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Negotiating the Ideological Boundaries of “The Four Freedoms”:  
An Analysis of African American Rhetoric from World War II

By

Jansen B. Werner

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

In

Department of Communication Studies

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

May 2012

Negotiating the Ideological Boundaries of “The Four Freedoms”:  
An Analysis of African American Rhetoric from World War II

Jansen B. Werner

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the thesis committee.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

On March 18, 2008, after more than a year of campaigning, Senator Barack Obama approached a Philadelphia podium to address the issue which had shadowed him since the beginning of his campaign: race. With the potential to become the first African American president in U.S. history, Obama's candidacy was defined by race from the outset. Prior to this afternoon in Philadelphia, he had generally circumvented the "race question" by choosing to focus on policy issues instead. Now, though, he was confronted by a daunting rhetorical situation. Six days earlier, on March 12, 2008, Obama's long-time spiritual advisor, Rev. Jeremiah Wright (2008)—a black preacher from Chicago—directed the following incendiary remarks at Obama's opponent, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton:

Hillary never had a cab whiz past her and not pick her up because her skin was the wrong color. Hillary never had to worry about being pulled over in her car as a black man driving in the wrong ... I am sick of [N]egroes who just do not get it. Hillary was not a black boy raised in a single parent home, Barack was. Barack knows what it means living in a country and a culture that is controlled by rich white people. Hillary can never know that. Hillary ain't never been called a nigger! (as cited in Parker, 2008, para. 6)

Prompted by Wright's inflammatory rhetoric, Obama was pressed to react to the racial hysteria which now engulfed his candidacy. He responded with a speech titled "A More Perfect Union."

In "A More Perfect Union," Obama (2008) expressed his conviction "that this nation is more than the sum of its parts—that out of many, we are truly one" (para. 9). He emphasized

interdependence and implored Americans to overcome the racial discrimination which had plagued the country. Indeed, Wright's sentiments, though radical in tone, were based on a racial history which had seen the systematic subjugation of African Americans. However, the majority of Americans considered Wright's remarks both regressive and despicable. To reconcile these warring constituencies, Obama pointed to the history books:

[Americans] do not need to recite here the history of racial injustice in this country. But we do need to remind ourselves that so many of the disparities that exist in the African-American community today can be directly traced to inequalities passed on from an earlier generation that suffered under the brutal legacy of slavery and Jim Crow. (para. 28)

Obama blunted the sting of Wright's (2008) comments by linking present-day racial disparities to the inequities of prior generations. In so doing, Obama pressed Americans to consider how the actions of the past still played a role in contemporary society. Obama (2008) demonstrated his appreciation for history throughout the oration, but the following passage proved rhetorically significant on multiple levels:

I was raised with the help of a white grandfather who survived a Depression to serve in Patton's army during World War II, and a white grandmother who worked on a bomber assembly line at Fort Leavenworth while he was overseas. (para. 3)

Aside from portraying himself as the embodiment of double consciousness, the physical manifestation of both black and white ancestry (Terrill, 2009), Obama's reference was significant because it invoked one of America's most resonant narratives—World War II (WWII).



“The Good War,” in many regards, revitalized the U.S., propelling the country out of the Depression, and launching Americans into an era of unprecedented prosperity (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2010). Many rhetorical scholars (Balthrop, Blair, & Michel, 2010; Biesecker, 2002; Bostdorff, 2003, 2011; Kahl & Leff, 2006; Noon, 2004) have speculated on the implications of WWII’s role in contemporary American culture. Biesecker (2002) discussed “the pivotal ideological role WWII has begun to play in U.S. public culture in the present” (p. 394). Biesecker’s examination of WWII texts highlighted Americans’ thirst for commemorating the legacy of WWII; to confirm her thesis one must merely peruse the recent explosion of WWII themes in film, popular television, and print media.<sup>1</sup> In many ways, these commemorations champion the notion that the WWII era was composed of exceptional individuals. For example, Tom Brokaw (2004) asserted that the Americans who endured the hardships of WWII signify “the greatest generation any society has produced” (p. xxxviii). Obama’s (2008) reference to WWII in “A More Perfect Union,” then, could be dismissed as simply another politician cashing in on the era’s rhetorical currency. Yet, the racial thrust of the speech infused Obama’s WWII reference with an ironic tension. For, although Obama’s discussion of his grandparents served to demonstrate how Americans had united to overcome national crises, the historical reality is, during the WWII era, African Americans still suffered from Jim Crow segregation. In other words, Obama championed Americans’ WWII sacrifices, but avoided discussing how the era’s

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<sup>1</sup> See: Hill, G. (Producer), & Malick, T. (Director). (1998). *The thin red line* [Motion picture]. U.S.A.: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox; Spielberg, S., & Hanks, T. (Producers), & Hanks, T. (Director). (2001). *Band of brothers* [Television mini-series]. U.S.A.: HBO; Spielberg, S. (Producer), & (Director). (1998). *Saving Private Ryan* [Motion picture]. U.S.A.: DreamWorks.

racism contributed to the racial tension which prompted him to deliver “A More Perfect Union” in the first place. This contradiction is further exacerbated because, in spite of WWII’s popularity in modern culture, African American narratives from the period continue to be overlooked by contemporary scholars.

A survey of African American discourse from the WWII era demonstrates diverse viewpoints within the black community. Blacks were divided across issues including politics, economics, and education. One especially controversial topic among black spokespersons was the tension between the war effort and the struggle for civil rights. In spite of these public controversies, only a few Communication scholars (Crabbe, 2003; Putnam, 2006a, 2006b, 2007) have critically examined black discourse from the period. As Putnam (2006a) contended, “the absence of sustained doctoral level research in black rhetoric contributes to a fragmented and partial narrative about the history of black rhetoric in the published literature of Communication Studies” (p. 16). His assertion reveals the need for scholars to continue engaging black discourse in varying historical contexts. In undertaking such a project, though, one must avoid privileging the expectations and norms of the present (Hartnett, 2002). Rather, critics must seek to situate texts within the boundaries of their respective epochs.

Obama went on to win the election, prompting many commentators to claim that his election marked America’s emergence as a “post-racial” society (Roy & Vaisse, 2008; Schorr, 2008; Steele, 2008). In those hasty declarations, one finds similarities to the ways Americans have appropriated the memory of WWII: In both cases, watershed achievements have eclipsed systemic shortcomings. More specifically, though, in both instances, Americans found excuses to avoid discussing race. Honing in on such moments of strategic evasion is essential to

understanding how the historical avoidance of race relations has influenced America's current racial climate.

My project explores how African Americans continued the quest for civil rights during WWII. In order to do so, however, one must acknowledge that black spokespersons responded to competing discourses—particularly, those of U.S. officials such as President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In an era where propaganda pervaded the public sphere,—according to Szasz (2009), “the Allies dropped two billion [propaganda] leaflets” (p. 538) in the closing days of the Pacific War alone—the sheer force of the white majority in the U.S. was politically and socially overwhelming. Thus, non-dominant groups, such as African Americans, were forced to react from a restricted discursive space. In this regard, my analysis cuts two-fold. First, I examine how President Roosevelt (1941) galvanized support for his “Four Freedoms” agenda by appealing to collective values. In appealing to collective values, Roosevelt placed a high demand on patriotism and unity. Roosevelt’s emphasis on collective values and national unity conveyed a homogenous sense of American identity which, in turn, discouraged public expression of minority and/or dissenting viewpoints. Second, I investigate how African American rhetors employed the principles of “The Four Freedoms” to formulate critiques of institutional racism. In particular, Ralph Ellison’s wartime editorials explicitly engaged “The Four Freedoms.” Ellison illustrated how, by tolerating oppressive systems, such as racism, colonialism, and imperialism, the U.S. and Allied forces actually undermined the ideals of “The Four Freedoms.” I contend Ellison’s reinvention served to problematize “The Four Freedoms” in a way which highlighted the prejudices which afflicted African Americans and colonial peoples throughout the world.

The seeds for my project were planted in an undergraduate seminar with Dr. Aric Putnam—the topic: The history of African American public address. After that class I began to realize how much racial oppression had shaped the American experience. Later, in my first year of graduate study, that consciousness was cultivated into a professional interest. My scholarship has been propelled further by discovering the relationship between discourse and ideology. Accordingly, I approach this project from the perspective that examining the intersections of rhetoric, ideology, and history is necessary to better understanding the power dynamics of contemporary society. In my view, an individual’s position in society is but one strand in the vast interlocking fabric of American life; my positionality is, in many ways, no more than the outcome of historical and ideological conditions. Therefore, I acknowledge the numerous factors which contribute to my perspective: being a white, educated, middle-class male; growing up in a conservative, blue-collar, small town in Minnesota; enjoying the advantages of a progressive education; and perhaps most importantly, coming of political age during the Obama era. Above all, though, my project echoes Guterl’s (2002) argument that virtually “everything we in America do, or think, or say, is informed by race” (p. 3). Accordingly, my project seeks to illuminate how race is textured by the material collusion of rhetoric, ideology, and history.

### **Precis of Remaining Chapters**

To explore these issues fully, I have divided the project into chapters which help to better frame the historical, theoretical, and critical concerns. In Chapter Two, I survey rhetorical texts, historical events, and scholarly literature which help to contextualize the environment of U.S. race relations during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Starting at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, black civic leaders began crafting culturally-specific programs for gaining political, social, and economic

rights. However, due to the pervasiveness of institutional racism, black spokespersons were largely limited to adopting reactive positions. Analyzing the interplay of rhetoric and public affairs which occurred during the 1900s-1930s helps to frame how institutional racism influenced the political culture of black America during the WWII era.

In Chapter Three I examine the reciprocal relationship between rhetoric and ideology. As McGee (1979; 1980) demonstrated, rhetoric and ideology converge in the material presence of ideographs. McGee's framework illuminates how rhetoric and ideology conspire to produce asymmetrical distributions of power. Charting ideographs enables critics to better understand how rhetors harness discourse to (re)characterize material conditions. Analyzing these intersections reveals how culture and identity are constituted through the confluence of symbolic structures and material conditions.

In Chapter Four, I investigate how black author and literary critic, Ralph Ellison, responded to the political culture of the WWII era. In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered the address "The Four Freedoms," in which he expressed four essential human freedoms which he contended must guide the U.S. war effort. In "The Four Freedoms," Roosevelt insisted that Americans must protect their freedoms and, moreover, must dedicate themselves to the ideals of patriotism and unity. However, such expectations were problematic because U.S. institutional racism prevented certain peoples, particularly African Americans, from experiencing the basic civil rights which most Americans associated with freedom. This disconnect drew responses from several African American spokespersons. Ellison, in particular, illustrated how "The Four Freedoms" were unattainable until oppressive systems, such as institutional racism and colonialism, were eradicated. Specifically, between 1942 and 1943,

Ellison addressed the problem of “The Four Freedoms” with a series of editorials in the black periodical *The Negro Quarterly: A Review of Negro Life and Culture*. I conclude that Ellison’s wartime editorials reoriented the connotations of “The Four Freedoms,” suggesting liberty, not the preservation of freedom, should be the central motive of the U.S. and Allied forces.

In the concluding chapter I explore the historical and theoretical significance of the rhetorical phenomena which I examine in Chapter Four. Specifically, I reflect on how my project accents contemporary understandings of the junctures between race and the American experience. I close by contemplating what this project demonstrates about contemporary discourses on race.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A study of African American rhetoric from WWII is grounded in two general assumptions. My project extends from the assumption that public communication has an impact on society. Moreover, my project assumes rhetoric and culture share a reciprocal relationship. Accordingly, the following literature review serves two primary functions. First, the review contextualizes events, attitudes, and discourses which impacted the rhetorical and political culture of black America during the WWII era. Second, the review demonstrates how black spokespersons from the epoch shaped their political programs in response to the ideological constraints of institutional racism.

#### **Modern Black Leadership**

At the turn of the 20th century, African Americans were in need of modern civic leadership. Three distinctive black leaders emerged during the era: Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, and W.E.B. Du Bois. Each man proposed a program for how black Americans should seek social and political change. These men and the rhetoric with which they advocated their programs shaped black political leadership during the WWII era.

Booker T. Washington gained notoriety after establishing the Tuskegee Institute, an all-black college in Alabama. His ascension as a civic leader can be traced to his famous 1895 address, "The Atlanta Compromise." In the speech, Washington (1895) urged blacks to appease their white neighbors:

To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man who is their next-door neighbor, I would say: “Cast down your bucket where you are”—cast it down, making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom you are surrounded. (para. 5)

As illustrated in the quotation above, Washington’s plan called for blacks to develop skills in menial tasks so they could advance economically (Smock, 2009). As a result of his growing popularity, by 1900, he was regarded the most influential black leader in America (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2010). According to Huggins (2007), behind Washington’s emphasis on the industrial and agricultural training of blacks was an adamant rejection of intellectualism. There were some, though, who protested his social gospel of industry, humility, and patience (Lewis, 1997). Chief among them was W.E.B. Du Bois, who decried Washington’s model as conciliation to white supremacy. Speaking of the Washingtonian approach, Du Bois (1903/2003) argued:

[Washington’s] doctrine has tended to make the whites, North and South, shift the burden of the Negro problem to the Negro’s shoulders and stand aside as critical and rather pessimistic spectators; when in fact the burden belongs to the nation, and the hands of none of us are clean if we bend not our energies to righting these great wrongs. (46)

Though he made great strides in providing economic stability for blacks, ultimately, Washington’s program revealed its shortcomings. Ironically, as Washington’s life came to a close in 1915, the tides of white oppression surged. One indication of this reality was the release of the racist film *The Birth of a Nation*—a film which depicted black men as villainous predators of white women, and Klansmen as chivalrous heroes. Though Washington’s leadership appears



conservative and submissive to contemporary scholars, Baker (2001) pointed out Washington's approach was consistent with other American capitalists from the era, except, Washington built institutions with the purpose of serving the black majority. Nonetheless, as Washington was laid to rest, so, too, was his program of go-slow accommodation.

Building on Washington's social gospel in significant ways, Marcus Garvey—a fiery, Jamaican immigrant who rose to prominence in Harlem in 1917—espoused a program of Black Nationalism and radical separatism. Garvey captivated blacks with his passionate Pan-African rhetoric, vowing to liberate the earth's “four hundred million ... darker peoples” (as cited in Lewis, 1997, p. 35). As an advocate of Pan-Africanism, Garvey insisted a cultural kinship existed between Africans and members of the African Diaspora. By and large, Garvey chased his Pan-African vision through the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)—an organization that, according to Garvey (1922/1994), was dedicated to “advocating the cause of Africa for the Africans” (p. 17). As the UNIA gained traction, it provided Garvey the platform to reach out to blacks in America and the West Indies, urging them to build “a racial empire of [their] own in [the] Motherland” (p. 17). Fundamentally, Garvey's race-conscious program was transnational; in his calculus, rather than resolve systemic shortcomings, the only way to reconcile centuries of discrimination was to unite blacks in Africa. Garvey hoped to supplant racial hostility by reestablishing blacks in Africa, where they could then form an independent state:

There is no other way to avoid the threatening war of the races that is bound to engulf all mankind, which has been prophesied by the world's greatest thinkers; there is no better method than by apportioning every race to its own habitat. (Garvey, p. 20)

Though his shipping outfit, the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation, would make many voyages between the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa, ultimately, the organization floundered. Jailed for mail fraud in 1922, Garvey was deported to Jamaica in 1927 after which the UNIA and the Back to Africa movement disbanded (Gates & Burton, 2011). Nonetheless, Garvey's transnational rhetoric was significant, for he inspired blacks to seek political autonomy through racial identification.

W.E.B. Du Bois emerged as the foremost voice among black spokespersons during the late 1910s. Greatly at odds with Booker T. Washington's social gospel, Du Bois argued that a "talented tenth," a collection of intellectual black elites, was necessary to lead the charge against racial oppression (Huggins, 2007; Lewis, 1997). In Du Bois' assessment, this "talented tenth" would serve as paragons for the rest of the race, thus, uplifting the black masses by raising both intellectual and cultural standards. Through sparring with rival black spokesmen, Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey, Du Bois distinguished himself by linking American white supremacy to the subjugation of colonial peoples throughout the world. For instance, when challenged for his contradictory positions regarding the Russian Revolution and Pan-Africanism, Du Bois (1921/2011c) responded with the following:

We have an immediate program for Negro emancipation laid down and thought out by the N.A.A.C.P. It is foolish for us to give up this practical program for mirage in Africa or by seeking to join a revolution which we do not at present understand. On the other hand, ... it would be just as foolish for us to sneer or even seem to sneer at the blood-entwined writhing of hundreds of millions of our whiter human brothers. (p. 307)

The above quotation encapsulates Du Bois' aspirations: though black American interests were couched in a broader colonial struggle, the well-being of black Americans remained his first priority. To this end, Du Bois strove for peaceful, racial integration—anything less was failure. Du Bois' rhetorical leadership placed emphasis on cultural performance and critique; in so doing, he demonstrated that blacks could garner political efficacy by centering black American culture.

Washington, Garvey, and Du Bois each advocated starkly different political programs; however, they were united through their allegiance to developing modern black leadership. Washington's modernism manifested in an economic program centered on black industrial growth. Washington did not assail institutional racism; rather, he operated within its ideological boundaries. In so doing, he offered blacks material gains and economic self-sufficiency. Garvey's modernism produced the "Back to Africa" movement. Garvey's race-conscious rhetoric awakened blacks' desires for political autonomy. Although, the program was ultimately derailed by his deportation, Garvey's influence would live on through the voices of Black Nationalism and black radicalism. Du Bois' modernism resulted in the expansion of political activism and integrationist civic organizations. His goal of racial integration established the trajectory of black leadership during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, Du Bois' insistence that African Americans were linked in struggle with other colonial peoples inspired black activists to challenge colonialism throughout the world.

### **The NAACP, *The Crisis*, and the Advancement of the Black Press**

Du Bois' emphasis on culture changed the way black leadership could be expressed. Though rhetoric was significant to Washington's leadership from the standpoint that his conciliatory message suppressed discussion, his program generally promoted advances in labor

and capital, not changes in state policies. Du Bois, however, advocated traditional political action. Indeed, Du Bois was instrumental to the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an agency which proved pivotal in fighting for African American political rights during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2010). The NAACP stimulated civil rights dialogue through its monthly publication, *The Crisis*, which Du Bois edited until 1935 (Lewis, 1993). During the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *The Crisis* framed the complexities of African American life in relation to the objective of equal citizenship (Huggins, 2007; Lewis, 1993, 1997). That mindset seeped into the black press,<sup>2</sup> prompting many black journalists to adopt increasingly critical tones, which consequently generated critical discussion among African Americans. During the 1910s, several black periodicals adjusted their tenor, arguing more explicitly for equal citizenship. I contend this shift reflected growing discontent within the black community and, in turn, fostered a militant rhetorical praxis among black activists.

Beginning in 1905 with the Niagara Movement, Du Bois sought to form an organization that would “[demand] an end to segregation, [appeal] for better schools, health care, and housing; [protest] the discrimination endured by black soldiers; and [criticize] the racial prejudice of most churches” (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2010, p. 380). But for myriad reasons, the Niagara Movement never gained a foothold and, ultimately, disbanded in 1911. Yet, just as the

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<sup>2</sup> The term “black press” could be understood to possess various different meanings. When I use the term “black press” I refer to periodicals that were owned and operated by black Americans.

Niagara Movement dissolved, the NAACP was being forged by a group of black civic leaders and white liberals.

The NAACP declared its chief goal was to secure for “black citizens ... the civil and political rights the Constitution guaranteed to all citizens” (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2010, p. 381). Though in conflict with the precepts of Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee machine, the NAACP’s progressive style steadily won over the hearts and minds of many Americans—both black and white. While technically directed by white literary scholar Joel E. Spingarn, in the eyes of black Americans, Du Bois *was* the NAACP (Lewis, 1997). Beginning with the magazine’s founding in 1910, Du Bois’ editorials in *The Crisis* functioned as the mouthpiece of the organization.

Though the black press had been active since the 1820s, in the 1910s, black journalists became increasingly political, harnessing journalism as a tool for advancing their causes and views (Wolseley, 1990). So, as WWI escalated in Europe, and the U.S. edged closer to entering, the black press developed a reporting style which advocated for civil rights but simultaneously kept an eye on the war. During this time, black periodicals, such as the *Chicago Defender*, became critical forums for black discourse. With America’s entry into the war looming, the black press seized the opportunity to develop cultural militancy (Jordan, 2001). Black periodicals commonly revealed America’s contradicting positions: support for international democracy on one hand and acceptance for domestic white supremacy on the other (Jordan). In this regard, black periodicals deviated from the objective standards of journalism—namely, the reporting of “straight news”—and, instead, adopted a style which articulated news stories according to the specific concerns of African Americans.

The *Chicago Defender* embraced this activist tone and became one of the most popular black newspapers during the 1910s. The *Defender* was instrumental in promoting the Great Migration—the mass exodus of blacks from southern to northern cities (Gates & Burton, 2011; Jordan, 2001; Simmons, 1998; Wolseley, 1990). “Come north ... all you folks, both good and bad” (as cited in Simmons, 1998, p. 37), the *Defender* implored its southern black readers. And so they came in droves; during the late 1910s, an estimated 700,000 to 1,000,000 African Americans relocated to the north (Jordan, 2001). Throughout WWI, the *Defender* shifted between supporting the war effort and battling for black rights. In this regard, the *Defender* exemplified a broader rhetorical current in black journalism: choosing words and shaping arguments “not simply with black readers in mind but to awaken the consciences of white readers as well” (Jordan, p. 2).

With the war looming, black journalists were splintered along ideological lines, mainly according to whether or not they advocated conditional or unconditional patriotism. Some black writers succumbed to patriotic pressure after President Wilson (1917) pronounced, “The world must be made safe for democracy” (para. 35). Others, however, viewed such appeals as rhetorical capital, and formulated responses which blended accommodation and protest. For instance, in a 1917 editorial entitled “No Time Now for Rebellion,” the *Baltimore Afro-American* claimed, “Now is the time to continue our insistence upon right, and now is the time to demand guarantees before going to war willingly ... BUT NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR REBELLION” (as cited in Jordan, 2001, p. 71). According to Jordan, such rejoinders served, among other purposes, to “make a convincing case that the government should take action to address the concerns of blacks—for example, by legislating against lynching—as a war

measure” (p. 73). Such concerns were justified considering the growing frequency of violence against blacks. While President Wilson busied himself with making the world safe for democracy, from 1914-1916, vigilantes lynched 126 African Americans in 10 southern states (Jordan). Black editorialists highlighted this inconsistency by juxtaposing the atrocities in Europe with the lynching of blacks in the South. For instance, writing for the *New York Age*, James Weldon Johnson (1917) decried American hypocrisy, citing the recent brutal murder of a black man:

this nation is ... ready to raise armies and navies to uphold the principle of international law ... [while] within its own borders one of its own citizens is taken from the custody of the lawfully constituted courts and burned at the stake by a mob [but] will not call for the raising even of a sheriff’s posse. (as cited in Jordan, 2001, pp. 42-43)

As the U.S. joined forces against the Central Powers, black journalists would be forced to tailor their rhetoric according to the competing demands of international democracy and domestic racial violence, all the while maintaining support for their country.

### Black Participation in WWI

After nearly three years of nonparticipation, the U.S. officially joined the Allied forces on April 6, 1917 (Williams, 2010). Upon entering WWI, President Wilson self-consciously framed the U.S. as a purely magnanimous supporter of international democracy. Ironically, such principles did not apply to racial justice locally—blacks remained constrained racial oppression. In turn, Americans were soon confronted with the question of whether or not African Americans would serve in the war. Even though blacks had served in all previous American wars, dating back to the Revolutionary War, the matter was heavily disputed. Black civic leaders, such as

W.E.B. Du Bois, viewed the war as an opportunity for blacks to prove their civic worth, and perhaps inch closer to equal citizenship. In a 1918 editorial entitled “Close Ranks,” Du Bois penned:

We of the colored race have no ordinary interest in the outcome. That which the German power represents today spells death to the aspirations of Negroes and all darker races for equality, freedom and democracy ... We make no ordinary sacrifice, but we make it gladly and willingly with our eyes lifted to the hills. (p. 294)

In spite of Du Bois’ optimism, blacks were met by strong opposition from the white majority—especially Southerners. Many Southerners feared arming African Americans in the war effort would lead to a violent backlash upon their return home (Williams, 2010). For instance, Mississippi Senator James K. Varaman (1996) opined, “I know of no greater menace to the South than this” (as cited in Brandt, p. 59). Ultimately, the federal government granted black participation in the war, with nearly 380,000 blacks enlisted by war’s end (Brandt, 1996; Moore, 2005; Williams, 2010). Lentz-Smith (2009) contended the Great War stands as one of the transformative moments in African American history. I, too, argue the Great War was transformative for African Americans, particularly to the extent it forced black activists to re-conceptualize and then re-articulate the tenets of democracy.

As the war continued in Europe, hate crimes against blacks surged domestically. On July 2, merely 12 weeks after Wilson’s declaration of war, a bloody race riot overtook the industrial city of East Saint Louis, Illinois (Lewis, 1997; Huggins, 2007). At least 40 blacks were killed and thousands were burned out of their homes (Brandt, 1996). To protest the violence, on July 28, the NAACP organized a march through the streets of New York City (Huggins, 2007; Lewis,



1997). Headed by Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson, approximately 10,000 protesters marched silently down Fifth Avenue, displaying signs with slogans such as “‘Thou Shalt Not Kill,’ ... ‘MR PRESIDENT, WHY NOT MAKE AMERICA SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY’ ... [and] ‘YOUR HANDS ARE FULL OF BLOOD’” (Lewis, p. 10). Barely a month later, racial discontent erupted again, this time in Houston, Texas. Beleaguered by white oppression, black soldiers from the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion took to the streets, killing 17 whites (Ellis, 2001; Williams, 2010). In the aftermath, 63 black soldiers were court-martialed, 13 of whom were hanged immediately (Wynn, 2010). The year 1917 closed with 38 documented lynchings (Jordan, 2001). However, race-based violence would only escalate in subsequent years.

The majority of African American troops stationed in France performed service or labor tasks: loading and unloading ships, building roads and dams, digging trenches, and burying the rotting corpses of dead soldiers (Williams, 2010). Indeed, the nearly 30,000 black troops fighting on the front lines were an underwhelming minority. Accordingly, consternation eventually grew over the racial hierarchies which relegated blacks to menial tasks, particularly the conditions which stymied blacks from ascending to officer positions. After extensive protest from black civic leaders, in June of 1917, the federal government finally capitulated to their demands and established a segregated officer-training camp in Des Moines, IA (Williams, 2010; Wynn, 2010). However, no camp—whether segregated or otherwise—was a place of refuge for black troops. The conditions on training bases were often comparable to the harshest Jim Crow environments. For instance, Private Silas Bradshaw, a black soldier stationed in Camp A.A. Humphreys, Virginia, lamented in a letter to his former commanding officer:

We hafter eat in the rain nowhere to wash out cloths and no where to take a bath only the Macomack River no latrine and sleeping in tents with no floor and nothing to sleep under only what we brought with us. (p. 105, as cited in Williams, 2010)

Compounding those conditions, the Des Moines officer camp, the vaunted triumph of black activists, proved merely a symbolic victory. For, even after completing the program, black officers were restricted to serving in segregated units.

Whatever prejudice black soldiers experienced on domestic bases, conditions were typically worse on the battlefield. Oftentimes the mistreatment of blacks abroad was linked to domestic pressures. For instance, in August of 1918, hostility became so intense among Southern whites that the U.S. Army sent a secret communique to French officials advising them to not commend blacks too highly, particularly in the presence of white Americans (Lewis, 1997). This secret communique, which was entitled *Secret Information Concerning Black Troops*, warned the French that if blacks and whites fraternized there was a strong chance black men would rape French women (Huggins, 2007). In spite of American racism, the French cherished the service of black troops. Indeed, black soldiers generally enjoyed better treatment from Frenchmen than from their white compatriots. A compelling example is the French government's praise for the all-black 15<sup>th</sup> Regiment of New York's National Guard. Better known as the "Harlem Hell Fighters," the 15<sup>th</sup> served admirably during their tour in France. The Hell Fighters remained at the front for over 190 days, longer than any American regiment and never relented during combat (Nelson, 2009). The Hell Fighters were even the first Allied unit to reach the Rhine (Brandt, 1996). For their valor, the entire unit was awarded the Croix de Guerre—"Cross of War"—by the French government (Brandt; Huggins, 2007; Lewis, 1997; Nelson, 2009;

Williams, 2010). According to Williams, the camaraderie that developed between the French and all-black units such as the Hell Fighters cultivated “a site where democracy and aspirations for freedom could become a reality” (p. 183).

Upon returning home, black soldiers were encouraged by the adulation they received in their communities. Harlem residents came out in droves to greet their beloved Hell Fighters. Lewis (1997) described the fanfare: “A field of pennants, flags, banners, and scarves thrashed about the soldiers like elephant grass in a gale, threatening to engulf them” (p. 5). The streets of Harlem that day purportedly teemed with blacks, anxious to celebrate the achievements of their troops. However, white America would not meet its black countrymen with such appreciation.

WWI called upon the military service of nearly 380,000 black Americans and the patriotism of millions more; WWI inspired Du Bois (1918/2011a) to surmise that an Allied victory would “inaugurate the United States of the World” (p. 294); WWI, however, did not yield tangible civic improvements in the lives of African Americans. Jim Crow still reigned supreme. Many of the same whites who unquestioningly supported democracy throughout the war, recanted those democratic principles when applied to the lives of black Americans. In grand departure from the patriotic tenor of his wartime editorial “Close Ranks,” after the war, Du Bois (1919) reproached American hypocrisy with the following critique: “It *lynches* ... It *disfranchises* its own citizens ... It encourages *ignorance* ... It *steals* from us ... It *insults* us” (p. 8, emphasis in original). Ultimately, 1918, the year the world was made “safe for democracy,” came to a close with the documented lynching of 78 African Americans (Lewis, 1997; Wynn, 2010). Black protesters who had diligently suppressed their critiques of race relations during the war were disillusioned by the scorn of postwar rejection. Now, though, black activists would

summon the militancy that suffused their prewar discourse and would urge the black masses to reject anything short of full civic participation.

### **Race Riots Foster Race Consciousness**

The armistice brought WWI to a close on November 11, 1918 (Nelson, 2009; Williams, 2010). Nevertheless, the struggle was far from over for African American soldiers. As black troops returned to the U.S., they were confronted with a revitalized spirit of white supremacy. While Americans had been focusing their attention on the war in Europe, the seeds for a race war were germinating domestically. The year 1919 was plagued by at least 25 race riots throughout the country, the North included (Lewis, 1997; Williams, 2010). At the same time, fueled by the biological racism popularized by Madison Grant, the Ku Klux Klan enjoyed a resurgence starting in the late 1910s. These interrelated factors precipitated a climate of increased race consciousness. African Americans, in particular, adopted a nuanced racial politics under the heading “New Negro.” The subsequent growth of the New Negro Movement—in its varying manifestations—marked the symbolic death of conciliatory politics and established agitation as the favored vehicle for obtaining civil rights. In many ways, the racial strife of the postwar period cultivated a cultural consciousness which stirred black Americans to explore new forms of expression during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s.

With the war behind them, black soldiers returned home emboldened by their experiences. Though the wartime performance of black troops was meaningful to most African Americans, few invested as much interest in their accomplishments as W.E.B. Du Bois. By curbing his critiques of race relations, and fully supporting the war effort, Du Bois had staked his

reputation as the preeminent voice of black activism. The return of black soldiers inspired Du Bois (1919) to rediscover his critical tone:

The faults of *our* country are *our* faults. Under similar circumstances, we would fight again. But by the God of heaven, we are cowards and jackasses if now that the war is over we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a sterner, longer, more unbending battle against the forces of hell in our own land.

*We return.*

*We return from fighting.*

*We return fighting.* (p. 5, emphasis in original)

However, the boldness expressed in Du Bois' editorial would be challenged by rampant race-based violence in the subsequent months.

Black civic leaders' prewar hopes of equal citizenship proved to be nothing more than a pipedream. Despite the wartime service of black troops, their sacrifice did not translate to civic improvements. Rather, the postwar era marked a regression in race relations, ushering in a wave of racial violence unequalled since Reconstruction (Williams, 2010). Aside from the lynching of 76 blacks, 1919 also gave way to vicious race riots in major U.S. cities, most notably Washington, D.C. and Chicago (Huggins, 2007; Lewis, 1997; Williams, 2010). According to Voogd (2007), the Red Summer race riots of 1919 "represent the height of white mob riot activity in the United States, never surpassed in frequency, breadth, or severity" (p. 550). The Washington, D.C. riot began on Saturday, July 18, 1919 (Williams, 2010). Fueled by the rumor that two black men had assaulted a white woman, tensions escalated until the city was entrenched in a full scale race war (Voogd, 2007; Williams, 2010). After three days of unrest, six

people were dead and several hundred were wounded (Williams). Just as the D.C. riot quieted, though, another riot broke out in Chicago on July 27. While swimming at a municipal lake, Eugene Williams, a young black boy, crossed over into the lake's restricted "white area," at which point whites began hurling rocks at him from the beach (Voogd, 2007; Williams, 2010; Wynn, 2010). One rock reached its intended target, striking Eugene in the head and causing him to drown. Enraged by a police officer's refusal to arrest the rock throwers, blacks on the scene began to voice their frustrations and, ultimately, it was the black citizens who were arrested on a charge of disturbing of the peace (Voogd, 2007). Pandemonium followed. After 14 days of violence, 38 were dead (15 whites and 23 blacks), 537 wounded, and more than 1,000 homeless (Lewis, 1997; Williams, 2010). The Chicago race riot signaled the actual scope of America's "race problem." No longer could institutional racism be discussed as an exclusively Southern dilemma.

During the era, the flames of racial tension were fanned by the racist philosophies which spread from the nascent field of eugenics, otherwise known as "race science." One of the leading proponents of eugenics in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was a blue-blood named Madison Grant. In 1916, Grant published *The Passing of the Great Race: Or, the Racial Basis of European History*, in which he espoused his belief in the racial superiority of the Nordic race—"Nordic" signifying those of pure white European ancestry. Grant contended three races existed in Europe: the Nordic, the Alpine, and the Mediterranean; however, the Nordic was the superior of the three, and thus "could be found throughout the world in positions of power and influence" (Guterl, 2002, p. 35). In regards to the so-called "Negro problem," Grant believed that as long as blacks remained "fixed in [their] place in the South ... they would be welcome in America" (Guterl, p.

37). Naturally, though, the relocation of blacks to northern cities during the Great Migration challenged that condition. Fragments of Grant's philosophies have been observed in the principles of the second Ku Klux Klan. Reestablished by William Joseph Simmons in 1915, the second Klan declared itself the country's fiercest defender of so-called "pure Americanism" (MacLean, 1994). The second Klan condemned "organized blacks, Catholics, and Jews, along with the insidious encroachments of Bolshevism" (MacLean, p. 5). The Klan's racist doctrine spread like wildfire. By 1925, the Klan boasted more than 1,000,000 members, with constituents in every corner of the country (McGee, 2003). The ascension of the second Klan demonstrates the rhetorical potency of racist discourse during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Relevant to my study is the nature in which Klan leadership used Booker T. Washington's (1895) conciliatory stance in "The Atlanta Compromise" to justify their opposition to racial integration. With the old approaches failing them, and even aiding white supremacists in some instances, black activists were forced to reinvent how blackness was both conceptualized and discussed. The result was the "New Negro."

### **The "New Negro" and the Harlem Renaissance**

Scholars have traced variations of the term "New Negro" to as far back as the 1870s (Gates & Jarrett, 2007). However, I am primarily concerned with how the "New Negro" was appropriated during and immediately following WWI. In this era, black spokespersons used the term "New Negro" to symbolize various political programs, ranging from William Pickens' accommodationism to A. Philip Randolph's radical socialism. Ultimately, though, the "New Negro" was concretized in Alain Locke's Harlem Renaissance movement of the 1920s. Locke (1925/1995) articulated the "New Negro" as a fresh generation of blacks who were concerned

with art, literature, and folk culture—cultural artists who were far removed from Randolph’s political radicalism. Locke’s rhetorical move deemphasized political activism and, instead, encouraged expressive production—stimulating blacks to assert their identities and explore their cultural origins.

At the turn of the century, Booker T. Washington was considered the cutting edge of “New Negroes.” Take, for instance, the title of the book which Washington authored in 1900, *A New Negro for a New Century* (Nadell, 2004). However, much had changed for black Americans since the turn of the century, and by 1919, Washington was now the quintessential “Old Negro.” Indeed, WWI, and the race-based violence which broke out after the war, altered the civic perspective of many African Americans. For instance, consider the prewar sentiments of black spokesperson William Pickens (1916/2007): “The new Negro is a sober, sensible creature, conscious of his environment, knowing that not all is right, but trying hard to become adjusted to this civilization in which he finds himself by no will or choice of his own” (p. 84). Then, compare Pickens’ statement with remarks delivered by Marcus Garvey (1919/2007) three years later: “We are preparing to shed [blood] one day on the African battlefield, because it is the determination of the New Negro to re-possess himself of that country that God gave his forefathers” (p. 93). Pickens (1916/2007) utilized the term “New Negro” to express a program where blacks slowly adjusted and integrated to the conditions of America; Garvey (1919/2007) harnessed the same term to describe a program where blacks militantly rejected the boundaries of America so to seek political autonomy in Africa. The “New Negro” was many things to different spokespersons. Frequently, though, the militancy fostered in the postwar era was reflected in



“New Negro” discourse. For instance, in 1919, in the socialist organ *The Messenger*, A. Philip Randolph asserted:

As among all other peoples, the New Crowd must be composed of young men who are educated, radical and fearless.... The condition [sic] for joining the New Crowd are: ability, radicalism and sincerity.... The New Crowd is uncompromising. Its tactics are not defensive but offensive.... The New Crowd sees that the war came, that the Negro fought, bled and died; that the war has ended, and he is not yet free. (p. 20)

Scholars maintain the initial postwar appropriations of the “New Negro” signaled the rising radicalism among younger blacks and, thus, resulted in political programs such as Pan-Africanism, Black Nationalism, and radical anti-capitalism (Foley, 2003; Huggins, 1995; Lewis, 1994). Given the varying conceptions of the “New Negro,” Gates and Jarrett (2007) surmised the term essentially signified “an irresistible, spontaneously generated black and sufficient self” (p. 4). Indeed, the desire for self-determination was prevalent in conceptualizations of the “New Negro.”

Eventually, the “New Negro” would be divorced from its radical connotations. Directed under the aegis of black intellectual Alain Locke, in 1925, black writers, intellectuals and artists collaborated to produce an anthology titled *The New Negro: An Interpretation*. According to Locke (1925/1995), who served as editor of the anthology, the emergence of black art and literature marked blacks’ first opportunity “for group expression and self-determination” (p. 50). “The New Negro,” Locke asserted, “is keenly responsive as an augury of a new democracy in American culture” (p. 51). Though that new democracy could yield political rights someday, Locke admonished that the present hope “rests in the revaluation by white and black alike of the

Negro in terms of his artistic endowments and cultural contributions, past and prospective” (p. 55). The publication of *The New Negro* anthology marked a shift in “New Negro” discourse from political radicalism to romantic culturalism (Gates & Jarrett, 2007). The postwar energies which generated race consciousness and militancy were channeled to an arts and literature movement centered in Harlem. The movement, which would come to be known as the Harlem Renaissance, spurred an explosion of African American art, literature, and cultural expression. In Baker’s (1987) assessment, the Harlem Renaissance functioned as a site for “expressive production” (p. 8), which, in turn, produced a “resonantly and continuously productive set of tactics, strategies, and syllables that [took] form at the turn of the century and [extend] to our own day” (pp. 91-92).

The Harlem Renaissance opened the floodgates of black creative expression. Yet, Locke’s (1928) vision for the movement to provide blacks artists with a “vehicle of free and purely artistic expression” (p. 313) would be encumbered by the eventual commodification of black art. As black art emerged as the vogue of American culture, the demands of white patronage confronted the “New Negro” movement with the pressures of white hegemony (Watts, 2001). Black artists from the era produced seminal works which continue to be celebrated and analyzed today. For instance, Langston Hughes’ 1921 poem “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” is noteworthy for its modernist sense of identity:

I’ve known rivers:

I’ve known rivers ancient as the world and older than the

flow of human blood in human veins. (p. 23)

Reflecting on the era’s creative exploits in his 1940 autobiography *The Big Sea*, Hughes recalled that the “Negro vogue of the 20’s” was so pervasive that its cultural elements spilled over into

“books, African sculpture, music, and dancing” (p. 224). However, the popularity of black culture did not translate into tangible gains for most black Americans. “The ordinary Negroes,” Hughes contended, “hadn’t heard of the Negro Renaissance. And if they had, it hadn’t raised their wages any” (p. 228). Lewis (1994) corroborated Hughes’ sentiments by illustrating how the elitism of the Harlem Renaissance prevented the movement from improving conditions for the black masses, likely only benefitting 10,000 of the estimated 10 million blacks who lived in American during the 1920s.

In *The New Negro*, Locke (1925/1995) sought to dissociate black artists and writers from the political sphere: “The great social gain in this is the releasing of our talented group from the arid field of controversy and debate to the productive fields of creative expression” (p. 56). Conversely, Du Bois, Locke’s chief intellectual rival, maintained black artists should infuse their work with propaganda. According to Watts (2001), “Du Bois argued for black artists to perform social work, while Locke affirmed the need for black artists to express universal values” (p. 184). Watts contended the debates between Du Bois and Locke were less about literary theory than they were about rhetorical praxis. Foley (2003), on the other hand, rejected the notion that the “New Negroes” transition to art and literature was rhetorical; rather, she interpreted the move as an admission of political inefficacy: “with the failure of the bid for working-class power, politics flees to the realm of the aesthetic” (p. 70). However, as Burke (1973) observed, “[a]esthetical values are intermingled with ethical values—and the ethical is the basis of the practical” (p. 234). For African Americans, the Harlem Renaissance may have marked a flight to aestheticism; however, as Burke demonstrated, the aesthetic sphere is inherently rhetorical. Thus, the Harlem Renaissance should not be overlooked for its rhetorical and political contributions.

Renaissance artists frequently debated the underpinnings of black art. Aside from the fundamental issue of “art vs. propaganda,” Harlemites hedged at complex issues such as form, purpose, and identity. Those issues were critically examined in a 1926 editorial exchange between Langston Hughes and George S. Schuyler. Schuyler initiated the exchange with an editorial in *The Nation* titled “Negro Art Hokum.” For Schuyler (1926/1995), the notion of a genuine black art was laughable, because in his calculus, the American black was “merely a lampblack Anglo-Saxon” (p. 310). Schuyler suggested one’s identity was shaped more by geography and class than race: “Negroes and whites from the same localities in this country talk, think, and act about the same” (p. 310). Schuyler concluded that the black artists and intellectuals who insisted upon the uniqueness of black Americans merely reinforced the implications of race difference and thus reinforced white hegemony. The following week *The Nation* printed Hughes’ (1926/1995a) rejoinder, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain.” Hughes began the piece by telling the story of a promising young black poet who simply wanted to be a poet—“not a Negro poet” (p. 305). Hughes lamented over the young black poet’s attitude:

[T]his is the mountain standing in the way of any true Negro art in America—this urge within the race toward whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization, and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible.  
(p. 305)

In Hughes’ assessment, if black artists rejected their black identities, they would paradoxically sever form and content, in turn, stratifying whiteness as the cultural standard.

Scholars are divided as to when the Harlem Renaissance officially ended, yet most agree it collapsed alongside the U.S. economy after the stock market crash of 1929 (Baker, 1987; Gates

& Jarrett, 2007; Huggins, 2007; Lewis, 1997; Nadell, 2004). According to Gates and Jarrett (2007), the “New Negro” of the Harlem Renaissance “transformed the militancy associated with the trope and translated it into a romantic, apolitical movement of the arts” (p. 13). Moreover, Gates and Jarrett contended the rhetorical shift projected modern blacks as “more deserving than the Old Negro because [the New Negro] had been reconstructed as an entity somehow ‘new’” (p. 14). Still, Harlem Renaissance historians Huggins (2007) and Lewis (1997) considered the movement a failure. Huggins (2007) concluded the movement failed due to its provinciality. Lewis (1997), on the other hand, surmised the Harlem Renaissance was doomed by its overly ambitious scope. Baker (1987) countered such logic with the following: “To ask *why* the renaissance failed is to agree, at the very outset, that the twenties did not have profoundly beneficial effects for areas of Afro-American discourse that we have only recently begun to explore in depth” (p. 12, emphasis in original). Ultimately, Baker concluded the “New Negro” movement—in its entirety—broadened and enlarged the traditional field of African American discursive possibilities.

### **The Great Depression and the Rise of Protest Rhetoric**

The Wall Street crash of 1929 halted American prosperity and triggered the Great Depression. The Depression hit African Americans especially hard. The crumbling economy not only affected blacks economically, but also awakened the scorn of white oppression; starting in 1930, blacks were once again subjected to frequent violence and discrimination. Although the 1932 election of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the advent of the New Deal yielded some improvements for black Americans, by and large, blacks remained constrained by institutional racism. Some black spokespersons, such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson, responded

to these conditions by formulating anticolonial critiques (Putnam, 2007). Though anticolonial critiques did not translate into federal programs, the rise of anticolonial discourse signaled African Americans' growing concerns with both domestic and international subjugation. The Depression era also fostered the politicization of black art. With the Harlem Renaissance stifled by the economic collapse, Chicago became the epicenter of black culture, having its own black renaissance during the 1930s and 1940s. However, the Chicago artists broke away from Locke's program of cultural expressionism, and injected their art with political protest. As black author Richard Wright (1937/2011a) outlined in "Blueprint for Negro Writing," the Chicago movement sought to infuse aesthetics with rhetorical praxis. The Depression era vortex of anticolonial rhetoric and politically-charged art established protest as a necessary function of black discourse.

Though race relations showed signs of improvement during the 1920s, the onset of the Depression reignited the flames of white oppression. One compelling example of the decline was the 1931 case of the "Scottsboro Boys." While riding a freight train in Alabama, two white women told police they were raped by several black men (Edgerton, 1994; Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2010; Wynn, 2010). Authorities apprehended nine young black youths—between the ages of 13 and 21—for the charge (Edgerton, 1994). Although the prosecution lacked firm evidence, the "Scottsboro Boys" were tried, convicted, and sentenced to death for the alleged crime (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2010). The Supreme Court ultimately exonerated the accused; however, by the time the conviction was reversed, the innocent "Scottsboro Boys" had collectively served almost 75 years in prison.

The resurgence of lynching further confirmed the deterioration of race relations. Though the lynching of blacks had declined during the 1920s, the Depression gave way to 20

documented lynchings in 1930 and 24 in 1933 (Wynn, 2010). Aside from overt acts of racism, blacks were also overwhelmed by employment discrimination. Indeed, blacks faced unemployment at nearly twice the rate of white Americans (Wynn). Though FDR's New Deal programs offered blacks some economic opportunities, they still suffered more than white Americans. According to a 1934 U.S. government survey, while 17 percent of white citizens could not support themselves, that figure ballooned to 38 percent among blacks (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2010). Edgerton (1994) suggested this condition reflected the "hire last, fire first" policy which blacks were subjected to during the Depression. According to Wynn (2010), white workers championed slogans such as "No Jobs for Niggers until Every White Man Has a Job" and "Niggers Back to the Cotton Fields" (p. 16).

In response to such wage and employment discrimination, Du Bois (1934) proposed a program based on voluntary self-segregation. Du Bois' approach supports Putnam's (2007) assertion that, during the Depression, the "anticolonial perspective influenced the tenor and focus of black political culture in the United States" (p. 420). Although Putnam's analysis illustrated how black anticolonialism came in response to international exigencies such as the Liberian labor crisis, or the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, Du Bois' sentiments demonstrate how black anticolonialism also manifested in rhetoric regarding domestic issues. For, Du Bois' argument suggested that blacks would enjoy material gains if they liberated themselves from the system of white dominance:

It is the race-conscious black man cooperating together in his own institutions and movements who will eventually emancipate the colored race, and the great step ahead

today is for the American Negro to accomplish his economic emancipation through voluntary determined cooperative effort. (p. 400)

However, many black leaders opposed Du Bois' position, most notably NAACP President Walter White. In an editorial response, White (1934/2011) rejected Du Bois' calls for self-segregation, arguing that blacks must "continue the grim struggle *for* integration and *against* segregation for [their] own physical, moral, and spiritual well-being, for that of white America and of the world at large" (p. 406, emphasis in original). Still, Du Bois (1935/1995) held firm to his anticolonial position and ultimately called for blacks to develop "an economic nation within a nation" (p. 388). Because of his stance, Du Bois was shunned by the NAACP—the organization which he helped found—and eventually chose to resign as editor of *The Crisis*.

While Du Bois was primarily concerned with economic liberation, Carter G. Woodson (1933/2011) suggested African Americans should seek empowerment by reforming the education system. Woodson critiqued the established curriculum as antiquated and inherently racist. He maintained the education system benefitted whites more than blacks, "because it [had] been worked out in conformity to the needs of those who have enslaved and oppressed weaker peoples" (p. 413). In accordance with Du Bois' (1935) economic solution, Woodson suggested that "the Negro ... should develop and carry out a program of his own" (Woodson, p. 413). In Woodson's assessment, U.S. racial disparities could not be reconciled until blacks escaped the system which perpetuated their subjugation.

In addition to the ideological shift in black political culture, the Depression also heralded a shift in black literature. Chicago emerged as the new epicenter of black culture; however, the Chicago artists rejected the apolitical program popularized by Locke during the Harlem vogue.



The groups' ideological differences were evidenced in an exchange between Chicago author Richard Wright and Harlem author Zora Neale Hurston. In 1937, Wright disparaged Hurston's (1937/2006) novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, for its lack of "a basic idea or theme that lends itself to significant interpretation" (p. 480). Moreover, Wright criticized Hurston's emphasis on the black vernacular, which, in his assessment, caricatured black identity: "Miss Hurston *voluntarily* continues in her novel the tradition which was *forced* upon the Negro in the theater, that is, the minstrel technique that makes 'white folks' laugh" (p. 480, emphasis in original). Wright concluded that Hurston's representations of blackness reaffirmed the notion of whites as "the 'superior' race" (p. 481). Hurston (1938/2011) answered Wright's criticisms by reviewing his novel *Uncle Tom's Children*. Hurston acknowledged Wright's talent but wondered "what he would have done had he dealt with plots that touched the broader and more fundamental phases of Negro life instead of confining himself to the spectacular" (p. 481). Furthermore, she was confounded by Wright's puzzling dialect. Hurston closed with the hope that "Mr. Wright will find in Negro life a vehicle for his talents" (p. 481). The angulation of Wright (1937/2011a, 1937/2011b) and Hurston's (1938/2011) respective critiques sheds light on their ideological differences. Whereas Wright (1937/2011a, 1937/2011b) critiqued political implications, Hurston (1938/2011) focused on cultural identification.

Wright (1937/2011b) further articulated his perspective in "Blueprint for Negro Writing," an essay which delineated principles for black writers who sought to function as political agents. This political activism differentiated the black writers in the Chicago Renaissance from those in the Harlem Renaissance. Wright maintained the Chicago writers distinguished themselves by embracing a new role, one which engaged more meaningful and complex subject matter.

Reflecting on the new positionality of black writers, Wright lamented that, historically, “Negro writing has been addressed in the main to a small white audience rather than to a Negro one” (p. 475). Thus, he extended the following question: “Shall Negro writing be for the Negro masses, moulding [sic] the lives and consciousness of those masses toward new goals, or shall it continue begging the question of the Negroes’ humanity” (p. 475)? Wright suggested black writers should be responsible for harnessing the ideologies and attitudes of the masses and then communicating those sentiments to millions. Moreover, he contended black writers were “being called upon to do no less than create values by which [the] race is to struggle, live and die” (p. 477). By establishing political standards for black writing, Wright galvanized black writers around a collective vision, thus assembling the rhetorical energy of black literature.

During the Great Depression, U.S. race relations deteriorated. Blacks were plagued by economic discrimination, legal prejudice, and mob violence. Accordingly, black spokespersons reconfigured their approaches to counter the system of white domination. In the political sphere, Du Bois and Woodson each utilized anticolonial discourse to critique the system of white oppression. In the aesthetic sphere, Richard Wright advocated for black writers to infuse their works with an ideology capable of coordinating the black masses. These related trends established protest as the primary function of black discourse in the coming years.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Interpreting and analyzing black discourse from the WWII era requires the employment of a specific theoretical perspective. According to Brummett (2003), in conducting a rhetorical analysis, theory and method should illuminate specific cases, and should help to illuminate future rhetorical moments. As I demonstrated in Chapter Two, during the early 1900s, black spokespersons tailored their discourse to the ideological barriers of institutional racism. Therefore, my analysis is predicated on identifying the ideological patterns within black discourse from the WWII epoch. Adopting an ideological perspective is constructive. The perspective permits critics to appreciate how rhetoric is influenced by a myriad of social forces. In particular, ideographic criticism is well-suited for my purpose. The ideographic approach allows rhetorical critics to examine how verbal clusters construct and reinforce a society's ideology.

#### **An Operational Definition of Ideology**

Before I can outline the studies regarding ideological approaches to rhetorical criticism, I must first explore the concept of ideology, and explain the set of assumptions which inform my understanding of ideology. First, I acknowledge "ideology" is a highly contested term, which can shift in meaning according to one's meta-theoretical perspective. My understanding of ideology is largely influenced by Althusser's (1969) framework of ideological state apparatuses (ISAs), wherein the interests of the ruling class are protected by everyday structures such as politics, religion, and public discourse.

According to Belsey (2002), “[i]deology justifies the rule of each ruling class” (p. 32). In this regard, an ideology reflects the motives of a society’s dominant group and, in turn, reproduces the systems and structures which provide the dominant group with power. Citing the works of Marx and Engels, Belsey stated:

in order to represent its own interests as the shared values of all members of the society in question, the ruling class has to invest its views with the character of inevitability and convince everyone that these ideas are the only serious option. (p. 32)

This perspective depicts ideology as a sort of false consciousness—a veil which prevents people from discovering the true reality of their existence. Yet, as Scott (1967) pointed out, in assuming the existence of a “true reality,” one also views “truth” as an *a priori* condition. In Scott’s assessment, within human affairs, truth is always contingent: truth exists in time—“the result of a process of interaction at a given moment” (p. 13). Moreover, Scott argued “truth must be seen as dual: the demands of the precepts one adheres to and the demands of the circumstances in which one must act” (p. 17).

Scott’s (1967) perspective on “truth” is significant to the discussion of ideology because, his insights illuminate how public opinion is shaped through both systems of belief and lived experiences. Scott’s position is similar to Althusser’s (1969) contention that ideology possesses a material existence. In his analysis of ideology, Althusser problematized the notion that ideology was merely the manifestation of a false consciousness; rather, Althusser asserted that “an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices” (p. 90). Unlike the repressive state apparatus, which is explicitly controlled by the ruling class, Althusser suggested the interests of the ruling class are also implicitly protected by ISAs. Althusser offered the

following as examples of ISAs: the educational system, religious institutions, family groups, the political system, trade-unions, public dialogue, and culture. In light of these ISAs, Althusser argued all human “practices are inscribed within the *material existence of an ideological apparatus*” (p. 91, emphasis in original).

To follow Althusser’s framework, ideology is inescapable: everything humans say or do is influenced by the materiality of ISAs. And for this reason, it is productive for scholars to examine the intersections of ideology and rhetoric. For, as Scott (1967) contended, “[i]n human affairs, ... rhetoric ... is a way of knowing; it is epistemic” (p. 17). Though absolute truth may be unattainable, whether because of human error, ideology, or otherwise, rhetoric remains the human agency for producing and conveying knowledge. Examining the process of such knowledge production provides scholars with the opportunity to better understand the nature of human experience.

### **Mass Consciousness and Rhetorical Theory**

The problem of mass consciousness has historically been a focal point of rhetorical studies (Black, 1970; Bormann, 1972; 1982; Burke, 1969b; McGee, 1975, 1979, 1980, 1987, 1990; Wander, 1984). Especially since the mid-20th century, rhetoricians have sought to understand the dimensions which simultaneously unite and divide people into various constituencies (Burke, 1969b; Charland, 1987; Delgado, 1995; Lucaites & Condit, 1990; McGee, 1975, 1979, 1980, 1990; Wander, 1984). With a stockpile of political controversies, civil struggles, and cultural disputes, the existing literature on mass consciousness has depth. An essential tenet for much of the scholarship has been theoretical allegiance, in at least some form, to Burke’s (1969b) paradigm of identification and division.

Burke (1969a) revolutionized rhetorical criticism by suggesting critics examine how pentadic terms—act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose—work in hierarchy to create consubstantiality between rhetor and audience. As one guideline to his approach, Burke called for examining “the exact relation between ideas and the conditions *out of which they arise*—or the other way round, the relation between ideas and conditions *which they help to bring about*, when acted upon by human agents” (p. 202, emphasis in original). Upon cursory reading, one might assume Burke was referring to the concept of ideology. However, throughout his vast body of research, Burke rarely engaged or even mentioned ideology.

In *Rhetoric* (1969b), Burke extended an analogous sketch of ideology: “imagination is to poetry as ideology is to rhetoric” (p. 88). Later in the same volume, he briefly discussed ideology, but only in two rather trivial ways: (1) how the term had been distorted since Marx and Engels’ conceptualization and (2) how “ideology” could be synonymized with “terminologies” (p. 103). Yet, given Burke’s interest with the interaction between “ideas” and “conditions,” one would expect rhetoricians to be drawn to the concept of ideology. Moreover, if “ideology is to rhetoric” as “imagination is to poetry,” how could one justify ignoring such an instrumental force? Accordingly, during the second half of the 20th century, rhetorical scholars engaged mass consciousness by focusing on the problem of ideology. The works of Black (1970), Bormann (1972), and Wander (1984), exemplify critical examinations of the intersections between rhetoric and ideology.

### **The Problem of Ideology**

The concept of “audience” has become a staple in the field of rhetorical criticism. Many critics concern themselves with analyzing how a rhetor’s discourse sheds light on their intended

audience. As an outgrowth of these inquiries, Black (1970) suggested a “second persona” was embedded within rhetorical discourse. He contended the second persona—a silent auditor of the rhetor’s beliefs and values—was actually a reflection of one’s ideology, or as he put, “the network of interconnected convictions that functions in a man epistemically and that shape his identity by determining how he views the world” (p. 112). Black maintained ideology was the primary force which shaped a person’s identity. In his assessment, since the Reformation, the West had witnessed a combat of ideologies, each of which generated their own discursive idioms, affecting the psychological character of their adherents. Thus, understanding the “second persona” as one’s ideology, might aid the critic in understanding the implications of a given discourse. From this ideological perspective, Black argued discourses are composed of verbal tokens, which offer cues to audience members for “how they are to view the world, even beyond the expressed concerns, the overt propositional sense, of the discourse” (p. 113). Black suggested a single term or phrase might indicate the ideology which unites rhetor and audience.

Bormann (1972) disapproved of the term “ideology,” largely because of its Marxist connotations; nonetheless, his fantasy theme approach implicitly engaged ideology. According to Bormann, fantasy themes emerge from discursive practices in the mass media and mainstream society, providing communities “with a social reality filled with heroes, villains, emotions, and attitudes” (p. 398). If these fantasy themes persist, they galvanize in the form of a rhetorical vision. Then, the subsequent “rhetorical vision is propagated to a larger public until a rhetorical movement emerges” (p. 399). Bormann examined fantasy themes and rhetorical visions with the hope of better understanding how human motives are embedded within discourse. His discussion of motives indirectly engaged the concept of ideology: “When a critic begins ... with the

approach that each rhetorical vision contains as part of its substance the motive that will impel the people caught up in it, then he can anticipate the behavior of the converts” (p. 407). Such a characterization sees people divided into discursive communities, each with their own interests, interests which pervade the community’s words and symbols. Vitally important to Bormann’s framework, one cannot overlook how these discursive communities are formed: influential public rhetoric. In this regard, Bormann’s position is similar to Williams’ (1985) conception of ideology as “the set of ideas which arise from a given set of material interests” (p. 156). Though Bormann conscientiously avoided discussing ideology, he nonetheless confirmed its influence by charting the relationship between motives, rhetoric, and social movements.

Wander (1984) contributed to ideological criticism by suggesting the analysis of the third persona. Ideological criticism, in his view, was defined by the political struggle of engaging “an historical perspective in relation to cultural artifacts and political issues” (p. 199). As such, when joined with rhetorical theory, ideological criticism could be harnessed to expose how discourse was used to rationalize a society’s actions, programs, and silences regarding social and political issues. Parsing out the third persona requires the critic to engage rhetorical moments of silence and repression. Not only are audiences identified through the rhetor’s explicit or implicit summoning, they are also (dis)identified via the absence of reference. Echoing Black’s approach, Wander maintained that analyzing discourse illustrated “the audience or audiences for whom the speech had meaning at the moment of utterance” (p. 208). Furthermore, rhetoric indicates the third persona, the “audiences rejected or negated through the speech and/or the speaking situation” (p. 209). According to Wander, the negation of these audiences signifies the rhetor’s beliefs and values. Therefore, differentiating the third persona allows critics to discern



the “characteristics, roles, actions, or ways of seeing things” (Wander, p. 209) which the rhetor rejects.

The sketches above demonstrate how the aforementioned scholars engaged the problem of ideology. Furthermore, one notes how each scholar was influenced by the Burkean (1969b) paradigm of identification and division. For instance, Black’s (1970) proposal of the second persona, particularly his assertion that “verbal tokens” contour audience members’ worldviews, correlates to Burke’s contention that “the basic function of rhetoric [is] the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents” (p. 41). Bormann’s (1972) insistence that everyday dialogue unites discursive communities through fantasy themes, reaffirms Burke’s stance that rhetoric should not be conceived of simply as masterful oratory, “but as a general *body of identifications* that owe their convincingness” to trivial repetition and daily reinforcement (p. 26, emphasis in original). Wander’s (1984) conceptualization of the third persona alludes to a central tenet of Burke’s rhetorical program: the scapegoat. Wander asserted the third persona, the “being not present,” becomes “equated with disease, a ‘cancer’ called upon to disfigure an individual or a group” (p. 209). Wander’s characterization reflects Burke’s (1969a) conviction that “the scapegoat represents the principle of division in that its persecutors would alienate from themselves to it their own uncleanness” (p. 406). In sum, Black (1970), Bormann (1972), and Wander (1984), each expressed adherence to Burke’s (1969b) position that rhetoric is defined by “*the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols*” (p. 43, emphasis in original). Fundamentally, ideological criticism analyzes how rhetoric and ideology interact to entice symbolic unification among human agents.

## The Emergence of Michael Calvin McGee

Though each of the aforementioned scholars made significant contributions to ideological criticism, I am interested in the ideological approach of Michael Calvin McGee. Beginning with his nuanced conception of “the people,” McGee sought to diverge from neo-Aristotelian methods by comingling “the notion of ‘the people’ from social theory with the notion of ‘audience’ from rhetorical theory” (Gess, 1999, p. 13). The result was a problematized conception of mass consciousness.

McGee (1975) re-conceptualized “the people” with the goal of changing the way rhetoricians understood audiences. Accordingly, he proceeded with the following question: “How can one conceive the idea ‘people’ in a way which accounts for the rhetorical function of ‘the people’ in arguments designed to warrant social action, even society itself” (McGee, p. 239)? In other words, how do we dispel the naïve notions of “the people” and replace them with problematized understandings of how “the people” are symbolically constructed for political purposes? Following the trajectory of Bormann’s (1972) fantasy theme approach, McGee (1975) conceded, “‘The People’ may be strictly *linguistic* phenomena introduced into public argument as a means of ‘legitimizing’ a collective fantasy” (p. 239, emphasis in original). However, in McGee’s calculus, “the people” are more accurately a fictive entity, called into rhetorical existence by an advocate’s appeal to a collective fantasy. “The people,” then, are collectivized not only through linguistic patterns, but also in response to a mythology. The advocate confronts their audience with a “battery of entirely personal convictions and opinions ... [and] then adapts them to [their] vision of what a ‘people,’ when created, will want to hear” (McGee, p. 241). McGee highlighted his departure from Bormann’s (1972) perspective by contending “‘the

people' are more *process* than *phenomenon*" (McGee, 1975, p. 242, emphasis in original). The process of transforming a collection of individuals into an individual collection hinges upon "the people's" active participation in social and political myths.

McGee's (1975) perspective of "the people" exhibits how ideology defines "the parameters of what 'the people' of what culture could possibly become" (p. 243). McGee illuminated how rhetoric and ideology convert individual persons into a collective people. Some rhetoricians have contested McGee's reliance upon the audience "in the construction of a text" (Morris, 2010, p. 23). Yet, others, such as Campbell (1990), have spoken favorably about the breadth of McGee's critical program:

History, for McGee, describes a symmetrical rhetorical arc in which a people emerge from fragments of folk belief and shared experiences and through the narrative skills of a charismatic leader discover their specific identity through a shared story which undergoes change and development as different generations adapt it to new circumstances, until the narrative decays and the People disappear as a self-conscious rhetorical entity. (p. 348)

McGee's (1975) assertions about "the people" revealed ideology's role in the rhetoric of social movements. He would further cement the link between rhetoric and ideology with his conception of the ideograph.

### **The Ideograph**

McGee contended rhetoric and ideology converge in the form of verbal constructs called "ideographs." Ideographs are "summary-terms which permit the mind to grasp in consciousness a thing which transcends [the] senses" (McGee, 1979, p. 78). In other words, ideographs are abstract terms or phrases which symbolically reflect a society's values.

Examples of salient, American ideographs include: <equality>, <liberty>, and <freedom of speech>.<sup>3</sup> Though ideographs perform various rhetorical functions, three are especially relevant to my project. First, ideographs induce collective identity. Second, ideographs are rhetorically efficient. Lastly, ideographs reveal a society's ideological boundaries.

Historically, political and civic leaders have harnessed ideographs to unite constituents behind a common ideal. Referencing Burke's (1969b) framework of identification and compensatory division, McGee (1980) argued that ideographs "both unite and separate human beings" (p. 8). Especially in times of crisis or unrest, ideographs become useful for conjuring and coordinating "the people." As McGee (1979) explained, ideographs are typically "called upon by a society's advocates when it is necessary to collectivize the masses or to legitimize particular acts of governments" (p. 79). As such, when spokespersons appropriate ideographs in public discourse, they appeal to collective values and thus mitigate the possibilities for dissent. However, as McGee pointed out, ideographs would be ineffective if they were merely slogans for inciting "mass societies into 'movement'" (McGee, p. 79). Rather, ideographs are effective because of their usage and existence in real, everyday circumstances. For example, McGee (1980) demonstrated how some ideographs are "enshrined in the Constitution, some in law, some merely in conventional usage; but all ... [are] ... constitutive of 'the people'" (p. 13). Fundamentally, ideographs are established according to how aptly they reflect the motives of "the people."

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<sup>3</sup> In accordance with conventional practices (Condit, 1987; Lucaites, 1984), I conform to the standard of identifying ideographs by placing them in angle brackets (< >).

Ideographs are rhetorically potent, in part, because they are discursively efficient. As McGee (1979) asserted, ideographs “are simple, straightforward, and empirically verifiable in the body of public discourse” (p. 69). For instance, American ideographs (e.g. <equality>, <liberty>, <freedom of speech>, etc.) are powerful because they frequently occur in political dialogue. Ideographs, then, must be familiar and relevant to their public—otherwise symbolic unification will not occur. In this regard, ideographs are similar to Bormann’s (1972, 1982) “fantasy themes” in the sense that they unite people under a collective vision. Yet, whereas Bormann suggested fantasy themes are constituted through human dramas, McGee (1979, 1980) countered that human dramas were derived from discourse, particularly the abstract terminology of ideographs. In other words, where Bormann (1972, 1982) asserted that discourse reflects a society’s motives, McGee maintained (1979, 1980) a society’s motives are shaped according to evocative discursive clusters. Indeed, merely a term or phrase—for instance, <affirmative action>—can conjure a complex narrative, fraught with competing motives and political allegiances. Ultimately, though, ideographs gain traction because they function “clearly and evidently as agents of political consciousness” (McGee, 1980, p. 7). With just a word or phrase, a rhetor can evoke “the people’s” fundamental beliefs and values.

To reiterate the subtitle of McGee’s (1980) essay: ideographs are the “link between rhetoric and ideology” (p. 1). More precisely, ideographs are the discursive manifestation of a society’s ideology. McGee further reasoned that ideographs are “the building blocks ... of ideology” (p. 7). Fundamentally, ideographs are merely “high-order” abstractions; however, their propensity to “invoke a sense of ‘the people,’” illustrates ideographs are pregnant with symbolic meaning (p. 15). The connotation of an ideograph can shift according to time and environment,

thus, the significance of ideographs varies across diachronic and synchronic structures. As McGee explained, ideographs evolve diachronically—or, across different epochs—and, therefore, “awareness of the way an ideograph can be meaningful *now* is controlled in large part by what it meant *then*” (pp. 10-11, emphasis in original). Moreover, ideographs are structured synchronically—or, amongst other clusters of ideographs within a single epoch—and, therefore, “when we engage ideological argument, when we cause ideographs to *do work* in explaining, justifying, or guiding policy in specific situations, the relationship of ideographs changes” (McGee, p. 13, emphasis in original). Analyzing the usage of ideographs in relation to variables such as exigency, context, or audience demonstrates how terminologies can foster or reinforce ideological commitments. As McGee pointed out, “[h]uman beings are ‘conditioned,’ not directly to belief and behavior, but to a vocabulary of concepts that function as guides, warrants, reasons, or excuses for behavior and belief” (p. 6). <Freedom> provides a compelling example of the aforementioned phenomenon. For instance, following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, President Bush (2001a, 2001b, 2002) repeatedly invoked <freedom> to justify the invasion of Iraq. Four decades earlier, in his famous “I Have a Dream” address, Martin Luther King Jr. (1963) utilized <freedom> to argue for African American civil rights. Throughout American history, rhetors have adopted <freedom> for various political purposes, and while one can question King’s or Bush’s respective motives for invoking <freedom>, one cannot freely question the principles of <freedom>. To do so would be to question a pillar of American identity.

### **Methodological Developments in Ideographic Criticism**

Proponents of the ideographic method have developed the ideograph in various directions. My project is informed by three methodological extensions of the ideographic

approach. First, Lucaites (1983) showed ideographs perform different types of ideological functions. Some ideographs generate discursive opportunities and others limit opportunities. Second, Lucaites and Condit (1990) demonstrated ideographs are polyvalent. Finally, Delgado (1995) concluded some social movements are constituted through ideographs. Case studies suggest numerous social movements have been galvanized around ideographs. The insights indicate the ideographic approach possesses theoretical value.

Lucaites (1983) categorized ideographs according to their ideological function. Ideological functions arise from a process known as “interpellation,” in which an ideology simultaneously “creates or enables possibilities (forms of thinking and modes of acting) while constraining other possibilities” (Jasinski, 2001, p. 314). Lucaites (1983) argued ideographs function substantively when they possess “intrinsic values for a particular ideological community” (p. 286). For instance, in American society, <equality> functions substantively, because even though <equality> does not possess a material value, Americans’ still inherently value <equality>. Ideographs function regulatively when they generate equilibrium between conflicting substantive ideographs (Lucaites). For example, prior to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, a disconnect existed between the substantive ideographs <equality> and <democracy>; one’s degree of civic participation was pre-determined by race. However, since the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was signed into <law>, the conflict between <equality> and <democracy> has been reconciled by the regulative ideograph <rule of law>. Lucaites elucidated his conception of substantive and regulative ideographs by surveying the development of ideographs in the Anglo-American Whig tradition. He justified his framework on the grounds that tracing ideographic functions helps “to direct our attention to the point(s) at which ideological

dislocations occur” (p. 299). Lucaites’ framework explains how, in specific synchronous moments, ideographs are organized into hierarchies. Analyzing the interplay between substantive and regulative ideographs demonstrates how an ideograph’s potency hinges upon both material conditions and symbolic structures.

Lucaites and Condit (1990) advanced the ideographic construct by illustrating how rhetors could appropriate ideographs for both culturetypal and counter-cultural purposes. Lucaites and Condit identified <equality> as the primary ideograph in African American civil rights discourse. They examined <equality> by juxtaposing rhetorical texts from Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. Through ideographic analysis, Lucaites and Condit concluded that, although King and Malcolm X each centered their rhetorical programs on <equality>, they articulated different visions of <equality>. For example, whereas King situated <equality> within the parameters of biblical teachings, Malcolm X positioned <equality> as a signifier of social power (Lucaites & Condit). King’s version of <equality> was culturetypal because he conformed to “culturally authorized characterizations and narratives” (Lucaites & Condit, p. 14). Malcolm X’s version of <equality>, however, was counter-cultural, because he challenged and redefined the dominant conceptions of <equality> (Lucaites & Condit). Building upon McGee’s (1980) assertion that diachronic analysis—analysis across epochs—revealed shifts in ideographic meanings, Lucaites and Condit (1990) illustrated how ideographs could possess dynamic meanings even within a specific epoch. Overall, Lucaites and Condit showed how ideographs vary according to rhetorical styles, material conditions, and symbolic environments.

Delgado (1995) examined how ideographs influence the constitution of social movements. Citing Chicano rhetoric as a textual example, Delgado maintained critics could gain



a fuller understanding of movement rhetoric by tracing how movements utilized ideographs. Delgado's conception of constitutive ideographs was informed by Charland's (1987) understanding of constitutive rhetoric. Following Burke (1969b) and McGee (1975), Charland (1987) contended one's subjectivity was prior to persuasion, because one must already exist as an interpellated subject within an ideology before acts of persuasion can occur. In other words, persuasive discourse requires an audience comprised of individuals whose identities have already been contoured by the ideological conditions of their community. Viewing ideographs from a constitutive frame, Delgado (1995) surmised "the use of ideographs extends beyond the state and contains cultural meanings that can invite opposition to the state" (p. 447). Thus, Delgado concluded "ideographs allow for political struggle among competing elements and contestations between dominant and non-dominant groups" (p. 447).

### **Applications of Ideographic Criticism**

Rhetorical critics have employed ideographic criticism to analyze how ideographs have affected public communication in specific political and cultural contexts. The case studies outlined below indicate the ideographic method has proven effective in tracing linkages between a society's discourse and its ideology. Furthermore, the studies below demonstrate ideographic criticism can be harnessed to better understand a society's ideological boundaries.

McGee (1987) employed the ideographic method to analyze the ideograph <people>. He conducted his analysis by examining the subtle difference between the Soviet characterization of the plural <peoples> and the American characterization of the singular <people>. McGee argued the subtle distinction signified ideological differences between Soviets and Americans; specifically, he maintained the distinction conveyed Soviets' preference for collectivity and

Americans' preference for individuality. Furthermore, he believed the American preference for the singular <people> signaled Americans' preference for "cultural and political homogeneity" (McGee, p. 434). McGee illustrated the homogenizing effect by showing how, just as minority groups began to establish the plural sense of <peoples>, Americans started to supplant <people(s)> with <public>. In McGee's calculus, the shift toward <public> served to structure silences because it weakened the linkages between <sovereignty> and <equality>. He illuminated his argument by explaining how American <popular sovereignty> equates to <equal opportunity>, not <political representation>. For example, the singular <public> "permits Chicano participation in the political process ... but in no way respects Chicano <sovereignty> (by anticipating that Chicanos should be represented in Congress in proportion to their numbers, for example)" (McGee, p. 435). Ultimately, McGee's analysis demonstrated how ideographs can produce criterion for evaluating if persons or groups meet the homogenous standards of the <people>.

Delgado (1999) harnessed the ideograph to examine Cuban leader Fidel Castro's use of ideographs in his 1961 address "Words to the Intellectuals." Delgado identified <revolution> as the central ideograph in Castro's speech. Furthermore, he contended Castro's use of ideographs marked a strategic move to "reconstitute an identity for artists and writers so that they could recognize themselves inside of, and be affirmed by, the revolution" (Delgado, p. 10). Delgado concluded such rhetorical tactics functioned as part of a larger rhetorical scheme to forge "a new Cuban ideology and identity" (p. 10). Moreover, Delgado's insight that Castro repositioned <revolution> by relating <revolution> to ideographs such as <justice>, <equality>, and

<stability>, illustrates how ideographs derive their meaning from their interaction with clusters of other ideographs.

Cloud (2004) applied the ideographic method to study visual representations of Afghan women in *Time* magazine. She argued Afghan women were depicted in ways that reinforced the ideograph <clash of civilizations>, an attitude which insists “the United States and its people face an incontrovertible conflict with Others, particularly Islamic Others, whose civilizations are inferior and hostile to Western capitalism” (Cloud, p. 286). In Cloud’s assessment, such representations served to reify the Western attitude of the <white man’s burden>. Through a procedure of linked verbal and visual ideographic analyses, Cloud showed how the depictions of Afghan women, coupled with the prevailing American ideographs <clash of civilizations> and <white man’s burden>, served to stratify notions of self and Other. Cloud maintained the dichotomy promoted the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Cloud’s study exemplified how ideographs simultaneously unite and divide people, and in so doing, induce cooperation by demarcating lines of ideological difference.

Powell (2008) utilized the ideographic method to investigate the rhetorical efficacy of *The Covenant with Black America*, a manifesto in which black intellectuals Tavis Smiley, Cornel West, and Eddie Claude, Jr. outlined a new vision of <equality> for African Americans. Powell sought to explain and evaluate how *The Covenant*’s “notions of equality ... related[d] to Black and African Americans and their relationship(s) with other race-based minority groups and dominant White America” (p. 4). In order to illuminate how *The Covenant* characterized <equality>, Powell performed both diachronic and synchronic analyses of <equality>. To perform the diachronic analysis, he drew upon Lucaites and Condit’s (1990) conclusions from

their ideographic study of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. Powell (2008) drew parallels between the rhetorical dynamic between King and Malcolm X (culturetypal vs. counter-cultural) to the rhetorical environment between black spokespersons Reverend Jesse Jackson and Minister Louis Farrakhan. Then, for the synchronic analysis, Powell analyzed how traces of both Jackson and Farrakhan's characterizations of <equality> could be found in *The Covenant*. Ultimately, Powell concluded *The Covenant* overemphasized Farrakhan's counter-cultural version of equality, and such oppositional rhetoric served to widen the chasm between white and black Americans. Powell's inquiry elucidated how, in synchronous moments, ideographs can be appropriated for competing political demands. Moreover, he demonstrated ideographic potency hinges upon how closely an ideograph aligns to its historical characterizations.

Miller and Murray (2008) used the ideographic method to explore how ideographs influenced abstinence-only sex education discourse. They argued the deployment of <Purity> and its "shadow-ideograph" <Taint> created a rhetorical landscape in which abstinence-only education was the only moral approach to sex education (Miller & Murray, p. 2). Miller and Murray stated that while <Purity> was prevalent throughout abstinence-only discourse, <Taint> did not manifest materially and thus did not meet the standard criterion of an ideograph. However, their analysis demonstrated that by functioning implicitly, <Taint> still had a real impact on sex-education discourse. Miller and Murray concluded: "The social outcome of this ideographic combination is the emergence of a rhetorical climate where it is exceedingly difficult to defend comprehensive sex education and birth control without completely rejecting almost universally-accepted social values and concomitant fears" (p. 6). Their analysis of <Purity> and

<Taint> exemplified how ideographs, whether materially present or implied, configure a discourse community's ideological boundaries.

### **Critiques of the Ideograph**

Developments in postmodernist thought have led to rethinking the epistemological and ontological foundations of various rhetorical theories and methods. The postmodern condition marks a break from the Enlightenment vision of isolated thinkers working out problems in solitude (Lucaites, 1998). Postmodernity, rather, compels scholars to recognize polysemic qualities and acknowledge multiplicity within spheres of influence, publics, and identities. As Sekimoto (2011) elucidated, the postmodern condition, even the previously unproblematic concept of “identity,” must be re-conceptualized “not only as a composition of relatively fixed categories [epistemology] but also a process and condition of being and becoming [ontology]” (p. 48). In short, postmodernity has resulted in a fluidity of meaning. Lucaites (1998) discussed how such fluidity affects rhetorical theory:

To theorize in the postmodern condition is not to solve social and political problems once and for all, but to approach them as they exist in all of their contingency and particularity—to treat their material presence symbolically and creatively, with and among one another as individuals-in-community. (p. 20)

Lucaites' emphasis on “individuals-in-community” exemplifies how postmodernity has disintegrated “grand political and social designs” (Delgado, Deluca, & Janas, 1993, p. 259). To negotiate the postmodern condition, then, rhetorical scholars must develop strategies which expose “important sites of struggle and dispute outside as well as inside the academic world” (Delgado, Deluca, & Janas, p. 260).

Opponents of McGee's ideograph have critiqued and amended various dimensions of the construct. The criticisms outlined below display the tension which exists between the ideograph and postmodernism. In many ways, the fragmentation of contemporary culture (McGee, 1990) has debunked notions of a totalizing ideology (Saindon, 2008), thus questioning the legitimacy of the ideograph.

In response to society's transition into "postmodernity," McGee (1990) revisited his rhetorical program and encouraged rhetoricians to adopt more critical methods. Whereas McGee previously theorized rhetoric in terms of totalizing ideological forces, he broke from the position by contending society had become socially and culturally fragmented and was thus impervious to homogenous rhetoric (McGee, 1990). McGee rejected the term "rhetorical criticism," believing the term relegated rhetoric to an adjectival state and assumed the existence of a homogenous audience.<sup>4</sup> In place of rhetorical criticism, he aligned with McKerrow's (1989) conception of "critical rhetoric." By adopting "rhetoric" as a master term instead of "criticism," McGee argued (1990) rhetoricians would begin to notice how "rhetors *make* discourses from scraps and pieces of evidence" (p. 279, emphasis in original). McGee elaborated on the fragmentation of postmodernity by suggesting discourses must be analyzed according to three structural relationships: source, culture, and influence. While "source" and "culture" are comparable to the ideographic variables "diachronic" and "synchronic," McGee's (1990) postmodern emphasis on

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<sup>4</sup> McGee (1990) argued the term "rhetorical criticism" emphasized "criticism" instead of "rhetoric." In so doing, rhetorical speech acts became conflated with the study of rhetorical criticism. McGee argued, in its adjectival state, rhetoric is dissociated from public discourse and instead synonymized with acts of interpretation.

“influence” implies fragments gain rhetorical force according to their distribution and duplication: “The public’s business is now being done more often via direct mail, television spots, documentaries, mass entertainment, and ‘quotable quotes’ on the evening news than through the more traditional media” (McGee, p. 286).<sup>5</sup> McGee’s critical turn merged context into text and dislodged the linkage between ideographs and audiences.

McGee’s (1990) fragmentation thesis highlighted the rhetorical complexities of the postmodern condition. Subsequent studies (Saindon, 2008; Swenson, 2008) have sought to refit the ideograph to the social and cultural demands of postmodernity. Saindon (2008) staged a debate between McGee’s ideograph and fragment theories. Saindon proposed the two theories be fused into the singular construct “ideographic fragment” (p. 88). Saindon found merit with both of McGee’s approaches, citing the ideograph’s faculty to illuminate asymmetrical power relations, and the fragment’s capacity to account for unstable meta-narratives. Saindon contended that adopting the ideographic fragment as an object of inquiry reorients the emphasis of rhetorical studies. Instead of understanding discourse as an index of cultural domination, critical rhetoricians could reestablish the significance of motives and examine how, in the face of increasing cultural fragmentation, discourse generates social cohesion. Overall, Saindon claimed supplanting the ideograph with the ideographic fragment illuminates why some discourse fragments resonate while others do not.

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<sup>5</sup> McGee’s (1990) characterization of new media is outdated; in contemporary culture, “the public’s business is being done” (p. 285) via e-mail, cellular text messages, Facebook, Twitter, 24-hour television coverage, and the Internet.

During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, poststructuralists insisted on the arbitrariness of signs, contending textual meanings varied from one audience to the next (Bizzell & Herzberg, 2001). Swenson (2008) adapted McGee's ideograph to the tenets of poststructuralism. In Swenson's assessment, a poststructuralist reading of the ideograph was fruitful because it repositioned "the ideograph not as a unifying principle, but as a rhetorical strategy that seeks to obscure and exclude" (p. 3). Swenson critiqued the ideograph for its reliance upon "a system of dualities that make partial truths ... into covering laws" (p. 8). As such, he maintained a poststructuralist reading problematized the ideograph's assumption of mass consciousness. Swenson asserted McGee's conception of the ideograph was flawed because it relied upon the "connection between a single signifier and system of belief" (p. 12). Swenson concluded a poststructuralist reading of the ideograph re-centered analysis within a specific text, and helped to liberate those who were marginalized by the ideograph.

### **Method**

In Chapter Four, I utilize the ideographic method to analyze African American rhetoric from the WWII era. My study is centered on the synchronic interplay of ideographs within the context of U.S. discourse during WWII. Drawing upon the theoretical, methodological, and critical insights of ideograph scholars, I have devised a method which satisfies the aims of the project. My procedure can be delineated into the following parts: the identification of ideographs, the interpretation of ideograph clusters, and the analysis of ideograph appropriation.

First, ideograph identification requires the critic to read texts and distinguish ideographs as they emerge. As Jasinski (2001) pointed out, a specific measure does not exist for identifying ideographs; rather, a critic must identify ideographs according to their function within text and



context. Therefore, I will identify ideographs according to their textual frequency, argumentative potency, and emotional intensity. I acknowledge the subjectivity of the process; however, the advantage of the ideographic method is that the critic's insights are based upon the material existence of ideographs within texts. In this way, the critic's analysis is predicated upon empirical, discursive formations.

Second, as McGee (1980) contended, ideographs derive their meaning from within clusters of other ideographs. As such, the critic must discern if the invocation of ideographs naturally elicits other ideographs within the text. Extending from Burke's (1969a) notion of pentadic ratios, I evaluate how clusters of ideographs function hierarchically.

Finally, in accordance with Lucaites and Condit's (1990) approach, I differentiate between culturetypal and counter-cultural characterizations of ideographs. Examining the relationship between culturetypal and counter-cultural ideographs provides a comprehensive understanding of how ideology and rhetoric share a reciprocal relationship. To do so, I evaluate whether a spokesperson's ideographic invention *reflects* or *reinvents* the culture's ideological expectations.

Though I utilize the ideographic method, I remain cognizant of the critiques of the approach (McGee, 1990; McKerrow, 1989; Saindon, 2008; Swenson, 2008). My procedure addresses those critiques by incorporating methodological extensions of the ideograph construct which adapt the approach to better account for the cultural and social fragmentation within postmodernity. In using ideographic criticism, I aim to illustrate how ideology influenced the rhetoric of black spokespersons during the WWII era.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I examine two related trends within U.S. public discourse from the WWII era. In general, I survey how U.S. officials and African American spokespersons both shaped their wartime discourses around ideographs. In particular, I focus on how black author, Ralph Ellison, challenged the rhetoric of U.S. officials in his wartime editorials. First, I explore how President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1941) utilized ideographs in “The Four Freedoms.” Second, I chart how Roosevelt’s ideographic commitments were advanced further in three wartime addresses by Under-secretary Sumner Welles. Third, I investigate three editorials by Ellison, focusing on how his ideographic usage diverged from Roosevelt’s. Finally, I examine the ideographic discrepancies between Roosevelt’s “The Four Freedoms” and Ellison’s reinvention of <The Four Freedoms>. Posed with the demands of WWII, U.S. officials asked Americans to sacrifice personal agendas in the name of <national security> and <freedom>. The ideological commitments of the epoch subordinated all other domestic concerns to the primacy of the war effort. At the same time, African Americans remained constrained by institutional racism and Jim Crow segregation. Even with the federal government pressing hard for Americans to enlist in the armed forces, able-bodied black soldiers were relegated to performing menial tasks within segregated units (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2010). In the civic sphere, the presence of the war effort—and its demands for <unity> and <patriotism>—stymied black spokespersons’ efforts to eradicate institutional racism. Overt criticism of the war effort carried serious repercussions.

According to Gates and Burton (2011), even those who simply voiced their dissent ran the risk of being arrested.

Though scholars have attended to the rhetorical foundations and appropriations of WWII (Balthrop, Blair, & Michel, 2010; Biesecker, 2002; Brands, 2005; Hunt, 1943; Olson, 1983), the intersections of race and wartime discourse remain understudied. Specifically, scholars have neglected to examine how black spokespersons continued to pursue civil rights in spite of the state-sanctioned ideological commitments which precluded protest. To better examine these issues I analyze Ralph Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) wartime editorials from the black periodical *The Negro Quarterly: A Review of Negro Life and Culture*. Ellison, who would later author the critically acclaimed novel *Invisible Man*, was one of the most promising black authors and literary critics during the WWII era. His editorials provide fitting texts for exploring the rhetorical and ideological complexities which faced black spokespersons during the epoch.

In order to critique the racial hypocrisy of U.S. and Allied forces, I contend Ellison negotiated the ideological boundaries of the wartime context. Drawing upon the cultural currency generated by President Roosevelt's (1941) "The Four Freedoms" address, Ellison utilized <The Four Freedoms> as a vehicle for reframing the aims of the U.S. and Allied war effort. First, I argue Ellison utilized a series of ideographs to reinvent the meaning of <The Four Freedoms>. Second, I contend Ellison's ideographic reinvention constituted a counter-cultural appropriation of <The Four Freedoms>, which served to highlight how domestic <fascism> undermined the tenets of <The Four Freedoms>. Finally, I demonstrate how Ellison's reinvention of <The Four Freedoms> served to contest the dominant ideology's insistence on

preserving <freedom> and, instead, advocated a program which emphasized liberating dispossessed <peoples>. Ellison's accent on <liberty> reflected the political, social, and economic inequity which stifled African Americans and colonial <peoples> throughout the world during the era.

### **“The Four Freedoms”**

On January 6, 1941, President Roosevelt delivered the State of the Union Address under the heading “The Four Freedoms.” The address responded to the intensifying conflict of WWII in Europe. As a remedy for the conflict, Roosevelt presented “four essential human freedoms”: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, and freedom from fear (para. 54-58). The U.S. had not yet entered WWII at the time of the address; however, “The Four Freedoms” suggested foreign <tyranny> jeopardized the basic principles of American life. Roosevelt exploited that anxiety to emphasize collective values such as <freedom> and <security>. In appealing to collective values, Roosevelt established stringent demands for <patriotism> and <unity>, thus, limiting the range of acceptable civic attitudes and behaviors. Overall, Roosevelt's coordinated appeal to collective values and civic duties imposed an homogenous conception of <American> identity. In so doing, Roosevelt reinforced the values of the dominant ideology and discouraged dissent from non-dominant groups.

In “The Four Freedoms,” Roosevelt (1941) juxtaposed the warring ideals of <tyranny> and <freedom>. By staging the contest between <tyranny> and <freedom>, he emphasized how Americans must commit energy and resources to <security>. First, though, Roosevelt had to establish a threat which warranted a national commitment to <security>. Thus, he illustrated how America's <freedom> was being threatened by tyrannical, foreign dictators. Referencing Hitler's

Nazi regime in Germany, Roosevelt declared, “[T]he new order of tyranny seeks to spread over every continent today” (para. 9). His description positioned <tyranny> as an imminent threat which, if left unchecked, could conquer the American people. Roosevelt’s reference to <tyranny> provided him the leverage to impose an essentialized concept of American character: “The American people have unalterably set their faces against that tyranny” (para. 9). Roosevelt characterized <tyranny> as an unequivocal evil. In so doing, he offered a rhetorical devil which Americans could universally unite against. Roosevelt’s usage of <tyranny> implored Americans to transcend their collective differences and, instead, unify around common ideals. Calling upon <tyranny> enabled Roosevelt to sketch an uncomplicated, homogenous portrait of American identity which, in turn, rhetorically eschewed the hegemonic structures which synchronously tyrannized U.S. cultural minorities.

Roosevelt (1941) countered <tyranny> with the American commitment to <freedom>. “The Four Freedoms” gain their ideographic force from their foundation in the customary ideograph <freedom>. Roosevelt contended <tyranny> must be combatted with “four essential freedoms”:

The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want, which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants—everywhere in the world.

The fourth is freedom from fear, which, translated into world terms, means a worldwide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world. (para. 55-58)

“The Four Freedoms” encompass both positive and negative rights. For instance, whereas Roosevelt’s first <freedom> is “freedom *of* speech and expression” (para. 55, emphasis added), his third <freedom> is “freedom *from* want” (para. 57, emphasis added). While the first two <freedoms> express desirable conditions, the last two <freedoms> convey conditions which must be prevented. This move metonymically reduces <freedom> to the principles of American life. Indeed, Roosevelt’s delineation of “The Four Freedoms” grounded the ideal of <freedom> in distinctly American terms, linking <freedom> to political, religious, economic, and social conditions which echo historic American values. Roosevelt further contracted <freedom> through rhetorical invention: “This nation has placed its destiny in the hands and heads and hearts of its millions of free men and women, and its faith in freedom under the guidance of God. Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere” (para. 62). Projecting the U.S. as the embodiment of <freedom>, Roosevelt harnessed America’s religious mythology to associate <freedom> with the divine wisdom of God. By posturing <freedom> as a divine right, bestowed upon humans by God, Roosevelt positioned the “The Four Freedoms” as a set of unalienable principles on par with the country’s Founders’ commitment to <life>, <liberty>, and the <pursuit of happiness>. In essence, Roosevelt reduced <freedom> to the political example of America, thus impelling other nations to follow the American model. Ironically, such an exceptionalist attitude conveyed a sense of national supremacy not all that dissimilar from Nazi Germany.

However, Roosevelt circumnavigated such trappings by linking <freedom> with *human rights everywhere*. Nonetheless, Roosevelt's ideographic usage reduced <freedom> to the example of U.S. democracy, which established Americans as the physical embodiment of <freedom>.

"The Four Freedoms" address exudes both urgency and solemnity. The speech is both deliberative and epideictic in the sense that Roosevelt (1941) called for future political actions by championing historic struggles and accomplishments (Aristotle, c. 350 BC/2007). He captured such a tone, in part, by linking <freedom> to <security>. Indeed, Roosevelt (1941) harnessed "The Four Freedoms" to convince Americans that if they wished to protect their <freedom> from <tyranny>, they must become committed to <security>. Although "The Four Freedoms" were the central theme of the address, Roosevelt's arrangement of the text oriented the audience to perceive domestic <security> as the logical defender of "The Four Freedoms." For instance, Roosevelt opened the oration by stressing the urgency of the moment:

I address you, the members of this new Congress, at a moment unprecedented in the history of the union. I use the word "unprecedented" because at no previous time has American security been as seriously threatened from without as it is today. (para. 1)

Roosevelt appealed to <security> by juxtaposing the present danger with the exigencies of the past. Although, historically, the U.S. had engaged in other wars with foreign powers, Roosevelt maintained, "[I]n no case had a serious threat been raised against [America's] national safety or ... continued independence" (para. 3). Later in the speech, Roosevelt shifted the emphasis of <security> by pledging American support to those nations and peoples who had resisted the aggression of the Axis Powers. Roosevelt asserted, "By this support we express our determination that the democratic cause shall prevail, and we strengthen the defense and the

security of our own nation” (para. 22). Thus, Roosevelt associated <security> with the preservation of <freedom>. Linking <security> and <freedom> provided Roosevelt with enough leverage to even justify Congressional confidentiality and demand increased production of war materials. Moreover, by drawing the link between <security> and <freedom>, Roosevelt proposed a logical framework wherein U.S. <freedom> hinged upon devotion to <security>. Thus, protesting the aims of wartime <security> measures was equivalent to denouncing the principles of <freedom>. This ideological landscape is significant because the pressures to preserve <freedom> squelched the potential for dissent from other state policies. In turn, the emphasis on <security> largely precluded non-dominant groups from critiquing civil injustices.

With <security> established as the essential defender of <freedom>, Roosevelt (1941) commanded allegiance to <security> measures by appealing to <patriotism> and <unity>. In particular, he used enthymematic logic to cultivate a terrain wherein one’s dedication to <freedom> hinged upon their performance of <patriotism> and <unity>. Roosevelt expressed <patriotism> in two distinct forms: (1) an agency which combats disloyalty and (2) a purpose for which Americans should strive (Burke, 1969a). Roosevelt (1941) discussed how, in trying times, <Americans> would be expected to make sacrifices, and the most effective way to deal with the “slackers” and “trouble-makers” who were unwilling to make such sacrifices was “to shame them by patriotic example” (para. 45). Roosevelt did not delineate any specific qualities of <patriotism>; rather, he ambiguously offered <patriotism> as an agency for vanquishing “unpatriotic” dissidents. In so doing, Roosevelt limited <American> identity by suggesting those who were not overtly nationalistic must be overwhelmed by the force of <patriotism>. In other words, Roosevelt discouraged dissent from state policies. Finally, Roosevelt positioned



<patriotism> as an indicator of integrity. He alluded to future programs needed to satisfy the aims of “The Four Freedoms”; however, such programs would require tax increases. To minimize negative reactions to his proposals, Roosevelt employed <patriotism> to reinforce his homogenous vision of <American> identity. Roosevelt maintained that if Congress upheld the principles of “The Four Freedoms,” <Americans> would put “patriotism ahead [of] pocketbooks” (para. 53). Ultimately, Roosevelt’s usage of <patriotism> forged a link between <American> identity and utilitarianism. Thus, the emphasis on <patriotism> served the interests of the politically and materially privileged.

Roosevelt (1941) deployed <unity> to further sketch the link between <American> identity and <security>. Specifically, he portrayed <unity> as an innate <American> quality. Roosevelt’s discourse implied <American> citizenship was not defined by geographical boundaries; rather, <American> identity stemmed from one’s personal character, particularly, their commitment to live in <unity> with other <Americans>. In the beginning of the speech, Roosevelt asserted the Civil War was the only domestic crisis to ever threaten U.S. <unity>. Then, Roosevelt harnessed the rhetorical capital of the Civil War to suggest, in the modern era, <Americans> possessed a natural propensity for <unity>: “Today, thank God, 130,000,000 Americans in 48 States have forgotten points of the compass in our national unity” (para. 2). By subjugating a history of conflict and difference to an *innate quality* of <American> identity, Roosevelt normalized <unity> as the natural condition of U.S. society, thus, leveraging minority opinions to conform to the dominant majority. Roosevelt further appealed to mainstream positions by suggesting subversives were actively spreading “poisonous propaganda ... to destroy unity and promote discord” (para. 10). Roosevelt’s characterization is significant

because, in linking “discord” with “poisonous propaganda,” he conflated dissent with subversion. Whereas subversives seek to overthrow a government, dissidents merely deviate from state positions. This move circumscribed <American> identity to accordance with state views. In the final section of the address, Roosevelt declared the U.S. derived its strength from <unity>: “Our strength is our unity of purpose” (para. 62). In sum, Roosevelt argued <Americans> derived their power from their coordinated commitments to <freedom>, <security>, <patriotism>, and <unity>.

In “The Four Freedoms,” Roosevelt (1941) harnessed the threat of <tyranny> to arouse wartime anxieties. In so doing, he questioned the efficacy of U.S. <security>, which, in turn, questioned the future of U.S. <freedom>. Roosevelt then appealed to those fears to craft an ideological landscape wherein one’s <American> identity hinged upon their allegiance to <patriotism> and <unity>. In sum, by grounding <freedom> in civic commitments to <patriotism> and <unity>, Roosevelt reinforced the authority of mainstream opinions. Moreover, Roosevelt’s ideographic usage imposed a homogenous conception of <American> identity which discouraged deviation from state positions. This ideological climate impeded cultural minorities from protesting political, social, and economic inequities.

### **Sumner Welles and the Expansion of “The Four Freedoms”**

The ideographic commitments which Roosevelt (1941) outlined in “The Four Freedoms” gained force as they were further expounded by other public figures. One such public figure was Sumner Welles. Welles served as the Under Secretary of State in the Roosevelt Administration during WWII. During his tenure as Under Secretary, Welles delivered various addresses to both domestic and foreign audiences. It is worthwhile to note how, after Roosevelt’s delivery of “The

Four Freedoms,” Welles’ speeches reflected the president’s ideographic commitments to <freedom> and <security>. As such, I examine Welles’ (1941/1943a, 1941/1943b, 1942/1943c) ideographic usage from three noteworthy speeches: “An Association of Nations,” “Wilson and the Atlantic Charter,” and “The Realization of a Great Vision.” By further emphasizing the link between <freedom> and <security>, Welles reinforced Roosevelt’s argument that Americans must capitulate to the requirements of the state and, thus, support the war effort.

On July 22, 1941, Welles delivered a speech titled “An Association of Nations” at the dedication to the new wing of the Norwegian Legation in Washington, D.C. The address came after Norway had been stripped of its independence by Nazi Germany. In the speech, Welles celebrated America’s historic relationship with Norway, and declared U.S. support to Norway’s struggle for <freedom> against Nazi Germany. Moreover, Welles proclaimed, “[I]n a larger sense, these ceremonies constitute an act of faith in the ultimate victory of the forces of human liberty, in the triumph of civilization itself over the forces of barbarism” (p. 12). In this regard, the material presence of Norway functioned as a synecdochal reference to the threat of <tyranny>. Welles reminded the audience such threats could not be overcome until Hitler was removed from power. Still, Welles professed his confidence “that the cause of liberty and of freedom [would] not go down to defeat” (p. 12). However, he qualified his conviction with the stipulation that free people must now dedicate all their energy and resources to the cause of victory. Americans, Welles contended, were particularly responsible for facilitating “an association of nations through which the freedom, the happiness, and the security of all peoples may be achieved” (p. 15). Finally, Welles closed by reflecting on the necessity of <security>:

That word, security, represents the end upon which the hearts of men and women everywhere today are set. Whether it be security from bombing from the air, or from mass destruction; whether it be security from want, disease, and starvation; whether it be security in enjoying inalienable rights which every human being should possess of living out his life in peace and happiness, people throughout the length and breadth of the world are demanding security, and freedom from fear. (p. 15).

In sum, Welles utilized the material presence of Norway's subjugation to conjure the threat of <tyranny> which lurked in Nazi German. Then, following Roosevelt's (1941) logic, Welles (1941/1943a) crafted an appeal which coordinated <freedom> and <security>.

On Armistice Day, November 11, 1941, Welles celebrated the memory of late President Woodrow Wilson by delivering an address at the Washington Cathedral titled "Wilson and the Atlantic Charter." Using the memory of President Wilson as rhetorical capital, Welles glorified Wilson's (1917) WWI-commitment to make the world "safe for democracy" (para. 35). In Welles' assessment (1941/1943b), the current war placed the U.S. in even greater peril than WWI. As such, Welles acknowledged the possibility for U.S. entry into the war, contending if foreign aggressors prevailed, there would be no place "for the freedoms which [Americans] cherish and ... are passionately determined to maintain" (p. 29). Anticipating the possibility of foreign aggression, Welles argued Americans must dedicate themselves to principles which he described as even "more dear ... than life itself": namely, "preserving the freedom of the United States and ... safeguarding the independence of the American people" (p. 30). Welles' characterization is significant because he placed a greater value on principles, such as <freedom> and <security>, than on actual human <life>. Welles closed by echoing the principles of "The

Four Freedoms,” arguing Hitler’s goal was to destroy <security> and to annihilate religious, political, and economic <liberty> across the globe. Again, Welles exploited Americans’ fear of <tyranny> to draw a logical link between <freedom> and <security>.

On Memorial Day, May 30, 1942, at the Arlington National Amphitheatre, Welles delivered an address titled “The Realization of a Great Vision.” In general, Welles used the speech to highlight how America’s historic dedication to <security> provided the current generation with the <freedom> they enjoyed. Welles emphasized the importance of <security> by “paying tribute to the memories of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country and for their fellow men” (p. 66). Similar to Roosevelt’s (1941) appeal in “The Four Freedoms,” Welles (1942/1943c) commemorated the Civil War to underscore the importance of <unity>. Furthermore, he used the example of the Civil War to illustrate how even great conflict could not dislodge Americans’ commitment to <freedom>. Ultimately, Welles concluded Americans must “secure the future safety of their country and of its free institutions and help the nations of the earth back into the paths of peace” (p. 75). Accordingly, Welles linked <security> to the preservation of U.S. <freedom>, and argued Americans had a responsibility to foster <freedom> throughout the world.

Welles’ (1941/1943a, 1941/1943b, 1942/1943c) usage of <freedom> and <security> in the aforementioned speeches echo the ideographic cluster which Roosevelt (1941) charted in “The Four Freedoms.” By expressing allegiance to “The Four Freedoms,” Welles advocated that <freedom> was grounded in a commitment to <security>. Furthermore, by conforming to “The Four Freedoms,” Welles advanced Roosevelt’s stringent demands for <patriotism> and <unity>, thus, perpetuating Roosevelt’s homogenous conception of <American> identity. In sum, while

Welles (1941/1943a, 1941/1943b, 1942/1943c) and Roosevelt (1941) each expressed a commitment to <equality> and <liberty> across race, creed, and color, their programs simultaneously precluded the possibility for non-dominant groups to protest discriminatory state policies and actions.

### ***The Negro Quarterly***

In March of 1942, Angelo Herndon launched *The Negro Quarterly: A Review of Negro Life and Culture*, a journal which declared its mission was to “reflect the true aspirations of the Negro people and their traditions of struggle for freedom” (p. 3). Moreover, the journal proclaimed:

The rapid change of life introduced by the war makes apparent the need of reflecting upon the genuine attitudes, thoughts and opinions of Negroes, and of giving direction and interpretation to certain new social and economic factors and their relation to the special problems of the Negro. (p. 3)

A few weeks after the journal was founded, Herndon convinced black author and literary critic Ralph Ellison to join the staff as managing editor (Rampersad, 2007). Ellison would influence the thematic trajectory of the journal and would also contribute the “Editorial Comments” in subsequent issues. *The Negro Quarterly* broke from contemporary black publications with its devotion to radical socialism and racial militancy (Rampersad). Although *The Negro Quarterly* only lasted four issues, its objectives were admirable; following the journal’s demise, Ellison stated, “I went into [*The Negro Quarterly*] feeling that it was badly needed, since so little is understood about Negroes even by themselves or by those dedicated, supposedly, to leading us” (as cited in Rampersad, p. 158).

Following the journal's credo, Ellison's editorials in *The Negro Quarterly* grappled with the complexities of African American life during the WWII era. In particular, Ellison revealed how the exigencies of WWII subordinated domestic issues to the demands of the war effort, thus, stifling blacks' struggle for civil rights. Ellison's *Negro Quarterly* editorials culminated in a 1943 piece which outlined the three common ways African Americans approached the war effort: (1) blind acceptance, (2) blind rejection, and (3) critical participation. According to Ellison, if blacks hoped to gain equal political, social, and economic representation, critical participation was the only productive course of action.

Ellison's editorials in *The Negro Quarterly* demonstrated a rhetorical sensibility to the wartime popularity of Roosevelt's "The Four Freedoms" address. However, Ellison did not only engage "The Four Freedoms" as an act of oratory, he also engaged <The Four Freedoms> as a material discourse which signified the privileges of the dominant ideology. In order to explicate the prejudices of U.S. and Allied forces, Ellison bracketed <The Four Freedoms> with the ideographs <fascism> and <liberty>. In so doing, Ellison positioned <liberty> as the primary goal of <The Four Freedoms>.

### <Fascism>

Ellison opened his *Negro Quarterly* editorials by engaging the problem of <fascism>. Ellison went beyond discussing <fascism> simply as it related to foreign aggression; rather, he illuminated how <fascism> manifested domestically and undermined the principles of <The Four Freedoms>. During WWII, the fascist regimes in Germany and Italy exemplified the evils of <fascism> with their acts of political disfranchisement, racial discrimination, and ethnic cleansing (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2010). America's wartime opposition to the fascist regimes in

Germany and Italy, coupled with the explosion of anti-fascist propaganda, rendered <fascism> a “devil term” (Weaver, 1985) in American society. Incongruously, as Americans publicly decried the <fascism> of foreign aggressors, U.S. citizens continued to adhere to the racist doctrine of Jim Crow. Honing in on such hypocrisy, Ellison (1943/1969c) stated: “Feeling that so much experienced by Negroes in the U.S. is tinged with fascism, some Negroes went so far as to join the pro-Japanese Pacific Movement” (p. 296). In other words, the experience of racism in the U.S. left some blacks so alienated they supported the very nation who attacked their country. However, Ellison rejected that position, arguing blacks had “*their own stake in the defeat of fascism*” (p. 296, emphasis in original). Ellison’s example illustrated how <fascism> was more than simply a foreign problem or threat to the future of U.S. <freedom>. On the contrary, Ellison characterized <fascism> as a current, domestic dilemma, which had already plagued American life for generations.

Gazing beyond the political boundaries of the U.S., Ellison (1942/1969a) examined how <fascism> was undermining the purpose of the Allied Powers. Ellison contended the Allied forces would struggle in “the war against fascist tyranny” until the “American Negroes, Africans, Chinese, Indians, [and] Latin Americans” received equal citizenship within their respective political systems (p. i). Ellison then elaborated how colonial oppression could negatively affect the Allies’ wartime morale, arguing, “As the war progresses it becomes increasingly evident that in order to fight fascism successfully a people must possess both a national will for its own independence and the independence of all other nations” (p. ii). Ellison’s arguments downplayed <fascism> within particular political contexts (e.g., Germany and Italy) and, instead, engaged <fascism> as a cancer of the human condition. Ellison (1942/1969b) warned that even if Allied



forces defeated Germany and Italy, unless <fascism> was properly engaged as an institution, and eradicated as a way of human life, then <fascism> would simply re-materialize in other contexts and spread from within like a “great sickness” (p. 196). Overall, Ellison illustrated how the problem of <fascism> would persist until the world’s dispossessed <peoples> were liberated from subjugation and servitude.

Ellison’s ideographic characterization of <fascism> broke from contemporary understandings. In particular, Ellison rejected the idea <fascism> was circumscribed within the political boundaries of explicitly fascist nations; Ellison conceptualized <fascism> as a political disease, capable of afflicting humans in any social context. By repositioning <fascism>, Ellison was able to point out how <fascism> even left its mark on the U.S. and Allied forces.

### **<The Four Freedoms>**

Ellison used <fascism> to critically frame the practical application of <The Four Freedoms>. While Roosevelt’s (1941) “four essential human freedoms” provided guiding principles for American involvement in WWII, Ellison questioned how adherents to <The Four Freedoms> could tolerate systems of institutional racism and colonialism. Ellison (1942/1969b) asserted, “[T]he Four Freedoms is a vision that must be embraced wholly or else it changes its shape to confound us” (p. 196). Sensing the disconnect between theory and practice, Ellison (1942/1969a) declared:

American Negroes are seeking to understand their relationship to the Four Freedoms ... and they look with distrust upon the good intentions of America when they know that Jim Crow still persists in the armed forces of the country as the most irritating symbol of their social and political debasement. (p. ii)

Ellison's assertion suggested <The Four Freedoms> did not speak to the asymmetrical power relations which subjugated African Americans. However, Ellison (1943/1969c) admonished those blacks who viewed such underrepresentation as grounds for blind acceptance of state policies:

Along with this is found an acceptance of the violence and discrimination which so contradicts a war for the Four Freedoms. This attitude is justified by the theory that for Negroes to speak out in their own interest would be to follow a 'narrow Negro approach' and to disrupt war unity. (p. 295)

Ellison adopted a critical tone with respect to <The Four Freedoms>, yet he still maintained confidence in the potential of <The Four Freedoms>. In order for the potential to be realized, however, Ellison contended <The Four Freedoms> "must be sloganized in terms of *the specific national aspirations of all peoples*" (p. v, emphasis in original). Ellison's stipulation indicates how <The Four Freedoms> were expressed to reflect the values and concerns of the dominant white majority. African Americans did not possess the same political and material advantages as the white majority, thus, blacks had a harder time identifying with the aims Roosevelt (1941) articulated in "The Four Freedoms." Indeed, how does one sacrifice for the defense of <freedom>, when institutional constraints limit <freedom>?

Given the dislocation of <The Four Freedoms>, Ellison (1942/1969a) called for African Americans and colonial <peoples> to express their relationship to the war effort from their own positionalities. Ellison utilized the rhetorical currency of <The Four Freedoms> to resist the restrictions which Roosevelt imposed, in turn, providing non-dominant groups the space to self-define the pursuit of <freedom>. Ellison (1942/1969a) extended the following question: "[I]n the

new light of the Four Freedoms: why should not decisions relative to the national aspirations of American Negroes rest with themselves rather than with those outside their own group?" (p. iii).

Ellison then harnessed <The Four Freedoms> to define the nature of WWII:

if this war is to be a peoples' war, based upon the Four Freedoms, then along with the discarded techniques of imperialist domination must go all of the old imperialist definitions and classifications of minority and colonial peoples. All peoples must be allowed to define themselves! (p. iv)

Ellison critiqued how "minority and colonial peoples" lacked the self-determination to assert their own social and political concerns. Utilizing <The Four Freedoms> to characterize WWII as a "peoples' war," Ellison removed the emphasis from nation states and, instead, centered the focus on liberating the oppressed.

Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) ideographic usage of <The Four Freedoms> illuminated how <The Four Freedoms> failed to capture the experiences of African Americans and colonial <peoples>. However, instead of rejecting <The Four Freedoms>, Ellison called for dispossessed <peoples> to engage the underlying principles of <The Four Freedoms> in a way so that they could articulate their own <freedom> struggle. Ultimately, by associating <The Four Freedoms> with colonial <peoples>, Ellison was able to frame liberation as the primary goal of WWII.

### **<Liberty>**

Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) accent on <liberty> offered an alternative to the dominant assumption that the Allied goal was to preserve <freedom>.

Moreover, Ellison's reinvention enabled him to define the standards by which Roosevelt's leadership should be measured:

The test of a Democratic leader's greatness lies in his ability to perform great liberating actions through mastery of politics and military strategy to the point that the old and hindering in men's lives may be discarded and the century of the "common man" ... might be brought into being. (p. 195)

By calling for "the century of the 'common man,'" Ellison appropriated the key metaphor from Vice President Henry A. Wallace's (1942) address to the Free World Association, in which Wallace proclaimed WWII could only be resolved by "an economic peace that is just, charitable and enduring" (para. 19). Ellison's (1942/1969b) adoption of the "common man" motif signaled a critique of the class disparities which prevented some <peoples> from experiencing the <freedom> which Roosevelt (1941) described in "The Four Freedoms." Such class consciousness prompted Ellison (1942/1969a) to declare, "*This is a peoples' war for national liberation, and it must be fought and won by the people*" (p. i, emphasis in original). In so doing, Ellison dissociated <liberty> from the machinery of governments and, instead, identified actual human experience as the barometer of <liberty>.

Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) editorials indirectly appealed to <liberty> by revealing deficiencies in the dominant understandings of <democracy> and <freedom>. By modifying <democracy> and <freedom> with qualifying terms (e.g. "true," "full," etc.), Ellison exposed how the meanings of <democracy> and <freedom> shifted according to social and political context. First, Ellison revealed an absence of <liberty> by problematizing <democracy>. In light of <The Four Freedoms>, Ellison (1942/1969b) argued

the U.S. could not resolve international domination until its own domestic inequities were reconciled:

[I]f the President cannot master the problem of freedom for all here at home, how can he hope to win freedom for the whole world? History moves from the specific to the general; the key to a world victory for democracy lies in the victory of *full* democracy in the U.S. and in British territories. (p. 195, emphasis added)

In Ellison's calculus, if the U.S. and Great Britain wished to spearhead the cause for international <democracy>, first, they needed to resolve the racism and colonialism which plagued their own boundaries. Ellison's indictment of <democracy> extended beyond the realm of executive leadership; he also criticized black civic leaders. In critiquing the paternalism which had historically guided middle class black leaders, Ellison (1942/1969a) suggested these state-endorsed black leaders did not adequately address the complexities of the black experience. According to Ellison, in order to voice the social and political inequities which confronted black America, the public dialogue needed to reflect the mood of the black proletariat: "They have created a culture and the basic outlines of a *truly* democratic vision of life" (p. iii, emphasis added). Whereas state-endorsed black leaders functioned like mouthpieces for the dominant ideology, the black folk would express the authentic struggles of the black experience.

Second, Ellison (1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) illustrated a need for <liberty> by fixating on <freedom>. Ellison (1943/1969c) advocated an attitude which "believes the historical role of Negroes to be that of integrating the larger American nation and compelling it untiringly toward *true* freedom" (p. 298, emphasis added). Thus, Ellison crafted a framework wherein Americans could not experience "true" <freedom> until blacks had successfully integrated into society.

Such logic is rhetorically significant because as Ellison diagnosed the imperfections of American society, he simultaneously prescribed blacks as the catalysts of <freedom>. Ellison (1942/1969b) further sketched the inefficacy of <freedom> by comparing the wartime programs of American Vice President Henry A. Wallace and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Ellison favored Wallace's (1942) position, particularly his appeals to "the common man." However, Ellison (1942/1969b) feared the "the long, bloody, hate-ridden years of Imperialism and racial chauvinism, [gave] Churchill's words a meaning that chills minority and colonial minds" (p. 196). Whichever approach U.S. officials implemented, Ellison maintained "American Negroes shall continue to seek *democratic* freedom regardless of where it lies, and the 'common man' of the world will be with them" (p. 240, emphasis added). Although Wallace and Churchill each advocated <The Four Freedoms>, Ellison distinguished Wallace's approach as the more "democratic" version of <freedom>. By asserting that blacks would continue to "seek" such "democratic" <freedom>, Ellison implied that, in its current state, U.S. <freedom> was inequitable.

Ellison (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) questioned the substance behind the American and Allied wartime aims. Rather than fall in line with the doctrine of <The Four Freedoms>, Ellison pointed to the inequities which plagued African Americans and colonial <peoples>, contending such disparities were grounds to position <liberty> as the central motive of the war effort. Ellison's discursive shift suggested <The Four Freedoms> would be politically inept unless freeing philosophy translated into the liberation of dispossessed <peoples>. Ellison's contestation of the dominant ideology injected an alternative narrative into the wartime discourse.

Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) editorials in *The Negro Quarterly* changed the scope and trajectory of the wartime effort. First, Ellison utilized <fascism> to critique the inequities of U.S. and Allied race relations. In so doing, Ellison problematized the dominant assumption that U.S. and Allied forces signified an ultimate good. Second, Ellison advocated the principles of <The Four Freedoms> but insisted <peoples> must be allowed to engage <The Four Freedoms> according to their own cultural needs. Grounding <The Four Freedoms> in cultural experience illustrated <freedom> was an illusory goal unless <peoples> had a role in *defining* <freedom>. Third, by texturing the vision of <The Four Freedoms>, Ellison redefined the primary goal of U.S. and Allied forces, supplanting <freedom> with <liberty>. With greater emphasis on <liberty>, Ellison revealed how dispossessed <peoples> must first be liberated before they could fight a war for <freedom>.

### **The Dialectic of <The Four Freedoms>**

The tenor of Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) editorials deviated from the wartime rhetoric of President Roosevelt and other U.S. officials. In "The Four Freedoms," Roosevelt (1941) sought to foster a harmonious wartime climate wherein Americans would be united around ideals such as <freedom>, <security>, and <patriotism>. Ellison (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c), on the other hand, exposed how racial discrimination undermined the U.S. and Allied commitment to <The Four Freedoms>. Given the discursive discrepancy, I utilize Lucaites and Condit's (1990) culturetypal/counter-cultural perspective to examine "the interplay of material conditions of social existence and rhetoric" (p. 7). Following Lucaites and Condit's framework, I contend Roosevelt's (1941) "The Four Freedoms" signifies a culturetypal

appeal and Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) editorials in *The Negro Quarterly* represent a counter-cultural appeal.

Roosevelt's (1941) insistence upon national <freedom> served to minimize difference as a way of channeling the flux of American opinions into a singular, homogenous vision for the U.S. war effort. Lucaites and Condit (1990) argued, "Rhetors who successfully rearrange and revivify the culturally established public vocabulary to produce social change are masters of culturetypal rhetoric" (p. 8). Roosevelt's (1941) ideographic usage in "The Four Freedoms" exemplifies culturetypal rhetoric, because he invoked pre-existing American values in order to establish the primacy of a nuanced version of <freedom>. Roosevelt initiated his revivification of <freedom> by harnessing the threat of foreign <tyranny> to produce doubts about the future of U.S. <freedom>. Establishing such a rhetorical canvas enabled Roosevelt to portray <security> as the foundation of U.S. <freedom>. With emphasis on <security>, Roosevelt galvanized support for defense initiatives: "The need of the moment is that our actions and our policy should be devoted primarily—almost exclusively—to meeting this foreign peril. For all our domestic problems are now a part of the great emergency" (para. 19). Roosevelt implied all domestic concerns must be subordinated to the war effort; if the U.S. were stripped of <freedom>, Americans would no longer enjoy the right to deliberate over domestic concerns. Thus, the presence of <tyranny> demanded Americans support any initiatives which would strengthen U.S. <security> and preserve U.S. <freedom>. Roosevelt suggested Americans could support U.S. <security> efforts by dedicating themselves to <patriotism> and <unity>. In sum, by drawing a series of related, ideographic connections, Roosevelt imposed an enthymematic logic in which the preservation of U.S. <freedom> hinged upon Americans' commitment to



<security>, <patriotism>, and <unity>. Crafting such an ideological landscape prioritized the vitality of the republic over the experiences of the groups and individuals who constituted the republic, thus, discouraging dissent from state policies.

Roosevelt's (1941) discourse in "The Four Freedoms" highlighted threats to U.S. <freedom> which, in turn, precipitated an ideological climate in the U.S. which predominantly focused on preserving <freedom>. However, in emphasizing the preservation of <freedom>, U.S. public officials characterized <freedom> as a pre-existing condition which Americans universally experienced. Such a conception of <freedom> rhetorically deflected the asymmetrical distribution of U.S. <freedom>. In other words, while the dominant discourse advocated <freedom>, it failed to convey how <freedom> was not a universal experience. African Americans were all too familiar with the reality that <freedom> shifted according to one's positionality within a given context. Ellison's editorials in *The Negro Quarterly* criticized the proponents of <The Four Freedoms> failure to articulate a program which reflected the experiences of African Americans and colonial <peoples> throughout the world. According to Lucaites and Condit (1990), "when conditions arise that invite or require social change, especially when a displaced group seeks to have its interest granted some kind of public legitimacy, the public vocabulary needs to be managed and reconstituted" (p. 8). Bridled by the dominant ideology's stringent demands for <patriotism> and <unity>, Ellison (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) sought to underscore the needs of blacks and colonial <peoples> by reinventing <The Four Freedoms>. Lucaites and Condit (1990) argued, "Those rhetors who introduce new—and thus culturally unauthorized—characterizations and narrative to the public vocabulary and who challenge existing characterizations and narratives are masters of counter-

cultural rhetoric” (p. 8). Ellison’s (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) ideographic usage in his wartime editorials constitutes a counter-cultural rhetoric, because in exposing the biases of <The Four Freedoms>, he repositioned <liberty> as the primary aim of the U.S. and Allied war effort. Ellison illustrated how imposing a homogenous conception of <freedom>—as <The Four Freedoms> did—would only perpetuate the systems of domination which the U.S. and Allied forces claimed to oppose. Ultimately, Ellison (1943/1969c) concluded, “Freedom, after all, cannot be imported or acquired through an act of philanthropy, it must be won” (p. 300). Ellison’s counter-cultural rhetoric illuminated how <freedom> is baseless unless <peoples> are at <liberty> to articulate their own political, social, and economic needs.

Although Roosevelt (1941) and Ellison (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) utilized similar ideographs to articulate their programs, when engaged in dialogue, their positions clash in discord. The dissonance stems from the material conditions and rhetorical motives which separated their discourses. Faced with the executive pressures of a nation at war, Roosevelt (1941) needed to craft a platform capable of garnering widespread support for the policies and actions of the federal government. Thus, Roosevelt centered his appeal on <freedom>—a symbol which both conjured the nation’s storied past and diametrically opposed the actions of foreign aggressors. Exemplifying the privileges of his identity as an elite, white male, Roosevelt characterized <freedom> as the foundation of American life—a condition which he discussed in terms of preservation. Contrastingly, although Ellison also (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) responded to the exigencies of WWII, moreover, he sought to critique the presence of <The Four Freedoms> as a state-sanctioned, material discourse. As an African American born into a system of institutional racism and Jim Crow segregation, Ellison had experienced the

scorn of racial prejudice firsthand, and understood his civil liberties were reduced simply on the basis of his skin color. In Ellison's assessment, the version of <freedom> which Roosevelt (1941) advocated wrongfully assumed the universality of experience. In the end, the difference of Roosevelt and Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) ideographic usages boil down to the matter of audience.

### **Interpretive Clashes of <The Four Freedoms>**

The ideographic clash between Roosevelt (1941) and Ellison (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) exemplifies the asymmetrical power distribution which pervaded U.S. society during WWII (Moore, 2005; Takaki, 2000; Wynn, 2010). Institutional racism and Jim Crow segregation produced an environment where race was an immutable signifier of power. Although Roosevelt's (1941) culturetypal rhetoric in "The Four Freedoms" was by no means explicitly racist, his ideographic usage perpetuated hegemonic structures which trapped African Americans within the existing discriminatory system. Ellison (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) responded with a counter-cultural reinvention which challenged dominant assumptions and expressed black and minority viewpoints. The dialectical tension which results from their contested interpretations of <The Four Freedoms> raises questions about audiences and motives.

The presence of the contested interpretations signifies what McKerrow (1989) termed a "polysemic critique" (p. 108). According to McKerrow, "A polysemic critique is one which uncovers a subordinate or secondary reading which contains the seeds of subversion or rejection of authority, at the same time that the primary reading appears to confirm power of the dominant cultural norms" (p. 108). However, as rhetorical scholars have highlighted, the term "polysemy" is problematic because it has been characterized in disparate, oftentimes contradictory,

terminologies (Ceccarelli, 1998; Condit, 1989; Jasinski, 2001). Condit (1989) contended instances of resistive reading more accurately indicate a text is “polyvalent.” Specifically, Condit argued, “Polyvalence occurs when audience member share understanding of the denotations of a text but disagree about the valuation of those denotations to such a degree that they produce notably different interpretations” (p. 106). Ceccarelli (1998) similarly maintained “polysemy” exists when audiences disagree about a text’s denotation; “polyvalence” occurs when audiences agree about a text’s denotation, but disagree about the implications of the denotation.

Roosevelt (1941) and Ellison (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) expressed contrasting ideographic commitments in relation to <The Four Freedoms>. The incongruity illuminates how their rhetoric sought differing: (1) audiences and (2) social responses. First, Roosevelt (1941) and Ellison (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) each appealed to their audience by invoking a sense of “the people” (McGee, 1975); however, while Roosevelt (1941) called upon <people>, Ellison (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) called upon <peoples>. As McGee (1987) concluded from his study of the ideograph <people(s)>, Americans’ penchant for using the singular <people> instead of the plural <peoples> is indicative of the coordinated American commitments to individuality and private property. Yet, according to McGee, while the usage of <people> asserts the value of private property, it simultaneously homogenizes conceptions of American identity. The rhetorical construction of an archetypal <American> results in the political underrepresentation of cultural minorities. Ellison (1942/1969a) alluded to such a condition when he called for black leaders to develop forms of protest which aimed for “a *real* representative government which includes Negro members of the House of Representatives, the Senate, the Supreme Court, the President’s Cabinet, and all other powerful governmental

committees” (p. v, emphasis in original). Moreover, Ellison (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) consistently discussed <The Four Freedoms> in terms of how they influenced the world’s “dispossessed,” “oppressed,” “colonial,” and “darker” <peoples>. In “The Four Freedoms,” Roosevelt (1941) never once used the plural <peoples>. Rather, Roosevelt called for material and symbolic sacrifices in the name of a singular American <people>.

Second, the ideographic clash between Roosevelt (1941) and Ellison (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) reveals how their rhetoric aimed to produce different social responses. Roosevelt’s (1941) ideographic usages constituted a rhetoric of control. Roosevelt harnessed the threat of<tyranny> to correlate <freedom> with <security>, thus, imposing a homogenous concept of the American <people>. Roosevelt drew upon the demands of <patriotism> and <unity> to animate his simplified sketch of the American <people>. Roosevelt’s appeal cultivated a wartime landscape which precluded dissent from state policies. Ellison’s (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) subsequent reinvention of <The Four Freedoms> constituted a rhetoric of liberation. Ellison enacted the material discourse of <The Four Freedoms> in response to state-sanctioned ideological boundaries. In so doing, Ellison utilized <The Four Freedoms> as an opening wedge for highlighting the dominant ideology’s failure to articulate the concerns of African Americans and colonial <peoples>. Ellison’s emphasis on the plurality of <peoples> revealed how monolithic appeals overlook the needs and concerns of the oppressed.

The exigencies of WWII posed African American spokespersons with considerable rhetorical constraints. The pre-existing political, social, and economic disparities which plagued blacks were compounded by a wartime discourse which failed to represent the concerns of black

America. Ralph Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) editorials in *The Negro Quarterly* responded to this cultural need by reinventing the ideographic dimensions of <The Four Freedoms>. Ellison's advocacy for the liberation of dispossessed <peoples> challenged dominant assumptions and offered a rhetorical alternative to the state-sanctioned discourse.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### IMPLICATIONS

In 1952, Ralph Ellison published the novel *Invisible Man*, the story of an unnamed, African American who struggles through America's racial divisions during the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ellison's anonymous narrator opened the novel by describing the conditions of his "invisibility":

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except for me. (p. 3)

Reflecting on his work three decades after its original publication, Ellison (1981/1995) declared his nameless, "invisible" protagonist was borne out of a desire "to manipulate imaginatively those possibilities that existed both in Afro-American personality and in the restricted structure of American society" (p. xxi). *Invisible Man*, then, was more than merely an expression of imagination and literary freedom; rather, as Ellison described the work, *Invisible Man* was a highly political and rhetorical venture:

[M]y task was one of revealing the human universals hidden within the plight of one who was both black and American, and not only as a means of conveying my personal

vision of possibility, but as a way of dealing with the sheer rhetorical challenge involved in communicating across our barriers of race and religion, class, color and region—barriers which consist of the many strategies of division that were designed, and still function, to prevent what would otherwise have been a more or less natural recognition of the reality of black and white fraternity. (p. xxii)

Viewed from an ideological perspective, the above quotation reveals two distinct readings. First, one views Ellison's emphasis on "human universals" as an agency for overcoming the "strategies of division" which prevented blacks and whites from living in "fraternity"—"fraternity" here implying brotherhood. On the other hand, his insistence on the double-consciousness which plagued "one who was both black and American" exposes an ironic reading where "fraternity" more closely resembles "faction." Whereas the first reading gives way to a "black and white" brotherhood, the second reading signals "the reality of black *and* white" factions. The latter draws into focus the ideological barriers which posed Ellison and other black rhetors with rhetorical challenges during the WWII era. From the second angle, blacks were not oppressed by "strategies of division"; on the contrary, blacks were stifled by U.S. officials' appeals to national <unity>. In other words, by centering collective values, U.S. officials' precluded black spokespersons from voicing the specific frustrations of black America—in essence, rendering the needs of black America invisible.

Following Ellison's (1981/1995) position, my concluding chapter problematizes the intersections of race and the American experience. In particular, my insights extend from a perspective where race is textured through the material collusion of rhetoric, ideology, and history. Accordingly, Chapter Five meditates on three particular intersections. First, Ellison's



(1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) reinvention of <The Four Freedoms> is indicative of a longstanding tradition of African American mimesis (Wilson, 2003). Thus, I aim to illuminate how Ellison's use of mimesis suggested a fragmented sense of identity among African Americans during the era. Second, I examine how the ideological barriers evidenced in the WWII era signal ideology's role in the articulation of cultural experiences. Third, I explore how my project identifies the need for pedagogical advances in scholarship on black rhetorical history and public memory. Finally, I close by analyzing how my insights from Chapter Four inform contemporary understandings of race discourse.

### **Mimesis in African American Rhetoric**

Whether explicitly or implicitly, rhetorical critics typically follow Aristotle's (c. 350 BC/2007) contention, "Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (p. 123). Rhetorical critics engage texts by analyzing how rhetors shape their discourse in accordance with the demands of the context. Bitzer (1968) echoed such logic when he argued rhetors respond to the demands of rhetorical situations. Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) editorials in *The Negro Quarterly* reflect the classic rhetorical model. Ellison responded to U.S. ideological commitments within the context of WWII. Ellison's reinvention of <The Four Freedoms> signified an instance of mimesis.

Scholars have illustrated the polysemic nature of mimesis (Haskins, 2000; Terrill, 2011; Wilson, 2003). Haskins (2000) signaled mimesis's polysemy by demonstrating how classical rhetoricians distinguished "*mimesis* as representation from *mimesis* as performative imitation and audience identification" (p. 7, emphasis in original). Wilson (2003), however, rejected the dichotomy and pursued the concept mimesis under the heading "imitation." Wilson showed

mimesis's recurrence within African American discursive practice. Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) nuanced appropriation of <The Four Freedoms> exemplified mimesis because he enacted his critique by imitating President Roosevelt's (1941) rhetorical appeal. In essence, Ellison (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) formulated his critique of institutional racism by fusing his "internal talents" with the "external resources" of the culture (Terrill, 2011, p. 302). The rhetorical imitation displayed in Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) wartime editorials, provides textual evidence for the modern viability of mimesis as a discursive practice.

According to Wilson (2003), studying mimesis in African American rhetoric may help orient rhetoricians to "the intersections of racism, rhetorical theory, and discursive practice" (p. 89). Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) ideographic usage in *The Negro Quarterly*, particularly his adoption of <The Four Freedoms>, echoes Wilson's (2003) position. Wilson argued blacks have historically "imitated the dominant culture to obtain a measure of independence and to establish grounds for their inclusion in the body politic" (p. 89). In particular, by (re)characterizing <The Four Freedoms> as an agency for liberating colonial <peoples>, Ellison (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) "imitated cultural norms" to adopt and extend "the ideals of citizenship" (Wilson, 2003, p. 89). Ellison (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) harnessed the norms of the dominant ideology as an agency for subverting the prejudicial structures of the dominant ideology. According to Terrill (2011), the dialectical tension which results from mimesis illustrated how "the process of rhetorical invention relies on the analysis of texts produced by others, which in turn forces the realization that public texts necessarily bear the imprint of multiple authors" (p. 302). Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b,

1943/1969c) attempted to challenge the dominant ideology through mimesis, demonstrating how, during the epoch, African Americans were confronted by the problematization of fragmented identities. In other words, although Ellison critiqued the system which subjugated blacks, he chose the machinery of the system as the most prudent vehicle for doing so. While whites dissociated themselves from blacks, blacks did not possess the autonomy to dissociate themselves from the very system of oppression.

Exploring African American mimesis during the WWII era is significant. The analysis demonstrates how the institutional racism of the epoch precluded rhetorical identification between blacks and whites. Indeed, as Wilson (2003) pointed out, during the antebellum period, the logic of racial difference made it impossible for European Americans to acknowledge any likenesses to African Americans—even when empirical evidence proved otherwise. Within the context of WWII, the state employed a discourse which demanded <unity> from all U.S. citizens. Although the expectation of African American conformity implicated blacks in full U.S. citizenship, they were not granted the equality which established such demands for <unity>. Yet, as Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) editorials demonstrated, mimesis can be utilized to interrogate such iniquitous structures and protest discriminatory systems.

### **Ideological Foundations of Cultural Rhetoric**

McGee's (1979, 1980) ideograph construct suggests rhetoric and ideology converge in the material form of abstract terms (e.g., <freedom>, <liberty>, <justice>). Lucaites and Condit's (1990) methodological advancement of the ideograph model illustrates how the connotations of ideographs can vary across cultural positionalities. In other words, although ideographs are summary terms which express collective values and principles, ideographs can be appropriated

in ways which either reaffirm the beliefs of the cultural majority (culturetypal), or in ways which deviate from and even critique the cultural majority (counter-cultural). Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) ideographic usage in *The Negro Quarterly* signifies a counter-cultural appropriation because he reinvented existing ideographic commitments to craft a vision which articulated the cultural experiences of African Americans and minority <peoples>. The presence of synchronic ideographic contestations across racial contexts highlights how ideographs can possess constitutive value when they intersect with signifiers of identity (e.g., race, class, gender).

Ellison's (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) ideographic reinvention of <The Four Freedoms> was predicated on the reality that black Americans did not possess the same rights as white Americans. However, without the exigence of institutional racism, the tenor of Ellison's critique would change shape, or perhaps cease to exist. Since Roosevelt's (1941) ideographic usage advanced a discourse which further perpetuated existing systems of racial discrimination, Ellison (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) was compelled to challenge those ideographs and provide a reorientation to articulate the concerns of African Americans and colonial <peoples>. Ellison's ideographic appropriation of <The Four Freedoms> functioned constitutively because he purged the ideograph of its dominant connotations and, instead, articulated a specific, culturally-grounded experience. As Charland (1987) elucidated in his analysis of the *peuple quebecois*, when a society is inundated by multiple, competing subject positions, its subjects may experience a degree of recalcitrance. Charland argued, "Successful new constitutive rhetorics offer new subject positions that resolve, or at least contain, experienced contradictions. They serve to overcome or define away the recalcitrance the world presents by providing the subject

with new perspectives and motives” (p. 142). By reframing <The Four Freedoms> and, in effect, the purpose of the U.S. and Allied war effort, Ellison (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) rejected the state’s appeals to preserving <freedom> and, instead, mobilized blacks around the ideographic platform of <liberty>.

As Ellison’s (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) ideographic reinvention exhibited, ideographs possess the potential to function constitutively in conjunction with any material signifier of identity (e.g., race, class, gender). Delgado (1995) demonstrated when non-dominant groups harness ideographs from counter-cultural stances, they wield the power to constitute their identities in opposition to the dominant forms of oppression. However, as Morrissey (2010) illustrated, culturally-grounded, ideographic reinvention does not always equate to immediate political success. Indeed, although Ellison’s (1942/1969a, 1942/1969b, 1943/1969c) ideographic usage was aimed at gaining social and political rights for African Americans, those rights would not materialize in legislative action until two decades later with the Voting Rights Act of 1965. However, if one conceptualizes black civil rights discourse as a linear continuum, Ellison’s wartime editorials then function as one of many black voices which collectively contributed to the exploits of the modern civil rights movement.

### **Exploring Pedagogical Advances**

In many ways, my project began as many rhetorical inquiries do—with the discovery of a contradiction. Specifically, I was mystified by how so many Americans could bestow the WWII era with the moniker “the greatest generation” (Brokaw, 2004) when, concurrently, the era was pervaded by Jim Crow segregation. Thus in closing, I reflect on how my project indicates the

need for pedagogical advances in future scholarship on both public memory and black rhetorical history.

First, my project demonstrates scholars should develop a more thorough engagement with the problematic of public memory. In the past two decades several scholars have approached various problems related to public memory (Balthrop, Blair, & Michel, 2010; Biesecker, 2002; Browne, 1995; Bostdorff, 2003, 2011; Dunn, 2010; Kahl & Leff, 2004; Noon, 2004; Phillips, 2010; Wilson, 2010), few studies have focused explicitly on the intersections of memory and race (Browne, 1999; Goodnight & Olson, 2006; Wilbur, 2002), and none of the published literature has examined how race factors in to the memory of WWII. WWII's vaunted status within contemporary American culture (Biesecker, 2002) provides scholars with a compelling reason to further examine the ways in which race has been reduced to the unspoken Other in WWII memory. As Goodnight and Olson (2006) argued, when dominant conceptions of public memory are contested, space opens for new interpretive evaluations. Provided such deliberative space, "[a]dvocates may reach backward and attempt to revalue past events, move laterally to unsettle present attributions of identity, and imagine a future where new precedents redraw political alignment and norms" (p. 610). Accordingly, sustained analyses of the intersections of WWII and race might help to (1) problematize the rhetorical legacy of WWII; (2) resolve contemporary problems of racial representation which stem from historical omission; and (3) safeguard against future tribulations regarding war and race.

Second, as I have demonstrated in previous chapters, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, African American spokespersons negotiated the ideological boundaries of institutional racism. Specifically, my project has honed in on a largely celebrated epoch in U.S. history and, upon

rhetorical analysis, has revealed how, despite the systemic repression of African Americans, black spokespersons still managed to formulate thoughtful rhetorical strategies for critiquing the interrelated issues of racism, colonialism, and imperialism. Yet, in spite of such rhetorical ingenuity, scholars have largely failed to examine the dimensions of black discourse from the epoch—only further underscoring the historic influence of U.S. institutional racism. Such scholarly omission contributes to the already truncated narratives which afflict black rhetorical history. My project problematizes the conventional perspective of black civil rights rhetoric which views the oratory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as the genesis of the modern black freedom struggle. On the contrary, I shed light on how King's tremendous accomplishments were preceded by a complex and robust history of black protest. Ultimately, the process of illumination is what shall add texture and depth to the existing literature on black rhetorical history. As Ellison's "Invisible Man" contended, "Without light I am not only invisible, but formless as well; and to be unaware of one's form is to live a death" (Ellison, 1952/1995, p. 7).

### **Implications for Contemporary U.S. Culture**

I opened this project by pointing out the way Barack Obama conspicuously appealed to the memory of WWII in his 2008 address, "A More Perfect Union." In the speech, Obama invoked the memory of WWII to illustrate a time in U.S. history where Americans overcame their collective differences in the name of a greater good. Obama's message was clear: Americans must transcend the divisions of their racial past. The week after Obama's address, conservative columnist, William Kristol (2008), remarked:

The only part of the speech that made me shudder was this sentence: "But race is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore right now."

As soon as I heard that, I knew what we'd have to endure. I knew that there would be a stampede of editorial boards, columnists and academics rushing not to ignore race. A national conversation about race! At long last! (para. 9-10)

However, such has not been the case. As Brown (2011) pointed out, dating back to his presidential campaign, Obama's discourse has largely fostered the feeling "that racism is part of a bygone era" (p. 551). Brown explained how such discourse serves "to alter one's sense of [America's] racist past by reinforcing collective visions in the present that would possibly inform racial ideologies of the future" (p. 543). For example, in "A More Perfect Union," one observes how Obama (2008) responded to a racial controversy by harnessing the collective memory of WWII—depicting the era as a time when Americans transcended their racial differences. Such appeals are problematic because of the way the postracial discourse de-problematizes race, projecting an America "wherein the boundaries of race have been surpassed and where racism is no longer a central problem" (Brown, p. 546). To return to my analysis from Chapter Four, during WWII, Ralph Ellison criticized President Roosevelt for his failure to articulate the institutional racism which undermined Americans' commitment to <The Four Freedoms>. The tragic irony is, six decades later, with an African American president in The White House, the problem of institutional racism is still being avoided.



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