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# Education and Liberation:

## A Look at the Early Development and Directions of the Virginia Public School System (1879-1899)

By JB Terzian

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### **Abstract**

From its founding in 1870 and early development, Virginia's public school system and its leadership provide a roadmap for many of the factors that have shaped America's social landscape and racial politics. The onset of a rapidly industrializing Southern economy was instrumental in forming the direction for black education following Reconstruction and embodies the ideological debate regarding the purpose of education as it relates to racial uplift. The emergence of leaders like Booker T. Washington had an enormous impact on reshaping attitudes toward blacks and their potential as citizens. Ultimately, the ideological hegemony which victimized blacks served as a mechanism for reestablishing white dominion over blacks as freedmen.

This thesis examines a twenty year span between 1879 and 1899 during the early stages of Virginia's public school system. In the first chapter, I look primarily at school reports from 1879 to highlight some of the factors of the schools' development that were detrimental to blacks such as racist ideology, marginalization from school administration, and trends of northern assimilation. In the second chapter, I show how much of the racist ideology has manifested itself through a form of industrial and vocational education that thwarted many of the ideals of liberation and freedom that education was initially intended to foster. Additionally, I use evidence from Booker T. Washington's speeches like his "Atlanta Compromise" and contrast them with criticisms from W.E.B. DuBois' *Souls of Black Folk* in order to demonstrate the process by which Washington's views conformed nicely to white ideological hegemony.

## **In the Literature: School Formation Following Reconstruction and Implications Today**

When looking at American society, we see that few institutions are more central to our lives and values than education. Education promotes freedom both by empowering citizens and by training students to live productive and meaningful lives. For many groups of immigrants that arrive in the United States, education is perceived as the vehicle through which steady and lucrative jobs can be obtained and socioeconomic status can be elevated. This notion that education is the primary vehicle to bring about social uplift is embedded in society but remains relatively unquestioned. Looking at the processes through which the common education system formed, particularly in the South following Reconstruction, would suggest otherwise. As historians such as Heather Andrea Williams and Christophe Span have shown, the South had little to speak of in the way of a public common school system prior to Reconstruction. In Virginia and states across the South, it was only through the efforts of organizations such as the Freedmen's Bureau and American Missionary Association that a schools system was constructed and was available to students other than those privileged enough to attend a private school. The struggle for the freed people to form schools in states like Virginia after Reconstruction and beyond would embody the class struggle in America as it affected the nation and continues today. It paints a clear picture of education, not only as it relates to the experience of African Americans, but of Americans in general.

The capitalist ideology of the United States has been one of few, if not the only force that has remained a driving factor behind the changes throughout its history. In seeking to liberate his race from economic depression and social marginalization, black leaders like Booker T. Washington identified the rise of industrial education at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the

solution to racial and economic uplift to elevate the freedmen from abject poverty. The solution he poses in the form of industrial education for training blacks to perform manual labor in factories or farms has often been lamented. Historians like Donald Spivey as assert that industrial education was simply a new form of slavery, adapted to fit the changing economic climate ushered in by the industrializing North. Nevertheless, Washington's rhetoric is very much in line with the values and ideologies of the United States, and its ultimate failure to reach those resolute goals is significant of some underlying problems the black leaders and American politicians fail to realize. Bringing some economic principles to light, we consider the paradox presented by Irish-French economist Richard Cantillon:

*If the increase of actual money comes from mines of gold or silver... the owner of these mines, the adventurers, the smelters, refiners, and all the other workers will increase their expenditures in proportion to their gains. ... All this increase of expenditures in meat, wine, wool, etc. diminishes of necessity the share of the other inhabitants of the state who do not participate at first in the wealth of the mines in question. The altercations of the market, or the demand for meat, wine, wool, etc. being more intense than usual, will not fail to raise their prices. ... Those then who will suffer from this dearness... will be first of all the landowners, during the term of their leases, then their domestic servants and all the workmen or fixed wage-earners ... All these must diminish their expenditure in proportion to the new consumption.<sup>1</sup>*

In considering this paradigm we realize a few things. For one, those who are the furthest away from the gold mines, the fixed-wage earners, are forced to pay higher prices. Second, it is only because the spending of those who are closest to gold mines has increased, that those farthest away are forced to suffer. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the land comprising the "New World" and the fertility of plush southern fields is nearly synonymous with the discovery of gold mines. Those closest to the gold mines, specifically the elite planter class in the southern colonies were the ones to reap the benefits and drive up spending. In turn, this spending would provide them

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<sup>1</sup> Grice, Richard. "Would the Real Peter and Paul Please Stand Up". *Edelweiss Journal*. (11 March 2013). 12. Print

with incredible freedom and enormous power. However, the Native Americans along with the African slaves who were ripped from their home across the Atlantic represent those furthest away from the gold mine plantations. These African slaves were hired for the purpose of serving as the underclass, and without them, the southern class structure could not have been formed. Moreover we are faced to acknowledge that for much of US history, life in America is a zero-sum game.

Today, in a globalized marketplace, the United States finds itself particularly trapped in its divided social structure and lack of consensus regarding the solution to the country's economic ills. Bringing to light a thesis posited by management professor at the University of Toronto, Richard Florida, we consider the following: economic growth in America in the present day and age is centered upon the growth and prosperity of its cities but specifically dependent on the actions of those he refers to as the "Creative Class." The construction of a social group referred to as the Creative Class represents a new development in America, suggesting that a resolute path to future prosperity is no longer a certainty but instead rests in the hands and minds of those individuals who possess the talents, creativity, and work ethic to bring about new ideas, innovations, and solutions that will result in a reinvigorations in the American economy which has faced tremendous growing pains in the shift from a manufacturing to service economy.

The inextricable connection between notions of "Creative Class" and their interactions with institutions of higher education is one that could potentially highlight some interesting flaws in the distributions of race and class in the US. Those cities which Florida reports have the highest creativity indexes are the same cities that are within a short distance of some of the nation's most advanced higher learning institutions. Florida defines the creativity index: "the Creative Class share of the workforce; innovation, measured as patents per capita; high tech

industry, using the Milken Institute's widely accepted Tech Pole Index...; and diversity, measured by the Gay Index, a reasonable proxy for an area's openness.<sup>2</sup> With #1 Boulder, CO-University of Colorado at Boulder; #2 San Francisco- Berkeley University; #3 Boston, MA- Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston University, Boston College, Northeastern University; #4 Ann Arbor, MI- University of Michigan. From this Creative Class filter we then are able to take on an interesting interpretation of the demographics in these cities. In these cities, according to the 2010 census, the black populations of these cities expressed as a percentage are, 0.9%, 6.1%, 24.4%, and 7.7% respectively. The fact that three of these four major Creative Class cities have black populations under 10% is a very interesting trend that sheds light on the meaning of education as it pertains to racial and socioeconomic equality. In other words, those areas like to make the most forward economic and social progress, are the same areas from which blacks are furthest away.

The tenet that education serves as a direct vehicle for social elevation is a particularly powerful value of American society but Florida's work disagrees and therefore signifies some of the more powerful disparities in American society today. Although education is clearly a crucial part of the Creative Class, it is in no way a full picture. Consider the following table displaying the median household income categorized by ethnicity:

Ethnic Category	Median Household Income
Asian Alone	\$64,308
White Alone	\$54,620
Hispanic or Latino	\$37,759
Black	\$32,068

<sup>2</sup> Florida, Richard. *Rise of the Creative Class*. New York, NY: Basic Books. 244-245. 2012. Print.

<sup>3 3</sup> US Census Bureau (2010) Retrieved March 14, 2013, from <http://quickfacts.census.gov>

Now consider a racial breakdown of Richard Florida's Creative Class categorized by race:

Ethnic Category	% working in Creative Class	% working in Service Class	% working in Working Class
Asian Alone	47%	37%	16%
White Alone	34%	40%	25%
Hispanic or Latino	18%	40%	40%
Black	24%	48.2%	28%

From this perspective we see that the proportion of the race working in the Creative Class is a determinant of median income except for the discrepancy between Blacks and Hispanics. And as Florida states, the Creative Class is not directly related to education. Further, the education rates do not translate into socioeconomic success. The fact that Blacks represent 14% of college students in 2011, and 13% of the US population highlight that despite their representation in higher education, this does not translate into a boost in income.<sup>5</sup> Here we see that education does not mean induction into the Creative Class and therefore not a boost in income. Moreover, we see that in those cities with the highest Creativity Indexes like Boulder, San Francisco, Boston, and Ann Arbor, we see that blacks are the furthest away from these creative developments, particularly in technology and healthcare, and as a result have restricted spending power and questionable means of ascending the socioeconomic ladder.

Thus, we see that education is not the solution to America's income inequality but in many ways a distraction from the problem. However, the founding of many of the early southern public school systems from Reconstruction well through the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century shows that education was viewed as the medium through which to elevate the freedmen. However, this process by which education came about and developed in states like Virginia highlight many of

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<sup>4</sup> Florida, Richard. *Rise of the Creative Class*. New York, NY: Basic Books. Appendix B. 2012. Print.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). *The Condition of Education 2012* (NCES 2012-045)



the racist tenets on which this system was established, and through it, racial inequality has been perpetuated.

Before examining education with respect to African Americans, we must take a look at some of the deeper relevance to education. We might question whether the purpose of education is to train or to teach. At the time of the American Revolution, nine of the country's educational institutions were centered on religion or liberal arts.<sup>6</sup> Principally, education in America originated out of a design to foster the ideas and creativity of students in their mission to become ethically sound, educated citizens. It was only much farther along in the nation's founding that institutions of higher learning were centered on means such as vocation and technical training. Such training, by focusing on specific components of a trade or skill, detracts attention from those teaching, which instills within students, moral character and upstanding citizenship. As one education historian Harvey Kantor asks, "Are we training boys to become presidents?" or "Are we training boys to get jobs?"

Reviewing the educational history of African Americans, we place this formation of a school system for the freed people against the backdrop of Reconstruction spanning from approximately roughly the early 1860s to the late 1870s. Eric Foner shows that during this period, the United States faced radical change not only with respect to racial dynamics, but also labor ideology and state-federal relations. Under the climate of Southern defeat, the Northerners who arrived on the scene to help the freed men were referred to as "carpetbaggers," and were perceived as a threat to impose New England values and beliefs on the minds of the impressionable freed people. Additionally, with this involvement of Northern whites, blacks

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<sup>6</sup> Lovett, Bobby. *America's historically Black colleges & universities: a narrative history from the nineteenth century into the twenty-first century*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press. 2011. Print

were transformed from slave laborers to “free laborers” who were in turn given more political power and became sought after to attract votes for Northern Republicans. Further, confronting revisionist historians like William Dunning and John Burgess, Foner stated that blacks were no longer acted upon in a social or political context but were instead acting participants in an ongoing narrative. And despite not being given land, black families saw to their own emancipation by consolidating their families and livelihood as laborers. The quest for education then, involves a complex, ongoing interaction between several forces, all of which are in turn, ineffective at rendering real racial equality amidst a harsh Southern, white supremacist climate.

Following Reconstruction, the course of black education was marked by two distinct paths. Though it later becomes clear which path black education took following Reconstruction, it is crucial to understand the development that led to this outcome. In his book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. DuBois advocates for the educated citizenship model, similar to the one set forth by the American Missionary Association, though differing drastically in its intention. He clearly maps this debate by juxtaposing his own views with those black leaders such as Booker T. Washington, who assert that black education must be centered on vocation and job training. Unlike Washington, DuBois argued in favor of educating blacks to become citizens and to be able to think independently. This form of self-empowered citizenship gives new meaning to the American values of freedom, rights, and justice in the way that education gives students independence through the way in which they choose their own paths. Exploring such values in a setting such as a classroom, DuBois pointed out, added more meaning to the lives of African Americans. Much in line with DuBois’ ethos, one Russian proverb states, “the unexamined life is one not worth living.” Calling on a more abstract perspective shows us that DuBois not only advocated for political, social, and economic equality through education, he also strove for a

form of equality often omitted from sociopolitical discussions: intellectual independence. In other words, a mind not fettered by the expectations of others is one that is free to form its own views and make its own assertions that are not only in line with, but improve our democracy.

However, black education in the South during reconstruction followed an entirely different trajectory. As historians such as James D. Anderson and Ronald Butchart show, black education in the South was very much a device to facilitate Northern objectives. The army of Northern whites sent in to assist the school building of the freed people consisted of Northern missionary and freedmen aid associations, and later the Freedmen's Bureau, and though philanthropic in nature, they were gravely biased in their perception of blacks and also their goals set for them. Butchart coins this imposition of white expectations on the freed people as "cultural imperialism." Much in the way that the European settlers seized land from Native American Indians and committed atrocities against them, white Northerners who joined hands in the struggle to help Southern blacks acquire an education commandeered their opportunity to form their own institution that would facilitate their own goals.

Teachers were consistently referred to as the soldiers of the movement to educate blacks. Congruent with the beliefs of nearly all educational historians on the movement for black schools, these teachers were both admired and lamented for their idealism and egalitarian aims. The selection of these teachers was conducted by the American Missionary Association, and the scrutiny of the process greatly reflects the lofty aims of the organization. Teachers were often selected for possessing traits such as higher moral character, purity, and self-control. Such values display a tremendous emphasis placed on teachers to convey traditional Christian values. In addition to possessing these qualities, the AMA also tended to select single females between the ages of 25 and 40, because they were believed to embody this missionary spirit and were

colloquially referred to as “Yankee Schoolmarms.” Looking at the action of teachers of the freed people, historians like Robert Morris point to the activism of free blacks in becoming teachers of the freed people as highly indicative of the evolving state of race relations. Other historians such as Butchart add that in teaching the freed people, Southern blacks specifically, reinvented themselves as autonomous servants, who earned their living outside of the white power structure. Thus, by defying the supremacist beliefs used to oppress the slaves and freedmen alike, they displayed their power and efficacy as citizens. Similarly, those white teachers of the freed people too challenged the previous rhetoric of southern race relations which prohibited teaching black literacy. In doing so, they were catalysts for black emancipation, an aim that was deeply frowned upon by white southerners.

Aside from Protestant and Evangelical missionary teachers deployed by the American Missionary Association and Freedman’s Aid Society, historians like Heather Andrea Williams and Linda Selleck, would agree that the Quaker women in particular made large contributions to the movement but were met similarly with violent opposition from southern whites. Moreover, they would agree that many of the northern white teachers also displayed racist belief patterns against their students. Yet, Quaker women instead asserted far more tolerance for the freed people, and in turn were less imposing and therefore more conducive for developing an individual free spirit within the southern black community. Such differences between religious denominations and their participation in the movement highlights the extent to which religious ideologies influenced black education specifically regarding behavior, personal conduct, and value systems.

One might view the role of northern teachers’ aim to educate the freed people as mutually oppressive in the context of white male hegemony. As American history has clearly

demonstrated throughout, the wealthy white male continues to fully dominate the social, political, and economic space. As demonstrated by the education initiatives during Reconstruction, recruiting women to perform the duty of educating the freed people is pervasively ironic. Women, and blacks alike at the time, enjoyed similarly oppressive statuses of second class citizenship. Thus, one might argue that because neither group had much ground to stand on, the cards were dealt to see that both parties inevitably failed to meet their aims.

Despite these lofty aims of the army of missionary teachers, historians like Morris as well as James D. Anderson are in agreement that education alone was insufficient for overcoming white oppression. Many teachers found it not only uncomfortable, but impossible to tolerate the adversity displayed by southern whites. And other historians like Jacqueline Jones acknowledge that the longer northern teachers remained in the South, the deeper they projected their expectations for success. Nearing the end of their campaign, many northern teachers expected a higher standard of living through education alone. Yet, as Jones and others consistently show through their narratives, the force of white oppression greatly hindered the aims of education for the freed people, minimizing successful outcomes. Combined with the fact that such educational goals were set by northern whites, seeing to the replication of northern Christian values in their southern black students, students were driven in a direction that would inevitably lead them to one of two aims: northern religiosity or subordination to southern whites. Encompassing this paradox, historians like Butchart refer to this northern education initiative as a form of “cultural imperialism.” In practice, this imperialist conquest of white northerners used teachers merely as soldiers. The agendas behind this conquest can be categorized into religious or political outcomes shaped to fit the intentions of powerful whites.

Fear of the freed people appeared largely for both southern whites as well as northern religious organizations. Butchart and Heather Andrea Williams, along with others, show that fear of black resistance loomed large in the American public opinion. We see that many groups like the Evangelicals formed beliefs following emancipation that blacks possessed an ignorance that would undoubtedly lead down a path of vice and behavior, which would put the lives of white Americans in danger. DuBois frequently referenced instances of violent black resistance such as the Haitian revolt led by Toussaint Louverture, the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina, and Nat Turner's revolt in Virginia. Such images leave long-lasting impressions of blacks being threatening and demonic. Thus, through education, many politicians argued in favor of using education to create a more "Godly" society, which emphasized those Protestant values such as self-discipline, patience, and hard work. Simultaneously, as Ward McAfee demonstrates, the influx of European immigrants, particularly Irish Catholics, were seen as a major threat to the homogeneity of the American society of the 1860s. The rising proportion of criminal activity and deviance in the North evoked a fear that put education as a whole on the forefront of the political agenda. As Butchart and a plethora of other historians have iterated, education was deemed the vehicle that would standardize this increasingly heterogeneous society, and instilled it with the values consistent with Protestantism and capitalism.

As many white Northern organizations entered the South to contribute to the school building effort, they were met with next to no motivation on behalf of those Southern whites. Since its conception, the South was completely dominated by the planter class, and their use of slave labor drove little need for an educational workforce. Instead, planters relied on ideological and physical domination to shape a society that would succumb to its demands. Not only did planters and Southern elite rely on physical brutality to drive their desired outcomes, they also

used Christianity as a method for social control that led blacks succumb to the white value system and behave accordingly. Further, this domination by planter class caused middle and lower class whites to become economically dependent. In this way, it becomes clear that lower or middle class whites were never able to form a school system of their own because they feared challenging the planter class. Combined with the leadership efforts of northern religious education initiatives, the historical use of religion to evoke subordination to whites, created a conflict for the ideology of black education. Though varying in sect, these conflicting uses of religion both to subordinate slaves and emancipate freed people through education highlight one of the great ironies that characterized the movement to offer education for the freed people. Contextualized, this irony fits in line with many of the great ironies that characterize the ongoing struggle between African Americans and their white oppressors.

Perhaps the more dominant force shaping black education following the Civil War and reconstruction was the backdrop of the industrial revolution and the enormous growth of northern capitalism. Though closely associated with the Protestant values of prosperity, the initiative to form schools for the freedmen was driven heavily by the northern industrial businessmen. Though philanthropic in intention, the efforts of those industrial tycoons were fueled enormously by self-serving intentions and were enabled by the great political and economic power they held. Following the war, the South was highly vulnerable, and to northern capitalists, a major opportunity. Just as they are now, the major Wall Street Brokers were always itching to break into new industries and seize untapped investments. The booming railroad, mining, and manufacturing industries were completely revitalized the North, but had relatively little impact on the South. When combined with the destruction of the South's most valued

institution of slavery, the Southern economy and workforce sat in disarray as northerners gravitated to the perceived call to restructure.

Tactfully, education was a sound approach taken by the northern industrialists to rearrange the economic landscape in the south. The expanding acceptance of “free labor” ideology on its face served to benefit both the freed people and the northern capitalists. The growing demand for laborers provided a new opportunity for blacks to begin progressing financially. And through harvesting able workers by teaching rudiments of reading and writing as well as providing vocational lessons, the northern aides were able to shape a population conducive to its own agenda.

This goal of shaping a morally standardized and vocationally trained population of southern blacks is a means of subordination in itself. James Anderson contends this use of education to build a trained workforce, also known as the Hampton model, and was used by industrialists to dominate blacks. To become an educated citizen in the 1860s was not simply to enter the oppressive Southern economy but to challenge it. The notion of accommodation creates an excellent parallel between the domination strategies used by both the northern industrialists and the planter class. Where the planter class used physical domination and ideological hegemony by instilling inferiority and religious control over their slaves, the northern industrialists too sought to exert control over the black population by insisting that they would be nothing more than factory or railroad workers.

With an interesting perspective of black history, DuBois illustrates that the rise of northern industrialism was not the first instance where the rise of technology served to subordinate blacks. Rather, it was half a century earlier, with the invention of Eli Whitney’s



cotton gin that sealed the fate of blacks in slavery. Where many global historians often focus on the growth of technology as a driving force behind societies as a whole, DuBois paints a contradictory picture. Challenging the assumption that population and cultural growth resulting from technological development is inherently positive, DuBois illuminates the often unturned stone reflecting the externalities of such impactful technology, demonstrating its use in fostering oppression by reinforcing white economic hegemony.

The Hampton model in turn became synonymous with the model of Booker T. Washington. In Washington's view, acquiring capital through vocational training and manual labor work was the first step in this bootstraps approach to elevate status on the socioeconomic ladder. However, as criticized by DuBois, Washington, through this approach sacrificed black political, social, and economic rights. Through accommodating an economic system rather than trying to change it, blacks would in effect be minimized only to the role as manual laborer and would play a small role, if any, in the political sphere. As Washington saw it, this strategy was to compromise between the North and the South, and African Americans at the time had little if any ground to stand on. Seeking to ameliorate their status as citizens before northern aid would relinquish its efforts, as well as a handful of other reasons, led southern blacks to side with Washington. Such a decision represents a self-inflicted form of racism or was viewed as a pragmatic approach to adjust to life's changes following emancipation.

Highlighting a crucial topic of discussion within the literature, this notion of rights through education remains identified but is less often given weight to one side over another. Historians like Bobby Lovett add that as blacks exert their independence through educational institutions of higher learning, documents such as the Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights, and United States Constitution are given new and reinvigorated meaning. America's

founding on the tenets of liberty and pursuit of happiness can shape a very conflicting ideology for those African Americans who were literate. Such values require not simply, an ability to read and write but also an ability to analyze and think critically about how such tenets affected blacks as African Americans. Moreover, such abilities to think critically may be viewed as suspect and a potential threat by those dominant whites who project their own system on the newly freed people. Thus, in effect, we see one potential benefit and also the critical flaw in the development of an education that is constructed to foster the goals of a particular group.

What many historians such as Butchart, Anderson, and Ward omit from the narrative is the specific role played by African Americans. These Dunning school historians refuse to see the significance of black action and instead painted them as acted upon rather than actors in their own future as Americans. This tendency not only reflects the paternalism politically, but also serves to commit the same crime when assessing the history with this same paternalistic scope. Contextualized against this greater study of oppression, more progressive historians chose simply not to report the history and determine the significance according to the winner, but also to dedicate attention to the perspective and actions with respect to the oppressed groups.

Historians like Christopher Span, and Heather Andrea Williams, argue that blacks did in fact take their own direction. There is no disagreement among historians, that blacks held education in a high regard and a requisite in their quest for freedom. Williams asserts that contrary to the arguments put forth by previous historians, blacks in many ways took responsibility for their education, but more importantly their emancipation in general. This assertion rests not on any new historical evidence but simply a new interpretation or even uncovering pieces left untapped. By joining the Union army many black men took the first step in determining their own fate in the fight for equal citizenship. Not only were those Union

soldiers taught to read and write while on duty but, seeing as the Union army contributed greatly to the construction of school buildings, Williams shares, “it made perfect sense that someone who had climbed into a hole in the woods to attend school, would, in freedom, sacrifice time and money to build a schoolhouse.” Capturing this inner burning desire to acquire literacy and develop as emancipated citizens speaks not only to the drive of African Americans in the struggle for equality, but also to the rich American value system it conveys. Those who taught slaves to read or write faced grave danger in Southern law, but the persistence to acquire an education in slavery speaks to the strength of their determination.

Following emancipation, those slaves or free blacks who could read or write have been underplayed in the story painted by those Dunning school historians and early revisionists who fail to address not only the significance of their internal schooling efforts, but the role of their effort altogether. According to historians like Jacqueline Jones, going to schools became a political act in and of itself for Georgia blacks. In practice, blacks established their own schools, hired their own teachers, but by exhibiting such independence they resisted white authority and undermined the perceived lack of capability assigned to them. In conjunction with this exertion of independence, Williams notes that many of the southern black schools which were commonly referred to as “American Missionary Association” schools could have easily been called freed people’s schools. Interestingly, this picture creates a stark discrepancy in the role played by northern whites in the founding of education for the freed people.

On this same token, Christopher Span presents a similar narrative of Mississippi blacks exerting their efficacy in the founding of their school system. Two tenets of his argument contribute largely to the debate regarding the education of blacks following the Civil War. Juxtaposed to Dunning schools, historians and even early revisionists like Butchart, Morris, and

Anderson, Span's narrative focuses the spotlight on blacks as actors, and shows how their actions represent their emancipation. Though assisted a great deal by white northerners such as the Northern missionary, freedmen aid associations, and the Freedmen's Bureau, Span limits their actions in the narrative as simply holding the door for the freed people. In other words, the funding to build schools as well as the instruction offered by northern teachers was central to the struggle to form black schools, but also it was a jump off point. Further, he paints this picture of black efficacy against the backdrop of the education movement as a whole. Specifically, he attributes the incorporation of many Mississippi schools established for freed people, directly to those freed people in establishing Mississippi's state-funded public school system. Such an accomplishment is often omitted from the movement's narrative and such new light reflects the ongoing efforts exhibited by blacks in their long struggle for equality spanning over four centuries.

Though viewed as a highly important time in American history, Reconstruction is often lamented as a failure of American politics. Being often referred to as the first Civil Rights Movement, Reconstruction did little to elevate the blacks from their condemnation as second class citizens. With respect to the Reconstruction's failure to create black schools, many historians including Ronald Butchart argue that the failure was contingent on the acquisition of land. Through his narrative, he shows that blacks were on the verge of their own emancipation, but were obstructed by the aid of northerners who detracted black emancipation by centralizing too heavily on the formation of schools. Acquisition of land, as he argues, formed the contingency which blacks failed to meet, thus resulting in the inferiority of its school system. Land ownership in the South was a crucial factor in determining one's place in society, and thus empowering land-owning plantation elite. Reconstruction efforts to elevate black citizenship

often cited the initiative developed by Union General William Tecumseh Sherman to offer the freed people “forty acres and a mule.” Though short lived, this effort spoke a great deal to the requisites for proceeding with black emancipation in the South. Thus, as Williams agrees, rather than being given land or protection from white violence at the poles, blacks were instead given a school.

In a similar fashion, James Anderson too discusses in his narrative his reasoning behind the ultimate direction of black education. His first assertion is contingent upon the fact that black education steered the industrial course because the northern industrial philanthropists waged a stronger campaign for the Hampton model. Despite efforts of black colleges to cultivate intellectuals, northern industrialists used their political and economic influence to create a more popular following, and in turn paved the way for a more technical, vocational black education. However, his argument does reflect one similar to that of Span and William in conveying the ongoing, four century long struggle for black equality, that to some extent culminated in the turbulent Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. This struggle, by no means finished, had enormous implications not only for the course of the black experience via economic subordination, but also the future struggle for racial equality.

In light of an uncertain economic future in the age of globalization, American students of all races are struggling to choose disciplines in education that will yield a job. Industries such as healthcare, technology, and business are those main fields to which students and job hunters flock to, anticipating an opportunity. With many of these fields, education is almost a prerequisite but the course of education is sometimes narrowly tailored to train students how to perform a job. Through this narrow course of study students can be steered away from some of the more beneficial components of a broad, engaging a course of study. Students who are not

only well trained for a job, but engaged in a more general course of study such as the liberal arts or other similar educational philosophies which are capable of not only accommodating the economic structure at present, but offer students the insight and potential to challenge it. In the context of an American, but increasingly globalized society, the demand for labor forms a duality: 1) a need for those who drive change through technological development or participation in a specialized field and 2) a demand for those who are capable of assessing the social needs of the greater society in order to protect the common good, rather than that of the power-holding elite. This is not to say that people fit one of these two needs, but that education does not prepare students for American life unless it trains them to pursue at least one of these functions.

Looking at America's history through the Cantillon framework, the founding of the agrarian American South, the Industrial Revolution, and the Tech boom of the 2000s are only some of the proverbial gold rushes which have shaped the social and economic landscape of the United States. More importantly, these will by no means be the last. However, as one notes the tendency for the privileged white male to stand closest to these developments, one must account for the consequent oppression incurred by other racial and gender groups who inherently suffer in the process. Further, as we examine the intersections between race, education, social uplift and economic progress, we see some connections that are potentially very useful in predicting some of the effects future economic development have on the social structure.

The impact that economic development can have on the social structure does not always occur at the large scale political level but often through the small day to day interactions that characterize life in America. The purpose of this investigation is not to look at either of these levels but to look at the level in the middle: the level of state and local governments to bring about changes in their community, particularly the school system. It is through these actors that

changes occurred year in and year out in school systems like Virginia which stands as an excellent model by which school systems were formed and developed. Development of the Virginia public school system in the 20 years spanning from 1879, where the system crawled out of its early development phase, through about 1899, where the changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution were rapidly materializing is a unique point in time. A closer look at the developments of the school system in Virginia in this 20 year span is telling of how the school system was deliberately structure to keep blacks working on farms and factories rather than owning and operating them. In essence, this twenty year period in Virginia is a microcosm for the set of mechanisms by which blacks have been and will continue to be kept on the periphery those proverbial gold mines and operate within a marginalized realm of society. The ideology behind the school system's development and the interaction between Virginia politicians and black leaders like Booker T. Washington is a further representation of how state level politicians and administrators are the key actors in perpetuating racial inequality.

## **Chapter 1: Early Developmental Phase of Virginia Public School System**

Reconstruction is lamented as one of the greatest failures in American history. Many of the programs to elevate the newly freed slaves into liberated citizenship simply failed and left racial progress by the wayside. The formation of school systems was perceived by northern philanthropists and religious organizations as a particularly powerful institution to elevate the freedmen. However, following the close of Reconstruction many of the initiatives had been redirected and headed by the same political forces that justified black enslavement and white domination.

Prior to Reconstruction, Virginia, like most of the South had very little to offer in what would be thought of today as a system of public education and religious institutions filling the role of educating the youth. For parents with the financial means, their children were taught by a private tutor but for most, Sunday schools offered the rudimentary skills necessary to read the bible. The first physical school in Virginia was founded in the late eighteenth century for the sole purpose of educating blacks and Native Americans. In this way, education for slaves, Native Americans, servants, free blacks, and poor whites was customary until the turn of the century and was given legal sanction under the provision that church wardens binding out a “bastard or pauper child black or white,” require that they be taught to “read, write, and calculate as well as to follow some profitable form of labor.”<sup>7</sup> This process of elevating disadvantaged children through teaching and religious guidance provides a distinct trajectory for the development of

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<sup>7</sup> Carter, Goodwin Woodson. *Education of the Negro Prior to 1861: A History of the Educational People of the Colored People of the United States from the Beginning of Slavery to the Civil War*. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1915. 28. Print



education in Virginia. The institution of a school as a physical object was formed by whites fulfilling their Christian duty to elevate disadvantaged children by instructing them to read the bible and become self-sufficient through labor.

Through the early nineteenth century, the Christian duty to educate children was consumed by the threat of deviant blacks. By 1801, one year after Gabriel's Insurrection and almost a decade after the Haitian Revolution led by Toussaint L'ouveture, much of the progressive, abolitionist spirit of groups like the Presbyterians and the Quakers was dwindling. By 1831, that spirit was completely silenced following the rebellion of Nat Turner in Southampton County, after which the General Assembly enacted laws prohibiting the gathering of blacks, free or enslaved, in order to prevent the teaching of reading or writing. This law essentially halted any effort to educate blacks and by 1838, there were essentially no opportunities left for blacks to become literate for fear that any form of education might inspire a similar revolt.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the combination the rebellions led by Virginia slaves like Nat Turner and Gabriel Prosser, the more distant revolution led by Toussaint L'ouverture in Haiti, as well as the activation of the 1808 Slave Importation Act included in the United States Constitution formed the basis to end the custom of educating blacks in order to eliminate the possibility of future slave resistance. Moreover, this action by whites highlights the ongoing trend to explore new means to fortify a stronghold over the existing slave populations and marginalize free blacks as to impress white dominance.

Following the defeat of the Confederacy, Virginia, like most of the South entered a period of political turmoil. Organizations like the Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees, and Abandoned Lands, more commonly known as the Freedmen's Bureau and American Missionary

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<sup>8</sup> Carter, Goodwin Woodson. *Education of the Negro Prior to 1861: A History of the Educational People of the Colored People of the United States from the Beginning of Slavery to the Civil War*. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1915. 29. Print

Association were pitted against the Democrats who felt imposed on by such northern organizations and deemed them “carpetbaggers.” The polarization of Republicans and Conservatives heavily impacted the school system and shaped its goals. The ruling class was represented by the conservative, Democratic Party and dominated the General Assembly. They were strongly opposed to the state-funded, common school system as Commissioner of the Schools and Finances of the Freedmen, John Alford reported,

*The long delay in political reconstruction of this state still leaves the schools dependent upon foreign aid. Probably there is not another southern State in which the ruling class have such poor opinion, not only of public free schools as a means of education, but of education itself for the masses. Said a learned Virginia judge to me, “You northern people have gone mad as ‘March hares on the subject of education. What does the laboring class want of knowledge? Given them meal and bacon to make more muscle, and we’ll direct the muscle.”<sup>9</sup>*

From this sentiment, one can extract the southern white resistance to a change in the social structure and the perceived threat education caused to this social order. In many ways, education until Reconstruction had been a largely religious endeavor and the state had played a minimal role in providing for the education of children. Further, much in the way that the ruling class had been obstructive to many of the reconstructive efforts in Virginia, the formation of the common school system was heavily contested and the newly forming school system was pressured to reiterate the social hierarchy of old, with respect to labor and daily life.

In practice, each individual state was responsible for administering the system through each of their respective counties and appointed superintendents, but funding was still contributed by many freedmen’s aid societies organized by many families in northern cities, and the

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<sup>9</sup> Alford, John Watson. “First Semi-Annual Report on Schools and Finances of Freedmen, January 1, 1866”. Washington: Government Print Office, 1868. 22. Print. Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction: American’s unfinished revolution 1863-1877*. New York, NY: Harper & Row Inc, 1988. 277. Print

supervision of these systems of education was conducted by the Freedmen's Bureau.<sup>10</sup> Without full autonomy, states like Virginia were forced to include blacks in their system of education but adjusted to form their own path initially laid out by the Freedmen's Bureau. Amidst the turmoil of Reconstruction, Virginia ratified the Underwood Constitution in 1869 which, among other things, provided for the establishment of a system of public schools for both black youth and poor white children who were not already enrolled in private school.<sup>11</sup> However, the political complexity of funding the school system and drawing district lines for superintendents left little room for discussion as to the specific purpose of the system of education and left room for other educational leaders to emerge.

One of the foremost leaders in Virginia education, Samuel Chapman Armstrong was instrumental in establishing a course of study for blacks in laying out the principles for the school system. Armstrong, white, was the founder of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in 1868, around the same time the Underwood Constitution chartered the establishment of the public school system, despite resistance from conservatives. Amidst this political turmoil, the early developments of institutions like Hampton were fundamentally flawed because they were based on degrading, racist beliefs. In reporting to Hampton's Board of Trustees in 1870, Armstrong condemns blacks as unfit to ascertain the benefits of a classical education and should instead be offered a more vocational form of instruction:

*Let us consider the answer to our problem is indicated by the character and needs of the freed people. Plainly a system is required which shall be at once constructive of mental and moral worth, and destructive of the vices characteristic of the slave. What are those vices? They are improvidence, low ideas of honor and morality and a general lack of*

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<sup>10</sup> Morris, Robert C. "Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks: General Introduction to the AMS Series". *United States Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands: Semi-Annual Report on Schools for the Freedmen*. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data, 1980. Print.

<sup>11</sup> Moore, Louis. "The Elusive Center: Virginia Politics and the General Assembly, 1869-1871". *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography- Play the Bitter Loser's Game: Reconstruction and the Lost Cause in the Old Dominion* 103.2. (April 1995) 210. Print.

*directive energy judgment and foresight. Thus, disabled, the ex-slave enters upon the merciless competition incidental to universal freedom. Political power being placed in his hands, he becomes the prey of the demagogue, or attempts that low part of himself. In either case he is the victim of his greatest weakness-vanity. Mere tuition is not enough to keep him from being a tool, politically and otherwise. The educated man usually over-estimates himself because his intellect has grown faster than his experiences of life, but the danger of the Negro is greater, proportionately, as his desire is to shine rather than to do. His deficiencies of character are, I believe the worse for him and the world than his ignorance. But with these deficiencies are found docility, enthusiasm for improvement and a perseverance in the pursuit of it, which form a basis of great hope and justify any outlay to secure the ablest services in his behalf.<sup>12</sup>*

With Armstrong's sentiment, two main points come to light. For one, he perfectly illustrates the fear of black suffrage at the time and expresses that the freedmen would be a vulnerable voter population. Second, he references blacks as deficient of moral character and unable to improve themselves through their own hard work. Both of these judgments are not only enormous falsities, but they reveal the stark paternalism with which institutions like Hampton were founded.

From its inception The Hampton Institute became the chosen model for black education. In many of early freedmen's school reports starting in 1868, education leaders like John Alford direct future schools toward Hampton's model. Initially, Alford sheds light on the many of the southern school systems to progress in spite of conservative resistance but points out their acceptance of industrial forms of education present as a form of compromise:

*The industrial labor of the freedmen as a necessity of the South is exerting great power in aid of their education. It helps our schools in every direction. There have been questions, difficult and embarrassing, arising from the supposed "war of the races," which worked practically against the freedmen's education. These questions, we are happy to say, are not being rapidly answered by the pecuniary value in productive industry.<sup>13</sup>*

From this perspective, daily labor in southern life shines through politically in order reconnect with traditional values to provide an educational blueprint moving forward. Also this emphasis

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<sup>12</sup> Armstrong, Samuel Chapman. "Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. Annual Reports for the Academic and Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1888". Hampton VA: Normal School Steam Press Print. 7. (1888) Print.

<sup>13</sup> Alford, John Watson. "First Semi-Annual Report on Schools and Finances of Freedmen, January 1, 1866". Washington: Government Print Office, 1868. 85. Print.

on labor is in line with directions laid out by early leaders like Frederick Douglass who advocated for vocational training as leverage for racial uplift and could not envision the leap from poverty to the professions.<sup>14</sup> The connection between Alford and Douglass in their thought processes is formed by a similar labor ideology which would have an enormous impact on the forming of a school system in Virginia. Also, the interplay between intersecting propositions from black and white leaders would later become a crucial trend in shaping the direction of the school system into institution fostering marginalization and racism.

By 1879 the early phases of the system's development had come into place and new issues on the political agenda became contingencies which would play a major role in the shaping of the school system. Among the many challenges facing the Virginia public school system in 1879, the most apparent is movement to centralize the school system. To hone these perspectives we visit documents like the Ninth Annual Virginia School Report from 1879, which review the school operations in the Commonwealth of Virginia as it pertains to attendance, enrollment, financing, current obstacles, and future directions. Prepared by Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction, William Henry Ruffner, with additional contributions made by officers of the Second Auditor's Office, William F. Taylor and A.S.A. Rogers, the school report provides one of the most in depth perspectives of contemporary school life from the administrative perspective.

This move to centralize was strongly opposed by Superintendent Ruffner and his argument in favor of preserving the localized level of supervision is indicative of the ongoing political struggle in Virginia and many other southern states at the time. By limiting the amount

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<sup>14</sup> Carter, Goodwin Woodson. *Education of the Negro Prior to 1861: A History of the Educational People of the Colored People of the United States from the Beginning of Slavery to the Civil War*. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1915. 306. Print

of county oversight, blacks could be restricted from having any impact on school deacons. Each county was comprised of no less than a 2:1 ratio of white schools to colored schools. Meaning, black schools could be further marginalized by pinning them in districts where they were outnumbered by white schools, therefore lessening their priority both in terms of funding and administrative oversight.

William Henry Ruffner was another prominent figure in Virginia who was primary responsible for the formation of the public school system in Virginia. A true Virginia native born 1824 in Lexington, Ruffner traveled a long road before finally being appointed the Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1870. Following his college years at Washington College (later became Washington and Lee University) in 1842, Ruffner then went on study at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia and finally at Princeton where he became a strong opponent of slavery and an advocate for the freedmen. He organized the first Sunday school for blacks in his native Lexington: “some hundreds, young, and old, were taught, reading and the fundamentals of religion by white teachers.”<sup>15</sup> With a strong religious background, Ruffner’s duration with the Virginia school system would reveal his strong commitment to the freedmen. Evidencing his strong moral character as a public servant, Ruffner shares, “the officer must not abuse his position for his own interest, or that of his friends or party, nor the injury or detriment of the people, and he must conscientiously strive to obtain the object for which he is appointed; that is, first to act according to the true spirit of the laws, and secondly, to do as much essential service

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<sup>15</sup> Fraser, Walter J. Jr. “William Henry Ruffner and the Establishment of Virginia’s Public School System, 1870-1874”. *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. 79.3 (July 1971): 259. Print.

to the public as he can.”<sup>16</sup> Even when faced with adversity from the Board of Education, Ruffner fought hard to preserve the school system and his reports are testaments to his zealous leadership and integrity.

Ruffner essentially built the Virginia schools system from nothing. Prior to his election as the Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1870, there was very little to speak of that would resemble today’s public system. The system for the most part was an ideal posited many notable Virginians such as Thomas Jefferson who as early as 1779, had proposed a system of “common schools” operated by cities and towns. He posited that not only children of means, but all children would be able to reap the benefits of a system of common education.<sup>17</sup> Drawing on such proposals made by founding fathers of the nation put Ruffner in a sound position to effect change as his intentions appeared to carry out the vision of those on which Virginia prided itself.

However, the greatest challenge facing Ruffner at the time of the school system's founding were those Conservatives in the state legislature who insisted that the budget would not permit such a system. To appeal to these conservatives, Ruffner proposed the implementation of Literary Fund investments, a capitation tax, and a statewide property tax on no less than \$0.10 per \$100 of land but not more than \$0.50.<sup>18</sup> In this way, Ruffner’s encounter with the school’s budget problem would be a sign of problems to come that would plague American schools systems even in the present day.

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<sup>16</sup> Ruffner, William Henry; Rogers, ASA. “Virginia School Report 1879: Ninth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Year Ending July 31, 1879”. Richmond, VA: R.E. Frayser, Superintendent of Public Printing (1879) 15. Print.

<sup>17</sup> Hunt, Thomas C.; Wagoner, Jennings L. Jr. “Race, Redemption: William Henry Ruffner and the Moral Foundations of Education in Virginia”. *American Presbyterians*. 66.1 (1988): 2. Print. Glasscock, Sharon K. *History of Public Education in Virginia*. Richmond, VA: Commonwealth of Virginia Department of education. (2003). 3. Print

<sup>18</sup> Ruffner, William Henry; Rogers, ASA. “Virginia School Report 1879. Ninth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Year Ending July 31, 1879”. Richmond VA; Frayser, R.E., Superintendent of Public Printing (1879). 29. Print.

The area where Virginia schools thrived most was cost-saving. A look at the total expenditures shows how little was spent on schools relative to other states: compared to education expenditures in 1876 by states like Maryland, Tennessee and Kentucky which spent \$1.06, \$0.93 and \$0.90 respectively, Virginia only spent \$0.88 per pupil per month.<sup>19</sup> Yet, the Virginia state legislature sought to make additional cuts to school systems by reducing the state and district taxes, only to rely on capitation taxes to serve the schools. This cost-saving tenet which guided the school system highlights how for many school systems, funding determines nearly every decision. For Virginia, the larger counties such as Albemarle and Rockingham tended to have higher sources of private funding, and smaller counties like Montgomery, Nelson, and Warren also had considerable private funding. In this regard, sources of private funding were accessible without respect to county size. In some ways, this was positive for school systems because it allowed them to operate with a larger budget at no expense to the state. However, one must also remain skeptical that sources of private funding are often attached to stipulations. Although it is relatively unclear who these benefactors were and what stipulations they attached to their donations, if any, the fact remains that the school system in Virginia was not only subject to the actions of public officials but also private investors.

When Ruffner inherited the task of founding a public school system for the children of Virginia, he met some success and quickly accelerated the early years of the system. He accepted the task dutifully and sought to elevate the freedmen socially, economically, and morally through education. By the time Ruffner came to office in 1870, there were about 207,000 illiterate

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<sup>19</sup> Ruffner, William Henry; Rogers, ASA. "Virginia School Report 1879: Ninth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Year Ending July 31, 1879". Richmond, VA: R.E. Frayser, Superintendent of Public Printing (1879) 5. Print.



freedmen in the Commonwealth.<sup>20</sup> Unlike many of his contemporaries, Ruffner was a strong believer in the educational equality of both races. Though popular belief at the time held that blacks were intellectually inferior, as exhibited by leaders like Armstrong, conversely, leaders like Ruffner challenged these notions. One of more pervasive ideologies which would later resurface at the turn of the century was posed by his former classmate at Union Theological Seminary, Robert Lewis Dabney. Similar to Armstrong, Dabney criticized the public school system for instilling in the freedmen, values that would distract them from what he asserted as their true calling-manual labor. However, Ruffner instead asserts, “It is utterly denied that there is any such difference between the two races in susceptibility of improvement, as to justify us in making the Negro an exception to the general conclusion of mankind in respect to universal education.”<sup>21</sup> Ruffner makes the point blacks are equal in the ability to improve themselves and for this reason should be included in the system of public education.

Ruffner had been able to substantially boost the population of the Virginia’s student enrollment after just his first term. This rapid increase in enrollment is very telling of the high demand for schooling. From 1770-1774, Virginia schools enrolled 121,789 white pupils, 52,086 colored and was operating a total of 3,902 schools state-wide.<sup>22</sup> However, by the end of Ruffner’s second term of service, his enrollment numbers seemed to stagnate. By 1879, only 35,768 black pupils or about 17.6% of the colored school age population (defined as children age 5-21) were enrolled, compared to 72, 306 white pupils, or about 25.7% of the school aged white

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<sup>20</sup> Hunt, Thomas C.; Wagoner, Jennings L. Jr. “Race, Redemption: William Henry Ruffner and the Moral Foundations of Education in Virginia”. *American Presbyterians*. 66.1 (1988): 2. Print.

<sup>21</sup> Hunt, Thomas C.; Wagoner, Jennings L. Jr. “Race, Redemption: William Henry Ruffner and the Moral Foundations of Education in Virginia”. *American Presbyterians*. 66.1 (1988): 4. Print.

<sup>22</sup> Fraser, Walter J. Jr. “William Henry Ruffner and the Establishment of Virginia’s Public School System, 1870-1874”. *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. 79.3 (July 1971): 279. Print.

population. Over the course of these five years Ruffner saw enrollment of white students drop by about 40.6% and a decrease of about 31.3% for black students. This decrease in enrollment highlights the presence of many barriers which hindered children from going to school. Although one might speculate that many white students were sent to private schools during this period out of parents' opposition to the state-funded system, it was likely the case that for blacks and poor whites, family obligations such as home or farming duties may have prevented children from attending school.

Some Virginians at the time contested that education should not be the duty of the state and should instead rest in the hands of the church or the family. Professor Bennett Puryear of Richmond College and one of Virginia's ruling elite offers,

*The education of children is not the business of government, but the sacred and imperative duty of parents.” He furthers his claim in noting that state involvement in education “is a wicked and dangerous denial of the reciprocal relations and obligations of parent and child, and proclaimed by nature and taught with solemn emphasis over and over by God, by Christ, and his Apostles.”<sup>23</sup>*

Puryear's defense of the relation between parent and child is one that is hotly contested even in today's society, but the religious tenets on which Puryear bases his logic stands in stark contrast to Ruffner's general aims to elevate students through education. Puryear suggests that to leave the state responsible for educating its students is in essence replacing a crucial role of the parent. Additionally, given the excessive illiteracy rate for freedmen during the period, one would anticipate those black pupils might be the ones receiving the greatest benefit. As a member of Virginia's ruling elite, Puryear could afford to regard the public school system with such skepticism but his rhetoric sheds new light on the potential hazard of leaving precious

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<sup>23</sup> Hunt, Thomas C.; Wagoner, Jennings L. Jr. "Race, Redemption: William Henry Ruffner and the Moral Foundations of Education in Virginia". *American Presbyterians*. 66.1 (1988): 4. Print.

institutions like education up to politicians who inherently pursue agendas which deviate from the best interests of children.

W.E.B. DuBois too discusses the potential religious basis for the decline in student enrollment in Virginia through the 1870s. In his *Souls of Black Folk*, DuBois shows that Christianity took clearly distinct paths in white sects than in black. Further, this divergence can be very useful in discussing parents' perceptions of education and differing attitudes formed by racial lines. In discussing the role of religion in the lives of the freedmen, DuBois draws on the language in which freedom became embedded in the context of worship when he writes,

*When Emancipation finally came, it seemed to the freedmen a literal coming of the Lord...Someday Awakening will come, when the pent-up vigor of ten million souls shall sweep irresistibly toward the Goal, out of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, where all that makes life worth living-Liberty, Justice, and Right- is marked "For White People Only."*<sup>24</sup>

With his powerful language, DuBois shows that Emancipation was in many ways disappointing.

In terms of education, despite the seeming availability of a public school system, many blacks were unable to attend as shown with the decline in enrollment.

Advocates for the freedmen, like Ruffner show that education was viewed as a vehicle through which to ameliorate their social and economic conditions. Ruffner expresses, "Remember, the Negro is our brother and our ward; and God will hold us responsible for his training and for his end, temporal and eternal. He may, by suitable effort, become a blessing and an ornament of the earth."<sup>25</sup> Ruffner displays a notion of Christian duty to educate the freedmen which although powerful, is slightly undermining of the true purpose of education. This basis is highly subjective to varying religious interpretation and by treating the education of the freedmen as a religious matter Ruffner's aims can become skewed. This religious basis for a

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<sup>24</sup> DuBois, W.E.B. *Souls of Black Folk*. (1903) New York, NY: Signet Classic Printing June 1969. 220-225. Print.

<sup>25</sup> Hunt, Thomas C.; Wagoner, Jennings L. Jr. "Race, Redemption: William Henry Ruffner and the Moral Foundations of Education in Virginia". *American Presbyterians*. 66.1 (1988): 4. Print.

political matter such as institution emphasizes the critical importance separating matters of church and state.

Additionally, the fact that black attendance in the Virginia school system was so high aligns itself with Armstrong's remarks regarding blacks' motivation to attend school. In light of many contextual factors, black students displayed a stronger desire to attend school than did whites. About 59.4% or 21,231 of black students attended school daily out of the enrolled population of 35,768. For whites, about 61.6% or 44,540 students attended school daily out of the enrolled population of 72,306.<sup>26</sup> The fact that black students showed such a strong motivation to attend school is misconstrued by Armstrong's early commentary in the way he suggests that blacks are only able to dream rather than do: "danger of the Negro is greater, proportionately, as his desire is to shine rather than to do." This logic stands as a major barrier to blacks obtaining a fair or liberating form of education and instead lends itself to the reinforcement of the white ideological hegemony that pervaded the South.

Embedded in these relatively similar attendance rates are some striking obstacles that affected black and white students to differing degrees. Following the Emancipation, many blacks had relatively few options for employment and the institution of slavery as many might agree, reincarnated itself in the way of sharecropping. W.E.B. DuBois encounters this very dilemma in *The Souls of Black Folk*. He describes the daughter of a sharecropper named Josie who is the quintessential representation of the quandary hindering many black youth from obtaining an education in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. DuBois writes, "How Josie longed to go away to school, but that it "looked like" they never could get far enough ahead to let her; how the crops

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<sup>26</sup> Ruffner, William Henry. *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the year ending July 31, 1879*. Richmond VA: R.E. Frayser, Superintendent Public Printing (1879). Print.

failed and the well was yet unfinished; and, finally how “mean” some of the white folks were.”<sup>27</sup> Between the diminishing returns on cash crops and a family suffering from starvation, children like Josie, despite their desire to attend school, simply had no freedom to do so. Furthermore, the fact that Virginia whites attended school at a rate barely higher than blacks in the same time period is rather striking and reflects the high value which blacks assigned to education both during slavery and after.

Throughout his career as Superintendent of Public Instruction, Ruffner encountered the problem of explaining the differing school attendance rates between white and colored pupils. To some extent, his logic serves to supplement DuBois’ logic but indeed avoids some of the larger issues in American society that DuBois tends to address head on. After the completion of his first year in 1870, Ruffner was faced with the fact that only 39,000 black children attended school compared to 92,000 white children. He based the cause of the discrepancy on two factors: 1) the practice of influential whites turning former private schools into public ones and limiting attendance to whites only; 2) the shortage of qualified black teachers combined with the unwillingness of whites to teach in black schools.<sup>28</sup> Neither of these proposed solutions attempted to tackle the abject poverty that plagued blacks and instead project a “quick-fix” mentality as to appeal to the Board of Education and the General Assembly. In this way, the warnings posted by scholars like Puryear seem to come to fruition and highlight the hazard of distributing education through government at the state level.

Nevertheless, by 1879 Ruffner was able to make tremendous strides in erasing some of the disparities in attendance rates between black and white students. Compared to the black

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<sup>27</sup> DuBois, W.E.B. *Souls of Black Folk*. (1903) New York, NY: Signet Classic Printing June 1969. 102. Print.

<sup>28</sup> Fraser, Walter J. Jr. “William Henry Ruffner and the Establishment of Virginia’s Public School System, 1870-1874”. *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. 79.3 (July 1971): 269. Print.

population whose attendance rate was 10.4% of the total school age population, that rate for the white population stood just 5.5% greater at 15.9%.<sup>29</sup> This smaller discrepancy in terms of average daily attendance reveals that though still existent, barriers to school attendance for black students were becoming less impactful, which served to illustrate a more equitable school system for students of both races. In discussing the opening of alternate school houses to offer year round education as opposed to only five month school years, Ruffner reports,

*“Theoretically the plan is manifestly good, when only five-month schools can be maintained, but the attempts to carry it [ten month school years] out to have in most cases been defeated, first by the preference of families in the rural districts for winter schools for the convenience of the boys who labor at other seasons... and second, by the clamors of second-rate teachers whose services are thus dispensed with in order that the people may have the benefit of the best teachers all the year”*<sup>30</sup>

Ruffner’s failure to bridge the long intermission between school years highlights the precedence that farm labor took over schooling in the lives of students both black and white. This prioritization highlights not only the role of parents in the school system but also the paramount of farm labor in Southern life, with Virginia being no exception. This commitment to the agrarian way of life not only inhibited blacks from attending school, but would later become the direction of schooling through the Hampton model.

Ruffner does notice a trend occurring since 1877 in which enrollment and daily attendance dropped by nearly 50%. Insisting that the decline is the result of efforts made by the state Legislature to remove county superintendents from the Virginia school system, Ruffner dedicates the majority of the report to justifying the role of county superintendent and determining the role to be imperative to the school department. As with any political debate, the

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<sup>29</sup> Ruffner, William Henry. *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the year ending July 31, 1879*. Richmond VA: R.E. Frayser, Superintendent Public Printing (1879).2. Print.

<sup>30</sup> Ruffner, William Henry. *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the year ending July 31, 1879*. Richmond VA: R.E. Frayser, Superintendent Public Printing (1879). XII.Print.

contention here arises because of the differing agendas between the local and state officials. It seems clear that Ruffner is arguing on behalf of the local officials in suggesting that without the county superintendent, functions like examinations of teachers, supervision of schools and similar functions will become obsolete to the detriment of the system. By insisting on county superintendents, Ruffner inherently supports the role of white officials who prioritize improvement and allocations for resources to those white schools.

Interestingly, Ruffner omits the topic of Freedmen's education altogether in his 1879 School Report. The overall lack of discussion regarding the state of black education within the report itself would lead one to believe that Ruffner was not attuned to the issue. However, one might notice that Ruffner was the creator of the report itself and intended to use it as a status report for the state legislature in Richmond. The fact that Ruffner does not mention the school systems in the report with respect to race shows that the duality in the school system was not the responsibility of the state legislature, but rather the Superintendent himself. In fact, in light of the Civil Rights Act of 1875, it is not only reasonable, but advisable that Ruffner not include a comparison between white and colored schools. Among other provisions, the Civil Rights Act of 1875, provided for the incorporation of a biracial public school system, to which Ruffner and allies were firmly opposed.<sup>31</sup> With the Virginia school system in its infancy, the forced, abrupt integration of those schools would result in its demise. By not explicitly mentioning any inequality or comparisons between the school systems, Ruffner allowed the schools to continue operating under his authority. However, with the looming threat of removing the county

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<sup>31</sup> Hunt, Thomas C.; Wagoner, Jennings L. Jr. "Race, Redemption: William Henry Ruffner and the Moral Foundations of Education in Virginia". *American Presbyterians*. 66.1 (1988): 7. Print.

superintendents, it was unclear as to how much longer Ruffner would be able to sustain the system which he had worked so hard to build.

Ruffner's strides to reduce the enrollment and attendance gap between white and colored education, by 1879 had evolved to incorporate a focus on women's education as well. Ruffner cites the trend toward women's rights with the approaching centurion anniversary of Mary Wolstoncrafts' "Rights of Women," and those famous universities such as Oxford and Cambridge where women were gaining an increasing number of higher learning opportunities. Embedded in the discussion of women's education is an ethos of social equality, which further evidences Ruffner's role as a public servant and activist. Ironically, in light of his discussion of sexism and injustice against women, Ruffner asserts that women are innately better teachers than men because "their domestic habits bring her into closer sympathy and association with children." Though seemingly misguided, by suggesting that motherhood and teaching are one in the same, Ruffner is strategically appealing to his Virginia statesmen. Being that state was predominantly concerned with the efficiency of the system and operating under a low budget, Ruffner is subtly proposing a lost cost solution to both the problem of the teacher shortage, as well as that of the insufficient system of female education. Here, we see that despite Ruffner's sexist façade, he is actually advocating for both the higher education of women in becoming teachers, and for the freedmen in the common schools. Yet, to appeal to his political audience Ruffner is very keen to propose his solution in terms of economic efficiency.

The teacher shortage is laid out more specifically in the statistical tables of the report. Looking at teacher to student ratios, one can make some assertions about the quality and rigor of the education. Student to faculty ratio is one criterion typically used to gauge the level of student interaction in the classroom. For those students in the colored schools, the student to teacher ratio



was about 1 to 86, compared to 1 to 35 for white students, shedding light on both the overcrowding in black schools as well as teacher shortage in those colored schools in particular. With respect to teachers, the superintendent notes that about 46% of teachers in white schools were female compared to on 33% of teachers in colored schools. As a proposed solution Ruffner offers three potential remedies: (1) Encourage the acceptance of women to institutions of higher learning (2) Establish a female state college (3) Prepare female teachers via the public school system. Though he leaves the vehicle up to the state, each of the potential plans Ruffner suggests place education in the context of the job market and promotes some strategy for increasing economic participation. However, by predetermining that women are destined to become teachers, there is an overarching form of paternalism to suggest women need to be controlled through those leaders in the school system, rather than allowing students them to use the system for their own advantage.

Going a step further, Ruffner's ideology confirms the skepticism of black leaders like W.E.B. DuBois who reject notions positing that education is a means to an end. Unlike Ruffner, who at times blurs the intended purpose of education as a mix between his own religious beliefs and those he anticipated acceptable to present before Virginia statesmen, DuBois offers strikingly different purposes of education. DuBois' work shows that his vision for black education involved the challenging of the contemporary economic landscape rather than simply conforming to it. To shape students based on general social constructions and perceived role in the job market serves largely to reaffirm the status quo, and perpetuates these flawed social constructions, namely misogyny and white supremacy.

Ruffner fails to address the minimal participation of Virginia school graduates in higher education. The fact that only 1.5% of white students and 0.24% of black students entered higher

education shows the relative lack of success the Virginia school system experienced in fostering those gifted intellectuals. The premise W.E.B. DuBois posits referred to as the “talented tenth” speaks directly the Virginia school department’s inability to foster a sound base of intellectuals and confers that the system existed largely to offer little more the rudimentary education. This particular flaw in the system in not only is ability to send black students to higher levels of learning, but also the small number of white students. Yet within this congruent failure, overt white exists in that Virginia whites attended colleges and university at a rate six times higher than that of blacks.

Unfortunately for Ruffner, one of the greatest obstacles he faced throughout his service as Superintendent of Public Instruction was financial constraints posed by politicians in Richmond. He was frequently denied requests for additional funding and as a result school houses were poorly maintained and teachers as well as superintendents were paid relatively low salaries. Additionally, the Literary Fund which had been set aside from fines, forfeitures, penalties, confiscations, escheats, and debt repayment from the War of 1812 was frequently diverted for other state purposes like the founding of the University of Virginia. This misuse plagued the Commonwealth and by the mid-1800s, the Literary Fund was incapable of providing any meaningful contributions to the public school system.<sup>32</sup> Combined with the parsimonious conservatives in Richmond, the removal of the county superintendent was a political move to strip the school system of its own autonomy, in order to allow the state to pillage the public school system and divert resources to other state affairs deemed more important.

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<sup>32</sup> Salmon, Richard G. “The Evolution of Virginia Public School Finance: From Beginnings to Today’s Difficulties”. *Journal of Education Finance*. 36.2. (Fall 2010): 145. Print.

Serving under a conservative state legislature, Ruffner felt pressure to appease the statesmen in order to preserve his career toward the end of his first term. Feeling the pressure to side with either the Republicans or Conservatives, Ruffner felt that the only way to save his career was to abandon his previous policy of abstaining from aligning the school system with a particular party and instead succumbed to the conservative-dominated caucus.<sup>33</sup> With the school system finally off of the ground, the state legislature found it highly problematic that the school system was not economically productive for the Commonwealth. Thus, to align himself with the Conservatives, Ruffner was able to protect his career and thus preserve the school system, but at a cost.

The post Civil War depression left many southern states, Virginia included, in economic ruin, making fiscal feasibility of the school system of paramount concern for the Board of Education. For this reason, towards the end of his service, he announces,

*The mere opening of schools will do much, but not enough toward attracting the children of that very class which most need the elevating power of education. And it is not only bad civilly and socially, for gangs of semi-barbarous children to be growing up in sight of school-houses, but it is bad economically. It is partially wasting a vast amount of education power by leaving it not fully employed and thus defeating the aim of the State in maintaining this great educational operation.*<sup>34</sup>

Ruffner's ideology here is perhaps the most critical evidence that foreshadowed the developments in Southern education to follow. Ruffner shows that education was seen as a vehicle for elevation on the socioeconomic ladder and also a form of "warehousing" those students who would otherwise become a detriment to society. In other words, Ruffner shows that the education in Southern states like Virginia did not aim to cultivate children intellectually as

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<sup>33</sup> Fraser, Walter J. Jr. "William Henry Ruffner and the Establishment of Virginia's Public School System, 1870-1874". *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. 79.3 (July 1971): 276. Print.

<sup>34</sup> Ruffner, William Henry. *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the year ending July 31, 1879*. Richmond VA: R.E. Frayser, Superintendent Public Printing (1879). 78. Print.

DuBois proposed, but to prevent them from going to waste. This rhetoric is inherently rooted in those racist tenets posited by Armstrong with the founding of Hampton and was embedded in throughout Virginia's school system formation.

## **Chapter 2: Influence of Booker T. Washington on Industrial Education**

*A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, "Water, water; we die of thirst!" The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, "Cast down your bucket where you are." A second time the signal, "Water, water send us water!" ran up from the distressed vessel, and was answered cast down your bucket where you are." A third and fourth signal for water was answered, "Cast down your bucket where you are. The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh, sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River."<sup>35</sup>*

By the late 1890s, Southern politicians, including Virginians were baffled as to how to serve the freedmen but more importantly, how to maintain superiority over them. When he rose to prominence, Booker T. Washington's words were exactly what state officials and schools board members in Richmond needed to hear. First presented at the International Exposition in Atlanta in 1895, and then echoing around the country for its solid representation of those values prosperity and capitalism, which were well received by the American public. His words came at a time when the public was fascinated with the economic boom created by the Industrial Revolution. In a genuine effort to elevate the status of his fellow black community, Washington sought to create an alignment between white economic interests and racial equality for the freedmen.

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<sup>35</sup> Washington, Booker T. "Atlanta Compromise Speech". Atlanta International Exposition. 1895.

Presented in Booker T. Washington's most famous speech and one of the most famous in American history, his "cast down your bucket where you are" rhetoric solidified a blueprint for black education through the turn of the century. Though an interesting analogy, hindsight would reveal that there was no "fresh sparkling water" for blacks in the 1890s. Urging blacks to forego all their attempts to acquire civil rights, Washington offers that blacks should instead concentrate their efforts solely on industrial and vocational education.<sup>36</sup> Developments of education in Virginia education through the turn of the century lead one to believe that Virginia school board officials such as Joseph P. Southall and others were in total agreement of Washington's rhetoric and used it to endorse the expansion of a more economically efficient system of industrial education.

Situated at the "mouth of the Amazon River," Washington projects that blacks were in a position of enormous economic potential to seize industrial and vocational training necessary to acquire wealth in America. In many ways, this strategy, though well situated in the context of America's capitalist founding, but is fundamentally flawed in its outright simplicity. In presenting industrial and vocational education as a "cure all" for the conditions facing the freedmen, Washington, though well-intentioned was highly misguided in assuming a one-dimensional view of society. This societal view, over-simplified beyond repair was seized by policy-makers across the South, including those Virginia and was rationalized and then justified for constructing a school system based on skewed political beliefs.

Washington's concern with capitalism, particularly as it was presented in his "Atlanta Compromise" speech was one of the tragic flaws of his leadership. His means for racial uplift were inextricably tied to economic uplift, and with this connection, the direction for progress is

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<sup>36</sup> DuBois, W.E.B. *Souls of Black Folk*. (1903) New York, NY: Signet Classic Printing June 1969. 76. Print

drastically skewed. Washington points out, “No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of this world is long in any degree ostracized.”<sup>37</sup> With this sentiment, Washington outlines that economic progress trumps all other racial accomplishments and suggests that strides for racial equality, can only occur through economic means. Not only does this rhetoric limit black culture, also it essentially degrades humanity by reducing people solely to the capital they possess. Through this light, one might observe Washington’s advice to appear self-deprecating. Further, its positive response from whites forms a bold contingency on which race relations would develop into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Unlike Washington, W.E.B. DuBois offered a differing approach to black entrance into the capitalist economy as free citizens. DuBois sought to challenge the status quo by refusing to validate capitalism as a fair or credible structure and instead chose to place it in a multi-faceted context. He criticizes Washington’s vision by noting, “And yet this very singleness of vision and thorough oneness with his age is a mark of the successful man. It is as though Nature must need make men narrow in order to give them force.”<sup>38</sup> In speaking about Washington specifically, DuBois analyzes the hazard of a taking on a tunnel-vision approach to racial uplift by focusing only on one sphere of life. Additionally, the stark disagreement between two prominent and well-respected black leaders speaks to the enormity of the task and the tremendously differing approaches indicate the challenge of clearing a resolute path.

By 1899, four years after Washington delivered his most famous speech, the school system in his native Virginia had grown tremendously. A look at the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the School Years 1897-1898 & 1888-1899 reveals to the enormous growth of the school system in the two decades

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<sup>37</sup> Washington, Booker T. “Atlanta Compromise Speech”. Atlanta International Exposition. 1895.

<sup>38</sup> DuBois, W.E.B. *Souls of Black Folk*. (1903) New York, NY: Signet Classic Printing June 1969. 81. Print

since the leadership of William Henry Ruffner. During that time, the total school aged population had grown 37%. For whites the growth of the school aged population had been more robust at 41% compared to only 32% for the black school aged population. To accommodate this growing population, the school system encountered a resultant boom. Black and white pupil enrollment grew at even more tremendous rates with white enrollment increasing 234% and black enrollment increasing 227% in the 20 years since William Henry Ruffner.<sup>39</sup> In the face of such an enormous swell in the population, the school was placed under considerable strain to accommodate a larger number of student but interestingly showed equal growth rates for enrollment between black and white pupils.

Despite similar rates of growth, the school system continued to favor the enrollment of whites and had perhaps grown even more disparate. Compared to enrollment in 1879 being 26% for whites and 18% for blacks, by 1899 those had jumped to 61% and 43% respectively.<sup>40</sup> This trend is very much in line with the polarization of the Conservatives in the School Board who did not see the purpose of educating the masses, let alone blacks. However, this ideology was only a part of the school system and Ruffner had helped to build too large of a school system to disassemble. To sustain this growth, cost-saving would be paramount in order to maintain the schools' worthiness and the young institution's perceived sustainability to Virginia statesmen.

Washington's emphasis of industrial and vocational education was enormously influential on the pedagogy that would take shape, particularly with respect to black education. Agricultural and industrial education had progressed tremendously since Ruffner's leadership and its progression shows that Washington was drawing on many of the same forces that shaped

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<sup>39</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889". XXVII. Print.

<sup>40</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889". XXVII. Print.

the pedagogy and mission of those schools in Virginia. Cost-saving had long been a priority of the Board of Education, as evidenced by the detail specific audits and extensive budget analyses. This frugality, combined with the Washington's recommendation to use education to furnish skills necessary to acquire wealth, converged nicely to set material productivity as an aim for black student in order to rationalize the use of state funding for blacks.

Unlike classical forms of education, agricultural and industrial forms were popular with northern philanthropists. Much in the way Ruffner was urged to join a political party in order to save his career in the 1870s, leaders like superintendent Southall were similarly forced to endorse industrial and agricultural education because of their popularity with northern benefactors like George Peabody who founded agencies like the Peabody Fund to subsidize education after the Civil War. Intended for the purpose of rebuilding the South, the funding was more of an investment than a donation in the way that schools were looked upon as institutions through which to bring about material prosperity to southern states like Virginia.<sup>41</sup> The politics of education inherently involved the teasing of funds out of private sources thereby extending influence of these wealthy elite over children. Further, this interaction highlights the irony of southern whites in their distaste for northern intervention, except in instances where it saves money.

The ongoing trend of the Virginia public school system's commitment to cost-effectiveness was perhaps stronger in 1899 than it had been two decades prior. Although the school population had experienced an enormous influx, the system grew in such a fashion that allowed it to educate at a low cost per pupil. By 1899, the total expenditures of the public school system in the Commonwealth of Virginia amounted to \$1,971,264, almost four times more than

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<sup>41</sup> Spivey, Donald. *Schooling for the New Slavery: Black Industrial Education, 1869-1915*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press Inc. (1978). 77. Print.



it had spent in 1879. However, taking into account attendance rates for the cost of education per month per pupil in the Virginia public school system would reveal a drastic improvement: Education in 1899 had cost less at \$1.41 per pupil compared to 1879 when it cost \$1.45.<sup>42</sup> Given the enormous population increase in the school system, and accompanying modifications including school house construction and increased arsenal of teachers, the feat of the school system to reduce the cost of education is remarkable. It speaks to the strength of the commonwealth's commitment to efficiency but also lends skepticism to the way in which such improvements could be made without sacrificing quality.

Placed in the context of the school system's expansion to accommodate such a large population, the means through which the commonwealth was able to contain costs provided a fundamental basis for many of the changes which had occurred. To accommodate the near two-fold swell in student population, the commonwealth added over 3,000 school houses amounting to a total property value of \$3,336,165 which was over twice as great as it had been twenty years prior. Moreover, by 1899 the Virginia public school system had stayed in the path to educate women and train them to become teachers, as planned by W.H. Ruffner twenty years prior. Over the course of that twenty year span, the population of white and colored male teachers had increased 82% and 205% respectively. For females, the population of white female teachers had jumped from 958 to 4,613, an increase of 382%. Even more astounding, the population of black female teachers had jumped from 136 to 1,314, an increase of 866%.<sup>43</sup> This dramatic increase in the number of teachers not only shows the enormous impact of leaders like Ruffner, but also

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<sup>42</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889". XXIII. Print.

<sup>43</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889". XX. Print.

speaks to the improvement of the education system to develop and utilize black teachers at such a rapid rate.

However, the number of black teachers was still dramatically overshadowed proportionally to whites. Comprising only 2/3 of the enrolled school-aged population, white teachers made up 75% of the teacher workforce.<sup>44</sup> This disproportionate representation of white teachers in the school system shows favoritism in the way that white teachers were trained at a higher rate than their black counterparts. And although the mechanisms through which this favoritism occurred is not entirely clear, it is fair to assume that normal schools, other than Hampton were far more accessible to whites.

Irrespective of teacher disparities, this ability of the commonwealth to produce such a rapid influx of professionals speaks to the growth of its higher learning institutes more generally and the trends they form. In Southall's discussion of the higher education institutions, he laments that only the University of Virginia is considered a "first rank" institution. As a remedy, he poses a law similar to the one past in Pennsylvania in 1896 providing that institutions cannot confer a degree unless they meet two specific conditions: 1) Possession of assets such as buildings, apparatus, and endowments totaling to no less the \$500,000 and 2) Students must pass a course of study covering no less than four years.<sup>45</sup> In this regard, Southall shows that he is committed to elevating the status of higher education in the elite higher learning institutions such as the University of Virginia, but the way in which he cites Pennsylvania, a northern state is highly indicative of a form of policy diffusion. It illustrates the critical influence of northern policy in

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<sup>44</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889".

<sup>45</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889". 358. Print.

southern institutions like education because Southall eschews the dissimilar political and education climate between Virginia and Pennsylvania.

In this way, he exhibits some assimilation to northern ideology but furthers this assimilation through his endorsement of an industrial pedagogy. Like the rest of the South, education too was becoming industrial. To meet the needs of an industrial economy, Southall comments on trailing behind other states in the race to offer a sound course of industrial education.

*Other States have led the way, and Virginia demands of the law makers and the school officials of the State that they should not only follow, but take her place in the forefront of this great educational movement. The introduction of manual training into the schools must be made gradually if, if made at all; but it is all important that steps be taken at one to start this movement in Virginia, unless we are content to lag behind and remain in the rear of the educational forces of the nation.<sup>46</sup>*

Southall's point of view shows that the industrialized form of education that garnered appeal through the turn of the century did not originate in Virginia, but diffused from the North. Like Washington, Southall viewed industrial education with a similar "water at the mouth of the Amazon" type of sentiment that instilled a sense of urgency to propel the school system into alignment with industrial principles. Additionally, the gradual means by which Southall suggests the industrial pedagogy be implemented conforms well to the top down to policy direction seen in the system of higher education then filtering down to the lower levels of schooling.

At the top of the educational hierarchy in Virginia was the great University of Virginia. Featured in the 1899 School Report is an article written by educational historian John S. Patton, who accounted the school with a specific focus regarding Thomas Jefferson. Discussing the Virginia public school system, Patton shows that Jefferson was the foremost advocate for education of masses:

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<sup>46</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889". XXIV. Print.

*Indeed, Jefferson began his work in behalf of education by an attempt to secure free public schools for the masses, and continued it in his efforts to put in everybody's reach opportunities for that liberal culture which, as the Journal pointed out in its April number, "the families" seemed to feel was necessary for the patricians only.*<sup>47</sup>

With this powerful sentiment Patton draws on the rich early history that Virginians pride themselves in. The education for the masses, in the provided context shows a more egalitarian vision for a future in which not only the elite, but all citizens shall be granted a sound education. However, being that the University of Virginia was considered an elite University from its inception; the records show that this "elitism" is nearly synonymous with whiteness.

Jefferson and his vision were incredibly revolutionary, but underneath his egalitarian views were the racist undertones that provide a more accurate picture. Without the financial means to pay full tuition, scholarships can contribute to social elevation, but only for whites: "The manner of selecting the persons who are to enjoy them is this: Each public school is allowed to name three or less of its **white male** graduates of the current session, or candidates for graduation, who are responsible only in case they graduate that session, as candidates for scholarships."<sup>48</sup> Scholarship opportunities are made for those white male students unable to pay the tuition at the University of Virginia, but no other groups, signifying how the social ascent resulting from education was marked distinctly by DuBois' "for whites only" rhetoric. Women and blacks who sought to pursue higher education were forced to forego those elite schools like the University of Virginia and were instead swayed to pursue opportunities less prestigious schools, like Hampton.

Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute was regarded as one of the foremost institutions carrying out **black** education since the inception of Virginia's education system, yet

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<sup>47</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889". XXCVII. Print.

<sup>48</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889". XCVII. Print

it stood at the other end of the pedagogical spectrum from the University of Virginia. Unlike the University of Virginia, depicted by Patton and Southall as the institution critical significance for achieving a high (white) society, the Hampton Institute was painted with a brush of subtle and at times overt, racism. From Southall's report, one can discern that the function of the Hampton Institute was essentially to protect blacks from themselves, as he draws on a variety of pseudo sociological and historical perspectives to lament about many of the shortcomings of the black population:

*First of all, Hampton is striving to deal with a race that has never thoroughly gained the work habit. The negro came from a tropical country where nature does everything for man and where habits of work are not acquired. In their native forests, his ancestors found everything necessary to sustain life, and it was only when enslaved that they were forced to labor. Slavery brought with it, however, neither the mental nor moral reaction that comes from work done from the love of it.<sup>49</sup>*

Southall's remarks bring to light two striking flaws. For one, he falsely generalizes that the entire African continent is full of lush, tropical of productive land which naturally yields food and water without requiring any work from those indigenous Africans who benefitted. Second, he asserts that slavery has deprived blacks from experiencing any form of labor which is enjoyable or fuels a passion. With this assertion, Southall deems that all blacks are destined to be lazy and that one of the major challenges facing black education is the group itself.

Southall adds to his perverse argument that those pseudo biological responses conditioned through slavery were very prevalent in Virginia society:

*We are dealing, also, with a race that has an alarmingly high death rate threatening its annihilation. The negroes, whose physical condition was carefully looked after during slavery days, while they were somebody's personal property, have had to shift for themselves into freedom. They have lived on the wrong kind of food, and have been huddled together in poor-houses with insufficient clothing. Their diet has been for the most part pork, corn bread, and molasses, all of them fuel-producing foods, with little*

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<sup>49</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889". 283. Print.

*power to form muscle or brain. Among large numbers of the race, educated physicians and skilled nurses are quite unobtainable, even in severe sickness.*<sup>50</sup>

Southall not only exhibits backwards patriarchy but indicates that blacks were better fed, housed, and clothed during their days as slaves than as free citizens. Alleging that blacks made poor dieting, clothing, and housing decisions through their own fault, he neglects to realize that inability to secure these life essentials is in no way indicative of poor judgment, but the consequence of living in abject poverty. Additionally, Southall offers quite contradictory logic in asserting that the lack of black physicians and nurses is representative of an intellectual or intrinsic inability to pursue these professional status occupations. In reality, this externality is by no fault of blacks themselves but resultant policy-makers like Southall and the Virginia Board of Education, who fail to construct school system to furnish blacks with the high level of education necessary to pursue these professions like nursing and medicine.

Moreover, by presenting the Board of Education with the rhetoric that legitimates the race problem facing the Hampton Institute and other institutions of black learning, Southall is able to make a case that justifies its neglect. By asserting that the problems facing the institutions are not the structures themselves, but the people they serve, Southall allows for blacks in higher education to be brushed over. Students at institutes like Hampton, unlike their white counterparts at the University of Virginia, were not told to achieve academic excellence and pursue areas of study like ancient and modern languages, history and literature, philosophy, mathematical science, experimental science, and descriptive science which as Southall comments, “foster general training in all the great departments of human knowledge.”<sup>51</sup> Blacks were instead instructed in such as way that limited their world knowledge and intentionally limited their world

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<sup>50</sup> Southall, Joseph P. “Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889”. 284. Print.

<sup>51</sup> Southall, Joseph P. “Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889”. XCVII. Print.

view as to make them content with the sole ability to feed, house, and cloth themselves and reserve the higher intellectual, cultural, and engaging pursuits of higher education for privileged white males.

For black children to inquire about the more academic sides of education was to build too lofty of an expectation for education to hold new possibilities beyond the status quo. Southall offers,

*These young people have usually had an entirely wrong idea of what education means. They have thought of it as a thing belonging to books and having little to do with their daily life. An effort is therefore made from that beginning to interest students in the world of nature, and to correlate what they study in books with practical affairs.*<sup>52</sup>

Perhaps contemporary academics might lend enormous credibility to the perceptions of these black students who regarded education as something more than vocational. They instead foresaw the possibilities conferred by a sound and well-rounded education and the benefits that arise in thinking in terms of what could be rather than what is. Unable, and unwilling to furnish these expectations which might aid black students in transcending the current economic and social environment, the public school system in Virginia was rooted in its agrarian tradition. It sought only to reinforce the notions of black inferiority by suppressing young eagerness to pursue to more intellectual and progressive studies that have the potential to shape new attitudes and drive change, and instead offer instruction in those areas that result in physical rather than intellectual productivity.

Instead of being given an opportunity to learn about the rich wealth of knowledge distributed by higher learning educations such as the University of Virginia, black students at schools like Hampton were instructed only in areas which would have immediate results for lifting blacks out of poverty. In discussing home life, Southall claims, “Since the war many

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<sup>52</sup> Southall, Joseph P. “Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889”. 286. Print.

mothers have had to support their families, and have therefore before obliged to leave their children uncared for the greater part of the day, so that the home has degenerated into a mere lodging house.” Proving that the Hampton Institute is taking direct measures to resolve this issue, he shows that the Hampton girls are instructed in the way of washing, ironing, and cleaning in order to ameliorate the home environment facing many black families.<sup>53</sup> However, underlying the problematic family and home environment for blacks is the discrimination in work opportunities that forced black mothers to forego caring for their children at home in order to work long hours at jobs that are likely domestic and servant to whites. By acclaiming Hampton for instructing black women in domestic trades as opposed to other opportunities such as professions like nursing, Southall justifies those forces that bind black women to domestic and servant work which interfered with their duty as mothers.

Much in the way of reinforcing the status quo, leaders like Southall sought to prevent migration to the city and instead reminded blacks to live in countryside where they could continue agricultural skills. He champions the fact that “classes in natural history spend considerable time in the open air, and much of the other work in the academic course tends to promote interest in country life.” As measure of this course of study’s success, Southall points out, “It is gratifying to learn that there are certain counties in Virginia to which our graduates have gone from which there is but little migration to the city.”<sup>54</sup> From here, Southall and his appeal to the Board of Education reveals the intention of policy-makers to keep blacks in the rural areas where the social and political structures were more amendable to white interests and were more suited to foster dominance. It is likely for this reason that 7/8 of black schools were

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<sup>53</sup> Southall, Joseph P. “Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889”. 285. Print.

<sup>54</sup> Southall, Joseph P. “Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889”. 286. Print.



located in rural areas.<sup>55</sup> More explicitly, Southall's comment was emblematic of the looming white fear that the plight of urban blacks in the North might befall those growing southern cities.

The fear of black crime served as an underlying motivator to keep blacks on the periphery, away from whites. In many ways this ideology serves to lay the foundation for what would later become segregated institutions. Looking at the school superintendent's discussion of rising reports of black crime in the North, particularly in cities, one might identify what can be thought of as a resurfacing of the same mentality that resulted in the implementation of the black codes following Emancipation. In a report prepared by Cornell University professor, Solomon Wilcox, he showed that in the North, there were 69 black criminals compared to 12 white per 10,000 residents. By contrast, the same study showed that in the South there were 29 black criminals compared to only 6 white per 10,000 residents.<sup>56</sup> Despite these seemingly alarming numbers, the classifications of a "criminal" are relatively unclear and should lead to some significant skepticism.

However, Wilcox was not the only figure painting a picture of this fear. This image was very much ingrained in the public perception of whites in both the North and the South. Using Washington as a pawn, Southall is able to validate the construction of the stereotypes such as the criminal black man and "brute" and use education as the platform to address them.

Southall directly quotes one of Booker T. Washington's articles published in the *Atlantic*: "It is a notable fact that no Negro educated in any of these larger industrial institutions in the South has been charged with any of the recent crimes against women."<sup>57</sup> By creating a fear of a large

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<sup>55</sup> "Negro Problems from the Negro Standpoint: Hampton Institute's Recommendation's for Race Improvement". *New York Times*, July 18, 1901. Print.

<sup>56</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889". 455. Print.

<sup>57</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889". XXXVI. Print.

population of black criminals in Virginia's political sphere, Southall, like Ruffner saw education as a means to prevent black crime. In addition, he manipulates Washington's words to support the racist stereotype that conforms to the Board of Education's low expectations for blacks in the school system, and prediction that blacks are innately criminal.

Placed in the context of national racial politics, Hampton was portrayed by the white media as a crucial institution to manage the risky and unsanitary behavior of blacks. In many ways, the racist stereotypes that school leaders like Southall and Armstrong draw upon were apparent even in institutions like the northern media. In an article about a Hampton conference on racial improvement, the *New York Times* writes, "Self-help has been the purpose of these conferences from the first, and throughout the whole the aim of these people has been to look the facts of their situation in the face, to find the faults and weaknesses inherent in the race, and to suggest ways of remedying them."<sup>58</sup> This media portrayal of blacks as an inferior group serves to spread that infectious southern racial ideology to the North. In this way, the media serves to justify the lack of initiative from white southern governments to assist racial uplift and instead shift the burden to blacks themselves. Further, sections of the article recommending, "That pamphlets on practical hygiene and sanitation be prepared and distributed as to reach the negro race" suggest that blacks should not only be separated from white society because of their social inferiority, but also quarantined as a public health concern.<sup>59</sup> The forces that marginalized blacks locally acted locally but injustice could continue because the media condoned the increasing practice of active and deliberate segregation. Also, through such accounts, Hampton established

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<sup>58</sup>"Negro Problems from the Negro Standpoint: Hampton Institute's Recommendation's for Race Improvement". *New York Times*, July 18, 1901. Print.

<sup>59</sup> "Negro Problems from the Negro Standpoint: Hampton Institute's Recommendation's for Race Improvement". *New York Times*, July 18, 1901. Print.

a strong connotation of managing and ameliorating black inferiority rather than cultivating any true potential or creativity.

Not only does Southall use Washington to perpetuate black stereotypes, but also to insist that blacks remain servile to whites, even in face of such harsh political and educational marginalization. To suppress any resentment blacks may feel toward their white oppressors, Southall quotes Washington's "Atlanta Compromise" directly:

*The negro race is natural suspicious of the Anglo-Saxon, and not without reason. But our students, as a rule, feel kindly toward the white race, and Booker T. Washington's words at Atlanta, "No man, white or black, from North or South, shall drag me down so low as to make me hate him," fairly represent the thought of the Hampton graduate.<sup>60</sup>*

This strategic remark serves once again to align one of his particularly racist views with one of Washington's. Here, Southall is making an attempt to suppress any resentment blacks might have toward whites regardless of the long history of oppression and domination. At the same time, he is able to mask his fundamentally racist remark by agreeing with Washington, who too asserts that blacks should not stoop to that level of hatred. Furthering this attempt to shape black attitudes toward work, Southall posits, "Our students need to learn that religion has much to do with everyday life; that the kingdom of heaven is to come here and now. Strong emphasis is placed on faithfulness in daily duties as an evidence of the Christian character."<sup>61</sup> By justifying the school's agenda with principles of Christianity, Southall shows that religion served as a mechanism of social control. By conditioning black behavior according to Christian values such as productivity, an alignment could be formed with white expectations. In turn, this rationale reiterates that education was intended by Southern leaders to be used as a means to effect material, rather than intellectual production.

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<sup>60</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889". 290. Print.

<sup>61</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889". 290. Print.

To assume that blacks were powerless in this ideological evolution on the purpose and future direction of Virginia schools would be a falsity. Underneath the politics of education at the federal and state level, there were many local figures such as William G. Price who was the founder and leading educator at the Agricultural and Industrial High School of Gloucester County. Price interestingly chose not to offer his students either an enlightened or vocational course of study, but a hybrid.<sup>62</sup> Through his resistance to political framework of education, Price who undercut political agendas to offer black students a meaningful educational experience that fell outside the boundaries laid out by figures like Washington and Southall.

Gloucester A & I, as it was commonly referred was a high school that offered a curriculum that would fall in the interesting middle ground between Washington and DuBois. Though Gloucester A & I offered technical training in the way of subjects like farming and biology, teachers who were almost exclusively black, also offered considerable class attention to black writers.<sup>63</sup> This interesting dichotomy draws attention to this form of passive resistance exhibited by leaders like Price. By purporting the façade of a solely technical school, Gloucester A & I was able to not only win the respect and generosity of whites, but also offer an education that geared to enriching the freedmen and offering a more liberal course of study to shape a more fundamentally sound citizenry. To its own success Gloucester A & I though small, on average, starting in around the mid 1890s had been sending at least half of its eight to ten graduates each year to universities such as Hampton, Virginia Union, Howard, Fisk, or universities that accepted blacks, each year.<sup>64</sup> In this way, leaders like Price were able to prioritize students' needs over

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<sup>62</sup> Bagby, George F. "William G. Price and the Gloucester Agricultural and Industrial Schools". *Virginia Magazine of History & Biography*: 108.1 (2000). 8. Print.

<sup>63</sup> Bagby, George F. "William G. Price and the Gloucester Agricultural and Industrial Schools". *Virginia Magazine of History & Biography*: 108.1 (2000). 12. Print.

<sup>64</sup> Bagby, George F. "William G. Price and the Gloucester Agricultural and Industrial Schools". *Virginia Magazine of History & Biography*: 108.1 (2000). 16. Print.

skewed political agendas in order to offer its black students the best education it could, given the turbulent climate.

Although resistance to political agendas in education were more feasible in the common school system, looking at the racial breakdown of students in the higher branches in 1899 reveals that, despite a stark disparity between blacks and whites. Generally speaking, the opportunities to pursue education beyond high school were limited. Without a strong likelihood of attending college after high school, many Virginia students, regardless of color, simply needed job to perform in order to become self-sufficient. Only 2.59% of white students and 0.37% of black students were able to attend colleges or universities.<sup>65</sup> Ultimately, in the midst of the ideological turmoil between DuBois and Washington, the practical approach was in favor of Washington's "cast you bucket down where you are" approach. With the exception of schools like Hampton, Tuskegee, Fisk, and Howard, black students had relatively few options other than to take up a vocation. However, this dilemma was no way black specific, and the implications of a shared dilemma would prove to threaten whites and force them to grasp at maneuvers to subordinate blacks through the turn of the century through education and otherwise.

In the fervent spirit of northern white capitalism, Washington sought to seize on the opportunity to lift his people out of poverty and into the American middle class. Further, Washington saw education as the institution through which blacks could prepare for this movement. Education as he saw it was the way in which to train people to prosper in America's newly emerging industries. At a dinner hosted by the Union League Club on February 12, 1899, Washington spoke on the value of industrial education as a means to carry out his vision for black prosperity through economic production in factories and in other forms of manual labor. In

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<sup>65</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889". XXXVI. Print.

his address, he reiterates many of the similar themes throughout his legacy such as his hope that industrial education would solve America's racism problem. Like his "Atlanta Compromise" speech he reiterated that industrial education was a one-size-fits-all solution to the race problem but also included a clearer element of self-inflicted racism.

This Washington approach, among many reasons, was widely accepted by whites because it was in line meeting with white expectations. It conformed nicely to southern white traditional values and sought not to make waves. In his "Union League Address," Washington states that education will unite blacks and whites through a common pursuit:

*Find any method of escape save that of patiently, wisely, bravely, manfully, bringing the Southern white man and the Negro into closer sympathetic and friendly relations through education, industrial and business development, and that touch of high Christian sympathy which makes the whole world kin- find any way out of our present condition save this, and I am ready to follow where you lead.<sup>66</sup>*

Much in the way that Southall recommends that blacks show no resentment toward whites and adopt Christian views of productivity, Washington delivers a recommendation that echoes this expectation directly. This form of copying seems to draw on many of the fears that whites and blacks held towards each other and through Booker T. Washington, white politicians in Virginia could keep mounting at racial tensions at bay by reducing common interests to generalized capitalist pursuits.

To Washington and his northern white audience at the "Union League Address," an education was worthless unless it could yield some form of capital or could help one support themselves financially. To signify the importance of an industrial education, he draws the comparison,

*An educated man standing on the corners of your streets with his hands in his pockets is not one whit more benefit to society than an ignorant man in the streets with his hands in*

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<sup>66</sup> Washington, Booker T. "Address prepared by Mr. Booker T. Washington" *For Delivery at a Dinner Given by the Members of the Union League Club on February 12, 1899 in Commemoration of the Birth of Abraham Lincoln.*

*his pockets. It is only as the black man produces something that makes the markets of this world depend on him for something, will he secure his rightful place.*<sup>67</sup>

Washington's words would prove divisive and his rhetoric would form the backbone of black education well through the 20<sup>th</sup> century and perpetuate many of the racist beliefs on which it was built.

By 1899, the Virginia public school system was striving to educate black children in the way of industrial and agricultural training to a greater extent than white children. This goal was implemented on the basis that traditional book learning was problematic for the commonwealth. And like Washington's flawed rationale for endorsing industrial education, state officials like superintendent Southall painted black education with a similar brush. In discussing the future directions of black education, Southall reveals his racist concerns by furthering the direction laid out by Washington:

*We have been giving him a smattering of book-knowledge that tends to educate him out of his environment rather than to aid him in making an honest living and becoming a good and profitable servant of the state. The education we are giving the Negro makes him dissatisfied with the menial pursuits in which his fathers engaged, and in which he must engage, if he is to make an honest living and in which he must engage and become a useful member of the community in which he lives.*<sup>68</sup>

With such commentary from prominent schools officials like Southall, industrial education as it pertains to blacks appears to take on negative connotations. As evidenced by his language, Southall explicitly states that blacks will be subordinated from the mainstream, implied white society. Even more derogatory, he goes as far as to suggest that a form of education encouraging book learning will actually hurt blacks and instill unrest in their banished realm of society. Thus, in this way, industrial education for blacks confers a level of continued subordination, exposing the racist condition on which industrial education was implemented under.

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<sup>67</sup> Washington, Booker T. "Address prepared by Mr. Booker T. Washington" *For Delivery at a Dinner Given by the Members of the Union League Club on February 12, 1899 in Commemoration of the Birth of Abraham Lincoln*.

<sup>68</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889".

Southall was in no way exerting his individual beliefs and in many ways he was acting in accordance with the expectations of his supervisors and peers. Hampton president at the time,

Dr. Hollis Burke Frissell shared a near identical criticism:

*The young Negroes are coming out of the public schools of Virginia cities and counties with some slight knowledge of books but no handicraft. Unfitted for the menial pursuits in which his parents engaged, and in which, from the nature of thing, they must also engage if they are to work at all, they gravitate to the cities, and in many instances become vagabonds and criminals. There is something radically wrong about any system of public education that does not elevate the standard of citizenship and increase the living power of those educated in the public schools.*<sup>69</sup>

Not only does Frissell draw on notions of blacks as criminals but he also is drawing on many of the same influences as Southall. Both seem to reflect the elitist belief that those of the lower classes like blacks should not be given any classical or intellectual course of education and should instead be taught to interact with daily life. More specifically, they project that blacks should carry out their god-given duty to perform physical tasks. Embedded in this assumption and subsequent direction of the school system, poor children, particularly black children were disadvantaged compared to their privileged, white counterparts who might not be pressured to work in a factory or farm.

Ultimately, Booker T. Washington's *Atlanta Compromise* molded nicely with white political aims to maintain a low operating cost for those schools in states such as Virginia's which prided themselves in their "efficiency." Not surprisingly, DuBois was Washington's greatest opponent in this regard. He laments,

*"This 'Atlanta Compromise' is by all odds the most notable think in Mr. Washington's career. The South interpreted it in different ways: the radicals received it as surrender of the demand for civil and political equality; the conservatives, as a generously conceived working basis for mutual understanding. So both approved it, and to-day its*

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<sup>69</sup> Southall, Joseph P. "Biennial Report of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia with Accompanying Documents: School Years 1887-1888 & 1888-1889". XXXIII. Print.



*author is certainly the most distinguished Southern since Jefferson Davis, and the one with the largest personal following.”*<sup>70</sup>

Being that DuBois was writing in 1903, eight years after Washington issued his speech, he was speaking with a great deal of hindsight and could be more critical of the actual effects of Washington’s advice. Though Washington’s advice was not ill-intentioned, its impact was. Industrial education would evolve as the model to sit on top of the educational agenda and substituted education with training rather than learning.

This DuBois perspective lends itself to the possibilities of life outside of a factory or field. His remarks on the purpose of education are incredibly progressive and are barely being recognized for their applicability in today’s world, let alone 115 years ago. DuBois offers a countering perspective in positing, “The function of the university is not simply to teach bread-winning, or to furnish teachers for the public schools or to be a centre of polite society; it is, above all, to be the organ of that fine adjustment between real and the growing knowledge of life, an adjustment which forms the secret of civilization.”<sup>71</sup> DuBois offers some much needed contrast between Washington and Southall in lending some credibility to learning for its own sake. DuBois’ view, as many academics would agree, acknowledges life in America as highly dynamic and impossible to approach with only one skill. It instead requires the ability to think about life from a variety of perspectives, and adapt to changes. More broadly, it offers greater possibilities for a life than simply acquiring capital. Unfortunately for blacks in the 1890s, that fateful bucket had already been cast.

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<sup>70</sup> DuBois, W.E.B. *Souls of Black Folk*. (1903) New York, NY: Signet Classic Printing June 1969. 87. Print

<sup>71</sup> DuBois, W.E.B. *Souls of Black Folk*. (1903) New York, NY: Signet Classic Printing June 1969. 107. Print

## Epilogue

The interaction between education and the economy is not only complex, but ongoing and shapes life in America as much today as it did a century ago. The dilemma posed by choosing a course of education concentrated on job preparation instead of one that furnishes curiosity, like Liberal Arts continues to press policy-makers to rethink their stances on education. In December of 2012, Florida governor Rick Scott proposed a system of tuition cuts for students pursuing job-friendly degrees, leaving those pursuing degrees in the Liberal Arts in an uncomfortable predicament.<sup>72</sup> Many students who chose majors in areas like History, English, American Studies or Psychology are faced with bleak job opportunities and sometimes mountainous debt from student loans. To alleviate such predicaments, leaders like Scott offer policies to steer students away from this uncomfortable plight, but in doing so neglects many of the tenets on which a successful system of education is based.

A system of education cannot be successful until it allows a student to explore new interests and cultivate their own unique skills. In the 1890s, southern politicians like Joseph Southall and Samuel Armstrong insisted that there were few possibilities for blacks outside working in a factory or field. Today, although economy and society might encourage students to pursue growing industries like engineering, finance, web or software development, and

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<sup>72</sup> Alvarez, Lizette. "Florida May Reduce Tuition for Select Majors". *New York Times*. December 9, 2012. Print.

bioscience, such decisions cannot be forced. An economy thrives when it holds choices for consumers. For those who consume education, the choice should be available to choose a discipline of interest. For policy makers like Scott to make the same mistake of coercing students to choose academic disciplines based on labor demands would be to repeat a known evil.

The issue of cost-saving is embedded in the school systems of each and every one of the United States. Funding for buildings, books, furniture, and most of all teachers, has always been difficult to obtain and continues to plague the field education as a whole. Controversy over scarce funding discourages many of the able and creative minds who have considered careers in teaching and instead forces them to pursue other more lucrative fields. The sobering reality of America's problem in hard sciences and education as a whole is simple: scientists with high powered degrees are able to make more money in fields other than teaching. As a result, students across the country are swayed into areas like History and English which offer a rich educational experience but few job opportunities. Simply put, America needs a well funded system of public education if it wishes to stand a chance in the age of globalization and grueling economic competition.

The interaction of political, social, and economic forces at play through the development's of Virginia's early school system represent the origins of those problems that have plagued the class structure of the United States and have the potential to squander the country's economic stronghold altogether. Through his valiant effort to boost enrollment and obtain funding in Virginia's schools, leaders like William Henry Ruffner show that although education might not be the direct means for social elevation, it is certainly a start. By advocating in favor of county, rather than state oversight of the school system, Ruffner highlights that importance of keeping decisions in the school system local and out of the hands of state

politicians who can be overwhelmed by national trends and ulterior political motives to serve only privileged groups. Attempts to centralize the school system show that state politicians sought to conform education to political goals such as saving money and addressing the workforce shortages in teaching, agriculture and manufacturing. From this standpoint, the downside of leaving precious institutions like education up to political organizations is problematic, but has been since the founding of public school systems across America.

This political motive to educate students on a job training basis served to marginalize an already vulnerable population of newly freed slaves. Following Reconstruction, the religious origins of Virginia education rooted in bible readings and the value of a hard day's work laid a sturdy foundation for the labor-centered educate that would develop into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As the religious organizations and freedmen's aid societies were replaced by more concentrated state efforts, the course of instruction changed only slightly but subsequently served to marginalize the newly freed slaves. Without a sound classical education, the freedmen were unprepared to approach the nasty monster of American politics. A vulnerable voter population without a say in the decisions of its school board was left with very little opportunity to rise up the socioeconomic ladder or advocate for the needs of the black population comprising nearly half of Virginia. By marginalizing blacks politically, Virginia political leaders were able to reinstate the white power structure and ideological hegemony that drove southern life since its origins.

In addition, the codification of the Civil Rights Act of 1875 posed as an enormous threat to the Virginia school system in its infancy. The provision for a biracial system alarmed leaders like Ruffner and threatened the entire system. Against this background, the highly controversial segregated school system was favored in order to keep the system incubated past the point of its early development. Combined with the pinning of black schools in predominantly white school

counties, blacks were severely restricted to the role they could play in effecting change in the county school districts and were instead left to tend to their own schools with their own pockets. Further, by marginalizing blacks educationally, the white power structure would be able to invest in its future dominance and prevent any resistance that might challenge the privilege of the southern white male.

Interestingly, amidst the turmoil of forming a school system and using education to address the race problem in the South, leaders like Ruffner along with the support of the Board of Education indicate one of the great ironies of southern white male ideology. Although blacks were granted political suffrage over half century before women, their education was not valued as highly. In 1879, women's education occupied a much larger sphere of political and public debate in Virginia than did the education of the freedmen. Virginia considered itself a leader in offering women a comprehensive and enlightened form of education that would serve the function of grooming school teachers and preparing women for motherhood. The way in which Virginia's schools trailed the footsteps of northern states like Massachusetts and Pennsylvania is telling of the ongoing trend to establish many copy-cat policies similar to those in the North such as Harvard's education of female students at Radcliffe.

From this standpoint, the divergence from the racial equality rhetoric laid out many of the "carpetbaggers" of the Reconstruction era contradicts Virginia's following a northern trend to educate women for active citizenship, even despite their political insignificance. Racially speaking, southern universities were decades behind their northern counterparts. Even at the turn of the century, blacks were not admitted to southern universities like the University of Virginia whereas northern ones had been admitting blacks (in small numbers) since the 1820s. On a side note, Union College admitted its first black student before 1840, although he was forced to

declare that he did not possess any black blood.<sup>73</sup> It was only after the course of women's education was established that a course for blacks could then be developed. In order to fill the demand for black teachers, education of blacks followed a trajectory similar to that of women's in the formation of normal schools like Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute.

From this context, Hampton's establishment appears as a subsequent reaction to fill the ongoing trend to manipulate blacks into serving functions laid out by white leaders. One is left to question the role of Hampton as an institution of higher learning, because of its foundation by a white supremacist, Samuel Armstrong who deliberately intended for Hampton to serve a different function than the elite white institutions like the University of Virginia. Armstrong built Hampton to conform to those commonly held beliefs that blacks were an inferior race and could not become self-sufficient through their own agency. In addition, his beliefs were misconstrued to align themselves with those black leaders like Frederick Douglass who too endorsed vocational training and could not imagine the abrupt shift to training for the professions. Additionally, Armstrong and other leaders like Southall painted blacks' eagerness to attend school as a misguided fantasy rather than a well-grounded value for achieving liberation in a free society. The misinterpretation of enrollment statistics combined with the intentional manipulation of sentiment from leaders like Douglass and Booker T. Washington was used to justify a patriarchic form of education that restricted blacks' opportunities for education and employment in Virginia.

Further, Booker T. Washington conformed so seamlessly with whites largely because he, as a Hampton graduate was groomed and instructed to embody this pervasive ideology. In the

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<sup>73</sup> Carter, Goodwin Woodson. *Education of the Negro Prior to 1861: A History of the Educational People of the Colored People of the United States from the Beginning of Slavery to the Civil War*. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1915. 26. Print.

way that educational leaders of organizations like the Freedmen's Bureau and the US Department of Education endorsed Hampton and those institutions like it, the chosen path for black education in America was already marked. It was only then paved over by leaders like Washington who had already traveled that road. As a product of Hampton, Washington fell in line with the mission established by white supremacists like Armstrong and became one of the greatest advocates of the industrial, labor intensive training it emphasized. This alignment also reinforced the southern agrarian tradition of keeping the majority of black schools in rural areas. This served to shape a worldview around the cultivation of land rather than exploring potential opportunities in the cities. In effect, this emphasis on the agrarian way of life was functioned to reinforce the status quo in the way that it kept blacks in socially vulnerable positions.

In examining the discourse of southern states like Virginia following Reconstruction, the process of assimilation to the North was rather complex but with processes like school formation, noticeable trends appear. With women's education policies and the later policies to mimic northern university accreditation, education was clearly being influenced by the North, but to varying extents. Looking at the delayed development of the school system in conjunction with the industrializing of the curriculum shows that this northern influence was most prominent economically. However, Washington's *Atlanta Compromise* then solidified this interwoven relationship between education and economy by gaining the support of the black community as well as northern philanthropists. Under this climate, the cost-saving priority of the Virginia school system then became the basis for its future directions.

This cost-saving ideology resulted in not only an invitation to private interest but also to a new school of thought that would accommodate the enormous surge in school age population. In fact, those black schools were particularly subject to the whim of northern philanthropy of

figures like George Peabody due to squalid school conditions resulting from a lack of funding. As a result, black schools then proceeded to adapt many of the economically viable principles of education regarding factory work and technology usage that were driving growth in the North. Moreover, these forms of schooling posed as a viable opportunity to achieve socioeconomic elevation in the still underdeveloped southern economy. With institutions like Hampton winning the attention of the philanthropists of the North and the politicians of the South, the Hampton-model of agricultural and industrial education unassumingly formed the pedagogy for black schools and to a lesser extent, white ones.

The media too played a role in the boasting of industrial models of education like Hampton to alleviate the race problem. With figures like Solomon Wilcox and media players like the *New York Times* depicting blacks in the northern cities as unhygienic and criminal, southern leaders only needed a glimpse of some of the age old oppressive stereotypes that had been used to justify the enslavement of the Africans. Using these reports of the North, in addition to statements from black leaders like Washington, racist southern politicians and school figures like Southall created a looming fear that deviant blacks would be unleashed on white society as criminals and threats to the safety of white women and children. Additionally, the depiction of blacks having poor hygiene furthered the justification for offering a system of education to quarantine blacks and minimize their damage to themselves and society. Like the revolts of Virginia slaves like Nat Turner and Gabriel Prosser, the media portrayals of northern blacks were reminiscent enough to enact a similar policy response from white leaders to further isolate blacks socially and economically, through institutions like the school system. By keeping blacks on the periphery of the school system, white leaders were portrayed as playing a positive role in maintaining health and safety in the face of a fabricated threat.



To the detriment of historians, a story of disadvantaged groups like 19<sup>th</sup> century Virginia blacks often goes untold. Rather, it becomes a tale of the winners as documentation is formed by figures like Southall and Ruffner who occupy positions of white male privilege. Aside from the resistance of black leaders like William G. Price and the criticisms of W.E.B. DuBois, this thesis does not address the role played by those blacks who resisted the skewed efforts of the Virginia school system. Further research would shed tremendous light on the black community's attitudes and perceptions toward the changes in the school system and the impact it had on the many hundreds of thousands of lives it affected. Moreover, it would paint a more accurate picture of the mechanisms and forces that enabled the marginalization and ostracism of blacks in Virginia as well as across the South. However, it could also shed light on some of the benefits or sanctuary that education may have offered and in this way can offer new perspectives on how we think of education and its true purpose.

Moving forward, we must remind ourselves of the forces that led to the development of the school systems and the effects that had on American society. The notion that education is the primary vehicle for socioeconomic elevation is somewhere between false and uncertain. Although education can lead to positive outcomes in terms of socioeconomic elevation, the history of school system's like Virginia reveal that the institution itself is very much an intersection between politics and social categorization in terms of race, class, and gender. The way in which certain people get certain things, at certain times, stands in contrast to the free egalitarian society that holds education as a pathway toward a healthy work life. However, founding fathers like Jefferson who regard education as paramount institution for societal health must not be forgotten. His mission was laid out over two centuries ago, but his view for a free

society in which a comprehensive, stimulating, and rewarding education is available to people across all social lines, has been an evolving creature.

As contemporary scholars like Richard Florida suggest we are moving towards a globalized, creative economy, Americans are placed in a position where every mind counts. With creative ideas serving as a new form of capital, all people, regardless of race, class or gender should be celebrated for their ideas and innovations they might offer. However, the rigid class structure and racial hierarchy in American society creates a barrier that not only serves to reinstate white male privilege, but also to squander the potential of those who remain suppressed. Under this social condition, the economic future for the United States forms a bleak picture. Specifically, the fact that blacks occupy the smallest percentage of Creative Class occupations, yet represent a proportional share of the enrollment in higher education leads one to consider the true role of education in preparation for stimulating and rewarding work life. In this light, one cannot help but notice that many other factors besides education are determinants of job success. Combined with the fact that the US cities with the highest indexes of creativity industries such as Boulder, San Francisco, Boston, and Ann Arbor coincidentally have the smallest black populations of any major US cities is considerably alarming. It stands as rather shocking evidence to suggest that black marginalization from employment is ongoing today except in new forms. Although education rates do not directly explain this trend, a look at the types of schools black students are enrolled in could potentially reveal some analogous conditions to those affecting blacks during the early school development in states like Virginia.

Aside from this possible theory of modern discrimination, the early development of Virginia's school system sheds light on more concrete patterns. Weighing the potential for education to elicit positive, future outcomes there are two principles to bear in mind. For one,

one can only be successful when it allows for choices by allowing students to explore different areas that fit their interests and curiosities. For this reason, proposals like Scott's cannot be truly successful in the long term. Although his suggestion is a wise one to ease the student debt loads in the short-term, it risks stifling creativity by coercing students to study areas outside of their own personal interest. As an alternative, students might be recommended to pursue certain areas by faculty and staff in order to stimulate this natural shift that must occur through choice. Only then can a creative spirit be cultivated and used to strive toward that great and free society.

Second, education is not a "cure all" and does not have the power to totally eliminate any of society's ills. It was not able to elevate the freedmen during or after Reconstruction, and in some ways it presented as a setback intentioned by white policy makers. Additionally, the industrial form of education with an emphasis on labor and job preparation only served to accommodate the interests of the white power structure.

Much in the way W.E.B. DuBois offers that education is a useful tool to challenge the economy rather than conform to it, we see that schools expand young minds beyond the confines of today and into tomorrow. Education is enormously useful for laying a moral foundation and stimulating intellectual curiosity. Curiosity is what leads to innovation which drives technological and economic growth. However, without a solid moral foundation, justice cannot be served. For education in America to succeed in a shaping a youth prepared for a global and creative economy, it must offer a course of instruction that tends to the search and cultivation of every child's individual strengths. To obtain these outcomes, American schools cannot exist in their current state. Efforts need to be made to back our school systems with heavy funding in order to invest in our future. Moving forward, one fundamental tenet transcends all others: to encourage and cultivate every child is paramount- a mind is a terrible thing to waste.

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