Jim Crow in Arkansas: A Reconsideration of Urban Race Relations in the Post-Reconstruction South

By John William Graves

Since the first appearance of C. Vann Woodward's *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* in 1955,¹ southern race relations in the late nineteenth century have received a remarkable degree of scholarly attention. Dozens of subsequent books and articles have investigated Woodward's central issue of the origins of southern segregation as well as such related matters as the economic and psychological sources of white racial aggression, the racial attitudes and policies of southern Redeemers and Populists, and the political and social consequences of racially motivated disfranchisement laws.²

If any one aspect of southern race relations during this era has been neglected, it is urban race relations. This oversight is understandable in that the American South during this period was an overwhelmingly rural, agricultural region; according to U. S. Census figures, as late as 1900 only 17 percent of persons living in the South Atlantic states and 11.1 percent of persons living in the South Central states resided in urban areas³—defined as communities with populations of twenty-five hundred or more.

Nevertheless, a nascent urban culture had appeared in many previously rural areas of the post–Civil War South. Stimulated by new

---


Mr. Graves is an associate professor of history at Henderson State University.

The Journal of Southern History
Vol. LV, No. 3, August 1989
railway construction, thousands of villages and hamlets had become towns. A small but already potent urban bourgeoisie had emerged, and in many places pioneer southern entrepreneurs founded some of the region's leading commercial houses. Profits and savings acquired from a variety of new business enterprises, deposited in local banks or plowed back into local investments, fueled the vital process of capital formation and urban development. Slowly the rudimentary foundations for the transformation of southern society and the southern way of life were being laid.  

The effects of urbanization on southern racial practices and attitudes have been investigated in only one regional study, Howard N. Rabinowitz's Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865–1890. Investigating racial conditions in five southern cities (Atlanta, Montgomery, Nashville, Raleigh, and Richmond), Rabinowitz emphasized the resistance that blacks encountered in their quest for personal and group advancement. While acknowledging that blacks who lived in cities and towns usually fared somewhat better than their fellows in rural districts, Rabinowitz highlighted the barriers confronting black town dwellers and the persistence of prejudice among the urban white majority. Concerning segregation, he contended that frequently the only choice open to urban blacks was to accept new, separate Jim Crow facilities or to continue to be excluded from opportunities and services; integration, in his view, was never a reality or an option.

Rabinowitz brought genuinely original insights to his area of inquiry. Nevertheless, research concerning race relations in Arkansas in the decades following the Civil War suggests that his perspectives and viewpoints may warrant further study and refinement. This is not to say that Rabinowitz's interpretations have no applicability to Arkansas. In some specific instances blacks in the state were in fact confronted with the stark choice of exclusion or segregation. Faced with these alternatives, they sometimes acceded to Jim Crow facilities without sustained protest.

The acceptance of segregated facilities by Arkansas blacks is most obvious in the case of the public schools. Immediately following the Civil War, the state's "rebel" legislature of 1866–1867 established a common school system that excluded black children, and, in turn, blacks were exempted from payment of the state school tax. The first Reconstruction legislature assembled in 1868 and adopted a new law providing segregated public education to blacks. Despite some initial

resistance, most Arkansas blacks appear to have soon acquiesced in segregated schooling.\textsuperscript{6}

A similar pattern can be discerned in other state-sponsored programs. The legislative acts of the 1860s establishing the Arkansas School for the Blind and Arkansas Deaf Mute Institute contained no racially exclusionary provisions.\textsuperscript{7} Official reports, however, indicate that no blacks were admitted to the former and only a very few into the latter until separate facilities were created in 1887.\textsuperscript{8} When the state's first mental hospital was established in 1883, blacks were admitted but were assigned to segregated wards.\textsuperscript{9} The major exception to the rule of exclusion or segregation in state facilities was prisons. A statute requiring segregation in state and county correc-


Despite the initial opposition of many black leaders to segregated education, by 1877 some blacks in Little Rock had acquiesced in separation to the degree that they were requesting that only black teachers be employed in black schools. There is evidence that this may have been in response to the prejudiced attitudes of some white teachers. Such a policy would also give needed employment to the emerging class of black urban professionals. Moreover, since blacks were excluded from teaching in white schools, the policy could be justified in terms of equity. Annual Report of the Public Schools of the School District of Little Rock, Ark. . . 1877 (Little Rock, 1877), 11; see also James T. Haley [comp.], Afro-American Encyclopedia . . . (Nashville, Tenn., 1896), 562–63; Selma Ann Plowman Hobby, "The Little Rock Public Schools During Reconstruction" (Ed.D. dissertation, University of Arkansas, 1967), 93.

\textsuperscript{7} Acts of Arkansas (1861), 301–3; ibid. (1868), 115–21. A subsequent law restricting admission to the School for the Blind to "white blind persons" was adopted by the "rebel" legislature of 1866, but it was repealed by the Reconstruction legislature of 1868. See Acts of Arkansas (1866–1867), 45–47; ibid. (1868), 154–61.

\textsuperscript{8} Report of the Board of Trustees and Superintendent of Arkansas School for the Blind, for the Two Years Commencing October 1, 1886, and Ending September 30, 1888 (Little Rock, 1888), 45–46; Tenth Biennial Report of the Board of Directors and Officers of the Arkansas Deaf Mute Institute to the Governor of the State of Arkansas, for the years 1887 and 1888 (Little Rock, 1888), 15; Mattie Cal Maxted, "Training of Deaf Children in Arkansas," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, V (Fall 1946), 199–200.

\textsuperscript{9} Acts of Arkansas (1883), 18–26. The 1883 statute did not mandate segregation, but separate wards were nevertheless established. However, black and white patients appear to have mingled freely when using the recreational areas on the asylum grounds. Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Trustees and Superintendent of the State Lunatic Asylum at Little Rock, Arkansas, for the Year Ending December 1, 1888 (Little Rock, 1889), 33. See also Charles Dudley Warner, "Studies of the Great West. VII. Memphis and Little Rock," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, LXXVII (September 1888), 556; [James Cooke Warde], Jimmy Warde's Experiences as a Lunatic (Little Rock, 1902), 189, 257.
tional centers was not enacted until 1903; before that time prison camps and jails were often integrated.10

Churches and religious organizations were special cases because separation in them was usually initiated by blacks.11 Almost immediately after emancipation blacks deserted the predominantly white churches and began founding their own congregations. In part this was because they wanted to develop their own leadership capacities, social outlets, and forms of spiritual expression. It also seems likely that blacks wanted to escape from painful encounters with white prejudice and condescension. In this respect black-initiated separation can be viewed as a response to white psychological exclusion.

The black impulse toward separatism had its limits, however. Blacks could not isolate themselves from the operations of the economy and the larger society, and they understood that acceptance of color bars in employment and public accommodations would impair their chances for bettering their circumstances. Reacting against incipient segregation restrictions and caste distinctions, blacks in the Reconstruction General Assembly of 1868 obtained passage of a new civil rights law. The measure forbade denial of first-class services to blacks in public accommodations or on public conveyances, with offenders subject to a fine of not less than two hundred or more than five thousand dollars, at the discretion of the jury trying the case, or imprisonment in the county jail for not more than twelve months.12

The immediate impact of the law was by no means obvious, for segregation continued. The disappointing lack of results prompted the Reconstruction legislature of 1873 to approve a second, more sweeping and strongly worded civil rights act. The law covered pub-

10 Acts of Arkansas (1903), 160–62. Before 1903 practices varied widely. In 1889 the Pulaski County jail in Little Rock did not have separate facilities, but such facilities were installed prior to 1903. As late as 1903 the Little Rock city jail still did not segregate prisoners by race. See Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, January 13, 1889; March 7, 1903.

11 Adolphine Fletcher Terry, Charlotte Stephens: Little Rock’s First Black Teacher (Little Rock, 1973), 51–57, 64–69. There had been only a few black congregations in antebellum Arkansas. Most blacks worshipped in white churches where they were supervised and controlled by their masters and either confined to the galleries or back pews or met in separate services. The origins of this custom are obscure and may first have had more to do with consciousness of class than of race; possibly it derived from the English practice, where white servants were often seated in galleries apart from the rest of the congregation.

Occasionally churches dispensed with these segregated arrangements altogether. In these instances blacks attended the worship services alongside their owners, took part in joint baptismal ceremonies, and were even called to preach before mixed congregations. Regardless of the practices followed, most blacks abandoned the white churches soon after freedom. See ibid., 14–15, 33–35; Orville W. Taylor, Negro Slavery in Arkansas (Durham, N. C., 1958), 168–87. Larry M. James, “Biracial Fellowship in Antebellum Baptist Churches,” and Randy J. Sparks, “Religion in Amite County, Mississippi,” in John B. Boles, ed., Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South, 1740–1870 (Lexington, Ky., 1988), 37–57, 58–80.

lic carriers, hotels, saloons, restaurants, and "places of public amusement" and required that owners or proprietors provide all persons "the same and equal" services at equal costs, regardless of race. Failure to comply could result in heavy fines and possible imprisonment. Another section of the act required school districts to furnish black children with facilities "like and equal" to those provided for whites. 13

This new law remained on the statute books until it was repealed in 1907, thirty-four years after its adoption. 14 A survey of the reports of the Arkansas Supreme Court, however, shows that no appeals were ever carried under either the 1868 or 1873 statutes. Charles Nordhoff, a journalist for the New York Herald who visited Arkansas in March 1875, related that only one case had arisen under the 1873 act during its first two years: a white saloonkeeper in Little Rock was fined $46.80, including court costs, for refusing service to Jefferson County state senator R. A. Dawson and other black patrons. The New Yorker revealed his own feelings by stating, "The negroes have shown no disposition to make the law offensive." 15 Apparently blacks liked to think that they enjoyed the theoretical right of access to all public accommodations, but not many were willing to undergo the emotional trauma of testing the statutes or to risk the expense of unsuccessful litigation.

Even so, it is quite possible that the mere presence of the civil rights measures had some influence. Although Nordhoff observed that some saloons in Little Rock "had two bars, one for each color," he "also saw in several cases black and white men drinking together." Furthermore, testimony of local blacks and a subsequent white visitor shows that, at least by the 1880s, Arkansas railroads had dropped earlier segregated arrangements; nor had segregation been instituted on the state's few urban streetcar systems until required by state enactment in 1903. 16

Similarly, blacks and whites shared common park facilities.

13 Acts of Arkansas (1873), 15–19 (quotations on p. 15); Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, February 22, 1873.
14 Acts of Arkansas (1907), 728.
15 Charles Nordhoff, The Cotton States in the Spring and Summer of 1875 (New York, 1876), 35–36 (quotation on p. 36); see court documents for the above mentioned case reprinted in the Pulaski County Historical Review, V (September 1957), 47–50.
16 Nordhoff, Cotton States, 36; Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, January 28, 1891, May 28, 1903. When speaking against a proposed separate coach bill in 1891, black state senator George W. Bell of Desha County observed, "The negroes have been riding upon and within the same coaches, in common with all other races, in this State for more than eighteen years." The reference to "eighteen years" suggests that the 1873 civil rights act may have been effective in ending incipient railway segregation. See also ibid., February 18, 1891; Boston (Mass.) Daily Globe, December 6, 1886; Warner, "Studies of the Great West," 559.
Although the Little Rock city directory for 1890 indicated that privately owned Fulton’s Park in Little Rock was “fitted up for the exclusive enjoyment of the colored people,” other parks were at times utilized by both races. For instance, the Little Rock *Arkansas Gazette* described the August 1897 meeting of an association of ex-slaves at Little Rock’s West End Park, owned by the city’s streetcar company. A little more than two months later, on October 14, the state Confederate reunion was held at the same place. Moreover, blacks and whites occasionally used the same park facilities at the same time. In 1892 the *Arkansas Gazette* described a concert at Glenwood Park, operated by an earlier Little Rock streetcar company, as being “free for every man, woman and child in Little Rock.” Readers were assured that “there is room for all.” No evidence was found that the festivities were segregated in any way.

Blacks and whites were admitted simultaneously to what was after 1885 Little Rock’s chief vaudeville house, the Capital Theater; it is not known whether the use of facilities was integrated or segregated. Incidental references to “Negro” saloons and restaurants can be found in almost any year, but in some of these businesses, as late as the 1890s, the races mixed freely. However, separate hotels and

17 *Little Rock City Directory, 1890* (Little Rock, 1890), 61; “Ex-Slaves’ Big Day,” in Little Rock *Arkansas Gazette*, August 10, 1897. The meeting was addressed by a number of prominent whites, including Governor Daniel W. Jones. Ibid., October 8, 1897; James W. Bell, “The Early Parks of Little Rock: Part I,” *Pulaski County Historical Review*, XXX (Spring 1982), 20–21.


19 In his autobiography prominent black Arkansan Mifflin Wistar Gibbs describes his attendance at the Folies-Bergère in Paris, France, in 1898. Gibbs mentioned that “the appearance of the occupants of the front row of seats very forcibly reminded me of a similar locality at the Capital Theater in the City of Roses [Little Rock], on similar occasions, where many of my old friends loved to congregate.” Although the race of the friends is not clearly identified, the sentence strongly suggests that blacks were not confined to the theater balcony but were using the main parquet section as well. Of course this would not preclude possible segregation within the parquet section. When Frederick Douglass spoke at the Capital Theater in Little Rock in 1889, it appears that blacks sat on one side of the theater and whites on the other. Still, in a 1967 interview with this writer, Miss Dorothy Gillam, a schoolteacher and older black resident, stated that she remembered no theater segregation or exclusion of blacks in Little Rock during her youth prior to World War I. Miss Gillam recounted painfully how theater segregation and exclusion began to be inaugurated during the 1920s and 1930s. Finally, only one downtown theater, the Roxy on Main Street, continued to admit blacks, and it restricted black patrons to the balcony. Mifflin Wistar Gibbs, *Shadow and Light: An Autobiography, with Reminiscences of the Last and Present Century, with an Introduction by Booker T. Washington* (Washington, 1902), 227; Little Rock *Arkansas Gazette*, February 6, 1889, October 17, 1896; interview by the author with Miss Dorothy Gillam, Little Rock, Arkansas, July 29, 1967. (Miss Gillam was the daughter of the late Isaac T. Gillam, Jr., principal of Little Rock’s black M. W. Gibbs High School, and granddaughter of the late Isaac T. Gillam, Sr., Little Rock city councilman during Reconstruction and Pulaski County state representative in 1879. Little Rock *Arkansas Democrat*, January 23, 1986, p. 10A.)

boarding houses were the general rule in spite of state civil rights laws. Concerning burial customs, as late as 1899 blacks were still being interred in lots interspersed with those of whites in Mount Holly, Little Rock's original cemetery, although in 1888 a section of the city's new Oakland Cemetery was set aside exclusively for blacks, and black fraternal societies were given authority to administer the use of plots within it.21

Throughout the state, ambiguity and confusion characterized the Reconstruction legacy in the sphere of civil rights. Widespread and pervasive racial discrimination continued, yet Arkansas blacks had managed to avoid a system of either total exclusion or total separation in public facilities. In the absence of a clear consensus in the matter of racial policy, the opportunity for mobility and advancement remained.

Blacks lost little time in seizing this opportunity. There were advantages for blacks living in Arkansas's larger cities and towns, especially Little Rock, during the latter half of the nineteenth century: populations more cosmopolitan and diverse than those in rural areas, strong competition between Republicans and Democrats, better schools, ample social diversions, greater prosperity, and greater freedom in the marketplace. A spirit of urban boosterism affected both races because it encouraged enterprise and mobility and applauded business talent and success. Though most urban blacks in Arkansas led lives of poverty and hardship, by the last two decades of the century a small class of independent black artisans and craftsmen had developed. Above them, at the head of black society, were thriving entrepreneurs and professional men, some of whom had acquired substantial wealth.22

The appearance of this latter group, in particular, elicited contradictory emotions and responses from urban whites. The achievements of these black leaders aroused new envies and status anxieties that led to heightened racial friction. Tension occasionally manifested itself in outbursts of violence and, at times, in demands for new impositions of segregation—a phenomenon described at length in the comparative studies and typology of race relations developed by sociologist Pierre L. van den Berghe.23

However, the accomplishments of individual blacks also produced

respect and admiration and a new degree of acceptance that weakened traditional caste arrangements. As studies by David R. Goldfield, Paul M. Gaston, and others have demonstrated, urbanization had facilitated the appearance of an authentic bourgeois class within southern cities that brought forth a new social milieu and new social values.\footnote{Goldfield traces the beginnings of this change during the antebellum period, while Gaston describes postbellum developments and stresses especially how the dream of an industrialized, urbanized "New South" was used to sustain southern morale after the region's defeat in the Civil War. See Goldfield, "Pursuing the American Urban Dream: Cities in the Old South," in Blaine A. Brownell and David R. Goldfield, eds., The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South (Port Washington, N. Y., and London, 1977), 52–91; and Paul M. Gaston, The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking (New York, 1970).} Whereas attitudes in plantation districts discouraged individual mobility and advancement, those of the cities and towns fostered them. Old ties and family connections remained important, but the town merchant and urban booster praised enterprise, initiative, bustle, and ability, particularly the ability to raise capital and make money. In Arkansas, blacks who demonstrated these qualities sometimes won a genuine degree of respect, a respect that went well beyond the condescending paternalism of the ancien régime.

Travelers in the state often mentioned interracial business and professional dealings. As late as 1899 Charles Stewart, a black reporter from Chicago, observed, "While in Little Rock I have visited the offices of . . . successful negro lawyers and have seen white men go in to consult them. Negro doctors have white patients. Negro merchants have white customers and the like." He asked, "Could these evidences be considered taking way the manhood of a race?"\footnote{Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, January 1, 1899.} In a similar vein Bishop W. B. Derrick of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, when first assigned to his church's conference in Arkansas, stated, "The relations existing between the races, I must honestly confess that I discover to be far better than I had any conception they were. I am surprised at business relations between employers and the willingness on the part of the business element to accord recognition to colored men . . . ."\footnote{Ibid.}

Local black leaders occasionally offered corroborating testimony. The comments of Mifflin Wistar Gibbs are a case in point. Gibbs was a Little Rock municipal judge during the Reconstruction era and afterward served in Little Rock as register of the U. S. land office and U. S. receiver of public monies. From 1887 to 1897 he was also secretary of the Republican state central committee and Arkansas's leading black Republican. In the latter year he achieved the capstone of his career by winning appointment as United States Consul to
Tamatave, Madagascar. Writing in his 1902 autobiography, Gibbs sharply attacked disfranchisement and other regressive tendencies in Arkansas. Nevertheless, he asserted, "It can truly be said of Little Rock that the press and leading citizens have been more just and liberal to her colored citizens than any other Southern city. I well remember when her institutions relating to commerce, literature, professions, Board of Trade, Real Estate Exchange, bar and lyceum were open to us, whilst two-thirds of their members were our political opponents." In this account Gibbs was not alluding only to Reconstruction, for newspapers refer to his attendance at meetings of the bar association and the real estate exchange at least as late as 1888.  

Gibbs not only belonged to professional associations, but he also conducted business dealings with whites. An 1889 sketch listed him as a partner in the Little Rock Electric Light Company and as a shareholder in other enterprises. At an 1888 statewide convention that had been called to discuss ways of attracting capital and labor into the state, Gibbs was a member of the predominantly white delegation from Little Rock; there were also a few black delegates among delegations from some other large towns.

Other blacks also became prominent. When a Little Rock streetcar company underwent financial reorganization in 1895, Chester W. Keatts, the cofounder of the Mosaic Templars of America, a black fraternal order that operated a burial and life insurance program, was named receiver of the bankrupt firm. Keatts posted personal bond of forty thousand dollars and spent over a year disposing of the corporation's properties. He earned special commendation from the bench and the general satisfaction of all concerned.

Commercial associations worked to dissolve opposition to black political participation and officeholding. When Mifflin Gibbs was nominated by the Republican state central committee for the appointment as consul to Tamatave in 1897, the Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, the state's most influential newspaper, actively supported him. "Judge Gibbs," the paper editorialized, "is one of the best educated colored men in the south and a man of advanced and progressive ideas. He is a leader among his race, well known throughout the

27 Gibbs, Shadow and Light, 199; Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, January 5, 26, 1888. While only a few blacks joined and participated in these organizations, all of them had some black members.

28 Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Pulaski, Jefferson, Lonoke, Faulkner, Grant, Saline, Perry, Garland and Hot Spring Counties, Arkansas (Chicago and St. Louis, 1889), 797.

29 Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, February 1, 2, 1888.

country, and commands the respect of all who know him. He has lived in Arkansas many years and has acquired much of the world's goods through business tact and honest effort. He is worthy of the position not only on account of the influence he commands in the ranks of his party, but by reason of his fitness for the place."

One might suppose that white responses to local federal appointments would not have been so positive. However, such was not always the case. In 1901 John E. Bush, a cofounder of the Mosaic Templars and a prominent black Republican, faced opposition in his bid for reappointment as receiver of the U. S. land office in Little Rock. Politics never made stranger bedfellows than in the coalition formed against Bush, which consisted of some white elements within the Arkansas Republican party and blacks from Boston, Massachusetts, who distrusted his close relationship with Booker T. Washington. In his successful fight to retain his office, Bush secured endorsement from Washington, from Powell Clayton, Arkansas's Reconstruction governor and Republican chieftain, and from Little Rock's white business establishment. The mayor, board of trade, bar association, every bank in the city, and "business houses without exception" all forwarded letters of recommendation to President Theodore Roosevelt. With this backing from Little Rock whites, Bush won his fight and held his position until 1912; he was one of the few southern black officeholders to escape the "black broom" movement of President William Howard Taft to reduce Negro influence in Republican affairs.\(^3\) While Bush's confirmation in 1901 has gone almost unnoticed by historians, it occurred just two years before the much-publicized Indianola, Mississippi, affair in which President Roosevelt closed a rural post office because of white protests against a new black postmistress.\(^3\)

The relatively broadminded attitude of urban white leaders regarding the Gibbs and Bush appointments was apparent in cases involving elective offices and participation by blacks in political affairs. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s the Democratic \textit{Arkansas Gazette}, though not always consistent, often acted as a force for moderation in state politics. The newspaper, for example, gave strong endorsement to compromise arrangements in the black-majority plantation coun-

---

\(^{31}\) Little Rock \textit{Arkansas Gazette}, March 23, 1897; Tom W. Dillard, "Golden Prospects and Fraternal Amenities": M. W. Gibbs's Arkansas Years," \textit{Arkansas Historical Quarterly}, XXXV (Winter 1976), 307–33.


ties of eastern Arkansas whereby black Republicans and white Democrats divided local offices among themselves. In an 1889 editorial it unreservedly condemned schemes for disfranchising black voters in these areas. “The charge that good government cannot be secured . . . [without disfranchisement] in counties where there is a large colored vote is not true,” it declared. “Jefferson county, with an immense negro majority, has as good a local government as there is in the south. So has Chicot, Phillips and other large negro counties in this state. They have adopted the plan that justice and common sense suggests . . . “”

Significantly, the same outlook prevailed in Little Rock’s local politics. Although Democrats in the capital city gerrymandered to reduce Republican and third-party representation on the city council, they were nevertheless anxious to corral as many black votes as possible. John Gould Fletcher, Little Rock’s first Democratic mayor after Reconstruction, kept four to six blacks on the municipal police force during his administration from 1875 to 1881 and filled other minor posts with blacks. Blacks served on the city’s police force throughout the nineteenth century. Furthermore, in Little Rock at least, the responsibilities of black policemen were not confined to the black population. In 1903, after learning that a black patrolman in nearby Pine Bluff was suspended for having arrested (and allegedly abused) a white suspect, the Arkansas Gazette observed, “The administration of city affairs at Pine Bluff seems to be chock full of novelties. . . . We do not remember to have heard before of a policeman’s sphere of activity being limited according to race, color or previous condition of servitude.”

In addition to soliciting black support through patronage, white Democrats in Little Rock not only urged blacks to organize their own separate “colored” Democratic clubs but sometimes encouraged them to join and participate in the city’s Old Hickory Club. On occasion local Democrats even placed a black candidate on their ticket. In 1890, faced by the threat of a new coalition of traditional Republican voters and rebellious third-partyagrarians and encouraged by racial dissension within Republican ranks, Little Rock and Pulaski County

34 Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, February 3, 1889.
35 Ibid., August 30, 1883, June 10, 1903; Little Rock City Directory, 1881–82 (Little Rock, 1881), 17–18; Little Rock City Directory, 1900–01 (Little Rock, 1900), 63. This is not to deny that Little Rock’s black policemen faced discrimination; as a group they were underrepresented on the police force and do not appear to have been promoted to officer rank. In these respects Little Rock’s experience conforms to that of other southern cities of the period. See Dennis C. Rousey, “Yellow Fever and Black Policemen in Memphis: A Post-Reconstruction Anomaly,” Journal of Southern History, L1 (August 1985), 357–74.
36 Little Rock Sun, n.d., in Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, July 15, 1888; Arkansas Gazette, August 18, 1888.
Democrats nominated and elected attorney Benjamin F. Adair to the Arkansas House of Representatives. He was the only black Democrat to serve in the General Assembly until 1973.\textsuperscript{37}

It is noteworthy that the Little Rock Democrats’ relatively open stance persisted in some measure into the early twentieth century. As late as 1901 the Democratic city central committee rejected a “white primary” proposal by a vote of eighteen to five. So far as is known, the capital city’s Democrats did not exclude blacks from voting in their primaries until instructed to do so by higher state party officials in 1906.\textsuperscript{38}

Of course, business associations and political dealings did not usually translate into social relationships. Occasionally, however, even here caste lines were breached. During his first month in office President Theodore Roosevelt invited Booker T. Washington to dinner in the White House. The resulting furor caused Opie Read, a nationally known humorist of the time, to recall another dinner given twenty years earlier in Little Rock. The dinner in question occurred in 1880 during Ulysses S. Grant’s extensive tour of the South. Grant’s southern visit had been transformed into a lavish ritual of sectional reconciliation, a means by which southern whites could demonstrate their renewed loyalty to the American government. In Little Rock a “grand parade” attended by fifteen to twenty thousand people had been staged for the former Union army commander, and in the evening a “grand banquet” was given in his honor at the city’s stylish new Capital Hotel. A reporter for the New York \textit{Graphic} described the banquet as “the largest and most sumptuous entertainment . . . that the local Delmonico had ever attempted, and . . . in every respect a magnificent success. Plates were laid for 250 guests. Everyone came in festive array and the solid men of Little Rock felt themselves proud to be numbered in the chosen band.”\textsuperscript{39} Among those present were Little Rock mayor John Gould Fletcher, Arkansas governor William R. Miller, and prominent politicians of both parties and leaders of Little Rock society.

Also “numbered in the chosen band” was Mifflin Gibbs. Read, then an editor of the \textit{Arkansas Gazette}, recounted that he had been seated next to the black Arkansan at the dinner. The person who had originally been asked to respond to the toast “American Citizenship—Its Duties and Responsibilities” had been unable to attend, and Read had


\textsuperscript{38} Little Rock \textit{Arkansas Gazette}, February 10, 1901; February 1, 1906.

\textsuperscript{39} New York \textit{Graphic}, April 26, 1880.
arranged with the toastmaster for Gibbs to talk in his stead. When Gibbs spoke, "every guest was spellbound, and General Grant was astonished." Read made note of Gibbs's "earnest speech" in the next day's issue of the Arkansas Gazette, and he subsequently stated that the black man had "scored the greatest oratorical triumph of the affair."  

Gibbs's attendance at the Grant banquet was an aberration from the prevailing etiquette, and he possibly was invited because of the special nature of the occasion. Other indications, however, point to a weakening of traditional racial mores in Arkansas's urban communities. Again the most convincing evidence comes from contemporary blacks. The statements of one young black man, John Gray Lucas, typify the optimism and pride in their communities that many felt. A native of Marshall, Texas, Lucas grew up in Pine Bluff and attended the public schools and the Branch Normal College of the University of Arkansas there. He continued his education in the North and was graduated from the Boston University School of Law in 1887, the only black in a class of fifty-two and one of seven who were graduated with honors. While a law student, Lucas was interviewed by the Boston Daily Globe and asked specifically about racial conditions in his hometown. According to the reporter, Lucas appeared to bubble over with enthusiasm. He pointed out that in Pine Bluff three of the eight city councilmen were black and that blacks filled the offices of county coroner and circuit court clerk; furthermore, half of the police force and half of the local justices of the peace were black. Negroes often served on juries, he noted, and a black man owned the city streetcar system. On public carriers throughout the state "there was neither distinction nor separation [by race] . . . ." Contrasting the lot of Massachusetts blacks with conditions in Arkansas, Lucas wondered aloud "why more colored young men from the North did not make Arkansas their home. It is an inviting field for them, and a grand opportunity to make something of themselves." Lucas, inci-

---

40 Gibbs, Shadow and Light, 356–58 (third quotation on pp. 357–58; fifth quotation on p. 358); Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, April 17, 1880 (fourth quotation).
42 Boston Daily Globe, December 6, 1886. The black streetcar line owner mentioned was Wiley Jones, who in 1894 sold his streetcar company to another streetcar syndicate. Jones also owned the Pine Bluff city race track and was a principal organizer of the Colored State Fair, which met annually in Pine Bluff. In addition, he became a major shareholder in the White Sulphur Springs Land and Improvement Company, along with several leading white Pine Bluff businessmen. See Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Palaski, Jefferson, Lonoke, Faulkner, Grant, Saline, Perry, Garland and Hot Spring Counties, Arkansas, 798–802; Haley [comp.], Afro-American Encyclopedia, 234, 289; and James W. Leslie, Land of the Cypress and Pine (Little Rock, 1976), 127–29.
dentally, followed his own advice. Upon graduation he returned to Arkansas where he was appointed assistant prosecuting attorney and subsequently U. S. commissioner in the eastern district of the state; running as a Republican in 1890, he was elected a state representative from Pine Bluff and Jefferson County.

Lucas's reactions and attitudes were corroborated by an incident that occurred in 1889 when Frederick Douglass visited Arkansas. During his stay in Little Rock, Douglass was a guest at the home of Dr. J. H. Smith, a well-known black dentist who treated white as well as black patients. A white reporter for the *Arkansas Gazette* was sent to interview Douglass but seemed almost more impressed by the elegance of Dr. Smith's residence than by the distinguished visitor. The journalist described Dr. Smith himself as "a colored man, but with so complete a polish in manners, dress, language and appearance that he may be truly called a negro in name only." The comment, while unintentionally rude, was revealing; personal wealth and individual refinement seemed to have had a marked effect on at least one white's perception of blacks.

The most persuasive testimony concerning racial progress came from Douglass himself. When queried by the *Gazette* reporter about his reception in the Arkansas capital, Douglass proved as outspoken as ever, complaining bitterly about having been refused service in a local restaurant. By and large, however, he seemed favorably impressed. When asked about the attitudes of local blacks he responded: "It gives me a great deal of pleasure to find that the race, as a whole, enjoys a large degree of contentment at the relations existing between it and your own race. I find that the colored man is a citizen in feelings as well as in law, and he talks Little Rock and Arkansas with a great deal of enthusiasm, and expresses a profound faith in the future greatness of your city and state."

What is one to make of the above statement? Was Frederick Douglass simply dissembling, simply attempting to flatter and placate a white reporter and his white readership? Was he merely trying

---

43 Lucas, however, had left the state by 1893, following passage of a new series of disfranchisement laws and a new railway separate coach law, all of which he fought against while serving in the legislature. After moving to Chicago he opened a law office on Dearborn Avenue and by the 1920s was being referred to in the press as the "black millionaire lawyer." During the Great Depression of the 1930s Lucas, like many blacks, left the Republican party and became a Democrat. He was appointed assistant United States attorney of Cook County by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1934. Gatewood [ed.], "Negro Legislators in Arkansas, 1891," p. 224; and Kousser [ed.], "A Black Protest in the 'Era of Accommodation',' 155–56.

44 Little Rock *Arkansas Gazette*, February 6, 1889.

to protect local blacks from possible white reprisal? Were local blacks themselves deluded and deceived as to the realities of racial conditions in their community? Or had urban race relations actually been improving for blacks in significant ways because of changing white attitudes? One place to search for answers to these questions is in the new attempts to mandate legal segregation on common carriers in Arkansas, particularly on urban streetcar systems. The history of these efforts helps to explain why de jure segregation requirements increased after 1890, even though caste attitudes among urban whites had likely weakened. Indeed, there is good reason to believe that it was precisely because of such weakened attitudes that de jure segregation was imposed.

Rapid black advancement in urban locales generated both negative and positive responses from white city dwellers. Why then, one wonders, was it the former that, beginning in the 1890s, increasingly prevailed? One possibility is simply that the more blacks progressed, the more status anxieties among many urban whites intensified. To some degree, however, the explanation can be found in the attitudes and reactions of rural Arkansans. None of the forces that served to lessen caste attitudes within the towns existed to any appreciable extent in country districts, where inherited outlooks still held sway. Rural visitors to the cities were disturbed and frightened by the erosion of caste lines and by the recognition accorded middle-class blacks.

Indicative of growing rural hostility was a book published at Little Rock in 1900 and entitled *The Status of the Negro* by Charles E. Nash, a physician and former plantation owner and overseer from eastern Arkansas. The plot concerns Jim, a rural black, who travels to Little Rock and is corrupted. He meets several urban middle-class blacks, a minister, a teacher, and a politician—all of whom are portrayed as pretentious, empty-headed buffoons. Under their pernicious influence Jim is driven to steal a red bandanna from a store, is arrested, and forced to work off his fine on the city road gang. He profits from his experience, however, for when a black attorney offers to plead his case for five dollars, he replies, "I got no five dollars, neider can you get me outen dis scrape, kase de white man put me in, an' he got mo' sense dan you." Properly chastened, Jim, a wiser man, returns to his cabin on the plantation.

At one point in the dialogue the author, speaking through Jim, compares the town Negro to an ornery mule who leads all the farm livestock into the corn patch every night, eats his fill, and then eludes capture the next day by hiding in the woods. What should be done with him? The mule cannot be killed, it is admitted, "kase he good to
work, an' make plenty for hisself an' de whole family." Rather, "keep dat mule in de lot. Make de fence ten rails high, an' stake-an'-rider it so he can't git out; den he be useful an' can't steal. Den let de white folks keep de nigger at home, an' don't turn 'em out to come to town and steal people's stuff. Keep him in his place; dat's what I say." The upshot of the tale, given in Dr. Nash's own voice, is that "Jim goes home satisfied that freedom does not free him from either punishment or labor, and settles himself down to make a living by honest work, and learns the lesson to keep away from the city."

Rural white resentments and status insecurities, so transparent in Nash's story, were exacerbated because, during the same decades in which the lot of some urban blacks improved, the lot of many rural whites deteriorated. White farmers became restless not only because they found themselves denied full racial exclusiveness but also because they were increasingly caught up in the same economic mechanisms—the crop lien, verbal contracts between sharecroppers and landlords, and the convict-lease system—used to subjugate rural blacks. By the late 1880s and early 1890s, large numbers of angry farmers threatened to "kick over the traces," leave the Democratic party, and bolt toward new independent agrarian third parties, such as the Union Labor and Populist organizations.

Alarmed Democrats attempted to prevent rural defections and sent a great many farmer delegates to their party's state convention in 1890. Probably expressing more wish than firm conviction, the Democratic Arkansas Gazette observed, "To see so many farmers in Little Rock making a State ticket is a good omen and goes to show in advance how the farmer vote will be cast at the September election." Rural influences were reflected in portions of the state platform that denounced the McKinley tariff and called for the free coinage of silver, antitrust legislation, state regulation of railroad rates, an end to land grants to railroads, the allocation of public lands exclusively to settlers, and curtailment of state leasing practices that placed "honest workmen in competition with paupers and convicts." Reform of state election laws was also endorsed.

One other action may also have demonstrated the temper of the meeting. Although other measures had passed calmly and without

---

46 Dr. Charles E. Nash, The Status of the Negro, From a Negro's Standpoint, In His Own Dialect—A Country Negro Visits the City and Takes in the Surroundings—His Conversation After His Return (Little Rock, 1900), 12 (first quotation), 10 (second quotation), 14 (third quotation).


48 Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, June 18, 1890.
undue commotion, a resolution that demanded separate coaches for white and black passengers on railway lines brought the delegates to their feet. "Amid the wildest cheering and the greatest enthusiasm" and "with a whoop and a hurrah," the convention sent the separate coach resolution through to adoption.49

Responding to the appeal of the Democratic state convention, the Arkansas General Assembly enacted the following year a new Jim Crow law requiring separate coaches on the railroads. Paradoxically, though the device of segregated coaches was new, its intent and purpose was to renew the ancient distinctions of caste, distinctions that were already in an advanced state of decay in the cities and towns. Arkansas's urban middle-class black leadership understood the import of the separate coach proposal and organized a vigorous though unsuccessful effort to defeat it. Two mass protest meetings were held in Little Rock, and of the twelve black lawmakers then serving in the General Assembly, all but one voted to reject the separate coach bill. Their chief spokesman in the Arkansas House of Representatives, John Gray Lucas of Jefferson County, noted pointedly, "We are opposed to the measure because it seeks to pand, not to the convenience of the people, but to gratify and keep alive a prejudice among our citizens, fast becoming extinct."50

It is noteworthy that the black protest effort was fairly and fully reported in the capital city press. Although they disagreed with his stance regarding the separate coach bill, the Arkansas Gazette and the Arkansas Democrat characterized Representative Lucas as "a fluent debater," "unquestionably the ablest and most brilliant representative of his race in the state, and it might be truthfully said (for his age) in the South," "a born leader of his people" for whom in 1891 there was "certainly a bright future in store . . ." The Gazette devoted three and one-half columns to a verbatim report of Lucas's chief proposal, more space than was given to any other speech delivered during the legislative session. The newspaper also gave front-page coverage to both of the Little Rock protest meetings and related the proceedings in detail and almost sympathetically—one speaker's address, for instance, was described as being "characterized throughout by conservatism and eloquence." Ironically, however, this extensive, even respectful, coverage may have been harmful to the black cause. Some country editors were incensed by the meetings of

49 Ibid., June 18 (first quotation), 19 (second quotation), 1890.
the "colored ladies and gentlemen' of Little Rock," and one editor predicted that their actions would only serve to hasten the passage of the separate coach bill.51

Following adoption of the separate coach law, twelve years elapsed before the Arkansas legislature initiated any new segregation legislation. The election of Jeff Davis as governor in 1900, however, prepared the way for additional expansion of the Jim Crow system. Davis campaigned as the champion of the "one-gallus" farmer against the "high-collared roosters" and "squirrel-headed editors" in Little Rock and rosted the "vested interests" at crossroads debates and rustic barbecues throughout the state. As chief executive, he proposed stricter regulation of railroads and insurance companies, supported a series of dramatic antitrust prosecutions against out-of-state corporations, and called for increased assistance to state charitable institutions and public education. There was, though, more than a little demagoguery in his methods, and the victories he claimed to have won for the people of Arkansas were sometimes more rhetorical than real. Political observers in Davis's own day disagreed about his sincerity and character, and later historians and biographers have been equally divided.52 Since few of his personal papers have survived, the question of his motivations may never be fully resolved.

If Davis was in fact a progressive, there can be little doubt that his progressivism was basically meant for whites only: he showed scant concern for the state's black citizens, and he did not hesitate to use race prejudice for his own benefit by sometimes employing the crudest racial epithets in his stump speeches and election campaigns. Moreover, at least as important as such verbal abuse was Davis's endorsement in 1905 of an abortive effort to fund Negro educational programs only with tax revenues collected from blacks—a plan that, if adopted, would almost have destroyed educational opportunities for the state's black schoolchildren. Although bills incorporating the proposal had been before the legislature since the 1890s, Davis was the first chief executive to support the idea.53

In retrospect, Davis's career symbolizes a conjoining of the two principal threads of the agrarian revolt in Arkansas, Populist eco-

51 Kousser [ed.], "A Black Protest in the 'Era of Accommodation,'" 151, 155; Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, January 20, 28 (fifth quotation), 31 (first quotation), February 21, 1891; Little Rock Arkansas Democrat, April 1, 1891 (second, third, and fourth quotations).
nomic unrest and Democratic support for white supremacy. Davis, though admittedly a dubious heir to the agrarian movement in Arkansas and never an authentic Populist (he was distrusted by many of the old radicals), still provided a kind of cathartic relief for his rural followers by excoriating Yankee trusts and by lashing out at urban commercial elites. By weaving together at least the rhetorical flourishes of Populism and traditional Democratic racial appeals, he gave political expression to the discontent of rural Arkansans. It is hardly surprising that pressures for expansion of the Jim Crow system arose during his administration or that the legislature passed a new series of segregation statutes during his tenure in office—although, curiously, Davis seems to have taken no direct part in promoting such legislation.54

The most important and far-reaching of the Davis era segregation enactments was a law passed in 1903 requiring separation of white and black passengers on the state's urban streetcar systems. The streetcar segregation act initially encountered considerable resistance. Paradoxically, opposition came not only from avowed segregationists but also from those who opposed segregation. Introduced by Reid Gantt of Garland County, a representative from the spa city of Hot Springs, the streetcar bill was modeled after similar measures already in force in Virginia and Georgia.55 It provided that conductors assign white and black passengers to different portions of the streetcar coach; the demarcation line between the races could be adjusted at will by the streetcar conductor. For example, if three-fourths of the passengers aboard were white, three-fourths of the coach could be allotted for the exclusive use of the white race, or vice versa. Passengers who refused to move to another seat when so ordered by the conductor could be ejected; the especially recalcitrant passenger could be subjected to a twenty-five-dollar fine. Adhering to the "separate but equal" formula, the bill also prohibited discrimination in the quality or convenience of services offered the two races.56

The legislative history of the streetcar segregation act demonstrates differences between urban and rural racial mentalities. As early as 1891 the Arkansas General Assembly had considered a proposal to extend provisions of the separate coach law for railroads to streetcar lines. Opponents had defeated this measure and had successfully deflected attempts in later legislative sessions to institute streetcar segregation requirements.57

55 Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, April 5, 1903.
57 Arkansas House of Representatives Journal (1891), 286. For instance, Representative
By 1903, however, it was obvious that some sort of concession to the growing demand for segregation would have to be made. Soon after the General Assembly convened, Jasper N. Ferguson of Lonoke County introduced a bill directing streetcar companies to provide separate coaches (or single cars divided by permanent, immobile partitions) for whites and blacks. Ferguson's proposal was referred to the House Committee on Cities and Towns, where it was quietly buried.58 Instead, the committee, very possibly responding to the streetcar interests, reported out the more moderate bill of Representative Gantt as a substitute. This latter measure did not require separate coaches but only contemplated segregation within the same car, with the line dividing the races to be moved at the discretion of the conductor. When brought before the full house, the Gantt bill gained easy acceptance. Because of the operation of a number of disfranchisement laws enacted during the preceding decade, there were no black representatives present to offer opposition, and the measure was unanimously adopted without discussion.59

In the Senate the bill encountered difficulties. A large group insisted that it did not go far enough and supported alternative legislation by Senator Joseph C. Pinnix of the Thirtieth District (Clark and Pike counties) that would have prescribed separate coaches for each race.60 Several senators hotly denounced the Gantt proposal, variously characterizing it as a "farce," "a miserable makeshift," and "a mere shadow on its face" that "would provoke fights and disturbances." Senator Paul G. Matlock of the Sixteenth District (Lincoln, Cleveland, and Dallas counties) capsuled their viewpoint and described the Gantt bill as "a mere subterfuge . . . gotten up to defeat the Pinnix bill, and endorsed by the streetcar people themselves." Matlock acknowledged that his own South Arkansas plantation, farming, and timber district contained no streetcar lines. He noted, however, that his constituents rode on streetcars when they visited the cities, and he felt he "reflected the views of a vast majority of the people in saying they wanted the separate coach."61

One of the strongest pleas for the moderate approach was made by Senator George Sengel of the Twenty-eighth District (Sebastian

A. G. Gray of Independence County had introduced an unsuccessful streetcar segregation bill in 1901. See Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, March 6, 1901.

58 Arkansas House of Representatives Journal (1903), 69, 106, 186.


60 Arkansas Senate Journal (1903), 314; Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, March 7, 1903.

61 Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, March 7, 1903.
County). Sengel openly admitted that he was a stockholder in the street railway company of Fort Smith and based his appeal on economic arguments. He urged his colleagues to "adopt laws of this character in mild doses" and asserted:

The street car systems of our state are not profitable property. I have been interested for several years in a system in Fort Smith and have not yet been the happy recipient of dividends. Help us to develop our cities and in doing so we are willing to meet you halfway, but don't strike us too hard at one fell blow. Separate seats will please everybody, and enable the car companies to exist. To use separate cars means confiscation of the street car companies, for it means double capital and double employment of help.62

A motion deferring action on the Gantt bill until the Pinnix bill could be considered was defeated by a vote of thirteen to fourteen. On the concluding tally the Senate finally approved the Gantt bill twenty-five to four. The former issue was decided on a rising vote, without a roll call being taken or recorded. Newspaper accounts indicate, though, that every senator from the districts encompassing Little Rock, Pine Bluff, Hot Springs, and Fort Smith, Arkansas's four major urban centers, supported the Gantt legislation; those reported as endorsing the Pinnix bill all represented predominantly rural counties.63

Interestingly, while this legislative contest was transpiring, the Isidor Newman and Sons banking house of New York and New Orleans was negotiating purchase of a controlling interest in the Little Rock Traction and Electric Company, which operated that city's streetcars.64 The directors of the Little Rock concern were all influential business and civic leaders. W. E. Hemingway, its president, was a former associate justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court, and George B. Rose, its secretary, was possibly the best-known attorney in the state. Other men of weight connected with the traction company were J. Fairfax Loughborough and D. H. Cantrell, law partners of Hemingway and Rose; H. G. Bunn, the incumbent chief justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court; J. A. Trawick, the streetcar line's general manager; and W. J. Tharp, the line's cashier.65 Circumstantial evidence suggests that the traction company management and direc-

62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.; Arkansas Senate Journal (1903), 314.
64 Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, December 12, 1902; January 8, 25, April 4, 18, 1903.
65 Ibid., April 5, 1903. Hemingway was the brother of William L. Hemingway, the Democratic treasurer of Mississippi who was sentenced to five years in the penitentiary for embezzlement of state funds. Jackson (Miss.) Daily Clarion-Ledger, February 27, March 20, July 3, and December 4, 1890; Woodward, Origins of the New South, 70; interview by the author with Linn Hemingway Bealke, great-nephew of Justice Hemingway, Fayetteville, Arkansas, March 5, 1964.
tors may have discreetly endeavored to secure a defeat of the Pinnix bill. In his previously cited address, Senator Sengel had also remarked that "nearly all our street car systems are owned by local capital and they are hoping to interest foreign capital to help them in extending and improving their systems, but [the latter] will not do so if the Pinnix bill is passed." Probably not coincidentally, the agreement transferring ownership of the Little Rock street railway was consummated on the very day that Governor Davis signed the Gantt legislation.66

The enactment of the Gantt streetcar law probably pleased Little Rock's businessmen, but it was unpalatable to many blacks. Recalling the events of 1891, Little Rock's middle-class black leadership launched a spirited protest. On March 11 a mass rally convened at the Negro First Baptist Church in the capital, with the participants demanding that the legislature defeat any new segregation proposals. The principal speakers were Judge Mifflin Gibbs, John E. Bush, physicians D. B. Gaines and G. W. Hayman, and J. H. Reed, pastor of Wesley Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church, and W. A. J. Phillips, pastor of Bethel A.M.E. Church.67 These men were representative of the leaders of black streetcar boycotts in southern cities.68 They were established spokesmen, well known for their moderation and advocacy of interracial cooperation. Indeed, several were close associates of Booker T. Washington, the apostle of racial accommodation.69 Their protest did not signal the appearance of a sudden militancy among blacks; rather, it represented a desperate attempt by essentially conservative leaders to preserve a relatively open status quo, now seriously threatened.

In addition to protest meetings and resolutions, blacks also tried economic coercion. When the streetcar law took effect on May 27, 1903, black boycotts of the car lines were organized in Little Rock, Pine Bluff, and Hot Springs.70 The Little Rock blacks even formed a "We Walk League" whose members agreed to submit voluntarily to fines whenever they relented and rode the streetcars. The president of

66 Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, March 7, April 5, 1903.
67 Ibid., March 12, 1903. For biographical sketches of these men see D. B. Gaines, Racial Possibilities as Indicated by the Negroes of Arkansas (Little Rock, 1898), 78–80, 92, 94, 149. Also see W. A. J. Phillips, Autobiography of W. A. J. Phillips (Little Rock, 1916).
69 Washington wrote the introduction to Mifflin W. Gibbs's autobiography and lent his assistance to John E. Bush in the latter's successful effort to be reappointed receiver of the U. S. land office at Little Rock. See Gibbs, Shadow and Light, v–viii.
70 Little Rock Arkansas Democrat, June 2, 9, 1903; Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, May 28, June 19, 1903; Pine Bluff Daily Graphic, May 28, 1903; Pine Bluff Weekly Graphic, June 27, 1903; and Indianapolis (Ind.) Freeman, June 13, 1903.
the league was said to be a porter in a Fifth Street saloon, suggesting that the boycott was supported by blacks of all social classes even though it had been launched by middle-class leaders. Initially, black traffic on the street railways dropped by over 90 percent in Little Rock, and it appears to have fallen precipitously in Pine Bluff and Hot Springs as well; in all three cities the boycott continued for weeks. Black ministers actively rallied their congregations' support, and black newspapermen appealed to their readers. The Voice of the Twentieth Century, edited by students at Shorter College, a black school in North Little Rock, told its readers:

Let us be obedient to the law. Let no one get on the cars and attempt to undo what the Legislature of the great state of Arkansas has done. This law was intended to humiliate negroes and every time a negro man, woman, or child goes to the back seat or rides on the cars while this iniquitous law is in force, the negro is humiliated. Never mind about forming resolutions or arguing the merits or demerits of the affair with anyone. Simply stay off the cars. Stay off the cars. In spite of the drastic decline in black traffic, the management of the streetcar companies maintained their composure. Alleging that they had no choice but to enforce the law, they philosophically waited for the boycott to run its course. The white press evinced a similar attitude. The Arkansas Gazette retained its equanimity about the whole affair and punned: "The We Walk Club, organized by negroes in protest against the new streetcar law, is of the opinion that these are times that try men's soles." On the first day of segregated streetcars, the Arkansas Gazette conducted a survey of public reaction to the new system in Little Rock. Because most blacks were participating in the boycott effort, there were only a few black passengers traveling on the city's streetcars. There were, however, numerous objections lodged against the new segregation arrangements—from white patrons. The streetcar company's general manager, J. A. Trawick, related: "There has been no trouble reported today [from Negroes] on account of the putting into effect of the separate accommodations law. All the trouble we have had was from whites, who either did not know the law or were constrained to argue the point." Surprisingly, "nearly all . . . white women . . . when they were seated, refused to move without a pro-

71 Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, May 28, 1903.
72 Little Rock Arkansas Democrat, June 2, 5, 9, 1903; Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, May 28, June 19, 1903; Pine Bluff Weekly Graphic, June 27, 1903; and Indianapolis (Ind.) Freeman, June 13, 1903.
74 Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, May 29, 1903.
test. One told the conductor that she would report him to Mr. Trawick for making her give up her seat to a negro.\textsuperscript{75}

Several white men also resisted the enactment. One individual “tried to argue with the conductor that the law was not constitutional, but was told that that had nothing to do with the question, for he must get out of the negroes’ seats.” Another, described as “a prominent lawyer,” declined to leave his seat in the rear of a streetcar unless he could be shown an actual line separating the races. Only “the sight of a bluecoat” made him move.\textsuperscript{76}

Perhaps the most notable confrontation, designated by the \textit{Arkansas Gazette} reporter as “the incident of the day,” occurred on the Choctaw depot line:

A white man sat down in the rear of the car, and was asked to move up front. He refused to do so. The conductor explained that the seats were for negroes. Then the man said: “Well, I’ll stay here then. I would rather sit in the same seat with a negro than with a good many white people.” Then he waxed warm and broke forth in this wise:

“In fact, I would much rather trust my wife and children with a negro than some white people. The negro is all right, and I am for him.” As he still refused to move, the conductor handed him his nickel back, with the remark that perhaps it would be better for him to get off and walk, like the negroes were doing. He got off.\textsuperscript{77}

Complaints against the streetcar segregation requirements persisted for several days. For example, “Front-End Patron,” the anonymous author of a letter to the editor of the Little Rock \textit{Arkansas Democrat}, made the following tongue-in-cheek proposal:

Noticing the difficulties encountered by the street-car management in separating whites and blacks under the new so-called law, recognizing its impracticability . . . I would suggest that Manager Trawick have the front end of each coach painted white, the rear end black, and in the black end put up only advertisements of Red Raven Splits, Gold Dust Twins and a life-size picture of the author of the bill, to whom the manager is directed to issue [a] pass over the road on [the] rear end of [the] car whenever he visits the capital city.\textsuperscript{78}

Though such grumblings continued, eventually most whites acquiesced in the new order of things. Infractions of the streetcar law could cause a passenger to be ejected from the streetcar or to pay a fine, penalties that were probably sufficient inducements for compliance.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., May 28, 1903. The few blacks riding the streetcars reportedly were either letter carriers or women.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{78} Little Rock \textit{Arkansas Democrat}, May 29, 1903.

\textsuperscript{79} Little Rock \textit{Arkansas Gazette}, May 28, 1903; \textit{Acts of Arkansas} (1903), 178–80.
It would be easy to magnify the significance of urban white resistance to racial separation on Arkansas streetcars. No doubt many white passengers simply disliked changes in their habits. Some whites may have disapproved of separate accommodations because they did not want to give up their places to blacks. Yet at least a few whites seem to have protested because they believed the segregation law was unjust, and most whites appear to have regarded the new seating arrangements as unnecessary and uncalled for. It is difficult to believe that the white patrons did not understand the rationale behind segregated streetcars. Separation of persons by race had existed on the state’s railroads for twelve years and had occasionally been employed at public gatherings since before the Civil War.

Also revealing were the actions of the streetcar management. The traction owners, like many other urban businessmen, seem to have been more interested in maximizing their profits than in upholding traditional caste distinctions. After resisting legislative pressures for segregation for over a decade, they finally capitulated but even then succeeded in having segregation inaugurated in its mildest and least expensive form.

The response of Little Rock whites to segregated streetcars in 1903 indicates that there was no unanimous demand for extension of the Jim Crow principle into every aspect of daily life in the city. While it is undeniably the case that some impulses toward segregation existed within urban areas, what may have proved decisive was the reinforcement they received from without.

What final conclusions can be drawn in light of the above evidence? To begin with, the thesis advanced here—namely, that segregation legislation applicable to urban areas did not emanate entirely from the city (where, in Arkansas, race relations were promising) but often from rural areas where whites demanded that cities conform to rural views of proper race relations—is compatible with other previously offered explanations and descriptions of southern racial behavior. The thesis, if true, easily harmonizes with C. Vann Woodward’s central contention in The Strange Career of Jim Crow that, prior to the 1890s, an “era of stiff conformity and fanatical rigidity” had not yet “precluded all variety and experiment in types of interracial association.” As Woodward observed, “There were still real choices to be made, and alternatives to the course eventually pursued with such single-minded unanimity and unquestioning conformity were still available.” The example of Arkansas’s urban centers also lends credence to Woodward’s assertion that “on balance . . . the urban contribution to racial segregation in the South would seem to be less
impressive than the encouragement that city conditions gave to inter-racial contact, familiar association, and intimacy.\textsuperscript{80}

However, if the arguments presented here generally complement those of Woodward, they are not necessarily inconsonant with some of the ideas of his critics. In The Crucible of Race Joel Williamson has suggested that after the Civil War, still rankled by memory of military defeat, southern white men found their abilities to care for their families being eroded by their region's growing poverty. Williamson believes that they compensated for their economic powerlessness by stressing their role as protectors of white women, especially against black criminals and rapists, whose numbers were perceived to be increasing. The fury of the resulting backlash against blacks was intensified by the prevailing Victorian code of sexual morality, which left white males feeling either guilty or frustrated. If this interpretation is valid, it certainly helps to explain white rural anger against the more casual and flexible racial mores of the cities and rural insistence on strict observance of the color line within urban areas. Presumably, moreover, rural resentments were heightened by the comparative prosperity and affluence of the cities.\textsuperscript{81}

Even Howard Rabinowitz's perspectives are not completely incompatible with the viewpoints that have been expressed herein. As has been shown, some particular cases in Arkansas's urban centers do conform to the pattern he delineated. To acknowledge this, however, is not to concede, as Rabinowitz has argued, that "by 1890, before the resort to widespread de jure segregation, de facto segregation had replaced exclusion as the norm in Southern race relations. In the process the stage of integration had been largely skipped." Nor does evidence substantiate his claim that "for most whites the [individual and class] distinctions among Negroes were unimportant. The only difference that mattered was between blacks and whites."\textsuperscript{82} Findings from Arkansas simply do not support such sweeping generalizations.

\textsuperscript{80} Woodward, Strange Career of Jim Crow, 16, 44. The statement was made principally in regard to Richard C. Wade's Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820–1860 (New York, 1964). Focusing on selected antebellum southern cities, Wade observed that slavery there had crumbled under pressures of urban life. Alarmed masters responded with demands for new legal restrictions on slave activities and segregation ordinances that compelled separation of the races. Although Wade did not advance or pursue the idea, much of his evidence suggests that antebellum urban segregation came about in part because of pressures from rural planters. \textit{Ibid.}, 126–27. On urban white resistance to restrictive measures, especially from town merchants, see \textit{ibid.}, 253–55. For a general discussion of social tensions between planters and the urban bourgeoisie in one antebellum city, Charleston, South Carolina, see William W. Freehling, Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816–1836 (New York and other cities, 1965), 13, 23–24, 86, 177–79, 254.


\textsuperscript{82} Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the Urban South, 332, 336.
A final few questions remain: Was Arkansas in some way unique; were there special conditions in the state that might conceivably have made it different from other states in the South in regard to race relations? In The Strange Career of Jim Crow C. Vann Woodward hypothesized that after the Civil War blacks residing in the older, settled regions of the South, where the paternalistic traditions of the eastern plantation lingered, may have fared better than those residing in the newer states only then emerging from frontier life.83 Edwin S. Redkey has echoed this view in his study of black emigration movements in the South during the late nineteenth century.84 Nevertheless, as both this writer and J. Morgan Kousser have argued in previous articles,85 possibly the opposite may have been the case: blacks may have received more humane treatment and enjoyed more real opportunity in the less structured societies of the newer regions, where social relationships were less constrained by inherited mores, at least in their rapidly developing cities and towns. The more quick-paced advancement of blacks in such areas also explains why a noticeable backlash against blacks occurred initially in the newer states, which were generally the first to adopt, for example, separate coach laws for the railroads. Thus Arkansas's being a newer state of the western South could conceivably have affected its racial outlooks and practices. Of course, Arkansas was also to some extent a state of the upper South, which could have had a moderating influence.

Still, one suspects that the same process of urbanization that opened new avenues of advancement to blacks in Arkansas was having a similar influence throughout Dixie. Already, studies by John W. Blassingame and Dale A. Somers on New Orleans suggest that this was so.86 And such advancement had a strange impact on white racial attitudes: paradoxical as it may seem, the very phenomenon that heightened racial tension and intensified prejudice—that of rapid black economic and social mobility—also worked to erode prejudice. Admittedly, few urban whites living during the New South era ever embraced the fully articulated racial egalitarianism of such advocates as George Washington Cable or Lewis Harvie Blair. Yet pioneer liberals like Cable and Blair may have been less exceptional than has usually been assumed.87 Significantly, both men were products of the

83 Woodward, Strange Career of Jim Crow, 41.
87 At least one notable white Arkansan during this era openly expressed views approximat-
emerging urban, commercial New South culture of their day. Cable, though best remembered for his nostalgic romances of old Creole days, was a native of the cosmopolitan city of New Orleans; and Blair was a wealthy and successful Richmond businessman. While it is perhaps correct to say, as Woodward does, that "acceptance of their doctrines had to await the development of urban liberalism, which did not arrive in any force until the second quarter of the twentieth century," the seeds for such liberalism had already been planted.

The Right Reverend J. M. Lucey, a Catholic priest at Pine Bluff and a Confederate veteran, courageously denounced efforts to adopt a separate coach law in 1890–1891 and appealed for fair and equal treatment for blacks. Monsignor Lucey also served as secretary of the Board of Trustees of the Colored Industrial Institute, a Catholic vocational school for blacks founded at Pine Bluff in 1889. In later years he was an unusually outspoken foe of lynching. Little Rock Arkansas Democrat, January 24, 1890; Little Rock Arkansas Gazette, February 2, 1890; August 27, October 12, 1899; September 4, 5, 1901. See also J. M. Lucey, "The Catholic Church in Arkansas," Publications of the Arkansas Historical Association, II (1908), 448–49. On liberalism elsewhere in the post-Reconstruction South see Williamson, Crucible of Race, 85–107.

88 Woodward, Strange Career of Jim Crow, 47.