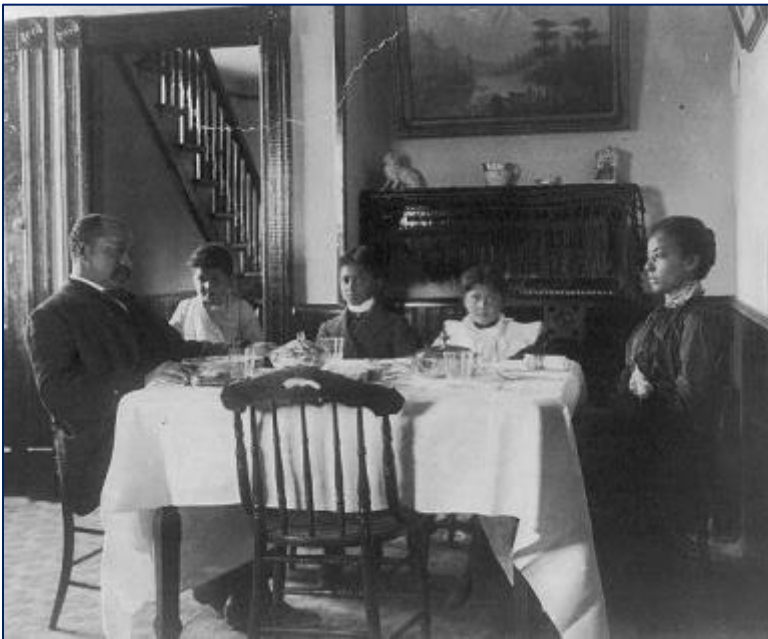


# African American Women and Race Relations: 1890-1920

## An Online Professional Development Seminar

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**AMERICA *in* CLASS<sup>®</sup>**

*from the* National Humanities Center

- To what extent were black women leaders of this period inspired by the Progressive Movement?
- Were they active in the campaign for women's suffrage?
- What was their position on U.S. entry into WW I?
- How did the work of women activists relate to the work of Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois?



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*Dignity and Damnation: The Nexus of Race, Gender,  
and Women's Work*  
(under contract, W. W. Norton, in progress)

*Women's Labor in the Global Economy: Speaking in  
Multiple Voices*, Editor and contributor.  
(Rutgers University Press, 2007)

Awarded "The Letitia Woods Brown Memorial  
Book Prize" (Assoc. of Black Women Historians)

- Independent Women
- Development of the Club Movement
- Period of Racial Uplift

## Sojourner Truth

(1797-1883)

- an African-American abolitionist and women's rights activist
- born into slavery in Swartekill, New York.
- escaped with her infant daughter to freedom in 1826.
- the first black woman to win such a case against a white man
- Her best-known speech on racial inequalities, "Ain't I a Woman?", was delivered extemporaneously in 1851 at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention.
- helped recruit black troops for the Union Army



# Independent Women: From Slavery to Freedom



## Harriet Tubman

(1820-1913)

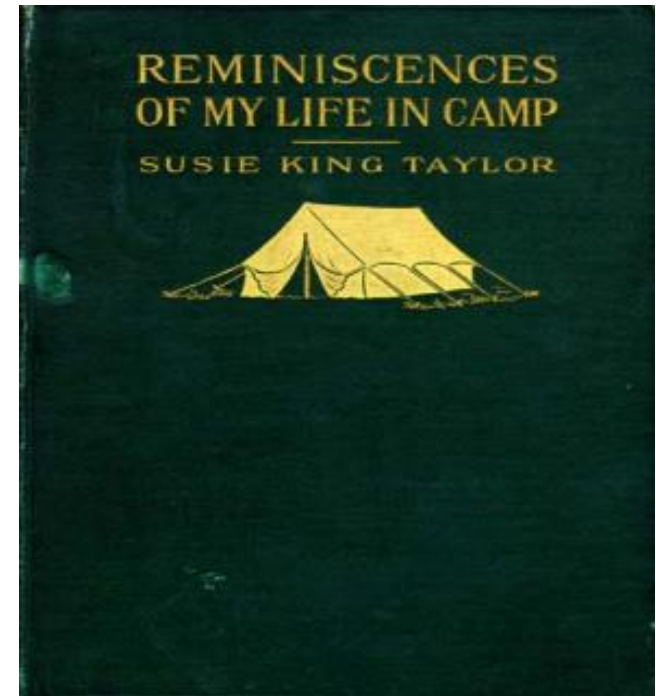
- Born into slavery in Dorchester County, Maryland, around 1821.
- Escaped bondage in 1849
- Underground Railroad
- During the Civil War, worked as a spy for the Union Army



*Susie King Taylor.*

**Susan King Taylor**  
(1848-1912)

Civil War nurse



From the frontispiece of her memoir,  
*Reminiscences of My Life in Camp with the 33d  
United States Colored Troops Late 1st S. C. Volunteers*,  
published in Boston, 1902.

**Charlotte Forten Grimke**  
(1837-1914)

- Born to a prominent black family in Philadelphia
- Forten became a member of the Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society
- In December 1878, when Forten was 41, she married Presbyterian minister Francis J. Grimké
- Organized a women's missionary group, and continued her “racial uplift” efforts in Washington D.C.





- After the Civil War
- Beginning of clubs: National Association of Colored Women
- Begin to see African American Women reaching out to white women

## Recent scholarship on the Club Movement:

- illuminates the history of African American women as leaders of and participants in the first New Negro Movement (1895-1914)
- highlights the long arc of interracial reform and activism
- revises the story of late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century African American history from the “nadir” to a period of organization and resistance, the “Women’s Era”
- expands the African American discourse of the period beyond the rivalry of Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois

# The Club Movement

- racial uplift through individual effort supported by secular and religious women's groups
- the ending of Jim Crow and lynching
- self-help, educational advancement, and domestic training to “prove” that the black masses were worthy of freedom, equality, and citizenship
- working collaboratively with white women to promote “women's” causes like women's suffrage, temperance, and higher education for women

## Racial Uplift

“What historians refer to as racial uplift ideology describes a prominent response of black middle-class leaders, spokespersons, and activists to the crisis marked by the assault on the civil and political rights of African Americans primarily in the U.S. South from roughly the 1880s to 1914.”

Kevin K. Gaines, “Racial Uplift Ideology in the Era of ‘the Negro Problem’” in *Freedom’s Story* from the National Humanities Center.

## Racial Uplift

“Black leaders generally countered anti-black stereotypes by emphasizing class differences among blacks, and their essential role as race leaders. From their perspective, to ‘uplift the race’ meant African American leaders combated stereotypes by emphasizing class differences among blacks that echoed the stereotypes themselves, highlighting their function as elites to reform the character and manage the behavior of the black masses. Against pervasive claims of black immorality and pathology, educated blacks waged a battle over the representation of their people.”

Kevin K. Gaines, “Racial Uplift Ideology in the Era of ‘the Negro Problem’” in *Freedom’s Story* from the National Humanities Center.

The first national secular black women's organization, the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) was formed in 1896.

# The Club Movement

## Mary Church Terrell (1863-1954)

- one of the first African-American women to earn a college degree, which she received from Oberlin College
- became an activist who led several important associations, including the National Association of Colored Women
- As a high-school teacher, Mary Church Terrell was appointed to the District of Columbia Board of Education, 1895-1906. She was the first black woman in the United States to hold such a position.



“While I was on the street car going to the building, I’ll try to think what I had better say on the Race Problem to a group of young white people who know very little about it, I assume....it occurred to me that the best thing for me to do would be to relate briefly to the pupils the progress which colored people have made-particularly the women-then appeal to their sense of justice.... Because I believed that if young white people were enlightened concerning the struggles which colored people are making to forge ahead-particularly the women-they would be more interested in them and more willing to work for their welfare, I sent a year’s subscription of the *Crisis*, the official organ of the NAACP, to Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Smith, Vassar and Wellesley Colleges.”

### Discussion Questions

- What is the goal of Terrell’s speech?
- What arguments does she propose to make?
- How would you describe the strategy Terrell proposes you use in her appearance before this white audience?



# The Club Movement

## **Josephine Silone Yates** (1859-1912)

- head of the department of natural science at Lincoln Institute (now Lincoln University)
- served as president and treasurer of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs
- served as president of the Missouri Association of Colored Women's Clubs and was instrumental in establishing women's clubs for African American women



# “The National Association of Colored Women,” Josephine Silone-Yates, 1904

“The National Council of Women, an organization founded in 1888, composed of twenty large national bodies, and as many local councils, and itself one of the affiliated branches of the International Council of women,...deserves the hearty and sincere gratitude of a race for the breadth of thought evidence and the advanced ground taken by its leaders in inviting to membership in its organization the National Association of Colored Women; and its act of affiliating this organization with the Council, as it did in the year 1900, was such a gracious recognition of the worth and merit of Negro womanhood ....”

## Discussion Questions

- What does this passage suggest about the “acceptability” of “colored” women’s groups?
- To Yates, what does the NCW’s invitation say about African American women?

# “The National Association of Colored Women,” Josephine Silone-Yates, 1904



“...when one reflects that few Negro women are women of leisure, or, of large means; and that the time and money they give to public work is usually at a sacrifice practically unknown to the women of other races engaged in similar work.”

# “The National Association of Colored Women,” Josephine Silone-Yates, 1904

“...The National has been urged at each biennial meeting to set aside a fund, however small, [to establish kindergartens and day nurses] and many other forms of national work that will help to make the National Association of Colored Women one of the great forces of the century in the solution of the race problem, a problem that can be solved only by race elevation.”

## Discussion Question

What does this passage suggest about the African American women’s club movement and the Progressive Movement?

## Other Progressive Causes Supported by the Club Movement:

- Women's suffrage
- Temperance
- Settlement Houses
- Public health



Jane Addams  
(1860-1935)  
Founder, Hull House  
in Chicago

Susan B. Anthony  
(1820-1906)  
Suffragist



# Fannie Barrier Williams (1855-1944)

“In our development as a race,  
the Colored Woman and the  
Colored Man Started Even”

Fannie Barrier Williams,  
“The Woman’s Part in a Man’s Business,”  
*Voice of the Negro* 1, no. 11 (1904).



**“The Intellectual Progress and Present Status of the Colored Women of the U.S. Since the Emancipation Proclamation,” Fannie B. Williams**

“The colored women, as well as all women, will realize that the inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is a maxim that will become more blessed in its significance when the hand of women shall . . . Make it the gospel of every-day life and the unerring guide in the relations of all men, women, and children.”

**Discussion Question**

What does this passage suggest about the relationship between the club movement and the political activism of white women at the time?

# “A Northern Negro’s Autobiography,”

Independent 57 (14 July 1904), Fannie B. Williams

“Plainly I would have been far happier as a woman if my life up to the age of eighteen years had not been so free, spontaneous, and unhampered by race prejudice. I have still many white friends . . . Yet I have never quite recovered from the shock and pain of my first bitter realization that to be a colored woman is to be discredited, mistrusted, and often meanly hated.”

## Discussion Questions

- What does this passage suggest about the women who joined the club movement?
- How might an African American woman from the South respond to this statement?



# Fannie B. Williams on Interracial Cooperation

Speaking as a member of the Committee of the Interracial Conference of Church Women, Williams claimed

“Realizing that interracial action must be preceded by interracial thinking, we find the women of our church need to learn to work with rather than for the Negro.”

## Discussion Questions

What does this passage suggest about the goals and attitudes of white women who collaborated with African American activists? Are they seeking an integrated society?

# Nannie Helen Burroughs (1879-1961)

- In 1896, Burroughs helped establish the National Association of Colored Women (NACW)
- She gained national recognition for her 1900 speech "How the Sisters Are Hindered from Helping," at the National Baptist Convention
- In 1909 founded the National Training School for Women and Girls in Washington, D.C.



“The next long step towards the solution of the race problem must be taken by white women . . . We will not get anywhere with our race relations program and interracial cooperation schemes until white women decide that this roasting of human beings alive, this lynching and burning in America must stop.”

## Discussion Questions

- How are Williams and Burroughs confronting white women, white society?
- Does their approach sound more like that of Booker T. Washington or W.E.B. DuBois?

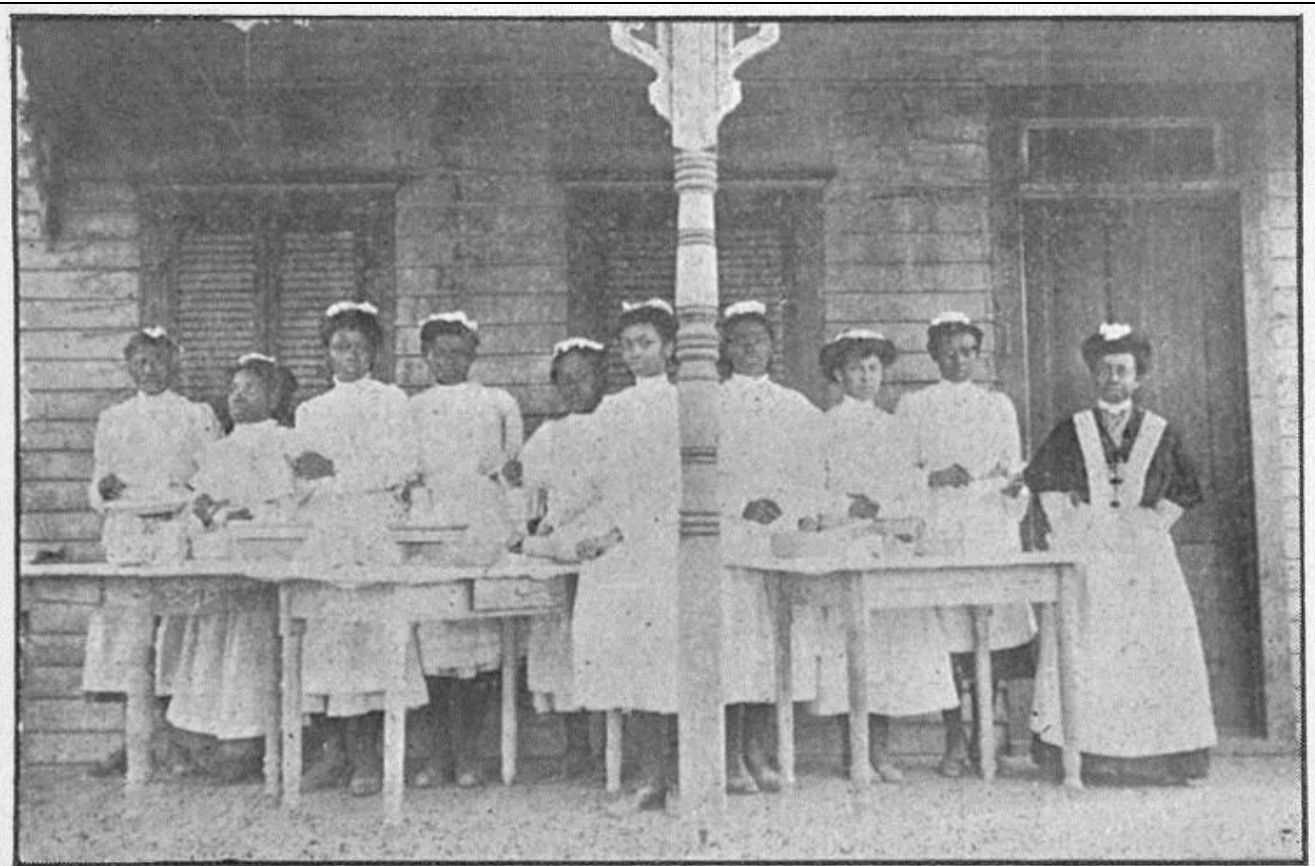
# The Women, Booker T., and W.E.B

Although a number of black club women were married to prominent men who owed their positions to Booker T. Washington, club women often straddled the fence between Washington and Du Bois, adopting aspects of both intellectual camps.

The husband of Fannie B. Williams, S. Laing Williams, for example, was a close friend of Washington. His appointments to the pension office in Washington and his later appointment as assistant attorney general in Illinois allegedly came as a result of his relationship with Washington. Yet both Laing and Fannie played active roles in the duBois-affiliated NAACP. In fact, despite Washington's opposition to the NAACP, Laing, served as the vice-president of the Chicago branch of the NAACP.

# The Women, Booker T., and W.E.B

For women, racial uplift often took the form of Washington's industrial training.



GIRLS' DOMESTIC SCIENCE CLASS. (Denton Industrial School).  
J. C. BRISCOE, Teacher.

# The Women, Booker T., and W.E.B

For women, racial uplift often took the form of Washington's industrial training.

Students at the National Training School pre-World War I



# The Women, Booker T., and W.E.B

Others criticized the idea of manual education.

## **Ida B. Wells** (1862-1931)

- Journalist, Feminist
- Club Woman
- Leading Anti-Lynching Crusader
- Early leader in the civil rights movement



## “Booker T. Washington and His Critics”, Ida B. Wells

But some will say Mr. Washington represents the masses and seeks only to depict the life and needs of the black belt. There is a feeling that he does not do that when he will tell a cultured body of women like the Chicago Woman’s Club the following story:

“Well, John, I am glad to see you are raising your own hogs.”

“Yes, Mr. Washington, ebber sence you done tole us bout raisin our own hogs, we niggers round here hab resolved to quit stealing hogs and gwinter raise our own.” The inference is that the Negroes of the black belt as a rule were hog thieves until the coming of Tuskegee.

There are those who resent this picture as false and misleading, in the name of the hundreds of Negroes who bought land, raised hogs . . . long before Booker T. Washington was out of school.

### Discussion Questions

- What does Washington’s performance before the Chicago Woman’s Club suggest about Washington’s relation with the club movement?
- What class differences does Washington’s performance highlight?
- What is Wells criticizing?



## “Booker T. Washington and His Critics,” Ida B. Wells

Does someone ask a solution of the lynching evil? Mr. Washington says in substance: Give me money to educate the Negro and when he is taught how to work, he will not commit the crime for which lynching is done. Mr. Washington knows when he says this that lynching is not invoked to punish crime but color, and not even industrial education will change that.

### **Discussion Question**

What is Wells criticizing?

# Conclusion

- African American women and their white collaborators played critical roles in the intellectual debates and the development of major late 19<sup>th</sup> century political movements
- Women reformers and their movements, like their male counterparts and the movements they headed, were more complex than the Washington-DuBois dichotomy.

# Conclusion

Despite their successes, black women leaders at this time faced persistent challenges including:

- Class tensions and ideological differences within the black women's club movement and the broader black community
- The perception that they were elitist and too accommodationist
- The exclusion from leadership positions in major civil rights organizations like the NAACP and the Negro Business League, relegation to women's auxiliary groups

Final slide

Thank you