

Before the Eyes of All Nations: African-American Identity and Historical Memory at the Centennial Exposition of 1876

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Introduction

Some years ago, African -American author and cultural critic Ralph Ellison made an extremely perceptive comment about historical memory and about the past as a contested terrain. “The white American,” Ellison noted, “has charged the Negro American with being without past or tradition (something which strikes the white man with a nameless horror) . . . ; and the Negro knows that both were ‘mammy-made’ right here at home. What’s more, each secretly believes that he alone knows what is valid in the American experience.”¹ This observation regarding black and white Americans’ contestation over the meaning of their immutably linked histories should remind us that the necessity for creating a usable past is presupposed by the horrifying prospect of a people not having a past or tradition upon which to build. Unthinkable as that notion was for white Americans, in Ellison’s view, it has been equally untenable for their black fellow citizens. For generations African American intellectuals and community leaders have expended considerable energy in refuting the common white assumption that blacks have no past or traditions. Black leaders in the nineteenth century frequently used shared public space to express their sense of collective historical memory, both to provide a foundation for African American identity and to challenge the dominant, white-centered interpretations of American history.

One telling moment in African Americans’ quest to construct a usable past took place in Philadelphia, at the National Centennial Exposition of 1876. There, the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church spearheaded a movement to raise a statue of the denomination’s Founder and first Bishop, Richard Allen, on the Centennial grounds in Philadelphia’s Fairmount Park. In some respects, this is a local, Philadelphia story—Richard Allen, the A.M.E. Church, and the Centennial itself, after all, were all based in the Quaker City. But the largely local incidents involved in this story have far broader implications. First, the Allen Monument is important because it marks the earliest successful effort by black Americans to honor one of their own with a commemorative statue.² African Americans’ participation in the Exposition is all the more significant because it highlights questions of identity, heritage, and historical memory that engaged many African American leaders in the generation after Emancipation. Finally, the Centennial experience signifies a

turning point in black commemorative traditions, which began after the 1870s to take place less frequently in shared, biracial public spaces and more often in segregated public spaces occupied primarily by fellow blacks. In this respect, black commemorative practices in the late nineteenth century were forced to follow the rules of racial exclusion that defined the emerging Jim Crow era.

Commemoration, Memory, Ambivalence, and Identity

African Americans' public engagement with historical memory has deep roots in the antebellum period.³ As white Americans began to mark the anniversaries of national events like Independence Day and the Battle of Bunker Hill, they prohibited black Americans from participating, often through the use of violence. By the 1830s July Fourth celebrations in cities like New York and Philadelphia were frequently marred by white mobs harassing or attacking black residents.⁴ Well before this time, however, free African Americans in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia were organizing their own "Freedom Day" celebrations—public gatherings that began in 1808 to commemorate the abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade in that year. These early slave trade celebrations fell out of practice by the 1820s, partly because of white violence against the celebrants and partly because the trade, in fact, continued despite its legal proscription. The abolition of slavery in New York State on July 4, 1827, though celebrated in several northern states for a few years, also proved inadequate to the task of holding together an incipient African American tradition of public commemoration.

It took a "foreign" event—though one fraught with universal relevance—to provide free blacks in the northern United States with an occasion whose real and symbolic import made it an appropriate cornerstone of a distinctive commemorative tradition. The process of emancipating and enfranchising the slaves in the British West Indies, initiated with legislation passed in Parliament on August 1, 1834, provided African Americans the hope and promise of their own eventual freedom and citizenship. This optimism invigorated black Americans' abolitionist activities as well as their celebration of the August 1 anniversary across the North. By the 1850s these affairs had become annual public events that fulfilled a variety of important functions for black communities in free states from Massachusetts to California. Sometimes attended by several thousand blacks and whites, West Indian Emancipation celebrations provided a vital civic forum for blacks to galvanize intraracial communication and organizational networks, to assert black rights to use public space, and to define publicly their role in American society and their interpretations of American history. These events are striking for the regularity of their observance and for the attendance of thousands of African Americans at celebrations, not only in major cities, but also in small rural villages, some of which contained at most a dozen or so black families. One of the most

important functions of these festivals was to articulate—to large audiences comprised of both blacks and whites—a black-centered interpretation of history which celebrated, on the one hand, blacks' essential American-ness and, on the other hand their special identity as a people with a distinct history and heritage which had to be defined and passed on.⁵

By the time of the Civil War this mature commemorative tradition was widely recognized by both blacks and whites as a defining feature of a vibrant free black culture in the North. After the war United States Emancipation became the primary focus of this tradition, but black commemorative activity expanded considerably, encompassing a host of national and local events that gave voice to African Americans' sense of their complex history and heritage. Between the 1860s and the 1910s black Americans paid tribute to numerous individuals by raising statues, installing plaques, preserving their homes, naming schools and other institutions after them, and celebrating their birthdays. African Americans also observed anniversaries: Lee's surrender at Appomattox, the storming of Fort Wagner by black troops during the Civil War, the Centennials of Prince Hall Freemasonry and of the A.M.E. Church, and, of course, "Freedom Day" celebrations on the various dates associated with the abolition of slavery in the United States.

African Americans' cultural institutions also defined and disseminated historical memory. Black veterans' organizations commemorated their role in saving the Union; black literary and historical societies sprang up in virtually every community; folk traditions were preserved and studied; individuals collected documents and treaties germane to African and African American history; historical writing (both fiction and non-fiction) blossomed notably after the 1870s. This expanding attention to history and tradition—and the concomitant goal of leaving a legacy for subsequent generations—reached an apotheosis during the era of the "New Negro," when Carter G. Woodson, Arthur Schomburg, and others established formal institutions to study, preserve, and promulgate black history. All these efforts were intended to edify future generations of blacks and to enlighten white Americans regarding blacks' noble past and their contributions to a common culture.⁶

This explosion of attention to historical memory was not exclusive to African Americans in the generation following the Civil War. A number of scholars have identified the period between the 1860s and 1910s as one in which Americans generally began more consciously to address questions of collective memory and tradition. Historian Michael Kammen asserts that late-nineteenth century Americans displayed a "new hunger for history and tradition" and suggests that the nation's collective attention to its past began at that time to "take form as a self-conscious phenomenon." Statues, commemorative events, historical societies, and pageants all became more prominent features of America's public cultural landscape.⁷ Black Americans

enthusiastically participated in this broader trend, but their concerns regarding historical memory were unique, defined largely by efforts to ensure black citizenship rights and to establish African American identity.

Black Americans, especially after emancipation, struggled to resolve two tensions inherent in their collective situation. Most fundamentally, African Americans—whether or not they were active in commemorative activities—had to define an individual and collective identity that took into account both their incontrovertible claim to equal rights as American citizens and their singular experience as a racially distinct people with a shared history of oppression. More specific to the question of collective memory, blacks had to balance the need to preserve, interpret, and disseminate the positive elements in their history with the desire to eradicate many of the more painful and degrading aspects of that history. These tensions—between American-ness and distinctiveness, between constructive memory and selective amnesia—lay at the crux of African Americans' often ambivalent relationship with historical memory.

Nothing captured that ambivalence with the same intensity as debates over the African past and the legacy of slavery. Both these central components of African American identity were looked upon with shame by some blacks in the postwar generation who argued that—as individuals and as a race—African Americans would be better served if they distanced themselves from those aspects of their collective history. In 1876 A.M.E. minister Theophilus G. Steward was one of the rising young intellectual luminaries within the A.M.E. Church, and was well-known for his outspoken views on social, political, and theological questions. Like many of the orators who spoke at early slave trade commemorations and at Freedom Day events throughout the nineteenth century, Steward took great pride in his African heritage. But he quickly dismissed the potential of shared “African blood” for forging a united, proud, and strong African-American people. Speaking particularly of black leaders, he alleged that “if you should claim them [to be] African or Negro, in high dudgeon they would probably exclaim, ‘I am an American citizen’” and deny that legacy.⁸ Steward's criticism was not unfounded. While many blacks continued to express pride in the greatness of ancient Africa, they were often less enthusiastic about identifying themselves with contemporary cultures on that continent. Steward was clearly troubled by the fact that, for some blacks, the longing to claim American-ness had superseded their connection with African and racial identities.

Many black leaders took great pains to point out that ancient Africans, particularly the Egyptians, had established a cradle of civilization while Europeans were dressing in animal skins and wallowing in barbarism. Unfortunately, this interpretation continued, African civilization had lapsed into isolation and, later, was exploited and ravaged by avaricious Europeans

through the Atlantic slave trade. Nineteenth-century Africans were generally seen as a benighted people living in a savage and heathenish state. Many American blacks sought to avoid association with the racist stereotypes of indolence and brutishness often applied to native Africans (as well as African Americans), and they consciously distanced themselves from their heritage, choosing rather to claim a fully American identity. Others, though usually just as disdainful of contemporary Africa, focused on past glories and asserted that it was the responsibility of Christian, American blacks to redeem their ancestral land from its savage state and return the continent to its rightful place among the civilized nations of the world.⁹

If identification with Africa was problematic for black Americans, many similarly thought that the slave past left too painful and enervating a legacy to provide a useful foundation for an African American identity. Theophilus Steward, for example, argued that blacks would never unite behind a “common history” because the race’s history was centered on slavery, and “slave history is no history.” While ministering to his congregation in Brooklyn, Steward wrote a series of essays on black social life in New York City, in which he claimed that it was extremely difficult

to find a colored man even from the South who will acknowledge that *he actually* passed through the hardships of slavery. . . . Our history is something to be ashamed of, rather, than to be proud of, hence it has no power to unite but great power to divide. Men do not like to be referred to slavery now.¹⁰

Proponents of preserving and drawing appropriate lessons from the memories of slavery forcefully challenged the advocates of amnesia and devoted themselves to placing the African American past before the American public. In 1873 Mrs. A. L. Trask, of Marysville, California, spoke to this issue as she compared blacks’ need for historical memory with that of the nation as a whole. She was responding specifically, and passionately, to African Americans who felt that even Emancipation celebrations were too closely identified with the indignities of slavery. Some blacks, using this logic, were completely “opposed to a first of January [Emancipation] celebration, believing we ought to let all recollection of former years die out.” This sentiment, Mrs. Trask argued, was “altogether wrong.” National institutions and practices, she pointed out, preserved the memory of the Founding Fathers through the dissemination of history in the schools, “paintings for our parlors, and monuments for our public squares.” The purveyors of national heritage, fearful that the people might still forget, “keep the great anniversary day—July 4. And decreed that it should be celebrated by American citizens to all coming time. Now have we not,” she prodded, “more to remember than they! What was the oppression of

the British yoke to slavery, taxation to stripes?" She implored fellow blacks to "cry aloud to your children and let children's children never forget what liberty cost; never forget Emancipation Day."¹¹

Prominent Philadelphia educator and journalist Mrs. Gertrude Bustill Mossell, in 1887, advocated yet another frequently suggested mechanism for the preservation of African Americans' collective memory: the creation of a national Negro historical society. She praised the ephemeral historical collection of fellow Philadelphian William Dorsey and asserted that black Americans "should feel it a privilege to gather [the] scraps of history of our people." Mossell was suspicious of the motives of whites who were actively working to collect abolitionist "pamphlets and books" and other "relics of slavery." Well aware of the ambivalence many felt toward the slave past, Mossell nonetheless urged that blacks themselves needed to lay claim to their history, for only they could make it serve the interests of the race. "[H]owever *painful* the memories [those materials] have stirred to life," she implored, black Americans should "not be ashamed of what is rightfully ours. Let us make use of it. Let us get to work and gather up the fragments. . . . Let us begin to form an historical society."

Mossell's plea was one of many that appeared in black newspapers, and especially in editor T. Thomas Fortune's succession of New York papers, during the 1880s and 1890s. During the early 1890s, blacks in Boston founded the short lived Society for the Collection of Negro Folk Lore. In Philadelphia the American Negro Historical Society, founded in 1897, proved only somewhat more enduring. But by the 1910s, the establishment of the Negro Society for Historical Research in New York and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in Washington, D.C., indicates blacks' increasing use of formal institutions to collect, preserve, and interpret materials relating to African and African American history.¹²

History, Memory, and Identity at the 1876 Centennial

These crucial debates over memory, identity, and the need for a distinctive African American interpretation of history were prominent during the 1870s and 1880s, as Americans generally began to pay unprecedented attention to heritage and tradition. A defining moment in this period of expanding attention to history and memory in American culture came with the 1876 National Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. The self-congratulatory rhetoric surrounding the Centennial celebrated many things: technology, industrial power, America's taking its place among the leading nations of the world. But in the year marking both the anniversary of American Independence and the end of Reconstruction, the Centennial most fundamentally emphasized national progress and national unity, especially focusing on "an explicit 'mission of [white sectional] reconciliation'" that would define race relations for the

next generation.¹³ References to African Americans' rights as citizens with a legitimate place in the nation were few and far between in this racially exclusive discourse of unity.

The exclusion of African Americans was exemplified in the historical interpretation that pervaded the Exposition. The Centennial, most fundamentally, celebrated the present and had its face turned toward an ever-brighter future. But a number of historical exhibits delivered an implicit historical interpretation whose outlines were sketched in a *Philadelphia Press* article unambiguously entitled, "American History at the Exposition." The writer focused specifically on the Exposition's art work, asserting that, "the history of our . . . country [was] never so . . . thoroughly illustrated as . . . by [the] pictures and statuary . . . on the [Centennial] grounds." The essay consciously constructed a predictably Eurocentric narrative of American History by sequentially calling attention to selected pieces.

Christopher Columbus was depicted in a number of works. One statue showed him several days before his landfall, "peering wistfully but hopefully into the distance." A painting in the Spanish exhibit portrayed the great mariner "at the moment his romantic dreams were realized and he was taking possession of the new land he had discovered after his prolonged, toilsome, and perilous efforts." Pilgrims and Puritans also appeared in several pieces, pointedly juxtaposed against the "savagery" of Native Americans. One "striking picture" showed the somber Calvinists "wending their way to church on a wintry day over ground covered with snow, with trusty weapons in their hands to guard against a treacherous enemy." In another, a "sturdy" Miles Standish, "clad in armor, is seen advancing to the midst of the foe after the superior weapons of the white race have carried terror to the ranks of the savages." Yet another crayon drawing showed Puritans "barricading their houses against the Indians." [This unflattering treatment of American Indians is particularly suggestive considering the rabid anti-Indian mania that gripped the nation after the Battle of Little Big Horn, which took place in late June, 1876.]¹⁴

Leaving behind this Anglicized vision of the colonial period, our guide next described several heroes of the Revolutionary War, whose Centennial anniversary made it a dominant theme in the Exposition's Art Department. Lafayette, Washington, Jefferson, and many others were present in a variety of works, but all were overshadowed by the resolute figure of "Yankee Doodle" himself, "a picture that is peculiarly attractive to all patriotic Americans, and is much talked about." After a brief mention of pieces depicting patriots in the War of 1812 and the "Indian scenes and portraits" of George Catlin, our guide finally turned to the "events of the late war."¹⁵

Healing the wounds of the nation's recent Civil War was one of the primary concerns of the whole country, and the Centennial did its share to ameliorate sectional strife. One of the mottoes of the Exposition explicitly emphasized

sectional reconciliation: "No North, No South, No East, No West—The Union One And Indivisible."¹⁶ No comparable concern for racial healing was evident in either the motto or in the Exposition itself. Images relating to the war were dominated by Lincoln, along with numerous portraits depicting Ulysses Grant, William Seward, Charles Sumner, and other Union loyalists. But tributes to Robert E. Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson also commanded attention. African Americans' important participation in the sectional conflict was conveniently erased, and the most pivotal event in their own history was embodied, for the *Press's* reviewer, in one "large picture illustrating Emancipation and Emigration."¹⁷

The phrasing here is meaningful. Many blacks did advocate emigration at various times during the nineteenth century, but a decided majority consistently rejected the idea of abandoning their American homeland. Black Americans had been overwhelmingly opposed to the idea of colonization since the earliest schemes of the American Colonization Society (ACS) were hatched in the early nineteenth century. At a mass meeting of some three thousand African Americans at Philadelphia's Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church in 1817, for example, "there was not one sole [sic] that was in favor of going to Africa. They think the slaveholders want to get rid of them. . . ."¹⁸ This unanimous rejection of the ACS program set the tone for black rights activism for much of the antebellum period. During the 1850s, however, some African American leaders, discouraged by intensifying racial violence and humiliating legal proscriptions, began to explore the possibilities of a better life outside the United States.

Even after the Civil War and Emancipation, blacks' acceptance as full citizens within the national family remained in doubt. Abraham Lincoln, the Great Emancipator himself, favored the colonization of blacks outside the United States, feeling that only enmity could exist between the races, given the history of American slavery. The ratification of the three Reconstruction Amendments by 1870 seemed briefly to assure black Americans of their full legal inclusion in the national family, but by the time of the Centennial those hopes were beginning to dim. Even so, strong black support for emigration did not reemerge until the 1880s, and even then the number of blacks who actually emigrated was relatively insignificant. Most African Americans who were concerned with Africa were primarily engaged in missionary efforts to Christianize and "civilize" the population.¹⁹ At the time of the Centennial African Americans generally saw their destiny as intertwined with that of the United States. Given this context, the fact that the celebration's dominant representation of blacks' place in the nation implicitly suggested that they belonged someplace else spoke volumes about the racial messages embedded in the entire Centennial Exposition. To be sure, other works of art relating to blacks did appear at the Exposition, in particular a large sculpture, by an Austrian artist, depicting the emancipation of a male slave, and a number of



"The Freed Slave" as depicted by Fernando Miranda in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, August 5, 1876.

pieces by African American artists. Painter Robert Duncanson displayed his work; sculptor Edmonia Lewis won a medal for her provocative *Death of Cleopatra*, and contributed several other pieces; and painter Edmund Bannister received a gold medal for his *Under the Oaks*. Upon learning of Bannister's race, the judges considered rescinding the award, but the white competitors insisted that Bannister retain his prize.²⁰

But black representation in all aspects of the Centennial Exposition was minimal. Regarding the construction of the nearly two hundred buildings on the Fairgrounds, Philip Foner has noted that "not a single black worker appears to have been employed . . . at a time when perhaps seventy per cent of the blacks of Philadelphia were unemployed." Those few who worked at the Exhibition were relegated to the menial positions of waiters, janitors, and messengers. African American men and women who tried to participate in fundraising efforts for the celebration met with discrimination, insult, and even physical injury. Frederick Douglass, arguably the greatest orator of his time, was invited to sit on the main platform on opening day, but was not invited to speak. Furthermore, he was almost denied entrance to the platform by police who refused to honor his ticket, incredulous that a black man would

be welcome in the company of President Grant and the other dignitaries on the dais.²¹

But black Americans, against great resistance, did make a place for themselves at the Centennial in order to properly represent the race before the nation and the world. In March, 1872, a full four years before the fact, a letter in the pages of the A.M.E. Church's weekly paper, the *Christian Recorder*, from a correspondent identified only as "Brister," called attention to the Centennial's importance. Brister recognized the tenuous nature of black Americans' recently acquired citizenship rights, and saw an opportunity to link more firmly the race and the nation. "It appears," he projected, "that this celebration is to be an Historical one. . . . The question arises, had the colored people any share in the work of bringing this country to its present status among the civilized nations of the earth"? Like many African-American orators and writers in the postwar decades, he answered enthusiastically in the affirmative, citing examples of military sacrifice, inventions and discoveries, and sheer uncompensated toil that were limited only by "the blighting influences of American absolutism" and race prejudice. "[W]e have done something," he urged, "and should not that something be felt and seen during the Centennial Celebration. Let us be up and doing. . . . Let us claim that our labor of the past has added something to the glory of the country."²²

Well before the A.M.E. Church finally took up Brister's call and assumed an official role in promoting black participation in the Centennial, other African American leaders had begun to see it as a vehicle for educating white Americans with regard to blacks' contributions to their shared history. Emphasizing African Americans' patriotism on the battlefields of the Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Civil War, Philadelphia's seasoned black abolitionist and civil rights advocate, Robert Purvis, envisioned the possibility that, once whites realized the extent of blacks' devotion to the nation, all vestiges of color prejudice would disappear. The Centennial, he argued, provided a golden opportunity for blacks to effect this transformation of white racial attitudes. Black Florida Congressman Josiah T. Walls similarly saw the Centennial as a cleansing and unifying ritual for a nation still recovering from sectional strife, the ravages of war, economic depression, governmental scandals, and racial animosity. Speaking in support of the \$3,000,000 House appropriations bill to aid the celebration, Walls touted the affair as a "patriotic demonstration of a hundred years of popular government" and an expression of the "spontaneous joy of a free people at their unbroken Union and the restored unity of their nationality." Frederick Douglass's *New National Era* agreed wholeheartedly and encouraged African Americans across the country to work toward their representation at the event.²³

A Centennial Committee was organized by the 1875 Convention of Colored Newspaper Men and charged with promoting the inclusion of the

“religious, literary, educational, and mechanical interests of the Negro” at the Exposition. The Committee was authorized to contract for a statue from noted African-American sculptor Edmonia Lewis, then residing in Rome, and to have the piece displayed in Philadelphia “in the name of the colored women of America.” Another part of the Committee’s duties was to initiate and oversee the publication of an eighteen-volume “Centennial Tribute to the Negro” that would inform the coming generations of the “true history” of the race. This ambitious literary project never came to fruition, and black participation in the Centennial was slight.²⁴

In January, 1874, *Christian Recorder* editor Benjamin Tucker Tanner finally involved the influential A.M.E. Church in the effort to assure black participation in the Centennial. Tanner was born Christmas Day, 1835, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and was converted to the A.M.E. faith in that city at the age of twenty. By 1860 he had been ordained a deacon and his career as a prominent clergyman was underway. Said to be a “forceful natural leader” and an “independent, intellectually curious, continuously self-educating, sensitive, and self-assertive” man, Tanner was a great lover of books and learning and was a vocal proponent of a highly educated ministry.²⁵ He prided himself on his scholarship and eventually received D.D. and LL.D. degrees from Wilberforce University. Tanner was a fairly prolific author of moral and theological books and tracts but was probably best known in his day for his journalistic endeavors. The *Christian Recorder* was under his able direction from 1868 until 1884, when he founded and began to edit the *A.M.E. Church Review*, a monthly journal designed for a more sophisticated audience than that of the *Recorder*. Historian Vincent P. Franklin has called Tanner’s brainchild “the most important scholarly journal among African Americans during the period.” It remained a mainstay of the denomination well after Tanner left the editorial seat upon his election to the episcopacy in 1888.²⁶

Tanner’s voice won respect beyond the denomination, as well. He represented the A.M.E. Church at ecumenical conferences in London in 1881, and served on the boards of Howard University and other black colleges. Tanner also contributed prose and poetry to the *New York Independent* and was an elected member of the New England Historical Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Tanner’s membership in the Historical Society is evidence of his keen interest in the history—and the present condition—of his church, his race, and his nation. Several months before John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry made him a hero and martyr in the eyes of black America, Tanner paid homage to the hero of Osawotamie, Kansas, through the name of his first son, the artist Henry Ossawa Tanner, who was born in a home that was a station on the Underground Railroad.²⁷ It is not surprising, then, that Tanner was the first, and one of the most vocal, of the African Methodists to clamor for official denominational involvement in the Centennial.

In an editorial in the *Recorder*, Tanner called into question “the popular thought that we colored Americans have not contributed anything to the moral grandeur of the common country—anything in the shape of heroes.”²⁸ Two months later he repeated his plea: this time appealing to black Americans’ sense of national belonging, particularly in contrast with immigrant Catholics who were planning to erect on the Centennial grounds an elaborate fountain surrounded by “statues of eminent men of their faith.” “As a people,” he exhorted, “we are surely to be credited with as much . . . patriotism as the alien Romanists, who are not and cannot be truly American.” This nativist outburst was followed by a challenge to the race to disprove critics who contended that blacks had made no contributions to the “civilization of the world.” Many whites, Tanner prodded, claimed that the race “has neither religion, history, government, or tradition.” A bronze statue of Richard Allen, dedicated to the ideal of religious liberty, would “tell mightily in the interest . . . not only of our Church, but of our whole race.”²⁹

Tanner’s brief initial entreaty is densely packed with meaning. On one level he appealed directly to African Methodists’ denominational pride. In addition, African Americans as a race were, by the mid-1870s, beginning to see their tenuous hold on social and political rights begin to slip. The southern states’ governments had already begun to be “redeemed” by white supremacist Democrats, and sectional reunion along racial lines began to supersede white northern and white Republican sympathy for blacks’ collective plight. Moreover, the assertion that the race lacked history or tradition was degrading to a people who, like all Americans, were beginning to embrace the past with a new enthusiasm stimulated in part by the purgative effects of the Civil War.

African Americans were, perhaps, especially sensitive to this perceived lack of tradition because they had for so long been denied the status of legitimate citizens in the only homeland the vast majority of them had ever known. Their transformation from denizens, or even nonpersons, in the United States into fully enfranchised citizens gave African Americans new cause to celebrate the meaning contained in the Declaration of Independence and the once-derided Constitution. Likewise, blacks recognized, and consistently articulated, their role in the major events of the nation’s history from the early colonial period, through the Revolution, and into the new era of the postwar years. The nation’s history and traditions, then, belonged as much to black as to white Americans, and the Centennial celebration as a national ritual belonged to them as well. Tanner’s rhetoric thus challenged black Americans to fuse pride of race with pride of nation in claiming their rightful place among the celebrants at Philadelphia.

Tanner’s proposal that a monument to Richard Allen be raised on the Centennial grounds gradually gained support from others in the denomination. The earliest and most determined backers came from the Church’s Arkansas

Conference, which had been organized just four years earlier by Bishop John M. Brown, the Reverend John T. Jenifer, and other “trailblazers” of the Church’s postbellum westward expansion. Both Brown and Jenifer would leave a lasting mark on the denomination. The Delaware-born Bishop Brown enjoyed a peripatetic career that saw him posted in Michigan, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, South Carolina, and various other eastern and midwestern states where he established a reputation for his skills in organizing schools, congregations, and new Conferences. Jenifer, though never elected to the bishopric, was known as the “scholar” among the Arkansas founders. He was a member of Wilberforce University’s first graduating class in 1870, and later received a Doctorate of Divinity. In 1912 Jenifer was named to the highly respected position of Church Historiographer.³⁰ Both clearly had a strong and sincere interest in the Church and its history, but perhaps these ambitious men also wanted to establish a reputation for the new Conference.

Whatever the reason behind Arkansas’s early involvement, Bishop Brown (Treasurer of the Allen Monument Fund) and the Reverend Andrew J. Chambers (Corresponding Secretary) responded to Tanner’s plea with their own letter to the *Recorder*.³¹ Like Tanner, they emphasized the monument’s significance for blacks as a race, for African Americans as citizens and patriots, and for African Methodists as a denomination.³² The Arkansans encouraged American blacks, as a race, to do as much as the other “different nationalities [ethnic groups] on the North American Continent [which] are making herculean efforts to be represented on a mammoth scale.”³³ As the Catholic Total Abstinence Union planned its elaborate water fountain to extol the virtues of Temperance, so the German Americans planned their statue of explorer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, the Italian Americans their statue of Columbus, and the Order of B’nai B’rith its monument to “The Triumph of Religious Liberty,” which now stands outside the Museum of American Jewish History on Independence Mall in Philadelphia.³⁴ Among these “nationalities,” black Americans had a special motivation to make their mark.

Blacks’ sense of themselves as a nation within a nation had a history that extended back into the late eighteenth century, and would continue into the twentieth. As the hopes of the Civil War era faded, this sense of distinctiveness rooted in racial identity and shared oppression grew. At the same time, however, separateness coexisted uneasily with the equally intense assertion by many African Americans that they were, most fundamentally, Americans. In fact, at the 1876 General Conference of the A.M.E. Church, a petition was submitted to change the name of the denomination to the *American* Methodist Episcopal Church in order to emphasize “that we desire the world to know that we are Americans.” That the petition failed despite the boosterism surrounding the Centennial indicates the depth of this tension over the nature of African-American identity.³⁵ The Arkansans, in their monument resolution, entered

this debate by calling attention to the fact that “the Negro race has figured so conspicuously in the history of the United States,” especially since emancipation. Blacks, they argued, had to join in the celebration not as a separate people, but as an integral part of the American national family.

Tanner, Brown, and Chambers echoed the sentiments of many other African American activists who were becoming increasingly aware during the 1870s and 1880s of the need to lay claim to their history and heritage. All had to overcome not only ambivalence about the African and slave pasts, but also very pragmatic concerns regarding the logic in spending scarce financial resources on the relatively intangible benefits of statues and celebrations when many African Americans were struggling for educational advancement, economic uplift, and, indeed, their very survival in a hostile racist society. An argument based on educational need and fiscal priorities was put forth by A.M.E. Business Manager William Hunter, a former Civil War chaplain and a highly respected minister who had been called in to manage the financial affairs of the Church in the wake of serious improprieties on the part of his predecessor. Hunter’s military and denominational service demonstrated his devotion to his Church, his race, and his nation, but he simply could not justify spending several thousand dollars on a statue when other needs seemed so much more pressing. Chambers agreed that Hunter’s concerns were indeed proper ones, but he countered that a black presence at the Centennial would serve both commemorative and practical educational purposes. An unlearned people, he asserted, needed visual displays like statues and monuments in order to “arouse the masses” to support the more high-minded educational enterprises like publishing houses and universities.

In assessing the practical value of the monument, Chambers emphasized the bolstering of racial and denominational pride, the educative value for the present, and particularly the importance of leaving a legacy for posterity. “This generation intends to leave traces of its existence for posterity to look upon.” The erection of the monument would link the present generation, through Bishop Allen, with the Revolutionary forefathers and with the celebrants of the next century’s bicentennial:

It shall work an epoch in the history of our race. It shall be a stepping stone to the colored men of America to rise higher in self esteem and the esteem of all nations. We intend to leave Philadelphia in 1876 as did the heroes in 1776, with a fixed resolve to achieve noble results; and in 1976 we expect our progeny to gather around the Monument in question, shed tears of gratitude for the example we have left them, and call us blessed.³⁶

Benjamin Tanner, also deeply concerned with the future, echoed Andrew Chambers: "As a race," he asserted, "the present is, our Heroic age. . . . The one question is: Will we embrace the present opportunity to immortalize ourselves?"³⁷

After overcoming internal opposition, primarily from the Business Manager, Church leaders next had to contend with the resistance of the Exposition organizers. Tanner expressed dismay that blacks—as "an integral portion of the American people"—were being "completely elbowed aside" in their attempts to participate in the Centennial. He chastised Director General Alfred T. Goshorn and his Commission for forcing blacks to "work only among ourselves" rather than in concert with whites, and asserted that black Americans would "stand ready" to work with the nation if the nation called, "as [they had] in the late Rebellion." In the meantime, African Americans would continue to strive as individuals toward "the necessity of the colored people being represented" in the form of the monument to Richard Allen.³⁸

But squabbles with Exposition organizers and negative public opinion marred the early arrangements. The African Methodists had hoped "to erect a permanent monument; just such an one as the Presbyterians are erecting to [Revolutionary hero John] Witherspoon . . . and the Germans to Humbold [sic]." The organizers agreed to provide space in Fairmount Park for the Allen statue, but required that it be removed from the grounds within sixty days after the closing of the Exposition. By contrast, statues of Humboldt, Witherspoon, and Columbus, as well as the Catholic and Jewish monuments, were intended to be "permanent memorials of the Centennial year" to remain standing in the Park. Fortunately, the Trustees of Philadelphia's Bethel congregation had agreed to provide a permanent home for the monument "on the very ground which the old hero had made sacred by the tramping of his feet."³⁹

Blacks' difficulty in gaining equal inclusion in the Centennial proceedings reflects their marginalization in the political life of the nation by the mid-1870s. While virtually all blacks involved in politics remained loyal to the Republican Party—the Party of Lincoln—in 1876, it was becoming increasingly clear that the Party no longer considered African Americans' civil and political rights an important component in its platform. The economic depression of the 1870s and the nation's increasing focus on white sectional reconciliation rendered blacks' concerns insignificant in the eyes of white Party leaders. The contested presidential election of that Centennial year, which saw Republican Rutherford B. Hayes gain the White House in exchange for the return of white Democratic "home rule" in the South, formalized the process of "Redemption" which had been underway for several years. This disheartening situation only grew worse in subsequent decades, as black rights were increasingly denied and the age of Jim Crow segregation became entrenched.⁴⁰

Negative coverage of the monument plan in the local mainstream Republican press gave further evidence that blacks were being abandoned by their erstwhile political allies. One white correspondent to the *Philadelphia Press* snidely suggested that blacks had done nothing “of their own free motion” to express their gratitude for American independence and should do something “better than complaining” about their treatment at the hands of the Exposition Commission. Another article attempted to discredit the A.M.E. project by quoting two African Americans who saw themselves and the race as native Americans who needed no separate representation at the Exposition as did “Jews and others who had found asylum here.” Philadelphia minister James Underdue, when asked about the advisability of “a separate demonstration . . . by the colored people during the Centennial,” claimed he did not “know to whose honor the colored people could erect a statue representative of them as a class” other than President Lincoln, who “belonged to white and black alike.” Prominent black Philadelphian William Forten “and other representative colored men” were reported to hold similar views. Underdue and Forten may well have expressed the sentiment that “we consider ourselves natives ‘to the manner born.’” It is as much our home as anybody’s.”⁴¹ But Tanner and the monument supporters made that claim with equal vehemence, as evidenced by Tanner’s appeal to blacks’ anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant sentiments regarding the belongingness of the “alien Romanists.” The claim to an undifferentiated American identity—with its implicit demand for undifferentiated citizenship rights—thus existed in tension with another claim to American-ness that simultaneously embraced blacks’ distinctive identity as a nation within a nation.

The details of the proposed monument further testified to the complexity of African-American identity. Sculptor Alfred White of Cincinnati, Ohio, identified in some press reports as an African American, was to prepare a life-size marble bust of Bishop Allen. The bust would sit upon an elaborate pedestal which was constructed separately in Italy, probably by noted African American sculptor Edmonia Lewis, who had been resident in Rome since 1865. Lewis has not been positively identified as the creator of the pedestal, but her residence in Rome, her contribution of other pieces to the Exposition, and the fact that her work often touched upon racial themes, all lend credence to that possibility.⁴² Said to be “a beautiful piece of workmanship,” the pedestal communicated pride in both the African and European roots of African American culture. It stood twenty-two feet high, including a four foot high, six foot square base. A report in the *Philadelphia Press* described its features in some detail:

On the pedestal are four Gothic columns, each of which bears an ideal bas-relief representing the high state of civilization to which the

African race had attained many ages ago. Above the columns is a Gothic pavilion, in the center of which will be placed a bust of Bishop [Allen], carved by the artist Alfred White of Cincinnati. The pavilion is surmounted with four slender spires bearing the Greek cross and ornamented with fern leaves.⁴³

The dedication of the monument site in Fairmount Park similarly honored the multiple roots of African-American identity. In his oration, the Rev. John T. Jenifer of the A.M.E. Arkansas Conference and future Church historian, called attention to the glories of the African past and linked that past to the centrality of an African presence in America's national destiny. First, he pointed out that the very impulse to commemorate was never expressed earlier or more imposingly than in "the Pyramids of Egypt." Linking his African American contemporaries with that ancient lineage, Jenifer held forth in powerful cadences

how becoming it is for us, the children of ancestors who were the founders of the earliest civilization, the establishers of great cities and vast empires, the patrons of arts and sciences, to emerge from the darkness of centuries, to show our appreciation of industry and art, by joining this feast of nations in this our own beloved country at this her first Centennial feast. With a history written in blood and baptised in tears, we are here to-day; here to-day upon the soil where we have suffered; here to-day with those by whom we have been degraded; here to-day with the wisest in scientific learning, the greatest in power, the most famous in art, and with the best in Christian philanthropy; here to-day to show that the spirit of our fathers has not expired; but with a purpose grander than that which built the Pyramids or founded Carthage, we come to make our contributions to the New World's Fair, which shall stand forever as the first national scientific effort of a race heroically struggling to shake off the degradation of centuries.

In this moving address Jenifer offered a poignant counterpoint to the lily-white reading of history and the message of white sectional reconciliation that dominated the Centennial. Blacks had earned the rights of American citizens, Jenifer asserted, through their "patriotism and bravery" displayed on the many battlefields of various American wars. The black folk had enriched American culture with the soulful gifts of song, poetry, and Christian devotion that sustained the race through the ordeal of American slavery. Jenifer interpreted the history of two-and-a-half centuries of that bondage as the history of "negro industry" which, he asserted, had "placed [the Negro] prominently upon the

pages of [American] history as foremost among those whose productive labors have developed the staple resources of" the South.

After thus situating black labor as the defining presence in the American South since the seventeenth century, Jenifer proceeded to situate "the Southern question" as a central issue for the destiny of the entire nation, especially "important," he said, "because the destiny of a struggling race is involved in it." Jenifer criticized the nation first for its continuing tolerance of "Kuklux Klans and White Leagues" and then for its "impatien[ce]" with the progress of the freedmen. Rather, he argued, their "progress [in] . . . the past fifteen years has been marvelous, all things considered. The mistake these people make who despair is that they do not read history wisely." In his conclusion, Jenifer looked forward optimistically to the nation's next Centennial, which would see "color lines . . . wiped out, caste . . . gone; the American citizen, white or black, will be honored and loved, and mind and moral excellence will be the measure of the man."⁴⁴

Jenifer did not even mention Richard Allen, the man who was to be honored with a commemorative statue. This surely was not intended as a slight to Allen. Appropriate paeans to the Founder were planned to accompany the actual placement of the monument later in the summer. Rather, Jenifer took this very public opportunity to address a racially-mixed audience, that was said to be "quite large," in the context of a huge national ritual of self-definition, in order to offer a striking reinterpretation of American history that placed African Americans in a central and defining role in that history. He incorporated the African past into a positive African American identity and then proceeded to construct the story of American bondage as one not primarily of humiliation and indignity, but of industry and nation-building. Similarly, the story of blacks' brief and troubled freedom became, in Jenifer's address, a story of progress that would lead into a future in which color would be irrelevant.

Jenifer also clearly targeted the critical questions of African-American historical memory and identity. Africa and slavery were two central and undeniable features of African-American history from which many blacks in the post-Emancipation generation sought to distance themselves. Here Jenifer attempted to dispel blacks' ambivalence about both those legacies by reconstructing them into a positive and empowering heritage; at the same time, he also tried to resolve the complex tension between blacks' experiences as a distinct people with a heritage all their own and their claims to an identity as full and equal American citizens. Many other black commemorative orations from the period addressed these issues as well. Some even offered equally trenchant and powerful critiques of the dominant Anglocentric narrative of American history. But none took place at a site of national self-definition comparable to the Philadelphia Centennial.⁴⁵

At the time of this stirring June 12 ceremony, the unveiling of the completed monument was scheduled to take place on July Fourth. By the end of May the pedestal had “already been completed in Italy” and was expected to arrive in Philadelphia in plenty of time. By mid-June Andrew Chambers reported that the finished monument was in fact in Cincinnati and would be shipped to Philadelphia along with Alfred White’s bust when the latter was completed and financial accounts settled.⁴⁶ But near the end of the month Chambers announced that the bust had not even been begun, as the artist was waiting for a shipment of Italian marble. The unveiling would be postponed until September 22—the anniversary of Lincoln’s preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in 1862.⁴⁷

As the September 22 date drew nearer, the monument committee renewed its enthusiastic pronouncements. Andrew Chambers again linked national belonging and race pride as he drummed up “patriotic enthusiasm” for “the Allen Monument—the Negro’s Bunker Hill, Independence Hall and Liberty Bell.” That “marble shaft” would pay tribute to the race’s emancipation, manhood, “moral worth and intellectual superiority” as it simultaneously represented blacks as a part of the nation’s celebration of itself. Drawing attention to the projected date of the unveiling, he proposed that “the Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation be to us the counterpart to the Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.” July Fourth (Independence Day, the original date for the dedication of the monument) and September 22 (in this circumstance the most proximate of several dates used by African Americans to commemorate emancipation) were to stand in equal measure as touchstones of liberty for black Americans.⁴⁸

But September 22 passed with no mention of the monument in either the *Recorder* or the local mainstream press. In early October the A.M.E. organ reported the devastating news that “the monument intended to be erected within the Centennial Grounds of Fairmount Park, is totally destroyed.”⁴⁹ During the transport of the monument from Cincinnati to Philadelphia, while crossing a river in Pennsylvania’s Lehigh Valley, a railroad accident rendered the entire pedestal irreparably damaged—according to one report, lost overboard. But the monument was not, in fact, “totally destroyed.” Alfred White’s bust of Allen, which sat protected in a marble alcove, survived unharmed.⁵⁰ Delayed yet again, and its overall configuration significantly altered, a monument to the A.M.E. Founding Father would finally make its long-heralded appearance at the Centennial.

On Thursday, November 2, 1876, barely a week before the Exposition closed its gates, a marble bust of the Right Reverend Richard Allen, first Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, was unveiled “with appropriate ceremonies in the presence of several hundred colored people” at a site “midway between Fountain and State Avenues, and west of the Government Building”

in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park. The monument itself consisted of the original bust of Allen, which had survived the railroad accident intact, and a pedestal made of granite blocks. The new pedestal, like the original, paid tribute to the African past, though in a more obtuse and much less elaborate form. It was a smoothly polished pyramid standing nine feet in height, with the memorial, "Richard Allen," in raised letters on the face of the central block. After the 2:00 p.m. meeting was called to order by Bishop Jabez Pitt Campbell, the chairman, Bishop James A. Shorter of Wilberforce University, led the assembly in prayer and instructed Elder William B. Derrick to lead in the singing of the hymn, "Joy to the World."

Given the unexpected absence of noted African-American educator, journalist, and politician John Mercer Langston, who was intended to deliver a historical oration on the life and times of Bishop Allen, Bishop John M. Brown was called upon to speak. The Treasurer of the Monument Association, who had just been transferred to the Virginia Episcopal District, compared Allen in his address with earlier European religious leaders Martin Luther, John Wesley, and George Whitefield because of the lasting effects of his "Christ-like" work for the religious liberty of his people. Brown did justice to the varied accomplishments of the honored prelate, highlighting Allen's integrity, benevolence, moral courage, and love of freedom and education. Langston's address was eventually delivered the following December to over two thousand people at Philadelphia's Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church, a congregation founded by Allen in 1794. Langston asked his audience to imagine themselves before the statue on September 22, and he explicitly called attention to that date's significance for African-American commemorations. He also attested that the Allen Monument was the first ever erected by black Americans to honor a black American.⁵¹

Both Brown's address and a letter read from Andrew Chambers emphasized that the monument was not narrowly denominational or racial, but a national undertaking. Whites as well as blacks contributed to the fund, most prominent among them the former Governor of Arkansas. The largest contribution by an individual was from William S. Montgomery, of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, a former slave of Jefferson Davis, who donated one hundred dollars. The nation as a body supported the project as well, Brown announced, with the United States Congress appropriating \$3,000. Allen was, he claimed, "the first and only colored man thus honored." The ceremonies closed with a benediction and the reading of a lyric by Philadelphia poet and activist Frances E. W. Harper, composed especially for the occasion, which began, "We are rising, as a people."⁵²

For several years, between 1874 and 1876, Benjamin Tanner, Bishop John M. Brown, Andrew Chambers, John T. Jenifer and others in the A.M.E. Church struggled to organize a tribute to the African American past that would unite

the denomination behind a project intended to fuse into a single monument the various identities of Church, race, and nation. To a considerable extent they succeeded. The monument to Allen was the most highly publicized African-American presence at the Centennial Exposition and kept before the public the idea of the essential American-ness of the nation's black population. Coverage in the mainstream press, which grew more favorable over the course of the Centennial summer, spoke well of Allen and the Church. At least one paper lobbied publicly (though unsuccessfully) for the Centennial Commission to "grant the request of our fellow-citizens" that the monument be allowed to remain permanently in Fairmount Park.⁵³ The Allen monument provided a tangible symbol of the accomplishments of the race that A.M.E. leaders hoped would stimulate the interest of both black and white America.

Conclusion

Historical memory matters. It shapes the way a people, a nation, or a culture is perceived, both by itself and by others. Moreover, as Ralph Ellison pointed out, the awesome power to define the public version of history is a contested power. African Americans have for nearly two centuries struggled to construct a heritage that would affirm both their distinctive identity as a people and their claim to full and equal status as American citizens. But struggles to define the past were not simply between blacks and whites. African Americans were hardly monolithic in their views and contended among themselves over the race's heritage. Those who attempted to preserve and pass on the legacy of the past heatedly debated the relative benefits of selective memory and selective amnesia.⁵⁴

Regardless of their particular positions on the subject, nineteenth century black leaders appreciated the power of historical memory. Benjamin Tanner, the driving force behind the Allen Monument, especially realized the importance of black Americans participating in the National Centennial Exposition in 1876. Tanner anticipated the analysis of historian Robert Rydell when he perceptively observed that the Centennial Exposition amounted to a "mighty Presentation of the nation to itself and to the world." Tanner urged that, in this national ritual of self-representation, African Americans needed to "put in [an] appearance. . . . Let [the negro] show the American people and the world what he is, and what he can do."⁵⁵ With the aid of John Jenifer's stirring revisionist address, delivered, as he put it, "before the eyes of all nations," the race did indeed put in an appearance.

However, during the generation after the 1870s, black Americans concerned with the race's historical memory grew increasingly frustrated by their inability to alter white America's racial ideology or whites' refusal to acknowledge the black presence in the nation's history and culture. To be sure, black leaders and community activists continued to engage in commemorative

ceremonies, but these came to be directed more exclusively toward black audiences in an increasingly segregated public arena.⁵⁶ That appearance at Philadelphia in 1876 might be seen as a turning point. The movement for the Richard Allen monument at the Centennial Exposition took place as an era of blacks' hopes for racial justice was being transformed by white America into an era of racial retrenchment. The foundering of African Americans' civil rights on the rocky shore of white sectional reconciliation was institutionalized during the coming era of Jim Crow. Though the Allen Monument movement was hardly out of character for the mid-1870s, similar attempts to use shared public space to articulate a message of blacks' American-ness would become less common. But still this Centennial project is suggestive of a larger, and ongoing, phenomenon. The A.M.E. Church's participation in the Centennial Exposition of 1876 exemplifies the efforts by African Americans over two centuries not only to lay claim to the past, but also to claim the power to define it.

Notes

1. "Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke," in *Shadow and Act* (New York, 1964), p. 54.
2. See "Bishop Richard Allen," in John Mercer Langston, *Freedom and Citizenship: Selected Lectures and Addresses* (Washington, D.C., 1883 [Miami, Fla., 1969]), pp. 123-40.
3. The following overview of the emergence and expansion of African Americans' public attention to historical memory is discussed in detail in my Ph.D. dissertation, "The Faith That the Dark Past Has Taught Us: African-American Commemorations in the North and West and the Construction of a Usable Past, 1808-1915" (Cornell University, 1997).
4. Michael Kammen, *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination* (New York, 1978), ch. 1 and 2; Leonard I. Sweet, "The Fourth of July and Black Americans in the Nineteenth Century: Northern Leadership Opinion Within the Context of the Black Experience," *Journal of Negro History*, 61 (July, 1976), pp. 256-75.
5. Numerous scholars have commented on the importance of West Indian Emancipation celebrations in the antebellum period, including, Sweet, "The Fourth of July and Black Americans"; William B. Gravely, "The Dialectic of Double-Consciousness in Black American Freedom Celebrations, 1808-1863," *Journal of Negro History* 67 (Winter, 1982), pp. 302-17; Genevieve Fabre, "African-American Commemorative Celebrations in the Nineteenth Century," in Fabre and Robert O'Meally eds., *History and Memory in African-American Culture* (New York, 1994), pp. 72-91; Detine L. Bowers, "A Strange Speech of an Estranged People: Theory and Practice of Antebellum African-American Freedom Day Orations," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Purdue University, 1992); and Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York, 1969), pp. 116-29.
6. Again, more detail can be found in Kachun, "The Faith That the Dark Past Has Taught Us." See also, August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* (Ann Arbor, 1963), and Nick Salvatore, *We All Got History: The Memory Books of Amos Webber* (New York, 1996).
7. Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York, 1991), p. 100. See also, David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, 1990); and

John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, 1991).

8. T. G. Steward, "Colored Society," installment V, *Christian Recorder*, December 14, 1876; William Seraile, *Theophilus Gould Steward (1813-1924) and Black America* (Brooklyn, 1991), pp. 59-64.

9. Kachun, "The Faith That the Dark Past Has Taught Us," ch. 2; James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (New York, 1995), especially ch. 3; Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent* (Amherst, 1989); James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks; 1700-1860* (New York, 1997), especially ch. 7 and 8.

10. Steward "Colored Society," *Christian Recorder*, December 14, 1876; Kachun, "The Faith That the Dark Past Has Taught Us," ch. 4.

11. "From Our Regular Correspondent," *The Elevator* (San Francisco), January 25, 1873.

12. "Two Notable Collections, Of Matter Relating to Race History," *New York Freeman*, June 4, 1887. See Meier, *Negro Thought in America*; Roger Lane, *William Dorsey's Philadelphia and Ours: On the Past and Future of the Black City in America* (New York, 1991); James Spady, "The Afro-American Historical Society: the Nucleus of Black Bibliophiles, 1898-1923," *Negro History Bulletin*, v. 37 (July, 1974), pp. 254-7; and Kachun, "The Faith That the Dark Past Has Taught Us," esp. ch. 1, 4, and 8.

13. Kammen, *Mystic Chords*, p. 137; Robert W. Rydell, "The Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia, 1876: The Exposition as a 'Moral Influence,'" in Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago, 1984), pp. 9-37.

14. "American History at the Exposition," *The Press* (Philadelphia), November 3, 1876.

15. "American History at the Exposition," *Press*, November 3, 1876.

16. Brookside, 1876, Library Company of Philadelphia.

17. "American History at the Exposition," *Press*, November 3, 1876.

18. Letter from prominent black Philadelphia businessman and activist James Forten to black emigrationist Paul Cuffe, quoted in Campbell,

Songs of Zion, p. 69.

19. Far more significant was the gradual expansion of black migration *within* the United States—from the South to the North and West, and from rural to urban areas. Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, p. 88; Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (Lawrence, 1976); Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, ch. 8.

20. See, for example, Leonard I. Sweet, *Black Images of America, 1784-1870* (New York, 1976); Floyd J. Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787-1863* (Urbana, 1975); Edwin S. Redkey, *Black Exodus, Black Nationalist and Back-to-Africa Movements, 1890-1910* (New Haven, 1969); Gilbert A. Williams, *The Role of the Christian Recorder in the African Emigration Movement, 1854-1902* (Columbia, S.C., 1989); and Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago, 1961). See Jessie Carney Smith, ed., *Notable Black American Women* (Detroit, 1992); Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists: from 1792 to the Present* (New York, 1993), pp. 73-5; Dorothy C. Salem, *African American Women: A Biographical Dictionary* (New York, 1993), p. 328.

21. Philip S. Foner, "Black Participation in the Centennial of 1876," *Negro History Bulletin* 39:2 (February, 1976), pp. 533-38, quotation from p. 534. See also Rydell, "The Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia, 1876," especially pp. 27-9.

22. *Christian Recorder*, March 16, 1872.

23. Foner, "Black Participation," p. 533-4.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Entry on Tanner's son, painter Henry Ossawa Tanner, in Bearden and Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists*, p. 78.

26. V. P. Franklin, *Living Our Stories, Telling Our Truths: Autobiography and the Making of the African-American Intellectual Tradition* (New York, 1995), p. 77; Richard R. Wright, ed., *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia, 1916), pp. 220-1; William Wells Brown, *The Rising Son; or, The Antecedents and Advancement of the Colored Race* (Boston, 1874), pp. 530-1; Robert Gregg, *Sparks from the Anvil of Oppression: Philadelphia's African Methodists and Southern Migrants, 1890-1940* (Philadelphia, 1993), pp. 71-2.

27. Bearden and Henderson, *A History of*

African-American Artists, p. 78-9; The Benjamin Tucker Tanner Papers, in The Carter G. Woodson Collection of Negro Papers and Related Documents, 1803-1936 (mfilm), reel 4; Benjamin W. Arnett, *The Budget* (Dayton, Ohio, 1884), p. 10.

28. *Christian Recorder*, January 22, 1874.

29. *Christian Recorder*, March 5, 1874.

30. Jack Salzman, David Lionel Smith, and Cornel West, eds., *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History* (New York, 1996); Charles Spencer Smith, *A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York, 1968 [1922]), p. 72, 90, 325.

31. I have been unable to locate any biographical information on The Rev. Mr. Chambers.

32. *Christian Recorder*, November 5, 1874.

33. The use of the term "nationalities" here clearly refers to the various ethnic groups (Germans, Italians, Jews, and others) within the United States which were arranging for some sort of participation in the Centennial, since global "political divisions" are mentioned separately.

34. *The Press* (Philadelphia), May 13, 15, 1876. Thanks to Francis W. Hoeber for calling this to my attention.

35. Smith, *A History*, pp. 116-7.

36. *Christian Recorder*, December 3, 1874.

37. *Christian Recorder*, September 10, 1874.

38. *Christian Recorder*, March 11, 1875.

39. *Philadelphia Press*, September 23, 1876.

40. On the process of white sectional reconciliation, see Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, 1993). The classic treatment of the political abandonment of African Americans in the postwar generation is Rayford W. Logan, *The Betrayal of the Negro: from Rutherford B. Hayes to Woodrow Wilson* (New York, 1965).

41. *Philadelphia Press*, May 15, 1876.

42. Lewis also contributed the provocative piece, *Death of Cleopatra* and a few other works to the Exposition. *Christian Recorder*, June 29, November 9, 1876; *Philadelphia Press*, June 12, 13, 1876; Bearden and Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists*, pp. 73-5; Salem, *African American Women*, p. 328. Thus far I have been unable to locate any reference to a sculptor named Alfred White, black or

otherwise, outside the press reports relating to the 1876 monument.

43. *Philadelphia Press*, June 13, 1876.

44. *Philadelphia Press*, June 13, 1876.

45. *Christian Recorder*, November 9, 1876;

Philadelphia Press, November 3, 1876.

46. *Philadelphia Press*, May 29, June 12, 1876.

47. *Christian Recorder*, June 29, 1876.

48. *Christian Recorder*, September 7, 1876.

African Americans celebrated numerous dates of either local or national significance. Some communities, especially in the Northeast, continued to commemorate August 1. In the South January 1 was most common, though regional celebrations like Washington, D.C.'s April 16, southern Virginia's April 9, and Texas's June 19 also thrived. The September 22 date was not widely celebrated, though it did generate some commemorative activity in the Upper South and the Midwest. Still other communities chose to observe the anniversary of the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. See Kachun, "The Faith That the Dark Past Has Taught Us."

49. *Christian Recorder*, October 5, 1876.

50. *Christian Recorder*, November 9, 1876; *Philadelphia Press*, November 3, 1876.

51. See "Bishop Richard Allen," in Langston, *Freedom and Citizenship*, pp. 123-40.

52. *Christian Recorder*, November 9, 1876; *Philadelphia Press*, November 3, 1876.

53. *Philadelphia Press*, May 29, 1876.

54. Detailed attention to the issue of memory and amnesia among African Americans during this period can be found in Kachun, "The Faith That the Dark Past Has Taught Us," ch. 4 and passim.

55. *Christian Recorder*, November 19, 1874; Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*; and Rydell's Introductory Essay, "The Literature of International Expositions," pp. 1-62 (especially p. 10., where he asserts that fairs intended to "frame the world view" of their times), in *The Book of the Fairs: Materials about World's Fairs, 1834-1916*, in the *Smithsonian Institution Libraries* (Chicago, 1992).

56. An interesting analysis of blacks' use of public space in the late nineteenth century can be found in Elsa Barkley Brown and Gregg D. Kimball, "Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond," *Journal of Urban History*, v. 21, no. 3 (March, 1995).