room on Barclay Street near Sixth Street. By January of 1850, the school had approximately thirty students, all of whom were apprenticing various trades: carpentry, cabinet making, boot making, tailoring, barbery, painting. Though no record exists of the academic courses the students received, their progress and breadth of study were notable enough that the managers and the Education Auxiliary committed to explore opening a day school to better ensure support for the apprenticeships and consistency in the young men's schooling.

The Education Auxiliary, or "colored committee," not only organized this new iteration of ICY and facilitated both the apprentice placements and academics, but also played a pivotal role in helping the managers understand the role of ICY in combating the systemic practices of racial discrimination in the city. When advocating for better compensation for the masters, they argued that the increase would not just help them (many of whom had taken on an apprentice), but that it was necessary to attract the participation of White masters, who were the key to positively affecting the racism within the trades in Philadelphia:

The great importance of having apprentices placed with white mechanics as a means of eradicating the unholy prejudice existing in this community against colored mechanics can hardly be estimated. It has a direct and important connection with the prosperity and success of the enterprise not only in rescuing mini youth from ignorance, idleness in crime, but in making way for the future respectability, usefulness and moral influences of the apprentices . . . The present compensation is no inducement to white mechanics to have the obloquy and contempt that will attend their efforts to give trades to color boys. (102)

After a few setbacks in securing a property, the corporation agreed to purchase a lot on Lombard Street and erect a building for the purpose of the day school on April 17. The

evening school, which continued until March of 1851, “taught reading, writing, defining, written a mental arithmetic, grammar, geography and philosophy.” Some lessons were given in the areas of “physiology, anatomy, hygiene, elocution, logic, composition and phrenology.” The apprenticeships continued to expand, and by February 1852, enough progress had been made on the building that a committee was formed to “produce . . . a plan for organizing the school as well as to seek a suitable teacher.” In May of 1852, Charles L. Reason was selected as principal of the Institute and the committee agreed to open the school to girls, who would have their own program of study, once a “suitable female can be found to take charge.” On September 13, 1852, the day school opened for boys. The girls school would open in May under the leadership of Grace A. Mapps, the first African-American woman to graduate from a four-year program in the United States and the cousin of Sarah Mapps Douglass, who would merge her small, private school into the larger institute. She would become head of the school’s Preparatory Department and work at the school for fifty years. The following February, the evening school would be reopened at the new Lombard Street school.

The early failure of ICY also revealed the consequences of building a program of education on the basis of what Banks would call functional access. Throughout those first few years of operation, the managers would consistently point to the rudimentary successes that the students had as a sign of the institution’s incremental progress during their yearly self-evaluations. This allowed them to justify ICY’s approach while also absolving them of the—dare I say—guilt for not living up to the full aims of Humphreys’ will and ICY’s original charter. In essence, they allowed themselves to feel that, for the time they had been in operation, what they had provided was good enough. They were

Negroes after all. The managers fell easily into a system of industrial education that would deny its charges any measure of social mobility or of economic freedom because they never saw a need to guard themselves against that notion. One of the reasons that critical access follows functional access in Banks's taxonomy is because there it offers the kind of discernment that allows one to "resist and avoid" technological discourse that operates in opposition to the developing agency of the marginalized who, in this case, are the students and stakeholders of ICY. The practitioners—the school's founders—did not critically engage the sociopolitical forces that were embedded in the technological discourse that they and ICY entered into. Those early years provided an important lesson in experiential access as well. The collapse of ICY could be understood in very contemporary terms as a disconnect between the institutional vision, strategic planning, programmatic outcomes, and reliable assessment. Day-to-day operations were never benchmarked by the original charter of the school, and the various teachers and farmers in charge of the students' education and development were incentivized to prioritize manual labor and fundamentals instead of a more formalized curriculum.

From the time the managers of Richard Humphreys' estate crafted the Articles of the Constitution for the African Institute, their efforts and intentions were systematically weathered away by the realities of racism within the technological discourse in and around the city of Philadelphia. This racism existed in the general public, but was also an inherent and unacknowledged facet of Philadelphia Quakerism. This is instructive because it illustrates that it is indeed possible to be engaged in the work of racial uplift and yet undercut that work's effectiveness because of lack of attention to one's own racist assumptions. For the managers of ICY, this perhaps created an oversight where they were

unable to negotiate the ways in which technological discourse during the time, namely “the mechanical arts,” carried the stain of racist ideology, which first has to be unpacked in order to circumvent and surpass it. The managers made a huge mistake by divorcing ICY from the resources and legacy of Philadelphia’s Black community. When they corrected that oversight—made the Black community a vital part of its “rhetoric of design”—and they reintegrated the vision of the original Constitution with strategic and programmatic planning from the colored committee, a committee that was a vital part of the community and could usher their young charges into apprenticeships, the institution began to do the kind of work that it was initially conceived to do. ICY began to become what it was meant to be, fulfilling that original vision of Humphreys after it was moved to Lombard Street and was nestled within the refuge of community. There, it could be integrated into the Black community and draw from its resources of artisans and tradesmen, educators and ministers, doctors and practitioners. It was also the place where ICY could begin recruiting its greatest leaders, the leaders who would shape the direction of ICY for decades to come.

CHAPTER 4

FROM PHOTOGRAPH TO FACTORY: DU BOIS AND WASHINGTON'S
TECHNODIALECTIC FAILURE DURING THE GREAT MIGRATION

In 1895, the year that Frederick Douglass died, W. E. B DuBois and Booker T. Washington both saw themselves following and fulfilling Douglass's legacy of racial uplift and leadership. Washington—who was born a slave in Virginia and rose to prominence based on a platform of industrial/agricultural, skill-based training—offered his “Atlanta Compromise” speech to White northerners and southerners at the Cotton States and International Exhibition in Atlanta, where he affirmed the social segregations of Blacks and Whites in exchange for the opportunities for Blacks to live peacefully and productively in America by “the productions of [their] hands,” a sentiment of progress and manhood he felt was in the spirit of Douglass. Though most of his groundbreaking work was still a few years away, Du Bois, then a classics professor at Wilberforce University and a Ph.D. candidate at Harvard, wrote a poem not only celebrating the life and legacy of Douglass, but also steadied himself to follow in that great man's example and fight “for a more equitable truth.” It is out of Douglass's departure that these two great men rise to articulate two distinct and seemingly opposing plans for the racial uplift of the American Negro.

This chapter attempts to look at W. E. B Du Bois and Booker T. Washington as influencers and products of HBCUs in order to examine how the discourse of technology functioned within their sociopolitical imaginations. I suggest that Du Bois and Washington's views of technology influenced the discourse around identity politics and

social mobility during the apex of the Great Migration era. What is even more interesting is that these same ideas expose a climate of tension between how prominent African-American leaders see technology usage and the desired appropriations of technology by the influx of working-class African Americans placed front and center by the Great Migration. The Great Migration marked a shift in the way African Americans looked at the technology and industrial spaces. African-American migrants' responses to the racial and polemical agendas offered by Du Bois and Washington brought into question how African Americans should respond to technological innovation and increased urbanization.

Overall, both men orchestrated a progressive movement to usher in a new season for Black people in very distinct, yet very paternalistic, ways. Both Du Bois and Washington envisioned a vanguard, a leadership class, that would further the advancement of the race, yet each man envisioned that group differently. The competing programs of progress offered by Du Bois, ever the "race man," and Washington, the staunch accomodationalist, feature a host of dichotomies: antipolitical compromise for the Black body politic versus full political participation, higher social and cultural awareness versus economic self-empowerment, traditional liberal college education versus a technical education track. Du Bois sought to lead the Black elite and, by extension, lead the Negro people to the security and expression of their "nobler selves," while Washington galvanized the masses to accept the technical education offered by the "Tuskegee Machine," provide services to the country-at-large and reap the security of property, ownership, and, by extension, honor. Keith Johnson and Elwood Watson see both Du Bois and Washington as pivotal contributors to advancing the plight of African-

American engineers. The institutions that Washington founded, Tuskegee University and Hampton University, were the crowning jewels of that educational philosophy. Their mission, and Washington's, was to give vocational training to African Americans in domestic professions and trade guilds. Washington felt the need to structure his learning institutions within an "authoritarian and religiously based" environment, ensuring that students were properly inundated with the social mores necessary to procure work and build wealth in the economic areas afforded to them by Whites well into the twentieth century. In his 1903 essay, the "Talented Tenth," Du Bois charges a small, select group of African-American college-educated men who exhibit *substance and character*, with the massive endeavor of uplifting the entire race. In 1910, the National Negro Committee adopts the name National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). And on November 1, *The Crisis* magazine debuts as the NAACP's official voice with W. E. B. Du Bois as editor. Interestingly enough, the essay first appeared in Booker T. Washington's *The Negro Problem*, an anthology of prominent African-American leaders.

The juxtaposition of "technical education" and "liberal education," the education stances of Du Bois and Washington, is oft interpreted as a statement of their attitudes toward the role of technology in African-American progress during the first quarter of the twentieth century. In actuality, this accepted binary is a bit misleading in this case: Du Bois and Washington shared rather complementary ideas of how technology fit into the equation of racial uplift, especially in demonstrating the legitimacy of the HBCU at the turn of the century.

These critical perceptions of Du Bois and Washington are a direct result of their attitudes towards progress, not just as leaders but as *technologists*. More specifically,

both Du Bois and Washington Bois situate an intrinsic value of African-American potential in technological space. This intrinsic value, or in their words, “substance,” worked as a moral compass for high achievement and a projection for the trajectory of the race. However, it is important to understand that both Du Bois and Washington Bois were heavily invested in this idea of empowering African Americans with knowledge that was representative of upstanding moral character or “substance.” The question for both men becomes one of exactly where this intrinsic substance would be located and nurtured. Ultimately, it is the photograph and the infograph that Du Bois and Washington will use to nurture the substance of African-American agency, presence, and authority during the dawn of the twentieth century.

The Photograph and the Infograph: Du Bois and Washington’s Joint Tool for “Substance”

The Atlanta Exposition of 1895 was a milestone not only because of Washington’s speech, but also because it was the first opportunity that African Americans had to display their cultural and industrial achievements on an international platform. Two years earlier, they were denied the opportunity to participate in the Columbian World Exposition in 1893 in Chicago. The successes of Du Bois and Washington in Atlanta culminated in an appearance at the Tennessee Centennial and International Exhibition in 1897 and a stipend from the U.S. government to prepare an exhibit for the upcoming Paris Exhibition. The Paris Exposition of 1900 would become an important example of how both Du Bois and Washington were engaged in the promotion of substance in technological space.

The Paris Exposition of 1900 featured an area within its U.S. exhibit entitled, “The Negro Section.” The section was organized and directed by Thomas J. Calloway, a special agent for the U.S. Exhibition in Paris and War Department employee. Calloway is an interesting figure: He was a former classmate of Du Bois at Fisk and a staunch advocate for his research from his position at the U.S. State Department. At the same time, he was an avowed supporter of industrial education and Washington’s stewardship of resources and funding to other Black colleges such as Hampton, Claflin, and Fisk. Washington thought so much of Calloway that he sent a letter of recommendation to the Board of Trustees of Alcorn College (in Lorman, Mississippi) endorsing Calloway as the only candidate for the presidency of the college that could properly implement the Tuskegee model. Because he was so highly regarded by both Du Bois and Washington, he may have been the only person to be able to get them to collaborate in such a spectacular fashion for the Paris Exposition. Calloway is an interesting example of leadership on the margins, outside of the spotlight, which seems to be a required subjectivity for Banks’s concept of an African-American rhetoric of design. It was Calloway who conceived “The Negro Section,” a collection of photographs, charts, graphs, maps, archival, and historical documents that was intended to show the “history of the Negro,” his “present condition,” his “education,” and his “literature.” According to Bruce Sinclair, the exhibit included, along with the work of Black artists, “books, models, the patents of black inventors, information about instruction at HBCUs such as Fisk, Howard, Atlanta University, Hampton, Tuskegee Institutes, and a few other colleges devoted to the education of African Americans” (119).



Figure 7. Photographs. (left) Howard University sewing class. (right) Howard University carpentry class. Displayed as part of the American Negro exhibit at the Paris Exposition of 1900.



Figure 8. Photographs. (left) Claflin University woodwork shop. (right) Agricultural and Mechanical College blacksmithing shop. Displayed as part of the American Negro exhibit at the Paris Exposition of 1900.



Figure 9. Photographs. (left) Howard University pharmaceutical laboratory. (right) Howard University chemistry laboratory. Displayed as part of the American Negro exhibit at the Paris Exposition of 1900.

Though it is unlikely that Du Bois or Washington took any of the photographs included in the collection, they had a huge influence on its content and design. One larger centerpiece of the exhibit was a large portrait of Washington that was mounted above images of industrial education taking place in America's HBCUs. When examining these photos, there is a notable absence of clear images of the Tuskegee Institute itself, as if to make the point that Washington's legacy of industrial education is larger than any singular institution. Carla Willard points out that Washington saw the photographs he commissioned at Tuskegee as a means of making the substance of the Negro character as "tangible." For him, the photograph possessed a certain storytelling ability, one that could ". . . through the powers of persuasion . . . prove a point through narrative appeal . . ." and spread the belief "in an unmediated and authentic 'glimpse' of the material world" (640). What is most revealing is how Willard sees Washington's compositional eye in later works, encouraging "multiple readings by managing and editing his photographic materials as a professional photographer might do." She gives an especially poignant example when describing Washington's use of photographic composition when depicting a women's gardening class at Tuskegee:

Letting the pictures tell the story became a standard feature of Washington's articles by the first decade of the new century. Published in *Outlook's* version of "Up From Slavery," for example, the women of "A Class in Horticulture" spanned two contrasting categories of domestication associated with Washington's uplift philosophy; the subjects figured in readings that defined two contrasting social positions for Tuskegee women. First, for black businessmen and professionals like George F. Robinson who read the first chapter as an example of his "own experience," the women enhanced the reading of a meteoric black uplift. Like the mistresses of "Signs," the subjects of the class added their number to an emerging black PMC. They were elegant wives-to-be who prepared to cultivate their own gardens and to grace the homes of their men. On the other hand, "new" southerners and northern industrialists

alike incorporated the photograph into the dominant interpretation of Washington's story—a narrative about the conservative process of slow and “natural” growth starting at the bottom and still far from the top. This reading complemented the overwhelming feminization of black industry during the period and the national and European focus on Tuskegee as a training ground for black domestics. (69)

Willard plainly and correctly surmises that the multiple readings gleaned from Washington's articles came from various admirers, many of whom had diametrically opposed ideologies. The unifying characteristic was that each of these readings “align the class with patriarchal agendas that bent not only segregation questions but also the professional potential of Black women to the wider ‘civilizing’ interests of U.S. imperialism.”

I want to extend Willard's summation a bit here. Washington's compositional style, his deceptively plainly stated prose juxtaposed with his manipulation of images produced doubled readings of the material world that he presented that, regardless of its intended audience, allowed the reader to bear witness to the honorable work and industriousness of Blacks, more specifically in this case, Black women. Though readings of the image or article and even the author's aims may have been contradictory, the “patriarchal agenda” remained intact. Revealing the humanity and civility of Blacks, exposing racial injustice perpetrated by Whites, and the troubling dynamics in the relationship between the two were the ultimate goal of many of Washington's publications in varying degrees. And yet Washington was comfortable allowing any one of those potential aims within a reading of his work fall through the reader's purview because of the subtle strength of his patriarchal ideals, which would ensure that the structures that bound his vision of progress—pastoral headship, an agricultural

foundation, and strategically managed (or allowed) opportunities—remained intact.

Willard points out that, “[w]hile ‘industry’ and second class citizenry continued to define the Tuskegee model,” Washington’s narratives and images gradually envisioned a comfortable, almost leisurely, middle-class lifestyle that would direct the aspirations of Blacks and present an air of culture and civility to Whites, prompting Willard to conclude that the “[s]tately homes and also the proprietors of homes—the doctors, lawyers, bishops, businessmen and their wives—presented readers with a ‘Negro’ closer to the ‘talented tenth’ of Du Bois than to any labor of the hands” (662). Many of the institutional photographs were taken by the most noted female photographer of the day, Frances Benjamin Johnston. A few years earlier, Johnston’s *Hampton Album* contextualized Washington’s emphasis on industrialized education after his “Atlanta Compromise” speech in 1895: The Hampton Photographs were displayed in the Palace of Social Economy as part of the American Negro Exhibit, assembled with the participation of such prominent black leaders as W.E.B. Du Bois, presented among books, charts, artifacts, models, photomontages, and many other photographs as documentary evidence illustrating “the educational and industrial progress of the Negro race in the United States,” the Hampton images received a grand prize, as did the exhibition as a whole.

In addition, photographic evidence of the substance of Negro worth and character was vitally important to Washington. Washington, for a time, subsidized *The Colored American Magazine* and oversaw its move from Boston to New York once it faced financial hardship in 1904. *The Colored American Magazine* was “the first up-to-date magazine in the history of the race” and was widely



Figure 10. Photographs. (left) Only Negro store of its kind in the U.S. at 2933 State Street, Chicago, Illinois. (right) Fisk University students and teachers in training school. Displayed as part of the American Negro exhibit at the Paris Exposition of 1900.

regarded for its “professional quality of prose, photography, layout and printing.”

Washington’s vantage point was complementary and took this notion further; he saw the photography as a tool for validating the substance of Negro character and work ethic. Not only that, but the photograph was not just a tool of revelation and utilization, but it was—in Washington’s view—an instructional composition, not one that merely captured a moment, but a way of constructing one. The institutional photo not only resisted racist assumptions of White viewers, but also served to model worth and industriousness to Blacks, primarily those enrolled in an institution focused on industrial education.

In a similar manner, Du Bois’s staging of the Negro Exhibit was in effect a multimodal composition; it was as evidential and resistant as it was instructive and polemical. In addition to the institutional photographs, the display included hundreds of images that portrayed African-American men, women, and children as respectable, middle-class people.



Figure 11. Photographs. (left) African-American man, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing slightly left. (right) African-American man, head-and-shoulders portrait, left profile. Displayed as part of the American Negro exhibit at the Paris Exposition of 1900.



Figure 12. Photographs. (left) African-American woman, head-to-waist portrait, facing slightly left. (right) African-American man, head-to-waist portrait, left profile. Displayed as part of the American Negro exhibit at the Paris Exposition of 1900.

Du Bois collected nearly four hundred portraits of upwardly mobile Blacks to reflect the civil values of the much-maligned race and to present visual evidence against the image of the Black criminal in the minds of Whites. By constructing a new visual referent, Du Bois hoped to shift the subjectivity of the racialized gaze from the destabilizing image to a stable revelation of civility that would bear witness to the

substance of the Negro people's character for Whites and Blacks. Shawn Michelle Smith, in her insightful work, *Photography on the Color Line: W. E. B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture*, holds "that visual culture was fundamental not only to racist classification but also to racial reinscription and the reconstruction of racial knowledge in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (4). She argues that Du Bois's enormous contributions to the Negro Exhibit at the Paris Exposition constitute a "counterarchive" that works against racist discourses within science and visual culture (3). By focusing her attention on the unidentified portraits of African Americans that, within each single image, seem to juxtapose the middle-class civility of the genteel parlor portrait and the malevolent defiance of a mugshot, Smith helps to recast Du Bois as a visual theorist of race by explaining how the Paris Exposition was an act of resistance against prevailing images of Black criminality and an affirmation of the "complicated visual dynamics of double consciousness." Smith observes that images provided by Du Bois do not include many captions or orienting texts, giving it a quality that she describes as initially "enigmatic." She surmises that the lack of explanatory text allows the viewer to engage their suppositions of race and African-American life as they view the images, and, as they peruse the exhibit, they can create a new narrative or counterstory, one that resists the racist assumptions held by the general public and reinforced by media. These images shed a more favorable light on the everyday lives and industry of African Americans and presented a stark contrast to the French examples of African primitivism also found in the exhibit.

Smith finds that Du Bois's images and the arrangement of the exhibit contested what she called the "authorizing discourses" through which many viewers at the time

would expect to see those images. Popular “vernacular photographs” were considered the “preeminent cultural sites” of the time, yet “The Negro Section,” particularly

Du Bois’s use of the Black image, destabilized that view, that gaze:

Du Bois’s Georgia Negro photographs refuse the fiction of “the disengaged look of universal man,” challenging the continued authorization of a white gaze; indeed, such disruptions of a racialized normative gaze are central to the ways in which the images function as a counterarchive. Du Bois’s photographs engage viewers that occupy particular historical and cultural positions, and they work to dismantle and reconfigure the popular and scientific visual genealogies of African Americans that inform dominant turn-of-the-century viewing practices. If the viewer, at least in part, produces photographic meaning, Du Bois’s albums suggest that the viewer can also be directed to look and see differently. (11)

Du Bois and Washington were not only concerned with the visual representations of African-American bodies, faces, labors, and intellectual pursuits. They were also invested in the visual-representations of 321 data that confirmed a less prejudiced view of the legacy and the demographics of the African-American experience. Just recently, the Library of Congress has digitized and made publicly available over 116 infographic tables, graphics, charts, and illustrations created by W. E. B. Du Bois and his students at Atlantic University. Graphical representation of quantitative data was a relatively recent phenomenon, gradually becoming more important throughout the nineteenth century as more government entities, both domestic and abroad, began to collect more and more data. Clive Thompson details how, in America, graphical representations of data collected on the American institution of slavery led to the creation of “slave maps.” These slave maps helped Union forces identify which areas in the country to focus their initial efforts in the first few years of the Civil War. With a slave map, they could determine which parts of a state had the greatest concentration of slaves, and therefore,

the greatest population of new troops for the Union service. Thompson marks the late-nineteenth century as a time where “data visualization had created a new type of citizen. Educated individuals in the United States or Europe were increasingly comfortable thinking statistically” (“The Surprising History of the Infographic”). The infographics are remarkable because they also show that Du Bois was keenly aware of the need for a technical or scientific rebuttal to the pseudoscience of racism that was growing in popularity during the time.

Du Bois himself presents his own statistical social study entitled, “The Georgia Negro,” which features a graphic of the transatlantic slave trade (which incidentally seems to coalesce at a point in Georgia) on its first page. Unlike his study of *The Philadelphia Negro* in 1898, Du Bois situates this study as an expression of sociological work through technological discourse. On the front page of the study, he boldly states, “This case is devoted to a series of charts, maps and other devices designed to illustrate the development of the American Negro in a single typical state of the United States.” So as not to confuse a reader or visitor of the rhetorical intent of study, Du Bois includes for the first time what would become one of the most memorable sentences of his most famous work: “The problem of the 20th Century is the problem of the color line” The data collected and shown by Du Bois’s students focuses mostly on demographic data on African Americans in Georgia. Included were graphics showing the gradual reduction of free Negroes in the state of Georgia right up until the Emancipation Proclamation of 1860; graphics of “race amalgamation,” or race mixing, among the Black Georgians; and graphics on literacy rates, along with demographics on Black students and teachers. The students visually represented socioeconomic data, depicting valuations of Black-owned

property, farm tools, and household and kitchen furniture, which harken back to the data-based appeals of Black Philadelphians in the 1820s, and which were mentioned in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. They presented several models that displayed comparative analysis of current occupational statistics, some of which utilize their visual rhetorics to project racial disparity, a bleak outlook in certain professions, and the need for reform, rates of income, and expenditures of 150 Black families in Atlanta, Georgia, complete with family budgets—even African American population density maps of the United States and particular counties in Georgia (Figure 13).

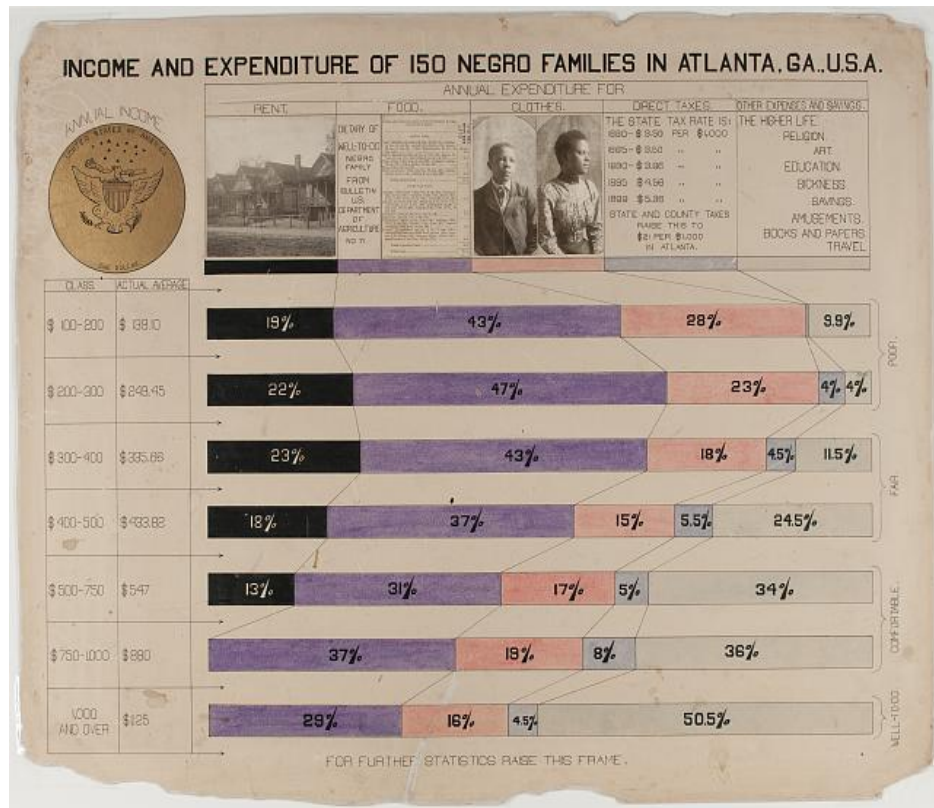


Figure 13. Print. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois. Income and expenditure of 150 Negro families in Atlanta, Georgia. Presented at the Paris Exposition of 1900.

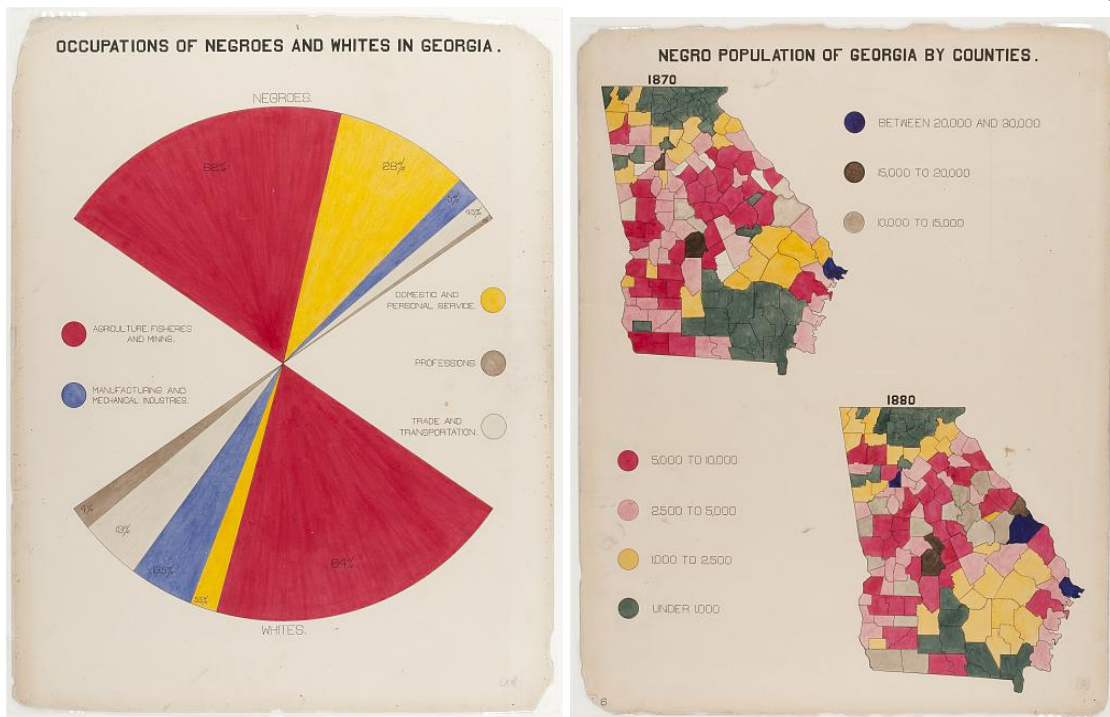


Figure 14. Prints. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois. (left) Occupations of Negroes and Whites in Georgia. (right) Negro population of Georgia by counties. Presented at the Paris Exposition of 1900.

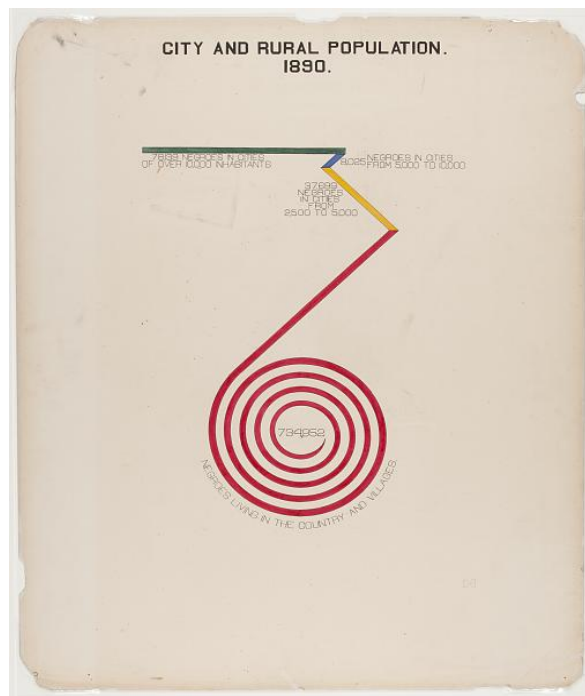


Figure 15. Print. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois. City and rural population, 1890. Presented at the Paris Exposition of 1900.

In addition, the students of Atlanta University presented a particularly sobering series entitled, “A series of statistical charts illustrating the condition of the descendants of former African slaves now in residence in the United States of America.” These infographics included a comparison of the illiteracy rates of African Americans to that of other nations; the enrollment of Black children in public and common arenas in former slave states; the proportion of freemen and slaves among the Black population from 1790-1870; African-American population data, especially in former slave states; and national demographic data including marriage, poverty, mortality, crime, religion, amalgamation, property, and Black entrepreneurs. It also compiled data on popular literary productions such as newspapers and periodicals; comparative data of the population of African Americans in America with the populations of other countries, which subtly suggests a nation within a nation; and rates of population increases. Thompson asserts that the modern-day concept of the infographic was a product of nineteenth-century “scientists and thinkers who found themselves drowning in their own flood of data . . .” For the first time, a significant number of researchers were able to take the findings and results of their work and analyze and present that data in concise and socially relevant ways. He reveals that the mid-nineteenth century produced “slave maps”—visualizations that depicted slaveholdings and movements across the United States. Brentin Mock holds that Du Bois and his students’ data and visualizations (Figures 17-20) compare favorably with today’s infographics designed by “data specialists,” which use advanced computer graphics. Allison Meier’s blog, *Hyperallergic*, describes the infographics as “strikingly vibrant and modern . . . but they are in line with

innovative nineteenth-century data visualization, like William Farr's dynamic cholera charts or Florence Nightingale's "coxcomb" diagrams on causes of war mortality."

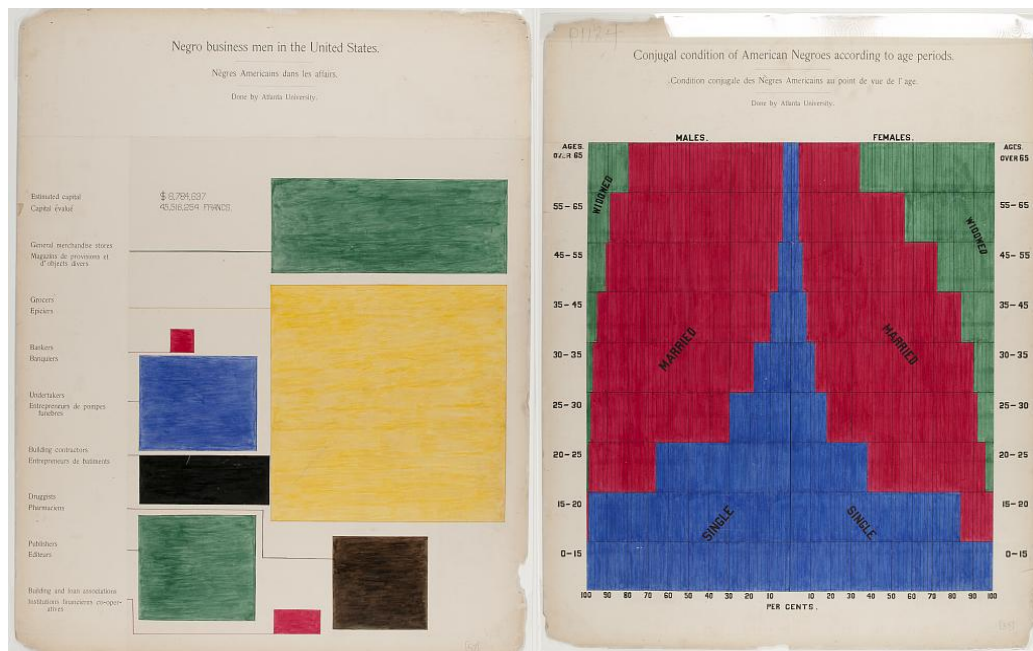


Figure 16. Prints. (left) W. E. Burghardt Du Bois. Negro businessmen in the United States. (right) Students at Atlanta University. Conjugal condition of American Negroes according to age periods. A series of statistical charts illustrating the condition of the descendants of former African slaves now in residence in the United States. Presented at the Paris Exposition of 1900.

These charts and graphs tie together the multimedia aspect of the exhibit and Du Bois's position as a compositionist. The organization of the materials at the Paris Exposition

. . . evoke multiple codes of photographic meaning . . . from the instrumental records of scientific and criminological mug shots to middle-class portraits . . . Du Bois's counterarchive specifically highlights the racialized contours of "official" photographic meaning and scientific knowledge, precisely as it challenges such authorized claims to truth. (Smith 6).

Wilson Jeremiah Moses describes both Du Bois and Washington as fashioning different visions of what he calls a "technocratic Black nationalism." Moses argues

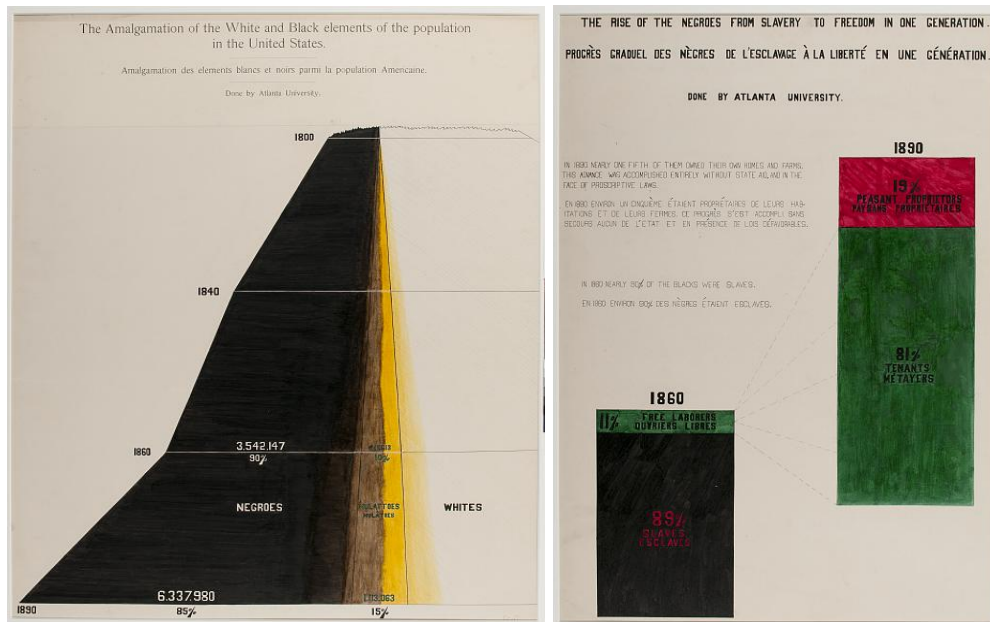


Figure 17. Prints. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois. (left) The amalgamation of the White and Black elements of the population in the United States. (right) The rise of the Negroes from slavery to freedom in one generation. A series of statistical charts illustrating the condition of the descendants of former African slaves now in residence in the United States. Presented at the Paris Exposition of 1900.

that this kind of “Black progressivism” worked toward a “new industrial democracy.”

Moreover, he specifies that:

Washington hoped to build business and industrial technocracy among Black people. He hoped that by responding to the demands of the age for skilled industrial workers and competent businessmen, Black Americans could make themselves sophisticated contributors to the new industrial revolution . . . W.E.B. Dubois also hoped to establish a Black technocracy, which he called the “talented Tenth.” The Du Bois technocrats were to be social scientists and humanists, rather than industrial workers. But Du Bois, like Washington, was in step with those main currents of American thought which were at the time extolling the virtues of professionalization and the creation of reformer elites. (28)

But Moses is only half right: Though Du Bois and Washington engage the era’s technological discourse in their visions of progress and racial uplift, and have trained students from their respective HBCUs to enter that discourse as well, it is precisely their adherence to “those main currents of American thought” about technological discourse

that hampers their programs from truly becoming examples of a technocratic Black nationalism.

Washington as Technocrat and His “Training of the Hand”

When Washington addresses his vision of industrial education in his essay, “Industrial Education: Will It Solve the Negro Problem,” he begins by lamenting that “no one object has been more misunderstood than that of the object and value of industrial education for the Negro” (113). An additional misunderstanding in this vein is exactly what Washington means when he uses the term, “industrial education.” Historians of technology often place his meaning within the context of gaining entrance into, and ultimately controlling, the means for industrial manufacturing and commodities production. If anything, Washington feared rapid industrialization because of its dependence on urbanization and its increased reliance on machinery to replace human labor, which Washington clearly stakes as the economic domain and potential wellspring for Blacks. Technologists such as Caplan and Labore see Washington as a standard-bearer for creating institutions of technological space that act as cultural and economic catalysts for innovation.

Because of these views, many of these historians and technologists have referred to Washington as a “technocrat.” Technocrats were engineers, scientists, and others with expertise in technical fields who “perceive many important societal problems as being solvable, often while proposing technology-focused solutions.” They were adherents to the idea of the “technocracy.” A fringe approach to economic systems became a parlor-room curiosity and then became an in-vogue fad in the late 20s and early 30s, which used

various charts, graphs, and calculations to determine energy output without direct consideration of capitalistic influences. The first accredited use of the word technocracy, however, was in William Henry Smyth's 1919 article "'Technocracy'—Ways and Means to Gain Industrial Democracy" in the journal *Industrial Management*.

The term had been bandied about for almost two decades prior, increasing the likelihood that Washington probably had some exposure to the term. By 1935, technocrats would be debunked as crackpots peddling a dangerous brand of technopseudoscience to gain political favor. In 1933, groups of engineers denounced the claims of technocracy for complete automation of industry and as "exaggerated, intolerant, and extravagant." In a communication to the Engineering Council, Mr. Smyth charged that the technocrats had misappropriated his invention of the word technocracy and surrounded it with false doctrine. Mr. Smyth urges a supreme national council of scientists superior even to the U. S. Supreme Court to deal with the constructive and distributive factors and the conventions of the nations. However, in later stages of Washington's career, technocrats first and foremost saw themselves amassing the data to support their ideas against the American capital price system, which they saw as inefficient, in order to maximize productivity. Nationally, there was little interest in these ideas given the thrust of the industrial economy in the U.S., which wouldn't reach its peak capacity until 1918. The technocratic platform where "everyone does an equal and rather small amount of work (say 12½ hours a week for 20 years) and enjoys an equal and very large income—in goods provided by the state or obtained by an exchange of [energy output] tokens" was a form of technoelitism, which ensured that technopolitical power would remain in the hands of the technoelite. And though many scholars applied

the term technocrat to Washington retroactively, given the responses at the gathering of engineers regarding engineering education, it is doubtful that for all their education and accolades, Tuskegee students would never be considered worthy of the status of engineer. Also, technocrats were considered to be interested in the most cutting-edge developments of technology and, for better or for worse, stretched the limits of the technological imagination to the point of spreading dubious claims about their findings and inventions.

In *Technology at Work*, Beverly Burris maps out the foundational ideological divides that have marked the evolution of technocracy. Burris avoids the extreme binaries of whether whole expert systems can lead to utopian or dystopian worlds, but argues that both knowledge and technology are subject to the will and intentions of the user. More importantly, the will of the user is often contextualized, even motivated, by social and political factors and logistical realities. Reviewer Bonalyn Neilsen notes that although Burris's even-handed treatment of the subject is useful, the book, like others that discuss the benefits of technocracy, "does little to systemically identify or explicate the social and political variables that influence the organizational implementation of expert systems." Burris's examination relies on an empirical review of automation, bureaucratic control, and professional control (851-852).

One weakness of the technocratic platform is that it often focuses on the role of blind, large-scale economic and demographic forces. But such forces do not simply occur, nor do they create specific outcomes; they are the products of conscious human action and in turn create contexts within which people fashion specific agendas. The transformation of postwar industrial cities was driven not by some abstract historical force but by a combination of private investment decisions and state action. This impetus

was centered around an urban renewal policy that—along with explicitly segregationist priorities in Federal public housing policy—cut off minority communities, displaced large sections of these communities, and concentrated them between expressways, office complexes, stadiums, and civic centers.

Though Washington makes clear that the “value and object of industrial education” is not in teaching Blacks how to work for Whites and the established socioeconomic elite, but in “teaching the Negro how rather not to work,” a comment seemingly in agreement with the technocratic platform. Washington was, in essence, no technocrat (“Industrial Education” 117). For the African-American community, and for Washington’s plan in particular, numerical efficiency and energy output were considerations that had been morally bankrupt and part of the problem. Washington built the “Tuskegee Machine” to not only be a landmark in the education of African Americans, but also a monument to a change in business philosophy—not towards the more efficient economy—which would, according to technologists, lead to a less competitive and thus more equitable market society, but to a more favorable capitalist community for Blacks. Washington explains the vision of his economic and educational agenda as a move to make the forces of nature—air, water, horsepower, steam, and electric power—work for him. By controlling the forces of the natural world, African Americans can imbue themselves with the creative intentionality that can transform labor from “toil and drudgery, into that which is dignified and beautiful.” Incidentally, Washington sees the conditions of one’s intent in labor as the producer of good or bad character, not the other way around. The lack of knowledge concerning every facet of production, combined with the lack of a truly diversified skill set as a result of being

barred from the full division of labor, produced many of the “traits” attributed to African Americans as a whole: ignorance, shiftlessness, incompetence.

When Washington defends industrial education and looks to the Tuskegee Machine as a paragon for industry, he does not look at industrial progress as a technological revolution, or even one of economic power through access. Quizzically, Washington uses the term industry to posit moral and ethical purity within the activities of the “hand.” Though the work of the hand includes “technical knowledge and mastery,” it does not presuppose/demand the recognition of mastery. That is, the industrious agency of the hand lacks the independent agency of a “creator,” a true master who can reconfigure, revamp, and reprogram tools for uses outside of existing frameworks.

To put it another way, the education of the hand produces a karmic benefit: As African Americans become more adept as baseline commodities producers, they will experience widespread, undeniable, concrete, and long-lasting economic vitality and stability, which will in turn lead to stronger ethical character. This produces a sense of empowerment based on tangible means, which will eventually lead to social change if and when African Americans learn all the right lessons along the way. However, Washington builds very little transformative access into his technoethos for progress through Tuskegee’s educational tract. Moreover, Washington’s “training of the hand” grounds a man and resists what Washington snarkily refers to as “an over-production of educated politicians—men who are bent on living by their wits.”

Washington readily explained that the Negro’s economic position hinges on establishing “men who, in addition to their practical knowledge, can draw plans, make estimates, take contracts. . . .” Unfortunately, he narrowly delimits what those plans,

estimates, and contracts should be for, which was to “understand the latest methods of truck-gardening and the science underlying practical agriculture.” A complementary goal was to increase the numbers of

. . . those who understand machinery *to the extent that they can operate steam and electric laundries*, so that our women *can hold on to laundry work in the South*, that is so far drifting into the hands of others in the large cities and towns. (116)

Not above proselytizing, Washington sought to show African Americans how—in the spirit of the biblical Joseph’s deliverance from slavery through his brothers’ treachery—what men planned for evil, God meant for good. He proclaimed that “God, for 250 years, was preparing the way for the redemption of the Negro through industrial development” (114). This is a haunting consideration, since the development of a new paradigm for technology usage is apparently tied up with Blacks also becoming better people:

The Negro can work in wood and iron, and no one objects, so long as he confines his work to the felling of trees and the sawing of boards, to the digging of iron ore and the making of pig iron; but when the Negro attempts to follow his tree into the factory, where it is made into chairs and desks and railway coaches; or when he attempts to follow the pig iron into the factory, where it is made into knife blades and watch springs, the Negro’s trouble begins. And what is the objection? Simply that Negro lacks skill, coupled with brains . . . or that when white men refuse to work with colored men, enough skilled and educated colored men cannot be found able to superintend and manage even part of any large industry, and, hence, these are the reasons we are constantly barred out. (117)

Each grievance listed by Washington indicates that he has a firm grasp of the issues facing Blacks’ ascension in the chain of production, and he seems to set to dismantle the arguments present against the inclusion of Blacks in the inner sanctums of industrial production, or to at least posit the factory as a site of eventual growth and

aspiration. Instead, Washington abandons specificity and offers the general salve that the Negro must become “*in a larger measure, an intelligent producer*” and that there should be a “*more vital connection between the Negro’s educated brain and his opportunity of earning his daily living.*”

Washington’s descriptions of the Black southerner form an uneasy juxtaposition: On the one hand, many Blacks who have achieved a measure of technical mastery in slavery have the requisite expertise and work ethic to shepherd the Negro people into a new season of economic prosperity. On the other hand, Washington condemns the same people for their “lack of skill, coupled with ignorance” which “causes him to do his work in the most costly and shiftless manner . . . this keeps him near the bottom of the ladder in the business world.”(117)

He ends his essay with a final articulation of his argument that, though rational, reveals the hidden slight at its core. He believes that:

He who would make the statesmen, the men of letters, the men for the professions for the Negro race of the future, must, to-day, in large measure, make the intelligent artisans, the manufactures, the contractors, the real estate dealers, the land owners, the successful farmers, the merchants in domestic economy. Further, I know that it is not an easy thing to make a good Christian of a hungry man. I mean that just in proportion as the race gets a proper industrial foundation—*gets habits of industry, thrift, economy, land, homes, profitable work*, in the same proportion will its moral and religious life be improved. (italics mine) (119)

For Washington, the secret was that industrial education built good character, and good character produced great wealth. “An industrial school . . . does not merely teach technique. It [is] also . . . a center of moral influence and of mental discipline” (123). Yet, Washington’s machine dreams were disingenuously genteel and rooted in an agricultural

South which may be able to insulate itself from the waking nightmare of the morally bankrupt, culturally rampant industrialized northern city.

At the turn of the century, Washington's industrial rhetoric outside of that associated with the Tuskegee Machine, was technological rhetoric steeped with death and destruction. Washington's penchant for ameliorating Whites at every available opportunity caused him to be dangerously cavalier with the struggles and lives of people of African descent in America, building a rhetoric that equated violence, bodily harm, and Black suffering as a necessity for the drum march of progress. I believe David Levering Lewis captures this sentiment best in his biography of W. E. B Du Bois when describing Washington's measured depth and careful calculations in a wistful aside:

A leisurely perusal of *Black Belt Diamonds*, the popular 1898 edition of [Washington's] speeches, yielded such gems as that lynching "really indicates progress. There can be no progress without friction"; that slavery gave the African-American "the habit of work"; or that, if the oppressed African-American "can be a medium of [southern whites] rising into the atmosphere of generous brotherhood and self-forgetfulness, he will see in it a recompense for all that he has suffered. (238).

As much as Washington believed in industrial education and economic power, he did not affirm self-sustained economic empowerment. As much as he championed the idea of hard work and the survivalist's creative allocation of resources, he lambasted the political agency (and the Black leaders) necessary for Black people to reap all of the fruits of their labors. As much as he dedicated his time and energy to create safe spaces for young Black men and women to learn, grow, and ultimately find a measure of success in world designed to see them fail and fall, his rhetoric toward those not directly under his administration, tutelage, or influence, including the masses of Black men and women who were populating the industrial centers of America in droves, was deadly. It devalued

Black lives and experience by articulating the cost of those countless lives and suffering as the price for progress, an expense for good business.

Du Bois, years later, would offer an interesting critique of Washington. Du Bois surmised that while Washington's notions of economic empowerment were indeed sound, Washington was bound by an understanding of economic development in the nineteenth century and not the twentieth century, and, for that reason, the curricula at Hampton and Tuskegee were vastly outpaced by the rapid advances in technology (266). This, I think is true, but I would also add that Washington saw the potential in known industrial methodologies as "moral" and the exploration of experimental scientific and technological methods as frivolous, even corrupting. The legacy of Washington's disdain towards the new would prompt James Weldon Johnson to make this observation and advocate for a new platform for industrial education:

A generation ago the majority opinion of the country was that industrial training should be the basic if not the only education for Negro boys and girls. But most of the standard trades that have been taught in our industrial schools and which were once regarded as sure guarantees of a livelihood have been practically abolished; they are today mechanized processes. It is hardly worth the while for these schools to turn out old-style blacksmiths, wheelwrights, shoemakers, typesetters, or even carpenters. The change calls for a revolution in the plants of our industrial schools. Machine methods must be substituted for the old handicrafts. This substitution is, however, one that only the largest and richest of our institutions can afford to make. (*Negro Americans, What Now?* 51)

The reality was that as scientific and industrial technologies developed throughout the Second Industrial Revolution and through the Progressive Era, Washington's unwavering focus on agriculture and domestic labor as technologically solvent practically ignored new approaches in science in favor of conventional and comfortable wisdom, an approach which had an adverse effect on HBCUs.

Du Bois as Eugenicist and His Afrofuturism

In *Dusk to Dawn* (1940), Du Bois admits to his fascination with new scientific approaches and the emerging technologies of his day:

I was interested in evolution, geology, and the new psychology. I began to conceive of the world as a continuing growth rather than a finished product. In Germany I turned still further from religious dogma and began to grasp the idea of a world of human beings whose actions, like those of the physical world, were subject to law. The triumphs of the scientific world thrilled me: the X-ray and radium came during my teaching term, the airplane and the wireless. The machine increased in technical efficiency and the North and South Poles were invaded.

On the other hand the difficulties of applying scientific laws and discovering cause and effect in the social world were still great. Social thinkers were engaged in vague statements and were seeking to lay down the methods by which, in some not too distant future, social law analogous to physical law would be discovered. . . . For me an opportunity seemed to present itself. I could not lull my mind to hypnosis by regarding a phrase like “consciousness of kind” as a scientific law. But turning my gaze from fruitless word-twisting and facing the facts of my own social situation and racial world, I determined to put science into sociology through a study of the condition and problems of my own group.

I was going to study the facts, any and all facts, concerning the American Negro and his plight, and by measurement and comparison and research, work up to any valid generalization which I could. I entered this primarily with the utilitarian object of reform and uplift; but nevertheless, I wanted to do the work with scientific accuracy. (*Science and Empire* 590-91)

Du Bois’s appreciation for science and scientific inquiry encouraged him to find ways to inject science and scientific innovation into social systems, primarily through the sociology and psychology of race. He applied such an approach in his study, *The Philadelphia Negro*, and in his use of infographics at the Paris Exposition of 1900, but he was also interested in experimenting with another “cutting-edge science”: eugenics. During the first twenty years of the twentieth century, scientists combined disparate

theories from anthropology, biology, genetics, and sociology to form eugenic science—the science, beliefs, and social practices that culminate in the improvement of a race or species by encouraging the reproduction of desirable traits through genetic manipulation or selective breeding. The central claim of newly minted eugenicists was that “both physical and character traits of individuals were biologically determined and thus the genetic quality of society could be made better or worse through artificial selection” (English 9). Though most American eugenicists focused on “negative eugenics,” which actively sought to prevent the reproduction of those in society deemed “unfit,” there was a subset of American eugenicists who concentrated on encouraging reproduction among those with the most desirable traits, a “positive eugenics.” Southerners had long advocated racial separation, but eugenics science and its resulting policies reinforced racial hierarchies.

Proponents of the pseudoscience of eugenics also believed that social order depended upon maintaining a standard of biological and racial integrity. For Whites, this often meant advocating racial purity through legislation and the systematic segregation of the races, especially between White women and Black men whose potential social contacts could lead to clandestine sexual encounters that could destroy White civilization. For American Blacks, eugenics meant obtaining a modicum of civility through the identification and elevation of those with desirable social and intellectual traits and the active discouragement of bringing any more children into society’s lower castes.

Lisa Lindquist Dorr has argued that eugenics was often thrust into the nexus of segregation law, social policy, and concern for maintaining the integrity of the general public. It is her contention that eugenics arguments magnified White America’s fear of

integration and especially emphasized the threat to White womanhood. Lindquist Dorr points out that the Racial Integrity Act in Virginia, which prohibited the marriage of a White person and a person of another race, harkens back to many of the Black codes that followed after Reconstruction. It was more heavily preoccupied with the ancestry of potential violators than public displays, going so far as to have eugenicists define what it was to be White and protecting the idea that there was an achievable racial purity. In effect, eugenics, as a scientific process, essentially “proved” that racial purity was an achievable act and that “the biological traits of the weaker race dominated those of the superior race when a mixture occurred” (46).

Daylanne K. English, in her work, *Unnatural Selections: Eugenics in American Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*, situates Du Bois in the center of the positive eugenics through his use of photography. English opens her discussion of Du Bois with a historical footnote on African-American progress, or “racial uplift.” When Phillis Wheatley addressed the advancement of Africa’s “pagan” descendants, she wholeheartedly maintained that African Americans, “black as Cain,” needed first to convert to Christianity, in light and truth, to begin the process of refinement through the “holy word” (and its most respected deliverers). Frederick Douglass’s narrative shifted the focus from Christianity proper to “literary, physical and political resistance (35). English later reveals that between 1900 and 1930, leaders such as E. Franklin Frazier, A. Phillip Randolph, James Weldon Johnson, Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Jr., and Du Bois all embraced some form of eugenics, which became more entrenched in discussions of racial progress.

This becomes even more intriguing when one considers the way Smith frames Du Bois's use of the photograph. Actually, English argues that Shawn Michelle Smith overlooks Du Bois's photographs as a kind of visual (or in modern terms, multimodal) eugenics document, primarily because most scholars are loathe to place Du Bois or any of his work in the same category of racializing eugenicists. However, I think that English argues succinctly and convincingly here, that Du Bois's photographs at the Paris Exposition of 1900 "cannot be interpreted solely as a reaction to white supremacy; he was, at the same time, advancing his own intraracial agenda, one that cannot be easily divorced from eugenic thinking and portraiture" (36). English even identifies Du Bois's hard-to-define novel, *Dark Princess*, as a kind of eugenics fantasy (43). She uncovers a 1922 issue of *The Crisis* where Du Bois clearly demonstrates his interest in eugenics by claiming that, "The Negro has not been breeding for an object and therefore must begin to "train and breed for brains, for efficiency, for beauty." Ultimately, English argues that "the ideology of eugenics effectively bridges the individual and the collective," primarily because "eugenics focuses simultaneously on the quality of the individual "breeder" and the quality of the collective body," whether it be a nation, race, or racial or social caste. In this way, eugenics serves to undercut the "binary constructions" of both modernisms and the Harlem Renaissance. Equally important, it allowed Du Bois a means to cope with various facets of his own double consciousness, easing the tension between "an elite yet paradoxically representative individual leader, and the Negro masses apparently so sorely in need of uplift." (41)

One of the resounding themes in *The Crisis* was, as Christopher Lasch put it, that intellectuals must play a central role in movements for radical change. But the journal

also had “an agenda for presenting eugenic racial portraiture.” Du Bois, regardless of where one may say that he stood on (or between) his various definitions of race, always imagined a selective and selectively bred leadership class of African Americans. The Talented Tenth were identified and bred through talent selection, virility, and intellect and, like English, I think of Du Bois’s articulation of the Talented Tenth as a biosocial solution to racial uplift. The attention shown to possibly eugenics’, and most assuredly elitists’, scientific methods of ensuring a leadership class ignores the possibilities of a more inclusive vision of racial progress that was as steadying scientifically, but perhaps more egalitarian and less intraracially exclusive.

To do this, Du Bois would split his own discussion of double consciousness into metaphors of the corporeal and the psyche. Sue Wells mentions that three central categories of modernity—temporality, embodiment, and expertise—are presented in Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk* and that Du Bois would “embod[y] racial identity in the blood” in order to establish some link between the reality of biological racial differences and the call for uplift for the Black upper echelon. Moreover, she reads his move here as “an understanding of consciousness as temporally constituted so that the work of previous generations can be effective only when it is appropriated in the present” (133-134).

Du Bois shifts the sites of embodiment depending on his audience. For more racially and politically integrated audiences, the metaphor of blood carries with it a message of humanistic unity and equality, a truth that exist on a horizontal axis under the rule of science and nature. For primarily African American audiences (and *The Crisis* supporters), the images of perfect families served as a metaphor for a more vertical

trajectory of progressive refinement, supported by eugenic science. When making these portrayals, double consciousness becomes a condition to be remedied and eventually transcended. It was not a conflict of warring tensions engaged to produce a stronger psyche—this was no socialistic dialectic—it was a site for psychosocial Darwinism. Double consciousness was an enemy, one whom African Americans would have to engage in a battle of life or death.

This mission of modernism generates some questions and issues for us when considering some of the earmarks of African-American progress. I like the way Kathleen Stewart articulates the modernist impulse in her essay, “Machine Dreams.” Stewart offers that the duality produced under the auspices of modernism (thought and matter, science and religion, machine and dream) seek to unlock the mysteries of the nature, the soul, and the heavens all while, as she quotes Bruno Latour:

. . . firmly maintaining that Nature escapes us, that Society is our own work, and that God no longer intervenes . . . In its simultaneous disenchantment and re-enchantment of the world, there is both anesthesia and shock, boredom and exhilaration, distraction and the lyrical pause of meaning. Far from a stable clarity of vision, or reason, modernity is like seeing double. (22)

Stewart goes on to direct her attention to Walter Benjamin, who sees the modernist world controlled by the bizarre images that it produces. She notes that the dream world of the middle class and upwardly mobile “inscribes,” or projects, personal agency within public spaces and through social issues, meaning that objects and ideas within modernist society became artifacts augmented by the “social energy” of this personal agency and, as such, refracted the values of the social energy to the public at large (23).

I think that Du Bois would wholeheartedly agree with Latour's—and by proxy Stewart's—sentimental explanation of modernity—with one caveat: For the African American, modernity is not like seeing double, it is like being double. This modernist enterprise inhabits our teeming, always-threatening-to-emerge subconscious; our dream states. But it is not a dream; it is a code, codes that have been inscribed by policy, American exceptionalist belief, and racial myth. To borrow the current sleep allegory, the most significant dialectic isn't produced through the struggle encountered between those transient and ephemeral moments between wake and sleep. The more engaging dialectic here lies in the interpretation of dreams. In other words, the key is in understanding the factors necessary to unlock those dreams.

This particular dream from Du Bois, a dream of a better, progressively more cosmopolitan and racially refined progeny culled out of selected sociocultural dictums and selective breeding, was in large sense a reclamation project in that aimed to bring African Americans a fuller measure of dignity lost by the harsh realities of slavery and second-class citizenship. However, it was to Du Bois a strictly American dream. What I mean is that Du Bois never expects his efforts towards “the civility of the race” to lead back full circle to the restoration of a healthy, distinctive African consciousness or psyche. Even amid the rising interest in African (and African-American) art, music, and culture that would give rise to the cultural boon that will become known as the Harlem Renaissance, Du Bois (I think unconsciously) always intones the divide of double consciousness as an absence of wholeness, a fracture in the psychic, a cultural and physical landscape that cannot be overcome.

Rather, as Bradford Stull notes in his book *Amid the Fall, Dreaming of Eden: Du Bois, King, Malcolm X, and Emancipatory Composition*, that Du Bois has to leave America “in order to offer a composition of paradise. To follow him, to have students follow him, is to leave America itself” (114). Du Bois does not hold Africa as an Eden for African Americans, but “contains the Edenic potential he explored in numerous places in America, only to reject them all.” What is fascinating to me is the way that Du Bois describes this “Edenic potential”:

. . . there will spring in Africa a civilization without coal, without noise, where machinery will sing and never rush and roar, and where men will sleep and think and dance and lie prone before the rising sons, and women will be happy. The objects of life will be revolutionized. Our duty will not consist in getting up at seven, working furiously for six, ten and twelve hours eating in sullen ravenousness or extraordinary repletion. No—We shall dream the day away and in cool dawns, in little swift hours, do all our work. (393)

Stull describes Du Bois’s position here as one who appreciates the role that technology may play in a fascinatingly utopian future for Blacks, but one who also recognizes the limitations of the social structure and the time in which he lives. This, of course, has special resonance for America. However, in a vision of the future rooted in the African landscape, Du Bois sees that technology “serves the harmonious relationship between the people and the land.” Du Bois saw wartime as a means of access and more technological acquisition as a by-product of higher rank and responsibility. Yet his technological “dream” of a more resilient race through the scientific means of eugenics seems decidedly more passive and less forgiving. Du Bois’s eugenic imaginings harken back to ideas of technological progress before the turn of the century that saw industrialization and the telegraph as means to transcend race, thus erasing the problem of the “colorline.”

The Great Migration: A Shift in the Potential of Technological Space

Much of what would become the great debate between Washington's accommodationist platform and Du Bois's integrationist stance was situated in the Progressive Era, or what is also called the Second Industrial Revolution. As America strove to become an industrial leader in the world at the turn of the century, it simultaneously worked to restructure its national identity as a democratic force by codifying its message of capitalism, freedom, and self-sufficiency into one mantra, one mythos: "The American Dream." The American Dream, like other ideologies of American lore and largesse, was/is fraught with contradiction, and, by the summer of 1915, African Americans were rapidly losing the political and economic gains they gained during the Reconstruction Era. Failed attempts to achieve a measure of acceptance in America by exhibiting valor in the first World War, repeated violence against African-American communities through the government-sanctioned policies of Jim Crow and the socially accepted, though publicly denounced, practice of race lynching placed many African Americans at a proverbial crossroads. Disillusioned with lives of generational poverty and few options of improvement, African Americans—as one disaffected southern sharecropper wrote, had to choose "whether to suffer long or be long gone"(3). These impulses marked the beginning of the Great Migration, a period where over twenty-two million African-Americans move from the agricultural South to the more industrialized North in search of better jobs, more equitable treatment, and less threat of bodily harm. At the beginning of the Great Migration, each man's message resonating with the rhymes and rhythms of the pastoral South and the deep bellows of yearning that drove men northward to the burgeoning cities, particularly Chicago, Detroit, and New

York. At the turn of the century, there were approximately four thousand students who would attend America's HBCUs. Most of these students attended HBCUs in the Deep South. Over the course of the Great Migration, those demographics began to shift. Enrollment at HBCUs increased almost tenfold, enabling these institutions to expand their scope and mission. It also empowered its students to exercise more collective autonomy.

Though most historians attribute the causes of the Great Migration to a combination of several "push-pull" factors, the Great Migration is an era that can be seen as one that is actually bracketed by technological innovation. Though the several incarnations of the mechanized cotton picker had been used marginally on plantations across the South, In fact:

[T]he mechanization of farming and the national expansion of industry undermined the major economic ideas of Fredrick Douglass and Washington. Their key ideas were, first, that owning small plots of land equated to power and, second, that black citizens could use their spending and saving decisions to solve the problems of political and economic discrimination, problems rooted in historical and social divisions of race and class. (McBride 34)

Pushed by the success of the mechanical cotton picker, which led to the widespread mechanization of the plantation's agricultural system, and pulled by the glut of expected opportunity created by the war effort, northern factory and service industries, and union recruiting teams, the African-American migratory experience at the beginning of the century was bookended by technological shifts. The Great Migration was an exodus of anticipatory progress, and the expectations of these northern-bound travelers were grand. Many expected to finally be afforded opportunities long denied in the land and law of Jim Crow, which held fast to the South in an attempt to protect the vitality of

its rapidly declining economy. They were—as the old folk used to say— “Canaan bound” to a land not necessarily of milk and honey, but one where the toil and enterprise of African Americans could be used to shape a new socioeconomic reality. The contemporary visions of those opportunities were not only shaped by the old stories, hymns, and slave records of successful journeys northward, but were also sanctioned and encouraged by several periodicals of the time. What is also taking place during this industrial reshaping is a process of migrant African Americans being integrated into the systems of economic and factory production in the North.

The Great Migration does not necessarily introduce the notion of a transformative technological space for African Americans, but the language that surrounds this unprecedented move created a new ethos for utilizing technology, which in turn galvanized African-American work and imagination. As these new possibilities become more and more apparent, so do the growing ideological concerns between the most prestigious and influential African-American leaders of the period and the increasingly democratic, opportunistic, and autonomous Black citizen. I would like to suggest that by examining the awakening and reenvisioning of this new technological space during the Great Migration, we can also see in this moment how this phenomenon disrupts the progressive racial utopias presented in the rhetoric of Du Bois, Washington, and Garvey. It also serves to give us greater insight into how these now-familiar leaders incorporated technology into their own visions and reconciled/processed/came to grips with the African-American community’s adoption of the turn of the century’s emerging technoculture.

Error Messages: Programmatic Missteps in Technology Integration

Du Bois and Washington were celebrated for successfully cultivating organizations and useful schools of thought in the service of African-American progress, and they were both instrumental helping African Americans gain access to technological fields. However, both men experienced a perceptible decline in popularity through the high point of the Great Migration and were roundly criticized for the deep polarization and sometimes vindictiveness they created through their competing agendas and personal vendettas. Even though Washington died of tuberculosis at his home in Alabama in 1915, the year that marks the greatest increase of African Americans in northern cities, his status as architect of the Atlanta Compromise and the Tuskegee Machine made him (and his ideas) as much a target in death as he was in life. By the spring of 1922, when the influx of Black laborers migrating to northern cities had reached its apex, many Black migrants, along with many critics, openly questioned the effectiveness, methods, and motivations of both leaders. The masses expressed their discontent in the “Letters to the Editor” sections of Negro newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender*, the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, the *New York Call*, and the *Pittsburg Courier*, commenting that the “so-called” negro leaders were “out of touch,” “shadowy,” “self-motivated,” even “scrupulous.” One engine-part fabricator from Mississippi asked if “any of these so-called bosses know what it means to be able to count on the clock.” Others, such as M. L. , a steel-factory laborer, lamented that for these leaders, “greed had got them good,” and they had formed a kind of middle-class elite that had moved them outside of the circle of poverty and violence surrounding many African Americans at the time.

Part of the negative perception among the Black working class was rooted in their mismanagement of the evolving technoculture of the day and the potential opportunities that came with it. As scientific and industrial technologies developed throughout the Second Industrial Revolution and through the Progressive Era, Washington's unwavering focus on agriculture and domestic labor as technologically solvent practically ignored new approaches in science in favor of conventional and comfortable wisdom. David McBride, in his work, *Missions for Science*, notes that Washington's agenda was "out-of-step" with most of American development. The "ownership of small farms or businesses [as] the potential basis for national social and economic power for African Americans facing a society of science-driven industry and government" was a de facto means of relegating African Americans to "outside of the circle of innovators, investors, and managers," while science and industry, controlled by America's White hegemonic political machine, would continue to expand and refine technologies to fit its own design and purposes (33).

Washington, and the network of educators, ministers, and businessmen that he spawned, misunderstood the industrial impulse of their time, mistakenly placing innovations in manufacturing and the applied sciences outside of the agenda for economic reform and overlooking the current attention to new technologies as both transient and digressive. As McBride points out, "Washington and his ideologues did not fathom the immense distance that U.S. economic and science profession leaders and their political sponsors had traveled and dreamed to travel in their mission to intensely use scientific technology in industry and government. Nor could Washington grasp the unbending power that reluctant large-scale industries and managerial bureaucracies were

gaining over workers and farmers” (6). Admittedly, in terms of the type of widespread economic, sociopolitical improvement and the enhancement of collective wealth and property ownership, instituting vocational curriculum throughout African-American intuitions of higher learning was a “dramatic” and “devastating failure.” Johnson and Watson find that “...by 1930 industrial education was seen as a ‘cynical political strategy, not a sound educational policy’ was widely held and has a ‘great detour’ for Blacks.”

Du Bois, the Harvard-educated sociologist and philosopher, writer and militant, academician par excellence was a constant and consistent critic of Washington’s educational program. Du Bois became the voice of a significant minority outside of Washington’s control and influence who believed that Washington’s agenda—articulated for the American public in his famous “Atlanta Compromise” and realized in his Tuskegee Institute—had mortgaged the future of Blacks for a few thankless jobs and personal prestige. Other Black leaders, such as William Monroe Trotter, harshly criticized Washington. However, Du Bois’s stinging critique of Washington in *The Souls of Black Folk*, along with his editorship of *The Crisis*, gave Du Bois a platform, making him a formidable adversary.

Du Bois warned that if American Negroes concerned themselves with merely training themselves to be better laborers and servants, they would be committing social suicide. He goes on to say that “in . . . the rapidly changing technique of industry their laborers will be displaced while they will have developed no intelligent leadership in industry or thought to guide the mass.” One of Du Bois’s major complaints against Washington was his utter misunderstanding about the way modern industrialization

would render much of his work at Tuskegee and Hampton obsolete and render that Black inhabitants of the southern Black belt “powerless” (34).

While the Washington that McBride describes “saw the Black belt as a romantic Negro world,” Du Bois had romantic notions of his own when it came to technological spaces and grossly miscalculated the impact of military service against migrant factory work in pursuit of industrial access. In his infamous editorial “Close Ranks,” Du Bois overestimated the potential gains that military service would afford African Americans. He had accused Washington of being dangerously focused on maintaining his status as HNIC, which led Washington to being irrationally suspiciousness of Du Bois’s “purely intellectual” arguments, presents an equally dangerous clarion call for voluntary military enlistment. The mix of personal ambition among the murky and lofty goals of African-American involvement in the war placed Du Bois at odds with many Black intellectuals and the African-American public at large. To this end, the army was construed as a place and system where prejudice would be removed enough so that they could achieve some semblance of the gains they weren’t able to achieve otherwise. Many thought that they would be able to fight the good fight, come home, and be heroes. In fact, there again, African-American men find themselves in a position where they are allowed to work only “Negro” jobs. However, Du Bois seemed all too ready to sacrifice thousands of Black men to the war effort. The battle for the colorline, it seems is a war of attrition. African Americans would not gain the tools or expertise of war; they would be fodder for American militarism. What they would gain, according to Du Bois, is a stepping stone towards proving their moral character.

What soldiers found upon their return from war was that they were discriminated against just as they were in the civilian world. Blacks were denied officer's training and commissions and were often relegated to "grunt" work, never allowed to gain honor or distinction among the various expertise offered by the armed forces. The war was just another in a long line of failed integration attempts that never intended to allow Blacks to have any real social gains or technological mastery. Indeed, as one critic noted:

It is the access to industrial technology which is the ends to the means that's the key, not armed warfare. But the fact that even though they are in these places of industrial manufacturing, they don't have access to more advanced positions. They are relegated to "negro" jobs. They are not allowed to gain the technological expertise and mastery that are inherent in the apprenticeship professions and that lead to wealth. (7)

Frustration with the leaders, and the armed forces, spilled over into frustration with the conservatism of HBCUs. The advent of the Harlem Renaissance and the New Negro Movement, coupled with the "Red Summer" of 1919, produced a greater emphasis of economic empowerment, self-reliance, and self-governance inspired by Garveyism. African Americans flocked to HBCUs in droves in order to enact and fulfill the vision of becoming the Talented Tenth. This shift prompted Black people to seek control of their own destinies by controlling their own institutions. For HBCU culture, the shift was seismic. As Raymond Wolters explains, Black students, professors, and alumni of HBCUs rejected the paternalistic conservatism of the largely White administrations that were entrenched at most HBCUs. Though many of these administrators dedicated themselves with altruistic resignation to the success of their institutions and their students, many were loath to accept the new intellectual vibrancy and militancy of the times, actively attempting to squelch the "New Negro" fervor in favor of what they held

as traditional Christian values. As Jimisha Relerford observes, “On college campuses, this renewed demand for self-direction and self-reliance in Black communities resulted in a wave of rebellions by students, professors, and alumni who demanded Negro control over the education and training of Negro youths” (28).



Figure 18. Editorial cartoon. *Chicago Defender*, August 20, 1921.
“Haven’t We Followed Him About Far Enough?”

Later publications such as *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*, and *The Messenger* would refer to Washington as “Pope Washington,” “the Black Boss,” “the Benedict Arnold of the Negro Race,” and “the Great Traitor” (8). Though the writers for these magazines saw Du Bois in a slightly more favorable light, he was not spared harsh

comments from the readership, described by several readers as an “Uncle Tom,” a “snake-oil salesman,” and, painfully, “a disappointment.” When Washington died, the intellectual and institutional legacy left by him was carried on by several of his lieutenants. Washington surrogates such as Judge Terrell, Emmett Scott, and Robert Moton were roundly criticized as “tools of the ‘bloody shirt,’” “traitors to the millions of black men, women, and children,” and cowards consumed with the desire to be the “Big Negro Leader” (9). These comments seem to suggest that Du Bois, Washington, and other Negro leaders had, at best, no real connection to the lives of their constituents, let alone how to get them “O’er to Canaan Land.” These “Old Crowd” leaders, in spite of their sometimes radically different plans for the advancement of the race, were lopped together for their wholesale categorical failures as leaders of the masses as well as the economic, political, and intellectual middle class. As early as 1917, editorial cartoons would depict the Old Crowd racial leader as a composite figure, one who carried the unflattering criticisms of all the Black leaders who had come before.

Migration as an Occasion for Reinvention and the Factory as a Cultural Communicator

The portrayal of the migrant’s arrival in northern cities, especially from the perspective of the northern Whites and the Black middle class, often depicted those resettlers as a Black mass, one which would not only change the face of the city, but would produce just as much dislocation and confusion as hope for those African Americans looking for a new life. Northern cities had enjoyed predominantly White communities where Blacks were easily controlled in terms of numbers and demographics as they were relegated to small outlying sections of their boundaries. Now, with the

encroachment of the “Black hordes,” those borders—social and topographical, real and imagined—were rapidly shrinking. Farah Jasmine Griffin describes the growing number of Blacks in these urban centers as “an omen of dramatic change” within contemporary society and questions suppositions about race, class, and modernity (51). She likened it to an ever-growing swarm of blackness threatening to cover the civilized, modern White territory. Though many northern newspapers looked at this mass exodus with a mixture of “humor, horror and disdain” (49), African-American print mediums seized the opportunity to galvanize the migration movement (42).

The African-American migrants of the migration narrative confront changes in technology and culture that affect their way of experiencing time and space. . . . In the North, the focus on the body, which is so prevalent in the southern sections of the migration narrative, shifts to a focus on the migrant psyche. The effect on the psyche is an indication of the complexity of northern power. The psyche is the realm where power is enforced, and it is the ground on which the migrants seek first to resist objectification (52).

In 1915, encouragement in the *Chicago Defender* leads to the Great Migration north for southern Blacks. The paper also adopts the slogan “if you must die, take at least one with you.” Other more moderate voices within the African-American community, such as Kelly Miller, Archibald Grimke, and Carter G. Woodson, often reject the rhetorical propaganda, while defending and contextualizing the various ideological frameworks at play, each working to practically situate the sometimes-raging polemics in the everyday lives of the Black migrant. Miller, who for years “occupied a middle ground between staunch accommodationist Bookerites and more nationalistic progressives and

militants such as Trotter and Du Bois, saw the New Crowd Negro” revolution as another polemic that ignores the thrush and momentum being generated by the very people upon which the revolution depended.

What these factories did, in fact, was invite writers to create a new rhetoric of space, one devoid of the oppressive legacy of slavery, with its legacy of violence, degradation, and inhumanity. Indeed, the space that the language of the field inhabited gave way to the language of the factory. Yet, one still has to pose the question: Do these new cultural artifacts convey a different message when sounding back to the African-American masses calling for a more equitable stake in their industry? How exactly do factories function as public spaces as cultural communicators?

Northern employers stood a good chance of hiring competent, and many times expert, workers for a pittance of what they would have paid for White workers, especially the unionized ones. However, as Charles Johnson noted, there would be “none of the Horatio Alger ascensions from messenger to manager or from porter to president” for Negroes. “Once a porter, barring the phenomenal, always a porter.” In effect, African-American labor lacked true vertical economic mobility, but was stratified horizontally. “Negro jobs” in factories afford African Americans employment, but rarely offered them upward mobility. (43) In a way, the burgeoning producers and distributors of consumerism, who at this time are rapidly growing and maturing as the most influential social class/caste, deposit their dreams within physical and cultural artifacts.

The Messenger, founded by A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, was a major artery of expression for Black socialists across the East Coast, but primarily from New York and Boston. Besides the standard socialist fare, including calls for socialized

industry, nationalized land distribution, and the collective unionization of Black and White workers, *The Messenger* offered long-term and immediate solutions. As John Brown Child asserts, *The Messenger* often used machine analogies to analyze society in important polemics-driven articles (50).[44] The ongoing metaphor often pitted the everyday proletariat, here the Black day labor or domestic, as a mere cog within America's capitalistic, racist, political machine. However, the trope was also used to positively describe the "new social machinery" of revolution, such as the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917 (also known as the Russian Revolution). Regardless of the machine metaphor's spin, the most important concern for *The Messenger's* writers was to articulate who controlled or fashioned the machine. What we have here are two competing, contrasting opinions rooted in industrial ideal. We have those who want to work, want to gain personal progress and prestige by working hard, gaining education, gaining technical expertise, and who are doing the cooperative thing, but who aren't being held by the socialist ethic. On the other hand, we have these socialists who are looking to establish cooperative economics, but at the same time denying African-American culture and basically propagating another system. Both sides recognize the failure of leadership and both sides recognize a crisis in opportunity, but neither side yet expresses a concrete economic plan that is designed to energize the African-American community. Remarkably, this will not be articulated until Garvey rises to prominence in the early 1920s.

Indeed, the problem from *The Messenger's* viewpoint was that other Black political activists and many in the Black masses mistakenly viewed racial, not economic, oppression as crucial. Accordingly:

. . . both Washington and Du Bois saw change as “progressive,” both in the sense of a positive advancement and also in the sense of a more or less gradual transformation of existing conditions. The socialist writers of the *Messenger* saw the situation quite differently: they envisioned a sudden, violent and cataclysmic social upheaval that would lift years of oppressive weight.

As Aston Wesley Welch remarks, “[I]n the 1920s, as now, educational policies and practices tended to mirror the beliefs and practices in the larger society” (496). Many administrators were paternalistic Whites; Black administrators were mostly “good niggers” who had demonstrated adherence to the status quo and readiness to follow orders. Fisk University and Hampton Institute illustrate that private schools were not excluded from such practices. By tradition, no Black person was considered for the presidency of Fisk until after the Second World War. In 1924, Fisk University President Fayette Avery McKenzie refused to allow the establishment of a student chapter of the NAACP on his campus; McKenzie was in good company. Paul Cravath, Chairman of Fisk University’s Board of Trustees, not only endorsed complete racial separation as the “only solution to the Negro problem,” but campaigned to convince philanthropists to limit their contributions to Black schools to those committed to the development of separate societies. Apparently, his pleas were accepted. Hampton Institute, on the other hand, provided segregated residences and dining halls for White visitors and faculty, discouraged “unnecessary” interracial contacts, and was rewarded with an endowment greater than the combined total of all the more prestigious Black colleges. Despite such examples, dissatisfaction and protests on Black college campuses became so widespread during the 1920s that Wolters termed them “one of the most significant aspects of the New Negro protest movement.” Black students’ rejection of paternalism and the

insistence that Black youth should be educated according to principles satisfactory to the Black community were the causes of the rebellions, according to Wolters.

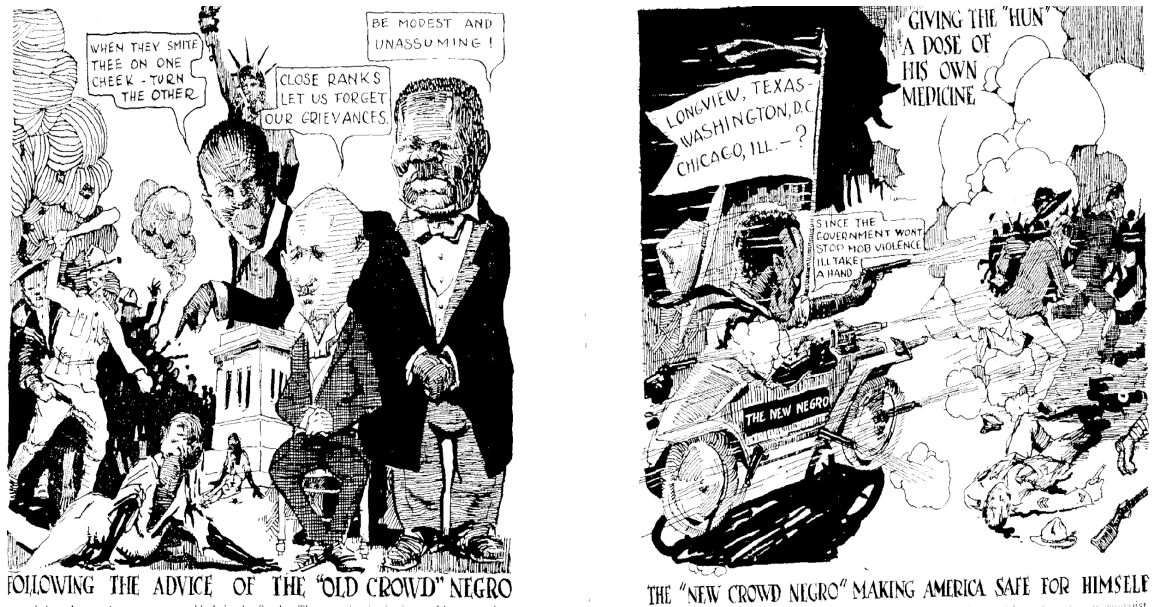


Figure 20. Editorial cartoon. *The Messenger*, July 1919. A. Phillip Randolph, founder and editor of *The Messenger*, idealistically described the “New Crowd Negro” as “educated, radical and fearless.”

The Black socialist writers of *The Messenger* were guilty of ascribing the same subconscious mindlessness to the participants of the Great Migration that Washington feared and Du Bois disdained. The “great mass movement among Negroes” for these writers was not the migration itself. In reality, the movement into locals of factory production was really just the “pull” of the American industrial complex. It was the activity that would prefigure the real revolution which would “assume four distinct forms . . . labor unions, farmers’ protective unions, cooperative business, and socialism” (45). Part of their ideological folly is that by reducing America’s institutionalized racism to a symptom of a corrupt capitalist system, it ignores the psychosocial and behavioral factors that allow racism to survive, even thrive, regardless of the national fiscal health or economic status. It ignored the emotional quotient of racism as strictly an irrational

phenomenon. Irrational . . . maybe. But for the millions of migrant workers and thousands attending HBCUs, no less real.

When Griffin describes her third movement of the migration narrative, she examines urban spaces that act as “sites of contestation for the migrants and the powers that seek to control them” (8). She looks at those spaces as locations with two distinct possibilities: They either “inhibit the progress and development of the protagonist” by perpetuating the most destructive forces of urbanization, which, for her, includes “fragmentation, dislocation, and material and spiritual impoverishment”—all of the ingredients for a postmodern milieu—or the locations become safe havens from the harsh realities of urban squalor, a place where the migrant can *create an alternate urban subjectivity* (italics mine). Griffin notices that “at their most progressive, they are spaces for healing, retreat and resistance.” However, she also points out that at their most oppressive, they can create automatons who complacently obey the commands and needs of marginalizing powers. Griffin argues that exploring and understanding these “safe spaces,” a term she borrows from Patricia Hill Collins, gives scholars a means of “understanding *the possibilities* of such sites within the migration narrative” (9).

These safe spaces are material, discursive, and, I would say, rhetorical. Every bluesman, every journeyman, knows that his future lies in front of him and not in the places that he has left behind. Experienced travelers also know that if you linger too long at one location, the prospects of reaching that original destination become slimmer and slimmer. Yet, the experienced journeyman knows that he needs places of rest, retreat, revitalization, and remembering along the way. Places where he can revel in the good times of the past, and the pain that prompted him to leave. Safe spaces may play an

important role in assisting migrants to resist dominant constructions of them. In other cases, they serve only to create a sense of complacency (103). The factory, the place where the mechanized and the mind were supposed to work more seamlessly together, was considered more rest stop than destination.

In the minds of Du Bois and Washington, the factory was a place to work out dreams of progress, not live in them. Yet, they penned their hopes and strivings in such a way that spoke of the mechanized industry as a safe space for a people to be, not as a place for people to become. In fact, the factory as a space for the possibilities of becoming is not their primary focus at all.

Perhaps the groundswell of resistance to the appeals of these leaders and the call for a more technologically savvy, protective, and nurturing posture within the technology can be seen as an emergent response, one attempting to perhaps repair a feedback loop and metaphorically bring the traditional rhetorical viability of call-and-response, a trope of sustainability and agreement within the African-American community between leaders and the people, back into harmony.

Conclusion

Both men shared a technological vision for the future. Yet, Washington's vision for economic prosperity suffered from the suffocating limitations of his industrial education agenda.

For Du Bois, the people were a source of vital energy, but that energy lacked the necessary direction for progress. For him, as for Washington, the problem was how to tie popular energy to elite leadership. Du Bois's plan called for an elite different from that of Washington's. His leading group would not be technocrats and industrialists but cultured warriors.

They would be cosmopolitan, free from the constrictions of any particular society. For them, world literature, art, and philosophy—in a word, “culture”—would form a free zone, untrammelled by the tendency toward crass materialism that Du Bois felt characterized Washington’s approach. (Childs 18).

Upon closer examination, the fruition of Washington’s educational platform depended on idealistic currency of work. That somehow the more industrious Blacks were the more ready to receive and manage the equality that they have earned, thus securing a greater portion of the American life. And Du Bois, for all his consternation and jealousy towards Garvey, ultimately sided with him, believing that the African American was better able to achieve his measure of liberation and technological solvency, proficiency, and fluidity in Africa, the place where he believed Blacks would study war (and work) no more.

They both used photography to further validate their respective positions of uplift in strikingly similar ways. Even more surprising, the two men’s vision for a technologically advanced future easily complemented one another where the work of the hand emboldens the Black man’s creational impulse to produce a salient, viable, and visible people of “substance” where the objects of life and life itself “will be revolutionized.” On a sadder note, it was a gambit that was either refused or ignored. For them, technology becomes a way of realizing their own identities, and yet, what Du Bois and Washington do not realize is that technology may be a better means of creating opportunities for collective agency than enforcing their own versions of what individual agency should be. Not so much in terms of the classic definition of an inventor, but more in terms of a creator on who can reinvent the master’s tools, as well as create new ones in order to produce new artifacts, discourses, and methods—types of “user-generated

content,” if you will—for the explicit purpose of improving the lives of African Americans.

The factories, in a way, create fragmented selves, torn away from the essentialist and naturalistic South and torn away from essentialist visions of upward social mobility (in Du Bois’s dream) or homeward mobility (like Washington and more clearly expressed by Garvey). If anything, the work applied by African Americans on the surface would seem to be a fulfillment of Washington’s dream, his handy-work, so to speak. Yet the lack of economic mobility and development would seem to betray that rationale as well. That destabilization allows for a political stand, communal investment, and technological appropriation.

As the Great Migration produces a demographic shift, it begins to work as a democratic one as well. The Black population at large wants to become attached to work in a new way. No longer wage slaves to the system, the relation to the means of production and the ways African Americans can manipulate what they produce, becomes vastly important. Technology, in this part of the African-American migrant tradition, is tied to the body. It is a means of seeing what we have and do not have. They are the tensions that, because of the social, economic, and political climate, were not allowed to develop or produce. Yet, the traces of community action and militant protest foreshadowed in these debated sketches are evidence of unrealized expectations and collective yearning for a more comprehensive, practical, and overall effective form of progress. Uplift bereft of elitist color politics or disingenuous “so-called leaders.” Proper uplift would be transformative. It would be technologically accessible. And it would be progress that they would be willing to fight for and protect.

These are frameworks that prefigure essentialism. Technology in the hands of leaders constructing alternative narratives of essentialism attempts to reinvent and positively turn the gaze to a multimedia “documentary” for Du Bois and a class of focused “Technocrats” for Washington. Technology wielded by the masses, however, disrupts and, in important ways rejects, essentialism in favor of the search for a transformative, transient, and transcendent use of technology that protects the family, ensures work/wages, resonates with the reality that the American Negro embodies multiple realities and will fight for the right to shape his own truth. To protect their lives, create new freedoms, and reveal the truth of multiplicity in world that thrives on creating the other in our mists. That technology can and should make possible the refiguring of power relationships between classes and races through the mechanism of shared leadership and communal values is a sentiment best captured by Manning Marable in his book, *Black Leadership*. When discussing the seemingly unlikely, but numerous similarities between Booker T. Washington and Louis Farrakhan, Marable finds that although various leaders throughout the past century have had divergent personalities and vastly different methodologies, they largely held the same ultimate agenda in mind, prompting Marable to add that “the underlying dynamics of blacks’ collective efforts to achieve empowerment have been remarkably consistent” (xii). Part of that consistency is tied to the expectation of Black leadership to be dynamic leadership from dynamic personalities. I believe it was Marable who popularized the term “black messianic style” when referring to this approach to leadership employed by most of the most notable names in African-American history and lore.

For relatively brief moments, [Black leaders] may create an illusion that it is they, and not the vast majority, who determine the possibilities of the future. Black leaders have given their own particular style and language to various phases and moments of American history, and they will continue to do so. But it may be the measurement of our ability to achieve a full redefinition of America's democratic project if over time black Americans are able to move away from the charismatic, authoritarian leadership style and paternalistic organizations toward the goal of "group-centered leaders" and grassroots empowerment. In short, instead of leadership from above, democracy from below. The time for all voices to be heard is long overdue. (xvii)

The dialectic fails because the end result does not encompass the shared values of the community at large, For Du Bois and Washington, the sacrifice of compromise is too much. It does not sit right within the hard-fought integrity and base desires of African Americans to sit at the table of fully recognized humanity Americana. It's a failed dialectic because the opposing forces do not carry the weight of the colliding of cosmic forces, violent and combustible, that are drawn to each other and with both force and gravity, destroying large parts of them, but creating newness out of the ashes. This was a smaller combustible event, one with the potential to be incendiary, but in actuality, it fizzles out like flint sparks against tinder and wind. Properly appropriated technologies can break established hierarchies and challenge normatively held values. That technology can and should make possible the refiguring of power relationships between classes and races through the mechanism of shared leadership and communal values is a sentiment best captured in the communal rejection of Du Bois and Washington.

CHAPTER 5

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES AND VERNACULAR INSURRECTIONS:

DEVELOPING A TECHNOETHOS AROUND HBCUS DURING
THE TRANSITION FROM CIVIL RIGHTS TO BLACK POWER

If you stick a knife in my back 9 inches and pull it out 6 inches, there is no progress. If you pull it all the way out, that's not progress. Progress is healing the blow that the wound made . . . some [people] don't even admit that the knife is there.

—*Malcolm X*

Throughout the first semester I received about 200 letters a day. Most of the people who wrote, particularly the Negroes, said that they had great admiration for me. They were praying and hoping that I would make it. Their basic attitude alarmed me. The letter that alarmed me most came from students at Alabama State College, a Negro school. The major message conveyed in this letter was that they had committed themselves to God and to me, to prove to the world that Negroes are somebody. The letter was alarming, because they had relieved themselves of all responsibility. They thought there was nothing more that they had to do. I feel that every young Negro must make his personal contribution toward the accomplishment of his freedom. No one man can fight alone. You can't confine the struggle for human freedom and dignity to one place or to one man. To free the right arm and cut the left arm off—this is not progress.

—*James Meredith*

There will be no pictures of pigs shooting down
Brothers in the instant replay
There will be no pictures of young being
Run out of Harlem on a rail with a brand new process
There will be no slow motion or still life of
Roy Wilkens strolling through Watts in a red, black and
Green liberation jumpsuit that he had been saving
For just the right occasion
Green Acres, The Beverly Hillbillies, and
Hooterville Junction will no longer be so damned relevant
and Women will not care if Dick finally gets down with
Jane on Search for Tomorrow because Black people
will be in the street looking for a brighter day

The revolution will not be televised

–“*The Revolution will not be Televised*” by Gil Scott Heron

After an honorable career in the United States Air Force, James Meredith enrolled in Jackson State College, a historically black college in Jackson, Mississippi in 1961. Jackson State was considered a good school by many standards: students engaged in a liberal arts education and its professors were relatively well known in Mississippi circles. Inspired by John F. Kennedy’s presidential address. Most importantly, it was known as an ultraconservative institution. Even as Mississippi bristled under increased media scrutiny as the Civil Rights Movement began to sweep across the country’s consciousness, Jackson State’s president at the time, Jacob Reddix, was swift to condemn and punish any unsanctioned political activities on campus. Consequently, Jackson State students remained largely out of the protests and out of the crosshairs. Jackson State’s lack of activism stood in stark contrast to Tougaloo College, a small, private Black college that sat right on border of North Jackson and Tougaloo, Mississippi. Its students and faculty, Black and White, were instrumental in the Civil Rights Movement within the state and nationally.

It was John Salter, a social science professor, and Lois Chaffee, both White professors at Tougaloo College, and Salter’s students, Memphis Norman, Anne Moody, Pearlana Lewis, and Joan Trumpauer—a white man and three Black students—who sat at the “Whites Only” counter in Woolworth’s store lunch counter. Moody, in her autobiography, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, remarked that Jackson State students were too insular to participate in the Civil Rights Movement (67).

James Meredith was a Jackson State student who saw things differently. In 1961, inspired by John F. Kennedy's national address, Meredith submitted his application to be the first African American to attend the University of Mississippi (known around the state as "Ole Miss") and thus integrate Mississippi higher education. After having his application rejected twice, pursuing a litany of court cases that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, finding the Mississippi Governor to be held in contempt of that court's ruling, being arrested on trumped-up charges of voter fraud, and watching the residents of Oxford engage in a shoot-out with the National Guard and federal agents on campus that left at least two men dead, Meredith was admitted to the University of Mississippi on October 1, 1962.

During a dorm-room interview in his second semester, Meredith expressed his concern for many students from HBCUs, who demonstrated a lack of personal civic responsibility. He believed that most carried the dangerous assumption that the leadership of the Civil Rights Movement and the Black community would blaze a trail for them to follow, making the crooked places straight before they got there. Though he had an exemplary military record and good grades at Jackson State, Meredith never saw himself as "exceptional"; he believed that his "great purpose" was "to make way for the average Negro. Negro progress up to now has been on the basis of selection. Great efforts have always been made to get the superior, the above average Negro the right to certain things ". . . But if we can make way for the average, the above average will always find his place. If getting a degree from the University of Mississippi were all I ever did with my life, I would have done very little." Meredith advocated for the kind of progress where even those who considered themselves unexceptional felt enough agency that they could

initiate change through their own individual acts of courage and rebellion, no matter the scale. It was hard for the everyday African American in Mississippi to generate and sustain that kind of agency, Meredith speculates, because of the constant threats to his life and livelihood.

In Malcolm X's first public statements after his ninety-day suspension by the Nation of Islam for his infamous "chickens come home to roost" comments regarding the Assassination of then President John F. Kennedy, a reporter asked Malcolm if he felt that the Civil Rights Movement specifically, and America generally, were making progress. Malcolm responded by saying he would never say that we were making progress and immediately offered the metaphor in the latter quote that begins this chapter. Malcolm's point was that progress could not be measured in achievements, gains, or degrees of success; real progress was healing the rift, the bad blood and animosity, between the injured and the injurer, the oppressor and the oppressed. Healing the blow is more than repairing old damage. It also calls for removing the threat of the knife and moving on to a new understanding between parties.

Malcolm's metaphor is both prophetic and philosophical. It calls into question the nature of violence in American social society at that time. In the midst of state-sanctioned racial violence against innocent African Americans campaigning for equal rights, the shining moral armor of nonviolence was beginning to lose its luster as the brutality against civic protest continued. The further escalation of the Vietnam War had begun to prompt violent demonstrations of its own in front of recruitment offices and college campuses. One could argue that America has always been a country that dealt in

bloodshed, but how would it be able to reconcile its claim as an exceptional nation when it was forced to look at the blood on its hands?

If technology has a place in this discussion, does it play the role of blade or healing balm?

This chapter explores the discourse of technology in and around the climate of student protests during the transition between the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. This chapter looks at HBCUs as not only sites of contested social power, but also as sites that embodied engagements with technology that were emblematic of the time and prompted a reevaluation of technological discourse. Technological discourse in the Black community was shifting from the appropriation of technology for the purposes of representation, which was key in the Civil Rights Movement, to technological liberation, which was a major theme in the polemics of the Black Arts/Black Power movements. I argue that “Black Power” marked a shift in communal ideology for African Americans’ understanding of critical access to technology politically, intellectually, and geographically. The often ignored and misunderstood student killings at Jackson State in 1970 served as a catalyst for a new direction in African-American technological discourse; specifically, in the Black Panther Party and the Pan-African Congress, one focused on creating sites of technological promise and security that would better address what Huey Newton would call “The Technology Question.”

Messianic Leadership and the Technology of Representation

A common launching point for this kind of exploration would be the iconic leadership of the Civil Rights era. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X were avid

readers and engaging intellectuals, steeped in the public performance of Black oratory traditions that prepared them to be, if not media-friendly, then exceedingly media-savvy. It is important to point out here that many agree that part of their brilliance was in their use of media to further their civil rights agendas. More scholars, journalists, and critics of these two men have covered this ground than I would care to discuss at the moment, but my point is this: Part of their attention to and ultimate success with media was through their appropriation of the medium—their images, their sound bites, and their protests were largely captured, edited, produced, and distributed by usually unsympathetic and often hostile White media outlets. Nonetheless, King and Malcolm were still able to further their respective civil rights agendas, enliven their bases, and challenge the White racist social-political hegemony of segregation. The power and substance of both King and Malcolm's soaring rhetoric and transforming presence were made active and real through the power of television. And whether it was King reframing the familial filmed image (and expectation) of Blacks as violent predators with the image of Blacks suffering under the threat and action of violence, where "sit-ins become beat-downs," or Malcolm reframing the sensationalist CBS extended news feature, "The Hate that Hate Produced" to use as a springboard his rigorous and apologetic appeals for common sense, common decency, *and* Black nationalism, both men readily saw communication mediums as dynamic space for transformation.

The attention to communication technologies shared by King and Malcolm overlap a couple of key realities for the two men. One, they would mark a shift with regard to the unifying countercultural, charismatic brand of Black leader that Marable describes and, therefore, the effect of their media presence (and ability to affect the terms

with which they engage media). Second, the rhetoric and polemics of King and Malcolm clearly utilized television to deliver strong rebukes of systemic racism, while also issuing powerful messages of strength and self-worth to the Black community. I would argue that their appropriation of communication technology stemmed from not only their positions as leaders, but also out of their particular individual agency as orators, public speakers, and intellectuals. While this agency benefits African Americans as a whole by resisting racist representations of Blacks and media and pushing forward the civil rights agenda that would ultimately benefit all Americans, this kind of agency is not easily replicated by the hundreds of thousands of Blacks still searching for a way to be leaders and effect systemic change themselves. Robert Charles Smith argues that one of the immediate consequences of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s death in 1968 was that there would no longer be an expectation of, or a prospect for, a single, dominant figure on the national stage who would be widely accepted as a leader and spokesman for all Black people (5). One would have to wonder what Smith would think of the presidential runs of Jesse Jackson, but it is an observation with some merit, given the fracturing between leadership and the African-American base that could be seen in my exploration into the use of technological discourse by Du Bois and Washington. However, Smith gives only scant attention to the importance of Stokely Carmichael as a new kind of visionary leader, one that is more concerned with the architecture of socioeconomic freedom and political power than the speeches about it. And when the speeches did matter, they would offer programmatic steps for empowering Black people.

James Meredith would be the catalyst for Carmichael's rise and the national scope of Black Power. On June 6, 1966, Meredith began his one-man "Walk against Fear,"

noting that a Black man in Mississippi should not have to fear for his life in 1966. He planned to make the 220-mile trek from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi, largely unaccompanied and with little to no media attention. On the second day of his walk, Meredith was ambushed by a White assailant and shot in the back, head, and leg with shotgun pellets full of rock salt. Meredith survived, vowing to continue his walk as soon as he was able; an incensed civil rights community vowed to do it for him. Civil rights leaders flocked to Meredith's Memphis hospital room to offer words of encouragement and to plan how they would continue Meredith's crusade. Now dubbed the "March against Fear," thousands of marchers would complete the march to Jackson under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Floyd McKissick and Stokely Carmichael. Carmichael was the new Chairman of the SNCC, a gifted speaker, and a brilliant student. He had participated in or helped organize civil rights demonstrations for over ten years and was seen as one of the movement's rising stars, an heir to the charismatic national leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr. It was a logical conclusion given their close relationship.

Even before Carmichael had become the Chairman of SNCC, he had developed a close relationship with King (Joseph 120). Still, Joseph observes that:

Carmichael's ascendancy to national leadership deepened his friendship with Martin Luther King. Both men took pains to publicly speak well of each other, and Carmichael's antiwar speeches offered creative space for King to speak out against Vietnam. Their joint antiwar declarations led critics to argue that Carmichael and King represented two sides of the same coin. (1)

It is fitting, then, to say that the Civil Rights Movement quite literally birthed the discourse of Black Power. Black Power grew to national prominence on a dirt road in

Greenwood, Mississippi, in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, as the leadership of the Civil Rights Movement appeared to shift from King to Carmichael. After being released from prison for a questionable trespassing charge, Carmichael delivered his defiant declaration that after being arrested twenty-seven times for working on behalf of African-American justice and against racist practice, he “ain’t going to jail no more. The only way we gonna stop them white men from whuppin’ us is to take over.” Still seething after his imprisonment, Carmichael eviscerated the Mississippi legal system, spitting that “[e]very courthouse in Mississippi ought to be burned down to get rid of the dirt.” The call and response chant of “What do we want?” and “Black Power!” may as well have set the stage on fire.

Not only was it a clarion call to unite the efforts of African Americans who had grown tired of the constant threats of violence allowed under the policy of nonviolence throughout the Civil Rights Movement, it also created a vernacular framework for realizing and utilizing self-determination and self-worth within a Black political identity, one that was also steeped in Black cultural and social capital and understanding. In short, it created a safe and nurturing platform to express black self-love.

Black Power as Vernacular Insurrection and Technological Discourse

In her book *Vernacular Insurrections: Race, Black Protest, and the New Century in Composition*, Carmen Kynard explores the diminished identities of HBCU students during the Civil Rights Movement and how that marginalization is mirrored in the critical language pedagogies of the times. Kynard focuses on exposing the structural racism that seeks to marginalize African-American communities, but does this through her

innovative concept of the vernacular insurrection. Kynard describes vernacular insurrections as deliberate acts of disruption that seek to destroy “the oppressive conditions of institutions” as well as interrupt mainstream America’s oppressive action against and violent reaction to Black people. As David Green explains, “These interventions are vernacular in the sense that they occur through the production of disruptive discourses that affirm identities, cultures, and histories outside of the dominant discourse” (161). Green’s language here is important because it explicitly reveals a detail about the formation of a vernacular insurrection that Kynard alludes to frequently in her book, which is that before it becomes an insurrection, it begins as an intervention. The difference is that the “expressive counterenergy” that ferments a vernacular insurrection is no longer limited to a localized occurrence of oppression or injustice. Its presence creates a new way for African Americans to see their world. Kynard argues that “vernacular insurrections then are not merely the bits and pieces chipped off or chipping away at the dominant culture, but a whole new emergence.” Shifts in language always happen when institutions move in new directions, but Kynard’s goal is to emphasize those places where the vernacular shift *causes* monumental change (30). Black Power would become a clarion call for a new generation of Black leadership, one that took institution building in a direction towards self-sufficiency and technological empowerment. The national media saw the moment in similar terms as well. John Hart of CBS News reported on that evening’s national broadcast:

You may think that this is the Meredith March against Fear. That is over. This is a line of emotional momentum that changes with its rotating leadership. When Dr. King leads it for a couple of hours, it becomes a Liberation Walk. When Floyd McKissick from CORA leads it, it is a

registration drive, and when Stokely Carmichael of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee leads, it is a Black Power March.

Carmichael would come to personify and lead. Debates over nonviolence versus self-defense grabbed headlines, but the march revealed deeper fault lines. Mississippi exposed tensions between the civil rights old guard and new faces over the trustworthiness of Lyndon Johnson, the sincerity of White liberals, and the movement's overall direction. The term Black Power effectively harnessed the political movement (previously led by Malcolm X) that had paralleled and intersected, like a fever dream, with civil rights struggles all along. Carmichael, through the act of naming this unacknowledged force in American politics, turned the Meredith March into a watershed historical event. Forevermore, the Civil Rights Movement would be defined by what occurred before and after this march. Carmichael now took his place alongside Martin Luther King, Jr. as one of America's two most important Black political leaders. (Joseph 102).

Carmichael's Black Power speech was a call for the Black community to engage in critical access. As Banks defines for us earlier, critical access requires thoughtful analysis of the structures that influence technological appropriation in order to determine the best paths towards access. There are many structural flaws, Banks would say, and thus many fronts on which to engage the problem. This is one reason why Joyce M. Bell finds:

The tactics of the black power movement are harder to generalize because they did not follow a dominant pattern like those of the nonviolent civil rights protest. Moreover, many of the tactics of the movement are oriented towards individual and community self-help. (36)

Even so, Carmichael worked hard to articulate how Black Power could work as a social and political reality. As Carmichael began to tour the country during July and September of 1966, he started to weave together his political vision for what Black Power could be: a means for uplift, protection, and technological appropriation for the Black community.

In a speech on July 28th, he begins with an admonishment for lofty, empty words. Black people need to find the courage to “say things nobody else in this country is willing to say and find the strength internally and from each other to say the things that need to be said.” He exposes the empty promises of the Horatio Alger-inspired myth of hard work and the American Dream when the work is by Black hands, stating that if it were true, Black people would own America. African-American oppression, Carmichael explains, is not because of some perceived character flaw on behalf of African-Americans; it is directly tied to one’s Blackness. He encourages the crowd to love their Blackness because it will be the key to freeing them from oppression. For Carmichael, building a healthy self-concept, an identity unmoored from the racist trappings of American society is to the next step, which is controlling one’s destiny.

We have to define how we are going to move, not how they say we can move. We have never been able to do that before. Everybody in this country jumps up and says, “I’m a friend of the civil rights movement. I’m a friend of the Negro.” We haven’t had the chance to say whether or not that man is stabbing us in the back or not. All those people who are calling us friends are nothing but treacherous enemies and we can take care of our enemies but God deliver us from our “friends.” The only protection we are going to have is from each other. We have to build a strong base to let them know if they touch one black man driving his wife to the hospital in Los Angeles, or one black man walking down a highway in Mississippi or if they take one black man who has a rebellion and put him in jail and start talking treason, we are going to disrupt this whole country.

What Carmichael is pointing out is a lack of protection on two compelling levels of sanctuary. The first is mental sanctuary and operates at a level of polemic sophistication and clarity that made Carmichael beloved. He articulates that hard-to-pin-down conundrum of being adversely affected by racist power structures, while at the same time having very few people willing to accept their complicity in maintaining those structures. These kinds of “friends”—the kind who refuse to do the kind of critical self-inventory of one’s own racist indoctrination—is dangerous, all the more so because the very defensive posture of that kind of friendship resists the antiracist self-analysis that is necessary. For Carmichael, the catch-all of “friendship” is a skeleton key when what the African-American community needs is a gate—and to establish themselves as gatekeepers. It is a point he returns to later in the speech where he advocates that:

When we form coalitions we must say on what grounds we are going to form them, not white people telling us how to form them. We must build strength and pride amongst ourselves. We must think politically and get power because we are the only people in this country that are powerless. We are the only people who have to protect ourselves from our protectors.

The second level is physical sanctuary. Black people will ensure that the entire country will be “disrupted” if harm comes to an African-American man, woman, or child exercising their Constitutional rights or God-given freedoms. No more will the physical tolls on the bodies of Black men and women be acceptable as collateral damage in the war for social justice. The metric of the body count may have been acceptable for the Johnson-era military commanders of Vietnam, but Black life is precious, sacred, and Carmichael believes in developing a spirit to protect it.

Carmichael also draws new parameters around the rhetoric of “disruption.” In contemporary terms, we are taught to think of disruption as a predictive metric for both

technological innovation and cost-benefit analysis. Every industry will periodically encounter a “game changing” technological shift that radicalizes one aspect of the business model and antiquates another. The seismic shifts that happen within new paradigms of discourse, in the spirit of Thomas Kuhn have some relevance here, but Carmichael alludes to a more applicable, racialized use of “disrupt.” The rhetoric of disruption in American culture has often been an institutional concern, if not always a technological one, and has often been levied towards African-Americans and other minorities as a support for the frequently discriminatory status quo. One of the most popular arguments among politicians and leaders of industry against the emancipation of millions of slaves before the Civil War was the projected catastrophic disruption it would have on the American economy. Many saw the call for integration in the early- and mid-twentieth century akin to forcing a new standard of living on the American people, disrupting the established social order in favor of uncertainty and, to some, almost certain chaos. The American armed forces, which had segregated units for African-American soldiers, resisted President Harry Truman’s desire to have a fully integrated military in 1948. Military officers and political officials pushed back in public forums and in private, arguing that integration would fracture and divide the military, not unify it. That it would destroy morale, not encourage it. It would become a go-to argument for the exclusion of other minorities in the American military.

It is at this moment that Carmichael seems to turn his attention to the youth listening to his speech, particularly the African-American college students in his midst. He spends the next few minutes plotting a course for how the African-American college student should develop a methodology for Black Power. First, he locates critical access

within community-based political action and technical expertise. The first three insights Carmichael gives for consideration are to reengage the Black community through a technoethos of community. Don't write poems about Malcolm X; pick up the work that he started. Don't work for IBM or Wall Street as they form a power block of technological and economic control that ultimately works against African-American interests. If anything, by being a part of these companies, "You are helping this country perpetuate its lies about how democracy rises in this country." Carmichael is gently positing a framework for how technoeconomic discourse helps to "sell" the idea of free market capitalism and innovation at the expense of positive real-world effects on the Black community at large. He goes on to say that engineers, economists, doctors, and lawyers should all "have to come back to the community where they belong and use their skills to help develop us." When skilled African-American professionals reinvest their expertise into the Black community, it also helps to shape what it means to be successful in the Black community. Carmichael then works to reposition other narratives: he explains that to fight in Vietnam is to be a "Black mercenary," paid to kill, but given no rights or privileges in the country for which he is fighting. He positions nonviolence not as a failed strategy, but as one the Black community needs to turn upon itself. Black people need to reject being violent towards other Black people. He claims, "The psychology the man has used on us has turned us against each other. He says nothing about the cutting that goes on Friday night, but talk about raising one fingertip towards him and that's when he jumps up. We have to talk about nonviolence among us first." Carmichael encourages young Blacks to educate themselves "not with Hegel or Plato or the missionaries who came to Africa with the Bible and we had the land and when they

left we had the Bible and they had the land,” but from the perspectives of African American scholars who reject the Western racial bias in their science and philosophy. Carmichael closes his speech by noting that Black Power is the ability to “organize ourselves to speak for each other . . . We have to move to control the economics and politics of our community.”

It is important to remember that his political ideologies were built on the foundation of his field work. Carmichael’s premises are battle tested. The applications of his theories were callus driven. He had seen either their effectiveness or experienced their need in small towns in Alabama and Mississippi. He had worked for over a year to ensure that the Black Panther Party in Lowndes County Alabama was a political force that could be self-sustaining, while not dependent on Republican or Democratic mechanisms to function. As Joseph maintains:

The creation of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO) fulfilled Carmichael’s dreams of organizing unrepresented people. LCFO distinguished itself from the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party by choosing a black panther as its symbol, noting the animal’s color and ability to defend itself. The Black Panther Party’s southern roots, although destined for obscurity, illustrated Carmichael’s continuing dedication to community organizing. (92-93)

More than the fiery speech in Greenwood, it was this speech that demonstrates the influence of Carmichael’s technoethos of Black Power that would be shaped later by Huey Newton as he develops the Black Panther Party of Self-Defense.

The Black Panther Party of Self-Defense: Greater than the Man’s Technology

On October 15, 1966, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. The Black Panther Party’s ideological foundations of militancy,

dignity, self-respect, proactive social justice, and self-determination had its genesis in the practices and teachings of the military wings of the Civil Rights Movement. The Black Panther Party had many influences. Newton and Seale were inspired and encouraged by the success of the increasingly militant stance of Stokely Carmichael and were heavily influenced by the socialist doctrine of Mao Zedong, as well as the dialectical materialism of Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx. Socialism was the ideological bedrock for the Party, especially in socioeconomic matters. Later, as the Black Panther Party's objectives changed, there would be several competing, sometimes conflicting, ideologies. However, it was actually Malcolm X's assertions for Blacks' rights to self-defense and Carmichael's insistence that Black people love themselves and, in doing so, work together to obtain the means to control their own destiny, that sparked the moral imperative and civic-mindedness for the Black Panthers creation. As Newton stated, to encourage Black people to exert a dignified agency, the Panthers would become the "personification of Malcolm X's dreams" (pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk).

Originally, the Black Panther Party's goal was to protect African Americans from the rash of incidents of police brutality across the nation, to imbue masses of Blacks in these neighborhoods with a sense of empowerment, and to fill in the gap between racially, residentially, and economically segregated civil and social services by offering a detailed and targeted counterprogramming in disaffected communities. However, as the Black Panther Party evolved, it took on a greater interest in technology appropriation and began to articulate how technology has been the "knife in the back" that has often thwarted systemic progress of Blacks across the diaspora; they also offer a reimagined

stance towards technology that could possibly be salve for that expansive, centuries-old wound.

To do this, Newton and Seale crafted a “10-Point Program” in October of 1966, which served as a platform for their agenda and programs. In order to put the 10-Point Program into action that “served the people,” BPP established several “survival programs” that would offer free services to the communities that surrounded their branches. Some of these programs included free medical clinics, including examinations, diabetes, sickle cell and STD testing; preventative care; ambulance services and lessons on first aid; self-defense classes; drug and alcohol rehabilitation and awareness; legal clinics and referral services; right-to-work initiatives, such as job sites, employment referral services, and benefits counseling; food assistance, including community pantries and nutrition classes; early-childhood development centers; free housing and furniture programs; cultural programs, including a film series, drama club, along with drill-and-dance teams; and sports programs. Probably the most well-known and most successful program instituted by BPP was its “Free Breakfast for Children” program, where thousands of Oakland, California children in lived in its worst neighborhoods. Newton explained that the survival programs that arose out of the 10-Point Plan were not final solutions, but acted as community salve and triage, helping people of color exist (if not thrive) until there is a “total transformation of this society.” It is that transformation which will signal the end to racial and socioeconomic oppression.

In the early months of 1967, a grieving family asked the Panthers to investigate the death of Denzil F. Dowell, a 22-year-old Black man from North Richmond, California, who was shot and killed, allegedly by a member of the Martinez Sheriff’s

Department. After finding several contradictions between the official police report and eyewitness accounts and confirming some of the family's suspicions of a cover-up, the Panthers held a rally in the neighborhood to expose the facts of the killing and garner community support for the Black Panther Party and its agenda for self-defense. Philip S. Foner recounts the scene in his edited collection, *The Black Panthers Speak*:

Hundreds of black people turned out, many carrying their own weapons. The police who came to stop the rally quickly turned away, except for one, caught in the middle of the crowd, who sat quietly and listened to the speeches. Several Panthers addressed the crowd, explaining the Party's program. Then Huey Newton spoke. "The masses of the people want peace. The masses of the people do not want war. The Black Panther Party advocates the abolition of war. But at the same time, we realize that the only way you can get rid of war, many times, is through the process of war. Therefore, the only way you can get rid of guns is to get rid of the guns of the oppressor. The people must be able to pick up guns, to defend themselves . . .

At that point a police helicopter began buzzing over the crowd. Newton pointed up and shouted, "And always remember that the spirit of the people is greater than the man's technology." The crowds cheered, and hundreds signed up to work for the Party that day.

After the meeting, the first number of *The Black Panther*, the official organ of the Party, was issued. (xxviii)

A month later, the Black Panthers marched on the California State Capitol, fully armed in protest of the state legislature's attempt to ban the carrying of loaded weapons in public.

Huey Newton's arrest in the fall of 1967, along with the subsequent "Free Huey" rallies that drew thousands of supporters, gave the Black Panther Party national exposure and began to recast its image in the national consciousness, though not necessarily for the better. Of vital importance was the *Black Panther* newspaper, the official news organ of the organization, which went into distribution on April 25, 1967. Newton, by his own

definition, was not a writer, though he longed to be. What Newton understood was that that through writing, one could better produce and disseminate applicable theory. As Seale would say, “Huey understands the need for media.” Though Eldridge Cleaver was the chief editor for the *Black Panther*, Seale explained that:

. . . the quality and development of that paper has come from brothers who have previously been in jails, brothers who have previously just been on the block . . . Afro-American brothers who became politically organized and politically conscious, and learned their skills in producing that paper. (“Seize the Time”)

The Black Panther Party began connecting to Black Studies and Black Student Alliance organizations across the nation. After a slew of high-profile shoot-outs with competing organizations, police raids, and court cases, the Black Panther Party of Self-Defense shortened its name in 1968 to the Black Panther Party. This change in nomenclature also represented a shift in the party’s focus, from Militant Black activism to direct political action. Engagement with technology is clearly a concern for Newton, even in the organization’s infancy, and he articulates a rhetorical and political stance that repositions the Black revolutionary with regard to modern technology: intercommunalism.

Newton, chief theoretician of the Black Panther Party, argued for Black empowerment, self-efficiency, and agency by theorizing intercommunalism as a particular kind of technoethos, one that is purposefully integrated into the strategic planning and programming of the Black Panther Party itself. More importantly, the integration of Newton’s technoethos into all aspects of the Black Panther Party’s programming encourages two distinct phenomena to take place: First, it replaces the implicit antagonisms against technology of the previous decades with the goal of a more critical appropriation of technology. Engagement with this kind of critical appropriation

is expressed as the responsibility of all revolutionaries, leaders, and masses alike. This leads to the second phenomenon: As more Black Power proponents take on the mantra of critical access appropriation, the Black Panther Party begins to actively work to deconstruct and rebuild social, political, and cultural institutions through attention towards technology.

Intercommunalism: An Attempt to Build a Technological Discourse of Black Political Thought

One persistent myth around the Black Power Movement in general and the Black Panther Party specifically is the misperception that the Panthers were gun-toting criminals and street thugs who primarily terrorized the communities they were supposed to protect. Yet, Kynard reminds us that the iconic image of a Black Power nationalist armed with a speech in one hand, a constitution in the other hand, and a rifle on his shoulder, could have been one of Black Panthers in California, but it could also have been Black students at Cornell. She goes on to say:

It was not simply that Black Power was influencing the Black Campus Movement, black college student activists, and Black Student Unions. In fact, if we follow [Ibrahim Rogers'] groundbreaking research, the students were the ones shaping the larger social movements; it was black college students who were defining, leading, and imagining Black Power. (65)

The entire nation, not just college campuses, would have to come to grips with this new cultural reality.

And it was a shift that the leaders of the Black Panther Party had difficulty adjusting to because of their meteoric rise in the national consciousness. Both Newton and Seale admit that when they began in 1966, they could be classically defined as Black

nationalists, the goal being for Blacks to establish a nation of their own, comprised of Black people. However, Newton describes how the Panthers begin to see relatively quickly that:

. . . something was wrong with this resolution of the problem. In the past, nationhood was a fairly easy thing to accomplish. If we look around now, though, we see that the world—the land space, the livable parts as we know them—is pretty well settled. So we realized that to create a new nation we would have to become a dominant faction in this one, and yet the fact that we did not have power was the contradiction that drove us to seek nationhood in the first place . . . It is an endless circle, you see: to achieve nationhood, we needed to become a dominant force; but to become a dominant force, we needed to be a nation. (“Survival Programs and Intercommunalism” 10)

This contradiction necessitated that the Panthers expand their perception of nation building to resist the concept of a land tied to a homogeneous body of citizens and shared space. Newton, in many ways, abandoned the developing technoethos of Carmichael, whose concept of Black Power was more grounded, more localized, and in many ways more accessible. Instead, their concept would be expansive: The focus would be on the great numbers of people across the globe who experienced forms of imperial oppression. This focus precipitated their move “from just plain nationalists or separatist nationalists into revolutionary nationalists,” as Newton would describe. This posture of revolutionary nationalism, a kind of transitory “nationlessness” that sought to unite its denizens through common struggle and not a common location, opened the door for the Panthers to become self-described “internationalists” (3). This move was necessary because the Panthers began to understand that nation building, in its strictest sense, was a false proposition for the oppressed. The conditions that often led to the creation of nation-states (population homogeneity; topographic isolation; full control of social, economic, political institutions; relative security for development; etc.) could no longer be the

bedrock for future nations simply because those essential elements no longer existed as the building blocks for future nations—at least, not in the same way as in previous generations.

The principle catalyst in this shift was technology. It was the advent of new communication, transportation, and military technologies that allowed for a fundamental change in not only the ways nations were constructed, but also how they remained viable. New settlers now have the means of controlling seized lands from a distance, ground conditions of emerging nations can be quickly communicated to supporting allies to minimize challenges, uprisings can be dismantled before they can traction and summarily put down when they do, even the way commerce is built into the fabric of a nation is structured to hinder revolution. In effect, Newton argues that technology would develop until “there was a definite qualitative transformation in the relationships within and between nations.” Technology, Newton predicted, would be a great equalizer among sovereign states.

America stands as one nation that has taken advantage of these technological advances and has been transformed by its sociopolitical elite into a global power, an “empire” at the expense of oppressed people *across the world*. With respect to America, Newton suggests that “technology is developing at such a rapid rate that automation will progress to cybernation, and cybernation probably to technocracy” (4). Whereas the nations of the past could survive, thrive, and resist imperialism, in part, because of their heft and homogeneity, the modern world, Newton proposes, is now “a dispersed collection of communities.” Newton explains:

A community is different from a nation. A community is a small unit with a comprehensive collection of institutions that exist to serve a small group of people.

And we say further that the struggle in the world today is between the small circle that administers and profits from the empire of the United States and the people of the world who want to determine their own destinies. We call this situation Intercommunalism. We are now in the age of reactionary Intercommunalism, in which a ruling circle, a small group of people, control all other people by using their technology. (Newton)

The international approach of class-based geopolitics and the focus on the United States as both an evil empire and a nation-building model upset many. As a result of their developing power to exercise change in the American establishment, critics soon charged Newton with selling out the movement to the very “system” from which the Panthers had previously demanded independence. In reply, Newton invoked intercommunalism by way of explanation:

I contend that no one is outside the system. THE WORLD IS SO CLOSE now, because of technology, that we are like a series of dispersed communities, but we’re all under siege by the one empire-state authority, the reactionary inner circle of the United States.

What Newton recognizes is that all the communities of the world are or can be interconnected through modern technology. This means that “you can see something, live, on T. V. tomorrow night, possibly, from halfway around the world” or you can travel around the globe over a weekend, but it also means that “there’s always the possibility of there being a righteous fool in control of H-bombs,” whose greed and power could trigger world-wide annihilation (5).

Newton had an almost prescient vision of technology predicting that during the next technology revolution, there would be “computers that can list and file everybody’s name. Millions and millions of people [will have] raw data entered against their names

and thus defined forever in their social mobility in time of peace; physical mobility in time of crises” (6). In the current environment, these mechanisms work to enhance the power of “a few technocrats over hundreds of millions of people who assume they are being spied upon 24/7.” With the CIA and FBI training new agents in state-of-the-art surveillance equipment and counterintelligence techniques, He worries that soon the government will cast an “electronic net” that will descend over urban populations (7).

For Newton, the concept of intercommunalism recognizes a basic contradiction: Although the hegemonic thrust of Western technology is the principle culprit in creating the nation-destroying American empire and industrial complex, that same technology—when properly refashioned, repurposed, and reoriented—could not only be the answer for many of the material conditions of the oppressed, but also could work together to produce “a culture that is essentially human and would nurture those things that would allow the people to *resolve contradictions* in a way that would not be the mutual slaughter of all of us” (*italics mine*). Newton was pushing for a kind of global critical access; Newton saw that the most influential technologies of the modern world were controlled by a very small group of sociopolitical elites, and that those elites manipulated the masses through that control of technology, inevitably separating those masses from a controlling stake in the means of their own ascension. This situation, this reactionary intercommunalism, produces a reductive, dichotomous culture of laborers/consumers on one side and controllers/creators on the other, which must be overcome if “the people of the world are to control their own destinies.”

We are a large collection of communities who can unite and fight together against our common enemy. The United States’ domination over all our territories equals a reactionary (in opposition to the interests of all) set of circumstances among our

communities: Reactionary Intercommunalism. We can transform these circumstances to all our benefit: Revolutionary Intercommunalism. Today the philosophy of revolutionary intercommunalism dictates that the survival programs implemented by and with the people here in America and those same basic People's Survival Programs being implemented in Mozambique by the Mozambique Liberation Front are essential to bringing about world unity, from Africa to the Black community inside America, developing and uniting against a common enemy. ("United Against the Common Enemy")

In order for the oppressed of the world to control their own destinies, the marginalized, the oppressed, and the community of justice-seekers across the globe must remove this small network of nation brokers, this ruling echelon, from the seat of power and redistribute not only the wealth but the technology that enables the dissemination of information and resources for the masses. This redistribution is what Newton calls revolutionary intercommunalism.

For all of Newton's incredible insights around appropriating technology and his astute readings of the development of global power in the new machine age, the concept of intercommunalism is limiting in some very important ways. First, it relies too heavily on the idea of nation building, even though Newton works to establish nation building in a new way. Nation building is an ideal of imperial militarism and is part of the lexicon of military conquests. Newton shows that part of his struggles in solidifying his concept is because the technological discourse of militarism resists the notion of independent nation-states that are not conceived of militarily. The removal of the upper echelon of global tech elites only seems to imply that another, better echelon, will take its place.

Newton's contention was that America was not a nation but an empire. Indeed, foreign governments—of any size—could no longer claim complete independence from American interests. Instead, what had once been a series of separate nations now

functioned collectively as a network of U.S.-controlled “communities.” His philosophy of intercommunalism was one of the earliest recorded premonitions of developing nations’ socioeconomic impact within present-day globalism. Newton attempts to use the idea of “communities” as opposed to “nations,” but the distinctions often fall flat.

From the standpoint of dialectical materialism, Newton never actually identifies intercommunalism functions as a response (which he calls an “opposite”) to its ideological predecessor, socialism, which is in the process of overtaking capitalism (8). It is unclear as to whether Newton sees intercommunalism as a linear evolution of dialectic materialism (he mentions the dialectical transitions of feudalism to capitalism to socialism, but does not include intercommunalism in this linear progression, though he says intercommunalism “works the same way”) or as a branching legacy that has taken a more prominent role because of the exponential growth and distribution of important technologies. Newton sees revolutionary intercommunalism as a corrective measure to reactionary communalism in that it opens up the means of communication, production, and skill building—what he calls “technological development”—to the previously unemployable on the margins. In the end, Newton hopes that revolutionary intercommunalism will allow for the “unemployable,” both Black and White, to exist and work together as an enlightened workforce, who will be able to take control of the technologies that will enable him to change his material existence.

Just as Newton’s intercommunalism never really escapes the technological discourse of militarism, it never really escapes the influence of Marxism either, which had an unintended consequence on Newton’s ever-shifting theory of intercommunalism. It put Newton at odds with the larger community of cultural nationalists that arose as

parts of the Black Power and Black Arts communities, respectively. In a scathing article published in the *Black Panther* in March of 1969, “Pork-chop” nationalists are described as “cowards,” “political whores,” and “champions of the status quo,” too busy engaging in “sensational, comical racism as a cover up” for engaging in real political and economic issues. The “tragic mistake” that the cultural nationalists make is that “they think that theirs can be a cultural revolution apart from an economic revolution.” Cultural nationalists armed with incendiary rhetoric “can rant and rave and look ugly and fierce” without having to face the “concrete economic issues” that lead to systemic oppression. At its core, cultural nationalism is reactionary because it ignores the impact of socioeconomics on the power structure. For this, the Panthers charged the “semantic madness contained in most of the writings of buffoons like Ronald Everett and Le Roi Jones as useless.

It was the kind of harsh and short-sighted critique that made revolutionary intercommunalism too rigid, too prescriptive, almost too doctrinally essentialist to be practically applied for many Black people, even as it sought to create a framework for appropriating technology that would be “people centered” and lessened its impact as a vernacular insurrection on the order of Black Power. A “vernacular insurrection,” as Kynard articulates, fits neatly into Banks’s figuration of a rhetoric of design. It is a transformative utterance to be sure, and one can easily see how the concepts of Black Power or intercommunalism lean hard toward building transformative access. Kynard would argue that the most enduring legacy of Black Power has been in the shift in strategic pedagogy and curriculum that lead to Black studies programs and social justice curricula in higher education across the country. For HBCU students, the changes were

even more dramatic. Even as HBCU students experienced increased marginalization, which was reflected in the critical language pedagogies of the times, the narrative of Black Power allowed students to assert writerly agency that was informed by the Black protest tradition and social relevance.

These vernacular insurrections at the time were engulfed in violence and what the United States government defined “as campus unrest.” This was in large part because of the prominence of the dominant technological discourse of the time: militarism. The tumultuous 60s and 70s, when the Vietnam War raged on and American citizens increasingly raged against it, and racial tensions continued to grow despite the efforts of the largely nonviolent Civil Rights Movement, brought about an attention to warfare that prompted African Americans to begin situating their struggle differently with respect to technology. The image captured in the *Chicago Defender* that chastised Black leadership for failing to be architects of uplift and progress for a large majority of Black people, on one hand, and imagined a virtually well-equipped army of “New Negroes” running the oppressors out of Black communities perfectly foreshadows the evolution of technological discourse in the transition between the Civil Rights and Black Power/Black Arts movements. The country’s inclination toward seeing campus violence as a result of the moral decay of American young people and also as an undue consequence of foreign influence (read: communist sympathizers), had the self-justifying effect of walling off large segments of American citizens from reading those instances in their local contexts.

That HBCUs were sites of disruption, not just in the sense that they were places where violence and unrest occurred as a result of the climate and struggle for equality and civil rights, but as sites where people were constantly attempting to shift the locus of

power to “the people.” Black colleges and universities were the lifeblood of the Civil Rights Movement. The most talented organizers of the civil rights organizations—Bayard Rustin, Ellie Baker, James Farmer, John Lewis—all had roots in HBCUs and spent significant time there recruiting and training students for the work of social justice. And so, it is no surprise that the philosophies and aims of Black Power would have a critical effect on the students there. As Kynard surmises, the narrative of Black Power did not only allow students to counter “diminishing identities” ascribed by a racist power structure, it also enabled them to begin thinking and restructuring their institutions differently. HBCUs were marked by the passion of that change, as well as by the violence that accompanied it. As noted by Moody, Kenneth Goings, and others, the legacy of racial violence and the legacy of campus-led rebellions at HBCUs have been largely ignored historically. The same year Stokely Carmichael became Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, who met in 1962 as students at Merritt College, founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. After Carmichael leaves SNCC for the Black Panther Party in 1967, H. Rap Brown replaced Stokely Carmichael as Chairman of SNCC. By that time, HBCU students had begun to challenge campus and local authority in meaningful ways. Fisk University held its first writer’s conference to raise the consciousness of African-American authors. Four hundred students at Cheyney State College took over the administration building, demanding more African-American leadership and more courses in African-American studies and social justice. But the consequences of a more politically aware student body were painful. On February 8, 1968, at South Carolina State University in Orangeburg, South Carolina, police officers killed three students during a demonstration in an attempt

to integrate a bowling alley. This became known as the “Orangeburg Massacre.” Not long after, on February 20th, state troopers used tear gas and clubs to break up a student demonstration at Alcorn A & M (now Alcorn State University) in Lorman, Mississippi. Students had opposed the dismissal of three students who had passed out campaign literature in support of congressional candidate Charles Evers, the brother of Medgar Evers, the slain field secretary of the NAACP. Student demonstrations were met with tear gas from Mississippi state troopers. Students at Howard University and Bowie State University would soon take control of the administration building to demand campus reforms and a Black-oriented curriculum, while students at Tuskegee University held twelve university trustees hostage in order to push for campus-wide reforms. In 1969, the Ford Foundation gave Morgan State University, Howard University, and Yale University one million dollars each to train faculty to teach African-American studies courses. Yet, at North Carolina A & T, Willie Grimes, a biology student and innocent bystander, was killed by officers when the police and National Guard attempted to break up a demonstration at North Carolina A & T. On February 10, 1970, at Mississippi Valley State College in the tiny town of Itta Bena, America’s largest mass arrest of college students took place. Nearly nine hundred Black protesters were loaded onto buses and carted off to the state penitentiary at Parchman.

Of course, the violence on college campuses at the time was not just occurring at HBCU, but was part of a cultural revolution across the nation. And these institutional battles for racially and historically relevant curriculum were happening on campuses all across the nation. Black students at Boston University, Northwestern University, San Francisco State, the University of Michigan, and, most notably, Columbia University

pushed for Black studies and Black faculty at their respective institutions. I am arguing that by 1970, there was already a narrative of student protest, campus rebellion, and violence at HBCUs that had more to do with racial injustice, relevant curriculum, and visionary leadership than about American warfare. Politics and media made it expedient to situate the killings at Jackson State within the narrative of student protests around Vietnam. Frequently, this leads many to miss perceptions about the tone and tenor of protest at HBCUs during the time and also gives a false impression of the major concerns of students at HBCUs during this time. If anything, it is more appropriate to consider the shootings at Jackson State College within the often overlooked incidence of racially motivated violence and student protest at HBCUs during the time.

Nineteen-seventy was an explosive year in student protests on college campuses nationwide, in no small part because of the government-sanctioned violence perpetrated against students. The National Guard was deployed at Ohio State and violently suppressed students there who were advocating for more Black student admissions and the removal of the ROTC program. In probably the most publicized student clash, four students were killed and were injured on May 4th by National Guardsmen at Kent State, where images of the state's brutality, along with the bodies of dead, dying, and traumatized students, were circulated around the world. Not two weeks later, the killings at Jackson State would become a further example of America's rampant warmongering, with most of its obvious, but contextually specific, racial overtones ignored by the mainstream media.

The Jackson State Killings: The Discourse of Militarism,
New Directions in Black Power, and a Technoethos of Sanctuary

The turmoil of May 1970 was so fierce and sudden that many Americans feared a revolution was at hand. Journalists said the unrest reflected the nation's worst ideological split since the Civil War. Some form of demonstration took place on nearly 80 percent of America's campuses. The National Student Strike closed the doors of at least one in five. To Nixon's Silent Majority, all the chanting, marching, and rock throwing on the campuses seemed the work of Communists. But to many liberals, the May 1970 revolt seemed the work of gallant antiwar crusaders. True, May 1970 was partly the rebellion of militant youths fed up with "Nixon's war" and the racism of "Amerika." Blacks held demonstrations on the nation's predominantly Black campuses as well. Black students staged demonstrations at Georgia's Albany State College and Payne College, at Alabama's Miles College, and at Pennsylvania's Lincoln University. But these demonstrations were generally peaceful. No one was killed (Spofford 660-673).

Tim Spofford's book-length account of the circumstances leading up to the shooting and its aftermath is still the most definitive source to date on the subject. Mark S. Giles's chapter on the Jackson State shootings makes marvelous use of Spofford's reporting, which turns the spotlight on the racist underpinnings of Mississippi culture, law enforcement, and campus unrest in Jackson. Giles marks the racially motivated incidents of May 13th as the buildup of racial tensions:

. . . these incidents, among others, are fresh in the collective consciousness of the students at Jackson State in 1970. The students were very aware of their surroundings and the history of their environment. The violence and racist reputation of the Mississippi Highway Patrol, Jackson city police,

and a large segment of the community was a constant threat to the safety of any black person who “stepped out of line . . .” (Giles 111)

News reports at the time, and even the historical record sometimes, misclassify the description of the “annual spring riot” on Jackson State campus. Giles notes that Jackson State President John A. Peoples characterized the throwing of rocks and bottles at White motorists passing through the campus on Main Street as the annual spring riot. At first glance, the locus of vagrant behavior was on either the Jackson State students or the “corner boys,” but another contributing factor was the White motorists themselves. For years, White motorists would tear down Lynn Street yelling obscenities, racial epithets, and denigrating comments out of their windows. At the stop sign in front of Alexander Hall—the woman’s dormitory—they would throw things out of their windows at the students who would congregate there. Many of the offending White motorists would leave from the affluent high school, harassing Black students on their way to other parts of the city. Perhaps there was a seasonal aspect to the cycle of taunts and retaliation that happened on Lynn Street, but it was by no means purely an issue of wayward students. Jackson State administrators and the community at large had sought to reroute traffic around Jackson State campus, closing off the Lynch Street thoroughfare in order to minimize the incidences of racism perpetrated against Jackson State students. Jackson’s mayor and the city council repeatedly denied that request, citing the change in traffic pattern would cause too much disruption for people leaving downtown Jackson after work.

The riot that Peoples refers to here is not related to any rock-throwing incident. Instead, Jackson State’s first riot was initiated by Jackson law enforcement, who, while

chasing a student driver on campus for some unidentified offense and upon losing the whereabouts of that driver, proceeded to discharge their weapons into a man's dormitory window in response to jeering students. Students were justifiably enraged because a police officer shot a Jackson State football player in the face with "number one birdshot." Number one birdshot was issued to Mississippi law enforcement as a tool for riot control and as a tactical response. Shotguns full of birdshot were standard in crowd control during the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi.

War protests against Vietnam and the recent the escalations in Cambodia had happened on Jackson State's campus on May 13th, but they were scantily attended. That night a series of "protests" erupted on campus. White motorists passing through the campus along Lynch Street were greeted with a barrage of rocks, bottles, and angry shouts. A police car was pelted with rocks and the officer called back to the station to make a report. In response, the police barricaded Lynch Street. As described by Spofford and Giles, those protests were harrowing and dangerous at times—students were out in force, law enforcement was barking orders, someone threatened to set fire to the ROTC building—but they ended with little destruction of property and no bloodshed. The Jackson Police Department had called in two of its most fearsome assets: one was Inspector Lloyd "Goon" Jones, whose violence against Blacks was legendary. It was Goon Jones who had ordered the teargassing of that mass of demonstrators during the March against Fear a few years earlier. The other asset was a militarized armored vehicle known as the Thompson Tank. Contrary to some popular reports, the Thompson Tank was not an M-class tank (like the ones seen in military skirmishes on television), which was part of the National Guard Armory and, as such, could be requisitioned by the

National Guard when deployed. The Thompson Tank has a shadier history and provenance. It was a light blue-and-white armored International Harvester Loadstar 1600 purchased by the Jackson Police Department under the administration of Allen C. Thompson. It was armored and retrofitted for paramilitary use, specifically to wage war on African Americans in Mississippi and the streets of Jackson. The Thompson Tank was first used in the summer of 1964, known as Freedom Summer or the Mississippi Summer Project, to disrupt African Americans registering to vote in the South (Figure 21).

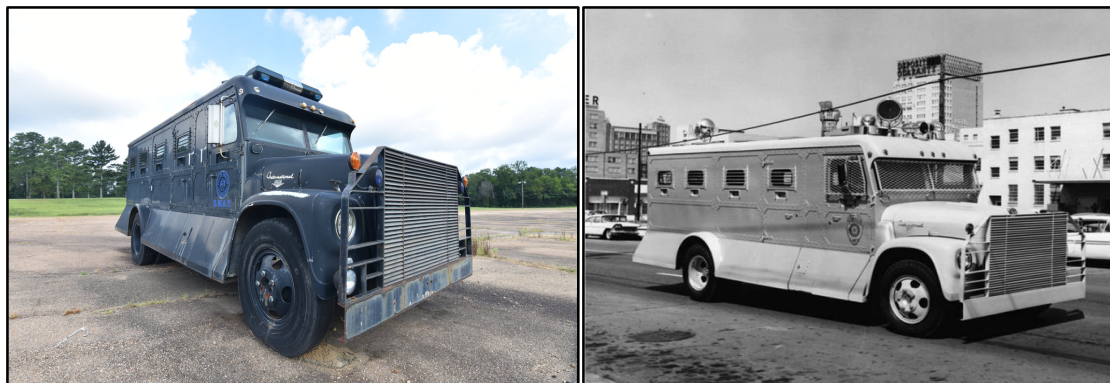


Figure 21. Photographs. William H. Kelly, III, August 30, 2017. (left) The infamous Thompson Tank is in the Jackson Police Department Firing Range parking lot off McDowell Road—hidden from society and in danger of being forgotten. (right) “The Thompson Tank, a forgotten artifact.”

As Spofford describes, Thompson’s Tank carried ten city policemen inside. It was an armored van, twenty-three feet long, with two spotlights on its roof. Each of the eight men in the back of the tank sat beside a bullet-proof window and a gun port. The tank had Thompson submachine guns and shotguns that could launch teargas canisters. The tank stored extra ammunition. “Oh, that tank was a hated symbol,” Charles Carr, a former student, remembers. “It stood for impregnable racism. I don’t know if that thing was purchased for any other reason than as a symbol that said, ‘We will run you down.’ I

mean, what else could you use it for?" And, in fact, the Thompson Tank had never been used anywhere else.

President Peoples invited student leaders to his residence to hear their concerns and learn reasons why the previous night's events occurred. The students mentioned the following reasons: the Vietnam War, the shootings at Kent State, the bell that was proposed to be installed on campus, and the presence of the ROTC building, which for many, represented the U.S. Military and all of the political uncertainties of the Peoples listened and assured them he would look into their concerns, but made it clear that the actions of the night before could not be tolerated nor condoned.

Peoples tried to reach an agreement with the mayor, Russell Davis, to barricade the street and divert traffic until things calmed down. Peoples (1990, p. 57) explains, "I pleaded with the city police authorities to keep up the street barricades so as to prevent any through traffic until we could be sure that the situation had cooled down . . . They said that there were a lot of people driving home from work who would be inconvenienced if they could not drive through Lynch Street. (114)

On the evening of May 14th, trouble began brewing again. There was a false rumor being spread on campus that Charles Evers, the brother of Medgar Evers, had been shot and killed. Hundreds of students were gathered outside of Alexander Hall. Two corner boys set a construction truck on fire. After the fire was extinguished, the fire trucks drove around the campus, avoiding the students, to handle another fire on the other side of the campus. In contrast and in a show of force, law enforcement officers decided to march straight through the campus. Eyewitness accounts also recalled the barely checked rage of many of the officers from the Jackson Police Department and the Mississippi Highway Patrol, who had marched onto campus, barricaded the street, and stood armed in front of Alexander Hall. A major problem at the scene was the lack of coordination and communication between the police and the patrol; no one was clearly in charge, nor was

there a clear plan of action. The officers were as much a loose mob as the students, except that the officers were heavily armed and willing to use deadly force” (115).

The Mississippi National Guard had been called, but they remained stationed on the outskirts of the campus, weapons in hand, but without ammunition. With students and law enforcement officers facing off in front of Alexander Hall, a standoff was imminent. A Thompson Tank was maneuvered in front of the dormitory and both police and patrol units took positions in front of the jeering students. Lieutenant Magee, a city policeman, used a bullhorn to order students to disperse. Shouts of “pig” and “whitey” were heard as the stage was set for the tragic moment (Spofford 63, Giles 110) . The women residents of Alexander Hall were busy attending to the typical activities of college students living in a residence hall: reading, studying, listening to music, and visiting one another. Many residents were unaware of the events taking place outside or of the danger lurking across the street. Some students, aware of the ruckus in front of the building, watched from their windows. Several eyewitness accounts recalled that it was a green bottle hurled at the feet of an officer that set off a barrage of gunfire that seemed to emanate from every direction at once. Giles describes the scene:

As soon as the sound of the crashing bottle filled the air, the officers began firing at will with shotguns and automatic rifles. Weakley (1990, p. 66) states, “The moment the bottle hit the ground the police and highway patrolmen appeared to go crazy. They began to fire their weapons as if all they had been waiting for was an excuse to fire.” The students, caught completely off guard, began running frantically. Gunfire flashed through the night. Students dropped to the ground like soldiers in a movie. Many students scrambled wildly toward the doorway of Alexander Hall and began piling up in the doorway, trying to get out of the line of fire (Weakley, 1990). The gunmen continued to fire their weapons into the crowd and into the building. The building was shot full of holes. Residents were wounded by bullets, buckshot, and flying glass while sitting in their rooms, running into the halls, or crouching in the lobby.

Over four hundred rounds were fired; it was a miracle more people were not killed or injured. Alexander Hall looked like a shooting gallery. Bullet holes riddled the west tower and lobby of Alexander Hall. Bullet holes would also be found in the student union building, the dining hall, and the science building. Most of the windows of the stairwell and the entire side of the building were shattered. Just as suddenly as it began, it was over. After thirty seconds of gunfire, over three hundred holes were left in the west side of Alexander Hall. Upon investigation, it was found that both the Jackson Police Department and Mississippi Highway Patrol officers had replaced their shotguns with rounds of number 9 buckshot instead of number 1 birdshot. They were prepared to kill that night. Two students, Philip Gibbs, 21, and James Green, 17, were dead in front of the dormitory. At least thirteen additional students were wounded and countless others were traumatized beyond words.

Jackson State: Aftermath

The governor of Mississippi and the mayor of Jackson, who had smugly suggested that the horrors of Kent State could never happen in the state of Mississippi because “King Cotton didn’t have no flower children, and their niggers were either under control or under their feet,” had to account for how two innocent bystanders were shot dead on the campus of a state-supported school and in the presence of no less than a hundred law enforcement officers from three different agencies. Hordes of journalists arrived from all over the nation to get a glimpse of the latest mass tragedy on a college campus, except this time many were reticent to acknowledge the critical role of race and the legacy of racial violence inherent in the shooting. The local papers had worked hard

to paint a picture of riotous militant students and stopped just sort of saying that they got what they deserved. The national news outlets found it much easier to contextualize the shootings within the now-more-familiar narrative of Kent State, Vietnam protests, and the degradation of the fabric of America because of the misguided whims of American youth. The circumstances surrounding the shooting were engorged with racism and were violently simple, but the forces leading up to it were nuanced, inconvenient, and controversial. The uncertainty and inaccuracy of the initial reporting made it seem as if no one knew what happened and that brought to Jackson State a phalanx of doubting Thomases who would take turns walking up to the corner of Alexander Hall, reaching with one arm, spreading their hand, and tentatively pushing their fingers into the side of the building, like the bullet holes were Jesus's wounds and they were testing their belief, testing Him.

Though the national media attention garnered by the shootings paled in comparison to other instances of violence on college campuses and was arguably mischaracterized as another instance of fervor against the Vietnam War, the shootings had a far-reaching impact. The location and scope of violence deeply affected students and faculty at other HBCUs. Gil Scott-Heron was angry and upset about the killings at Jackson State, and he, like many other students at Lincoln and other HBCUs, were forced to reconsider their place in America, not just as Black people, but as *Black students*. It was no secret that Jackson State College was a conservative institution and no hotbed for political activity. If they were to become militant, it was not because of political leanings but out of self-defense. No student at any HBCU was safe. Scott-Heron was incensed with both the racial violence of the state (i.e., law enforcement) and also with the tepid

responses of Lincoln's administration. He believed that Lincoln should cease all activities for a day of mourning and protest in solidarity with Jackson State, holding that "... if they didn't protest the killings, their silence would only embolden reactionary forces that sought to quell student unrest by any means necessary" (Baram).

Scott-Heron was not alone in his outrage. Hundreds of students lined up to march to Oxford, the small White town located a mile from campus. Oxford and many of the other towns surrounding Lincoln's campus were quietly hostile to students and Black faculty at the school, denying them lodging, meals, and an entrance to theaters and stores. The farms that surrounded Oxford had sites where large Ku Klux Klan rallies would be held. Burning crosses could be seen from the route one come and where they had once hung a man in effigy. While the students attempted to mobilize themselves for an angry march on Oxford, apparently word got out to the locals. As David Barnes recollects:

We saw trucks drop by with shotguns and rifles in the back. We had no weapons for the revolution. And some of us wised up. Cooler heads prevailed. Gil told everyone to calm down. We weren't ready for that type of revolution.

Most of the students went to the chapel to hold vigil; Scott-Heron and a few others stood on the outskirts of Lincoln, watching for a possible violent response from outsiders, rifles at the ready.

Though there was no violence that day, Lincoln's campus was politicized in a way it had not been before. Scott-Heron would leave Lincoln after his freshman year, but his leadership had a perceptible influence on the campus.

Lincoln University, located about fifty miles southwest of Philadelphia, was the first degree-granting institution for African Americans in the United States. In 1969, it

was also feeling the stress of revolt; even though its location in rural Pennsylvania isolated it from the widespread turmoil of more urban HBCUs, it was not immune. For instance, Herman Branson became president in 1970, replacing the White former president, Marvin Wachman. But “the conservative-minded Branson didn’t approve of the school’s rampant activism. Baram supposes there was plenty of anger directed at the conservative school administration, which looked down on political demonstrations and some of the free-form creativity taking place on campus (“Pieces of a Man”). Yet, Lincoln had students and faculty who possessed an active connection to the Civil Rights Movement during the time: Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered the commencement address in 1961; James Farmer, activist and principal organizer of the Freedom Rides and former director of CORE, was lecturer at Lincoln in 1967; Jesse Jackson would deliver the commencement address in 1969. Jeffery Hoogeveen notes that:

The violent police brutality directed at African-Americans in the south (and especially at Morehouse, in Augusta, Georgia) lead the Lincoln faculty and student body to initiate a new kind of dialogue, one concerned with both internal administrative policies and larger national issues. (204)

Faculty and students were working together crafting and experimenting with techniques of social investigation and scholarly practice that would have real-world consequences in a way that had been unheard of even a year before. “The faculty/student alliance was now an agent of personal and institutional, as well as political, change” (207). Hoogeveen reports that 1970 was a year that capped a five-year rise in enrollment; the freshman class of the fall of 1970 was the largest in that span.

In the fall of 1970:

A new way of discussing student writing emerged, and emerged in conjunction with the progressive solidarity forged between faculty and

students . . . Whereas students and faculty were working together to create social change, concurrently and almost suddenly, student writing became a sign of pathology, perhaps even to question larger abilities. (210)

Even as some faculty resisted the shift in focus, Hoogveen identifies this semester as a pivotal one for the humanities division of Lincoln, who not only began relenting some of the paternalistic didacticism that is typical of Black colleges, but also began making programmatic changes such as teaching socially relevant texts and introducing a new interdisciplinary course, all in an effort to teach material “that [matched] the tenor of our time” (211). The precise timing of such a shift, along with the reactions of students to the killings at Jackson State from Lincoln students like Scott-Heron during that year suggests that the May 14th killings brought awareness of HBCUs to the national stage and awakened the political consciousness of many who had taken a moderate approach to the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. Not only that, but it acted as a catalyst for programmatic and structural changes across institutions as well.

Hoogveen’s observation is also indicative of what Kynard saw as reasserting the relevance of Black protest traditions to open admissions, basic writing histories, and critical pedagogy. She connects this tradition of protest to the “Students’ Right to Their Own Language” (SRTOL) document and implies that the study of such history can be vital to understanding the document and redressing the roots of deficit pedagogies. As she argues, the inability to see SRTOL and other critical statements on language as connected to a Black protest tradition reinforces troubling assumptions about the spirit of these documents. These statements began with the idea of empowering students who spoke a number of language varieties and of acknowledging the resistance teachers might encounter from students who value the intellectual traditions of their cultures and

neighborhoods. In other words, these statements were written for the very working-class and minority students often written out of the dominant histories of composition (163). Hooegeveen refers to the tension around the teaching of writing at Lincoln in 1970, as expressed in the meeting minutes, as a frustratingly tense affair where one was getting an almost schizophrenic back and forth, “a tale of two universities,” not just in how to teach writing, but also in the mounting discontent between increasingly progressive, even militant, students and faculty, a body politic embodied by students like Gil Scott-Heron and the more conservative students, faculty, and administrators on campus.

The violence at Jackson State also marked a shift in the ideology of the Black Panther Party. Before, Newton acknowledges that the intercommunalist stance “has no time for racism,” an assertion that makes other Black power organization uncomfortable. Seale adds that this position necessitates that to ascribe to intercommunalism you must “get rid of your own racism” in order to truly “educate the masses and serve the people,” noting that to try to achieve liberation through any other framework would open the movement to the same oppressive and racist practices that had been perpetrated against Blacks for hundreds of years (Seale 16-18). As a result of this notion of developing power to exercise change in the American establishment (as opposed to overthrowing it or ameliorating themselves from it), critics soon charged Newton and Seale with selling out the movement to the very “system” from which the Panthers had previously demanded independence. Newton contended that because technology had brought the world so close together, “no one operates outside of the system” and that the fight for liberation had to take on a new front: to resist the authority of the United States’ inner sanctum of reactionary technocratic political elites. Newton’s response was an

ideological break from the Black separatists of the present and the Panther's Black separatist past.

After Jackson State, Newton recognized that racism would not be erased through technological appropriation. If anything, if one did not attend to racist policies when considering technology, the consequences would be dire. The Black Panther Party became keenly invested in the education of a new generation of children of color, and many of its members were interested in reforming the way in which Black students were taught in public schools. In January 1971, The Black Panther Party extended their "liberation schools" model and established the Intercommunal Youth Institute (IYI), which created a system of performance skill levels, instead of grade levels, in order to meet children where they were and teach to their instructional levels. Many of the children who were taught at IYI were considered unteachable by the school system. They recruited teachers and support personnel from HBCUs and even attempted to stage two IYIs at separate HBCUs. IYI attempted to meet the holistic needs of the student, giving its students free transportation, breakfast, lunch, and dinner, school supplies, medical clinics, treatment, and even clothing.

Newton admitted that during the years when the Panthers experienced the most growth and the most visibility, what moved the party away from its core values of social responsibility and economic empowerment were the constant police battles and shootouts; the legal wrangling with the rotating imprisonment of Newton, Seale, and Cleaver; media sensationalism created by those within the party (like Cleaver) and without (like Ronald Regan); and the conflicting ideological positions of the Black Panther Party's many "ministers." Newton was vehemently against the bombastic,

sensationalist rhetoric and political posturing that came to define the Black Panther Party. He would apologize for the ways David Hilliard and H. Rap Brown would alienate preachers and leaders from Black church communities. He would denounce the vulgar language and the sexually tinged political violence advocated by Eldridge Cleaver. In his words, he would “cringe” at the tension between their methods and the deep investment these men felt towards the suffering of Black people. These stances, Newton believed, ultimately undermined the foundational mission of the Black Panther Party and his vision of unity for all of the oppressed:

In terms of our change, I think that many things that we did in the past may have been incorrect, but in some cases it may have been necessary that we go through some of those mistakes. The changes came about primarily in 1971 when we determined that we had abandoned not only the Black community but our Ten Point Platform and Program and had become so sidetracked by media rhetoric that we had lost sight of our original vision. We attempted to return to that vision so that the change that has been observed by many people is really a return to the original ideas of the Party as laid down in our Ten Point Platform and Program which, in essence, states that we want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, peace and people’s control of modern technology.

Intercommunalism had to be codified as the ideological center of the 10-Point Program. For Newton, the issue is no longer one of just possessing or repossessing the land, but of equal importance is the ability to control the technology that “can work the land” that will ultimately enable the oppressed to determine their own destinies.” What follows is a comparison of the BPP October 1966 and March 1972 platforms (Table 1).

Even outside of the Black Panther Party, Black writers on the fringes of the Panther and Black Arts ideological camps begin to frame class struggle, socioeconomic ascendancy, and cultural/political influence in technological terms. Amiri Baraka’s views on technology seem to move closest to creating a revolutionary, imaginative, and

protective space in his 1970 essay, "Technology and Ethos." "Technology and Ethos" works rhetorically as a call to calculated action in redirecting our acquisition of technology towards specific aspects of Black life, real and imagined. Baraka posits that technology is not only an extension of its inventor, creators, and controlling engineers, but that technology has the morality, the spirit, of their inventors. Baraka defines the technology of the West as not a scientific evolutionary eventuality in technology, but as a vessel of oppression that has been shaped, fashioned, and formed specifically for the task of maintaining oppressive relationships across the globe and furthering the Western patriarchal racist hegemonic march towards domination. It is this "oppressor's spirit" that binds the technology of the West to the West's understanding of political power. Yet, Baraka also acknowledges that "nothing *has* to look and function the way that it does," and that a technology infused with a Black ethos of community well-being, radical redistribution of wealth, and spiritual balance could be even more powerful than the status quo.

Think of yourself, Black creator, freed of European restraint which first means the restraint of self determined mind development. Think what would be the results of the unfettered blood inventor-creator *with the resources of a nation behind him*. To imagine—to think—to construct—to energize!!!

Table 1. Comparison of the Black Panther Party's October 1966 and March 1972 Platforms

October 1966 Platform	March 1972 Platform
<p>1. <i>We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.</i></p> <p>We believe that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.</p>	<p>1. <i>We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black and oppressed communities.</i></p> <p>We believe that Black and oppressed people will not be free until we are able to determine our destinies in our own communities ourselves, by fully controlling all the institutions which exist in our communities.</p>
<p>2. <i>We want full employment for our people.</i></p> <p>We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the</p>	<p>2. <i>We want full employment for our people.</i></p> <p>We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every person employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the American businessmen will not give full employment, then the technology and means of production should be taken from the businessmen</p>

Table 1. (continued)

October 1966 Platform	March 1972 Platform
<p>community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.</p>	<p>and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.</p>
<p>3. <i>We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black Community.</i></p> <p>We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules was promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of black people. We will accept the payment as currency which will be distributed to our many communities.</p> <p>The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has</p>	<p>3. <i>We want an end to the robbery by the capitalist of our Black and oppressed communities.</i></p> <p>We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million Black people. Therefore, we</p>

Table 1. (continued)

October 1966 Platform	March 1972 Platform
<p>taken part in the slaughter of over twenty million black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.</p>	<p>feel this is a modest demand that we make.</p>
<p>4. <i>We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.</i></p> <p>We believe that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.</p>	<p>4. <i>We want decent housing, fit for the shelter of human beings.</i></p> <p>We believe that if the landlords will not give decent housing to our Black and oppressed communities, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that the people in our communities, with government aid, can build and make decent housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that the people in our communities, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for the people.</p>

Table 1. (continued)

October 1966 Platform	March 1972 Platform
<p>5. <i>We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.</i></p> <p>We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.</p>	<p>5. <i>We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.</i></p> <p>We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If you do not have knowledge of yourself and your position in the society and the world, then you will have little chance to know anything else.</p>
<p>6. <i>We want all black men to be exempt from military service.</i></p> <p>We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in</p>	<p>6. <i>We want completely free health care for all Black and oppressed people.</i></p> <p>We believe that the government must provide, free of charge, for the people, health facilities which will not only treat our illnesses, most of which have come about as a result of our</p>

Table 1. (continued)

October 1966 Platform	March 1972 Platform
<p>the world who, like black people, are being victimized by the white racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.</p>	<p>oppression, but which will also develop preventative medical programs to guarantee our future survival. We believe that mass health education and research programs must be developed to give all Black and oppressed people access to advanced scientific and medical information, so we may provide ourselves with proper medical attention and care.</p>
<p>7. <i>We want an immediate end to police brutality and murder of black people.</i></p> <p>We believe we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the</p>	<p>7. <i>We want an immediate end to police brutality and murder of Black people, other people of color, all oppressed people inside the United States.</i></p> <p>We believe that the racist and fascist government of the United States uses its domestic enforcement agencies to carry out its program of oppression against Black people, other people of</p>

Table 1. (continued)

October 1966 Platform	March 1972 Platform
<p>United States gives a right to bear arms.</p> <p>We therefore believe that all black people should arm themselves for self defense.</p>	<p>color and poor people inside the United States. We believe it is our right, therefore, to defend ourselves against such armed forces, and that all Black and oppressed people should be armed for self-defense of our homes and communities against these fascist police forces.</p>
<p>8. <i>We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.</i></p> <p>We believe that all black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.</p>	<p>8. <i>We want an immediate end to all wars of aggression.</i></p> <p>We believe that the various conflicts which exist around the world stem directly from the aggressive desires of the U.S. ruling circle and government to force its domination upon the oppressed people of the world. We believe that if the U.S. government or its lackeys do not cease these aggressive wars that it is the right of the people to defend themselves by any</p>

Table 1. (continued)

October 1966 Platform	March 1972 Platform
	<p>means necessary against their aggressors.</p>
<p>9. <i>We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.</i></p> <p>We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that black people will receive fair trials. The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the black community from which the black defendant came. We</p>	<p>9. <i>We want freedom for all Black and poor oppressed people now held in U.S. federal, state, county, city and military prisons and jails. We want trials by a jury of peers for all persons charged with so-called crimes under the laws of this country.</i></p> <p>We believe that the many Black and poor oppressed people now held in U.S. prisons and jails have not received fair and impartial trials under a racist and fascist judicial system and should be free from incarceration. We believe in the ultimate elimination of all wretched, inhuman penal institutions, because the masses of men and women imprisoned inside the United States</p>

Table 1. (continued)

October 1966 Platform	March 1972 Platform
<p>have been, and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the “average reasoning man” of the black community.</p>	<p>or by the U.S. military are the victims of oppressive conditions which are the real cause of their imprisonment. We believe that when persons are brought to trial that they must be guaranteed, by the United States, juries of their peers, attorneys of their choice and freedom from imprisonment while awaiting trials.</p>
<p>10. <i>We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.</i></p> <p>When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to</p>	<p>10. <i>We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, peace and people’s community control of modern technology.</i></p> <p>When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature’s God</p>

Table 1. (continued)

October 1966 Platform	March 1972 Platform
<p>dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. <i>That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes</i></p>	<p>entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.</p> <p>We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its</p>

Table 1. (continued)

October 1966 Platform	March 1972 Platform
<p><i>destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce</i></p>	<p>powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.</p>

Table 1. (continued)

October 1966 Platform	March 1972 Platform
<p><i>them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.</i></p>	

How do you communicate with the great masses of Black people? How do you use the earth to feed masses of people? How do you cure illness? How do you prevent illness? What are the Black purposes of space travel?

It staggers the mind. To be free go let the mind do what it will as a constructive progress force, availed of the total knowledge resource energy of a nation (“Technology and Ethos”)

Baraka reminds us that “political power is also the power to create” and in doing so, highlights the creative intentionality necessary in designing and utilizing technology through the rhetorical questions he asks that proposes a technology that affirms the needs and dreams of the African diaspora. In a way, Baraka’s technological imagination works much like the “Edenic potential” Bradford Stull finds in Du Bois’s sketches some fifty years earlier. Baraka articulates the relationship between racism and technology as an impulse to see the uses of technology as innately objective, when in fact the guiding spirit behind technology usage is always subjective and “it is time the engineers, architects, chemists, electronics craftsmen, i.e. film too, radio, sound, &c., that learning Western technology must not be the end of our understanding of the particular discipline we’re involved in.” The role of machines in culture becomes the means to realizing a

“constructive progress force,” one that will enable Black people to express their freedom in a way that is holistic, fulfilling, and generative.

The new technology must be spiritually oriented because it must aspire to raise man’s spirituality and expand man’s consciousness. It must begin by being “humanistic” though the white boy has yet to achieve this. Witness a technology that kills both plants & animals, poisons the air & degenerates or enslaves man.

The technology itself must represent human striving. It must represent at each point the temporary perfection of the evolutionary man. And be obsolete only because nothing is ever *perfect*, the only constant is change.

The statement, “the Spirit of the people is greater than the Man’s Technology” adopted a new critical stance towards technology, not a vague propagandistic slogan. It shifts the discussion away from American-style civil rights and issues of race and focuses on a more globally centered concern with human rights. It also lays the groundwork to examine and expose how and where “Man’s Technology” is applied by arguing for the liberation of men from systems of oppression that are aided and abetted by a misuse of technology. Margaret Walker Alexander bluntly asserts that “Western technology is completely mechanistic and its technoculture has no humanity—no spiritual value and no moral value, ethical, or cultural viability” (75). Banks, on the other hand, emphasizes Baraka’s imaginings of the reaches and applications of a Black technology that is not only humanistic, but collective, visions that go beyond appropriation and stretch into new realms of possibility. Banks supports these revelations pointing out that “African-American pursuits of technological innovation must proceed from that point of self-knowledge and completely destroy our current notions of form in order to see again, to be able to imagine and produce new forms, free of the assumptions and exclusions embedded, encoded into old forms and old technologies” (107).

Amiri Baraka, formally Le Roi Jones, and arguably the most prominent cultural nationalist at the time, had begun to lean towards the Pan-Africanist position of Kwame Touré (formerly Stokely Carmichael) and, after waging a successful campaign to help elect the first Black mayor of Newark, New Jersey, sought to build a national coalition of Black organizations with a Pan-African agenda. In September of 1970, Baraka and his “Congress of African People” held the first modern Pan-African Congress in Atlanta. The central idea of Pan-Africanism—that Blacks in America should focus first on the struggle for the liberation of Africa and its subsequent unity in order to create a strong foundation for America’s on racial liberation—was widely accepted among diverging Black ideologues in principle and was gaining in popularity in the early 70s. However, Touré also argued that this focus on Africa rendered engagement with American electoral politics irrelevant and many of the social reforms Blacks have advocated during the Civil Rights Movement as lower priorities. Several high-profile Black leaders from representative organizations were not invited, most notably Congresswoman Shirley Chisolm (who would run for president two years later) and Newton and Seale. Even so, Robert Charles Smith points out that even well-known Black moderates, such as Charles Hamilton, agreed that, “Pan Africanism is clearly the next viable stage of the historical struggle of black people to assert themselves on the world scene” and that the goal of electoral politics was to “politicize the masses rather than obtain mass benefits” (36).

Given this emphasis, Baraka’s Pan-African Congress was to develop a national platform for Black political engagement in the United States (specifically focusing on developing more Black elected officials), even while much discussion revolved around Africa. Many of the speeches and discussions, from moderates and revolutionaries alike,

invoked the Pan-Africanist theme of “it’s nation time!”, proselytizing an opaque Pan-African agenda while giving little attention to many of the real issues that prompted their engagement with politics in the first place. Nevertheless, the conference did present several workshop series on various topics (education, technology, family, the justice system, etc.) with the intended goal of producing resolution proposals that would provide the groundwork for establishing institutions built on the foundations of Pan-Africanism. It was the workshops on technology that demonstrated the weight of intercommunalism and the need to focus on technology (Baraka 107-111).

In an opening resource paper at the conference, Saidi Jengaji took on the unenviable task of defining Black technology. He defines Black technology as the ways and means to “devising systematic, designed, principled, organized, regular methods by which Blacks can obtain *any* goal we may determine as having priority” (his italics) (221). Jengaji takes time to differentiate between material goods as technology and expertise and knowledge as technology. In like fashion, Jengaji focuses on finding ways to incorporate the scientific method of discovery into areas that are generally considered labor intensive technologies. This way, Blacks can begin to enter technology fields through research and development departments and agencies, develop workable models for new inventions and ideas, and gather public interest and support. One brief site for such a move given by Jengaji is the abundance of skilled labor in and around central Brooklyn, which has suffered from operation constraints in housing construction. Jengaji leaves this example to somewhat speak for itself and does not take time to fully explain how the scientific method will fit into a plan that brings more Blacks into research and development positions and aid Blacks in building homes and institutions in central

Brooklyn. If anything, Jengaji seems to close his resource paper on a somewhat somber note, concluding that the materials technology needs with which to build were in short supply and “capital was a constraint,” as if it was then that he realized that financial concerns impossibly complicated the notion of organizing and employing technology, Black or otherwise.

Benjamin Scott argued that Western nations support technology development for economic and military purposes, but ignore “support of technology for improving communities or the individual lives of people.” However, Scott is also apprehensive about current prospects for developing the necessary technological infrastructure for such a shift, adding that the Black Movement is “requiring technological development according to a new act of priorities” without the necessary resources and political backing. His references here seem to acknowledge the Panther’s new focus on intercommunalism, and he goes on to remark that:

The technology of liberation will deal with the same basic materials as the technology of imperialism—of that we can be sure. The pile of stuff [raw materials] is the same. What engineers make from the pile depends on the ideology. (226)

What is important here is that Scott, like Newton, recognizes the importance of creating a new ethos for liberation technology. Furthermore, Scott advocates for a Pan-African Academy of Science and Technology that will train “Black technologists for a technopolitical future by somehow melding together a new educational philosophy with a Pan-Africanist strategy for technology integration.” He cautions that:

Unless technology is Pan-African, it will willy-nilly become part of each African state’s need to promote its own national interest regardless of the interest of Africa as a whole. Black technology harnessed to individual

states will eventually be used for imperialistic nationalism, and the first to suffer from it will be other African peoples. (227)

Scott's observation here is dead-on, so much so that it actually complicates his argument for a technology that is rooted in Pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism is, to a large degree, nation building, and Scott does not offer a solution for nationalist sentiments to subsume the potential for technology to help communities. Scott's argument assumes that Pan-Africanism, by being antiimperialist, fosters an ethos of collaboration that restores the core values of nationhood and does not consider nationhood as an ideology with its own values and idiosyncrasies. The Panthers avoid the contradiction altogether by renouncing the concept of nations for communities.

While discussing the importance of technology to Black people, Malaika Jalia presents a perspective that is most closely associated with Touré's techno-ethos of Black Power and Banks's notion of critical access, and she raises very clear concerns for the ways Blacks have been manipulated through their relationship with technology. Jalia effectively sets the stage for her discussion when she asks her audience to take a small object, hold it in the air, and demand it not to fall if they let it go. Her point: No amount of rhetoric or accusation is a substitute for a sound understanding of the laws of science. Jalia addresses the fundamental lack of technical expertise in the Black community by asking first why Blacks are not encouraged to become proficient in technology. She argues that it is through the withholding of technical expertise that allows for the continued exploitation of Black oppression. Throughout history, the European was able to uphold his position of superiority by maintaining "a technological edge," an edge that utilizes technical disciplines to keep the entire earth under submission.

Jalia goes on to discuss several engineering and scientific fields that impact communities and have, for the most part, been denied Blacks in America. Jalia reminds us that at the heart of these disciplines lies math and physics, areas of study that for some reason have produced fear and apprehension in many Blacks, even the most “revolutionary” among those participating in the Congress. Jalia explains that this fear is part and parcel of the tricks devised by those in power to deny Blacks entry into technology-oriented fields and culture. Many diasporic Africans, as well as African Americans, were encouraged to study nontechnical subjects if they went to college, rendering them unable “to make real contributions to developing their country (provide clean water, heal sick babies, build hospitals)” and were qualified only to regurgitate cultural and political discourse. Jalia even goes so far as to include the advent of emerging Black and urban studies programs in colleges and universities in this charade, describing them as “new academic disciplines of self-defeat,” which ignore the proper training in technical fields that will encourage real systemic empowerment and change. Jalia counters that those Blacks who do go into technical fields of study or professions are white-washed by:

. . . the old myth that a good engineer must not get involved in social or political issues: he hides behind his slide rule, and he concentrates only on solving specific technical problems. For brothers who do not fall for this line, he has other measures. He may shoot one of his women on them or give them a token amount of power, or give them a little more money, or swell their heads by making them the “First Negro to...” Black men have made great contributions to technology. The masses of Black people have not benefited much from them because these men were separated from the masses and were always encouraged to produce for the good of America or to “benefit all mankind,” in both cases the white man.

It is important that Black people master technology but even more important that we master it within the correct ideological framework.

There are many brothers and sisters who are using their technical creativity to develop new methods of warfare for the white man to use on Black people throughout the world. It is doubly tragic because these technically trained brothers are selling their people down the river for ten thousand dollars per year and fringe benefits... These people aren't evil; they're just misled (237).

The key, according to Jalia, is that those Blacks who have technological expertise must embrace an agency for the needs of the Black community while also eschewing the traps of Western technological ideas of application that limit the impact and creativity of potential Black technologists. On the other hand, Jalia is quite clear that “men who claim to be revolutionaries” are fooling themselves if they think they can adequately spark a change in American culture and society without discipline and knowledge in science and mathematics, criticizing the overemphasis placed on revolutionary rhetoric. Jalia remarks that, although culture and ideology are important, Blacks

. . . must become proficient in technology [or else they will] end up with the culture and ideology and the white man will still have all the power. In this technological age simply “picking up the gun” is suicide, just as “picking up the spear” was suicide for our ancestors. (238)

Finally, Jalia echoes the sentiments of Baraka in building critical access and connecting Black technology to the spirit of man, concluding that Black technology must be spiritually oriented because it must raise man's consciousness. To achieve this, Blacks must ask critical questions of the function, contribution, and level of appropriation of any given technology if it is to be used for the process of liberation.

We must remember that we do not want a Black America. That is to say, we cannot be committed to Western ideas, Western forms, Western limitations or we will be copies of Westerners. *We are actively engaged in the total process of building*, developing a technology designed for our own selves. Machines reflect the culture of their makers. Our machines must reflect our African personality. We must be free from all Western forms and develop our own technology, from our own ideology—a Black

ideology: one of progressive perfection. All that we create or develop has to come from a totally Black framework. This way, coming from us, it will work for us. (238-239 italics mine)

Any considerations of creating and incorporating technology with a distinctly Black agency must be fashioned from a critical perspective that works to resist ingrained notions of technology imposed by Western frameworks. The development of Black ideology, framework, and, ultimately, an appropriate technology are all components of the total process of creating a Black technology, which must be built, so to speak, from the ground up. This critical workflow model advocates for a *constructive space* where new technologies for the Black community can be expressed. Jalia implores her audience to take five steps to create these constructive spaces: 1) Use a Black ideology, one focused on nation building as a starting point for development; 2) Study scientific fields related to community investment and infrastructure, and create a self-study that addresses their specific concerns; 3) Create a referral center “for people that need technological assistance in building or repairing anything; 4) Recruit future Black technicians by giving seminars at schools on the importance of Black technicians in Black communities; and 5) Appoint a staff of technologists to commit to seeing these projects through.

In the ensuing resolutions produced by the workshop, Ken Cave reflects that Western technology has developed with complete disregard for human values, which has adversely affected all Western technologists. Black technologists in particular have been maligned, subverted, and used to further oppress the Black masses. Moreover, there has been a conspiracy against the development of Black technicians. The technology workshop committee proposed several solutions to rectify the exclusions of Blacks from technical fields and to aid in nation building. Perhaps building on Jalia’s suggestions, the

first solution suggests the creation of a new system built on traditional and African values that would prioritize human values. The proposal also calls for: 1) The creation of a Pan-African Institute of Technology, which would train a properly valued generation of Blacks in technical expertise and be a site for the implementation of this new system; 2) Social technologies that focus on holistic health, the Black family and home life, developing a comprehensive resource and knowledge base, revenue streams, and psychological revitalization; 3) The creation of skills banks and databases for those needing technical assistance; 4) A greater concentration on using cybernetics as a “new dimensions in information gathering” for nation building; 5) The use of unspecified “Black technology” to enhance the communication between Black technologists and the masses, especially Black youth; to solve health and housing problems in the Black community and to better facilitate the dissemination of information and organizational support of the Pan-African Congress; 6) The establishment of a Black technology journal; and 7) A series of educational seminars designed to counsel students interested in science and technology.

On May 21, 1970, the Jackson City Council voted to close Lynch Street to through traffic. Mayor Russell Davis and Commissioner Tom Kelly voted in favor of permanently closing the thoroughfare, while Commissioner Ed Cates cast the only negative vote. It was during this same council meeting that the initials “J. R.” were added to the existing street signs, denoting J. R. Lynch Street, named for one of Mississippi’s leading Black statesmen who served during Reconstruction—Congressman John R. Lynch. On June 13, 1970, President Nixon formed the President’s Commission on Campus Unrest and conducted its first meeting on the June 25. From there, it spent

thirteen days listening to the public speak from Jackson, Michigan; Kent State, Ohio; Los Angeles, CA; and Washington, DC. Despite the emotional testimonies given by the faculty, staff, and students, there were NO arrests made. The Commission found that the 28-second fusillade from police officers was an “unwarranted and unjustified” overreaction”. (“President’s Commission on Campus Unrest” 462) Shortly after the closing of the street, a plaza was constructed near Alexander Center, naming it the Gibbs-Green Plaza. Just north of the plaza and directly in front of Alexander Hall is the Gibbs-Green Monument, a permanent memorial to the slain students and a tangible reminder to all students that the Jackson State tragedy must never be forgotten.



Figure 22. Photographs. (left) Gibbs-Green Plaza (c. 1992); (right) Gibbs-Green Memorial.

An Appreciation for the Gibbs-Green Plaza: A Conclusion

There are no photographs, video, or audio of what happened on Jackson State campus during that night. There is only evidence of its aftermath. There is no need to minimize or justify how a peaceful protest ends with two young people slain, scores and scores of students injured by gunfire, flying glass shards, and scared trampling feet. Eyewitnesses to the shooting have consistently questioned the significance of the anti-Vietnam War sentiment at Jackson State that fateful night. At a memorial and day of

remembrance recently held on the Gibbs-Green Plaza, James “Lap” Baker, a senior at Jackson State at that time and a witness to the shooting, disputed (and consistently so since the event) the conventional wisdom over the years that the killings at Jackson State were a result of Vietnam War protests on campus. On the day of the killings, there was no Vietnam War protest happening on campus. Baker witnessed the shootings and was also present during the often-overlooked protests and police incidents on the previous day. “The Jackson State [killings] were all about racism,” he told a crowd gathered to commemorate the events of May 15, 1970. “And I want to make that a point. It wasn’t about protesting the Vietnam War.” President Emeritus John A. Peoples would add, “This Gibbs-Green plaza was developed because students and I went down to the City Council and demanded that this site be made part of Jackson State.” Baker echoes those sentiments in other memorial years.

The Jackson State killings have several enduring legacies, many of them painful, but one that carries within it a kernel of hope and transformation is the Gibbs-Green Plaza. Scholars have often overlooked the importance of the plaza to life and legacy of Jackson State as an institution. Spofford acknowledges that the memorial exists, but gives it sparse attention. Giles passively notes that the plaza is “pleasant-looking.” They obviously are not Jacksonians. Jacksonians know that the plaza is the heart of the Jackson State’s campus. It is the location of outdoor science fairs, impromptu student concerts, and all-day conversations that can go all night, too. It is the place where girls still get serenaded, where fraternities and sororities hold their step shows and probates. Langdon Winner, whose seminal essay “Do Artifacts Have Politics?”, demonstrates urban design as a technological force intervening politically in the lived experiences of city dwellers.

Physical spaces, he maintains, are imbued with the values of its designers and, in turn, disseminate those values through haptic rhetorics of space and place. It was students who advocated for the closure of Lynch Street and who, along with Peoples, had a hand in the redesign and repurposing of that area of Lynch Street. The plaza's design would be five years in the making and would see significant input from students, faculty, and the president of Jackson State himself. It would be seeded with certain core values: to keep White motorists (especially law enforcement) off campus, to be a place where students can congregate standing or sitting. Design-wise, it needed an elevated platform with open sight lines down both ends of Lynch Street and it needed to be a performative space. As much as the Thompson Tank was a technological fabrication for the racist subjugation of Jackson's Blacks, particularly their Black students, the construction of the Gibbs-Green Plaza was the literal construction of an innovative and liberating space built directly to stand against it. As Darin Payne suggests:

Space creates frameworks for conception, action, and interaction; its design—whether natural or artificial—limits and directs what we think and do, as well as with whom we do it. Space is not a neutral conduit within which social productions occur; it is itself socially produced, and as such it is shot through with the very ideologies of identity and power with which much of our disciplinary work contents. Indeed our disciplinary work must, without exception, occur in space. If space is epistemic, as critical geographers, postmodern philosophers, and contemporary sociologists have argued, then we have an obligation to understand how our intellectual work with one another and with students is shaped by the spaces that govern it. (485)

The way we are in space—how we act, what we say, the way we say it, and to whom—contributes to *who* we are in space (486). What space generates is “spontaneous consent” for a set of hegemonic practices. It does not mean that other alternative practices will not happen in that space; it just means that they are less likely to happen because the space

has been designed for specific practices, designed for a specific social group that will perpetuate a certain level of “normalized” exchanges in the world of acceptable discourses. Their discursive behaviors are policed, in part, by unspoken rules of engagement embedded within the spaces as codes of conduct. In this way, the Gibbs-Green Plaza is Black Art (collective, functional, revolutionary) and Black Tech (as Baraka says, an extension of its inventor-creators). More than a memorial, it is transformative in that the Gibbs-Green Plaza was and is imbued with Black Power; a technoethos of sanctuary.

CHAPTER 6
THE BELOVED COMMUNITY AND FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES
FOR RESEARCH

Nothing *has* to look or function the way it does.

—*Amiri Baraka* “*Technology and Ethos*”

Technology within the context of HBCUs is partially defined by its ability to combat racism and the prevailing ideas around the lack of humanity of African Americans. One of the most powerful technological narratives coming out of HBCUs from the very beginning is its purpose as a tool to humanize Black people. It is this agency towards the acknowledgment and revelation of joint human experience and existence that served as a central purpose, a foundational tenant, and a guiding light. It was an idea that was revolutionary in scope, but built cautiously. This agenda is so critical and yet so fragile that great importance always has to be given to creating safe spaces to nurture and support it. And that was part of the genesis in the creation of HBCUs as well—that they will be institutions of learning, but first and foremost they will be safe spaces of being. Incorporating the conventions of not just material technology for programmatic study, but engaging the technological discourse within both the professional discipline and the public sphere is part of the legacy of HBCUs as well, along with a strong legacy in undergraduate research that is relevant personally, professionally, and politically. Like the undergraduates completing incredible work in STEM fields across the nations, garnering both respect and acclaim for their work, so, too, did the students at Atlanta University under the tutelage of Du Bois and the vision of

Washington, whose representation of statistical data translated the reality of the African-American experience into the cutting edge of twentieth-century technological discourse. In a way, they led the charge. This has been an undertone in the discourse of technology around some of HBCUs most notable and influential leaders and thinkers. However, it is also important to understand that when leaders abandon the premise of communal safety and development of the humanistic goal in favor of other considerations, they often lose a vital connection with the community they have sworn to uplift.

Part of the renewed interest in and social commitment to HBCUs is a direct response to most recent waves of racial violence perpetrated by law enforcement, hate groups, and “the state.” And it is important to remember that African Americans have faced these challenges before. HBCUs are spaces of collective memory in such a climate of oppression and history of violence. Each chapter of this dissertation presents a smaller narrative of technological discourse that is, in its own way, subsumed by a larger, competing narrative. Each chapter also presents a thread of technological discourse that encouraged the protection of the HBCU stakeholders, values, and institutions, while also supporting their growth and development.

These considerations also help scholars to consider technological discourse as not only conversations about material artifacts or physical space, but also as rhetorical practices. Rhetorical acts are political decisions: They are necessarily biased, which helps in dispelling the assumption that technology is an unbiased and easily accessible tool. From this vantage point, there is clearly a need to reevaluate some of the expectations for technology in primarily African-American institutions or frameworks. I would like to argue that technology integration is first a rhetorical move and it is a disbursement of new

modalities and the subsequent programming and veiling of the codes that make those modalities operational. We aren't talking about literary technotropes that point to disjunctions in space, time, and contemporary metaphors of psychological and socioeconomic trauma in African-American social spaces or measuring the decibel levels and frequencies of stereotypical whoops, hollers and shouts, clamors, or clichés. This is straight talk, real talk, about how technology is situated in rhetorical situations and the everyday lives of African-American students and HBCU stakeholders, and how, within these situations, one might consider technology within the tangible goals for what *they* consider progress.

A major thrust of this dissertation has been to prove that HBCUs have wrestled with notions of technological discourse even before the 2000s. However, the framework of this dissertation is a useful step in reframing the technological discourses that are more familiar to us in the twenty-first century. The role and response of HBCUs during the rise of the digital-divide narrative is a good example. The digital divide has been, until fairly recently, the dominant narrative of race, education, innovation, and technology in America. Even as many indicators point to a closing and, in some cases, an erasure of that gap (especially when it comes to mobile computing and broadband access), the digital divide is still an enduring benchmark of technological progress in America. It is problematic because the idea of a binary divide between the haves and have-nots accurately portrays technological access in racial terms, even when the evidence says otherwise and can even be patronizing because it fails to value the social resources that diverse groups bring to the table. As Barbara Jean Monroe put it, “the digital divide almost always gets visually pictured in terms of race, even when the accompanying story

never mentions color, focusing instead on socioeconomic status” (22). Mark Warschauer indicates:

For example, in the United States, African Americans are often portrayed as being on the wrong side of a digital divide when in fact Internet access among Blacks and other minorities varies tremendously by income group—with divisions between blacks and whites decreasing as income increases (NTIA 2000). Some argue that the stereotype of disconnected minority groups could even serve to further social stratification.

Research by the Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project has seen a closing of the gap, especially when it comes to material access and mobile connectivity. When wireless connectivity is considered, the gap between Black and White technology users has been virtually nonexistent since 2010. Yet, the “Falling through the Net” reports, the mass media, and the administrative voices at the federal level produced a conversation that was tantamount to “a government-sponsored ad campaign” to close the digital divide, tying to class disparity, to an undercurrent of racialized social justice, but separating that connection from the controls of real economic advancement and control of social mobility for the previously marginalized (Warschauer 23). Yet, before the term “digital divide” made it into the American lexicon and became part of a national conversation anchored in part by then President Clinton’s State of the Union Address, HBCUs were building discourses for how its students, communities, and institutions could leverage the new climate of technological innovation in order to thrive in the twenty-first century. HBCUs were strategizing how to negotiate the digital divide and discussed the implications of it before the term was popularized. HBCUs theorized how to address some of the most pressing issues of the digital divide by positing a technoethos

that countered the rhetoric of deficit surrounding technology acquisition and imagined technological innovation and racial uplift as results of an atmosphere of love and support.

Theorizing the Digital Divide before Al Gore Invented the Internet

On March 8, 1999, then Vice President Gore was preparing for a presidential run and doing the media circuit. In a CNN interview, Wolf Blitzer asked Gore why Democrats should consider him for the Democratic nomination. Gore responded that “during [his] service to Congress, he invented the Internet.” At the time of the live interview, there was very little said about this seemingly innocuous, though clearly misleading, overstatement. To be fair, Gore had been instrumental in paving the way for the “information superhighway” (a term he popularized) to get government support and funding. He was also at the forefront of developing and popularizing policies that enabled the fledgling Internet to grow internationally without it being immediately cannibalized by the global marketplace. As noted in the *Washington Post*, he sponsored “the 1991 High-Performance Computing and Communications Act, generally known as the “Gore Bill,” which allocated \$600 million for high-performance computing. His efforts on behalf of the Information Age earned him a well-deserved induction into the Internet Hall of Fame. The speech that most often contributed to the myth around Al Gore’s “creation” of the Internet is a speech Vice President Gore gave to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) on March 21, 1994. This was this speech that is known as “Al Gore’s Information Superhighway Speech”, but it is commonly misreferenced as the “Al Gore invented the Internet” speech. The goal of the speech was to solicit the help of the ITU in establishing “a global information infrastructure.” Though Gore is speaking

to an international audience, his first move is to place his commentary on this new dawn of technological advancement within the technological framework of the pastoral ideal from Nathaniel Hawthorne, Marshall McLuhan, in his book, *Understanding Media*, envisions the dawn of the age of electricity and, by extension, the Information Age as material expressions of the human central nervous system—a nervous system that not only carries, but that is controlled by, both conscious and unconscious thought. It is a metaphor that is part of a discourse tradition of technology that can be found in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *House of the Seven Gables*, where Clifford declares:

Then there is electricity, the demon, the angel, the mighty physical power, the all-pervading intelligence!" . . . "Is it a fact—or have i dreamt it—that, by means of electricity, the world of matter has become a great nerve, vibrating thousands of miles in a breathless point of time? Rather, the round globe is a vast head, a brain, instinct with intelligence! Or, shall we say, it is itself a thought, nothing but a thought, and no longer the substance which we deemed it!

Though the comment was largely ignored, *Wired* columnist Declan McCullagh wrote a tongue-in-cheek piece about the statement in an article entitled, "No Credit Where Credit Due" where he points out that the creators of the Internet (of which Gore was not one) had innovated new technologies, built infrastructure, and laid the groundwork for the Internet long before Gore's involvement as a policy advocate for the Internet. Once other legislators got wind of the McCullagh story, Gore was widely panned for his comments in that interview because it supported the public's perception of him as a bit of a grandstander with a penchant for overstating his own importance. The vice president's gaffe illustrates how fluid the notion of the Internet was at the time, and even though the word Internet has been used before, media, as well as larger society, was still grappling

with what to call it, how it would function in larger society, and what it could actually do. This also complicated other technological concepts in flux such as the digital divide.

Three days after the vice president's speech during the 19th Annual Conference of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education on March 24, 1994, Gretchen C. Lockett presents a paper that offers a different take on what would be known as the digital divide. In it, Lockett presents an interesting argument. She acknowledges that HBCUs have always had to figure out how to build and maintain their institutions with limited resources, but that this very fact gives HBCUs insight on how larger institutions of higher learning can function more effectively during periods of economic hardship, changing demographics, or shifting educational paradigms. She argues that recognizing the contributions that HBCUs can make to the institutional well-being of other institutions can foster "an opportunity to develop new models and definitions of social institutions which will help our communities and our nation to approach the new century as victors rather than as victims, as participants and leaders rather than as spectators" (2). During a period when most of the rhetoric around the digital divide revolved around the very real and increasingly impactful inequalities of technological access in poor, rural, and/or minority communities, Lockett presents a framework that resists that seemingly worthwhile endgame. She is not asking HBCUs or Predominantly Black Colleges and Universities (PBCUs) to search for ways to get more. She is advocating that these institutions build an ethos of empowerment to reshape what she calls "the beloved community" in a landscape of transforming cultural communicators.

Lockett is not defeatist. She is making the astute calculation that, based on the African-American experience in these not-yet-United States, African Americans cannot

hang their hopes on the things they may not get, even when they are justly due, deserved, or earned. Empowerment, in Lockett's estimation, cannot be fueled by wish fulfillment. Lockett does not mention the digital divide explicitly or posit any particular boon to the material position of more technology—nor does she claim that great strides will be made in the wake of more technological access. What she does is target empowerment as the impetus for rethinking the structure, motivations, and implications of predominantly Black institutions of higher learning. And she structures her methodology in technoethical terms.

Lockett describes this shift as a move

. . . to continue our traditional mission which is to empower our institutions and constituencies, especially our students, to accept the true meaning of leadership by creating new knowledge and having this new knowledge manifest itself at new levels of community. But we also want to empower our institutions for what may be a more important non-traditional role which is the demonstration of the development of a nonviolent army in operation as “the beloved community” which exhibits innovations in human interactions and economic self-sufficiency. (3)

In the midst of this turn towards the digital divide as the dominant narrative and discourse around technology and the acquisition of technology in the African-American community, Lockett establishes another paradigm for consideration. She begins by alluding to the fact that although America's slow recovery in the years following the recession of 1990 has produced some national anxiety around funding, capital, and depreciating assets, this climate of financial unease is a “unique opportunity.” Because the African-American community has always experienced “The American Dream” as “a dream deferred,” the prospects of a shrinking American economy do not generate “the same levels of psychic or philosophical conflict that many Americans in the majority

communities face” (6). HBCUs and other predominantly minority-serving institutions have always operated under a cloud of duress and have often found ways to avoid diminishing returns, even among dwindling resources. This adaptive quality, this survive-and-thrive mentality, gives HBCUs a distinctive advantage in the current economic and sociopolitical climate. While other institutions have to grapple with new realities, HBCUs can seize the moment to create a new reality, simply because they don’t have to grapple with the trending financial concerns of the day. Budget shortfalls? Scaling back? Doing more with less? This lexicon of austerity is essentially built into the institutional DNA of HBCUs.

Because of this, HBCUs can use this time of transition to press forward as opposed to maintaining the status quo. Lockett asserts that now is the time “to develop new models and definitions of social institutions which will help our communities and our nation to approach the new century as victors rather than as victims, as participants and leaders rather than as spectators” (2). It has always been the goal of HBCUs to empower students to contribute widely and greatly to American society, but Lockett advocates that HBCUs begin the process of empowering students in “moral reasoning, democratic values, understanding of community and economic development” as soon as they step on campus. Lockett’s description of her steps toward student empowerment is her first salvo against the paradigm of contemporary education that she is suggesting that HBCUs upend.

Her second barrage is even more devastating rhetorically because it lays the groundwork for the kind of institutional values that she sees are necessary in order to take advantage of their emerging reality. In addition to “creating new knowledge and having

this new knowledge manifest itself at new levels in the community,” HBCUs must demonstrate “the development of a nonviolent army in operation as ‘the beloved community’ which exhibits innovation in human interactions and economic efficiency” (3). She remarks that HBCUs have subtly taught their students that the methodologies of social change are not just historical footnotes or solely the practices for courtrooms, marches, pulpits, and picket lines, but are part of the modus operandi for their everyday professional and political lives. This is part of the legacy of widespread student activism at HBCUs from the 1950s, 1960s, and early-1970s. Lockett sees the dawn of a new century in terms of a sweeping economic shift from “an industrial to a post-industrial” society, one that will be primarily a service economy and rewards entrepreneurship. As such, the first step towards empowerment HBCUs should take is the opportunity to redefine the problem, themselves, and the country at large. Lockett declares that part of the problem is that the nation is ill equipped to transition from an industrial to a postindustrial economy:

This drastic economic change is having political and social ramifications worldwide. In the U. S. the ramifications are manifested in the shattering of families and family values, the ineffectiveness of the schools, the loss of jobs and the work ethic, the abuse of drugs and alcohol, the limited reach of the church, the inability of the government to provide supports to ensure that the minimum standards of the American Dream can be met, and the loss of manufacturing business and other forms of commerce. (7)

Lockett argues that the next steps in HBCU and PBCU empowerment must be to abandon the narratives of nihilistic victimization and deficit that often serve as the launching point for discussions of problem solving in the Black community. Lockett plainly states that, in the second step, African Americans have to “stop blaming ourselves for the destruction of the social institutions as we know them. We didn’t do it “(8). In this moment, Lockett

targets a traumatic wound that many in the African-American community do not often admit and fewer care to discuss, which is the realization that African Americans have been conditioned to see themselves as “the problem,” and this programming has contributed to the fragmentation of the African-American community as much as the persistent racism of America’s larger social institutions. It is the classic scenario where the victims blame themselves for their injurious circumstance and resulting condition. Lockett here makes an admonition and a declaration, one that could have shaped a stronger counternarrative to the tone and tenor of the rhetoric of the digital divide as it developed. It is an easy trap to fall into given how strongly the idea is reinforced throughout American culture. It is psychosocial commentary that appears as subtext in Du Bois’s groundbreaking 1898 study, *The Philadelphia Negro*, and the soul (if not the heart) of Carter G. Woodson’s exploration of American education in his book, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* in 1933. It is a theme that runs through notable works of African-American literature, like Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, Richard Wright’s *Native Son*, Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, and Colson Whitehead’s *The Intuitionist*. It is the “nihilism in Black America” that Cornel West describes in the first chapter of *Race Matters* and part of the generational struggle that Ta-Nehisi Coates tries to articulate to his son in just about every chapter of *Between the World and Me*. The breakdown of the African-American family is seen as a moral deficiency. The lack of job opportunities, Black businesses, and community success is often seen as the result of a set of generally widespread character flaws in the race: lazy, lack of initiative or originality. Failing schools in largely Black communities, both urban and rural (but not suburban, strangely enough), are often attributed to curricular and structural deficiencies that are a result of

mismanagement (which in this case is a kind of intellectual deficiency) and not systemic or institutional racism. One of the consequences of this kind of self-blame is that it strips one of the critical agency necessary for problem-solving. Instead of producing moments of self-awareness, it's what I call a "pocket discourse." This ever-expanding, metacontextualized, universe of negative framing that is easy to enter with just a few seemingly innocuous phrases of response or assertion. Evolving technologies and a changing economic climate allow HBCUs and PBCUs to focus on the values of the beloved community in two important ways: First, it allows the community to perform a critical kind of values reassessment. Second, it allows HBCUs and PBCUs to affirm and recommit themselves to some of the sustaining values that Lockett alluded to before.

In that moment of self-assessment, Lockett advocates for a call to self-define, similar to the call Stokely Carmichael made on a make-shift stage in Greenwood, Mississippi:

Next in our steps toward empowerment we must adopt the principle of KUJICHAGULIA (koo gee choc gu li Ha) from KWANZAA which refers to our need to define, name, create, and speak for ourselves. We need to redefine our social institutions using a credit model based on function and effect. (8)

Lockett's desire for the adoption of *kujichagyulia* in order to prepare HBCUs for a postindustrial America is eerily reminiscent of the call that Carmichael made during his Black Power speech for the necessity of Black people to love themselves ("We need to stop being ashamed to be Black!" Carmichael intoned) and then get to the business of defining themselves. The key innovation here is that Lockett grounds the definition of African-American identity and social institutions in what she calls "a credit model." She explains:

Historically our families, churches, schools, and businesses have been judged by majority standards and role models and always evaluated with a deficit viewpoint. Our families were said to be too extended, matriarchal, uneducated and poor for us to have success. Our schools were too overcrowded and our teachers too unchallenging to produce geniuses. Our churches were much too emotional, loud and busy to know and serve God. Using our credit definition of family based on factors more than just the ability to achieve success and rewards in the market place, we recognize that in every endeavor we have been more extended, emotional, improvisational, survivalist and resourceful. From our businesses to our churches and from our schools and colleges to our homes, we have had to take less, manage it better and do more. Most of the time we have been so good at it that it has looked to all the world as if we have more fun and that we have more spiritual and rhythmic soul.(8-9)

The “credit model” performs a kind of rhetorical course correction, framing the narrative of African-America life in measures of intelligence and brilliance, resourcefulness and skillful, empathetic and good-natured. Even Lockett’s playfulness is a rhetorical/political act of engagement in the “credit model.” Understanding the importance of the credit model is key to Lockett’s next step, which is to create a new “American Dream” by taking on leadership within the developing technology economy of the twenty-first century.

By the year two thousand, our graduates who find jobs working for others will be in careers based on science, mathematics and high technology or in service industry jobs where information technology and human relations will be the primary skills. To the degree that we can keep the career paths to teaching open, we will be able to graduate and place our teacher education students. But most of our students, within five to ten years of graduation will be required to be self-employed with offices in their homes. Our time will be well spent in redefining education not in terms of what it used to be but in terms of what it needs to be.(9)

Not only does Lockett situate the new economy in “science, mathematics and high technology,” she also recognizes an important connection between “information technology” and “human relations.” This connection carries none of the lofty

transcendental quality of Gore's Hawthorne references, but seems very grounded in daily lived experience. In a surprisingly frank recognition of the racism inherent in the science and technology fields, Lockett utilizes the credit model, noting that the students should begin thinking of being self-employed and being entrepreneurs. HBCUs, therefore, will shift their paradigms of education to supporting a workforce that will be technically proficient, innovative, and entrepreneurial. Lockett observes that with the downturn in the economy, the first casualties have probably been that first generation of African Americans that made a significant dent in the corporate glass ceiling. "Hopefully," she says, "they learned enough about business during their tenures that they can invest their resources as well as develop enterprises which will afford an income for them and their families" (9). Since they can no longer tell their students they will be assured good jobs in a corporation, HBCU must help students "redefine work":

We must give them opportunities to develop small businesses and services so that they can be self sufficient after graduation. Concomitantly, we must develop our colleges and universities into "work-colleges" so that our students work in our college enterprises and businesses and graduate without debt. At least five institutions in the nation are doing this and providing such an effective model that they have garnered the support of corporations, their communities and have been developed creative uses of Title IV funds. Students graduating from these "work colleges" leave their campuses with substantial work experience, commitment to the work ethic and no debt to the college or financial institutions. This work model was the model of our institutions historically when we had our farms and brick factories. Our empowerment efforts should include a return to a new form of this model. (10)

By building programs that focus on internships and entrepreneurship, students will gain valuable work experience and the ability to be self-sustaining. Not only that, but Lockett envisions a postindustrial, tech-savvy student who is also debt-free, rejecting the deficit model in a financial sense as well. Her comparison of twenty-first century "work

colleges” and the industrial trades school that made up most HBCUs at the turn of the century emphasizes the capacity of the institutions to be relevant in any economy.

HBCUs should be centers for the empowerment of churches, providing the curriculum development and technical skills necessary to support churches in their ministries.

However, the most important thing HBCUs can do to empower their community is to teach the values of the beloved community. Lockett argues that we must “teach values to our students and we must practice and employ these values in our policies and actions on our campuses. We must develop nonviolence as a way of life on our campuses” (11).

Many HBCU students have inherited a value system that is defeatist, nihilistic, and unhealthy “which may cause them to never develop as efficacious, self-sufficient and contributing members of the American society.” To value life, to value education, to value one’s civic and social duty are all values of “the beloved community.”

It may be that one of the primary venues for the empowerment of African American youth in the communities, general education college students, and teacher education students is values training and development. Without the development of values leading to morality and efficacy, our African American youth do not have a chance on or off campus.

Inclusion and tolerance, excellence and persistence, decency and honor should be the orders of the day. One way to make such programs palatable and meaningful, is for us to begin to delineate and teach the values which are appropriate in “the beloved community” with our emphasis on the development of agape and nonviolence as a way of life. (13)

The concept of the beloved community is most often attributed to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who in his later speeches would invoke the beloved community as an end goal that would come about through a commitment to the philosophy of nonviolence. Because King often associated the beloved community with his nonviolent strategy, some scholars have reduced the beloved community to an integrationist utopian fantasy or a tidy

rhetorical trope in King's speeches that harkened back to the earlier days of the Civil Rights Movement. However, when King invoked the notion of the beloved community, he would often use it as a means of establishing a value system that would foster a Black community that was generative in both a spirit and community investment. In a speech on May 4, 1966, just a few weeks before the March against Fear, King maintains that:

I must continue by faith or it is too great a burden to bear and violence, even in self-defense, creates more problems than it solves. Only a refusal to hate or kill can put an end to the chain of violence in the world and lead us toward a community where men can live together without fear. Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives . . .

King's belief in the benefits of a nonviolent civil rights platform is well documented.

Less familiar are the very practical rationales for nonviolence that follow in his speech.

King, to the surprise of some, does not reject self-defense, but takes pains to explain that self-defense

. . . must be placed in perspective. It goes without saying that people will protect their homes. This is a right guaranteed by the Constitution and respected even in the worst areas of the South. But the mere protection of one's home and person against assault by lawless night riders does not provide any positive approach to the fears and conditions which produce violence . . .

For King, the beloved community was one that was soundly rooted in the morality of humanitarian endeavor and creation; that Black communities would seek first to build as opposed to destroy. He saw the creation of the beloved community as a "plan of action" and a "tactical program."

We want a share in the American economy, the housing market, the educational system and the social opportunities. The goal itself indicates that a social change in America must be nonviolent. If one is in search of a better job, it does not help to burn down the factory. If one needs more adequate education, shooting the principal will not help, or if housing is

the goal, only building and construction will produce that end. To destroy anything, person or property, can't bring us closer to the goal that we seek.

So when King declares that the result of commitment to the values of life, creation, and humanistic industry will be reconciliation, redemption, and “the creation of the beloved community,” he is not advocating for a Black community that White people will love. He is advocating for a community that loves and cherishes itself first. King points out that “it is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opponents into friends. . . . It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men.” I would like to suggest that Lockett sees a connection between the values of the beloved community and the need to build a concept of HBCU sustainability in the dawn of the Information Age not only because King's beloved community is the kind of credit model, value-based strategy that is necessary at the moment, but also because the beloved community is a technoethos of survival as well.

The King Center suggests that for King, the beloved community was a realistic, achievable goal that could be attained by a critical mass of people committed to and trained in the philosophy and methods of nonviolence. With that philosophy in place, issues like poverty, hunger, and homelessness would not be tolerated because standards of human decency will not allow it. The ethos of the beloved community is one of transformative access, and it was the ethos of the beloved community that anchored arguably King's most controversial speech. In his April 4, 1967, speech at Riverside Church in New York entitled “Beyond Vietnam,” King offered a scathing rebuke of the Vietnam War, calling for “a true revolution of values.” It is here that King openly rejects

the materialism and racist ideology that is at the heart of American values and American technological discourse.

. . . The words of the late John F. Kennedy come back to haunt us. Five years ago he said, “Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.” Increasingly, by choice or by accident, this is the role our nation has taken, the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investments. I am convinced that if we are to get on to the right side of the world revolution, **we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. . . . we must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.**

King’s tacit rejection of the trifecta of American technological discourse—racism, material access, and militarism—positions the concept of the beloved community as a functional rhetoric of design for the twenty-first century. What Lockett understands is that as HBCUs have had to resist dominant discourses of technology, they have also had to combat accompanying notions of deficit.

Lockett concludes her talk by emphasizing that by empowering students to uphold the values of the beloved community, they will not only redefine “the concept of power, nationally and internationally,” but will also become active and responsible for their own lives and for their communities. Just as King believed, Lockett reinforces the notion that the beloved community is not a philosophical approach but a practical approach. Lockett encourages HBCUs to take on this cause because their cultural stability makes it the perfect conduit for revolutionary values and practices. Lockett closes by saying:

The colleges and schools, by their very nature, still have within them numbers of persons who support, subscribe to and exemplify the highest of human values . . . Without values training, our efforts to empower our

students through the development of entrepreneurships, cottage industries, and work colleges . . . will be less than successful. (16)

Paying attention to the larger technological discourse of a particular moment helps to understand the negotiations of HBCUs through that technological space. The HBCUs have experienced the greatest successes when their entrees into technological discourse have rejected the deficit model. The deficit model in technological discourse, lived out through the programming, curriculum, and construction of HBCUs, has sparked an undercurrent of resistance throughout the existence of HBCUs. However, knowing that part of the legacy of HBCU stakeholders have been the consistent resistance to that deficit thread within technological discourse is in itself liberating. From its beginnings with the Institute for Colored Youth, student protests for survival; for equality; for better, more relevant programmatic options and programs of study; protests against the systemic oppression of racism that is embedded in its society, whether it has been propagated by those outside of the institution or those within it has always been part of the DNA of HBCUs.

Further Opportunities for Research: Digital Portfolios and The Perils of Not Paying Attention

This dissertation does not explore the influence of technological discourse at HBCUs in the areas of institutional or writing assessment. However, I believe that this study is perfectly positioned to make that exploration its next steps. I would like to explore how the conversation around digital portfolios was an opportunity lost to many HBCUs because of the battle against the larger narrative of assessment culture. I would

like to trace how external forces within the culture of higher education—specifically the culture of assessment on the program level and the narrative of accreditation on the institutional level have had the unintended consequence of shifting HBCUs away from developing core institutional values around technological creativity and utilization, even as they attempt to meet those critical pedagogical goals. This can have a detrimental effect on the technoethos of the beloved community. I must admit that the desire to examine the implementation of digital portfolios and variable measures of success they have had at HBCUs in order to evaluate the importance of understanding the technoethos of the beloved community comes out of my own personal and professional practice.

Because of the unique burden of historical discrimination that HBCUs have faced and the distinctive mission they have taken on as a result, they often operate from a position of disadvantage in financial, technological, and human resources with respect to their predominantly White counterparts. For example, accreditation has long been a difficult process for HBCUs. In fact several HBCUs have been reprimanded (and even closed) at a disproportionate rate in comparison with predominantly White institutions. Most reprimands and revocations of accreditation are due to financial deficits; however, campus infrastructure, student enrollments, and even library holdings play a role in the certification process. Most recently, arguably the greatest new challenge has been that of comprehensive assessment.

These issues are not endemic to only HBCUs; Many institutions of higher learning, regardless of size, classification, or configuration, face challenges of student placement, long-term student assessment in writing, finding systems that work for everybody involved, institutional assessment measure and accountability, addressing

student deficiencies in writing during the critical freshman and sophomore years, writing proficiency, or gate-keeping, exams or portfolios—or both. Though this is true, I would argue that because HBCUs serve primarily minority populations, the stakes are higher. In addition, just like mainstream institutions, not all HBCUs are privy to the same levels of resources. There are some that have a greater legacy of success, that have a national profile or a distinctive set of core values that begin to work on a student's consciousness and confidence as soon as they step on campus. In other words, even among HBCUs, there are special institutional challenges that different HBCUs face based on size, demographics, and prestige.

And now, as HBCU's struggle to redefine who they are, what their goals and mission are, many have also have also been assailed by a sort of "brain drain" of talented students who, in previous decades have chosen a historically Black institution of higher learning, were being heavily recruited by more resourced, "mainstream" (read: predominantly White) institutions.

These struggles are compounded by the professors who want to see more sharply focused prose, who still want to fail students for ghastly comma splices and other routinely common grammatical errors; a student's writing errors become so egregious that what follows is a sense of hopelessness. Many of the small to midsized HBCUs are still embroiled in the pre-Enig/preprocess era, with a concentration on rhetorical modes and literary analysis, which sets up a kind of nostalgia that is a dangerously rose-colored window, to view the pedagogies of the past and ignores some of the most important and impactful developments in writing pedagogy in the last thirty-five years.

To complicate matters, while that particular tide is slowly turning, there has been an ever-increasing shift in the education profile of HBCU students, especially those entering smaller, less prestigious, often state-funded HBCUs. Across the United States, minority students—many from marginalized segments of the educational society—are not receiving the instruction necessary for achieving proficiency in writing. Minority students may be tracked in vocational or even special education classes. Statewide assessment tests show underperformance in writing. Financial and academic struggles limit minority enrollment in colleges. Many of the students in this demographic who do make it to college, attend small to -midsized second- and third-tier HBCU's.

As HBCUs face new federal policies around government funding, new institutional policies around affirmative action, the persistent reality of the digital divide, and rapidly changing student needs, many find themselves at a strange crossroad: How do HBCUs address incoming students' increasing lack of basic college-level writing skills and still fulfill the founding mission to train and produce future African-American leaders, especially in a climate of rapidly dwindling resources? These issues are rarely extricated from any faculty-driven conversation on campus. The importance of addressing these issues within the confines of the historically Black university was driven home for me in a faculty meeting one day.

When I was a Writing Program Administrator (WPA) at an HBCU, I was confronted with these realities. My institution, Lincoln University, is a midsized HBCU with an enrollment of approximately two thousand students, 98 percent of whom are of African descent. It is the first degree-granting HBCU in the United States and has had a tradition of strong writers. In our aim to reconceptualize and revitalize the institutional

assessment components of our writing program, we set out to create a comprehensive WAC program that would support the development of better writers campus wide. From the very first day of my arrival at Lincoln as a newly minted WPA, my job involved a lot of listening, a lot of spirited debate, a lot of planning, and a lot of patience, all of which have been geared towards a strong foundation for a campus-wide shift towards more focused writing. While discussing possible changes to Lincoln's freshman composition sequence, one of my colleagues noted—frustratingly, I might add—that “it seems the more proficient our students get with computers and technology, the less proficient they get with their writing.” My colleague's comment struck a chord within me; it took the resounding, sometimes troubling relationship African Americans have encountered with new technologies in America, put the face of a freshman undergrad on it, and placed it squarely in our laps as university instructors.

That this comment was made in the context of an emerging conversation about digital portfolios on our campus is significant; it succinctly foregrounds the tension between perceptions of emergent African-American scholars and the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of digital literacy as a means of developing emerging African-American scholars in general, which begs the question: What roles can technology and digital literacy play in developing minority student writers at HBCUs, especially through the medium of the digital portfolio? While there is a contemporary body of scholarship that gives critical attention to the ways that minority student writing is affected by integrated technology usage (Banks; Barber and Tait; Redd and Massey; Velez-Rodriguez), and while the theory and implementation of digital portfolios is an area of scholarship that has been addressed, there has been little research done on the creation, implementation, or

assessment of digital portfolios among minority students or within HBCUs of higher learning.

Quickly, we realized that to achieve that goal, our scope would have to widen to support composition instructors in their teaching of basic writing and freshmen composition; provide training and resources for instructors in all disciplines who teach writing intensive courses; create a “support center for writing” (our Writer’s Studio); train students to tutor; and, in some way, tie all these initiatives together with each department’s learning outcomes, standards, and objectives. To do this, faculty writing instructors decided to implement a university wide writing initiative that utilizes a campus wide system of digital writing portfolios. Through the digital portfolio system, we hoped to unify university writing intensive courses in a way that addresses the specific needs of various departments, while building a renewed interest in writing and technology use on campus. We also planned to conduct workshops that encourage, inform, and engage faculty members’ understanding of how to improve the writing in their discipline through technology and a renewed focus on leadership.

Our hope was to dramatically improve students’ competence in writing in their discipline, develop student/faculty professionalism and leadership, and use writing to encourage critical engagement in a world that is increasingly digital and profoundly global. As the initiative coordinator, I also knew that our faculty and our students wanted a plan for writing that went beyond the classroom and would be tangibly impactful in the lives of students after graduation. As a part of a historically Black university, I thought it was equally important to build our program around ideas of African-American writing and technology integration. My argument has been that critical attention to the historical

and rhetorical relationships between African Americans, technology, and public discourse can provide a strong foundation to move students at HBCUs from consumers of technology to creators, while also increasing their writing proficiency and attitudes towards writing.

I met separately with each individual department chair on campus to discuss the possibility of digital portfolios for their majors. Each department has committed to this new approach to their chosen writing-intensive courses. These courses will provide the writing that will serve as the instructional and evaluative basis for the digital portfolios. Each department appointed a “writing liaison” as a point of contact to help me evaluate student writing, identify particular writing skill sets for the students, and train department “experts” in the ways Lincoln faculty, students, and writing program leaders envisioned working together in technology and writing.

As Lincoln prepared for changes in expectations for assessments (much of the planning and staging for this project took place during preparations for our accreditation review, though no Writing Across the Curriculum initiatives factored into the accreditation review . . . initially), I hoped that the digital portfolio system could act as a Graphic User Interface for the University’s academic goals, objectives, and outcomes. For a year, I worked with each of Lincoln’s academic departments to develop their writing intensive courses by concentrating on assignment construction, projected outcomes, and assessment rubrics for each writing assignment. We worked to improve the culture around writing on campus by creating a faculty development series for writing and a series for student writers. I also conduct biweekly workshops for different departments based on the faculty’s requests and needs, always with a digital portfolio

component to prepare for our pilot project. Because Lincoln lacked the resources to produce a viable institutional model to administrate and evaluate digital portfolios, and we did not have enough IT professionals or web-code-savvy faculty to really push for an open source solution, we researched third-party vendors to create and manage digital portfolios for institutions of higher learning. There are about a dozen third-party vendors in the United States who create, manage, and support digital portfolio systems. Once we selected an e-portfolio vendor, we spent the summer conducting a small set of training sessions on the functions, limitations, and nuances of the portfolio system.

In the fall of 2008, we ran a small pilot program with a cross-section of writing-intensive courses from each of the university's three academic schools (and the graduate school) to collect data on the system. The end of the first semester of our pilot was a difficult one, one that helped me see some of the really thorny issues in implementing a digital portfolio system. Probably the most difficult issue had been figuring out the place that this kind of assessment is going to carve out of the culture of our institution. The narrative associated with our very practical need to make sure we met all the required outcomes for our Middle States accreditation review did not always square with the notion of using the digital portfolio to help students become better writers and better leaders, even when the Writing Program Administrator (me!) saw no real reason why both conditions could not be met. The digital portfolio initiative gave me an occasion to reconsider some assessment issues in light of obstacles we faced in working with digital portfolios en masse for the first time, but it is this dissertation that has given me a way of thinking about technological discourse at HBCUs in order to consider that experience in a way I had not before. WPAs are institution builders. If they are lucky enough, they get a

chance to build something from scratch. Most times, they are trying to build onto existing institutional frameworks, some of which are fundamentally antithetical to ways we think about writing and writing instruction. Other times, WPAs have to build from scraps, the outdated and or leftover resources from the programs and projects that are considered a greater priority, regardless of their effectiveness or overall impact on the institution. Sometimes, these efforts are like putting new wine in old wineskins; new initiatives fail because their very nature threaten to interrupt, fracture, or break the long-held structure of the institution. When any institution builder fails to take into account the existing latticework that makes their institution function, and then not make that institutional reality a cornerstone for the way their program will get off the ground and operate in the future, that WPA is making a grave mistake. Had I paid more attention to the different visions for the pilot program and the competing narratives of institutional assessment and writing assessment at Lincoln and how they would be expressed technologically, we may have experienced more success with our digital portfolio project.

Further Opportunities for Research: Discourse, STEM, and a “Culture of Support”

In contrast, I maintain that the success of STEM education in HBCUs is a direct result of embedding a culture of support for the beloved community within their programmatic framework. This dissertation does not cover the extensive body of research that explores the mechanisms of success that HBCUs have created to encourage their STEM programs, but it has given me a launching point for examining the rhetorical culture of support that has been embedded within STEM programs at HBCUs. In an interview with David Wilson, President of Morgan State University, he claims that it is

incredibly important for HBCUs like Morgan State to “enroll, support, and graduate more students who are prepared to be the innovators of this country.” Wilson argues that as the demographics of the U.S. population becomes increasingly non-White, there could be a significant portion of the new majority who are unprepared “to be our astronauts, scientists, and engineers and to come forward with the inventions that are necessary to keep America strong and competitive” (10).

When asked about the state of STEM advancement in American higher education, and in HBCUs in particular, Wilson observes that in his twenty-five years in higher education, he has seen more talent in the African-American students in his last seven years than in all the previous time combined. That, Wilson states, is a direct result of the fact that they are “supported by a faculty that truly believe in them.” He goes on to make what I feel is one of the most insightful commentaries I have ever read or heard from any college president:

I heard a former HBCU president say it best: When places like Morgan State and other HBCUs accept students in STEM fields, we accept that they are good. We assume that they can be successful. Our role is to support that. Our role is to make sure that light bulb is continually shining bright. On some of the other campuses, the opposite could be true. If students who are people of color show up as STEM majors, the perception, intended or not, might be that they are NOT up to snuff—and they have to prove that they are. Consequently, those students can start out with a level of doubt. Once they run up against their first hurdle, they switch majors to something else because that doubt has been confirmed, and their brilliance is not being affirmed.

At Morgan, if they run up against an obstacle, professors immediately jump in, provide them the support and nurturing that they need, and convince them that they can get over this bump and over that hurdle. What I’m seeing now in terms of the state of STEM across higher education is that too many Black students are stumbling in these fields at institutions that have not perfected a culture of support. As a result, unfortunately, these students turn their backs on the fields. What we have to do at

HBCUs is to say to some of those institutions, “We really have perfected a culture in terms of how you can take students in STEM fields and imbue them with the preparation that they need to do so, in a way that will enable them to not just get their baccalaureate degrees but to go on and compete at the very highest levels in master’s programs and Ph.D. programs in some of the more elite institutions in the country.” That’s what I’m hearing the traditionally white institutions right now are struggling to incorporate on their campuses—a culture that is similar to the culture that exists on HBCU campuses. They could learn a great deal about the cultures that we have established on these campuses over decades that churn out some of the top scientists, engineers, and innovators in this country—and must continue to do so if we are going to make an appreciable dent in producing graduates who are Black in STEM fields going forward. (Dove 11)

Wilson and, by his admission, other HBCU presidents, while discussing STEM, place the root of his college’s success in the “culture of support” they have created around the students entering the study of technology fields. It’s not rooted in competition or Americanized work culture, but in “support.” This harkens back to Lockett’s recapitulation of the beloved community and Gloria Ladson-Billings’s “culture relevant pedagogy.” The key here is that when it comes to building an institutional apparatus for the success of STEM education, HBCUs have succeeded in ways that other institutions have not. As Lockett argued at the dawn of the digital divide, HBCUs have something important to offer to American higher education: Institutionally, they have crafted a culturally relevant pedagogy that encourages innovation through the creation of sites of sanctuary, and that encourages success through a culture of support as opposed to a culture of competition.

Even more radical is the premise that begins Wilson’s insight: “We accept that they are good.” A simple declaration, to be sure, but one in the context of racism that has permeated American education, is alternately ground breaking and earth shattering. In

every historical, physical, rhetorical, political, or technological space that engages the realities of race and education, there are trading echoes of disdain and concern that sometimes whisper and sometimes scream, “You are not good enough.” It exists there in the space between the creation of the Institute of Colored Youth in 1837 and the successes of Howard West today. It exists in the hallways of public schools and charters schools across the country. It exists in the spaces between every news report full of anti-HBCU rhetoric of the media and in the private call for every Black college student to “lead.” It exists in the space between 1983’s *A Nation at Risk* and 1995’s *Falling through the Net*. Resisting and ultimately destroying that echo of inferiority, of deficit, is key to creating an environment for minority STEM students to thrive. Assume intelligence. Affirm brilliance.

Wilson also alludes to the notion that building a STEM program that emphasizes a culture of support in the way that it has been envisioned at HBCUs is replicable. It starts, Wilson explains, with institutional leadership that recruits talent and committed faculty who believe in the vision of the institution and the capacity of its students.

“It’s almost if,” as one of our graduates at Morgan said [at graduation], “we love you to success” . . . The leadership recruits the right type of faculty member who is going to challenge the students, support them, and put in place networks and support systems to ensure their success. That’s the kind of thing that leads to “loving students to success” and supporting students to success. (12)

The research attests to this. Marybeth Gasman and Thai-Huy Nguyen identify communal celebration, peer mentoring, undergraduate research, and same-sex/-race role models as integral parts of the success HBCUs have had in STEM education. They maintain that it is these features which create a climate of support and success for students in the STEM

fields to succeed and determined four major themes that HBCUs provide their students to be successful in STEM fields: 1) celebrating success in STEM, 2) peers mentoring peers, 3) undergraduate research, and 4) same-gender and -race faculty role models. In addition, HBCUs have created an environment where they exhibit their belief in the ability of Black students to succeed. DeShawn Preston finds that HBCUs serve as a form of “community cultural wealth” for many African-American students who find it difficult to navigate through the educational pipeline. Within this framework, there are various forms of capital nurtured. This is expressed in faculty and peer-to-peer engagement, exposure to research, carefully aligned research agendas within the doctoral program, a supportive graduate school environment, and financial assistance to pursue a doctorate. Ivory Toldson’s research has shown that African-American students at HBCUs were significantly more likely to have positive relationships with faculty members, and that faculty at HBCUs tend to be more approachable and sensitive to their cultural background. This fostered a greater sense of belonging on their campuses (2013). Clearly, HBCUs have developed powerful cultures of support for students; a new direction in my research would be to examine how individually successful programs work to build local narratives, counternarratives, and discourse practices that build on and sustain that success.

EPILOGUE

This study is not really about social media or STEM funding or distance learning. It's really about how important it is to recognize that historical thrust towards resistance that Betsy DeVos overlooked in her statement and the legacy of discourse about innovation, technology, progress, and uplift that can be found in the life and legacy of African-American educational institutions like HBCUs. It has been a never-ending story of struggles and triumphs, but it is the story of all who have been a part of the HBCU tradition.

After the photo op seen around the country, the administration of Bethune-Cookman soon took steps to minimize the fallout, attempting to avoid public scrutiny from its supporters for its decision to invite DeVos in the first place, while trying to proactively assuage conservative political forces in its native Florida, as well as across the nation, that Bethune-Cookman was not a hotbed for protesters. DeVos was well known in education and public policy circles for her public advocacy for education policies that were considered controversial, if not outright harmful, to minority communities before she was selected as Secretary of Education. But for some in the Bethune-Cookman administration, the matter was further complicated by the fact that DeVos is part of the HBCU community. She is a member of the Board of Trustees for Howard University. Just as DeVos faced criticism from various constituencies and media outlets for leveraging the HBCU community for the administration's political gain, especially in a climate of uncertainty created by confusing and potentially damaging remarks, University President Jackson faced criticism for the appearance of doing the

same, except that judgement came primarily from the community he was leading. Many in the Bethune-Cookman family saw the tenth-hour invitation as a move by Jackson to curry favor from the current administration after the meeting-turned-photo-op incident in February. The spotlight was uncomfortable for Bethune-Cookman, but they were not alone. Many of the university presidents had to wrestle with their core beliefs and values been allowed them to leave their institutions and the harsh stark realities of fiscal responsibility and playing the political game. By accepting the rhetorical gambit offered by The White House and its administration, it is probable that some of the presidents did not fully calculate the sacrifices that they themselves would make or be in a position to make.

But it also brought about a display of both collective resistance and love that had not been seen or shared nationally among HBCU constituent stakeholders and family in a long time. In the midst of the Bethune-Cookman's lukewarm campaign for damage control, a notable contingent of the HBCU community utilized social media in a unique way to support the students and 2017 graduates of Bethune-Cookman University. African-American faculty at HBCUs and other institutions, often maligned, marginalized and disempowered, utilized shared leadership (and social media) to generate a display of social action and support of HBCUs students that frankly had never been seen or done before. Though mediated through the digital technologies of the Information Age, it was an old technology that won the day: the open letter. Organized by North Carolina Central University's Yaba Blay and written by Loyola University-Maryland's Camika Royal and The Ohio State University's Treva B. Lindsey, the epistle delivered familial encouragement, prophetic truth, and communal healing:

Dear Graduates of Bethune-Cookman:

First, congratulations! We are so proud of what you have accomplished. You have studied, prepared, planned, learned, and have earned what our parents, grandparents, and ancestors have had to fight, scrape, and die for in this nation. We are proud of you for that!

Beyond becoming graduates, we are floating this morning thinking about how you stood up to your university and protested the woefully under-qualified Secretary of Education who attempted to address you at your graduation yesterday. Watching you stand and turn your backs to her makes us elated. Overjoyed. Humbled. It was a day and a moment that should have been about celebrating you and what you achieved.

The world watched you protest the speaker you never should have had. We cheered as we saw so many of you refuse to acquiesce in the face of threats and calls for complicity. Your actions fit within a long tradition of Black people fighting back against those who attack our institutions and our very lives with their anti-Black policies and anglo-normative practices. Betsy DeVos' commitment to dismantling public education and her egregious framing of historically Black colleges and universities as "pioneers" in school choice are just two examples of why she should never have been invited to speak at an event celebrating Black excellence.

We shared your outrage when it was announced that DeVos would serve as your commencement speaker and receive an honorary degree. As your administration hid behind the rhetoric of "learning from people with divergent perspectives," current students objected. Alumni petitioned. We watched from a distance wondering how but knowing why this moment was taken from honoring you.

But then, you turned it around, figuratively and literally. We beamed with joy as we watched videos and read tweets of how you took your graduation back to honor yourselves. To honor your founder. To honor our ancestors. To honor us all.

You represent the best of Mother Mary McLeod Bethune who took the little she had and built an institution that remains committed to bringing out the best in us. You are the best of us. We, the undersigned, are Black professors and college administrators—some of us at HBCUs, some of us at PWIs, some of us HBCU alums—and we thank you. We salute you. And we love you. ("cassiuslife.com")

The letter was signed by over two hundred African-American faculty and faculty from HBCUs. The letter serves as a reminder that HBCUs, its students, and its leaders have always stood in the gaps between excellence and injustice, and the building of HBCUs are an active response to social unrest, open hostility, and violent oppression, not just opportunistic development during the periods when America as a nation takes small steps away from racial dehumanization. That would be like saying that Jackson State was an innovator in urban campus planning by promoting the contemporary walkable campus because it built a raised student plaza in the middle of its main thoroughfare. HBCUs and its stakeholders have always had to chart new paths of resistance against American racism in general, and racist technological discourse in particular. An important tool in that resistance has been the consistent striving of The Beloved Community to encourage power, love, and innovation through a culture of support. And it is in that spirit that the framers of the Bethune-Cookman letter to its students can say that they (and we) are proud of them. That we honor them. We have seen that they protect that which they valued and others had forsaken. We have seen them stand in the gap and not falter. That we recognize their place in the tradition. That they are, and have always been, our future, our link, our children. And we welcome them home.

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