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THE CRUSADER



Cyril V. Briggs, Editor



A Facsimile of the Periodical
edited with a new Introduction and
Index by Robert A. Hill

A GARLAND SERIES

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THE
CRUSADER



September 1918 – August 1919



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INTRODUCTION

Racial and Radical: Cyril V. Briggs, THE CRUSADER Magazine, and the African Blood Brotherhood, 1918-1922

Until the publication of the present facsimile edition, scholars working on the history of World War I black radicalism, popularly known as the “New Negro” movement, have been unable to consult a comprehensive file of the *Crusader*, the magazine edited and published in New York City by Cyril Valentine Briggs. The crucial significance of the journal for the broader study of American radicalism has long been attested to: “The magazine seems absolutely essential for an understanding of the early Negro aspect of the American Communist movement,” allowed Theodore Draper, who at the time he made this statement, in 1958, was researching *American Communism and Soviet Russia: The Formative Period* (New York: Viking-Penguin, 1960; reprinted 1985). Draper offered the opinion that the file of the *Crusader* was “going to be of the greatest interest to other scholars in years to come.”¹

In the nearly twenty years that have elapsed since Draper made these observations, the study of Afro-American radicalism has experienced a veritable scholarly revolution. At the same time that this advance was taking place, however, scholars have been forced to depend on fugitive issues dispersed in various repositories for their knowledge of Briggs and the *Crusader*.² “[O]nly scattered copies of the *Crusader* survive,” the historian Philip S. Foner has lamented, adding that “most of what we know of the magazine published by Briggs and his associates during the years 1918-1919 comes either from reprints in other contemporary radical papers, mainly white Socialist journals, or extracts published in witch-hunting reports during the postwar Red Scare.”³ As could be expected, the result has been an unhappy combination of intellectual neglect and historical misconception.

The facsimile reprint edition of the *Crusader* that is now presented will close a major gap in the historical study of twentieth-century black radical movements. The essay that follows will attempt to dispel the accumulated myths and misinformation that surround both the political career of Cyril Valentine Briggs and publication of the *Crusader*.

The New Negro phenomenon that so startled America during and immediately following the First World War comprised a wide range of voices, all heralding the birth of a new era for black Americans and, more widely, for peoples of African descent worldwide. This intellectual and political ferment soon found significant expression in a major confluence of black publications that began making their

appearance during the Great War. "New Negro publications are not only expressive of the new spirit that has seized the race," declared one of the keenest observers of the phenomenon, "but they are exerting a tremendous influence in inspiring the people with the highest racial ideals and aspirations. They are inculcating into every Negro a sense of race pride and determination which is without parallel in the history of the race."⁴ The intellectual fountainhead of this journalistic ferment was Harlem, the rapidly burgeoning capital of the black world, known as "the Mecca of the New Negro."

The radical forerunner of these Harlem-based journals was Hubert H. Harrison's *Voice* ("A Newspaper for The New Negro") that began publishing on 4 July 1917, as the organ of the Liberty League of Colored Americans. "It was this paper," assessed Hodge Kirmon, "that really crystallized the radicalism of the Negro in New York and its environs."⁵ Shortly after appearance of the *Voice* came A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen's *Messenger*, in November 1917, as the moutpiece of socialism and trade unionism among blacks. August 1918 saw the appearance of the *Negro World*, the organ of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. The first issue of the *Crusader* reached the newstands that same month.

These four journals provided the principal articulation of the New Negro mood. But other voices were heard from as well. Joining the appeal for new dispensation were William Monroe Trotter's *Guardian*, the official Boston-based newspaper of the National Equal Rights League; William Bridges' *Challenge*; Hodge Kirmon's *Promoter*; Osceola MacKaine's *Commoner*; and W.A. Domingo's *Emancipator*. When taken together, this outpouring of political and social commentary far exceeded anything seen or heard since the days of the proliferation of black anti-slavery newspapers.⁶

Each of these journals represented a distinct political current within the general confluence of New Negro radicalism. Indeed, the task of distinguishing them one from another and establishing their precise relation to the larger New Negro phenomenon constitutes a major task of historical investigation. What distinguished the *Crusader* was its assimilation of black nationalism with revolutionary socialism. The fusion of what have historically been regarded as antithetical viewpoints accounts in no small measure for the continuing interest of scholars. It is also what gives the reissue of this facsimile edition of the *Crusader* such signal importance.

"Angry Blond Negro" was the phrase used by George W. Harris, editor and publisher of the *New York News*, to summarily describe Cyril Briggs. The phrase appears to have endeared itself to Briggs, who later employed it, near the end of his life, as the title of his projected autobiography.⁷ In essence, the phrase captured the highly paradoxical quality which characterized Briggs's career throughout.

Cyril Valentine Briggs was born, on 28 May 1888, on the tiny mountain island of Nevis (part of the recently independent state of St. Kitts-Nevis) that lies near the head of the Leeward Islands' chain at the outermost eastern edge of the Caribbean. The island derives its name from the Discoverer's description of the clouds surrounding Nevis Peak, which takes up almost the entirety of the circular island, as *las nieves*, or

“the snows,” when he discovered the island on his second voyage in 1493. He also named its sister island St. Christopher for his patron saint, which name the settlers who arrived from England in 1623, making it the first successful English colony in the West Indies, shortened to St. Kitts. Nevis is perhaps best remembered today as the birthplace of Alexander Hamilton, another founding father, who was born there in 1757.

Once dominated by great plantation houses, with one of the first and finest hotels in the Caribbean, Nevis receded, with the passing of slavery and King Sugar, into a becalmed backwater of empire, made up mainly of peasant farmers and fishermen who could barely eke out an existence from the island’s stony fields and the surrounding sea. Briggs was born and raised on the social margins of the island’s tiny landowning elite, the illegitimate son of Mary M. Huggins, a woman of color, and Louis E. Briggs, a white native of Trinidad who was the overseer of a remaining plantation at Gingerland. Extremely light in complexion as a result of this mixed parentage, Briggs would later in life become mistaken oftentimes for white. Such an endowment might have secured for him a relatively privileged place in the insular social order stratified on the basis of class and color, but the island had proven its inability historically to absorb the best and brightest of her young.

Briggs attended the Baptist primary school at Brown Pasture, but he walked out after a conflict with a teacher which resulted in his being sent “to be plastered,” in his words, by the principal. Next, he attended the Church of England school at St. John’s, but once again, he recalled, he received “short shrift.” From Nevis he was finally transferred to Ebenezer Wesleyan grade school on St. Kitts, where he finished schooling in 1904.

By the standards of the era, he received a good if thoroughly colonial education, which was, as he later satirically recalled, “aimed to turn out Black Anglo-Saxons, glorify whites, [and] denigrate Africans.” Underlying the process of cultural mimicry, moreover, was a deeper social mission which Briggs found symbolized in the poignant stanza from “All Things Bright and Beautiful,” the famous Church of England hymn for the young:

The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them, high or lowly,
And order’d their estate.⁸

Missionaries were not all of the same mind as far as the gospel according to colonialism went. Indeed, history records numerous instances where the political consciousness of the colonized first became awakened in the process of exposure to a countervailing gospel of redemption in the context of the here and now. This moment forms a crucial conjuncture in the history of colonial resistance. In the instant case, Briggs would later recall “working in the library of Baptist Rev. Price, eagerly reading Ingersol and a number of books on imperialism.” This intellectual antidote to the precepts of the colonial moral order thus supplied in the rhetoric of Robert

Green Ingersoll would nourish in Briggs a taste for radical ideas, in support of which he was to crusade throughout his mature life. As far as his attraction to Ingersoll was concerned, however, Briggs might have been drawn not only by the irreverent quality of “the great agnostic,” but also, by virtue of a personal handicap, through projection of a felt need to identify with the man acclaimed by Henry Ward Beecher to have been the “most brilliant speaker of the English tongue of all men on the globe.”⁹ From early in childhood, Briggs was afflicted with an uncontrollable stutter; indeed, as one close political acquaintance later disclosed, Briggs “stuttered so badly it was impossible to understand him or even to hold a conversation with him.”¹⁰ Briggs would forever be kept from mass political work because of his impediment, but whatever he lacked in regard to the spoken word, he more than made up for in the fluency and cogency of his written expression.

Another influence derived from a missionary figure that may have been important in his intellectual development was noted by Briggs in his autobiographical jottings. He recalled, albeit cryptically, the presence in Nevis-St. Kitts of a white missionary, referred to in the notes only as “Crawford a white missionary,” who apparently was linked in Briggs’s mind with the precept of “Thinking Black.”

Taken together, these two diverse sets of influences—agnosticism and free thought on one side, and racial self-assertiveness on the other—may help in part to explain Briggs’s later successful fusion of radical left-wing ideology with militant racial nationalism. His later embrace of these ideas might well have been regarded by him as an extension of the ideas he had earlier been introduced to in the West Indies by the Reverends Price and Crawford.

Similarly, it was in the West Indies that Briggs embarked upon his life-long career as a journalist. The year after leaving school he worked as a sub-reporter in the employ of the *St. Kitts Daily Express* and the *St. Christopher Advertiser*. Apprenticeship to the journalistic craft was relatively brief, however, since Briggs soon left St. Kitts to come to the United States. Briggs reported that he declined to accept a scholarship, during the period when he was still a student, due to the fact that he “was looking forward to [an] early departure for New York.” Briggs’s mother had earlier migrated to the United States from St. Kitts, leaving the son to be cared for by relatives until his schooling was completed. On 4 July 1905, a couple months after his seventeenth birthday, the young Nevitian stepped off the boat in New York City to join the expanding diaspora of West Indian immigrants entering the United States in the first decade of the century, when, it is estimated, the number of foreign born blacks in America went from 19,979 in 1890 to 20,336 in 1900 and then doubled in a single decade to 40,339 by 1910. Two-thirds of these black immigrants came from the Caribbean and circum-Caribbean.¹¹ Many of these early twentieth-century immigrants from the Caribbean would, in their time, contribute in significant ways to the Afro-American community in the United States, an influence that would reflexively benefit also the growth of West Indian national consciousness. “It is not beyond possibilities,” W.E.B. Du Bois speculated, “that this new Ethiopia of the Isles may

yet stretch out hands of helpfulness to the 12 million black men of America.”¹² The same sentiment was expressed by Fenton Johnson, whom Benjamin Brawley designated “one of the first of the Negro revolutionary poets.” Author of *Tales of Darkest America* (1920), among other volumes of poetry, Johnson began publication of the *Favorite Magazine* in Chicago in 1919: it contained, in the maiden December 1919 issue, an editorial entitled, “Credit is due the West Indian,” in which Johnson wrote as follows:

In every field of our American life we find the West Indian pushing ahead and doing all in his power to uphold the dignity of the Negro race. In every industry, in every profession, in every trade, we find this son of the islands holding aloft the banner of Ethiopia.

When the great day of our liberation comes, we will find the West Indian foremost in the ranks of those fighting with his armor on and his sword raised aloft. In fact, this Negro renaissance is due largely to the aggressive mind of our brother from the islands, and for it we thank him and his Creator.¹³

West Indians were not unconscious of their strategic role in the wider Afro-American community. “When the epic of the [N]egro in America is written,” declared Eric Walrond, the great prose stylist of the black literary renaissance from British Guiana, “it will show the West Indian as the stokesman in the furnace of [N]egro ideals.”¹⁴ It was this ideological cross-fertilization that would eventually produce the African irredentist or “Africa for the Africans” movement which Briggs’s *Crusader* helped to spearhead in the United States. Briggs addressed this issue in the very first issue of the magazine, wherein he announced: “The American Negro and the West Indian Negro are one in blood, one in achievement, and one in the aspirations for equal rights and opportunities. They are both of the seed of Africa.”¹⁵

In fact, one of Briggs’s fellow countrymen, George Reginald Margetson, was eventually to gain recognition as a forerunner of the Afro-American literary renaissance that crystallized after the First World War. Margetson was born in St. Kitts in 1877 but immigrated to the United States when he was twenty years of age. Author of *England in the West Indies* (1906), *Ethiopia’s Flight* (1907), *Songs of Life* (1910), he was best known for production of *The Fledgling Bard* and the *Poetry Society* (1916), a remarkable series of commentaries written in verse on the politics of the day and questions of interest to blacks.¹⁶

Little or nothing is known about Briggs’s activities immediately following his arrival in New York City. According to census figures, the entire Manhattan black community in 1910 numbered a mere sixty-thousand souls. However, it was a community possessing a uniquely pan-black flavor, with 65 percent of all immigrant blacks in the country contained in New York City.¹⁷ It would appear that Briggs developed social ties within the Afro-American community, as evidenced by the fact that, on 7 January 1914, after becoming engaged in Norfolk, Virginia, he married Bertha Florence Johnson of Talcott, West Virginia.¹⁸

Two years prior to his marriage, and in the same year that his wife-to-be moved to New York City, Briggs got his first break in the field of Afro-American journalism,

when he landed a job with the *Amsterdam News*, the small independent black newspaper started in 1909. It was through this association that the fledgling black weekly would, at the time of America's entry into the First World War, develop a position of major historic importance in the national black community. Meanwhile, the first assignment handed to the young apprentice journalist was that of society reporter; soon thereafter, he was promoted to the position of sporting editor and, still later, to that of editorial writer. "It furnished me," Briggs later remarked, "my first lessons in the drearily economics of Negro publishing."¹⁹

After three years of working for the *Amsterdam News*, Briggs resigned to become editor of the *Colored American Review*, an organ claiming to be the mouthpiece of Harlem's black business community and subtitled "A Magazine of Inspiration." It called for blacks to patronize "Negro Enterprises[,] For Herein Lies the Strength and Sinews of the Race, With all the Possibilities of a Successful Future."²⁰ The publisher was E. Touissant Welcome, a black real estate broker from Queens who billed himself as "president of Jamaica's pioneer colored realty firm," the name of which was the Frederick Douglass Home Building Company, Inc.

x With publication of the *Colored American Review*, Briggs first emerges as a defender of race in general and of the success of black business in particular. "The purpose of the COLORED AMERICAN REVIEW, apart from a dissemination of news and views," Briggs declared, "is to encourage the colored business man to greater efforts and to uncover the white rascals and their tools—traitors of our own race—who are operating their dishonest schemes in Harlem, seeking victims of their guile and misrepresentations among hard working colored people."²¹ Such caustic remarks, in espousing "manhood rights and race pride," were but a warm-up for Briggs's political emergence as the most extreme radical of the New Negro group. For the moment, the editorial was greeted with high commendation from Hubert H. Harrison, the black autodidact and author of "The Harrison Method of Simplified Education": on 4 October 1915, writing in care of George W. Harris's *New York News*, Harrison enthused:

All hail to you and your new magazine! It is great stuff! Just what we have needed for years. I sincerely hope that your hands may be upheld and strengthened and that you will rapidly become a power in the community.

Every person who respects himself and the race to which he belongs will give you "God speed!" So, here's my best respects to you, and may your shadow never grow less.²²

Shortly afterward Harrison was made contributing editor, but the appointment does not appear to have continued for long. Likewise, although the reason is still unknown, Briggs's editorship of the *Colored American Review* came to an abrupt end with the second issue. It is possible that Briggs's uncompromising stance was too radical for a business-oriented publication. Mitigating against this reading, however, is the fact that the magazine did publish, in the December 1915 issue, an unsigned editorial by Briggs, entitled "Race Rights in America," which could hardly have been surpassed for its radical tone.

Following his resignation from *Welcome's* magazine, Briggs returned to the *Amsterdam News*. It was disclosed, in the same year, that Briggs was engaged in writing a book with the somewhat mystifying title, "Arizonia," but no portion of this work has ever been traced.²³

In addition to journalism, Briggs was also active in the world of black entertainment. His original association stemmed, most likely, from his newspaper reportage of the Harlem theatrical and dramatic scene for the *Amsterdam News*. In 1915 he wrote glowingly of what soon became the "Lafayette Players," Harlem's first legitimate theatre group.²⁴ The owner of the famed Lafayette Theatre, the theatrical residence that gave the stock company its name in March 1916, would be one of the earliest financial contributors in the launching of the *Crusader* in 1918, pledging \$25.00 upon the appearance of the first number. "The [Lafayette] [P]layers are doing themselves and the race proud," declared Briggs.²⁵ Briggs makes mention, in his autobiographical notes, of three prominent members of the Lafayette Players who were presumably friends of his, namely, Abbie Mitchell, Clarence Muse, and Mrs. Charles Anderson. Briggs would eventually also pen a moving tribute at the time of the passing of the company's star performer ("Charlie Gilpin Dead," *Liberator*, 10 May 1930, p. 1). A notable feature of the *Crusader* was, indeed, the regularity and depth of coverage devoted to serious reviews of plays and other theatrical events in Harlem, all by way of encouraging, in Briggs's words, "the Negro drama."²⁶

In addition to involvement in the theatrical world, Briggs was also an accomplished exponent of, to use his words, "the modern dances introduced in that period by the Castles."²⁷ Briggs was referring to the famous cabaret dance team of Irene and Vernon Castle who, it has been claimed, "transformed the dance craze" by popularizing several "modern"-dance movements, many of which were inspired by the music of the outstanding black musician and bandleader, James Reese Europe. Briggs described this phase of his career as his "Dancing Master period." Indeed, while it is only speculation, it is possible that Briggs might have had a dancing part in the Lafayette Players' production of *The Octoroon* in January 1916.²⁸ Tall, handsome, and polished, Briggs was, culturally speaking, a protege of the Ragtime era as it swept toward its zenith amid the clouds of war.²⁹

"The world must be made safe for democracy" was President Woodrow Wilson's injunction in his address to the joint session of Congress, on 2 April 1917, calling upon the United States to declare herself a belligerent nation against Germany. It was in this American-launched international crusade for democracy—Wilson's demand "for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own government"—that Hubert H. Harrison in 1917 declared "the aims and ideals of the new Manhood Movement among American Negroes" were to be nourished.³⁰

That spring America underwent the first phase of war mobilization. On 5 June 1917, Briggs registered for the draft, although, much later on, he was to make the claim that he had "refused to fight for a democracy denied my people."³¹ While no evidence of any widespread draft resistance among blacks has been found, a sudden

disenchantment was perceptible following the race riot that erupted, on 2 July 1917, in East St. Louis.³² If Wilsonian rhetoric about democratic rights and liberties had raised the hopes and expectations of blacks for a change in racial attitudes on the part of whites, their hopes were soon dashed.

A consequence of this era of violent atrocities against blacks, starting with the East St. Louis race riot and culminating in 1919 with the infamous "Red Summer," was not only the emergence of a new generation of radical black spokesmen (the generation of 1917), but the creation of a popular constituency ready and willing to support a different kind of black leadership than that which had previously existed. As one of the New Negro spokesmen was to explain the desire for new leadership, "the [East] St. Louis riot demonstrated to every Negro that the lackey, cringing and conservative spirit was not a help to him, but a decided hindrance."³³

The touchstone of the new black militancy was the idea that blacks could fight back in defense of their lives and community, hence the use of the appellation "Manhood Movement" to describe the new outlook. Nowhere was the example of retaliatory violence more graphically displayed than in Houston, Texas, where black soldiers of the Third Battalion, Twenty-fourth Infantry, having mutinied against their white superior officers, on the evening of 23 August 1917 marched on the city of Houston, killing fourteen white civilians and seriously wounding eight others.³⁴ According to the *Messenger*, the incident signified what the limits were to the tolerance of black soldiers (and, by implication, of the larger black community) in the face of "the taunts, insults and abuses so unsparingly heaped upon them."³⁵ When thirteen of the court-martialed men of the Third Battalion were secretly executed by hanging, a wave of intense shock swept over the black community. A possible gauge of the widespread nature of the black response to the executions might be found in the following notice, no larger in size than a small index-card, that was passed from hand to hand in Little Rock, Arkansas, and found by the Bureau of Investigation (precursor of the FBI):

REMEMBER

Those thirteen Colored soldiers hung at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, met their tragic end because they dared to resent an insult offered to, and an assault made on a Colored woman, and the forty-one sent to prison for life found guilty of mutiny also dared to take into their own hands the defense of their race, and then resolve to help provide relief for their sorrowing and dependant families. Our race loyalty is now at stake.³⁶

The impact upon black Americans of the Houston riot and the martyrdom of the executed soldiers that followed in its tragic wake were not unlike the effect of the Easter Rising of 1916 in Ireland.³⁷ It is important to recognize this parallel, since New Negro radicals were extremely conscious of the Irish independence struggle and borrowed freely from its highly charged nationalist rhetoric. Thus, for example, on 30 June 1917 it was reported that "Herbert [Hubert] L. [H.] Harrison of N. Y. speaking under the auspices of the Liberty League in Boston suggested that the colored people rise against the government, just as the Irish against England[,] unless they get their rights."³⁸ Harrison could have been referring to only one thing: the Irish Easter Rising

of the previous year. What is especially noteworthy is the fact that his suggestion was uttered *before* the outrages committed against blacks in the East St. Louis riot. Harrison's Boston address followed by a day the historic mass meeting held in Harlem at the Bethel AME Church where Marcus Garvey, who was then still unknown, delivered the address that launched the UNIA in the United States. Indeed, according to Garvey, it was then that he was persuaded by the recruits to the nascent New York division of the UNIA who came out of this meeting to remain in the United States and not to return to Jamaica.³⁹

It is from the perspective of the Irish example that Briggs's often-referred-to editorial of September 1917, in which he called for a separate black nation within the territorial boundaries of the United States, takes on special significance. A few days after the newspapers published, on 31 August 1917, President Wilson's extended reply to the peace appeal issued by Pope Benedict XV, Briggs enquired, in the title of his editorial, "'Security of Life' for Poles and Serbs—Why Not for Colored Americans?" In his reply to the Pontiff, Wilson had affirmed that "peace should rest upon the rights of peoples, not the rights of governments,—the rights of peoples great or small, weak or powerful,—their *equal* right to freedom and security and self-government and to a participation upon fair terms in the economic opportunities of the world. . . ." The following was the bleak picture that Briggs offered readers of the New York black weekly:

Considering that the more we are outnumbered, the weaker we will get, and the weaker we get the less respect, justice or opportunity we will obtain, is it not time to consider a separate political existence? As one-tenth of the population, backed with many generations of unrequited toil and half a century of contribution, as free men, to American prosperity, we can with reason and justice demand our portion for purposes of self-government and the pursuit of happiness, one-tenth of the territory of continental United States.⁴⁰

Although it would never be productive of anything, Briggs continued over the next several months to consider the idea of a black autonomous state within the range of choices black Americans would be plausibly entitled to make when peace was negotiated. An *Amsterdam News* editorial of 15 May 1918, discussing the stand that black Americans should adopt at the war's end and warning that "foresight is to the race what the compass is to the ship," proposed, according to an American intelligence report, that "one [choice] is to claim and take a tenth part of the territory of the United States, seeing that they form a tenth part of the population."⁴¹

The first indication of a break in his preoccupation with the United States was occasioned by President Wilson's Fourteen Points speech before Congress on 8 January 1918. The emphasis given to the settlement of colonial claims by Wilson was a major highlight of the speech. The result, it would appear, was that Briggs began to entertain seriously the notion of self-determination in Africa. In a letter written to the *Globe* and entitled significantly, "Africa for the Africans," Briggs advanced the following proposal:

The very least that the white man can do with any semblance of fairness and justice is to give the franchise to the native inhabitants of the South African Union, independence to Egypt

(with all Anglo-Egyptian Soudan) and save the natives of Portuguese, Belgian, Spanish, and German Africa (at least!) from further enslavement and selfish and cruel exploitation, by establishing a free native state, under temporary (say, twenty years), international or American guidance, out of German East Africa, Portuguese East Africa north of the Zambesi River, British Northwest Rhodesia and Nyasaland, British East Africa and Uganda, the Belgian Congo, French Equatorial Africa, and Northern Angola (Portuguese), with the East African islands situate between the equator and the 22d degree of south latitude, including the whole of Madagascar.

This, while not an act of complete justice or full reparation to the Negro, would nevertheless supply, to the millions of dissatisfied Negroes in Africa and in America, "the opportunity for the enjoyment of genuine freedom, with free development and security of life," which are now denied them under the white man's governments.⁴²

Briggs's political conceptions at this point were beginning to expand outward from America to Africa. Late in his life Briggs was to speak self-critically about "the confusion and unreality in which I put forward the question [in 1917] of a separate American Negro nation."⁴³ The problem is to trace the exact stages through which Briggs evolved beyond the "unreality" of his prior position to one that mirrored the supervening reality of Wilsonian self-determination in the colonial sphere.

Briggs was undoubtedly sensitive to the thinking of other influential black spokesmen on this question of the application of Wilson's program. Indeed, Briggs's idea of "a free native state, under temporary . . . international or American guidance" bore a strong and distinct resemblance to the proposal made a couple months earlier by W.E.B. Du Bois. In an article in the *Survey* for 10 November 1917 entitled, "The Negro's Fatherland," Du Bois called for "a great free central African state [to be] erected out of German East Africa and the Belgian Congo" at the termination of the war. More resonant still was Du Bois's brief editorial statement, in the *Crisis* of January 1918, on "The Future of Africa":

This war ought to result in the establishment of an independent Negro Central African State composed, at least, of the Belgian Congo and German East Africa and, if possible, of Uganda, French Equatorial Africa, German Southwest Africa, and the Portuguese territories of Angola and Mozambique. Such a state should be under international guarantees and control.⁴⁴

Briggs would undoubtedly have been aware of Du Bois's proposals. Moreover, the idea of international supervision was one that had been circulated even earlier by two young black socialists, A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, in their booklet *Terms of Peace and The Darker Races*, published in August 1917, which advocated an "International Council on the Conditions of Darker Races." Randolph and Owen also made the statement that "Africa should exist largely for the Africans."⁴⁵ These proposals indicate that application of the self-determination concept to Africa, in some form or other, actually preceded Briggs's pronouncement of mid-January 1918.

At the time that Briggs wrote his "Africa for the Africans" letter, however, he was undoubtedly responding to the specific peace proposals that President Wilson had enunciated in his speech before Congress on 8 January 1918 (the famous "Fourteen Points" speech). After calling for observance of open covenants, freedom of

navigation, equality of trade, and guaranteed disarmament, Wilson advanced to the following fifth point:

Free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the population concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the Government whose title is to be determined.⁴⁶

With this declaration, and without any idea of the consequences, President Wilson immediately set in motion among black Americans a broad outpouring of interest in the postwar African settlement. “[P]ractically the entire Negro press utilized Wilson’s Fourteen Points,” Briggs was to recall, “to press the fight against jimcrow oppression and by quoting his point on self-determination gave the question wide publicity in the Negro community.” Robert Lansing, the American secretary of state, observed somberly in December 1918:

The phrase [self-determination] is simply loaded with dynamite. It will raise hopes which can never be realized. . . . In the end it is bound to be discredited, to be called the dream of an idealist who failed to realize the danger until too late to check those who attempt to put the principle into force. What a calamity that the phrase was ever uttered! What misery it will cause!⁴⁷

By basing adjudication of the principle of “sovereignty” on the premise of “the interests of the population concerned,” the American president appeared to hold out before the Afro-American population the tantalizing prospect of official sanction for a post-war settlement based on application to Africa of the principle of self-determination.⁴⁸ New Negro opinion-makers were given the perfect platform, and one that appeared to have official legitimacy, upon which to mount, for the duration of the war and afterward, a highly sustained propaganda offensive for including the political voice of Afro-Americans in shaping the terms of peace.

From January 1918 onward the question of Africa became one of ever increasing saliency for the emerging Afro-American political agenda. For Briggs, specifically, it meant that his earlier goal of a separate black state was rapidly overtaken by, and subsumed within, a far wider program of racial self-determination. Writing about the “Aims of The Crusader,” in November 1918, Briggs allowed that “*The Crusader* dedicates itself to the doctrine of self-government for the Negro and Africa for the Africans.”⁴⁹ The idea of an autonomous state for blacks within the United States lingered on for the next year and a half, but finally, in July 1920, Briggs explicitly rejected it as “unsatisfactory both to the Negro and the white man.”⁵⁰ The idea was not heard of again until it was revived in 1924, though not by Briggs, but by the New Negro ideological mentor, Hubert H. Harrison, in his capacity as promoter of the “International Colored Unity League,” with the declared objective of having set aside a section of the United States for exclusive occupation by blacks who would, in Harrison’s words, “then have an outlet for their racial egoism.”⁵¹ When Briggs denounced Harrison in 1931 for “his degeneration,” we are left to wonder if this was not partly the reason for the condemnation.⁵² As we shall see, however, still more ironic turns were to be made in the political genealogy of black self-determination.

Launched in August-September 1918, the *Crusader* had the avowed purpose of spearheading a racial crusade, as Briggs told it, "to help make the world safe for the Negro."⁵³ The actual title of Briggs's journal reflected the highly idealistic tenor of the time, stemming from the view of the war as an international crusade. The personification of moral leadership in the waging of this life-and-death crusade and in the quest for peace was, of course, the president of the United States.⁵⁴ Strong echoes of the selfsame crusading spirit and rhetoric were also present in Briggs, particularly in the employment by him of phrases such as "the War begun for Negro Freedom throughout the world," "the Fight for the Negro's Rights," "the fight for World Justice for the Negro," "the fight for world justice and unity of the Negro Race," as well as in his statement supporting American participation in the war:

The CRUSADER MAGAZINE is going to help the United States win the war by urging active support of our people, and The CRUSADER MAGAZINE is going to INSIST that the Negro be rewarded for his work for *democracy and civilization* [emphasis added].⁵⁵

The dual slogans that Briggs emblazoned on the cover of the maiden issue of the *Crusader*—"Onward for Democracy" and "Upward with the Race"—bore out the concept of combined national and racial patriotism, even though the former was made pointedly subservient by Briggs to the latter. An earlier formulation of this subordination of nation to race was provided in Briggs's declaration that "Negroes who have not the rights of American citizens . . . are therefore Negroes first before they are anything else."⁵⁶

Strict postal censorship legislation (the Espionage and Trading with the Enemy Act) hampered the freedom with which black newspapers could report upon and express dissatisfaction with the treatment meted out to blacks during wartime. But Briggs, along with other black editors, became adept at evading the ever threatening presence of the censor. This was confirmed by the official most directly involved in monitoring the black press. "[T]hese colored editors have a certain talent for spreading a seditious feeling without uttering any actually seditious words," he confessed. In the case of the *Amsterdam News*, however, described as "always the worst of the colored newspapers," the official acknowledged that "it has a peculiar talent for saying the most fervently patriotic things in the most irritating unpatriotic manner." The postal official correctly grasped the priority assigned the racial factor over national allegiance, when he observed: "Despite occasional protestations of patriotism on the part of this newspaper, it is clearly to be seen where its first feelings of 'patriotism' lead it."⁵⁷

Appreciation of the subtlety of the political disguise employed editorially by black newspapers seems merely to have increased the level of vigilance on the part of the postal censor. After first coming to the attention of the postal authorities in March 1918, for example, at which time it was recommended, "this paper will bear watching," each issue of the *Amsterdam News* was subjected to the most thorough scrutiny by the Translation Bureau (Bureau M-1) of the Post Office. The result was

that suppression of the paper was frequently sought on the ground that it was deemed to be seditious and unpatriotic and “to exist principally for the purpose of stirring up race feeling.”⁵⁸

The idea of the *Crusader* originated not with Briggs but with the West Indian merchant, Anthony Crawford, who wrote to Briggs on 24 January 1918, following publication of the latter’s two letters in the *New York Globe*, with an offer “to help finance an organ—especially suited to your propaganda of ‘Africa for the Africans’—to educate the caucasian in African History.” Race patriotism was what Crawford had identified in Briggs’s published writings, seeing him as “one capable of turning the hearts and faces of the race, with pride, towards Africa.” In a follow-up letter to Briggs of 25 February 1918, Crawford revealed a further source of inspiration:

In these days when the Jewish People are working for a united Israel and Palestine, I feel it my duty to do something towards supporting ONE VOICE in all America calling for Africa for the Africans.⁵⁹

For his “noble donation of \$200,” which led to the founding of the *Crusader*, and for such sentiments of “Race Patriotism,” Anthony Crawford’s name was placed at the head “upon the roster of Ethiopia’s roll of honor.”

Strong support was also given the infant journal by the fraternity of black Harlem journalists and publishers. A second sum of \$200 was loaned, on equally generous terms, by W.H. Willis, manager of the Colored Amateur Billiard Players’ Association, who would also shortly become proprietor of the Bee Hive Printing Company, which at the start of the *Crusader* was also responsible for its printing.⁶⁰ As president of the company, Willis also offered office accommodation to many New Negro radicals who established headquarters for their publications in the same building known as the Beehive Building. Briggs also acknowledged the support received from Edward H. Warren, managing editor of the *Amsterdam News*, “whose broad-minded, manly attitude made possible the wide advertisement of The *Crusader* and its purpose.” What it concretely translated into was later assessed by Briggs “an important factor in the rapid growth of the magazine’s circulation, to wit, that we had the list of the field agents of The *Amsterdam News*, many of [whom] were known to me personally.” It was the support of these agents which, in turn, induced others “to push the magazine.” Thus, when in the course of WPA interviews in the 1930s Briggs propagated the notion that the *Crusader* was started on its publishing career in the aftermath of his political rupture with the *Amsterdam News*, he was not only in error: he committed a grave injustice against the black weekly’s staff and agents who contributed significantly to the early success that the *Crusader* achieved.⁶¹

The *Crusader* was also the beneficiary at the start of its career of valuable promotional help from other West Indian New Negro journalists, including Hubert H. Harrison, Anselmo Jackson of Harrison’s *Voice*, and R.L. Dougherty, sporting editor of the *New York News*, prior to becoming sporting and dramatic editor of the

Amsterdam News. “We are satisfied with the warmth of our reception in the States,” Briggs proudly informed his foreign readers in the magazine’s second issue; in truth, the *Crusader* could hardly have asked for a brighter beginning or greater approval.⁶²

The person with the distinction of being the first subscriber, “while yet *The Crusader* was but a literary expression, and subsequently helped greatly in the staging of the First and Second Liberty Dances,” was the founder and manager of the successful Spartan Braves basketball team, Robert L. Douglas. Born in St. Kitts, British West Indies, the ever popular Bob Douglas, as he was known to all, migrated to the United States in 1900, five years before his fellow countryman, Cyril Briggs. Employed for a number of years as a doorboy, Douglas witnessed his first basketball game in 1903: “[W]hen I saw that basketball game,” he declared, “I thought it was the most remarkable game ever.”⁶³ The Spartan Braves was the basketball team of the Spartan Field Club, which also fielded teams in soccer, cricket, and track. In the period between 1906 and 1910, New York City’s black basketball teams came together under the umbrella organization of the black-run Metropolitan Basketball Association. An important member of this group of pioneers was the sports writer R.L. Dougherty, who figured prominently also among the group of “Race Patriots” that gave the *Crusader* its successful start.⁶⁴ In 1923 Douglas renamed the Spartan Braves team the “New York Renaissance Big Five” after the Renaissance casino and ballroom, a two-story red brick building on the corner of 138th Street and Seventh Avenue in Harlem, which was the home court of the “Rens,” as they became popularly known by their fans, throughout basketball’s dance-hall era. Winner of the first professional basketball tournament on record, the Rens vaulted to become what some believe was the greatest basketball team of its time and were acclaimed, according to the official history of the game, “the best basketball team of the 1930s.”⁶⁵

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As an ardent fan of the game, Cyril Briggs was to make reportage of the black basketball scene a highlight of the *Crusader*, going so far as to name his own “All-Negro All-Star Five.” Although overlooked in the historical accounts of the period, contemporary sports writer Romeo L. Dougherty allowed that black basketball ranked as “our chief pastime during the fall and winter months.”⁶⁶ It was in this climate of flashing brilliance that the amateur spirit of the club teams began to give way. Briggs refers to it, in his autobiographical notes, as “THE BASKETBALL FIGHT . . . THE FIGHT FOR THE SOCIAL AND ATHLETIC CLUBS IN HARLEM,” “the coming of professional basketball vs. the social and athletic clubs [of] Alpha, Spartan, St. Christopher, Salem-Crescent.”

In the battle that erupted over the question of professionalism during the season of 1920-21, Briggs took it upon himself to try to enlist Hampton Institute as part of what he called the “Fight to Keep Sport Clean.” Specifically, he tried to persuade Hampton to cancel games scheduled with Will Anthony (“Little Napoleon”) Madden; formerly the guiding hand of the St. Christopher’s team, had taken the best of the St. Christopher players to form the Incorporators.⁶⁷ The position of Hampton Institute was a strategic one, since it was, according to one authority, “probably the only

college that had a gymnasium large enough to accommodate a game on a regulation court and seat a thousand spectators.”⁶⁸ Although the attempt was ultimately futile, Briggs managed to obtain the “ready acquiescence” of Paul Robeson, then a young Columbia University law student residing in Harlem. While a student at Rutgers University, Robeson had the distinction, among many other notable athletic accomplishments, of being the star collegiate basketball center.⁶⁹ The collaboration between the two men would mark Briggs’s first meeting with Paul Robeson. In all probability, and more importantly, it represented Robeson’s first encounter with a member of the Communist party, the prelude to a political association that would eventually grow to substantial proportions.

Another outstanding athlete whose support Briggs enlisted in the fight against the growing influence of Madden’s professional team was James H. Ravenell, former hundred-yard-dash champion for Greater New York high schools, who accompanied Briggs on the trip to Hampton. In addition to his athletic qualification, Ravenell had served as chief clerk with the “colored” Quartermaster Corps attached to the 92nd Division in France.⁷⁰

In retrospect, Briggs’s attempt to stem the decline of the amateur teams was, inevitably, a losing proposition. For Briggs, however, the fight was as much about basketball as it was about the nature of the clubs in the social life of the Harlem community.

“Not only have we been something as
against the claim that we have been nothing,
but we have been everything. History is
all of us, the record of our rise, our glory,
and our civilization. . . .”

George Wells Parker
The Children of the Sun

At the beginning of 1919, the *Crusader* announced to its readers that it was the “Publicity Organ of The Hamitic League of The World.” Although it would continue in this appointed role for two years (January 1919–December 1920) or more than half of its publishing existence, there has been a paucity of comment in the scholarly literature on the significance of this early partnership. Part of the reason for the silence stems from the preoccupation of scholars with the functioning of Briggs’s “African Blood Brotherhood” as the first black auxiliary of the American Communist party. But perhaps an even more fundamental reason for this lack of inquiry has been the absence of a comprehensive set of the *Crusader* for scholarly research, a problem that has been felt most especially where the early issues of the journal are concerned. The result has been tantamount to an omission from the historical literature of the major involvement of Briggs and the *Crusader* in the spread of racial consciousness nationally and internationally, and an emphasis on their role in communist mobilization of blacks.

As the vehicle for the new and insurgent "Race Patriotism," the pages of the *Crusader* awarded special attention to the propagation of other "patriotic" currents of thought among blacks. This reciprocity achieved its strongest expression in the scope that Briggs gave to the views of George Wells Parker, founder and guiding light of "The Hamitic League of the World." The impact of Parker's Afrocentric thought upon Briggs and the *Crusader* was manifest and immediate. Briggs's "Race Catechism," a highlight of the *Crusader's* maiden issue, was a distillation into simple formulae of the central idea to be found in George Wells Parker's earlier series of articles, "The Children of the Sun," namely, the belief that the African was the greatest race of history and "the real founder of human civilization." "No race can lay claim to such glory as can the African race, and when the truth is known, as it must be known some day, all other races will bow to it, not because they wish, but because truth is a tyrant that admits of no falsity," Parker confidently declared.⁷¹

Revised and published in booklet form by the HLW in October 1918, *The Children of the Sun* stood out even then as a major canonical text in the developing black nationalist tradition.⁷² The impact of George Wells Parker's erudition and eloquence of language on New Negro intellectual consciousness still remains fully to be estimated. One provisional measurement can readily be found by noting the influence of his poem, "When Africa Awakes," that appeared in February 1919 in the *Crusader*, upon the title of Hubert H. Harrison's 1920 book of the same name. Parker was born 18 September 1882, the son of Abraham W. Parker of Petersburg, Virginia, and Augusta Bing of Charleston, South Carolina. After moving to Omaha, Nebraska, the Parker family rose to become one of the best established black families of that community. The son attended Creighton University where he was a medical student until his junior year, 1909-10. After dropping out of medical school, Parker joined forces with Rev. John Albert Williams, in September 1916, as co-editor (later contributing editor), and for a time business manager, of the Omaha *Monitor*. Besides writing, Parker was active as an insurance agent, real estate broker, and naturopath. He played an active role in assisting blacks relocating in Omaha during the Great Migration of 1916-17. He quit the *Monitor* in June 1919 and a few years afterward moved to Chicago where he was employed as an agent with the Lion Bonding Insurance Company.⁷³ Parker wrote, in December 1920, to J.R. Ralph Casimir in Dominica, West Indies, advising him of the following:

Within the next sixty days you will receive under second class mail a prospectus of the H.L.W. [Hamitic League of the World] magazine which will appear this spring. There will be absolutely nothing upon its face to indicate that it is being put out by our people. But after reading the entire prospectus and studying it carefully, you will begin to understand what will be behind the efforts. One of the aims of the League is to spread the truth concerning us and what we mean to say is that we are going to spread it. But we are going to spread it so subtly, that no one, not even our people themselves, will realize the source.

We have long contemplated this method for the reason that the people whom we wish to reach with the truth (besides [our] own) cannot be reached with race papers and magazines. Hence we are going to get out a magazine which THEY WILL READ. And you will acknowledge that we have worked wisely when the time arrives.⁷⁴

J.A. Rogers, the indefatigable sleuth of the racial ancestry of great men, would in due course credit Parker's *The Children of the Sun* with providing him with "much perspective and valuable leads."⁷⁵ Parker suffered a mental collapse around 1926-27 and was committed to the Chicago State Hospital where he died on 25 July 1931.

Exactly how Parker and Briggs came into contact with each other is unclear. It is possible that the intermediary was John E. Bruce ("Grit"), the venerable Afro-American journalist and Pan-African broker. Noticeable among the members listed as belonging to the League in its first appeal for enlistment appearing in the December 1918 *Crusader* was J.E. Casely Hayford, the well-known Gold Coast nationalist and long time friend of John E. Bruce.⁷⁶ Once again, we can detect in the forging of this link Bruce playing his role as Pan-African impresario *nonpareil*. When a New York branch of the HLW was organized in July 1919, moreover, we find listed among the names of members John E. Bruce, Arthur Schomburg, Mrs. Augusta Waring, E. Latimer, Anselmo Jackson, and Cyril Briggs.⁷⁷

Founded in early 1917, the HLW was revived in the winter of 1918-19 after suffering a halt to its activities due to the war. Its declared purposes were

To inspire the Negro with new hopes; to make him openly proud of his race and of its great contributions to the religious development and civilization of mankind and to place in the hands of every race man and woman and child the facts which support the League's claim that the NEGRO RACE IS THE GREATEST RACE THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN.⁷⁸

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Numbered as being among "the original founders of the League" were John E. Bruce and Cyril V. Briggs, but it is impossible to determine if this statement referred to the 1917 founding group or the founders of the reconstituted 1918-19 league. If it did refer to the former, their relationship would have extended backward in time to well before the initial publication of the *Crusader*.

At any event, by December 1918 Briggs was being listed as vice-president of the league. The same *Crusader* advertisement identified the magazine's editorial offices, at 2299 Seventh Avenue in New York, as "Eastern Headquarters" of the HLW. In similar fashion, the organizer of the league's British Guiana branch, G. McLean Ogle, was also the *Crusader* representative in that country.⁷⁹

In later testimony, Briggs described the relationship with Parker and the HLW as having been based on "a modus operandi by which we would support each other in the work we were doing," meaning they would each push the publications of the other in their respective spheres.⁸⁰ In this manner, Briggs perhaps was able to garner additional subscriptions for his *Crusader*, at the same time that the sales of *The Children of the Sun* would have been increased. Moreover, the link with Parker and the HLW imparted to the *Crusader* a distinctively Ethiopianist flavor, thereby lending credence to the magazine's claim to be the authentic voice of New Negro patriotism. A further reinforcement of the Ethiopianism of the *Crusader* was the series of articles contributed by the Jamaican divine, James N. Lowe, entitled "A Revealed Secret of the Hamitic Race," starting in December 1919 and continuing until July 1920.

Nevertheless, well before Briggs dropped the designation of the *Crusader* as the "Publicity Organ of the Hamitic League of the World" at the end of 1920, the basis of the partnership had crumbled. Although it lingered on in name, the relationship faded at the moment that Briggs turned toward the working-class as the revolutionary solution to the problem of racial oppression.

Throughout the first nine months of the publishing life of the *Crusader*, Briggs continued his employment of many years standing with the *Amsterdam News*. The parting of the ways occurred sometime in June 1919 when Briggs resigned his combined positions of editorial writer, city editor, and sporting editor with the black weekly. At the time Briggs stated that he had "decided to devote his entire time to *The Crusader*".⁸¹ The truth of the matter, according to Briggs's later testimony, was that he resigned "in protest against the publishers' attempt to censor my editorials, following their intimidation by government agencies."⁸²

The publishers had been advised by the New York Postmaster that the issue of 12 March 1919 had been submitted for consideration as to its mailability, under the terms of the Espionage Act, and that, in consequence, copies of the issue had been held up awaiting instructions as to their disposition from the solicitor of the United States Post Office. The offending item, in the eyes of the Post Office official responsible for newspaper surveillance, was the editorial denouncing "The League of Nations," in which it was stated that "judging the projected League by its covenants and mandatory plans it is not easy to differentiate between the League of Nations and a League of Thieves banded together for the protection of their thefts." The official adjudged the editorial "generally as michievous as bumptious."⁸³

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Although the decision of the Post Office solicitor was to release the issue for mailing, the affair was what set in motion the political alienation that precipitated Briggs's resignation from the newspaper. It was shortly after the detainment by the Post Office that Briggs sounded off in the pages of *The Crusader* with pointed advice under the caption, "A Slogan For Negro Editors," to the effect that "this paper comes out weekly but not meekly!"⁸⁴ The editor of the *Amsterdam News*, Edward A. Warren, had been among the select group of invitees who attended the "Conference of Colored Editors," summoned to Washington, D.C., on 21 June 1918, "to assist the government in winning the war, and more especially to furnish advice as to how the morale of the colored people might be made more effective for this purpose."⁸⁵ The resultant declaration issued by the black conferees calling upon the black community to support the war effort, it seems plausible to assume, gave the authorities definite political clout with black editors.⁸⁶ Indeed, by December 1918 the Post Office's Translation Bureau was noticing that "all the negro papers are more careful than they used to be," though the trend toward restraint was attributed to the fact that "lynchings are fewer."⁸⁷

While official influence cannot be discounted, on the basis of the documentary evidence it appears that the Post Office's letter to the *Amsterdam News* publishers was sufficient in itself to do the trick. Such a capitulation, if this is what it was, did

represent a major turnaround from the time when the Post Office's surveillance unit, on the basis of the issue of 22 May 1918, had declared that the *Amsterdam News* "continues to be the most objectionable of all the negro publications."⁸⁸ In fact, shortly after arriving at this assessment, the Post Office held up the mailing of the 29 May 1918 issue pending a decision of the Post Office solicitor who declared it nonmailable.⁸⁹ Another delay followed in quick succession of the 12 June 1918 issue, though the decision of the Post Office was in time to accept the issue for mailing.⁹⁰

Issues of the *Amsterdam News* were thus held up on at least two previous occasions, one of which included actual suppression by the postal authorities, before the publishers were notified of the detainment of the 12 March 1919 issue. From the evidence presently available, there is no indication that the two earlier instances of censorship led to any muzzling of Briggs by the publisher.

According to Briggs's later autobiographical notes, his second of "two confrontations with federals" came when the Post Office summoned him for an interview regarding the appearance, in the April 1919 *Crusader* issue, of his exposure of the ill-treatment suffered by black soldiers at the hands of their white officers in France, especially as it pertained to their "neglecting wounded Negro-Americans on the field and in the hospitals and in giving prior aid to slightly wounded enemy prisoners over badly wounded Negro heroes."⁹¹ "My inquisitors suggested," Briggs later recounted, "that I should be eulogizing Tuskegee's Moton instead."⁹² Briggs could not be intimidated, however; he declared in an editorial on the subject in the withheld *Amsterdam News* issue of 12 March 1919 that "Fear of consequences has not been allowed to influence the detailed presentation of these facts."⁹³

What was the cause of this fear? As we have seen, the Post Office's exercise of postal censorship May-June 1918 had not caused the publishers to take fright or to attempt to censor his editorials. What had changed? What was it that now made Briggs's fiery denunciations appear so threatening in the eyes of the publishers? The answer was the Red Scare and the climate of repression that it had unleashed. By sundering the relationship between Briggs and the *Amsterdam News*, the way was now cleared for Briggs to become eventually, in the later words of an intelligence official, "one of the extreme radical leaders among the Negroes," by linking a militant race consciousness with political radicalism in the struggle for black liberation.⁹⁴

The purpose of this summary has entirely failed of its mark if it has not made clear the fact that the negro is rapidly being made strongly race conscious and class conscious. . . .

Robert Adger Bowen, United States Post Office,
Translation Bureau⁹⁵

In the August 1919 issue of the *Crusader*—i.e., the issue immediately following announcement of his separation from the editorial staff of the *Amsterdam News*—Cyril Briggs apprised his readers of the reasons "why the Negro is turning to

radicalism and making cause with those who are waging war against the powers that are despoiling him."⁹⁶ The statement came by way of his response to the investigative raids of the New York State Legislature's Lusk Committee that had recently taken place. It was also part of his answer to the question, "Why should not the Negro be a radical?" As if to confirm the prognosis, the Military Intelligence Division in that same month made note of the fact that the *Crusader* was being "recommended by radical leaders," although it did not say exactly what "radical leaders" were being referred to.⁹⁷ Briggs was thus no stranger to the world of radicalism at the moment of striking out on his own.

Retracing the exact course that Briggs steered toward revolutionary politics, in addition to nailing down an accurate chronology of the process, is far from easy. It is one with many pitfalls, having perplexed historians and commentators for years. Indeed, researchers have assayed various scenarios for Briggs's political transition, with the result that the subject has become progressively entangled in a web of myths, most of them spun from whole cloth. It would be wearisome to attempt to identify and correct all of the erroneous information thus disseminated; what we propose instead is to recast Briggs's progressive evolution placing it within a frame of reference that coheres and comports with authenticated data.

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A major conceptual problem that must be faced at the very outset, however, is the ideological and temporal separation imposed by existing accounts between Briggs's organization of the African Blood Brotherhood and the start of his involvement with the American communist movement. By keeping these two processes mutually separate, historians have failed to comprehend the unfolding of what was, in reality, a simultaneous and organic process of political radicalization, even if the phenomenon appeared to express itself as two different processes. Thus, Theodore Draper, in his revisionist attack on what he regards as CP "legend," insists that "the Brotherhood was organized in 1919 *in complete independence* of the Communist party [emphasis added]," and he places at a distance of "[a]bout two years later" the Communist winning over of the Brotherhood's top leaders. As we shall attempt to show, Draper's assumption that "the Brotherhood was organized before there were Negro Communists" was erroneous, thus misguiding his attempt to present the evolution of their relationship.⁹⁸

When asked by Draper just when he joined the Communist Party, Briggs stated that he joined "before the Palmer raids. . . . In fact, I am rather sure that was the case."⁹⁹ That would place the date of his joining at sometime *prior* to 2 January 1920, the date of the dragnet raid directed by Attorney General Palmer and J. Edgar Hoover that spanned more than thirty cities and resulted in the arrest of between five and ten thousand persons presumed to be alien members of the Communist party and the Communist Labor party.¹⁰⁰ The first Palmer raid, carried out against the office of the Union of Russian Workers by federal agents, took place on 7 November 1919, so it might be possible that Briggs joined the communist movement before this first raid rather than the climactic nationwide raid of 2 January 1920.

With the later of the two parameters thus fixed, it is possible to mark a point in time for the start of Briggs's movement toward political radicalism. "My interest in Communism was inspired by the national policy of the Russian Bolsheviks and the anti-imperialist orientation of the Soviet State birthed by the October Revolution," Briggs recalls.¹⁰¹ From this statement it seems plausible to deduce that it was the manifesto of the founding congress of the Communist International adopted at Moscow, 2–6 March 1919, containing as it did the major declaration of the regime's anti-imperialist stance in world politics, that attracted Briggs. The manifesto powerfully resonated with Briggs's own anti-imperialist views, the expression of which had caused the 12 March 1919 issue of the *Amsterdam News* to be detained by the United States Post Office as a result of its editorial explicitly denouncing the proposed League of Nations as a "League of Thieves." From this perspective, it is possible that the timing of the offending editorial and the manifesto of the new Communist International might have been, after all, more than a mere coincidence.

The manifesto's analysis of the relationship between the war just concluded and the colonies ("The last war, after all a war against the colonies, was at the same time a war with the aid of the colonies") was also entirely consonant with the experience of blacks with which Briggs and other radicals of the New Negro movement were already intimately familiar. "As a consequence," the manifesto went on to declare, "we witness a series of open rebellions and revolutionary ferment in all colonies." In place of the Wilsonian concept of self-determination, what the manifesto offered was the idea of the overthrow of colonial domination and exploitation. The manifesto heralded this new era of colonial revolution with the ringing statement, "Colonial slaves of Africa and Asia! The hour of triumph of the Proletarian Dictatorship of Europe will also be the hour of your liberation."¹⁰²

Briggs enunciated the same principle of linkage, in August 1919, in an editorial defending "the Negro . . . making cause with those who are waging war against the powers that are despoiling him." In the September 1919 issue, Briggs exclaimed: "And still they wonder at Bolshevism! At direct action by the people for the betterment of conditions that are fast becoming intolerable."¹⁰³ Briggs grew even bolder in the issue immediately following (October 1919), when he declared his defiance of the anti-Red campaign. No angrier editorial ever appeared in the pages of the *Crusader*. Under the caption "Bolshevist!!!" Briggs asserted:

This epithet (Bolshevist) nor any other holds any terrors for us. If to fight for one's rights is to be Bolshevists, then we are Bolshevists and let them make the most of it!

The editorial concluded by declaring its defiance of the magazine's detractors and by enunciating the exigency of a policy of alignment with radicalism. "And for the further information of the asses who use the term so loosely," Briggs openly declared, "we would not for a moment hesitate to ally ourselves with any group, if by such an alliance we could compass the liberation of our race and the redemption of our Fatherland."¹⁰⁴

Throughout the fall of 1919 Briggs used the editorial columns of the *Crusader* to laud Bolshevism and to argue the case for black support. Writing on “Bolshevism and Race Prejudice,” in the December 1919 issue, Briggs tried to advance the claim that Bolshevism held the solution to the problem of racial oppression. Immediately following the climactic Palmer raid of early January 1920, we find Briggs posing, in the February 1920 issue, the editorial question: “Bolshevism’s Menace: To Whom and To What?”

In the minutes of a confidential discussion held in 1960, dealing with problems affecting relations between black and white communists in Los Angeles, Briggs recalled these early party days. The statement is historically revealing about both the date and reasons for his decision to become a party member. “[O]ur Negro comrades come into the Party,” he explained, “not because they are socialists but because they believe that the Party is conducting a struggle on the Negro field.” Then, in a striking analogy, Briggs told the meeting:

I would say that was the way I entered the Party myself *some 40 years ago*. I had no understanding toward socialism. I entered simply because the Party had a program[,] even tho[ugh] not written[,] and speed [*sic*] out on the Negro field[;] because also of the solution of the national question in the Soviet Union and because I was confident that the American Party would in time take its lead on that question from its Soviet party which is what it eventually did.¹⁰⁵ [*emphasis added*].

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In light of the ambivalent opinion regarding the date of commencement of his membership, the testimony offered in the reminiscence with party colleagues deserves to be given serious weight. The statement also confirms that it was the national question, and not the class question, that provided the Communist party’s original attraction for Briggs and other black radicals.

Among the charter members of the Communist party at the time of its formation, in September 1919, were two West Indians—Otto Huiswoud, a native of Dutch Guiana (now Surinam), and Arthur Hendricks, a theology student from British Guiana (now Guyana). Both men were involved in the National Left-Wing conference, held in New York on 21 June 1919, that issued from the split in the Socialist party and as such became charter members of the constellation from which the Communist party emerged months later.¹⁰⁶ A printer by trade, Huiswoud joined the Harlem branch of the old Socialist party near the close of World War I.¹⁰⁷ “[D]espite the urgings of some of my closest friends who were members,” Briggs claims that he refused to join the Socialist party. His reason was “its refusal to recognize the special character of Negro oppression in the U.S.A.”¹⁰⁸ Ironically, chances are that it was Briggs’s former Socialist party friends, two in particular, who recruited him into the nascent Communist party. “When I joined the [Communist] party,” Briggs later recalled, “there were only two other Negroes in it, Huiswoud and Hendricks.” Although the precise details of the recruitment process remain murky, it would seem that these two friends of Briggs provided an important bridge between both organizations—“Both Huiswoud and Hendricks joined the [African Blood] Brotherhood after I had entered the party—presumably on assignment by the party,” Briggs

recalled.¹⁰⁹ The relationship was political as well as personal. In September 1926, Huiswoud married Briggs's associate from British Guiana, Hermina Alicia Dumont, who was a member of the Crusader News Agency staff from 1922 onward. On the basis of the close ties, personal and organizational, between the party's first black recruits, it becomes impossible to divorce the African Blood Brotherhood's inception from Briggs's involvement with the Communist party in the fall of 1919.

Those only need apply who are willing to go the limit!

African Blood Brotherhood¹¹⁰

Now, Mr. Briggs, I am with you,
and, of course, that means that I am going the limit.
I always liked to play that limit game.
I don't know just what your game is,
but I believe I can play it with you.
So enroll me as one of those extreme limit players.

S.C. Jordan to Mr. Cyril V. Briggs¹¹¹

The Negro is 'seeing red'

xxvii

A. Mitchell Palmer, Attorney General¹¹²

If the Red Scare helped to channel his radicalism into communist militancy, it was the violent racial clashes that erupted throughout what was dubbed the Red Summer of 1919 that pushed Briggs into organizing black self-defense. The disturbances began in early July with the riot at Bixbee, Arizona, involving the Tenth U.S. Cavalry, and reached unprecedented proportions in the riots that in late July shook Washington, D.C., and then, almost immediately following, Chicago.¹¹³ At mass meetings planned by blacks the call went out to organize "race defense."¹¹⁴

It was in this atmosphere of heightened racial consciousness that Briggs announced the formation of "The African Blood Brotherhood for African Liberation and Redemption." "From the tone of this advertisement," declared the Director of Military Intelligence, Brigadier General Marlborough Churchill, "it appears to be of a revolutionary nature."¹¹⁵ The Red Scare had now merged with a parallel black scare: in fact, the October 1919 *Crusader* that first advertised organization of the ABB was also the issue in which Briggs announced his willing acceptance of the Bolshevik label.

In chronological terms, the ABB was synchronous with the Communist party's formation. In Briggs's subsequent testimony, however, he tried to advance the date of the formation of the ABB. While admitting to some confusion on the point—"I am unable to state the exact date that organization of the Brotherhood was begun"—he nevertheless ventured the opinion that it came "a few months after publication of the first issue of The Crusader magazine. Thus in early 1919 if, as I believe, the first issue of the magazine appeared in November [*sic*] 1918." "[T]he Communist Party

had no part in initiating the organization of the Brotherhood,” Briggs contended.¹¹⁶ In Carl Offord’s WPA interview, the date of the ABB’s formation was put back to the fall of 1917. “The exact date of the Brotherhood’s formation is not known,” Philip S. Foner asserts; “it has been put either in the fall of 1917 or some time in 1919.”¹¹⁷

Notwithstanding the confusion that has accumulated around the issue, the evidence points to the creation of the Brotherhood as a black auxiliary of the nascent Communist party from its inception, the first in a succession of such auxiliaries spawned over the years.¹¹⁸ Throughout the duration of the Brotherhood, the national organizing secretary was Communist party charter-member, Otto Huiswoud. The commander of the ABB’s Chicago “post,” (the only one, aside from New York, for which any concrete information exists), was the Negro communist Edward Doty, organizer of the American Consolidated Trades Council, to which the black plumbers in Chicago belonged. According to Harry Haywood, “Besides the tradesmen, other members of the ABB [Chicago] post included a number of older radicals such as Alonzo Isabel, Norval Allen, Gordon Owens, H.V. Phillips, Otto Hall, and several others. Together with Doty, they made up the communist core of the Brotherhood.”¹¹⁹ Huiswoud was the first black member elected to the Central Committee of the American Communist party and the first black district organizer of the party in Buffalo; he would later hold the distinction of being a candidate member of the prestigious executive committee of the Communist International based in Moscow.

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In terms of its political program, the Brotherhood sought to ally racial consciousness to the goals of class consciousness, as adumbrated in the final item in its statement of aims:

1. A Liberated Race.
2. Absolute Race Equality
3. The Fostering of Racial Self-Respect
4. Organized and Uncompromising Opposition to the Ku Klux Klan
5. A United Negro Front
6. Industrial Development
7. Higher Wages For Negro Labor, Shorter Hours and Better Living Conditions
8. Education
9. Co-operation With Other Darker Races And With the Class-Conscious White Workers¹²⁰

The Brotherhood’s membership was subsequently instructed to “Affiliate yourself with the liberal, radical and labor movements,” but it was noticeably forewarned “Don’t mind being called ‘Bolsheviki’ by the same people who call you ‘nigger.’” This was the first in a long list of “suggestions” that the ABB, in June 1920, “issued for the guidance of members and for the race in general.” “Adopt the policy of race first, without, however, ignoring useful alliances with other groups,” the ABB advised. “Make the cause of other oppressed peoples your cause, that they may respond in kind, and so make possible effective co-ordination in one big blow against tyranny.”¹²¹ Even though membership was “confined to persons of African blood,” the restriction was not seen as presenting any kind of bar to integrating its fight against

racial oppression within a larger framework of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggle. Thus, Briggs found no difficulty, while defiantly declaring himself a “Bolshevist!!!” in simultaneously proclaiming allegiance to the doctrine of “NEGRO FIRST, LAST AND ALL THE TIME!”¹²² Indeed, Briggs went so far as to maintain subsequently that the ABB “was not conceived as an exclusive Negro organization, although that is what it turned out to be.”¹²³

If communist revolutionary theory provided the ideological inspiration for its program, organization of the Brotherhood was “carried out along lines similar to secret fraternal orders and societies.” This entailed all the customary trappings of “a ritual of its own, with degrees, pass-words, signs, etc, etc., and a formal initiation ceremony when a solemn oath is taken.”¹²⁴ The following was the secret brotherhood oath administered to members:

I do hereby freely and voluntarily enlist in THE AFRICAN BLOOD BROTHERHOOD and swear absolute and unquestioning loyalty and obedience to all orders and decrees emanating from the COUNCIL and the International officers of the BROTHERHOOD, swearing to carry out these orders and decrees in the strictest secret [*sic*] and to THE DEATH IF NECESSARY in the fight for the liberation of the Fatherland from the oppression and exploitation of the alien. May I be accursed of God and man should I be disloyal a hair-breadth to the BROTHERHOOD or disobedient to its decrees; Yea, may the curse be sure and lasting and no good thing come of me. Hear and record, O God!¹²⁵

Although selection of the organization’s name was suggested by “the blood brotherhood ceremony performed by many tribes in Black Africa,” symbolized by the ritual exchange of blood, it is necessary to separate the political inspiration that gave rise to the ABB from the racially symbolic connotations of its choice of name and initiation ceremony. Admittedly, this is made all the more difficult by recruitment propaganda such as the declaration issued in October 1921:

The AFRICAN BLOOD BROTHERHOOD (ABB) is the only EFFECTIVE protective Negro organization in the world, with the grandest lineage of any FRATERNAL organization in all history, dating from the dawn of history on the banks of the upper Nile and operating uninterruptedly through all the centuries in the ennobling ceremony of blood brotherhood which is practised to this day in Central Africa.

Similarly, the badly garbled article “African Blood,” published in the November 1921 *Crusader* and authored by Theo. Burrell, a founding member and officer of the Brotherhood, purported to explain “the Historic Ceremony of Blood Brotherhood” in order to validate “our recognition as ‘blood brothers.’”¹²⁶ To understand the meaning of the ABB, however, it is necessary to go beyond such curiosa. Briggs would disclose later that “Garvey’s success in popularizing Africa as the symbol of Negro freedom, a mission begun by the New Negro movement, may very well have had something to do with the selection of the name African Blood Brotherhood.”¹²⁷ In response to a *Crusader* correspondent who expressed a keen desire to affiliate simultaneously with both the Brotherhood and Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association, Briggs advised:

Any member of the African Blood Brotherhood is free to join any other purely Negro organization, and there is no other we can so highly recommend as the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities' League. The two organizations are but parts of one movement—that movement to free Africa and raise the status of the Negro everywhere. By all means join the U.N.I.A. and A.C.L.¹²⁸

“Encourage the Universal Negro Improvement Association movement as the biggest thing so far effected in surface movements,” Briggs advised his followers in June 1920.¹²⁹ Again pairing the two organizations, Briggs exhorted readers of the *Crusader*, in March 1921, to “Join the U.N.I.A. and the African Blood Brotherhood. And join now!”¹³⁰

In historical terms, the ABB could be said to have been prefigured by the *Sons of Africa*, a secret benevolent order organized in 1912 by John E. Bruce, who modified the name in September 1913 to the *Loyal Order of the Sons of Africa*. It was also prefigured by George Wells Parker's *Hamitic League of the World*. There were definite points of similarity between the ABB and these two antecedent groups. The three groups were explicitly international in scope.¹³¹ In the case of the *Sons of Africa*, both it and the ABB were organized on the principles of mutual help, secrecy, and paramilitary organization, the plan of the earlier group calling for “Units of 10 or 20 with a captain for each group.”¹³² Briggs could possibly also have been among those attending the meeting to organize the renamed *Loyal Order of the Sons of Africa* that was held, in September 1913, at the home of the the Moravian minister from Antigua in the West Indies, Reverend C.D. Martin.¹³³ In spirit of the HLW, the ABB upheld the tradition of racial vindication through study and propagation of “the true facts concerning the grand achievements of the Negro race.”¹³⁴

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The model of political organization from which the ABB derived its principal inspiration was the *Irish Republican Brotherhood*, the legendary clandestine Fenian organization that stood out, according to the late F.S.L. Lyons, as “the doyen of all revolutionary movements in Ireland.” Founded simultaneously in Dublin and New York in 1858 with the avowed purpose of overthrowing British rule in Ireland, the IRB achieved its greatest notoriety as the body responsible for planning and coordinating the insurrection that was to erupt so disastrously and yet so spectacularly into the Easter Rising of 1916.¹³⁵

The impact of the entire Irish struggle and its symbolism of political sacrifice extended well beyond Irish-American circles in the United States. In June 1919 President Wilson's personal secretary, Joseph Tumulty, confided in a telegram to the American peace delegation in Paris: “You can not overestimate real intensity of feeling behind Irish question here. It is growing every day and is not at all confined to Irishmen.”¹³⁶ When seen from this perspective, Briggs's fateful *Amsterdam News* editorial of March 1919 on the League of Nations paralleled the Irish-American assault against the League proposal, more especially as the focus of the Irish-American attack was the very point that Briggs himself had assailed in the editorial, namely, article X of the Covenant.¹³⁷

“[E]ntirely sympathetic with Bolshevism, Sinn Fein, Jewish agitation, in fact any movements which the magazine could compare with the struggle of the negro” was the assessment given of the *Crusader* by the Post Office’s Robert Bowen in August 1919, the same month in which Briggs, in an editorial entitled “Approaching Irish Success,” hinted that blacks could anticipate the same political benefits if they were to emulate Ireland’s example of sacrifice “when dealing with the oppressor.”¹³⁸ The perceived link between Black radicalism and Irish nationalism was illustrated the previous year when Bowen found Briggs’s editorials in the *Amsterdam News* “quite as obnoxious toward Great Britain as anything in the Irish journals.” Toward the end of Briggs’s tenure with the *Amsterdam News*, Bowen submitted a collection of “editorial briefs” to the Post Office solicitor “just to show how one sort of disloyalty breeds another in the souls of these negro editors.” Briggs’s radical anti-imperialist views received ample confirmation in the editorials that would appear over the next few years in the *Crusader*. “It is our belief,” wrote Briggs in August 1921, “that we should make common cause with the Indians and the Irish Republicans, with Soviet Russia and the Turkish Nationalists and with all other forces now, or in the future, menacing the British Empire in particular and the capitalist-imperialist world in general.”¹³⁹ While officialdom was thus correct to perceive the overlapping character of foreign and domestic radicalism, the official response represented a replay or extension of the anti-radical crusade of the 1880s, when American opinion, in a swing away from sympathy with the Irish struggle, suddenly lumped Irish revolutionaries together with Chicago anarchists, Communists, Russian assassins, and assorted labor agitators—in sum, the social revolution.¹⁴⁰ In a certain historical sense, the novel feature of post-World War I radicalism was the admission of blacks into the revolutionary drama, with Briggs as the major black voice of the new post-war radical alliance: “The oppressed Negro must seek alliances,” he advised *Crusader* readers, “to the end of successful co-ordination of effort with the oppressed Irish, the oppressed Indian and all other oppressed peoples, and with that friend of the oppressed and enemy of our enemies, SOVIET RUSSIA!”¹⁴¹

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Nowhere did Briggs pay greater tribute to the importance that he attached to the Irish struggle than in the February 1921 issue of the *Crusader*, which contained this headline: “The Irish Fight for Liberty the Greatest Epic of Modern Times and a Sight to Inspire to Emulation All Oppressed Groups.”¹⁴² The issue following carried a letter from an “Irish Patriot” that endorsed the *Crusader*’s exchange of subscriptions and advertisements with the Irish-American *Sinn Feiner*.¹⁴³ The *Crusader* also publicized the March 1921 formation of the “American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic,” made up of black and white Harlem residents, “a co-ordinating factor in the cause of oppressed humanity,” among whose number Briggs was doubtlessly active.¹⁴⁴ “Lessons in Tactics For the Liberation Movement,” Briggs’s catechism, utilized the Irish struggle by way of example to offer, as a Pan-African moral, the principle of reflexivity:

Just as the Negro in the United States can never hope to win equal rights with his white neighbors until Africa is liberated and a strong Negro state (or states) erected on that continent, so, too, we can never liberate Africa unless, and until, the American Section of the Negro Race is made strong enough to play the part for a free Africa that the Irish in America now play for a free Ireland.¹⁴⁵

In a December 1921 broadside attacking the program of African repatriation represented by Garvey, Briggs re-emphasized that the ABB's aim was, in his words, "to Strengthen the Position of the American Negro in order to Use it in the 'Struggle for a Free Africa in much the same Manner as the Irish Strength in America was used in the Struggle for a Free Ireland."¹⁴⁶ Reflecting near the end of his life on the political differences involved in his "Tilt with Garvey," Briggs maintained that his position was "that the American Negro emulate the Irish-American in bringing pressure on Washington in behalf of Irish independence."

At an operational level, the ABB emulated the clandestine methods of the IRB. The name of the ABB's governing "Supreme Council" paralleled the name of the IRB's ruling body which, under the leadership of Patrick Pearse, Thomas Macdonagh, and Joseph Plunkett, was responsible for planning and executing the Easter Rising.¹⁴⁷ The attempt to base the ABB's legitimacy on the ground that it represented the "Tactical Generalship . . . for a Free Africa" was inspired by the same insurrectional ideal that animated the IRB. Furthermore, the ABB's assertion at the outset that membership was by enlistment carried the clear implication that the ABB was some kind of military force, which the use of the term "posts" to designate ABB units reinforced. "No opportunity should be lost," the ABB program in relation to Africa declared, "for propagandizing the native soldiers in the 'colonial armies' and for organizing secretly a great Pan-African army in the same way as the Sinn Fein built up the Irish Republican Army under the very nose of England."¹⁴⁸

To the extent that Briggs and the ABB came under the ideological and operational influences of the revolutionary wing of Irish nationalism, they could be said to be representative of a black Fenianism inside the New Negro movement. Thus, for example, a short time after the bloody race riot in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Anselmo Jackson, Briggs's close friend and *Crusader* booster, writing in the *Toiler*, the early predecessor of the Communist party's *Daily Worker*, placed the question of black retaliatory violence in the context of the Irish struggle:

The lynching of Negroes continues unabated, year after year, because it costs nothing to kill Negroes. It is because of this that Negroes who are members of the New Manhood Movement—which is nothing more nor less than a Sinn Fein movement among Negroes—have resolved to put a prohibitive price on lynching.¹⁴⁹

Part of the appeal of the Irish struggle for blacks was undoubtedly the practical lesson of armed self-defense that the circumstances of America's recurrent racial disorders necessitated. Beyond the immediate need to locate a political basis for self-defense against the onslaught of white mobs, however, the romantic appeal of Ireland's nationalist rebellion resonated strongly with the New Negro outlook of racial vindication. Ultimately, it was the assimilation of both these strands of

rebellious nationalism to the revolutionary ideology of Bolshevism that imparted to Briggs and the ABB their unique historical significance as agents of black radicalism.

[The African Blood Brotherhood, or A.B.B, headed by Cyril Briggs] is the only Negro organization that the capitalists view with any degree of alarm. This may be because of the historic reputation of the organization, dating from the Tulsa race riots. . . .

C. Lorenzo [Cyril Briggs]
"The Negro Liberation Movement"
The Toiler (December 10, 1921)

"Propaganda is everywhere recognized as a great weapon. The Negro needs to put out propaganda not only on the inside to wake up the masses and mobilize Negro thought in the Liberation Struggle, but on the outside, among the whites, as well."

Cyril V. Briggs, "Lessons in Tactics
For the Liberation Movement"
Crusader, Vol. 5, No. 3 (November 1921): 15

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The ABB was catapulted into national attention, if only briefly, by the riot that destroyed the black community in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a conflagration sparked when blacks interposed themselves en masse outside the city's courthouse to block the lynching of a Negro bootblack accused of making "improper advances" to a white girl. The large number of whites who lost their lives in the ensuing battle was undoubtedly cause for the prominence of the national press coverage of the event. Then, on 4 June 1921, three days after the burning and sacking of black Tulsa, *The New York Times* carried in its front-page report from the ravaged city the following conspiracy allegation:

An official who is in close touch with the military men here declared tonight that the "authorities" had evidence in their possession that organizers of "the African Blood Brotherhood" passed through Oklahoma about sixty days ago and organized a chapter of the secret society in Tulsa.

He stated that this evidence indicated that some leaders of the mob that first gathered before the Court House on Tuesday night [31 May] had been identified as members of this society, which was "highly aggressive" in character, seeking to foment unrest among the negroes; that the society was national in scope and headed by a New York negro, and that it had carried on activities in other parts of Oklahoma and the Southwest. It was said also that there was a suspicion that a store of ammunition, which exploded with the burning of the new church in the negro district, was suspected to be the arsenal of this society.¹⁵⁰

The published report of alleged ABB incendiarism in Tulsa supplied the organization with the "historic reputation" that it had otherwise been unable to acquire. *The*

New York Times, by providing the ABB with the opportunity to publish a response to the charge, gave additional publicity to the organization's existence. Whilst the ABB rebuttal denied that the organization or any members of its Tulsa branch were "in any way the aggressors in the Tulsa disturbances," Briggs admitted in the accompanying interview that "in a way he welcomed the race riot in Tulsa, because it would convince the whites that the negro was not a coward and would fight to the last ditch to preserve his rights."¹⁵¹ The ABB received additional *New York Times* coverage, on 20 June 1921, with a report of the statements made by ABB speakers at the public meeting called in Harlem to discuss the black response to the Tulsa riot.¹⁵²

Did the ABB hedge on the question of its involvement in the Tulsa events? Since, as Scott Ellsworth has noted, "it later openly associated itself with the steadfast self-defense shown by black Tulsans in the spring of 1921," it might appear so. In a published appeal for contributions in November 1921, the ABB exhorted readers:

Remember TULSA! Remember the Bright, Untarnished Record of the A.B.B.! What other organization can match that Brave Record?¹⁵³

As the time of the actual occurrence receded, the ABB came increasingly to take credit for the heroic defense mounted during the riot by Tulsa's black community. The following year, the ABB's national organizer, Otto Huiswoud, attending the Comintern congress in the Soviet Union as an American communist delegate, asserted that the ABB "was the one organisation which, during the time of a race riot in Tulsa, Oklahoma, put up a splendid and courageous fight." However, with the single exception of the report appearing in *The New York Times*, states Ellsworth, "no further information was located regarding the Tulsa chapter of the African Blood Brotherhood."¹⁵⁴

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In private, however, Briggs understood the difference between the claims of propaganda and reality. Thus, in a confidential letter sent to Marcus Garvey in August 1921, with the aim of promoting an ABB-UNIA united front, Briggs conceded that "the statement sent broadcast over the United States by the Associated Press to the effect that the A.B.B. 'fomented and directed the Tulsa riot,' e.g., agitated, supplied leaders, ammunition, etc., while not literally true can still give you an idea of the nature of our organization."¹⁵⁵

The truth is that the Tulsa riot coincided with a major shift in the ABB's strategic orientation, from that of a secret order, as it was originally conceived, and toward becoming an instrument of open mobilization. The public stance of the ABB following the Tulsa explosion was designed to extract maximum propaganda from the event in order to enhance its image as a militant self-defense organization, in the process exploiting the identification for purpose of aiding the recruitment drive it had embarked upon. The accusation of having organized and directed black Tulsans in self-defense in the riot supplied it with reputability. "The Tulsa riot has given the A.B.B. more than 1000 new members," Briggs reportedly claimed in an interview, on 22 June 1921, with a representative of the New York City office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Military Intelligence.¹⁵⁶

In the same August 1921 letter that he addressed to Garvey, Briggs offered a somewhat qualified admission of the shift in strategy: "For your information," he informed the man against whom he was very shortly to be ranged as probably the most implacable foe of all, "I may state that the A.B.B. is essentially a secret organization, though at present engaged in open recruiting in the Northern States (U.S.)." Responding just shortly before to the charge of conspiracy levelled against the Brotherhood by Rev. Rolfe P. Crum of Tulsa, Briggs included in his rebuttal letter to the *New York World*, on 21 June 1921, the statement "that the African Blood Brotherhood is not a 'secret order of revolutionists,' but simply a Negro protective organization pledged to mobilize Negro thought, and organize Negro man power to a defense of Negro rights and lives wherever and by whomsoever attacked."¹⁵⁷ Near the end of that same month a public forum was organized in Lafayette Hall in Harlem "to begin a propaganda of [the] African Blood Brotherhood."¹⁵⁸

In retrospect, the timing of the statement appearing in the masthead of the June 1921 *Crusader* that it was the "Organ of the African Blood Brotherhood" was clearly significant. What the transfer signified was the formal beginning of the ABB's attempt to function as a "surface movement" (to borrow Briggs's phrase employed to characterize the UNIA in June 1920). On this score, moreover, it was significant that the "constitution of the African Blood Brotherhood," presented in the same June 1921 issue that announced the *Crusader's* changeover, omitted any mention of the Brotherhood as a secret order, preferring instead to describe itself as "highly centralized."

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The African Blood Brotherhood is essentially a propaganda organization. It is highly centralized in order to give the greatest effect to its purpose of developing an intensified and consistent propaganda (1) within the race for the mobilization and education of Negro thought for the achievement of Negro Labor solidarity throughout the world; (2) outside of the race for the removal and conquest of antagonism based upon misconception of the Negro on the part of the white proletariat as the result of vicious capitalist anti-Negro propaganda aimed at dividing the ranks of Labor.¹⁵⁹

Propaganda was to be the new watchword, and it was obviously in furtherance of this purpose that the ABB unveiled to the public, in October 1921, the statement of its political program.¹⁶⁰ At the same time, a carefully sanitized version of the hitherto secret ABB oath of membership was also made available in a full-page solicitation for recruits in the November 1921 issue of the *Crusader*. The same issue also contained official notification that the ABB had modified its policy in order to confer upon all new recruits automatic fraternal rank:

The Supreme Council has ruled that First Degree of the Brotherhood be automatically given to every person upon his entrance into the organization on the grounds that the very act of joining the A.B.B. displays high intelligence, firm purpose and a clear conception of the realtion of the Liberation Struggle. The First Degree has accordingly been given to all members under an impressive ceremony.¹⁶¹

Conferral of the first degree merely upon entry was obviously meant to be an inducement to new recruits.

A final, albeit ironic, expression of the change that had overtaken the ABB was its offer, in the January-February 1922 Crusader, to pay "Liberal Compensation" to organizers to sign up. "Energetic Men and Women, Here's Your Opportunity!," it promised in the fashion of the feverishly speculative schemes so characteristic of the post-war era.

The United Communist Party must find
the revolutionary elements among the negroes
and select those most likely to develop
into revolutionary propagandists.
These shall be trained
for revolutionary work.

"The Program of the American Arm
of the Communist International"
The Toiler
Saturday, 12 February 1921

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Tulsa was a major turning point for the ABB, not only from the point of view of Brotherhood's "historic reputation," but also for the reason that it accelerated the tempo of its open recruitment campaign. It is essential to recognize, however, that the change in strategy was already underway when the racial cataclysm erupted in Tulsa. To find the explanation behind the change, we must examine the gravitational pull of the Communist party at this juncture upon its black auxiliary.

Significantly, the transformation of the ABB from an exclusively secret body into a "surface movement" mirrored, organizationally and chronologically, the identical passage of the Communist party from an underground to an aboveground or legal party. However, as was also true of the Communist movement, which did not disband its underground until 1925, the ABB change to a "surface movement" did entail abandonment of secrecy, since, as one of its more prominent recruits put it, "while its general business is transacted in open meetings, its modus operandi is operated secretly."¹⁶² In instances where political repression was deemed to operate, Briggs upheld "the necessity, long ago affirmed by the A.B.B., of underground tactics." In a manner that echoed in precise terms the debate over legalization that raged within the Communist party in America, Briggs laid out the following options facing the Black movement in countries, such as the Spanish-speaking republics in the Caribbean, where repression was the order of the day:

In those parts it's a choice of one of three things: (1) Open organization with fearless operation and resultant persecution by the powers that be; (2) open organization and compromise of principles with the powers that be for the sake of exemption from hampering persecution; or (3) underground organization and the ability to "carry on" fearlessly and effectively without compromise and without inviting premature persecuion that would hamper and perhaps even cripple the movement in its early stages, before it is strong enough to strike back effectively at its enemies. WHICH IS THE COMMON SENSE WAY?¹⁶³

The answer was—both ways.

By 1921, having been forced underground by repression, the Left was in tatters. The simultaneous collapse of the hopes for a repeat of the “Russian October” in Europe and the defeat of the Red Army at the gates of Warsaw, which event definitively halted the Soviet advance into Central Europe, further demoralized an already considerably weakened movement. Overconfidence quickly gave way, instead, to confusion and rancorous debate over the question of party organization. Briggs’s explication of tactics for the black movement was issued at the same time as the party’s factional debate over legalization approached its greatest intensity, which was only resolved when the Comintern imposed its decision in support of the central executive committee and in favor of both an underground and a legal political party.¹⁶⁴ The convergence of political points of view between Briggs and the party’s central executive committee was confirmed at the founding convention of the Workers Party of America, created as the legal counterpart of the Communist party. Briggs was one of two delegates who represented the ABB at both sessions of the convention held 23–24 December 1921, at the Labor Temple, On East 84th Street in New York City.¹⁶⁵

Briggs claimed that his decision to join the central executive committee faction came only after he was visited a number of times by both Rose Pastor Stokes and Robert Minor, “each representing what they claimed to be the official C.P.”¹⁶⁶ “She [Rose Pastor Stokes] was the first American Communist assigned to the work among the oppressed Negro masses of this country,” Briggs recalled.¹⁶⁷ Robert Minor, the former newspaper cartoonist turned war correspondent and anarcho-syndicalist turned Bolshevik revolutionary, was associated with the faction made up of advocates of an exclusively underground party and a thoroughly revolutionary program, in keeping with the modus operandi of party organization and agitation following the Palmer raids of early 1920. As a member of the party’s central committee, Minor was increasingly charged with responsibility for work among blacks, playing a role in the proceedings in 1924 of both the Negro Sanhedrin conference in Chicago and the fourth UNIA convention in New York; he would become involved in the 1930s in helping to organize the League of Struggle for Negro Rights, the black CP auxiliary that was the successor to the American Negro Labor Congress, and in planning the party’s role in the famous Scottsboro Boys’ defense campaign.¹⁶⁸

The timing of the discussions between Briggs and his two Communist interlocutors was undoubtedly connected with the convention of the United Communist Party of America (amalgamating the Communist Party of America and the Communist Labor Party of America), held at Kingston, New York, in January 1921. The convention program enjoined party members “to break down the barrier of race prejudice that separates and keeps apart the white and negro workers, and to bind them into a union of revolutionary forces for the overthrow of their common enemy.” The program reflected directives sent from Moscow regarding the urgency of carrying out propaganda and organizational work among blacks, instructions that flowed from the

concern that Lenin himself had addressed at the meeting of the second Comintern congress in July 1920, in the course of which he reportedly admonished the American party to recognize blacks as “a strategically important element in Communist activity.”¹⁶⁹

It took the admonition of the great Soviet leader to spur his American followers to attempt their first systematic recruitment of blacks into the Communist party. It was no accident that, in a tribute published at the time of her death, Briggs stated that the assignment of Rose Pastor Stokes to work among blacks came from the Comintern in 1921.¹⁷⁰

The program directive issued in that same year by the United Communist Party, to the effect that “Negro Communists must enter lodges, unions, clubs, and churches (which, among negroes, are not essentially ecclesiastic institutions, but in effect are social clubs and forums),” was the first major enunciation of communist strategy among blacks ever made. It seems unlikely that such a statement could have been made without the participation of those selfsame “Negro Communists” called upon to implement the program. To accomplish the goals of what was essentially a united front approach to the black community, the program enunciated that the following steps be taken:

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Communists shall use the negro press as a means of presenting revolutionary ideas. Communists are to aid every movement that tends toward the cultivation of the spirit of revolt among the negroes, and especially must organize revolutionary direct-action bodies of negroes for resistance to lynching, mob rule, etc.

What the statement basically did was certify as party policy the course that the *Crusader* had pursued on its own for over a year before the party got around to noticing it. The clear echo of the African Blood Brotherhood could also be heard in the statement’s concluding exhortation to the effect that “especial attention must be given to those that have military experience, in order that their talent may be used for training their people for the inevitable revolutionary outbreak.”¹⁷¹ Once again, what the program called for was an endorsement of what the party’s “Negro Communists” had already been promoting on their own.

A short time after the January 1921 convention of the United Communist Party of America Briggs, in an editorial on “The Salvation of the Negro,” explicitly called for “replace[ment] of the Capitalist System with the Socialist Co-operative Commonwealth.” “It has the advantage for the Negro race,” Briggs was careful to argue, “of being along the lines of our own race genius as evidenced by the existence of Communist States in Central Africa and our leaning towards Communism wherever the race genius has had free play.” Allowing that “the oppressive Capitalist System was . . . inconceivable to our Communist African forefathers,” Briggs concluded:

The surest and quickest way, then, in our opinion, to achieve the salvation of the Negro is to combine the two most likely and feasible propositions, viz: salvation for all Negroes through the establishment of a strong, stable, independent Negro State (along lines of our own race genius) in Africa or elsewhere; and salvation for all Negroes (as well as other

oppressed peoples) through the establishment of a Universal Socialist Co-operative Commonwealth. To us it seems that one working for the first proposition would also be working for the second proposition.¹⁷²

This amounted to a radical revision of the concept of black self-determination combining the pre-existing ideal of racial sovereignty with a revolutionary vision of a communist society. It was at this juncture that Briggs began to denounce the concept of “a general [African] Exodus.” He issued a warning also against the belief that “a Free Negro Africa” was an immediate political prospect:

Africa will eventually be freed of white control. However, the time is not yet ripe. There is much organization and propaganda work yet to do.

The freedom of Africa long sought after would have to be delayed until the “substitution of the Socialist Co-operative Commonwealth for the vicious Capitalist System” was accomplished.¹⁷³ Almost inevitably, such reassessments on the part of Briggs meant that the political stage was being set for a decisive confrontation with the leader dubbed the “Moses of the Negro Race.”

While preparing for battle, however, Briggs was being wooed by emissaries of the two factions contending for Comintern support in their internal battle over party organization. The faction with which Robert Minor was aligned could have been said to hold the initial advantage, since Briggs’s African Blood Brotherhood was itself operating as a self-declared secret organization. Undoubtedly, Minor’s mission was to some degree also facilitated by his relationship to Claude McKay, who was appointed co-editor with Max Eastman, Robert Minor, and Floyd Dell of the reorganized *Liberator*, and whose oft-reprinted poem, “If We Must Die,” was recognized on every hand as the anthem of the New Negro radical movement. The *Crusader* hailed McKay’s appointment with the *Liberator*, acknowledging it to be “America’s foremost white radical monthly.”¹⁷⁴ White radicals received McKay with open arms upon his return to the United States in early 1921 from his sojourn in England, where his association with Sylvia Pankhurst and her *Workers’ Dreadnought* placed him, in McKay’s words, “in the nest of extreme radicalism in London.”¹⁷⁵ Introduced to the radical and flamboyant Pankhurst through Max Eastman, McKay soon after his arrival in England became an active participant in Pankhurst’s Workers’ Socialist Federation, the officially recognized British section of the Third International.¹⁷⁶ Upon his return to New York, McKay became a supporter of the underground wing of the Communist party, which might partly help to explain the animosity and suspicion he felt toward the aboveground Workers’ Party of America that would be formed at the end of the year.

While he was drawn into the bitter intra-party struggle on the side of the underground wing, McKay was at the same time lending his efforts toward strengthening the self-styled band of black revolutionaries in the African Blood Brotherhood. When McKay addressed the Comintern’s Fourth Congress in Moscow, in November 1922, the chairman of the American delegation publicly declared that McKay spoke “in the name of the African Blood Brotherhood.” The original Soviet translator of

McKay's *The Negroes in America* concurred, noting in the introduction that "[McKay] was chosen as a delegate to the congress by the Brotherhood of African Blood [sic]." At the same time, McKay sought to dispel the confusion which had arisen at the congress over his political allegiance: "Actually I am a Communist," he announced, "and my request to transfer [my membership] from the illegal party in the United States to the legal one was dictated by purely practical considerations."¹⁷⁷

McKay was ideologically well placed to play his appointed role as political intermediary. He was instrumental in arranging meetings between Robert Minor, representing the Communist underground, and "the advanced Negro radicals," for whose allegiance the opposite wings of the Communist party were competing.¹⁷⁸ McKay was present also in the meeting of "black Reds" hosted by Rose Pastor Stokes, representing the aboveground wing of the Communist party, in her home in May 1921. The meeting was attended, according to McKay's subsequent account, by W.A. Domingo, Hubert H. Harrison, Edgar M. Grey, and Cyril Briggs. Stokes reportedly made an offer of financial backing to Hubert H. Harrison for his so-called Liberty party, which proposition Harrison apparently rejected, thus foiling any plan that the communists might have entertained of using him as their stalking-horse against Garvey.¹⁷⁹ In this connection, McKay was to recall in his autobiography that "[t]he real object of the meeting [with Minor] . . . was to discuss the possibility of making the Garvey Back-to-Africa Movement (officially called the Universal Negro Improvement Association) more class-conscious."¹⁸⁰ From this it would appear that Garvey unwittingly supplied the rallying-point for the Communist party to make its first major intervention in black community affairs.

Despite Harrison's rejection of Stokes's reported overture of financial assistance, the abortive attempt was itself sufficient for U.S. military intelligence to want to know more about Harrison's political credentials for the attention he was receiving. On 23 June 1921, a month after the meeting at Rose Pastor Stokes's home, the Second Corps Area (New York City) of Military Intelligence Division filed a report that was, from an historical point of view, one of its most valuable, particularly for the light that it shed on the evolving relationship between Garvey and Harrison. The intelligence report made plain the reason why Harrison would have appeared such a likely stalking horse against Garvey:

The editor of the "Crusader" was interviewed on June 22nd by a representative of this office [New York City] and the following information was obtained.

The Liberty League was started some five years ago by Hubert H. Harrison. It was intended to be an organization for the civil rights of the Negro, but soon disclosed its radical character. It never had more than a few hundred members and eventually Marcus Garvey secured control of the League and completely ousted Harrison from the leadership. This was brought about principally because Harrison, who was then editor of Garvey's "The Negro World," started an attack on Garvey with the object of ousting Garvey and securing "The Negro World" for himself and thus become the leader among the American Negroes. Garvey's followers resented this attack and repudiated Harrison. The members of the Liberty League went over to the Garvey forces and Harrison was dismissed from his position on "The Negro World." Later Harrison was made contributory editor of that paper, which position he holds at present, but he has stopped his attacks on Garvey and is at present busy

trying to revive the Liberty League. A few meetings for that purpose have been held, but so far he has not been able to obtain any members, so the League must be considered as defunct.

Harrison still calls himself the President of this League and a man named Edgar Gray [Grey] is the Secretary. Gray is a radical, much more so than Harrison. He is not an educated man, like Harrison, and among the leading Negroes in New York he is called the evil spirit which dominates Harrison.

One of the chief reasons why Harrison, who is really a very intelligent and highly educated man and scholar, has failed in nearly all his undertakings is said to be his abnormal sexualism, in spite of the fact that he is the father of several children.¹⁸¹

The conclusion drawn by the report was that “[t]he Liberty League can be discountenanced as an organization,” for the reason that “[t]here are hardly any members and they have no influence with the colored people.”

By no means discouraged, Mrs. Stokes and Briggs were meanwhile busy in their attempt to raise a popular following for the ABB to array against Garvey’s superior forces. Special agent P-138 was disturbed by their efforts, reporting:

I am again compelled to repeat that the Communist Party of America, headed by Mrs. Rose Pastor Stokes, working through the African Blood Brotherhood, headed by Cyril Briggs, Domingo, Moore, [Arthur] Reid—all aliens and connected with the ‘Crusader’ magazine—are spreading dangerous propaganda among negroes in Harlem. This is especially so since the Garvey Convention has been in session.¹⁸²

A victory of sorts was scored by the communists when Garvey agreed to permit Rose Pastor Stokes to address the UNIA convention, which she did on 19 August 1921. According to the Bureau of Investigation’s confidential informant, “The Blood Brotherhood members were scattered through the audience to hear their leader Mrs. Stokes while others were busy outside giving out circulars headed by Cyril Briggs.”¹⁸³ The circulars, in keeping with the main theme of Rose Pastor Stokes’s speech to the Garvey assemblage, called for Soviet Russia to be endorsed by the UNIA convention.¹⁸⁴

At first Garvey merely looked askance at the agitation conducted by the ABB delegates present at the convention. However, he was finally roused to take action, on the convention’s twenty-fifth day, following distribution of the ABB’s third weekly bulletin, the headline of which declared, “Negro Congress at a Standstill—Many Delegates Dissatisfied with Failure to Produce Results.” This caused an angry denunciation from Garvey of the policy of the African Blood Brotherhood, which he told the convention “pretended to have at heart the interests of Negroes. It was in reality the advocate of Sovietism, Bolshevism and Radicalism, the paid servant of certain destructive white elements which aimed at exploiting Negroes for their own subservient ends.”¹⁸⁵ The ABB was thereupon effectively expelled from further participation in the convention. According to Briggs, the ABB’s response was to “[take] its case to the negro masses by means of pamphlets, news releases in the negro press and mass meetings.”¹⁸⁶ A significant part, if not the whole, of the bill for sustaining the anti-Garvey campaign was doubtlessly supplied by the Communist party, which might help to explain where the \$828.00 recorded as expenditure on “Negro Propaganda” in the party’s financial statement, for the period July 1921 through July 1922, went.¹⁸⁷

“Our agitation . . . has made considerable headway. The negro organization has increased in membership as well as in the number of party groups.”

Report of the Central Executive Committee,
Workers Party of America, August 1922
“Agitation Amongst Negroes”¹⁸⁸

The entire anti-Garvey exercise appears to have followed the directive of the United Communist Party of America calling upon Negro Communists to infiltrate existing black institutions and “to expose the reactionary leaders, who, for the purpose of betraying their race, infest these institutions.”¹⁸⁹ The attempt by the ABB to infiltrate the UNIA convention formed part of a much broader strategy to wrest control of the movement away from Garvey as preliminary to assuming direction of the black struggle. The official Communist party report on “Agitation amongst Negroes” acknowledged this much; at the same time, the report went on to explain how the struggle against Garvey fitted into the party’s longer term perspective. “We are engaging in a widespread struggle against one of the chief yellow fakers who has been misleading a considerable fraction of the negro militants,” it declared. The report then proceeded to give a detailed picture of developments since the UNIA convention fracas together with the plan of the party for “agitation amongst negroes”:

The struggle began at a Negro congress called by this chieftain at which we had a minority of delegates. Since then, the struggle has expanded on a country-wide scale. A number of the prominent leaders of the opposing organization has come over to our organization which is on the offensive. Whole divisions of Garvey’s organization are either refusing to turn in funds or are withdrawing from the organization altogether. This organization has been almost entirely demoralized and we are now arranging a series of meetings in all centers where he has any membership in order to swing them to our side.

Our policy in this field has been the same as before. It consists in the unification of all negro organizations on the basis of the liberation struggle, drawing them closer together with the necessity to organize economically in solidarity with the rest of the labor movement.

As soon as the first part of our program has reached sufficient maturity, we will start a drive which has already been planned, of promoting and actually starting the organization of negro unions whenever such is feasible. Through the connections we have thus far obtained, through our negro activities, it will be possible to initiate effective party activities in the South and in some of the colored colonies, activities which thus far have not yet been touched by the party due to lack of connections and unfavorable circumstances.¹⁹⁰

Of the aims elucidated in the report, the one that had been given greatest prominence in the propaganda carried on by the ABB at the UNIA convention was the proposal for a united front of black organizations. “Out of this Congress,” the ABB declared, “there must emerge a federation of all existent Negro organizations, molding all Negro factions into one mighty and irresistible factor, governed and directed by a Central Body made up of representatives from all the major Negro organizations.”¹⁹¹ The “Federation Plan,” as it was called by Briggs, would eventually be revived in the form of the short-lived All Race Conference of Negroes, better known as the Negro

Sanhedrin, which met in Chicago, in February 1924, with Briggs as secretary.¹⁹² Planning for the Negro Sanhedrin began in New York in March 1923 at a meeting of the newly-formed United Negro Front Conference that Briggs organized.¹⁹³ Although historically associated with the name of Kelly Miller, it was William Monroe Trotter of Boston, head of the National Equal Rights League, who, having put forward the original proposal for establishment of a black leadership council, deserved, in Briggs's opinion, the real credit for the movement.¹⁹⁴

Less than two months after the close of the UNIA convention, Briggs would claim that over sixty-three members of the Garvey organization "have thrown off their pro-one-man loyalty to adopt a pro-Negro loyalty and do effective work for Liberation under the shield of the African Blood Brotherhood."¹⁹⁵ Of the group of former Garveyites to defect, undoubtedly the ABB's most important catch was Bishop George Alexander McGuire, who resigned from his position as chaplain-general of the UNIA in late October 1921, after Garvey had denounced his unauthorized attempt to secure the names and addresses of UNIA members.¹⁹⁶ It was possible that McGuire could have been seeking to acquire the UNIA membership list for the ABB, in addition to wanting it himself, as Garvey assumed at the time, for use by his own recently founded African Orthodox Church. In any event, the ABB quickly rewarded McGuire with appointment as departmental chief of the so-called Department of Religion and Education.¹⁹⁷ Another important UNIA official to defect to the side of the ABB was former secretary-general James D. Brooks, who, it is alleged, "carried with him several former important Garveyites."¹⁹⁸ From a strictly propaganda point of view, however, the chief coup for the ABB was Garvey's resident commissioner to Liberia, Cyril A. Crichlow, whose extensive insider account of the UNIA's first sorry attempt at establishment of a West African beachhead consumed the greater part of the final two issues of the *Crusader*.¹⁹⁹ These must be adduced as having represented significant embarrassments for Garvey's image in the eyes of the black community.

Finally, in exploiting the Tulsa upheaval, the ABB was careful to adhere to the Communist party line that warned, in the section of the January 1921 program relating to Negroes, that "[g]reat care must be exercised to avoid race wars, and to cultivate the spirit of self-protection and solidarity with the white workers in the class war."²⁰⁰ Thus did the ABB, in issuing its call for a meeting to protest the Tulsa events, steadfastly invite "every negro tired of lynching, peonage, jim-crowism and disfranchisement, to come out and hear our plan for removing these injustices which we suffer, with others, as workers."²⁰¹

Theoretical elaboration from a black perspective was supplied by Briggs, while abjuring blacks at the same time against "chauvinistic utterances and threats." In "Lessons in Tactics For the Liberation Movement," Briggs explained: "We must aim to keep White Labor and Capital apart, by showing White Labor that its interests are identical with our own, inasmuch as we are both seeking freedom from Capitalist oppression and exploitation and neither the Negro nor White Labor can achieve that freedom without the aid of the other."²⁰² The notion of black Americans taking

advantage of “existent divisions and even to foster new divisions in the ranks of the white race” was again resorted to in the admonition to blacks to use their votes in the November 1921 elections. Writing on election eve, Briggs declared:

Every Negro in the United States should use his vote—and use it fearlessly and intelligently to strengthen the radical movement and thus create a deeper schism within the white race in America and at the same time make more friendly—by demonstrating his willingness to go half the way—those who are already friendly to his Cause.²⁰³

On the basis of such reasoning, Briggs would appear to have been addressing the racial self-interest of blacks rather than arguing for an alliance on purely philosophical grounds. In this perspective, the determining consideration for blacks was the weakening of white strength. Thus was racial reasoning utilized to support radical ends, although, from the perspective of history, the ideology of a black-white working-class alliance ended up possessing far more appeal to white communists than to blacks.

Briggs has always tried
to make me believe
that his organization is a very strong one[,]
when I know that it is only on paper.

Special Agent “800”
24 December 1921²⁰⁴

We would like to know more about
the so-called African Blood Brotherhood.

Marcus Garvey
The Negro World
1 September 1923

The focus of both the *Crusader* and the ABB, after August 1921, centered nearly exclusively on their combined struggle to topple Garvey. A short time after expulsion of the ABB’s delegates by the UNIA convention, Briggs embarked on a determined probe of the legality of Garvey’s operations. “Briggs has also started action against Garvey for using the mails to defraud, in that the circulars that Garvey sent out with the name of the Phyllis Wheatley on the ship on these circulars was cut into the plate and that no ship by that name was in existence at that time or since,” the government’s confidential informant (“800”) communicated to his superiors in Washington, D.C.²⁰⁵ This provided the line of investigation that ultimately would lead to the successful prosecution of Garvey on charges of fraud. The upshot was that Briggs became identified in the black community, as one individual put it, as “one of the fellows that sent Marcus Garvey to prison.”²⁰⁶ On the other hand, Briggs remained steadfast in the conviction that “our fight against Garvey was a principled fight”; he was to plead, in 1958, that “during our exposes of certain of his [Garvey’s] financial transactions we consistently refused to release any information to the government

prior to its publication in the magazine and/or the CNS,” referring to the Crusader News Service which, too, according to Briggs himself, “was inspired by our fight against certain policies and tactics of Garvey and his lieutenants.”²⁰⁷ Indeed, W.A. Domingo would go so far as to characterize the Crusader News Service as “Garvey’s veritable Nemesis.”²⁰⁸ Domingo was the ABB’s acknowledged Garvey expert, and it was Briggs and himself who were principally responsible for production of the Crusader News Service.

The campaign waged against Garvey, however, went well beyond the bounds of journalistic production in the *Crusader* and the Crusader News Service. Thus, it was reported that Briggs, in the company of dissident former UNIA secretary-general James D. Brooks, on 6 January 1922 visited the Department of Justice’s New York office to enquire “when the Government intended taking action as they [Briggs and Brooks] had heard rumors that records of the UNIA were being changed and that they [Garvey and his colleagues] were all prepared to be arrested.”²⁰⁹ The month before Briggs had summarized the situation with Garvey’s Black Star Line thus: “Frankly, we think Marcus Garvey is strenuously flirting with the laws of the land, and may wake up to an early realization of the seriousness of such flirtation.”²¹⁰ When the inevitable occurred, Briggs was quick to credit the *Crusader* with being responsible for “the exposure of the non-existence of the ghost ship ‘Phyllis Wheatley’ [that] led those who had bought passage on that ship, on the fraudulent representations of Marcus Garvey and his agents, to make complaint to the post office authorities and thus force an investigation of the Garvey schemes, with the result that Garvey will at last be forced to give an accounting of his collections and expenditures.”²¹¹

Ineluctably, the campaign waged against Garvey so dominated both the *Crusader* and the ABB that it apparently dimmed any purpose they might have otherwise possessed. Claude McKay later would give it as his opinion that “the Brotherhood was strictly a paper organization run by Cyril Briggs, in opposition to the Marcus Garvey ‘back to Africa’ movement.”²¹² A similar assessment of the membership status of the ABB was made by W.A. Domingo, listed in 1923 as the ABB’s director of publicity and propaganda and signatory on behalf of the ABB to the historic “Concordat” that established the framework for the United Negro Front movement in 1923–24. Earlier, Briggs was a contributing editor, along with A. Philip Randolph, Chandler Owen, Anselmo Jackson, and Richard B. Moore, to the radical socialist weekly published by Domingo in the spring of 1920, the *Emancipator*. Domingo was himself a contributor to the *Crusader* and author of the lengthy article that demolished the greatly inflated UNIA membership figures which had been put forward variously by Garvey.²¹³ In retrospect, Domingo proved to be just as skeptical about the membership claims of the ABB: “[T]he organization, in my opinion, my objective opinion,” he stated in a 1958 interview, “was nothing more than a paper organization.”²¹⁴

At the very least, such avowals as those made by McKay and Domingo would seem to lend a note of caution to any appraisal of ABB membership. A somewhat similar appraisal was made by the black sociologist, Abram L. Harris, in June 1923, in an

essay on "The Negro Problem as Viewed by Negro Leaders," wherein he observed that "[t]he Communist element makes its appearance as the latest development in racial leadership." "At present," Harris declared, referring to the ABB, "its following is quite small and its voice is hardly heard outside New York City."²¹⁵

Like Garvey, the fact is that Briggs was not averse to manipulating figures for their propaganda value. Thus, six months after the launching of the ABB, the *Crusader* claimed that "over a thousand red-blooded Negro Patriots have enlisted for Service with the African Blood Brotherhood."²¹⁶ This would have been starting from an initial ABB membership of "less than a score, and all in Harlem," according to Briggs's later testimony.²¹⁷ In June 1920, Briggs claimed there were "over 1,000 members and women of African blood."²¹⁸ A mere four months later, however, the figure escalated to "several thousand members and over fifty posts in secret operation throughout Africa and the West Indies and other parts of the Ethiopic world."²¹⁹ In the interview he had with *The New York Times* the following year, immediately after the Tulsa race riot, Briggs claimed the existence of "150 branches throughout the country with a membership of 50,000 negroes."²²⁰ Then, a few weeks later, military intelligence reported after an interview with Briggs:

The African Blood Brotherhood is a flourishing organization. There are about 23,000 members, scattered all over the world. Five posts in New York City, with a membership of about 1000, have been established.²²¹

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Several months later, in December 1921, an undercover agent reported Briggs as having stated that "the African Blood Brotherhood had a total membership throughout the country of about 30,000 members, 17,000 of which were paid up and the others being in arrears."²²² However, claims such as these are called into question by the much lower estimate Briggs would eventually offer in 1958. "The Brotherhood never attained the proportions of a real mass organization," he explained. "At its peak it had less than three thousand members."²²³ This is the figure that historians have come, for the most part, to accept, but even this much reduced figure is now being called into question. "Perhaps future scholarship will reveal that the organization had a substantial political base," one recent investigator acknowledges, but, he surmises, "for the moment, I have my doubts."²²⁴

A similar problem of credibility is encountered when the circulation figures of the *Crusader* are examined. In October 1919, the magazine reported that 32,700 copies had been distributed the preceding month.²²⁵ However, the report of the Joint Legislative Committee of the New York State Senate, popularly known as the Lusk Commission, drew a vastly different picture of the magazine's circulation in April 1920. The report cited circulation figures for the following black periodicals:²²⁶

<i>The Crisis</i>	104,000
<i>The Crusader</i>	4,000
<i>The Emancipator</i>	10,000
<i>The Messenger</i>	33,000
<i>The Negro World</i>	30,000

In Frederick G. Detweiler's pioneering study, *The Negro Press in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922; reprinted 1968), it is stated, in what appears to have been a reply by Briggs to a questionnaire, that "circulation [of the *Crusader*] had climbed [within three years] to the average of 33,000 per month" (p. 77). In 1958, Briggs claimed that the *Crusader* achieved "a peak circulation of 36,000."²²⁷

It is significant that Briggs, in his December 1921 survey of "The Negro Liberation Movement," published in the *Toiler*, should have refrained from making even a single mention of the *Crusader*, and this in spite of the magazine's strategic role in the ABB's anti-Garvey campaign from the September 1921 issue onward. The omission was all the more ironic in light of Briggs's subsequent acknowledgment to the effect that most of the ABB's members were recruited through the magazine.²²⁸

It would seem that the *Crusader* was already being phased out by the time Briggs published his December 1921 essay in the *Toiler*. Thus, it was announced in November 1921 that a \$10,000 fund was being launched "to enable us the better to serve the Negro race, defend its honor and protect it from selfish, opportunist and craven leaders by the publication in the near future of a weekly newspaper to be known as THE LIBERATOR."²²⁹ The monthly *Crusader* had obviously proved inadequate to satisfy the propaganda demands of the struggle against Garvey, who possessed in the weekly *Negro World* a powerful propaganda resource. To contest Garvey's hegemonic position in the black movement, what was called for, in the words of the proposed *Liberator* fund, was "a weekly newspaper whose purpose it will be to educate the masses in proper tactics and knit closer together in common purpose the various sections of the great Negro Race in the United States, Africa, Central America, etc., etc."²³⁰

It was probably not a mere coincidence that the final issue of the *Crusader* (January-February 1922) appeared when it did. "[W]e welcome the present situation" was the ABB's response to the arrest of Garvey on 12 January 1922.²³¹ For the previous five months the *Crusader* had been preoccupied with very little else besides exposure of what it saw as Garvey's "fraudulent representations."²³²

Garvey's querulous comment, "No one can tell what has become of Briggs' *Crusader* magazine and his *Liberator*," a statement made while awaiting bail in the Tombs, to which place Briggs could be said to have helped to consign him, expresses genuinely the puzzlement felt at the *Crusader's* demise then and now.²³³ It would be 1929, the year of the stock-market crash, ending the dizzying decade of the 'twenties, before Briggs was to see his original idea for the *Liberator* realized. When it appeared, in December 1929, with Briggs in the position of editor, it was announced as the organ of the American Negro Labor Congress, the black auxiliary established by the Communist party in 1925 following its liquidation of the African Blood Brotherhood, which was historically the first auxiliary of its kind to carry out Communist party work among blacks.

The story of Briggs's continuing odyssey as a Communist party functionary following the demise of the *Crusader* in 1922 lies beyond the scope of this introductory essay. To the end of his life, however, Briggs held fast to a black nationalist line within the party. In 1930 it caused him to be censured by party chief Earl Browder, who cited Briggs by name as rerepresentative of "the tendency displayed by some Negro comrades (which they have since corrected more or less completely) to surrender to the propaganda of the Negro bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie intellectuals of race hatred directed against all whites without distinction of class."²³⁴ Characteristically, when Cyril Briggs was expelled from the Communist party, along with two original African Blood Brotherhood members, Richard B. Moore and Otto Hall, in the fall of 1942, their "crime" was said to have been their "Negro nationalist way of thinking."²³⁵

It's amazing
how hard some of this material
is to locate now. . . .

Theodore Draper to Cyril V. Briggs
27 May 1958

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In 1944 Briggs moved to California, but in the process of relocating many of his personal papers were lost in shipment. Another significant loss was suffered when a nearly complete file of the *Crusader*, with only three or four issues missing, disappeared from the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York. Donated by the former secretary of the ABB, Theo. Burrell, the file, which included other material such as the constitution of the brotherhood, has never been recovered.²³⁶

The twin legacy of the *Crusader* and the African Blood Brotherhood remained alive, however, to reappear in the struggle of blacks in the 1960s. Robert F. Williams, the leader of the militant NAACP chapter in Monroe, North Carolina, that emulated the concept of black self-defense pioneered by the African Blood Brotherhood in 1919, has acknowledged the influence exerted upon his thinking of the earlier example. "Many years ago I heard of Cyril V. Briggs and his *Crusader*," he recalls, "but not being aware of his possible approval or disapproval of my use of the name I changed it by adding Weekly Newsletter."²³⁷

One of the most significant features of the period of revolution and counter-revolution ushered in by the First World War was the emergence of radicalism among Afro-Americans. One of the most important documents of this phenomenon was the *Crusader* magazine and one of the most important political figures to appear in this period was Cyril Valentine Briggs.

NOTES

1. Theodore Draper to New York State Library, Albany, New York, Manuscript Division, 6 February 1958, and Mrs. Jean Blackwell, Chief, Schomburg Collection, ca. May 1958, Theodore Draper Research Files, Box 21, Folder 2, Series 1.2, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Special Collections, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia (abbreviated hereafter as TDRF). The author wishes to express appreciation to Mr. Theodore Draper for permission to quote from these and other letters.
2. Of the forty-two issues of the *Crusader* that were originally published, the Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C., has the largest number, fifteen. An additional six issues have survived in the Records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (R[ecord] G[rup] 65), National Archives, Washington, D.C. (abbreviated hereafter as DNA). Duplicate copies of three scattered issues are to be found respectively in the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library; the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; and the *Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine*, University of Nanterre, France. A lone original issue survives in the Public Record Office, Kew, Surrey, England, among the Gold Coast files of correspondence (C[olonial] O[ffice] 96/614/54738). Mr. J.R. Ralph Casimir of Roseau, Dominica, W.I., possesses the most complete extant set of the *Crusader*, which he has kindly made available for this reprint edition. Mr. Ben Waknin of New York City provided a fugitive issue from his valuable research collection of New Negro material. Dr. Philippe Bourgois, Department of Anthropology, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo., at the request of the present author tracked down and identified the three *Crusader* issues at the University of Nanterre in France. Co-operation received from these individuals and from the staffs of the various archival and manuscript institutions cited is hereby gratefully acknowledged.
3. Philip S. Foner, "Cyril V. Briggs: From the African Blood Brotherhood to the Communist Party," unpublished paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, Los Angeles, California, 12-15 October 1978, p. 6; Philip S. Foner and James S. Allen, eds., *American Communism and Black Americans: A Documentary History, 1919-1929* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), pp. 16-17.
4. Hodge Kirmon, "The New Negro & His Will to Manhood & Achievement," *Promoter*, Vol. I (August 1920): 6, quoted in Frederick G. Detweiler, *The Negro Press in the United States* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1922), p. 78; Theodore G. Vincent, ed., *Voices of a Black Nation: Political Journalism in the Harlem Renaissance* (San Francisco: Ramparts Press, 1973).
5. "Towards the One Common End," *Promoter*, Vol. 1 (August 1920): 8.
6. For a list of "Negro Anti-Slavery Newspapers," see Monroe N. Work, comp., *Negro Year Book And Annual Encyclopedia of the Negro* (Tuskegee Institute, Alabama: Negro Year Book Co., 1913), p. 75.
7. Cyril V. Briggs, Ms., "'Angry Blond Negro': Autobiography." Quotations cited in the present essay, unless otherwise stated, are to these autobiographical notes. A group in New York had requested Briggs to prepare his autobiography (Cyril V. Briggs, King Edward Hotel, New York City, to Wayne Cooper, Brooklyn,

- New York, 29 June 1965). Dr. Boyd James, Los Angeles, California, provided a photocopy of the original typescript to the author in 1978. The assistance of Dr. Wayne Cooper and Dr. Boyd James is gratefully acknowledged.
8. Mrs. Alexander, "All things bright and beautiful," Hymn 573, with music composed by W.H. Monk, p. 496, in C. Steggall, ed., *Hymns Ancient and Modern for Use in the Services of the Church with Accompanying Tunes* (London: William Close & Sons, Ltd., 1924). The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Mr. Robert Simpson, Music Department, Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta, Atlanta, Georgia.
 9. Quoted in C.H. Cramer, *Royal Bob: The Life of Robert G. Ingersoll* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.: 1952), p. 100. David D. Anderson, *Robert Ingersoll* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972), states: "He (Ingersoll) was, without question, the great orator of his day . . ." (p. 32). The twelve-volume Dresden edition of *The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll* appeared in 1900.
 10. Interview with W.A. Domingo, 18 January 1958, p. 2, TDRF.
 11. W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Rise of the West Indian," *Crisis*, Vol. 20, no. 5 (September 1920): 214; cf. Reed Ueda, "West Indians," pp. 1021-1022, in Stephan Thernstrom, ed., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980). Ueda reports that "No exact figures are available for the size of the black British West Indian population in the United States in the early 20th century" (ibid).
 12. "The Rise of the West Indian," p. 215.
 13. Benjamin Brawley, *The Negro Genius: A New Appraisal of the Achievement of the American Negro in Literature and the Fine Arts* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1939), p. 237; *Favorite Magazine*, Vol. III (December 1919): 209.
 14. Eric Walrond, "The New Negro Faces America," *Current History*, Vol. 17, no. 5 (February 1923): 787.
 15. "Sowing Dissension," *Crusader*, Vol. I, no. 1 (September 1918): 30. The editorial was a reprint from the *Amsterdam News*.
 16. Brawley, *The Negro Genius*, pp. 236-37.
 17. Monroe N. Work, op. cit., p. 260; Ueda, op. cit., p. 1022. The total population of the borough of Manhattan in 1910 numbered 2.3 million.
 18. Frank Lincoln Mather, ed., *Who's Who of the Colored Race: A General Biographical Dictionary of Men and Women of African Descent*, Volume One, 1915 (Chicago: n.p., 1915; reprinted 1976), p. 38.
 19. Cyril Briggs to Theodore Draper, 24 March 1958, Theodore Draper Collection, Box 31, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford, California (abbreviated hereafter as TDC).
 20. *Colored American Review*, Vol. I, no. 1 (1 October 1915): 5; "Along The Color Line . . . Social Uplift," *Crisis*, Vol. 11, no. 2 (December 1915): 61. The review's name evoked the title of John B. Russwurm's weekly *Colored American* (1837-1842) and the Boston-based *Colored American Magazine* (1900-1909).
 21. Ibid., "Certain Whites Now Have An Attack Of Cold Feet", n. p.
 22. Ibid., "Editorial Confidences," n. p. The *Colored American Review* published contributions from two subsequent contributing editors to the *Crusader*, viz., William H. Briggs, "Self-Analysis," Vol. 1, no. 2 (15 October 1915), p. 16, and Bernice De Basco, "The Quadroon Maid" and "The Mystery of Life" (poems), ibid. For a self-description of William H. Briggs, see advertisement in the *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 9 (May 1920): 32.
 23. Frank Lincoln Mather, ed., *Who's Who of The Colored Race: A General Biographical Dictionary of Men and Women of African Descent*, Volume One (Chicago: Half-Century Anniversary of Negro Freedom in U.S., Memento Edition, 1915), p. 38.
 24. New York *Amsterdam News*, quoted in Mary Francesca Thompson, *The Lafayette Players, 1915-1932* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1978), p. 27; "The

- Lafayette Stock Company," *Colored American Review*, Vol. I, no. 8 (June 1916); Theodore Kornweibel, Jr., "Theophilus Lewis and the Theater of the Harlem Renaissance," pp. 171-189, in Arna Bontemps, ed., *The Harlem Renaissance Remembered* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1972).
25. "Roll of Honor," *Crusader*, Vol. I, no. 1 (September 1918): 23; "The Sportive Periscope," *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 4 (December 1919): 17.
 26. "The Return of the Drama: Some Thoughts on Its Past and Future by One of Its Most Ardent Supporters," *Crusader*, Vol. IV, no. 2 (April 1921): 15-16.
 27. Lloyd Morris, *Incredible New York: High Life and Low Life of the Last Hundred Years* (New York: Random House, 1951), pp. 321-22; Irene Castle McLaughlin, "Jim Europe - A Reminiscence," *Opportunity*, Vol. VIII, 3 (March 1930): 90-91; Jervis Anderson, *This Was Harlem: A Cultural Portrait, 1900-1950* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1982), p. 75. The husband of Mrs. Charles Anderson, mentioned in Briggs's autobiographical notes, was also a popular Harlem dance-master (Thompson, *The Lafayette Players*, pp. 238-269).
 28. Thompson, *The Lafayette Players*, pp. 31-32.
 29. See "Ragtime Dance" in Edward A. Berlin, *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 13-14; cf. John Edward Hasse, ed., *Ragtime: Its History, Composers, and Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1985).
 30. Hubert H. Harrison, "Preface," *The Negro and the Nation* (New York: Cosmo-Advocate Publishing Co., 1917).
 31. Draft Registration Card No. 152 and Registrar's Report 3699, Precinct 38, New York, N.Y., Record Group 163 (World War I Draft Cards), Atlanta Regional Archives Branch, National Archives and Records Service, East Point, Georgia. The registration card shows no claim of exemption by Briggs; in an interview in the late 1930s, however, it was stated: ". . . he [Briggs] was 'picked' up by a policeman in connection with his failure to register for the draft. Taken before the board, he told them he had been denied his democratic right[s] and saw no reason why he should fight for something that was denied him" (Vivian Morris, "Position of African Blood Brotherhood, Amsterdam News & New York Age on War of 1917," Writers' Program, New York [City], "Negroes of New York," New York, 1939, New York Public Library, Schomburg Collection Microfilm, Reel 3.)
 32. Cf. Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *The East St. Louis Massacre: The Greatest Outrage of the Century* (Chicago: The Negro Fellowship Herald Press, 1917); Kelly Miller, *The Disgrace of Democracy: Open Letter to President Woodrow Wilson* (Washington, D.C.: published by the author, August 1917); and Hubert H. Harrison, *When Africa Awakes: The 'Inside Story' of the Stirrings and Strivings of the New Negro in the Western World* (New York: The Porro Press, 1920), pp. 14-20; cf. Elliott P. Rudwick, *Race Riot at East St. Louis, July 2, 1917* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964).
 33. Hodge Kirnon, "Towards The One Common End," *Promoter*, Vol. I (August 1920): 8.
 34. Edgar A. Schuler, "The Houston Race Riot, 1917," *Journal of Negro History*, 29 (October 1944): 300-338; Robert V. Haynes, *A Night of Violence: The Houston Riot of 1917* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976); August Meier and Elliott P. Rudwick, "Black Violence in the Twentieth Century: A Study in Rhetoric and Retaliation," pp. 224-237, in August Meier and Elliott P. Rudwick, *Along the Color Line: Explorations in the Black Experience* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976).
 35. "The Rioting of Negro Soldiers," *Messenger*, Vol. I, no. 11 (November 1917): 6; Archibald Grimke, "A Court Martial Tragedy," *ibid.*, Vol. II, no. 10 (October 1919): 21-24; "Thirteen Black Martyrs of Houston - In Memoriam," *ibid.*, Vol. V, no. 4 (April 1923): 680. For black American reaction to the Houston tragedy and attempts to reduce the harsh court-martial sentences, see Haynes, *A Night of Violence*, pp. 299-302, 304-05, 307-14.

36. RG 65, DNA. The anonymous circular contained the individual names of "THOSE THIRTEEN HUNG."
37. Alan J. Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations, 1899-1921* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), Ch. 5; Joseph Edward Cuddy, *Irish-America and National Isolationism, 1914-1920* (New York: Arno Press, 1976), Ch. 8; John Patrick Buckley, *The New York Irish: their View of American Foreign Policy, 1914-1921* (New York: Arno Press, 1976).
38. *Baltimore Afro-American*, 30 June 1917, p. 1; "Urges Negroes To Get Arms, Liberty League President Advises His Race to 'Defend Their Lives,'" *The New York Times*, 5 July 1917, p. 9. For the influence of Ireland on the political radicalism of Marcus Garvey, see Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, Vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), "General Introduction," pp. lxx-lxxviii; cf. Claude McKay, "How Black Sees Green and Red," *Liberator*, Vol. 4, no. 6 (June 1921): 17, 20-21.
39. Hill, ed., *Marcus Garvey Papers*, Vol. 1, pp. 209-212; Vol. II, p. 709.
40. Quoted in Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (New York: Viking, 1960), p. 323; Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Vol. 44, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 35. Draper cites Briggs's *Amsterdam News* editorial as "a two-part editorial" dated 5 and 19 September 1917 (p. 543, fn. 20), but an earlier source gives only a single date of 19 September 1917 (Samuel Michelson, "The Negro in Wars from 1860: The World War," Writers' Program, "Negroes in New York City," Microfilm Reel 2, "History and Historical Questions No. 49," Chap. V, pp. 5-6). Unfortunately, the original *Amsterdam News* issues for this crucial period have not survived. Although Briggs would later assert that his editorial was "inspired . . . by Wilson's Fourteen Points" and published "directly after" (Briggs to Draper, 7 March 1958, TDC), Wilson's Fourteen Points speech of January 1918 came after Briggs's September 1917 editorial.
41. Records of the Post Office Department, RG 28, DNA, File 50740, [Louis How], Bureau M1, United States Post Office, New York, to U.S. Assistant District Attorney, 15 May 1918; "Democracy and the Colored Race: the Case for Autonomy," *Amsterdam News*, 2 January 1918, quoted in Cyril Briggs, "The Negro Press as a Class Weapon," *Communist* (August 1929): 458-59; "Liberty for All!," *Amsterdam News* (1918?), quoted in Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, p. 323; cf. Cyril V. Briggs, "Negro Rights in Abeyance," letter to the editor, *New York Globe*, 14 January 1918, p. 8. The Socialist party's statement to the effect that self-determination was a means of redressing "the wrongs of which Negroes complain" ("Self-Determination," *New York Call*, 13 November 1918, p. 4) is cited by Philip S. Foner as evidence of "[t]he influence of Briggs' stand on the issue" ("Cyril V. Briggs," p. 12).
42. Cyril V. Briggs, "Africa for the Africans," *New York Globe*, 23 January 1918, p. 10, written in response to the *New York Globe* editorial, "Germany's Colonial Titles," 15 January 1918, p. 8. Briggs's letter was signed "Editor, *Amsterdam News*".
43. Cyril Briggs to Theodore Draper, 14 April 1958, TDC.
44. W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Negro's Fatherland," *Survey*, Vol. 39, no. 6 (10 November 1917): 141; "The Future of Africa," *Crisis*, Vol. 15, no. 3 (January 1918): 114.
45. A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, *Terms of Peace and The Darker Races* (New York: The Poole Press Association, 1917); Theodore Kornweibel, Jr., *No Crystal Stair: Black Life and the MESSENGER, 1917-1928* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975), pp. 21-22. Randolph and Owen may have participated in the Socialist party's 'First American Conference for Democracy and Terms of Peace' (New York *Call*, 31 May 1917, pp. 1-2). The idea of "a standing International Council" originated with the British Fabian economist, J.A. Hobson (*Towards International Government* [London, 1915], p. 141); from the summer of 1917 onward, the political left in England was primarily respon-

- sible for propagating the idea of international control as a safeguard for the future welfare of Germany's ex-colonies (Wm. Roger Louis, *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies, 1914-1919* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967], pp. 86-93).
46. Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Vol. 45 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 537; *The New York Times*, 9 January 1918, p. 1; "President Wilson Chills Africa," *Literary Digest*, 25 March 1918, p. 25; "Official American Commentary on the Fourteen Points," October 1918, Appendix A, pp. 276-77, in Arthur Walworth, *America's Moment: 1918 — American Diplomacy at the End of World War I* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977).
 47. Robert Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative* (Boston, 1921), p. 98.
 48. Cf. Sylvia M. Jacobs, *The African Nexus: Black American Perspectives on the European Partitioning of Africa, 1880-1920* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), Ch. 11; Wm. Roger Louis, "The United States and the African Peace Settlement of 1919: the Pilgrimage of George Louis Beer," *Journal of African History*, Vol. IV, no. 3 (1963): 413-433.
 49. "Aims of The Crusader," *Crusader*, Vol. I, no. 3 (November 1918): 1; "Africa for the Africans," *ibid.*, Vol. I, no. 1 (September 1918): 1-4; "Africa for the Africans," *ibid.*, Vol. III, no. 2 (October 1920): 8-9; "Progress of the African Movement," Vol. III, no. 3 (November 1920): 9-10.
 50. Cyril V. Briggs, "At The Crossroads," Part II, *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 11 (July 1920): 5.
 51. "Separate Colored State Urged by Harrison," *New York News*, 2 August 1924; "Separate State for Negroes Urged," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 8 August 1924; "Lecturer Proposes Independent State for Negro Citizens," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 August 1924; Joseph G. Tucker, "Special Report of Radical Activities in the Greater New York District for Period Week Ending July 26, 1924," File 61-23-297, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C.
 52. Cyril V. Briggs, "The Decline of the Garvey Movement," *Communist*, Vol. 10, no. 6 (June 1931): 550, fn. 2.
 53. "Roll of Honor," p. 22.
 54. Cf. Harold Garnet Black, *The True Woodrow Wilson, Crusader for Democracy*, introduction by Franklin D. Roosevelt (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1946); John Morton Blum, *Woodrow Wilson and the Politics of Morality* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1956); cf. Captain Ferdinand Belmont, *A Crusader of France*, translated from the French (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1918), reported by the *New York Globe*, 19 January 1918, p. 6.
 55. "To You," *Crusader*, Vol. I, no. 1 (September 1918): 10; "To Our Foreign Readers," *ibid.*, I, 2 (October 1918): 7.
 56. "The League of Nations," editorial, *Amsterdam News*, 12 March 1919, transcribed in "Report of the Translation Bureau," 18 March 1919, RG 28, File B-236, DNA.
 57. Louis How, Translation Bureau, New York, to U.S. Asst. District Attorney, 22 and 29 May 1918; 8 May 1918, RG 28, DNA, File 50740.
 58. *Ibid.*, W.H. Maxwell to Hon. William H. Lamar, Solicitor, Post Office Department, 21 March 1918; [Louis How], Bureau M-1, to United States District Attorney, 24 April 1918, 1 May 1918, 8 May 1918, 15 May 1918, 22 May 1918, 29 May 1918, 5 June 1918, 12 June 1918, 11 July 1918, 31 July 1918, and 18 December 1918.
 59. "Roll of Honor," p. 22. Crawford was organizer and president of the Inter-Colonial Steamship & Trading Company; Augusta Waring, a member of the New York branch of the Hamitic League of the World, was treasurer.
 60. *Colored American Review*, Vol. I, no. 2 (15 October 1915), backpage advertisement; *Crusader*, Vol. I, no. 2 (October 1918), advertisement.
 61. According to Vivian Morris, "Cyril Briggs, Editor of the *Amsterdam News* (Negro publication) during this period [the war period] was forced off the paper because of his opposition to the war and participation of the Negro in it. His editorials were censored and he resigned"

- ("Position of African Blood Brotherhood, Amsterdam News and New York Age on War of 1917," Article No. 49, "Negro Organizations in New York City," op. cit., Microfilm Roll 3). The same misleading account is repeated in subsequent accounts, viz., Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, pp. 322-23, Theodore G. Vincent, *Black Power and The Garvey Movement* (San Francisco, California: Ramparts Press, 1971), pp. 77-78, and Theman R. Taylor, "Cyril Briggs and the African Blood Brotherhood: Another Radical View of Race and Class During the 1920s," unpublished Ph. D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1983, pp. 92-93.
62. "To Our Foreign Readers," op. cit.; Frederick G. Detweiler, *The Negro Press in The United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922; reprinted 1968), p. 77. Dougherty was a native of the the Virgin Islands, who, according to one local source, "reminds his readers at least once a month that he is from the sunny islands of the south" (J. Antonio Jarvis, *Brief History of the Virgin Islands* [St. Thomas, VI: The Art Shop, 1938], p. 219).
63. "Robert Douglas," p. 298, in Edna and Art Rust Jr., *Art Rust's Illustrated History of the Black Athlete* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor/Doubleday, 1985).
64. "Roll of Honor," op. cit.; Edwin Bancroft Henderson, *The Negro in Sports*, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1939), pp. 127, 135. Douglas helped in securing "several hundred new subscribers" ("Acknowledgment," *Crusader*, 1, 3 [November 1918]: 7).
65. W. Augustus Low and Virgil A. Clift, eds., *Encyclopedia of Black America* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981), p. 129; Zander Hollander, ed., *The NBA's Official Encyclopedia of Pro Basketball* (New York: New American Library, 1981), p. 33.
66. "Valentine's All-Negro All-Star Five," *Crusader*, Vol. I, no. 8 (March 1919): 14; Romeo L. Dougherty, "Behind the Scenes in Basketball," *Crusader*, Vol. 3, whole issue no. 29 (January 1921): 13.
67. Dougherty, *ibid.*, pp. 13-14; Henderson, *The Negro in Sports*, p. 130; "Pictures of Interesting People and Places," *Colored American Review*, Vol. I, no. 2 (15 October 1915).
68. Henderson, op. cit., p. 131. Black college basketball, which began in 1909-1910, developed rapidly after 1911.
69. "Rutgers Loses Robeson: Giant Negro was One of Greatest College Stars," *The New York Times*, 15 June 1919, Section 2, p. 4; Jack Orr, *The Black Athlete: His Story in American History* (New York: The Lion Press, 1969), pp. 83, 90, 126; Philip S. Foner, *Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings, Speeches, Interviews, 1918-1974* (New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 1978), p. 28.
70. Henderson, *The Negro in Sports*, p. 278; James H. Ravenell, "Work of the Colored QMC in France," *Crusader*, Vol. I, no. 9 (May 1919): 8-9, 32. More than likely, it was Ravenell who supplied Briggs with the information for his *Crusader* expose of the mistreatment of black soldiers in France by white officers.
71. "Race Catechism," *Crusader*, Vol. I, no.1 (September 1918): 11, reprinted in Monroe N. Work, ed., *Negro Year Book, An Annual Encyclopedia of the Negro, 1918-1919* (Tuskegee Institute, Alabama: Negro Year Book Company, 1919), p. 100; George Wells Parker, "The Children of the Sun," *Monitor* (Omaha, Nebraska), 12 June 1918. As an example of this theme of black superiority, the *Amsterdam News*, 29 May 1919, observed "how superior the negro race is to the white race" (cited in Bureau M1, 29 May 1918, RG 28, File 50740, DNA).
72. Certificate of Copyright Registration No. 507085, Copyright Office of the United States of America, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Parker presented a modified version of the book in a speech delivered before the Omaha Philosophical Society, on 1 April 1917. Published under the title of "The African Origin of Grecian Civilization," in the July 1917 issue of the *Journal of Negro History* (Vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 334-344), it was reprinted by the *Crusader* in serial form, commencing with the May 1919 issue. In

- September 1919, the book became the subject of a "musical comedy" in Philadelphia. Described as "A Show that is Strictly American Negro Character," it featured the comedy team of Salem Tutt Whitney and J. Homer Tutt (*The Philadelphia Tribune*, 13 September 1919, p. 4). Parker's book has recently been reprinted by Black Classic Press, Baltimore, Md.
73. George Wells Parker, "When Africa Awakes," *Crusader*, Vol. I, no. 6 (February 1919): 26; Sandra Nichols, secretary to the registrar, Creighton University, to Robert A. Hill, 9 August 1919. The assistance of Gregory Organ and Paul Coates in researching the details of Parker's career is gratefully acknowledged.
 74. George Wells Parker, Omaha, Nebraska, to J.R. Ralph Casimir, Roseau, Dominica, 7 December 1920, Casimir Papers.
 75. J.A. Rogers, *World's Great Men of Color*, Volume I, ed. by John Henrik Clarke, reprint ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1972), p. 9.
 76. "The Hamitic League of the World," *Crusader*, Vol. I, no. 3 (December 1918): 18.
 77. "Talking Points," *Crusader*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (September 1919): 24. In addition to contributing to the October 1918 issue of the *Crusader* with an article on Frederick Douglass, Bruce was, most likely, the person responsible for providing the contact that lead to the *Lagos Weekly Record* (5 & 12 October 1918) reprinting together the lengthy "Africa for the Africans" and "Race Catechism" editorial statements from the inaugural issue of the *Crusader*.
 78. "Hamitic League of the World, A New Race Effort With a New Thought and a New Purpose," *Monitor*, 18 January 1919, p. 5. The manifesto of the HLW reprinted in Martin Kilson and Adelaide Cromwell Hill, eds., *Apropos of Africa* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1972), pp. 198-99, indicates that membership was formally open to members of *all* races.
 79. "Talking Points," op. cit.; "Report of Inaugural Meeting of Hamitic League of The World," *Monitor*, 24 May 1919, p. 1; "Foreign Notes," *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 1 (September 1919): 12. Ogle was a representative of the British Guiana Labor Union and Co-operative Stores (*Emancipator* [New York], 10 April 1920, p.1).
 80. Briggs to Draper, 14 April 1958, TDC. Briggs was never to meet Parker in person.
 81. "Briggs Off Amsterdam News," *Crusader*, Vol. I, no. 11 (July 1919): 4. "His determined stand caused the authorities to threaten the paper, and the timid owners buckling under official threats forced Briggs to resign" (Charles Alexander, "Cyril Briggs: Veteran Publicist and Fighter for Democracy," *Crusader News Agency*, 26 February 1940, p. 6).
 82. Briggs to Draper, 17 March 1958, TDC. Briggs's letter erroneously cites 1918 as the year of resignation from the *Amsterdam News*.
 83. RG 28, Files B-236 and 50740, DNA.
 84. "Facts, Fun and Fancies," *Crusader*, Vol. I, no. 8 (April 1919): 7.
 85. Memorandum of Major J[oe] E. Spingarn to Colonel Churchill, "Report on Conference of Colored Editors," 22 June 1918, RG 165 (Records of the Military Intelligence Division, 1917-41, Correspondence Relating to Surveillance of Black Radicals), File 10218-154, DNA. Extensive information on the conference can be found in RG 63.2, Records of the Committee on Public Information, Emmett J. Scott Folder, DNA.
 86. "Newspaper Men and Leaders in Important Conference," *Chicago Defender*, 6 July 1918, p. 4.
 87. Translation Bureau to U.S. Asst. District Attorney, 18 December 1918, RG 28, File 50740, DNA.
 88. *Ibid.*, 22 May 1918.
 89. *Ibid.*, W.H. Lamar, Post Office Solicitor, to Postmaster, New York, N.Y., 7 June 1918. The offending item was Sergeant James Thomas's statement: "For if it is worth sacrificing life for democracy for others over there, it is worth sacrificing life for democracy for ourselves over here."
 90. *Ibid.*, ca. 13 June 1918.

91. Cyril V. Briggs, "Fighting Savage Hun And Treacherous Cracker," *Crusader*, Vol. I, no. 8 (April 1919): 4; also "Rewarding The Batlers For Democracy," *ibid.*, pp. 11, 13. A favorite polemical device of Briggs and other New Negro journalists was to correlate the violent behavior of white Americans with German barbarity, e.g., "Crackers and Kaiser — New World Huns Lynch Colored Men," *Amsterdam News*, 24 April 1918, in RG 28, File 50740, 24 April 1918, DNA.
92. For Briggs's response and a digest of editorial responses by black newspapers critical of Robert Russa Moton's role in France, see "Moton's Address," *Crusader*, Vol. I, no. 8 (April 1919): 22.
93. "To You," *Amsterdam News*, 12 March 1919, found in RG 28, File B-236, 18 March 1919, DNA.
94. Parker Hitt, Assistant Chief of Staff for Military Intelligence, Headquarters 2d Corps Area, Governors Island, New York City, to Director, Military Intelligence Division, Washington, D.C., 23 June 1921, File 10218-424, RG 165, DNA.
95. "Radicalism and Sedition Among The Negroes As Re-flected in Their Publications," New York, 2 July 1919, RG 65, File OG 359561, DNA.
96. "The Lusk Committee Makes a Discovery," *Crusader*, Vol. I, no. 12 (August 1919): 6. The *New York Call* reprinted the editorial on 11 July 1919.
97. Major J.E. Cutler to Major W.H. Loving, 26 July 1919, File 10218-349/1/190x, RG 165, DNA.
98. Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, pp. 326, 545, fn. 34.
99. Briggs to Draper, 14 April 1958, TDC.
100. Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), pp. 196-97, 210-222; Robert W. Dunn, ed., *The Palmer Raids* (New York: International Publishers, 1948), pp. 32-38, for documents describing the 2nd January 1920.
101. Briggs to Draper, 17 March 1958, TDC.
102. *Manifesto and Governing Rules of the Communist International* (Chicago: Arbeiter-Zeitung Publishing Company, 1919), quoted in *Red Radicalism as Described by Its Own Leaders: Exhibits Collected by A. Mitchell Palmer, Attorney General* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920), pp. 20-21. The proposal to establish "a new revolutionary Internationale" was announced in late January 1919; the document containing the announcement stated, in part, that "the present is the period for the overthrow of the world's capitalistic system, and European culture with it" ("Call To World Overthrow," *The New York Times*, 26 January 1919, p. 3).
103. "And They Wonder At Bolshevism," *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 1 (September 1919): 8.
104. "Bolshevist!!!" *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 2 (October 1919): 9.
105. "Discussion of Enlarged Negro Commission, L.A. [Los Angeles] 1960," Southern California District Committee of the Communist Party, U.S.A., Box 69B, File 22, California State University Library, Long Beach, California, Special Collections; cf. "Russia and Self-Determination," *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 4 (December 1921): 11-12.
106. "Report of Louis C. Fraina, International Secretary of the Communist Party of America, to the Executive Committee of the Communist International," pp. 5-13, in *Red Radicalism as Described by Its Own Leaders*, *op. cit.*; cf. Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1957), "The Great Schism," pp. 164-75.
107. Robert A. Hill, "Otto Eduard Gerardus Majella Huiswoud," pp. 219-221, in Bernard K. Johnpoll and Harvey Klehr, eds., *Biographical Dictionary of the American Left* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1986); *Worker*, 18 February 1924; Otto Huiswoud, "Dutch Guiana: A Study in Colonial Exploitation," *Messenger*, Vol. II, no. 11 (December 1919): 22-23. Huiswoud arrived in the United States in 1913 after working as a scullion aboard a banana boat. Two other black members who subsequently followed Huiswoud in quitting the Socialist party to join the Communist party were Richard B. Moore and Lovett Fort-Whiteman.

108. Cyril Briggs to Wayne Cooper, 29 June 1965, cited in Wayne F. Cooper, *Claude McKay, Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance: A Biography* [Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1987], p. 402, fn. 17).
109. Briggs to Draper, 17 March 1958, 14 April 1958, TDC. Briggs wrote Huiswoud's official party obituary (*Daily Worker*, 31 December 1961).
110. *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 2 (October 1919): 27.
111. S.C. Jordan to Cyril V. Briggs, *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 4 (December 1919): 28.
112. "Radicalism and Sedition Among the Negroes as Reflected in Their Publications," Exhibit No. 10, p. 162, in *Investigation Activities of the Department of Justice, Annual Report of the Attorney General of the United States for the Year 1920* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920).
113. For an account of the myriad racial disturbances of this era, see Arthur Waskow, *From Race riot to Sit-In, 1919 and the 1960s* (Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1966). Other riots that took place during the Red Summer of 1919 were Longview, Texas; Norfolk, Virginia; and Knoxville, Tennessee; see "The Knoxville Riot," *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 2 (October 1919): 8.
114. *The New York Times*, 8 September 1919, p. 3. The meetings were announced by the National Equal Rights League under the leadership of William Monroe Trotter. Theodore Burrell, secretary of the ABB, in later years described the Brotherhood as "a 'fighting back' organization that counteracted race riots in the early '20's" (Theodore Burrell to Theodore Draper, n.d., ca. 24 March 1958, TDRF).
115. Brigadier General Marlborough Churchill to Major H.A. Strauss, 13 October 1919, File 10218-349, RG 165, DNA.
116. Briggs to Draper, 17 March 1958, TDC. Briggs was mistaken in informing Draper that the ABB "was launched in 1919, two or three months after the first appearance of The Crusader magazine in November 1918 [*sic*]" (7 March 1958).
117. Foner, "Cyril V. Briggs: From the African Blood Brotherhood to the Communist Party," op. cit., p. 11.
118. William Z. Foster, *History of the Communist Party of the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1952), p. 268; cf. Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, p. 545, fn. 34. Towards the end of his life, Briggs was described as "a rabid Fosterite" (J. P. Cannon to Theodore Draper, 13 February 1958, Box 21, Folder 2, TDRF). Foster's *The Negro People in American History* (New York: International Publishers, 1954) makes mention of neither Briggs, the *Crusader*, nor the ABB, an exclusion that is all the more inexplicable in the chapter dealing with the Garvey movement (Ch. 41, pp. 442-451.)
119. Foner, op. cit., p. 19; Haywood, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1978), pp. 122, 129. Doty was to be one of the charter members of the American Negro Labor Congress, the black CP auxiliary launched in Chicago in 1925 which was the successor to the ABB.
120. *Summary of the Program and Aims of the African Blood Brotherhood, formulated by 1920 Convention*, quoted in Arthur Preuss, *A Dictionary of Secret and Other Societies* (St. Louis, Mo.: B. Herder Book Co., 1924), pp. 4-7. For a comparison of the variant 1920 and 1922 ABB programs, see the appendix to this introductory essay. Neither version makes mention of self-determination for black Americans, despite repeated assertions to the contrary, e.g., Carl Offord, "An Account of the African Blood Brotherhood: Interview with Cyril Briggs," 27 July 1939, p. 1; Charles Alexander, "Cyril Briggs: Veteran Publicist and Fighter for Democracy," p. 6; Foner, "Cyril V. Briggs," p. 12. Theodore Draper, in *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, was the first author to challenge the erroneous assertion. "It is unfortunate," Draper lamented, "that no first-hand copy of the ABB program, especially the original one, has yet turned up" (pp. 545-46, fn. 30).
121. "The African Blood Brotherhood," *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 10 (June 1920): 22.

122. "Negro First!," *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 2 (October 1919): 9. Hubert H. Harrison was the originator of the "race first" concept, which he stated he derived from "the American doctrine of 'Race First'" (*The Negro and The Nation*, op. cit., "Note," p. 3).
123. Briggs to Draper, 17 March 1958, TDC.
124. "The African Blood Brotherhood," op. cit., p. 7.
125. Cyril V. Briggs to J.R. Ralph Casimir, Roseau, Dominica, W.I., 4 February 1920, Casimir Collection; Briggs to Arthur Preuss, quoted in Preuss, *A Dictionary of Secret and Other Societies*, p. 4.
126. Briggs to Draper, 17 March 1958, TDC; ABB advertisement, *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 2 (October 1921); Theo. Burrell, "African Blood," *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 3 (November 1921): 6, 32; Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, pp. 325, 544, fn. 28; Foner, "Cyril V. Briggs," p. 11. Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, p. 122, gives a description of the ABB's "induction ceremonies."
127. Briggs to Draper, 17 March 1958, TDC.
128. "Editor's Note," *Crusader*, Vol. 2, no. 4 (December 1919): 32. Hardly any issue of the *Crusader* went by without some editorial or other statement dealing with Garvey and the Garvey movement, viz., "Marcus Garvey," Vol. I, no. 12 (August 1919): 8-9; "The Black Star Line," Vol. II, no. 4 (December 1919): 9; "A Paramount Chief for the Negro Race," Vol. II, no. 7 (March 1920): 5-6; "A Letter from Marcus Garvey," Vol. II, no. 8 (April 1920): 4; "The Universal Negro Improvement Association," Vol. 2, no. 9 (May 1920): 6; "The U.N.I.A. Convention," Vol. 2, no. 10 (June 1920): 1; "Garvey's 'Joker'," Vol. 2, no. 11 (July 1920): 8-9; "Those Responsible," *ibid.*, p. 11; "The U.N.I.A. Convention," *ibid.*, Vol. III, no. 1 (September 1920): 8; "The Black Star Line," Vol. III, no. 2 (October 1920): 20; "Blaming It On Garvey," Vol. III, no. 6 (February 1921): 9.
129. "The African Blood Brotherhood," *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 10 (June 1920): 22.
130. "Talking Points," *Crusader*, Vol. IV, no. 1 (March 1921): 27.
131. It may well have been the case that the New York-based *Loyal Order of the Sons of Africa* was related to the *National Association of Loyal Negroes*, organized in 1918 by West Indians living in Cristobal, Panama, and the *Association of Universal Loyal Negroes*, a branch of the same group established in Montreal, Canada ("Letter from Negroes' Association, Panama," *Anti-Slavery Reporter and Aborigines' Friend*, Fifth Series, 8 [July 1918]: 45-46; Dillon C. Govin, "National Association of Loyal Negroes," *African Times and Orient Review*, Vol. VI, no. 3 [September 1918]: 29; "Independent State for African People," *New York Age*, 21 December 1918).
132. "The Sons of Africa," pp. 101-102, in Peter Gilbert, comp. and ed., *The Selected Writings of John Edward Bruce: Militant Black Journalist* (New York: Arno Press, 1971).
133. Rev. Charles Martin was the pastor of the Beth Tphillah Moravian Church ("Establish History Classes," *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 4 [December 1919]: 10); "Facts, Fun and Fancies," *ibid.*, p. 17. Anderson refers to "Charles Martin, of the Fourth Moravian" (*This Was Harlem*, p. 256.) Rev. Martin authored an important account of "The Harlem Negro," in the *AME Zion Quarterly Review* (October-November-December 1916), cited in Anderson, op. cit., p. 358.
134. "The African Blood Brotherhood," *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 10 (June 1920): 8.
135. F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* (London: Collins/Fontana, 1973), p. 489; Leon O Broin, *Revolutionary Underground: The Story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, 1858-1924* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1976), Ch. 10; see also Paul Bew, *Land and the National Question in Ireland, 1858-82* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978), for the agrarian origins of the IRB.
136. Joseph P. Tumulty to Rear Admiral Gary T. Grayson, cablegram, 7 June 1919, quoted in Cuddy, *Irish-America and National Isolationism, 1914-1920*, p. 180.
137. *Ibid.*, pp. 171-180; according to Ward, "Irish-American opposition to the League was far more forceful than qualified Irish and

- Irish-American support for it, and powerful allies were to be found in the ranks of the Republicans, German, Italian and Jewish-Americans, and in the anglophobic Hearst press" (*Ireland and Anglo-American Relations, 1899-1921*, p. 190).
138. "Approaching Irish Success," *Crusader*, Vol. I, no. 12 (August 1919): 8. Briggs made yet another association between the Irish and Afro-American struggles, when he observed that President Wilson "has successfully refused to see Justice Cohalan, representing the Irish cause in America, and William Monroe Trotter, representing the Negro cause in Paris" ("William Monroe Trotter," *ibid.*, p. 9; Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations, 1899-1921*, p. 174).
139. Robert A. Bowen, Bureau M1, to U.S. Assistant District Attorney, 10 April 1918; Bowen, Office of the Postmaster, New York, Translation Bureau, to William H. Lamar, Solicitor, Post Office Department, 23 April 1919, RG 28, DNA; "Liberating Africa," *Crusader*, Vol. IV, no. 6 (August 1921): 8.
140. For the "red scare" of the 1880s, see Henry David, *The History of The Haymarket Affair: A Study in the American Social-Revolutionary and Labor Movements* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1936), p. 528, and Paul Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 215; cf. J.M. Schaak, *Anarchy and Anarchists: A History of the Red Terror and the Social Revolution in America and Europe. COMMUNISM, SOCIALISM, AND NIHILISM in doctrine and deed. The Haymarket conspiracy* (Chicago, 1889), cited in M.J. Sewell, "Rebels or Revolutionaries? Irish-American Nationalism and American Diplomacy, 1865-1885," *Historical Journal*, Vol. 29, no. 3 (1986): 730.
141. "A Few Notes on Tactics," *Crusader*, Vol. VI, no. 1 (January-February 1922): 9; "Alliances (Excerpt from A.B.B. Program)," *ibid.*, p. 16.
142. "Heroic Ireland," *Crusader*, Vol. IV, no. 6 (February 1921): 1.
143. "From an Irish Patriot," *Crusader*, Vol. IV, no. 3 (March 1921): 27-28; "The Sinn Feiner" advertisement, *ibid.*, Vol. IV, no. 2 (April 1921): 3. The Irish secretary of the Socialist party's Washington, D.C., branch, Edward J. Irvine, informed the *Crusader*: "So, too, Ireland and Ethiopia, suffering in their chains, find almost a pleasure in their pain, for the fire of righteousness of their cause burns in their hearts' core. The 'Black and Tans' of Ireland and the 'Black and Tans' of Georgia must give way to their idealistic spirit that oppose them" ("Irresistible Idealism," *Crusader*, Vol. IV, no. 5 [July 1921]: 29).
- Irvine was dubbed by Briggs "a White Internationalist" (*Crusader*, Vol. III, no. 5 [January 1921]: 29). There are numerous parallels between Edward J. Irvine and the Irish-born co-founder of the American Socialist party, Alexander Fitzgerald Irvine (1863-1941), whose *The Souls of Poor Folk* (London: W. Collins Sons & Co., 1921) emulated W.E.B. Du Bois' classic *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). Alexander Irvine was a correspondent of Du Bois's (see the W.E.B. Du Bois Papers Microfilm, Reel 1, Frame 1.) The author wishes to thank Professor Emeritus George A. Shepperson, University of Edinburgh, and Visiting Fellow, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute of Afro-American Studies, Harvard University, 1986-87, for the reference to Alexander Irvine.
144. "A Co-ordinating Group," *Crusader*, Vol. IV, no. 2 (April 1921): 16.
145. *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 3 (November 1921): 15.
146. "African Blood Brotherhood — Negro Radical Activities", File 61-1015, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C.
147. "The African Blood Brotherhood," *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 10 (June 1920): 7; "Constitution of the African Blood Brotherhood," *Crusader*, Vol. IV, no. 4 (June 1921): 21-22; Karl S. Bottigheimer, *Ireland and The Irish: A Short History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 226.
148. *Crusader*, Vol. VI, no. 1 (January-February 1922): 1; "Program of the ABB," *ibid.*, Vol. V, no. 2 (October 1921): 16.

149. Anselmo Jackson, "New Viewpoints of the American Negro," *Toiler* (Cleveland, Ohio), 9 July 1921.
150. "Military Control Is Ended At Tulsa," *The New York Times*, 4 June 1921, pp. 1, 14; Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); R. Halliburton, Jr., *The Tulsa Race War of 1921* (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1975). The conspiracy allegation was repeated by Rev. Rolfe P. Crum, rector of Tulsa's Trinity Episcopal Church, who asserted, in a letter addressed to the *New York World* of 21 June 1921, "that some of the Negroes have been planning a racial revolution for some time and that there is a secret order of revolutionists with its agents all over the country called the African Blood Brotherhood."
151. "Denies Negroes Started Tulsa Riot; Head of Blood Brotherhood Defends the Purpose of the Organization," *The New York Times*, 5 June 1921, p. 21; Cyril V. Briggs to Theodore Draper, 17 March 1958, TDC. The response of Richard B. Moore, a former ABB official, to the allegation contained in The New York Times report was given in an interview in January 1958: "Ridiculous," he declared, "How could organizers coming down there 60 days before start such a thing . . . It is Fantastic to say the African Blood Brotherhood started those riots" (Richard J.[sic] Moore, Interviewed Wednesday, January 15, 1958, p. 2, Box 21, Item 10, TDRF.)
152. "Urges Race Retaliation; Organizer of African Blood Brotherhood Would Pay Whites in Kind," *The New York Times*, 20 June 1921, p. 8. The reference in the headline was to the speech by W.A. Domingo.
153. Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land*, p. 136, fn. 12; "Announcement," *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 3 (November 1921).
154. *Fourth Congress of the Communist International: Abridged Report of Meetings held at Petrograd and Moscow, Nov. 7-Dec. 3, 1922* (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, published for the Communist International, n.d.), "The Negro Question," Session 22, November 25, 1922, p. 258; Ellsworth, op. cit.
155. Cyril V. Briggs to Marcus Garvey, New York, 15 August 1921, *Crusader*, Vol. 5, no. 3 (November 1921): 1. Garvey's attorney, William C. Matthews, showed J. Edgar Hoover the letter received from Briggs, during an interview with Hoover at the Bureau of Investigation office in Washington, D.C., on 16 November 1921 (Memorandum for Mr. Ruch from "J.E.H.," 17 November 1921, file 61-50-11, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C.).
156. Parker Hitt, Assistant Chief of Staff for Military Intelligence, Headquarters 2d Corps Area, Governors Island, New York City, to Director, Military Intelligence Division, Washington, D.C., 23 June 1921, Subject: Negro Activities, file 10218-424, RG 165, DNA.
157. For complete text of the letter, see "African Blood Brotherhood Business," *Crusader*, Vol. IV, no. 6 (August 1921): 18.
158. Geo. W. Royall to Editor, 27 June 1921, *Crusader*, Vol. IV, no. 6 (August 1921): 27.
159. "Constitution of the African Blood Brotherhood," Article III, Section 1, *Crusader*, Vol. IV, no. 4 (June 1921): 21-23. Article VI, Section 1, stipulated: "The Crusader Magazine (New York) shall be considered the official organ of the A.B.B. and shall be supported by all posts and members."
160. "Program of the A.B.B., Offered for the Guidance of the Negro Race in the Great Liberation Struggle," Issued by the Supreme Council, A.B.B., *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 2 (October 1921): 15-18.
161. "A.B.B. Activities," *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 3 (November 1921): 23; "Condensed and Tentative Constitution of the African Blood Brotherhood," *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 4 (December 1921): 16.
162. Bishop McGuire, "Why I Joined the A.B.B.," *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 4 (December 1921): 5.
163. "Lessons in Tactics For the Liberation Movement," *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 3 (November 1921): 16.
164. For the struggle of the opposing party factions, see Theodore Draper, *The Roots of*

- American Communism* (New York: The Viking Press, 1957), pp. 327ff; James P. Cannon, "First Days of American Communism," pp. 12-18, in *The History of American Trotskyism: Report of a Participant* (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1944).
165. "Workers' Party of America —Convention," 31 December 1921, file 61-167-108; "Special Report of Radical Activities," 3 January 1922, file 61-23-66; Confidential Informant "800" to George F. Ruch, Department of Justice, 26 December 1921, file 61-826-X19, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C.; "Red Party Born to Turn U.S. into Soviet Republic," *New York World*, Sunday, 25 December 1921, p. 5; Cyril V. Briggs, "The Workers Party, Marcus Garvey and the Negro," *Crusader*, Vol. VI, no. 1 (January-February 1922): 15-16.
166. Briggs to Draper, 17 March 1958, Box 31, TDC. Briggs may have had in mind white communists, when he asserted that "my first contact with the Communists [was] through the visits of Rose [Pastor Stokes] and Bob [Minor] to my office at 2299 Seventh Avenue," though the plausibility of even that interpretation seems doubtful.
167. "Two Outstanding Champions of Negro People Are Dead; Leaders in World-Wide Fight for Negro Rights," *Harlem Liberator*, 24 June 1933, p. 4; Kathleen Ann Sharp, "Rose Pastor Stokes: Radical Champion of the American Working Class, 1879-1933," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Duke University, 1979, Chap. VI. Following her death the Communist party established a scholarship in Rose Pastor Stokes's name at the Workers School for "the worker who puts up the best fight for Negro Rights during the year" (Kathleen Ann Sharp, *ibid.*, p. 190). According to Briggs, Stokes's second husband, Victor J. Jerome (aka Jerome Romaine) was "active in the work of the Harlem Section of the Communist Party" (*Harlem Liberator*, *op. cit.*). Jerome would author *The Negro in Hollywood Films* (New York: Masses & Mainstream, 1950) in his role as the cultural director of the Communist party (Johnpoll and Klehr, eds., *Biographical Dictionary of the American Left*, pp. 224-25.).
168. "Negro," Pts. 1 and 2, Boxes 12-13, Robert Minor Papers, Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New York; "Great All-Race Negro Congress Opening Today," *Daily Worker*, 11 February 1924; cf. Joseph North, *Robert Minor, Artist and Crusader: An Informal Biography* (New York: International Publishers, 1956), pp. 157-163; Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), *passim*; and Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, Vol. 5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 741. Christopher Lasch discusses Minor's conversion to communism in *The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 149-155.
169. Claude McKay, "Soviet Russia and the Negro," *Crisis*, Vol. 27, no. 2 (December 1923): 64; Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, pp. 322-23; "The Comintern and American Blacks, 1919-1943," Appendix III, pp. 841-854, in Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, Vol. 5.
170. *Harlem Liberator*, 24 June 1933, p. 4.
171. "The Program of the American Arm of the Communist International," *Toiler*, Saturday, 12 February 1921, p. 2. For a concise and useful listing of the dates of official conventions and the various party appellations used in the early years, see "Conventions of the Communist Party of the U.S.A.," Appendix, p. 573, in William Z. Forster, *History of the Communist Party of the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1952).
172. "The Salvation of the Negro," *Crusader*, Vol. IV, no. 2 (April 1921): 8-9.
173. *Ibid.*, p. 8; "Talking Points," *Crusader*, Vol. IV, no. 1 (March 1921): 27.
174. "Claude McKay with the Liberator," *Crusader*, Vol. IV, no. 2 (April 1921): 21; Max Eastman, "Editorials," *Liberator*, Vol. 4, no. 3 (March 1921): 5, and *Love and Revolution: My Journey through an Epoch* (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 222-23; Cooper, *Claude McKay: Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance*, pp. 99-101, 134-170; cf.

William L. O'Neill, *The Last Romantic: A Life of Max Eastman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 98.

175. Claude McKay, *A Long Way from Home* (New York: Lee Furman, Inc., 1937; reprinted 1970), pp. 76-7, quoted in Patricia W. Romero, *E. Sylvia Pankhurst: Portrait of a Radical* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 129; Cooper, *Claude McKay*, pp. 112-123.
176. For the early Communist groups in Great Britain, see Raymond Challinor, *The Origins of British Bolshevism* (Totawa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977), *passim*.
177. G. Carr to the *Bolshevik* [organ of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International], 2 December 1922, reprinted as Appendix 1, pp. 88, in Claude McKay, *The Negroes in America*, translated from the Russian by Robert J. Winter, edited by Allan L. McLeod (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1979); P. Okhrimenko, "Original Translator's Note," p. xviii; McKay to the *Bolshevik*, 3 December 1922, Appendix 2, p. 89, *ibid*. A summary of McKay's Comintern address is contained in *Fourth Congress of the Communist International . . .*, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-262.
178. McKay, *A Long Way from Home*, pp. 108-09. There were in actuality two meetings held, though the second went unmentioned in McKay's autobiography; he did allude to it, however, in a letter to Max Eastman, 18 May 1923, cited in Cooper, *op. cit.*, pp. 143, 398, fn. 29. According to McKay, the suggestion for the meeting with Minor came from Hubert H. Harrison (*A Long Way from Home*, p. 109), but this seems improbable, since Harrison had vociferously repudiated all previous ties with white radicals. More plausibly, it was Briggs and not Harrison, who McKay introduced to Minor at the office of the *Liberator*, and who it was that "suggested a little meeting that would include the rest of the black Reds" (*ibid.*).
179. McKay, *A Long Way from Home*, p. 162; file BS 202600-2031-7, RG 65, DNA. When he was interviewed by the FBI's Chicago field office, the year just prior to his death, McKay was reported "attending some affair at her [Rose Pastor Stokes's] home and that he thought that other individuals in attendance were Eugene [sic] H. Harrison, Grace Campbell, Robert Minor, Cyril Briggs, and Richard Moore" ("Communist Party - USA - Brief, Internal Security - C," Chicago letter to Director, September 9, 1947, file 100-3-74-961, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C.) In his autobiography, McKay described Stokes as "working with a radical Negro group" in Harlem at the time (*A Long Way from Home*, p. 161).
180. McKay, *op. cit.*, p. 109; McKay, "Garvey as a Negro Moses," *Liberator*, 5 (April 1922): 8-9.
181. Assistant Chief of Staff for Military Intelligence, Parker Hitt, Headquarters, 2d Corps Area, Governors Island, New York City, to Director, Military Intelligence Division, Washington, D.C., 23 June 1921, file 10218-424/1, RG 165, DNA.
182. File BS 202600-667-78, 15 August 1921, RG 65, DNA.
183. *Negro World*, 27 August 1921; files BS 198940-240 and BS 202600-667, RG 65, DNA. For Rose Pastor Stokes's speech and Garvey's reply, see Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, Vol. 3, pp. 676-681.
184. "Negro Convention Refuses to Endorse the Soviets," *New York Herald* (Paris Edition), 21 August 1921.
185. *Negro World*, 3 September 1921; Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and UNIA Papers*, Vol. 3, pp. 691-92.
186. C.B. Valentine [Cyril Briggs], "The Negro Convention," *Toiler*, 1 October 1921, p. 14. The Hungarian-born Joseph Z. Kornfeder, a founding member of the Communist party and the self-described director of "Communist Party activities amongst the Negroes," would testify at a later date: "He [Garvey] was holding one of those show conventions that he held every two [sic] years to which he invited all Negro organizations in this country and other countries — he invited also the African Blood Brotherhood. That was his big mistake. So we

- sent a large delegation there and the delegation, of course, demanded an accounting of his income, funds and other things. Meanwhile we created a bulletin which was dressed up as a news bulletin in such a way as if it was coming from Garvey's organization. And the bulletin was sending news about the doings at that convention. The Negro papers, of which there were several hundred weeklies, thought it was coming from the convention. But it was gradual criticism of Marcus Garvey — subtle, but positive. So he got excited and decided to expel the delegates of the African Blood Brotherhood" (Subversion In Racial Unrest, part I, Public Hearings of the state of Louisiana Joint Legislative Committee, Baton Rouge, 6-9 March 1957, pp. 18, 39). It was undoubtedly the heavy demands of the ABB's propaganda effort during the August 1921 UNIA convention that explains the non-appearance of the September 1921 issue of the *Crusader*.
187. "Financial Statement and Trial Balance for the Period from July, 1921, to July 31st, 1922," account #107, Exhibit No. 20, file 61-443-642, Documents Seized at the Bridgman Convention held at Bridgman, Michigan (hereafter cited as Bridgman Convention documents), United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C. The original Bridgman documents were transferred for photographing to the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., on 3 September 1922, and subsequently returned to the Michigan prosecutor for court hearings. I wish to express my appreciation to Professor Harvey Klehr, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, for permission to use his photocopied set of the original Bridgman Convention documents released to him by the FBI under provisions of the Freedom of Information-Privacy Act; cf. R.M. Whitney, ed., *Reds in America* (New York: Beckwith Press, 1924; reprinted 1970); Harvey Klehr, "The Bridgman Delegates," *Survey*, No. 2 (99) (Spring 1976): 87-95.
188. "Report of the CEC on its activities during amalgamation," Document No. #77, 22 August 1922, file 61-443-642, Bridgman Convention documents.
189. "The Program of the American Arm of the Communist International," op. cit., p. 2.
190. "Report of the CEC on its activities during amalgamation," op. cit.
191. African Blood Brotherhood, "To New Negroes Who Really Seek Liberation," pamphlet found in Miscellaneous Records, Military Government of San Domingo, 1914-1920, box 5, M201-202, RG 38, DNA; "Plan of Having All Negro Organizations in a Mighty Federation to Make Race a World Power . . .," *Negro Congress Bulletin and News Service*, Vol. I, no. 1 (6 August 1921): 1. It should be pointed out that both the Communist party and the ABB preferred to use "congress" instead of "convention," when they referred to the UNIA gathering. The opening of the third Comintern congress, from which body the Communist party derived its authority, had only recently taken place in Moscow ("Opening of the Congress of the Communist International," *Toiler*, Saturday, 23 July 1921, p. 1; cf. "Congress of the Communist International: A Brief Report on a Movement That Greatly Affects the Destinies of All the Oppressed," *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 6 [August 1921]: 12). The usage preferred by the Communist party was reflected in the name given to the American Negro Labor Congress in 1925.
192. "General Intelligence Report of Radical Activities of the Workers Party for Chicago and Vicinity, Radical Activities," Chicago report, 12 February 1924, file 61-228-173, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C. For the opposition of the black socialists to the ABB on the basis of the latter's Communist party link, see "A Negro Sanhedrin," *Messenger*, Vol. V, no. 5 (May 1923): 689; "The Menace of Negro Communists," *ibid.*, Vol. V, no. 8 (August 1923): 784; George S. Schuyler, "Shafts and Darts," *ibid.*, Vol. V, no. 9 (September 1923): 819; "The Sanhedrin," *ibid.*, Vol. V, no. 10 (October 1923): 830; and *ibid.*, Vol. V, no. 10 (November 1923): 841; see also Abram L. Harris, "The Negro Problem as Viewed by Negro Leaders," *Current History*, XVIII, No. 3 (June 1923): 417. The "Concordat," signed by the six participating black groups that made

up the so-called United Negro Front, would appear to have been drafted by Briggs ("Toward Realization of a United Negro Front: Concordat Signed by Six Leading Civil Rights Organizations," New York, 23-24 March 1923, Papers of the NAACP, file C-232, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division; Preuss, *A Dictionary of Secret and Other Societies*, pp. 4-5).

193. "Minutes of Third Assembly of the Permanent United Front Conference," 16 June 1923; Cyril V. Briggs to the *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 June 1923; Cyril V. Briggs to James Weldon Johnson, 3 July and 12 July 1923; Kelly Miller to Cyril V. Briggs, 22 July 1923, NAACP Papers, file C-232, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

194. Briggs to Draper, 17 March 1958, p. 5, TDC. Sanhedrin was the name suggested by Kelly Miller, who was chairman of the council during its short-lived existence (W. Sherman Jackson, *Kelly Miller and the Nadir of Race Relations in America: A Selected Anthology* [New York: Garland Publishing, forthcoming]).

195. "A.B.B. Activities," *Crusader*, Vol. 5, no. 3 (November 1921): 23.

196. Marcus Garvey to Bishop George Alexander McGuire, 25 October 1921, and McGuire to Garvey, 25 October 1921, *New York Age*, 29 October 1921, reprinted in Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and UNIA Papers*, Vol. 3, pp. 128-30; Bishop McGuire, "Why I Left the U.N.I.A.," and "Why I Joined the A.B.B.," *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 4 (December 1921): 5.

197. "Condensed and Tentative Constitution of the African Blood Brotherhood," *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 4 (December 1921): 19; "Religion in the Liberation Struggle," *Crusader*, Vol. VI, no. 1 (January-February 1922): 9-10; Richard Newman, "The Origins of the African Orthodox Church," introductory essay, pp. iii-xxii, in *The Negro Churchman: The Official Organ of the African Orthodox Church, 1923-26* (Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus Reprint Co., 1977).

198. "James D. Brooks, Activities of Universal Negro Improvement Association, etc.," New York Report by Special Agent Mortimer J.

Davis, New York City, 9 January 1922, file 61-837-1, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C. When Brooks was interviewed in the Tombs in New York City, he was reported to have "stated that Briggs had been in touch with him regularly while he was in prison."

199. Cyril A. Crichlow, "What I Know About Liberia," *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 4 (December 1921): 20-23; *ibid.*, Vol. VI, no. 1 (January-February 1922): 18-23; "A Simple Statement in Three Parts," *ibid.*, pp. 23-26.

200. *Toiler*, 12 February 1921, p. 2.

201. *The New York Times*, 20 June 1921, p. 8.

202. *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 3 (November 1921): 15. Briggs would justify ABB attendance at the December 1921 Workers party convention on the basis of "encouraging and utilizing all divisions within the white race and of uniting against our oppressors all elements of the discontented of their own and other races" ("The Workers Party, Marcus Garvey and the Negro," *Crusader*, Vol. VI, no. 1 [January-February 1922]: 15).

203. "Lessons in Tactics For the Liberation Movement," *op. cit.*

204. Agent "800" to George F. Ruch, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C., 24 December 1921, file 61-826-X17, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C.

205. Confidential Informant "800," New York, to George F. Ruch, 25 October 1921, file 61-826, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C. (reprinted in Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and UNIA Papers*, Vol. 4, pp. 130-31. For an account of the federal investigation and prosecution of Garvey, see Robert A. Hill, "'The Foremost Radical Among His Race': Marcus Garvey and the Black Scare, 1918-1921," *Prologue*, Vol. 16, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 215-231.

206. Earl E. Titus, New York City, "African Blood Brotherhood — Negro Radical Activities," 23 October 1923, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C.

207. Briggs to Draper, 17 March 1958, TDC. Briggs in his letter erroneously claimed that the Crusader News Service was "the first Negro national news service to be organized in this country," asserting that it "preceded by several months the Associated Negro Press (ANP), probably inspir[ing] organization of the latter." The Associated Negro Press was formed almost three years before organization of the CNS (Lawrence D. Hogan, *A Black National News Service: The Associated Negro Press and Claude Barnett, 1919-1945* [Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984]).
208. "The Policy of *The Messenger* on West Indian and American Negroes: W.A. Domingo vs. Chandler Owen," *Messenger*, Vol. V, no. 3 (March 1923): 640.
209. File 61-837-1, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C.
210. "Explanations That Do Not Explain," *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 4 (December 1921): 9.
211. "Crusader Warned Its Readers Against Marcus Garvey," *Crusader*, Vol. VI, no. 1 (January-February 1922): 8.
212. File 100-3-74-961, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C.
213. "Negro Radical Activities," files 61-3838-2 and SI 61-1122-12, New York report, 23 May 1923, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C.; W.A. Domingo, "Figures Never Lie, But Liars Do Figure," *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 2 (October 1921): 13-14. Domingo was the first editor of Garvey's *Negro World* newspaper in 1918-19. The ABB supreme executive council, in 1923, in addition to Domingo, was made up of Cyril V. Briggs, executive head; Theo Burrell, secretary; Otto E. Huiswoud, national organizer; Richard B. Moore, educational director; Ben E. Burrell, director of historical research; Grace P. Campbell, director of consumers' co-operatives; and William H. Jones, physical director. Of the eight directors, at least six were alleged to be Communist party members (Special Agent J.G. Tucker, New York, 1 October 1921, file BS 202600-1628-171, RG 65, DNA). The committee that actually directed the ABB consisted of Grace P. Campbell, Theo Burrell, and Cyril Briggs.
214. Transcript of interview with W.A. Domingo, Bronx, New York, Saturday, 18 January 1958, box 21, TDRF. Domingo informed the interviewer: "As for the ABB I thought that was wild. I think it was only a paper organization. I don't think I was ever a member. I think it was used just as an organization to back the *Crusader*."
215. *Current History*, Vol. XVIII, no. 3 (June 1923): 417. Briggs published the following denial: "The African Blood Brotherhood is not affiliated with the Workers' Party of America, or with any other political party, for that matter, and is not the official Communist organization among Negroes" (*Crusader News Service*, 2 July 1923, quoted in the *Messenger*, Vol. V, no. 9 [September 1923]: 819).
216. "The Fight for Negro Liberty," *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 6 (February 1920): 29.
217. Briggs to Draper, 17 March 1958, p. 2, TDC.
218. "The African Blood Brotherhood," *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 10 (June 1920): 7.
219. "Before It Is Too Late," *Crusader*, Vol. III, no. 2 (October 1920): 10.
220. "Denies Negroes Started Tulsa Riot," *The New York Times*, Sunday, 5 June 1921, p. 21.
221. Assistant Chief of Staff for Military Intelligence, Headquarters 2d Corps Area, Governors Island, New York City, to Director, Military Intelligence Division, Washington, D.C., 23 June 1921, file 10218-424/1, RG 165, DNA.
222. Report on Radical Activities in Greater New York District, 12 December 1921, file 61-23-37, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C..
223. Briggs to Draper, 17 March 1958, p. 2, TDC.
224. Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 27, fn. 15. Naison

laments the fact that "Because of limited documentary evidence, what this organization [the ABB] actually did remains something of a mystery" (p. 7).

225. "Rally To The Cause," *Crusader*, Vol. II, no. 2 (October 1919): 11.

226. *Revolutionary Radicalism . . . being the Report of the Joint Legislative Committee Investigating Seditious Activities, Part I, Revolutionary and Subversive Movements Abroad and At Home, Volume II* (Albany, New York: J.B. Lyon Company, 1920), Table I, "Revolutionary and Subversive Periodicals Published in New York City," p. 2004.

227. Briggs to Draper, 17 March 1958, TDC.

228. *Ibid.*

229. "Announcement," *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 3 (November 1921): 28.

230. "As They Have Done By You, Do You By Them," *Crusader*, Vol. V, no. 3 (November 1921): 12.

231. "On With the Liberation Struggle," *Crusader*, Vol. VI, no. 1 (January-February 1922): 6; "Marcus Garvey Arrested," *ibid.*, p. 5.

232. "Crusader Warned Its Readers Against Marcus Garvey," *Crusader*, *ibid.*, p. 8.

233. *Negro World*, 1 September 1923, p. 1.

234. Earl Browder, "Economic and Political Situation and Tasks of Our Party, Draft Thesis for the Party Convention," Section XIX, p. 17, Box 6, Folder 26, TDRF.

235. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 November 1942.

236. Theodore Burrell to Theodore Draper, ca. 21 March 1958, TDRF; Cyril Briggs to Wayne Cooper, 29 June 1965. Burrell stated that he had turned over his nearly complete file of the *Crusader*, and other material pertaining to the ABB, including the constitution, to the curator at the time of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Dr. Lawrence D. Reddick. Reddick's successor, Mrs. Jean Blackwell Hutson, claimed never to have seen the donation nor uncovered, after considerable search, any record of it (Theodore Draper to Dr. L.D. Reddick, Montgomery State Teachers' College, Montgomery, Alabama, 8 April 1958, TDRF).

237. Robert F. Williams, Baldwin, Michigan, to Robert A. Hill, 27 October 1986; Robert F. Williams, *Negroes With Guns*, Marc Schleifer, ed. (New York: Marzani and Munsell, 1962); James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries: A Personal Account* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), pp. 163-211.

APPENDIX

A Comparison of the Programs of the African Blood Brotherhood 1920 and 1922

Summary of the Program and Aims of the African Blood Brotherhood, Formulated by 1920 Convention.

1) *A Liberated Race* in the United States, Africa and elsewhere. Liberated not merely from alien political rule, but also from the crushing weight of exploitation, which keeps the many in degrading poverty that the few may wallow in stolen wealth. **The Negroes in the United States—both native and foreign born—are destined to play a vital part in a powerful world movement for Negro liberation. Just as the Negro in the United States can never hope to win genuine equality with his white neighbors under the system of exploitation, so, too, a free Africa is impossible until commercial exploitation is abolished. The A.B.B. proposes (a) to develop and organize the political and economic strength of the Negro in the North for the purpose of eliminating peonage, disfranchisement, etc., in the South and raising the status of the Negro in that section of the country, and (2) to organize the national strength of the entire Negro group in America for the purpose of extending moral and financial aid and, where necessary, leadership to our blood-brothers on the continent of Africa and in Haiti and the West Indies in their struggle against white capitalist exploitation.**

2) *Absolute Race Equality.* In this question are inextricably bound the issues of Political Equality, Social Equality, and Economic Equality. Let one be denied and the whole principle of racial equality is denied.

The Program and Aims of the African Blood Brotherhood, 1922

[1] A liberated race in the United States, Africa and elsewhere. Liberated not merely from political rule, but also from the crushing weight of capitalism, which keeps the many in degrading poverty that the few may wallow in stolen wealth.

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[2] *Absolute Race Equality.* In this question are inextricably bound the issues of political equality, social equality and economic equality. Let one be denied and the whole principle of racial equality is denied.

3) *The Fostering of Racial Self-Respect* by the dissemination of the true facts concerning the Negro's contributions to modern civilization and the predominant part played in the ancient world by the African peoples.

4) *Organized and Uncompromising Opposition to the Ku Klux Klan* and all other movements or tendencies inimical to the true interests of the Negro masses. To effectively oppose the bigotry and prejudice of the Ku Klux Klan we must (a) organize the Negro masses; (b) create a strong Negro Federation out of the existing organizations that we may present a United Front; and (c) for the purpose of fighting the Klan ally ourselves with all groups opposed to its vicious activities, viz: the workers, particularly the Jewish workers and the Catholic workers, at whom, with the Negro, the Klan's activities are especially directed. As, for the purpose of throwing off our oppression, the enemies of the Imperialist system are our natural allies by virtue of being in the same camp and opposed to the same enemy, so the enemies of the Klan are our friends in that they fight the foe we fight. The Negro masses must get out of their minds the stupid idea that it is necessary for two groups to love each other before they can enter into an alliance against their common enemy. Not love or hatred, but *Identity of Interest at the Moment*, dictates the tactics of practical people.

5) *A United Negro Front* with which to oppose the Ku Klux Klan and all other organizations and tendencies antagonistic to the Negro. This can be done only by bringing all Negro organizations into a Federation with a programme to which any serious and intelligent Negro organization could subscribe. Their identity would not be lost. Their autonomy practically unimpaired. And the race organized and effective for the first time in its history.

[3] The fostering of race pride by the dissemination of true facts concerning the negro's contributions to modern civilization and the predominant part played in the ancient world by this great race of ours.

[4] Organized and uncompromising opposition to the Ku Klux Klan and all other movements or tendencies inimical to the interests of the negro masses. To effectively oppose the bigotry and prejudice of the Ku Klux Klan we must (a) organize the negro masses; (b) create a strong negro federation out of the existing organizations that we may present a United Front; and (c) for the purpose of fighting the Klan ally ourselves with all groups opposed by its vicious activities, viz.; the workers, including the Jewish and Catholic workers. As, for the purpose of throwing off our oppression, the enemies of the capitalist system are our natural allies by virtue of being in the same camp and opposed to the same enemy, so the enemies of the Klan are our friends in that they fight the foe we fight. The negro masses must get out of their minds the stupid idea that it is necessary for two groups to love each other before they can enter into an alliance against their common enemy. Not love or hatred, but identity of interests at the moment, dictates the tactics of practical people.

[5] *Rapprochement* and fellowship within the darker races and within the class-conscious and revolutionary white workers. For the purpose of waging an effective struggle and of weakening our enemies, we must (a) establish fellowship and coordination of action within the darker masses and (b) between these masses and the truly class-conscious white workers who seek the abolition of the capitalist system that oppresses and exploits alike black and white workers, and must, therefore, necessarily work toward the same end as we, whether they consciously will to help us or not. By seeking the abolition of the capitalist states, which are instruments of the capitalist-imperialists for the exploitation of the workers in the colonies and at home and the maintenance of the supremacy of the capitalist class, the class-conscious white workers must perform contribute to our complete liberation, even as in 1863 the white workers in the Northern

States of the United States contributed to our partial liberation because of their fight against the slave power competition of the South, and in fairness to large masses of revolutionary workers who acknowledge the leadership of the Third International, it is well to state that the Third International has emphatically ordered its members to help the darker races and all other oppressed peoples in their struggles for complete liberation.

6) *Industrial Development* along genuine cooperative lines whereby the benefits will be equally distributed among the masses participating, and not appropriated by a few big stockholders and dishonest and inefficient officials drawing exorbitant salaries. The A.B.B. is sternly opposed to the foisting of individual and corporation enterprises upon mass movements for the reason that (a) such procedure is manifestly dishonest and misleading. Enterprises supported by mass movements should be of such a nature as to equally benefit every one in the movement, not merely a handful of officials; (b) the A.B.B. does not consider *any* commercial enterprise good enough to base the sacred Liberation Movement upon the mere chances of its success or failure. No movement so based can long survive the collapse of its commercial enterprises. We believe in fostering and encouraging cooperative enterprises that will benefit the many rather than the few, but without basing the movement upon them.

7) *Higher Wages For Negro Labor, Shorter Hours and Better Living Conditions.* To gain for Negro Labor the full regard of its toil and to prevent exploitation either on the job or at the source of supplies we must encourage industrial unionism among our people and at the same time fight to break down the prejudice in the unions which is stimulated and encouraged by the employers. This prejudice is already meeting the attack of the radical and progressive element among white union men and must eventually give way before the united onslaught of Black and White Workers. Wherever it is found impossible to enter the existing labor unions, independent unions should be formed, that Negro Labor be enabled to protect its interests.

[6] Industrial development along genuine cooperative lines whereby the benefits will be equally distributed among the masses participating, and not hogged by a few big stockholders and dishonest and inefficient officials drawing exorbitant salaries. The African Blood Brotherhood is sternly opposed to the grafting of individuals and corporation enterprises upon mass movements for the reasons that (a) such procedure is manifestly dishonest and misleading. Enterprises supported by mass movements should be of such a nature as to equally benefit every one in the movement, not merely a handful of officials; (b) The African Blood Brotherhood does not consider any commercial enterprise good enough to base the sacred liberation movement upon the mere chances of its success or failure. No movement so based can long survive the collapse of its commercial enterprises. We believe in fostering and encouraging cooperative enterprises that will benefit the many rather than the few, but without basing the movement upon them.

[7] Higher wages for negro labor, lower rents. To gain for negro labor the full reward of its toil and to prevent capitalist exploitation either on the job or at the source of supplies we must encourage individual unionism among our people and at the same time fight to break down the barriers which capitalist-stimulated prejudice has created against us in the trade unions. These barriers are already meeting the attack of the radical and progressive element among white union men and must eventually give way before the united onslaught of black and white workers marching to attack with the stirring slogan:

“Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to live for in chains! You have a world to gain!”

8) *Education.* That "Knowledge is Power" was never more true than today, when on every hand it is being demonstrated that races or groups advance by virtue of their acquirement of knowledge or lag behind because of their failure to overcome ignorance. The A.B.B. proposes to send lecturers throughout America, establish forums, newspapers, etc., etc.

9) *Co-operation With Other Darker Races And With the Class-Conscious White Workers.* For the purpose of waging an effective struggle and of weakening our enemies wherever possible, we must (a) establish fellowship and coordination of action within the darker masses and (b) between these masses and the truly class-conscious white workers who seek the abolition of human exploitation.

SOURCE: Arthur Preuss, *A Dictionary of Secret and Other Societies* (St. Louis, Mo.: B. Herder Book Co., 1924), pp. 47.

[8] A united negro front with which to oppose the united front of the white capitalists organized under the guise of chambers of commerce, Ku Klux Klan, American Legion, American Defense Society, etc. This can be done only by bringing all negro organizations into a federation with a program to which any decent negro organization could subscribe. Their identity could not be lost. Their autonomy practically unimpaired.

SOURCE: R.M. Whitney, ed., *Reds in America* (New York: Beckwith Press, 1924), pp. 190-192.

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