

FROM ESTEBAN TO FIVE CENTURIES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY IN THE WEST

BY QUINTARD TAYLOR



Drawing of Esteban by José Cisneros, courtesy David J. and Carol Bryant Weber

The slave Esteban, the first African known by name to take part in exploring the American West, accompanied Cabeza de Vaca in an odyssey north of Mexico in the early 1530s and died at the hands of the Zúñi Indians in 1539 while in search of the Seven Cities of Cíbola.

RODNEY KING

IN APRIL 1992, SOUTH CENTRAL

Los Angeles exploded in a maelstrom of anger and rage. Although Los Angeles is by far the largest metropolis in the West, those scenes of carnage, no less than the city itself, belie the regional self-image most westerners prefer—placid valleys or broad vistas populated by a proud, self-reliant citizenry, jealously guarding its individual rights, equality, and freedom “under an open sky.”¹ Yet black western history, much like the Los Angeles uprising, intrudes itself onto our sensibilities and forces reexamination of the imagined West.² That history, with its examples of resistance, negotiation, conflict, and cooperation between African Americans and other westerners, can be celebrated or critiqued, but no longer can it be ignored.

It is tempting to credit the New Western History, with its emphasis on race, class, and gender, as primarily responsible for the growing recognition of the African American past in the region. Indeed, any bibliography on the black West would find most of the

entries dating from the past two decades when new methodologies, interpretations, and

debates reinvigorated the field. Yet for all that is new in the scholarship of African Americans of the region, black western history is, in fact, nearly a century in the making. One thinks, for example, of the early articles analyzing slavery in Texas, California, and Oregon, which appeared in 1898, 1905, and 1908, respectively, or the essays by W. Sherman Savage in 1928 and Kenneth W. Porter in 1932, which initiated long careers of reconstructing African American history “on the frontier.” Of course, the post-1970 period witnessed the rapid proliferation of studies of discrete aspects of black western history as historians ask, and answer, more profound questions about the region’s past.³

Much of New Western History scholarship easily reconciles Asian American, Chicano, or most of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Native American history, which are axiomatically “western” in orientation. Yet anomaly continues to define black western history. There is the uneasy sense that it is imposed on regional historiography to appease contemporary sensibilities rather than because it is central to the historical narrative. Scholarship on African American westerners continues to be viewed by many western regional historians and historians of African America as an interesting footnote to a

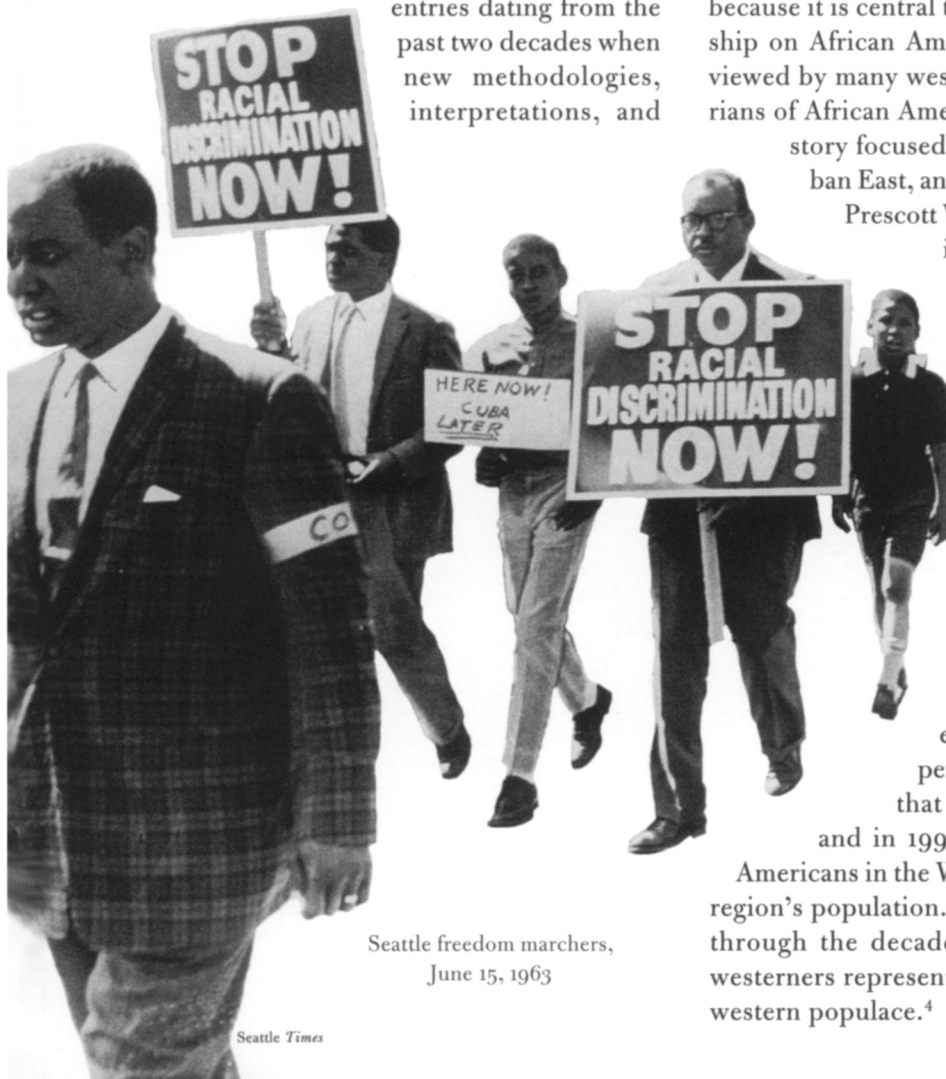
story focused largely on the rural South, the urban East, and the Midwest. The ghost of Walter Prescott Webb’s 1955 comment that the West

is defined by its scarcity of “water, timber, cities, industry, labor, and Negroes” continues to intrude

onto the region’s popular consciousness. This “dearth” argument, long a central tenet in the marginalization of black western scholarship, is particularly surprising considering the size of the affected population. As early as 1870 African Americans constituted 12 percent of the region’s inhabitants—some 284,000 people who resided in every western state and territory. By 1910, the percentage had dropped to 5.7, but that still represented 941,000 blacks, and in 1990, there were 5.2 million African

Americans in the West, constituting 7.1 percent of the region’s population. If the percentages have fluctuated through the decades, they nonetheless show black westerners represented a substantial component of the western populace.⁴

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Seattle freedom marchers,
June 15, 1963

Seattle Times

AFRICAN AMERICAN history in the West tests the validity of western exceptionalism, originally advanced by Frederick Jackson Turner and posited in a quite different context by many New West historians. Was the West significantly different for African Americans? That answer is a qualified yes as exemplified in the success of post-Civil War western blacks who gained and kept voting rights everywhere in the region except Texas, but no, if we consider the emergence of postbellum discriminatory legislation symbolized by antimiscegenation statutes and public school segregation in states as diverse as Montana, Arizona, and Kansas. Such ambiguity surely renders more complex the region's past.⁵

That complexity begins with the earliest African arrivals. Consider the lives of Esteban, the black slave who ventured to New Spain's northern frontier in 1539 in a futile search for the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola, or of Isabel de Olvera, a member of the Juan Guerra de Resa colonization expedition to New Mexico in 1600, who became the first free black woman to enter the West (predating by nineteen years the landing of twenty Africans at Jamestown). These accounts should be removed from the "contributions" school of ethnic history and allowed to suggest myriad possibilities for reconceptualizing the region's past. Esteban's travels, for example, initiated the meeting of Indian and Spanish cultures, which in turn shaped much of the region's history. Moreover, Esteban, Isabel de Olvera, and the hundreds of other Spanish-speaking black settlers who populated cities and towns from San Antonio to San Francisco, and who in 1781 comprised a majority of the founders of what was to become the greatest of the region's cities, Los Angeles, confirm the "multicultural" West as the meeting place of diverse races and cultures long before the arrival of nineteenth-century English-speaking settlers. From the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, persons of African ancestry who

migrated to what now constitutes the West were far more likely to move north from central Mexico than west from the Atlantic seaboard. Their experiences call for a reinterpretation of Spanish Mexican history in the Southwest to illustrate the enigmatic role of race in shaping social and cultural traditions in colonial and post-colonial Mexican society. Those traditions, in turn, confounded Anglo sensibilities on proper racial attitudes long after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo established American sovereignty over the region.⁶

African American history in the West often reveals paradoxes, as in revolutionary-era Texas where the liberty of Anglo slaveholders was in direct opposition to the freedom of black people. Mexico's constitution of 1821 renounced black slavery and proclaimed political equality for all the nation's inhabitants. The promise of freedom and equality proved a powerful attraction for African Americans "from the states." Many were fugitive slaves, but the African American immigrants also included free blacks determined to live under what they viewed as Mexican liberty rather than American tyranny. Samuel H. Hardin, for example, wrote that he had moved to Texas because Mexico's laws "invited his emigration" and guaranteed his right to own property. Yet the aspirations of free blacks and their supporters for a free, racially tolerant Texas soon clashed with the goal of southern white planters to transform the Mexican province into an empire for slavery. By 1835 Texas slaveholders had duplicated the slave system of the United States, increasing the servile population to 10 percent of English-speaking Texans. With growing numbers of slaveholders demanding protection for their property while openly selling black slaves, Anglo Texans and the Mexican government were on a collision course that led to the Alamo.⁷

African Americans were soon engulfed in the tumultuous creation of an independent Texas. For many Texas slaves the flag of Mexico rather than the revolutionary "lone star" seemed the banner of liberty. In

1. Westerners disagree on whether Los Angeles should be included in the region. See Walter Nugent, "Where is the American West? Report on a Survey," *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, 42 (Summer 1992), 8.

2. I define the West as the nineteen states from North Dakota south to Texas and west to Alaska and Hawaii.

3. The early articles on slavery are Lester G. Bugbee, "Slavery in Early Texas," *Political Science Quarterly*, 13 (September 1898), 389-412; Clyde Duniway, "Slavery in California after 1848," *American Historical Association Annual Reports*, 1 (1905), 243-48; and T. W. Davenport, "Slavery Question in Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 9 (September 1908), 189-253. See also W. Sherman Savage, "The Negro in the History of the Pacific Northwest," *Journal of Negro History*, 13 (July 1928), 255-64; and Kenneth W. Porter, "Relations between Indians and Negroes within the Present Limits of the United States," *Journal of Negro History*, 17 (July 1932) 287-367.

4. On black western population see Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915* (Washington, 1918), 43-45; and Bureau of the Census, *1990 Census of Population, Gen-*

eral Population Characteristics by States, (Washington, 1992), table 3. The "scarcity" quote appears in Walter Prescott Webb, "The American West: Perpetual Mirage," *Harper's Magazine* (May 1957), 30.

5. See for example Donald A. Grinde, Jr., and Quintard Taylor, "Red vs. Black: Conflict and Accommodation in the Post-Civil War Indian Territory, 1865-1907," *American Indian Quarterly*, 8 (Summer 1984), 211-29; and Quintard Taylor, "Blacks and Asians in a White City: Japanese Americans and African Americans in Seattle, 1890-1940," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 22 (November 1991), 401-29.

6. See Arnaldo De Leon, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin, 1983), 75-102. On Esteban see A. D. F. Bandelier, ed., *The Journey of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca* (New York, 1905), 8-9, 30-34, 53-54. On Isabel de Olvera see George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, eds., *Don Juan de Oñate: Colonizer of New Mexico, 1595-1628* (Albuquerque, 1953), 560-62.

February 1836, one month before his siege of the Alamo, General Antonio López de Santa Anna, commander of the Mexican army, queried government officials in Mexico City about the liberation of the slaves. "Shall we permit those wretches to moan in chains any longer in a country whose kind laws protect the liberty of man without distinction of cast or color?" Mexico's minister of war, José María Tornel, provided an answer on March 18. While affirming that "the philanthropy of the Mexican nation" had already freed the slaves, he directed commanding general Santa Anna to grant their "natural rights," including "the liberty to go to any point on the globe that appeals to them," to remain in Texas, or to relocate to another part of Mexico. The Mexican army seemed poised to become a legion of liberation. As that army crossed the Colorado and Brazos rivers, moving into the region heavily populated by slaves, the boldest of the bondspeople took flight toward Santa Anna's forces both when they marched into Texas and when they retreated. In return for Mexican protection, fugitives served as spies, messengers, and provocateurs for their liberators.⁸

The victory of the Texas revolutionaries over the Mexican army set in motion political events that in the next decade resulted in all of Mexico's northern territories being added to the United States. But it also initiated a decline in the status of free blacks who sought refuge in Texas, and fixed African slavery as the state's predominate labor system. With guarantees of governmental protection, Texas's "peculiar institution" grew from three thousand African Americans held in bondage in 1835 to a quarter of a million slaves by the time of the Civil War almost three decades later.

7. The Hardin quote appears in George Ruble Woolfolk, *The Free Negro in Texas, 1800-1860: A Study in Cultural Compromise* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1976), 23. See also Paul Lack, *The Texas Revolutionary Experience: A Political and Social History, 1835-1836* (College Station, Tex., 1992), 238-52.

8. Quoted in Lack, *Texas Revolutionary Experience*, 244.

9. The "natural limits" of slavery debate has a long history and only a slightly shorter historiography. See for example Charles W.

African slavery was central to the political economy of Texas. Yet few western historians have ever linked slavery with the rest of the region. When the Civil War began in 1861 only four western states had been admitted to the Union, and the Euramerican inhabitants of

the vast western territories considered themselves physically and psychologically removed from the labor system that generated the turmoil engulfing the nation. The West's claims of innocence on slavery are muted, however, by the presence of African American bond servants in virtually every state and territory in the region prior to the Civil War, and by the intense local debates about the suitability of slavery in Oregon, California, Utah, Nebraska, New Mexico, and particularly "bleeding" Kansas, where political discourse gave way to armed conflict in the 1850s. The ninety-eighth meridian may have represented the farthest advance of slave-based plantation agriculture as it was practiced in the Old South, but the meridian was not an insurmountable barrier to the development of some variation of the servile institution in the West. The region was saved from slavery by antislavery, antiblack

"free soil" farmers, who were always more numerous than proslavery advocates or slaveholders, rather than any natural environmental barrier or any particular commitment by westerners to universal liberty or equality.⁹

Yet the significance of the western debate over slavery extended far beyond the valleys of California and Oregon or the prairies of eastern Kansas and Nebraska. The arrival of just a few black slaves into western states and territories often immediately transformed the intense political debate east of the Mississippi between *sections* into a contentious *local* struggle between neighbors. By the 1850s the West remained the only region

Ramsdell, "The Natural Limits of Slavery Expansion," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 16 (September 1929), 151-71; Allan Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union*, 2 vols. (New York, 1947), 116-24; and Charles Desmond Hart, "The Natural Limits of Slavery Expansion: Kansas-Nebraska, 1854," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 34 (Spring 1968), 32-50. On the race-slavery-politics nexus in antebellum West see Eugene Berwanger, *The Frontier against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy* (Urbana, Ill., 1967).



Photographer L. A. Huffman took this picture of "Auntie" Palmer in Miles City, Montana, probably in the 1880s, and noted that she was a slave "before the war."

in the nation where the fate of slavery had not been determined. Both pro- and antislavery interests felt compelled to compete for its allegiance in a contest that ultimately brought on the Civil War.

The first significant numbers of African Americans who entered the West from the older states came as slaves. The largest servile population resided in Texas, where the federal 1860 census reported 182,556 bondpeople comprising slightly over 30 percent of the state's total population.¹⁰ Like Texas, the Five Indian Nations in what would become Oklahoma had an economy that rested on slave labor. Eight thousand bondpeople in Indian Territory in 1860 comprised 14 percent of the total population. Their subjugation by another "people of color" cautions our propensity to view the institution only in terms of white masters and black slaves. (In yet another irony of western exceptionalism, black slavery in New Mexico was rendered superfluous by the availability of Mexican peons and Indian slaves.) Slavery was legal in only one other western territory—Utah—yet the historical record is replete with accounts of black bond servants held illegally throughout the region.¹¹

WESTERN SLAVEHOLDERS did not anticipate the role that a dedicated minority of black and white abolitionists, particularly in California and Kansas, would play in undermining the "peculiar institution." Through the 1850s white abolitionists such as Cornelius Cole, Joseph C. Zabriskie, Edwin Bryan Crocker (brother of Charles Crocker), and Mark Hopkins utilized the courts to free Californians illegally held in bondage. Their efforts were joined by an aroused African American community willing to employ legal and extra-legal means to ensure the freedom of black slaves. Unlike Texas and the Indian Territory, where abolitionist sentiment was virtually nonexistent, California slaves and antislavery activists resided in the same urban communities or worked side by side in the mining fields. The close proximity of slave and abolitionist gave bond servants direct contact with their champions, a position virtually impossible in the eastern United States. That proximity also heightened the sense of urgency for antislavery activists who could witness the horrors of the

servile institution on a daily basis. Peter Lester, a former Philadelphia abolitionist who arrived in San Francisco in 1850, invited black slaves into his home to lecture them on their rights. "When they left," he declared, "we had them strong in the spirit of freedom. They were leaving [slavery] every day." The active role of blacks in challenging slavery prompted one contemporary German observer to remark: "The wealthy California Negroes . . . exhibit a great deal of energy and intelligence in saving their brethren."¹²

Kansas blacks challenged slavery through flight. Indeed black Kansas was virtually created by the Civil War itself. Although the late 1850s battle for "bleeding Kansas" resulted in a victory for free state partisans, the territory in 1860 had only 627 African Americans. By 1865 more than 12,000 blacks resided in Kansas, comprising 9 percent of the population. A combination of politics and geography explains the explosion of black population Kansas. As a sparsely populated territory adjacent to the Missouri counties with the largest slave populations, Kansas was an obvious destination.¹³ After passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, the territory attracted a small group of ardent abolitionists who established Underground Railroad "stations" in the region. Although only a minority of Euramericans approved of their actions, antislavery partisans such as James H. Lane, James Montgomery, and John Brown, who briefly resided in Kansas before returning east to direct the fateful raid on Harper's Ferry, led bands of "Jayhawkers" into Missouri in the late 1850s on raids for slaves who were then led back across the border and directed toward northern states, creating what one historian described as the "golden age of slave absconding." If northern black and white abolitionists mounted rhetorical campaigns against slavery and occasionally protected fugitives who fled the South, some white Kansans actually entered a slaveholding state to rescue black men and women from bondage.¹⁴

Slaves also acted on their own, seeking to cross the Kansas-Missouri border and then reach Lawrence, "the best advertised antislavery town in the world." While both Kansas abolitionists and Missouri slaveholders exaggerated the figures of escaped slaves for their own purposes, it was clear that the western Missouri slaveholding counties, isolated from other major slaveholding regions and in close proximity to free,

10. Campbell, *Empire for Slavery*, 55-56, 251.

11. On the extent of slavery in nominally free states and territories see James A. Rawley, *Race and Politics: "Bleeding Kansas" and the Coming of the Civil War* (Philadelphia, 1969), 87; James R. Harvey, "Negroes in Colorado" (master's thesis, University of Denver, 1941), 15-17; Quintard Taylor, "Slaves and Free Men: Blacks in the Oregon Country, 1840-1860," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 83 (Summer 1982), 165-69; and Albert S. Broussard, "Slavery in California

Revisited: The Fate of a Kentucky Slave in Gold Rush California," *Pacific Historian*, 29 (Spring 1985), 17-21.

12. The Lester quote appears in the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, December 5, 1850. The quote of the German observer is in Ruth Frye Ax, ed., *Bound for Sacramento* (Claremont, Calif., 1938), 144. See also Rudolph Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven, 1977), 137-39, 155-56.



Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka

Blacks experienced the West in both civilian and military capacities. Above, the town of Nicodemus, shown about 1885, was founded by ex-slaves in Kansas in 1877 on land they advertised “To the Colored Citizens of the United States” as “pleasing to the human eye.”

sparingly populated western territories, were particularly susceptible to servile flight. Freedom for such bondspeople, unlike their counterparts in the Deep South, lay a short trip to the west rather than a long, circuitous journey through slaveholding states to the north.¹⁵

Opportunities for flight increased dramatically with the coming of the Civil War. Kansas entered the Union on January 29, 1861, barely two months before Lincoln’s inauguration and five weeks after South Carolina seceded. The state legislature chose as one of its two United States senators James H. Lane, a passionate, volatile abolitionist who assumed leadership in the defense of his adopted state and quickly fused his military responsibilities with his antislavery goals. In August 1861 Lane mounted a brief incursion into southwest Missouri. News of his presence encouraged fugitive slaves to seek out his military camp near Springfield. Without authorization from higher military or civilian authorities, Lane enlisted the male fugitives into his command and arranged for the women and children to be sent to Kansas “to help save the crop and provide fuel for the winter.” His impetuous and largely symbolic act emancipated slaves and unofficially created the first African American troops in the Union army during the Civil War.¹⁶

13. See Richard B. Sheridan, “From Slavery in Missouri to Freedom in Kansas: The Influx of Black Fugitives and Contrabands into Kansas, 1854–1864,” *Kansas History*, 12 (Spring 1989), 30–31, 37; and Gunja SenGupta, “Servants for Freedom: Christian Abolitionists in Territorial Kansas, 1854–1858,” *Kansas History*, 16 (Autumn 1993), 200–13.

14. The “golden age” quote is from Harrison Anthony Trexler, “Slavery in Missouri, 1804–1865,” *Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science*, 32 (no. 2, 1914), 384.

When word of Lane’s action as a “liberator” spread, other Missouri slaves as well as refugees from Arkansas and Indian Territory made their way toward Kansas. Henry Clay Bruce, the brother of future Mississippi Senator Blanche K. Bruce, recounted in his autobiography how he and his fiancée escaped from Missouri to Kansas in 1863. Bruce strapped around his waist “a pair of Colt’s revolvers and plenty of ammunition” for the run to the western border. “We avoided the main road and made the entire trip . . . without meeting anyone,” he wrote. “We crossed the Missouri River on a ferry boat to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. I then felt myself a free man.”¹⁷

After 1862, both Lawrence’s established white residents and black newcomers engaged in activities that suggested their recognition of the permanence of black settlement. “The Negroes are not coming. They are here. They will stay here,” asserted abolitionist Richard Cordley. “They are to be our neighbors, whatever we may think about it, whatever we may do about it.”¹⁸ The newcomers certainly heeded Cordley’s words. Despite their relatively short residence in the Sunflower State, African American men soon demanded the right to vote and to serve on juries. Both black women and men called for an end to discrimination in public transportation and accommodations, initiating

15. Sheridan, “Slavery in Missouri to Freedom in Kansas,” 29–31.

16. The quote is from H. D. Fisher, *The Gun and the Gospel: Early Kansas and Chaplain Fisher* (Chicago, 1896), 42–43.

17. Quoted in Henry Clay Bruce, *The New Man: Twenty-Nine Years a Slave, Twenty-Nine Years a Free Man* (New York, 1969), 108–9.

18. The quote is from Richard Cordley, *Pioneer Days in Kansas* (New York, circa 1903), 150–51.

a century-long struggle to extend the prewar promise of freedom for slaves into the post-Civil War prospect of equal rights for all of the state's citizens.

African American agricultural history on the high plains during the post-Civil War decades provides another opportunity to explore the western promise of success and upward mobility for the freed people. On a thousand-mile frontier from North Dakota to Oklahoma, African American homesteaders, propelled by twin desires for land and political freedom, confronted the Great Plains. The Langston City *Herald*, the newspaper for the famous all-black town in Oklahoma Territory, proclaimed as much in 1893 when it called on African American southerners to avail themselves of the last chance to secure "free homes" on government domain. "Everyone that can should go to the [Cherokee] strip . . . and get a hundred and sixty, all you need . . . is a Winchester, a frying pan, and the \$15.00 filing fee." In Graham County, Kansas, in 1879, Logan County, Oklahoma, in 1891, or Cherry County, Nebraska, in 1904, African American women and men tried and often failed to "conquer" the plains. A sense of the daunting challenges they faced are found in the words of one settler, Willianna Hickman, who wrote of navigating across Kansas by compass in the summer of 1878, destined for Nicodemus, the first of the high plains black settlements. When fellow emigrants exclaimed: "There is Nicodemus!" she anxiously surveyed the landscape. Expecting to find buildings on the horizon, she said, "I looked with all the eyes I had. 'Where is Nicodemus? I don't see it.'" Her husband pointed to the plumes of smoke coming out of the ground. "The families lived in dugouts," she dejectedly recalled. "We landed and struck tents. The scenery was not at all inviting and I began to cry."¹⁹

Success for black western farmers rested on a tenuous foundation of ample credit and rain. The absence

of either could spell disaster. Gilbert Fite did not have African American farmers in mind when he wrote that homesteaders "battered and defeated by nature and ruined by economic conditions over which they had no control . . . who filed on government land soon found that natural and human-made barriers defeated their hopes and aspirations." Yet the statement reflected the experience of a disproportionate number of African American agriculturalists on the high plains as well. Statistics indicate that the general poverty of black homesteaders from the South prevented their acquiring the land necessary to sustain farming in the West. In Oklahoma, which received the largest number of African American homesteaders, black farm ownership peaked at thirteen thousand in 1910. Perhaps more telling, 38 percent of these farmers had less than 50 acres. In a region where large landholding was a necessity, the small size of these farms ensured a rapid exit from western agriculture.²⁰

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homesteaders in northwestern Nebraska suggests that farm size alone did not ensure success. The Kinkaid Homestead Act of 1904, which threw open thousands of acres in the Nebraska Sandhills, provided the last opportunity for black homesteading in the state. Recognizing the land's aridity, the federal government provided homestead claims of 640 rather than 160 acres. The first African American to file a claim, Clem Deaver, arrived in 1904. Other blacks followed and by 1910 twenty-four families filed claim to 14,000 acres of land in Cherry County. Eight years later 185 blacks held 40,000 acres. Yet much like Oklahoma and Kansas, black farm families, unable to render the land productive enough for sustainable incomes, began

The Jerry Shores family, pictured here in 1887, homesteaded in Custer County, in central Nebraska, as did a number of other former slaves.



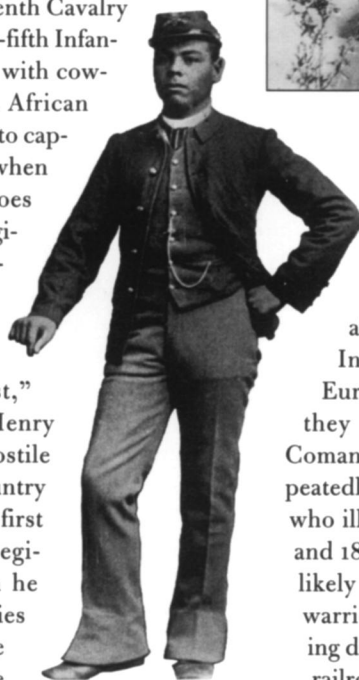
Solomon D. Butcher Coll., Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln

The passengers and crew of the Missouri River steamer *Helena* posed (right) for photographer F. Jay Haynes at Milk River Landing, Montana Territory, in 1880. Among them are several African American men visible on the lower deck.

Below, twenty-one-year-old Private James D. Cowan of Company E, 25th Infantry, Fort Custer, Montana, 1888, was one of thousands of black infantry and cavalry men stationed in the region.

leaving the isolated region in the early 1920s for Denver, Omaha, or Lincoln. The disappearance of black homesteaders from the high plains constitutes one of many crucial areas in need of scholarly investigation.²¹

No debate in black western history has been more contentious than that surrounding the “buffalo soldiers,” the approximately 25,000 men who served in four regiments, the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry and the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry, between 1866 and 1917. Along with cowboys, these troops were the first African American western historical figures to capture public attention in the 1960s when a nation eager to accept black heroes embraced the saga of the western regiments. Indeed, long before the nation recognized them, some black soldiers were highly conscious of their role in the “pacification” of the region. “We made the West,” boasted Tenth Cavalry Private Henry McCombs. “[We] defeated the hostile tribes of Indians; and made the country safe to live in.” William Leckie, the first biographer of the black cavalry regiments, reiterated that view when he wrote in 1967 that “the thriving cities and towns, the fertile fields, and the natural beauty [of the West] are monuments enough for any buffalo soldier.” But by the 1970s Jack Forbes and other historians began to probe the moral dilemma posed by the actions of these men. Were they not instruments in the subjugation of native peoples for a society that went on to “erect thriving *white* cities, grow



O. S. Goff, photographer, MHS Photograph Archives, Helena



Haynes Foundation Coll., MHS Photograph Archives, Helena

fertile *white* fields and leave no real monuments to the memory of brave, but denigrated-in-their-lifetime soldiers.”²²

Forbes’s critique rests on the presumption of an Indian-fighting army. Until 1890 that presumption was generally correct, although on occasion black soldiers defended Indian people from the depredations of Euramericans, as black troops did in 1879 when they were dispatched to protect Kiowas and Comanches from Texas Rangers or when they repeatedly removed hundreds of the white “boomers” who illegally occupied Indian lands between 1879 and 1885. After 1890 black soldiers were far more likely to confront angry white strikers than native warriors. Beginning with the Coeur d’Alene mining district shutdown in 1892 through the national railroad strike two years later, and the second confrontation in the Coeur d’Alene district in 1899, African American troops were called upon to defend life and property and to maintain law and order, a curious paradox in light of antiblack violence common in the South during this period. At the height of the Johnson County War in 1892, for example, the

19. The Hickman quote appears in Glen Schwendemann, “Nicodemus: Negro Haven on the Solomon,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 34 (Spring 1968), 14.

20. The Fite quote appears in Gilbert C. Fite, “A Family Farm Chronicle,” in *Major Problems in the History of the American West*, ed. Clyde A. Milner (Lexington, Mass., 1989), 431-32. See also Jimmie Lewis Franklin, *Journey toward Hope: A History of Blacks in Oklahoma* (Norman, 1982), 22-23.

21. Bish, “Black Experience in Selected Nebraska Counties,” 157, 209-20.

22. The Leckie and Forbes quotes are taken from Lawrence B. De Graaf, “Recognition, Racism, and Reflections on the Writing of Western Black History,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 44 (February 1975), 37; McCombs’s statement appears in Frank N. Schubert, ed., *On the Trail of the Buffalo Soldier: Biographies of African Americans in the U.S. Army, 1866-1917* (Wilmington, Del., 1995), xviii.



Military service did not preclude families. Here, African American soldiers from Fort Keogh, Montana, pose with their wives near the Yellowstone River, probably in the early 1890s.

Wyoming Stockgrowers Association exploited the longstanding hostility between black soldiers and white Texans as well as the belief that poor whites' hostility toward black workers would ensure African American loyalty in the coming battle between the social classes. When local law enforcement officials sided with small ranchers, the stockgrowers association wired Wyoming Senator Joseph M. Carey, on June 1, 1892, asking him to arrange for stationing black troops in the area. "We want cool level-headed men whose sympathy is with us," the telegram read. "Send six companies of Ninth Cavalry. . . . The colored troops will have no sympathy for Texan thieves . . . these are the troops we want."²³

Historians have provided nuanced accounts of black soldiers in the West that reveal the texture of military life. We know now, for example, that as soldiers were posted at various forts, wives and children accompanied them as did single black women and men—laundresses, cooks, prostitutes, gamblers, and laborers. As Virginia Scharff has written elsewhere, these military communities resembled a "traveling village, more like the bands of Plains Indians who inhabited the same territory." Eventually the traveling stopped as retired

soldiers and their families settled in towns such as Havre, Montana, near Fort Assinniboine, and Douglas, Arizona, near Fort Huachuca, or they augmented black populations in larger communities such as Salt Lake City and Spokane.²⁴

WE ALSO KNOW NOW that black soldiers were not always "heroic," and that boredom, isolation, and racism emanating from both officers and civilians took a toll in alcoholism, desertion, suicide, and internalized violence such as the 1887 murder of Sergeant Emanuel Stance, a Congressional Medal of Honor winner. Stance's repeated verbal and physical abuse of his men at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, led to his death at their hands. The historical record even occasionally shows soldiers in sympathy with those they were sworn to fight. Private W. H. Prather, one of the Ninth Cavalry troopers who guarded the Sioux in the winter of 1891 after the Wounded Knee confrontation, summarized his

23. Quoted in Frank N. Schubert, "The Suggs Affray: The Black Cavalry in the Johnson County War," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 4 (January 1973), 60. On the Coeur d'Alene strikes and other civil disturbances see United States Senate, *Federal Aid in Domestic Disturbances, 1787-1903*, 57th Cong., 2d sess., 1902-1903, Senate Doc. 209, pt. 10, pp. 222-25, 246-53; and Clayton D. Laurie, "The United States Army and the Labor Radicals of the Coeur d'Alenes: Federal Military Intervention in the Mining Wars of 1892-1899," *Idaho Yesterday*, 37 (Summer 1993), 14-17, 24. On the protection of Native American land see "Oklahoma," *Harper's Weekly Magazine*, 29 (March 28, 1885), 199; and William L. Leckie, *Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West* (Norman, 1967), 28, 166-68, 246-51.

24. Virginia Scharff, "Gender and Western History: Is Anybody Home on the Range?" *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, 41 (Spring 1991), 62.

25. The Prather quote appears in Jack D. Foner, *The United States Soldier between Two Wars: Army Life and Reforms, 1865-1898* (New York, 1970), 135.

26. See Ruthe Winegarten, *Black Texas Women: 150 Years of Trial and Triumph* (Austin, 1995); Paul Spickard, "Work and Hope: African American Women in Southern California during World War II," *Journal of the West*, 32 (July 1993), 70-79; and Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage: African American Migrant Women and the East Bay Community* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1996). On California population see Bureau of the Census, *Seventh Census of the United States: 1850* (Washington, D.C., 1853), xxxiii; Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Population* (Washington, D.C., 1864), 33.

anger over the inadequate supplies left for both the Indians and the soldiers in a poem, the last lines of which read: "In a warm barracks our recent comrades take their ease, while we poor devils, and the Sioux are left to freeze."²⁵

The explosion of scholarship on Euramerican women in the West in the 1970s shattered the myth that the region, even in its "pioneering" period, was a particularly male preserve. Several historians are examining the region's African American women comprehensively to answer the often unstated assumption that their history simply parallels the experiences of white women or of black men. As with many fundamental assumptions concerning the West, the evidence indicates otherwise. Isabel de Olvera's saga, for example, shows black women in the West from the seventeenth century in various roles and capacities. Sex ratios suggest that African American women were neither isolated from other women of their race or overwhelmingly outnumbered by black men. By 1860 African American women comprised half of the black population in Texas, Indian Territory, Utah Territory, and the Pacific Northwest. Only in gold rush California was there initially a huge imbalance between black women and men. Of the 952 blacks counted in the 1850 census, only 90 were women. Ten years later, when black California numbered slightly more than 4,000 inhabitants, black women comprised 31 percent of the total population. Post-Civil War settlement patterns of African American homesteaders in Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma also show a balanced ratio as black women came both as single homesteaders and in families. Unfortunately we know far more about the numbers of women on the plains than about their experiences.²⁶



Dadilali L. Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers*, p. 111

Among the black women who played important roles in the West was Bridget "Biddy" Mason (above), who founded the First African Methodist Episcopal Church in Los Angeles in 1872 and supported it singlehandedly in its early years.

At right, the Montana Federation of Negro Women's Clubs meets in 1933 at St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church in Helena, Montana.

We know a great deal more about nineteenth-century urban black women. Accounts of Mary Ellen Pleasant in San Francisco, Biddy Mason in Los Angeles, Lutie Lytle in Topeka, when coupled with studies of organizations such as the black women's clubs in Colorado, Kansas, Wyoming, and Montana, help provide a composite image of African American women as crucial pillars in the maintenance and defense of the black community. Bridget "Biddy" Mason, for example, founded Los Angeles's First African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1872, the oldest black church in the city, and singlehandedly supported it during the crucial first years by paying all taxes and expenses, including the minister's salary. Businesswoman Mary Ellen Pleasant challenged streetcar segregation in San Francisco in the 1860s and used her influence with prominent white politicians such as California governor Newton Booth (who was elected while a resident of her boardinghouse) to promote civil rights for African Americans. Lutie Lytle, only the second black female attorney in the nation, was a Populist campaigner and organizer in Topeka, Kansas. African American women in Lawrence organized the Ladies Refugee Aid Society in 1864 to collect food, clothing, and money and to assist destitute ex-slaves. A decade later, the Colored Ladies Legal Rights Association, a group of middle-class black Denverites, made highly visible protests of racial discrimination such as the exclusion of African Americans from the Tabor Opera House. That pattern of service and protest carried forward into the twentieth century and was embodied in the activities of individuals such as Los Angeles newspaper editor Charlotta Bass, who in 1952 became the first African American woman to be nominated on a presidential party ticket (the Progressive Party), or Clara Luper who in 1958 organized one of the first sit-in protests of the modern civil rights movement, when she led black students into Katz Drug Store in Oklahoma City, and in myriad



MHS Photograph Archives, Helena



The contrasting images of black cowboys, like these men branding a calf in Wyoming in the late nineteenth century, with black homesteaders, urban workers, and families at western military posts, serve as reminders that “multiple” Wests existed side by side.

organizations such as the hundreds of black women’s clubs stretching from Montana to Arizona.²⁷

Today the vast majority of African American women and men reside in the region’s cities. The origins of these contemporary black western urban communities can be found in the rise of the nineteenth-century African American urban population. In 1885, when black cowboys were trailing cattle from Texas to Dodge City, Kansas, when black homesteaders were trying to grow wheat from stubborn west Kansas soil, or when buffalo soldiers were patrolling the Southwest desert, far more women and men entered Denver, San Francisco, Seattle, and Los Angeles, anxious to assume the various jobs they believed the urban economy made available. The contrasting images of black cowboys, homesteaders, buffalo soldiers, and urban workers reminds us that “multiple” Wests often existed side by side.

The nineteenth-century black urban community expanded in the larger cities—San Francisco (which had the only significant antebellum black urban population), Los Angeles, Denver, Seattle, Salt Lake City, Omaha, Portland, Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, and San Antonio. But black communities also evolved in smaller towns and cities such as Topeka, Kansas, Virginia City, Nevada, Helena, Montana, Yankton, South Dakota, and Pocatello, Idaho. It was here that churches, fraternal organizations, social clubs, even fledgling civil rights

organizations established the fabric of community life. Some black urban populations such as those in Helena and Yankton did not survive into the twentieth century. Others, such as those in Houston, Dallas, Oakland, Denver, and Los Angeles, became the final destinations for tens of thousands of migrants inspired by the belief that their piece of the urban West would provide the political and social freedom that had evaded them in their former homes.²⁸

The late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century black urban West population was small. The combined African American population of the five largest western cities in 1910—San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Denver, and Portland—totaled just 18,008 people, only slightly more than one-fifth the black population of Washington, D.C., the nation’s largest black community. Such small numbers, however, did not keep western urban blacks from organizing a rich social and cultural life or prevent them from continuing the battle for racial justice. Despite the different local economies, blacks in western cities performed surprisingly similar work. Men and women were personal servants for wealthy households, and black men worked as hotel waiters, railroad porters, messengers, cooks, and janitors. The seaports had some sailors and dock workers. A small number of blacks were independent entrepreneurs operating barbershops, restaurants, and boardinghouses. By the 1890s most western cities had handfuls of black doctors, lawyers, and newspaper

27. See Dolores Hayden, “Biddy Mason’s Los Angeles, 1856–1891” *California History*, 68 (Fall 1989), 97–98. See Lynn M. Hudson, “A New Look, or ‘I’m Not Mammy to Everybody in California’: Mary Ellen Pleasant, a Black Entrepreneur,” *Journal of the West*, 32 (July 1993), 37. Lytle is described in Thomas C. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka, Kansas, 1865–1915: A Social History* (Baton Rouge, La., 1982), 94–95, 129. See also Sheridan, “Slavery in Missouri to Freedom in Kansas,” 40. On the Colored Ladies Legal Rights Association see Brian R. Werner, “Colorado’s Pioneer Blacks: Migration, Occupations, and Race Relations in the Centennial State” (master’s thesis, University of Northern Colorado, 1979), 13, 25. On other

women’s organizations see Marilyn Dell Brady, “Kansas Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs, 1900–1930,” *Kansas History*, 9 (Spring 1986), 19–30; and Lynda Fae Dickson, “The Early Club Movement among Black Women in Denver, 1890–1925” (doctoral diss., University of Colorado, 1982). Charlotta Bass is described in Gerald R. Gill, “‘Win or Lose—We Win,’ The 1952 Vice-Presidential Campaign of Charlotta A. Bass,” in *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images*, ed. Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn (Port Washington, N.Y., 1978), 109–18. Luper is profiled in Franklin, *Journey Toward Hope*, 187–89.

editors who, along with ministers and private school-teachers, comprised the “elite.” This elite often urged separation from impoverished blacks. Some of them anticipated following the advice of one Kansas newspaper editor who exhorted middle-class black westerners to “make a line, and keep within it . . . to ostracize them from our society.”²⁹

Most pre-World War II western urban populations proved too small, however, to successfully segregate themselves into distinct social classes, as had been done in Washington, D.C., Baltimore, New York, and other eastern cities. Despite their small numbers, black urban westerners usually established churches, fraternal organizations, social clubs, newspapers, and literary societies. These fledgling nineteenth-century institutions and organizations immediately addressed the spiritual, educational, social, and cultural needs of the local inhabitants. But such “race” organizations also provided African Americans with respite from a hostile world, a retreat where blacks could lose their anonymity and gain some control over their lives. While these desires were hardly unique to black westerners, the small size of the region’s population, the vast distances between black communities in the West, and from the South, increased the importance of these organizations.

As early as 1862, the San Francisco *Pacific Appeal* called on its readers to create political, religious, and moral organizations “wherever there are half a dozen Colored people.” This network of organizations did not end at the city’s boundaries. Indeed, its most important function was to link small, isolated black western populations with the larger African American world. Such linkages were far more crucial for western communities separated by huge distances and by their even greater remoteness from the large African American populations of the South and eastern cities. Thus, the creation of the Puget Sound African Methodist Episcopal conference, which embraced black churches in Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Idaho, and British Columbia in 1900, or the founding of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapters in places as diverse as Houston, Portland, Albuquerque, Omaha, El Paso, Oklahoma City, Tucson, San Antonio, Salt Lake City, and Boise, all by 1919, or the establishing of Marcus Garvey-inspired Universal

Negro Improvement Association chapters by 1926 in Denver, Dallas, Kansas City, Tulsa, San Francisco, San Diego, Phoenix, Oakland, and smaller towns such as Prescott, Colorado Springs, Fresno, Muskogee, Ogden, and Waco, served as vital reminders that however isolated they might be in individual cities or towns, African Americans were part of a much larger black community that stretched across the region, the nation, and the world.³⁰

Whether the activity involved building a church, mounting a political campaign, organizing a women’s club, or protesting a lynching, black urban westerners generated a sense of cooperation and shared destiny that was impossible to establish among the region’s African American cowboys, soldiers, miners, or farmers. Thus, the urbanites were the first black westerners who could be accurately depicted as constituting a “community.” Their activities and aspirations would shape the black West for generations. There were consequences, of course. One was that urbanization made black westerners a less distinct group as they melded into an emerging national African American culture.

IT WAS IN THE WESTERN CITIES

that these intrepid newcomers fought for the full democratization of American society. Indeed California’s “Rosa Parks” emerged when the rest of the nation was still in the throes of the Civil War. On April 17, 1863, Charlotte Brown was ejected from a San Francisco streetcar because of her race. In her subsequent suit against the Omnibus Company for \$200 in damages, the jury awarded her just five cents—the cost of the fare. Three days after the trial she was again ejected from an Omnibus streetcar and brought a second suit for \$3,000 in damages. The case ended on January 17, 1865, with a jury awarding her \$500. Brown’s victory did not permanently abolish streetcar exclusion. In 1868 the California Supreme Court reversed on appeal lower court judgments against Mary E. Pleasant and Emma J. Turner, who had brought similar suits against the North Beach and Mission Railroad, another San Francisco streetcar company.³¹

28. See William Lang, “The Nearly Forgotten Blacks on Last Chance Gulch, 1900–1912,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 70 (April 1979), 50–51; C. Robert Haywood, “No Less a Man: Blacks in Cow Town Dodge City, 1876–1886,” *Western Historical Quarterly*, 19 (May 1988), 161–82; and Quintard Taylor, “The Emergence of Afro-American Communities in the Pacific Northwest, 1865–1910,” *Journal of Negro History*, 64 (Fall 1979), 342–51.

29. Quoted in the Fort Scott *Colored Citizen*, June 14, 1878. On the elites in western cities see Willard Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880–1920* (Bloomington, Ind., 1990), 138.

30. The quote is from a *Pacific Appeal* editorial, June 7, 1862, p. 2. On regional church networks see Taylor, *Forging*, 37–38. For representative examples of western NAACP chapter activities see Barr, *Black Texans*, 144; Elizabeth McLagan, *A Peculiar Paradise: A History of Blacks in Oregon, 1788–1940* (Portland, 1980), 123; Franklin, *Journey toward Hope*, 52; and Ronald Coleman, “Blacks in Utah History: An Unknown Legacy,” in *The Peoples of Utah*, ed. Helen Z. Papanikolas (Salt Lake City, 1976), 139. For a listing of UNIA branches in the West see Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Westport, Conn., 1976), 361–368.



Archives & Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City

Even as black urban Texans commenced their campaign to restore voting rights in 1921, blacks in Tulsa, Oklahoma, were victimized by a race riot that left scores dead and hundreds of black homes and businesses burned.

The right to vote epitomized complete African American political emancipation in the urban West as well as the rural South. In 1865 black women and men in Virginia City, Nevada, initiated a series of meetings that led to the formation of the Nevada Executive Committee, which in turn petitioned the next legislature for voting rights. The following year a convention of black men meeting in Lawrence, Kansas, challenged the widely held idea that black voting was a privilege that the white male electorate could embrace or reject at its pleasure. The convention then issued this warning to the Euramerican majority in the state:

Since we are going to remain among you, we believe it unwise to . . . take from us as a class, our natural rights. Shall our presence conduce to the welfare, peace, and prosperity of the state, or . . . be a cause of dissention, discord, and irritation. We must be a constant trouble in the state until it extends to us equal and exact justice.³²

The victory black westerners gained in their campaign for suffrage in Colorado Territory had national implications. Between 1864 and 1867 Denver's 150 African Americans, including Lewis Douglass, son of the national civil rights leader Frederick Douglass, waged a relentless campaign to press Congress to delay statehood for the territory until their suffrage rights were guaranteed. Denver barber William Jefferson Hardin, who had arrived from Kentucky in 1863, quickly assumed leadership of the effort, contacting Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner by letter and telegram in 1866 to outline the grievances of the territory's African Americans. Hardin issued an ominous warning in his letter to Senator Sumner: "Slavery went down in a

great deluge of blood, and I greatly fear, unless the american [sic] people learn from the past to do justice now & in the future, that their cruel prejudices will go down in the same crimson blood." Senator Sumner read Hardin's telegram to the United States Senate in a speech opposing Colorado statehood. The ensuing debate over black suffrage restrictions in Colorado prompted Congress to pass the Territorial Suffrage Act in January 1867, which gave black male residents the right to vote. Consequently black male Coloradans and those in other western territories gained suffrage months before similar rights were extended to African American males in the southern states and three years before ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment insured those rights for black men in northern and western states.³³

ALTHOUGH THEY HAD to wait much longer, other black westerners were equally determined to win voting rights. In 1921 black urban Texans began their campaign for the restoration of the voting rights they had gradually lost after Reconstruction. Charles Norvell Love, editor of the *Texas Freedman*, filed suit against the Harris County Democratic Party for its prohibition of African Americans from voting in primary elections. The Love lawsuit sparked a war of litigation between black urban political activists in Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, and El Paso, and the state Democratic Party. The legal conflict that ensued produced four United States Supreme Court rulings between 1927 and 1944, culminating in *Smith v. Allwright*, the decision that outlawed the

31. See Robert J. Chandler, "Friends in Time of Need: Republicans and Black Civil Rights in California during the Civil War Era," *Arizona and the West*, 24 (Winter 1982), 333-34.

32. Quoted in the *Kansas Tribune*, October 28, 1866. See also Elmer Rusco, "Good Time Coming?" *Black Nevadans in the Nineteenth Century* (Westport, Conn., 1975), 73-75.

33. See Eugene Berwanger, *The West and Reconstruction* (Urbana, Ill., 1981), 145-55; and Eugene Berwanger, "William J. Hardin: Colorado Spokesman for Racial Justice, 1863-1873," *Colorado Magazine*, 52 (Winter 1975), 55-56.

34. See Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York, 1975), 234-37.

all-white Democratic primary and guaranteed voting rights to the state's African Americans.³⁴

The unprecedented migration of African Americans to the West during World War II fused the campaigns for civil rights and economic opportunity. Wartime migrants believed their access to jobs, to housing, and to the voting booth were all components of racial and individual advancement. The numbers suggest the scale of change in the African American West. During the 1940s the region's African American population increased by 443,000 persons or 33 percent. The three Pacific Coast states and Nevada led the region (and the nation) in percentage growth with virtually all of the newcomers concentrated in five major metropolitan regions: Seattle-Tacoma, Washington, and Portland, Oregon-Vancouver, Washington, in the Pacific Northwest; the San Francisco Bay area, including San Francisco, Oakland, and smaller cities such as Berkeley and Richmond; the Los Angeles-Long Beach area; and San Diego. These regions saw black population increases ranging from 798 percent for San Francisco to 168 percent for Los Angeles. Las Vegas, although three hundred miles inland, also saw its population grow rapidly. Between 1940 and 1950 the African American population of Las Vegas exploded from 178 to 2,888, a 1,622 percent increase. Although their numbers were less dramatic, Denver, Omaha, Phoenix, Wichita, Kansas City, Tucson, Houston, and Honolulu also saw surging black populations. The migration signaled a significant shift in the intraregional concentration of African Americans. In 1940, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas accounted for 86 percent of the region's blacks. Ten years later their share dropped to 67 percent. Conversely, the Pacific Coast states of California, Oregon, and Washington, saw their regional share jump from 10 percent to 28 percent.³⁵

Expanding populations were only the initial indicators of change. After decades of labor in menial positions on the periphery of the economy, black workers throughout the region finally gained access to the industrial workplace. By 1943 thousands of black women and men, old residents and newcomers alike, worked in aircraft factories, shipyards, munitions plants, and related industries. Thousands more African American military personnel were stationed at western military facilities that also hired numerous black civilian employees.

35. Overall the region's African American population increased 33 percent from 1.3 million to 1.8 million between 1940 and 1950. See Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population*, vol. 2, *Characteristics of the Population*, pt. 1 (Washington, D.C., 1943), 52; and Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population: 1950*, vol. 2, *Characteristics of the Population*, pt. 1, (Washington, D.C., 1953), 1-106.

36. See Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley, 1993), 58.

Black service personnel frequently ended their enlistments in the West, sent for family members, and settled permanently in the region. Marilyn Johnson's conclusion that World War II-era migration made the East Bay area population "younger, more southern, more female, and noticeably more black" than ever before, applies with equal force to other western communities from Omaha to San Diego.³⁶

THE WORLD WAR II migration enlarged and intensified the campaign for civil rights. Determined to challenge local and national racial restrictions and obtain a double victory over the Axis and Jim Crow, black activists from Houston to Honolulu launched a full-scale assault on western citadels of racial discrimination, including some of the most powerful labor unions in the nation. In Seattle, for example, the enlarged black community, supported by white and Asian allies and ultimately the federal government, challenged the exclusionary practices of the International Association of Machinists Local 751. Their efforts forced the local to admit people of color and white women on a nondiscriminatory basis at Boeing Aircraft and prompted the IAM itself to remove its color bar at its national convention in 1946. Similar campaigns by black shipyard workers against the International Boilermakers' Union in Portland, the San Francisco Bay area, Los Angeles, and Honolulu led to the union's postwar admission of African American workers and put in place important legal precedents that would be used in the 1960s and 1970s to challenge workplace discrimination throughout the nation.³⁷

Black western urbanites continued their campaign for full political equality into the Cold War. In 1951, Oliver Brown filed suit in Topeka, Kansas, on behalf of his daughter, Linda, against her exclusion from a nearby racially segregated elementary school. The case would reach the United States Supreme Court in 1954 as *Brown v. Board of Education* and would inspire a national effort toward racial equality whose repercussions are felt to this day. Although *Brown* received international notoriety for the societal change it initiated, few scholars have explored the seventy-year campaign

37. On Seattle see Taylor, *Forging*, 164-65, 170. On campaigns in Portland, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Honolulu see Alonzo Smith and Quintard Taylor, "Racial Discrimination in the Workplace: A Study of Two West Coast Cities during the 1940s," *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 8 (Spring 1980), 35-54; Albert Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, (Lawrence, Kan., 1993), 158-65; and Beth Bailey and David Farber, "The 'Double-V' Campaign in World War II Hawaii: African Americans, Racial Ideology, and Federal Power," *Journal of Social History*, 26 (Summer 1993), 831-35.

by Topeka activists that culminated in the decision. Nor do most scholars know of the decades-old effort by blacks in Phoenix and Tucson that led to a 1953 Arizona State Supreme Court decision providing a crucial legal precedent for *Brown*.³⁸

A decade before *Brown*, other black and white westerners were employing "direct action"—sit-ins and boycotts of public facilities that discriminated against African Americans. The impetus for these efforts came from the creation of the multiracial Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Formed in Chicago in 1942 by peace and civil rights advocates, it was initially active mainly on college campuses. CORE mounted brief campaigns in the West, including a sit-in against a downtown Denver movie theater in 1943 and in 1948 against a restaurant in Lawrence, Kansas. By 1951, the DePorres Club, a CORE affiliate based at Creighton University in Omaha, launched successful direct action campaigns against employment and housing discrimination in the city. Independent of the CORE actions, University of New Mexico students in 1947 initiated successful boycotts against discrimination in Albuquerque-area public accommodations. These efforts were a prelude to large-scale direct-action campaigns beginning in 1958 with sit-ins in Wichita and Oklahoma City against public accommodations segregation. The sit-ins in the southern plains cities preceded by two years the much heralded Greensboro protests credited with initiating the direct-action phase of the 1960s civil rights movement.³⁹

By the early 1960s, the campaign that began on the southern plains swept across the region. From San Antonio to Seattle, African Americans took to the streets



The suit Oliver Brown (above) filed in 1951 in an effort to have his daughter admitted to a racially segregated Topeka, Kansas, elementary school led to the U. S. Supreme Court's famed *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling of 1954, which heralded an end to the separate-but-equal doctrine.

as an integral part of the national campaign that attempted to eradicate racism, empower black communities, and achieve the full and final democratization of the United States. The Seattle "Movement," for example, an entirely local effort mounted by blacks and sympathetic whites and Asians, employed sit-ins, economic boycotts, protest marches, and other forms of nonviolent demonstration to confront the three major community grievances—job discrimination, housing bias, and *de facto* school segregation. When

Reverend John H. Adams, a local activist, proudly proclaimed in 1963 that "the Civil Rights Movement has finally leaped the Cascade Mountains," he was simply confirming the rise of a nonviolent crusade that already had engaged the energies and aspirations of thousands of Seattleites. Although the "direct action" efforts of western black civil rights activists and their allies did not eliminate all of their racial grievances, as became apparent in Los Angeles in 1992, the campaign nonetheless demolished decades-old barriers to opportunity and equality, confirming what nineteenth-century black westerners had long known: that the struggle for racial justice was not simply a southern campaign, it had to be waged everywhere in the nation, including the American West.⁴⁰

The 1992 Rodney King uprising in Los Angeles should remind historians of the complex, uncertain, evolving relationships between peoples in the modern urban West. The 1992 conflagration was not simply a reprise of the 1965 Watts Riot, which pitted angry black ghetto residents against a largely white police force and National Guard. The 1992 confrontation revealed tensions that divided Angelenos by class as much as by race (impoverished blacks, Latinos, and whites engaged in looting and burning), as well as conflicts and rivalries between people of color (black and Latino hostility toward Korean American merchants). Yet the

38. On *Brown v. Board* see Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 367-424. On the Arizona case see Mary Melcher, "Blacks and Whites Together: Interracial Leadership in the Phoenix Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of Arizona History*, 32 (Summer 1991), 201.

39. On CORE demonstrations in Denver, Lawrence, and Omaha see August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* (New York, 1973), 27, 56-57, 60. See also George Long, "How Albuquerque Got Its Civil Rights Ordinance," *Crisis*, 60 (November 1953), 521-24; Ronald Walters, "Standing Up in America's Heartland: Sitting in before Greensboro," *American Visions*, 8 (February), 20-23; and Carl R. Graves, "The


Right to Be Served: Oklahoma City's Lunch Counter Sit-Ins, 1958-1964," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 59 (Summer 1981), 152-66.

40. The Adams quote appears in Taylor, *Forging*, 198.

41. The Bell quote appears in Leigh Dana Johnsen, "Equal Rights and the 'Heathen Chinese': Black Activism in San Francisco, 1865-1875," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 11 (January, 1980), 61.

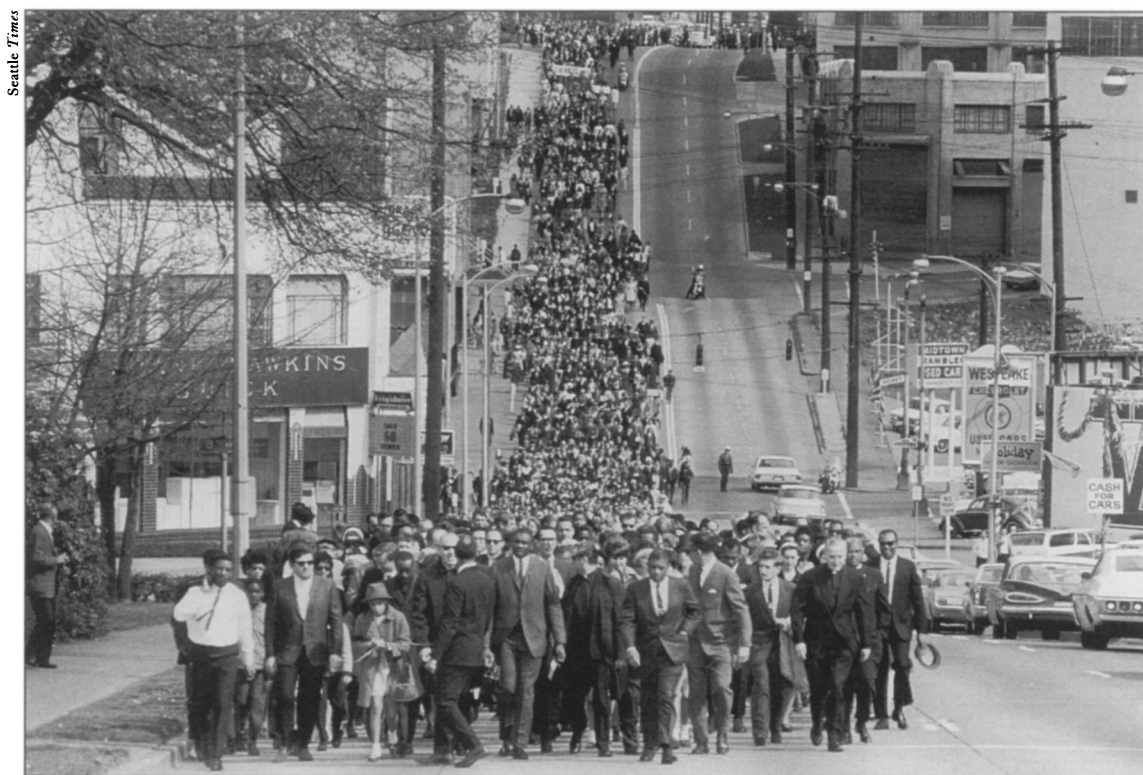
42. See Richard White, "Race Relations in the American West," *American Quarterly*, 38 (Fall 1986), 396-97; and Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York, 1987), 349.

multiple sources of that relationship are rooted in five centuries of encounters between racially and culturally diverse peoples both as individuals and distinct populations. A careful reading of African American history in the West reveals the numerous ways in which Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos have been allies or competitors for land, jobs, and political power, and how each group has, in its own particular fashion, incorporated racist beliefs against other people of color to further its own interests. This view was bluntly advanced by nineteenth-century San Francisco newspaper editor Philip A. Bell, who attempted to distance the post-Civil War black suffrage campaign from “heathen . . . idolatrous” Chinese. “We make no issue in the Chinese question,” Bell proclaimed, “let them paddle their own canoe.” The record also reveals how people of color have overcome what appeared to be insurmountable cultural chasms to forge bonds of friendship and fidelity as occurred in the 1850s when *Tejanos* (Texans of Mexican ancestry) aided black slaves via an underground railroad that ran south across the Rio Grande, or the 1930s when a remarkable coalition of Asian Americans and African Americans forestalled enactment of anti-intermarriage laws in Washington state. These examples, at the very least, confirm the obsolescence of the model of race relations that centers on Euramerican interaction with each group. Historians must now ask how the groups faced each other in the West.⁴¹

In an influential article published in 1986, Richard White argued that the peculiar pattern of race relations in the region provides much of the foundation for western distinctiveness. Without it the West, White maintained, “might as well be New Jersey with mountains and deserts.” Indeed, from the sixteenth-century encounter of Esteban with native peoples to the Rodney King uprising eight years before the beginning of the twenty-first century, “race” in the West has mattered, although its specific impact and consequence has varied as much as the regional landscape. African American history in this region affords us an opportunity to view this contested racial terrain and to understand how the contest itself, as it unfolded through the centuries, shaped the destiny of all westerners.⁴² 

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African Americans in the West employed increasingly direct, visible efforts to air grievances and achieve racial equality. Here, ten thousand people march in Seattle in April 1968 in a memorial for the slain Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.



BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY ON THE AFRICAN AMERICAN WEST

by Quintard Taylor

CONSIDERING THE WIDELY HELD

assumption that the African American presence in the West was not significant until World War II, the historical literature on blacks in the region is surprisingly rich and diverse. Unfortunately, broad regional syntheses are absent. W. Sherman Savage's *Blacks in the West* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976) remains the only regionwide study, although it ends, in classic Turnerian fashion, in 1890. Kenneth W. Porter's *The Negro on the American Frontier* (New York: Arno Press, 1971), often cited as a work of synthesis, is in fact a compilation of the author's numerous articles on the advancing North American frontier. Only a few of Porter's articles actually address African American history in the West. William Loren Katz's *The Black West* (Seattle: Open Hand Publishing, 1987), a pictorial survey of the region, remains a highly popular account intended primarily for a nonacademic audience. Like Savage's work, however, it fails to discuss twentieth-century developments.

Some state studies exist, although they vary enormously in quality. See for example Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans: A History of Negroes in Texas, 1528-1971* (Austin, Tex.: Jenkins Publishing Company, 1973); Elmer Rusco, "Good Time Coming?" *Black Nevadans in the Nineteenth Century* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975); Barbara J. Richardson, *Black Pioneers of New Mexico: A Documentary and Pictorial History* (Rio Rancho, N. Mex., Panorama Press, 1976); Elizabeth McLagan, *A Peculiar Paradise: A History of Blacks in Oregon, 1788-1940* (Portland: Georgian Press, 1980); Richard E. Harris, *The First 100 Years: A History of Arizona Blacks* (Apache Junction, Ariz., Relmo Publishers, 1983); Everett Louis Overstreet, *Black on a Background of White: A Chronicle of Afro-Americans' Involvement in America's Last Frontier, Alaska* (Fairbanks: Alaska Black Caucus, 1988); Mamie O. Oliver, *Idaho Ebony: The Afro-American Presence in Idaho State History* (Boise: Idaho State Historical Society, 1990); and B. Gordon Wheeler, *Black California: The History of African Americans in the Golden State* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1993).

Important unpublished sources for state histories include Robert Kim Nimmons, "Arizona's Forgotten Past: The Negro in Arizona, 1539-1965" (master's thesis, Northern Arizona University, 1971); James Adolphus Fisher, "A History of the Political and Social Development of the Black Community in California, 1850-1950"

(doctoral diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1972); and Ronald G. Coleman, "A History of Blacks in Utah, 1825-1910" (doctoral diss., University of Utah, 1980). For a four-state survey of African American communities see Quintard Taylor, "A History of Blacks in the Pacific Northwest, 1788-1970" (doctoral diss., University of Minnesota, 1977). Lawrence B. De Graaf's, "Recognition, Racism, and Reflections on the Writing of Western Black History," *Pacific Historical Review*, 44 (February 1975), 22-51, remains one of the best surveys concerning the challenges of writing western black history. Richard White attempts to place the discussion of race relations at the center of the New Western History in "Race Relations in the American West," *American Quarterly*, 38 (Fall 1986), 394-416.

The literature on blacks in New Spain begins with the first African in the region, Esteban. On Esteban see A. D. F. Bandelier, ed., *The Journey of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1905); and Cleve Hallenbeck, ed., *The Journal of Fray Marcos de Niza* (Dallas: University Press, 1949). Isabel de Olvera is described in George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, eds., *Don Juan de Oñate: Colonizer of New Mexico, 1595-1628* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1953), 560-62. On blacks in colonial Mexico see Gonzalo Aguirre Beltran, "The Integration of the Negro into the National Society of Mexico," *Race and Class in Latin America*, ed. Magnus Morner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 11-27; and Colin Palmer, *Slaves of the White God: Blacks in Mexico, 1570-1650* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976). The founders of Los Angeles are profiled in Lonnie Bunch III, *Black Angelenos: The Afro-American in Los Angeles, 1850-1950* (Los Angeles: California Afro-American Museum, 1988), 10-12. See also Jack D. Forbes, "Black Pioneers: The Spanish-Speaking Afroamericans of the Southwest," *Phylon*, 27 (Fall 1966), 233-46. For a successful integration of African American western history into a larger narrative see David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982).

Some of the earliest articles on African Americans in the West describe slavery in the region. They include Lester G. Bugbee, "Slavery in Early Texas," *Political Science Quarterly*, 13 (September 1898), 389-412; Clyde Duniway, "Slavery in California after 1848,"

American Historical Association Annual Reports, 1 (1905), 243-48; and T. W. Davenport, "Slavery Question in Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 9 (September 1908), 189-253. Eugene Berwanger's *The Frontier against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967) remains the starting point for any discussion of the race-slavery-politics nexus in the region. For localized studies see Robert W. Johannsen *Frontier Politics on the Eve of the Civil War* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1955); and James A. Rawley, *Race and Politics: "Bleeding Kansas" and the Coming of the Civil War* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1969). The best state study of slavery is Randolph Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989). See also Paul D. Lack, "Slavery and the Texas Revolution," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 89 (October 1985), 181-202. On black slavery among Native Americans see R. Halliburton, Jr., *Red over Black: Black Slavery among the Cherokee Indians* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977); Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., *Africans and Seminoles: From Removal to Emancipation* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977); and Theda Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979).

On the extent of slavery in nominally free states and territories see Delilah L. Beasley, "Slavery in California," *Journal of Negro History*, 3 (January 1918), 33-54; Alvin R. Sunseri, *Seeds of Discord: New Mexico in the Aftermath of the American Conquest, 1846-1861* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979), 115-24; Quintard Taylor, "Slaves and Free Men: Blacks in the Oregon Country, 1840-1860," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 83 (Summer 1982), 153-70; and Albert S. Broussard, "Slavery in California Revisited: The Fate of a Kentucky Slave in Gold Rush California," *Pacific Historian*, 29 (Spring 1985), 17-21. On the status of free blacks in antebellum California see Malcolm Edwards, "The War of Complexional Distinction: Blacks in Gold Rush California and

British Columbia," *California Historical Quarterly*, 66 (Spring 1977), 34-45; Robert J. Chandler, "Friends in Time of Need: Republicans and Black Civil Rights in California during the Civil War Era," *Arizona and the West*, 24 (Winter 1982), 319-40; and Rudolph Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). The complex relationship of western African Americans to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is discussed in Newell Bringham, *Saints, Slaves and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People within Mormonism* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981).

Slavery and freedom on the Kansas-Missouri border are explored in Richard B. Sheridan, "From Slavery in Missouri to Freedom in Kansas: The Influx of Black Fugitives and Contrabands into Kansas, 1854-1864," *Kansas History*, 12 (Spring 1989), 28-47; and Gunja SenGupta, "Servants for Freedom: Christian Abolitionists in Territorial Kansas, 1854-1858," *Kansas History*, 16 (Autumn 1993), 200-13.

Contemporary abolitionist perspectives can be found in Richard Cordley, *A History of Lawrence, Kansas from the First Settlement to the Close of the Rebellion* (Lawrence, Kans.: E. F. Caldwell, 1895); Richard Cordley, *Pioneer Days in Kansas* (New York: Pilgrim Press, circa 1903); and H. D. Fisher, *The Gun and the Gospel: Early Kansas and Chaplain Fisher* (Chicago: Kenwood Press, 1896). See also Wendell Holmes Stephenson,

The Political Career of General James H. Lane (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1930), 123-33. On the Kansas-Missouri border during the Civil War see Henry Clay Bruce's ex-slave narrative, *The New Man: Twenty-Nine Years a Slave, Twenty-Nine Years a Free Man* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969).

The impact of western Reconstruction on the black population is addressed in Eugene Berwanger, *The West and Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981). See also Eugene Berwanger, "William J. Hardin: Colorado Spokesman for Racial Justice, 1863-1873," *Colorado Magazine*, 52 (Winter 1975), 52-65; and "Hardin and Langston: Western Black Spokesmen of the Reconstruction Era," *Journal of Negro History*, 64

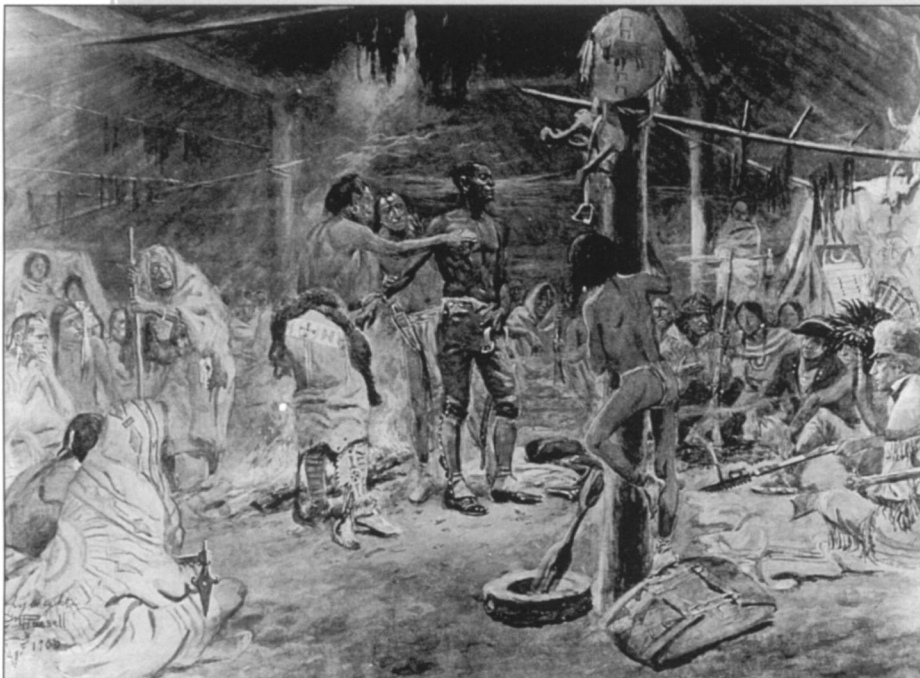


A Pull at the Canteen, by Frederic Remington (1888), drawing from "A Scout with the Buffalo Soldiers," written and illustrated by Frederic Remington, *Century Magazine*, 37 (April 1889), p. 909

(Spring 1979), 101-14. On Texas reconstruction see James Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair: Black Texans during Reconstruction* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1981); and Merline Pitre, *Through Many Dangers, Toils and Snares: The Black Leadership of Texas, 1868-1900* (Austin, Tex.: Eakin Press, 1985). Post-Reconstruction black Texas is described in Lawrence D. Rice, *The Negro in Texas, 1874-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971). Two books by Daniel Littlefield, *The Cherokee Freedmen: From Emancipation to American Citizenship* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978), and *The Chickasaw Freedmen: A People without a Country* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), describe Reconstruction among two of the five major Indian Territory nations. On the post-Civil War western racial hierarchy see Randall B. Woods, "Integration, Exclusion, or Segregation? The 'Color Line' in Kansas, 1878-1900," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 14 (April 1983), 181-98; and Randall B. Woods, *A Black Odyssey: John Lewis Waller and the Promise of American Life, 1878-1900* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1981).

African American settlement on the high plains is described in Nell Painter's, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976); Robert Athearn, *In Search of Canaan:*

Black Migration to Kansas, 1879-1880 (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1978); Glen Schwendemann, "Nicodemus: Negro Haven on the Solomon," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 34 (Spring 1968), 1-31; Daniel F. Littlefield and Lonnie E. Underhill, "Black Dreams and 'Free' Homes: The Oklahoma Territory, 1891-1894," *Phylon*, 34 (December 1973), 342-57; and James D. Bish, "The Black Experience in Selected Nebraska Counties, 1854-1920" (master's thesis, University of Nebraska Omaha, 1989). Two memoirs and two autobiographical novels provide accounts of life on the high plains. Robert Anderson's *From Slavery to Affluence: Memoirs of Robert Anderson, Ex-Slave* (Hemingford, Neb.: Hemingford Ledger, 1927) recalls his life as a successful black Nebraska homesteader-rancher. For one woman's recollections of her childhood in the first decades of the twentieth century see Ava Speese Day, "The Ava Speese Day Story," in *Sod House Memories, Vols. I-III*, ed. Frances Jacobs Alberts (Hastings, Neb.: Sod House Society, 1972), 261-75. Oscar Micheaux's novels, *The Conquest: The Story of a Negro Pioneer* (Lincoln: Woodruff Press, 1913), and *The Homesteader* (Sioux City, Iowa: Western Book Supply, 1917), afford a glimpse into the life of a homesteader who eventually becomes one of the most successful black filmmakers in the pre-World War II era.



Gift of the artist, MHS Museum, Helena

York (the black man who accompanied Lewis and Clark across the continent), by Charles M. Russell (1908, watercolor, 18 1/4" x 25")

Although much of the contemporary interest in the African American West can be traced to the "discovery" of black cowboys in the 1960s, the subsequent literature has been disappointing. Philip Durham and Everett Jones, *The Negro Cowboy* (New York: Dodd and Mead, 1965), was far more successful in inspiring popular rather than scholarly accounts. The one exception was Kenneth W. Porter's "Negro Labor in the Western Cattle Industry, 1866-1900," *Labor History*, 10 (Summer 1969), 346-74. One must look to general accounts such as Jack Watson's *The Real American Cowboy* (New York: New Amsterdam Press, 1988) to find much about black cowboys. A brief but useful primary source is D. W. Wallace's personal memoir in R. R. Crane, "D. W. Wallace ('80 John'): A Negro Cattleman on the Texas Frontier," *West Texas Historical Association Yearbook*, 28 (1952), 113-18.

In contrast, the literature on the buffalo soldiers, the other black westerners who captured the public's attention in the 1960s, is rich, detailed, and increasingly sophisticated. See William L. Leckie, *Buffalo Soldiers:*

A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967); and Arlen Fowler, *The Black Infantry in the West, 1869-1891* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1971). All of the following authors examine discrete aspects of black life in the post-Civil War army in the West: Monroe Billington, *New Mexico's Buffalo Soldiers, 1866-1900* (Niwot: University of Colorado Press, 1991); Frank N. Schubert, *Buffalo Soldiers, Braves and the Brass* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Publishing Company, 1993); Garna L. Christian, *Black Soldiers in Jim Crow Texas, 1899-1917* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995); and Frank N. Schubert, ed., *On the Trail of the Buffalo Soldier: Biographies of African Americans in the U.S. Army, 1866-1917* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1995). For two accounts of the history of individual soldiers see Frank N. Schubert, "The Violent World of Emanuel Stance, Fort Robinson, 1887," *Nebraska History*, 55 (Summer 1974), 203-19; and Thomas R. Buecker, "One Soldier's Service: Caleb Benson in the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry, 1875-1908," *Nebraska History*, 74 (Summer 1993), 54-62.

On black urban communities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries see Douglas Henry Daniels, *Pioneer Urbanites: A Social and Cultural History of Black San Francisco* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); Thomas C. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka, Kansas, 1865-1915: A Social History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Kenneth M. Hamilton, *Black Towns and Profit: Promotion and Development in the Trans-Appalachian West* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Howard Beeth and Cary D. Wintz, eds., *Black Dixie: Afro-Texas History and Culture in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992); Albert Broussard, *Black San Francisco: The Struggle for Racial Equality in the West, 1900-1954* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993); Bradford Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix: A Profile of Mexican American, Chinese American, and African American Communities, 1860-1992* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994); and Quintard Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994). On small cities

see William Lang, "The Nearly Forgotten Blacks on Last Chance Gulch, 1900-1912," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 70 (April 1979), 50-51; C. Robert Haywood, "No Less a Man: Blacks in Cow Town Dodge City, 1876-1886," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 19 (May 1988), 161-82; and Quintard Taylor, "The Emergence of Afro-American Communities in the Pacific Northwest, 1865-1910," *Journal of Negro History*, 64 (Fall 1979), 342-51. The single book-length discussion of the Garvey movement in the West remains Emory J. Tolbert, *The UNIA and Black Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980).

Literature on the interaction of black westerners with other people of color is slowly evolving. Beginning in the 1930s Kenneth W. Porter wrote a series of articles on black-Indian contact, although not all of his studies were set in the western United States. See especially "Relations between Indians and Negroes within the Present Limits of the United States," *Journal of Negro History*, 17 (July 1932), 287-367; and "Negroes and Indians on the Texas Frontier, 1831-1876," *Journal of Negro History*, 41 (July 1956), 185-214, and *ibid.*, 41 (October 1956), 285-310. For later efforts see Daniel F. Littlefield and Lonnie E. Underhill, "The Crazy Snake Uprising of 1909: A Red, Black or White Affair?"



Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma

The Stampede (in which a black cowboy tries to turn the herd), by Frederic Remington (1908, oil on canvas, 27" x 40")

Arizona and the West, 20 (Winter 1978), 307-24; Donald A. Grinde, Jr., and Quintard Taylor, "Red vs. Black: Conflict and Accommodation in the Post-Civil War Indian Territory, 1865-1907," *American Indian Quarterly*, 8 (Summer 1984), 211-29; and Kevin Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila and Texas* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University, 1993).

ON BLACK INTERACTION WITH ASIANS

see Leigh Dana Johnsen, "Equal Rights and the 'Heathen Chinese': Black Activism in San Francisco, 1865-1875," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 11 (January 1980), 57-68; Quintard Taylor, "Blacks and Asians in a White City: Japanese Americans and African Americans in Seattle, 1890-1940," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 22 (November 1991), 401-29; and Sumi K. Cho, "Korean Americans vs. African Americans: Conflict and Construction," in Robert Gooding Williams, ed., *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 196-211. On nineteenth-century black-*Tejano* cooperation see James Smallwood, "Blacks in Antebellum Texas: A Reappraisal," *Red River Valley Historical Review*, 2 (Winter 1975), 459-60; and on twentieth-century rivalry see Arnold Shankman, "The Image of Mexico and the Mexican American in the Black Press, 1890-1930," *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 3 (Summer 1975), 43-56.

Black women in the West are profiled in Ruthe Winegarten, *Black Texas Women: 150 Years of Trial and Triumph* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), to date the only statewide historical survey on the subject. Essays by Lawrence B. De Graaf and Glenda Riley remain valuable historiographical surveys of black women in the region. See De Graaf, "Race, Sex, and Region: Black Women in the American West, 1850-1920," *Pacific Historical Review*, 49 (February 1980), 285-314; and Riley, "American Daughters: Black Women in the West," *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, 38 (Spring 1988), 14-27. Two prominent black Californians are described in Dolores Hayden, "Biddy Mason's Los Angeles, 1856-1891," *California History*, 68 (Fall 1989), 86-99; and Lynn M. Hudson, "A New Look, or 'I'm Not Mammy to Everybody in California': Mary Ellen Pleasant, a Black Entrepreneur," *Journal of the West*, 32 (July 1993), 35-40. Anne Butler's "Still in Chains: Black Women in Western Prisons, 1865-1910," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 20 (February 1989), 19-36, reminds us that unequal justice shadowed western black women throughout the region. On western black women's organizations see Marilyn Dell Brady, "Kansas Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, 1900-1930," *Kansas History*, 9 (Spring 1986), 19-30; and Lynda Fae Dickson, "The Early Club Movement among Black Women in Denver, 1890-1925" (doctoral diss., University of Colorado, 1982).

On African American women during and after World War II see Paul Spickard, "Work and Hope: African American Women in Southern California during World War II," *Journal of the West*, 32 (July 1993), 70-79; and Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage: African American Migrant Women and the East Bay Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). There are still far too few biographies of western black women. For one account of a black North Dakotan see Era Bell Thompson, *American Daughter* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1986). Newspaper editor and political activist Charlotta Bass's vice-presidential campaign is described in Gerald R. Gill, "'Win or Lose—We Win': The 1952 Vice-Presidential Campaign of Charlotta A. Bass," in Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds., *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1978), 109-18.

The World War II literature is voluminous so only a few works will be listed here. On the growth of East Bay area black communities see Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). On San Francisco see Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 133-204; and on Seattle see Taylor, *Forging*, 159-89. See also Lawrence B. De Graaf, "Negro Migration to Los Angeles, 1930-1950" (doctoral diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1962); Neil Gary Sapper, "A Survey of the History of the Black People of Texas, 1930-1954" (doctoral diss., Texas Tech University, 1972); Shirley Ann Moore, "The Black Community in Richmond, California, 1910-1963" (doctoral diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1989); and Delores Nason McBroome, "Parallel Communities: African Americans in California's East Bay, 1850-1963" (doctoral diss., University of Oregon, 1991). For a discussion of African American defense industry employment campaigns in Portland, Los Angeles, and Honolulu see Alonzo Smith and Quintard Taylor, "Racial Discrimination in the Workplace: A Study of Two West Coast Cities during the 1940s," *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 8 (Spring 1980), 35-54; and Beth Bailey and David Farber, "The 'Double-V' Campaign in World War II Hawaii: African Americans, Racial Ideology, and Federal Power," *Journal of Social History*, 26 (Summer 1993), 831-35.

The single largest early twentieth-century western civil rights campaign, the challenge of the all-white Texas Democratic primary, ended in a World War II-era victory in 1944. That campaign is described in J. Alton Atkins, *The Texas Negro and His Political Rights: A History of the Fight of the Negro to Enter the Democratic Primaries of Texas* (Houston: Webster Publishing Company, 1932); Conrey Bryson, *Dr. Lawrence A. Nixon and the White Primary* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1974); and Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Victory: The Rise and Fall of the White Primary in Texas* (Millwood, N.Y.: KTO Press, 1979).

Western direct-action civil rights activity also began in the World War II-era when activists in Denver, Lawrence, and Omaha initiated sit-ins and boycotts to challenge theater, housing, and employment discrimination. For brief discussions of those campaigns see August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 27, 56-57, 60. The remarkable 1947 University of New Mexico student-initiated boycotts of discriminatory restaurants and stores in Albuquerque are described in George Long, "How Albuquerque Got Its Civil Rights Ordinance," *Crisis*, 60 (November 1953), 521-24. On the 1958 sit-ins in Wichita and Oklahoma City see Ronald Walters, "Standing Up in America's Heartland: Sitting in before Greensboro," *American Visions*, 8 (February), 20-23; and Carl R. Graves, "The Right to Be Served: Oklahoma City's Lunch Counter Sit-Ins, 1958-1964," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 59 (Summer 1981), 152-66. On *Brown v. Board of Education*, which originated in Topeka, see Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 367-424.

There is a growing body of literature on the 1960s black civil rights movement in the West. One of the

few firsthand accounts is Lubertha Johnson and Jamie Coughtry, *Lubertha Johnson: Civil Rights Efforts in Las Vegas: 1940s-1960s: An Oral History Interview* (Reno: University of Nevada Oral History Program, 1988). See also Elmer R. Rusco, "The Civil Rights Movement in Nevada," *Nevada Public Affairs Review: Ethnicity and Race in Nevada*, 2 (1987), 75-81; Mary Melcher, "Blacks and Whites Together: Interracial Leadership in the Phoenix Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of Arizona History*, 32 (Summer 1991), 195-216; Robert A. Goldberg, "Racial Change on the Southern Periphery: The Case of San Antonio, Texas, 1960-1965," *Journal of Southern History*, 49 (August 1983), 349-74; W. Edwin Derrick and J. Herschel Barnhill, "With 'All' Deliberate Speed: Desegregation of the Public Schools in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, 1954 to 1972," *Red River Valley Historical Review*, 6 (Spring 1981), 78-90; Doris Pieroth, "With All Deliberate Caution: School Integration in Seattle, 1954-1968," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 73 (April 1982), 50-61; and Joseph N. Crowley, "Race and Residence: The Politics of Open Housing in Nevada," in Eleanore Bushnell, *Sagebrush and Neon: Studies in Nevada Politics* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1973), 55-73.

Numerous African Americans worked in service capacities in the nineteenth-century West, as did these waiters from Canyon Hotel in Yellowstone National Park, pictured in 1896 enjoying a day's respite on the Yellowstone River.



Elliott W. Hunter, photographer, Haynes Foundation Coll., MHS Photograph Archives, Helena