

ABSTRACT

BENTON, ANDREW MORGAN. *The Press and the Sword: Journalism, Racial Violence, and Political Control in Postbellum North Carolina*. (Under the direction of Dr. Susanna Lee.)

Political tension characterized North Carolina in the decades after the Civil War, and the partisan press played a critical role for both parties from the 1860s through the turn of the twentieth century: Republican papers praised the reforms of biracial Republican legislatures while Democratic editors harped on white fears of “negro rule” and black sexual predation. This study analyzes the relationship between press, politics, and violence in postbellum North Carolina through case studies of the 1870 Kirk-Holden War and the so-called Wilmington Race Riot of 1898.

My first chapter argues that the Democratic press helped exacerbate the Kirk-Holden War by actively mocking black political aspirations, criticizing Republican leaders such as Holden, and largely ignoring the true nature and scope of the Klan in the 1860s. My second chapter argues that rhetoric played a crucial role in the way the violence in Wilmington transpired and has been remembered, and my conclusion discusses the ways that the press manipulated the public’s historical memory of both tragedies. It is not my intention to argue direct causation between racist rhetoric and racial crimes. Rather, I argue that North Carolina’s partisan press, and especially its Democratic editors, exacerbated pre-existing racial tensions and used images and language to suggest modes of thought—defense of white womanhood, for example—by which white supremacists directed and legitimized violence.

The Press and the Sword: Journalism, Racial Violence, and Political Control in Postbellum
North Carolina

by
Andrew Morgan Benton

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

History

Raleigh, North Carolina

2016

APPROVED BY:

Dr. David Ambaras

Dr. Craig Friend

Dr. Susanna Lee
Chair of Advisory Committee

DEDICATION

To my father.

BIOGRAPHY

Andrew Morgan Benton is a student of the history of Asia and the United States, with a focus on the American South and the societal upheavals of the nineteenth century. Andrew's love for history and cultural studies began with his childhood in Wilmington, North Carolina, and grew during a year-long trip teaching English and working as a missionary in Tuy Hoa, Vietnam. Andrew is an avid reader, an average runner, and a historian interested in the intersection of politics and faith in his nation's history. Following his graduate studies at North Carolina State University, Andrew hopes to stay connected to academia by teaching at the community college level and continuing to research the historical impact of media rhetoric.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although I cannot list everyone here, I would like to thank the professors and classmates who offered feedback and encouragement throughout the research and writing process. Dr. Keith Luria's Historiography course taught me to critically analyze other historians' arguments and introduced me to the joys and rigors of graduate study. Dr. Craig Friend challenged me to find a unique personal voice in Historical Writing, and his comments greatly enhanced my second chapter. Dr. David Ambaras and the late Dr. Jonathan Ocko broadened and enriched my graduate studies through courses on China and Japan—my perspective on current events and historical processes will (thankfully) never again be confined to the American or Atlantic worlds.

I am especially grateful to Dr. Susanna Lee for her patience and guidance as my advisor and committee chair.

My decision to pursue graduate study was greatly influenced by the encouragement of David Gorman, Sherman Graham, and the rest of my teammates in Tuy Hoa, Vietnam. To them, I am immeasurably grateful. Hẹn gặp lại.

Finally, I wish to thank my parents for their unending inspiration and support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: RIVALRY AND RETRIBUTION IN THE KIRK-HOLDEN WAR ...	12
CHAPTER TWO: “TO NE’ER BE NEGROIZED”: RHETORIC AND RAGE IN THE WILMINGTON COUP, 1898	61
CONCLUSION	106
WORKS CITED	116

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	“I Make Them Dance Or I Crush Them”	72
Figure 2	“A Serious Question, How Long Will This Last?”	73
Figure 3	“Why The Whites Are United”	78
Figure 4	“North Carolina’s Womanhood Appeals To The Ballot For Protection”	79
Figure 5	“Good Morning! Have you voted the White Man’s Ticket?”	80

INTRODUCTION

The decades between 1865 and the turn of the twentieth century featured political turmoil and bitter partisan conflict across the American South, a pattern that held true in North Carolina, where political rivalry climaxed in propaganda campaigns and outbursts of racially-motivated violence around the 1870 and 1898 elections. This is a study of the relationship between racial violence and the partisan press in North Carolina during these two distinct yet intimately-connected moments when the Democratic Party wrested control from its Republican rivals and worked to neuter the newfound freedom of the state's black citizens.

Newspapers and partisan editors played a crucial role in the violent suppression of individual rights during and after Reconstruction. Individual editors wielded immense influence in nineteenth-century North Carolina, and any study of politics and race must acknowledge their power. One early scholar wrote that, more than any other individual in postwar Southern society, it was the editor "who implanted the idea that the South could maintain its regional integrity only through the predominance of the Democratic Party."¹ The depth of feeling elicited by newspapers was manifested in pro-Confederate mobs targeting opponents' offices for destruction after the South's military fortunes declined. Such was the case in September 1863, when a group of Georgia soldiers heavily damaged the Raleigh offices of the *State Journal* and the *Standard*—a Unionist paper owned and edited by future governor William Woods Holden. Commentators on the raids acknowledged the danger of

¹ Thomas Clark, *The Southern Country Editor* (1948; repr., Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 22.

press rhetoric directing public action, with one paper writing that “The *State Journal* and the *Register* have asked for mob law and they have got it.”²

The media continued to influence public views on race after 1865. As former Confederate leaders used their wealth and influence to reclaim the state legislature in the 1870s, white supremacists overturned many of Reconstruction’s advances and introduced “Black Codes” that would restrict black political involvement through the 1890s and beyond. Dominated financially and numerically by Democrats, the partisan press spread racial stereotypes, destroyed public trust in elected Republican officials, and generally played a key role in the major political events of Reconstruction in North Carolina. This study covers two examples of this phenomenon, focusing on the “Kirk-Holden War” of 1870 and the “Wilmington Race Riot” of 1898. Press campaigns shaped public memory of the violence in both cases: the feud between Democratic editor Josiah Turner and Republican Governor Holden in 1870 deflected attention from the barbarity of the Ku Klux Klan, and a prolonged Democratic campaign in 1898 cast black Wilmingtonians as aggressors while spreading false reports of black men raping white women.

Although press events in the 1860s and 1890s may appear unrelated, the issues involved are intimately connected in North Carolina history due to the durability of racial stereotypes and the longevity of Democratic rule imposed after 1870. Racial stereotypes created and championed during the 1860s endured into the twentieth century, as did white citizens’ willingness to resort to violence and the press’s tendency to promote white supremacy. In a 1900 letter reprinted in the *Raleigh News & Observer*, for example, a North

² Quote in “Mob Violence in Raleigh,” *The Daily Progress*, 11 Sept 1863. For the *New York Times*’ coverage of both press attacks, see “News from the South; Particulars of the Emeute in Raleigh, North Carolina,” 20 September 1863.

Carolina citizen invoked Josiah Turner's fiery Democratic image from the Reconstruction era to argue for stricter applications of Jim Crow. "We plume ourselves as having redeemed North Carolina from negro thralldom," wrote the man, but "the real deliverance of North Carolina was effected early in the seventies...and this man [Turner] was the soul of the movement." In a leap across decades, the author then claimed Turner's rhetoric and racial ideology as a primary inspiration for the 1898 Wilmington Coup: when Wilmingtonian whites gathered to retake their city by force, "the spirit, the methods, almost the words of Joe Turner modified to the occasion, counted heavily."³

The Kirk-Holden War of 1870 and the Wilmington Race Coup of 1898 were two of the most important manifestations of the press's violent impact on a turbulent era in North Carolina's history. Fed steady streams of racist rhetoric by the press, white citizens in both cases defied their government and terrorized their neighbors in defense of a socially-constructed white supremacist ideal. Why, however, did "the spirit" and "the methods" of editors such as Turner resonate across the decades? In seeking to answer this question, clarification on two points is needed: I do not believe that press strategies in the 1860s directly created the rhetoric of 1898, and neither will I argue that the press directly caused these tragedies. Rather, I suggest that the partisan press encouraged radical political change

³ O. W. Blacknall, "He Pleads for Josiah Turner, the Great Editor of some Thirty Years Ago," *Raleigh News & Observer*, 1900, NC Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Some historians have argued that strict chronological divisions of "Reconstruction," "Redemption," and the "Gilded Age" should be reconsidered in favor of studying a long Reconstruction in North Carolina and across the South. I agree: the continuing influence of media-driven racial stereotypes, heroic efforts by black citizens to organize politically, and class tensions between Democratic elites and poor whites are crucial themes which extend across traditional eras of historical study. For examples of studies which trace Reconstruction's themes and social effects into the twentieth century, see Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Gregory Downs, *Declarations of Dependence: The Long Reconstruction of Popular Politics in the South, 1861-1908* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); and Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

in 1870 and 1898 by focusing on similar themes of black empowerment and white fear, and that the Kirk-Holden War and the Wilmington Coup thus deserve to be treated as thematically connected events. The white men who rode with the Klan and gunned down Wilmington's black citizens were thinking individuals with similar beliefs on racial supremacy, and the severity of their actions should be acknowledged regardless of their retroactive attempts to justify themselves by reciting media rhetoric. Racial violence did not occur solely due to the press, but the press was crucial to the manner in which these tragedies unfolded.⁴

The multi-faceted nature of this study demands ties to multiple veins of historiographical thought on the nineteenth-century United States. The first and most crucial body of work concerns the nineteenth-century press. Relevant studies of national scope include *Partisan Journalism*, in which Jim Kuypers argued that the Civil War “contributed to the slow movement toward a more objective, fact-driven press,” and Joshua Brown’s *Beyond the Lines: Pictorial Reporting, Everyday Life, and the Crisis of Gilded Age America*, which opposed Kuypers by arguing that political biases actually increased during the volatile politics during and after Reconstruction. While national news services such as the Associated Press began to adopt objectivity as a professional ideal by the late 1800s, North Carolina’s Democratic editors did not embrace objective reporting and continued to view journalism as an aggressively partisan tool to be mobilized across class, race, and geographical lines.⁵

⁴ Central to this study is the idea that, in a rural state without other modern systems for transferring information between isolated communities, newspaper rhetoric shaped peoples’ thoughts and actions. As historian Carol Gluck wrote, rhetoric and the ideologies it creates “not only reflect and interpret the social realities that sustain them; they also construct those realities.” Carol Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 7.

⁵ For Blondheim’s argument late 19th-century bias, see Menahem Blondheim, *The Telegraph and the Flow of Public Information in America, 1844-1897* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994). Beyond bias, it is also

Brown's observations thus held true in North Carolina throughout the 1890s, as highly biased cartoons and articles played an integral part in the stylization of black men as a political and sexual threat.⁶

This study's concept of rhetoric influencing yet not dictating individual thought derives from a body of modern media theory which began with the work of Walter Lippman in the early twentieth century. Lippman's greatest contribution to media studies came in his 1922 *Public Opinion*, in which he argued that media allowed modern readers to comprehend an increasingly-complex world by creating sets of stereotypes and constructed realities which do not correspond to lived experience. Lippman also suggested that readers actively decide which media realities to accept. Lippman's ideas directly contradicted the then-popular "hypodermic" media model, which posited that audiences largely accept media messages without questioning their validity or adjusting their meanings.⁷

Lippman's idea of media-constructed stereotypes helps explain the prevalence of "negro rule" rhetoric and claims of white subjugation by the partisan press in both the 1860s and 1898: if we accept that the press's goal was not to accurately convey North Carolina's

important to understand that the relative strength of Democratic and Republican presses in the South depended on an editor's ability to secure funding through government patronage, subscriptions, and business support. The most valuable source on this topic which I used during my research is Richard Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights: Republican Newspapers in the Reconstruction South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004).

⁶ Jim A. Kuypers, *Partisan Journalism: A History of Media Bias in the United States* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 35. For discussion of political cartoons, see Joshua Brown, *Beyond the Lines: Pictorial Reporting, Everyday Life, and the Crisis of Gilded Age America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). In addition to the sources referenced above, Praeger has published a series of survey texts entitled "The History of American Journalism" which discusses in accessible fashion the evolution of the press from the Colonial era to the twentieth century. The volume in Praeger's series applicable to this paper is Ted Curtis Smythe, *The Gilded Age Press, 1865-1900* (Westport: Praeger, 2003).

⁷ See Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922). The hypodermic model was supported by proponents of early twentieth century propaganda films and radio news broadcasts. Lippman's rebuttal of this way to view the media was supported in the 1940s by Paul Lazarsfeld, whose *The People's Choice* contended that audiences are generally more critical than accepting of media messages. See Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948).

sociopolitical reality, it follows that editors would choose rhetoric which appealed to their white readers' prejudices and would allow those readers to make sense of federal pressure for racial equality. A second and more difficult question involves readers' response to this racist rhetoric—how did white North Carolinians respond to the messages placed before them by newspapers in the late nineteenth century? Although few sources directly answer this question on an individual level, modern media theory suggests an answer through Jay Blumler's and Elihu Katz's "uses and gratifications" theory. Based on the idea of an active audience, uses and gratifications theory argues that readers function similarly to consumers in a marketplace, selecting and rejecting specific messages which validate their identity or satisfy emotional needs. The uses and gratifications theory provides a powerful model for understanding why, for example, white citizens chose to accept obviously false claims of black rape as justification for extremist violence in Wilmington. White readers repeatedly accepted and propagated rhetoric which described them as defenders and providers of society as under attack, and segments of that readership took drastic action to make that rhetoric a reality.⁸

In addition to drawing from press history and media theory, both chapters of this study discuss the public devaluation of black life and examine the motives of racial violence. How did extremists in 1870 and 1898 justify their actions? What shared cultural beliefs informed their opinions and worked to divert or dampen their guilt? Leon Litwack discussed

⁸ For a succinct summary of Blumler's and Katz's Uses and Gratifications theory, see Jay G. Blumler and Elihu Katz, eds., *The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1974). Stuart Hall updated and advanced the Uses and Gratifications model in 1978 with *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. In this treatise on government and just punishment, Hall advanced a theory of mass media which based on the ideas that readers process media messages based on their unique life experiences and that every received message impacts the viewer's life in some way. Hall called this complex practice of media consumption "encoding," and his theory has continued to direct media studies into the twenty-first century. See Stuart Hall, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (London: Macmillan, 1978).

these questions in his 1998 *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow*, in which he addressed the psychology of lynching by arguing that white mob violence required a belief that public atrocity was acceptable when in defense of societal ideals. This belief was present in both 1870 Klan raids and in the cartoons of 1898.⁹

Litwack's idea of devalued black life is also found in Jennie Lightweis-Goff's 2011 *Blood at the Root: Lynching as American Cultural Nucleus*. Lightweis-Goff asserts that viewing lynchings as the work of pathological outliers has prevented American society from confronting its own complicity in mass racism and "the collectivity of violence."¹⁰ A "collectivity of violence" characterized the tragedies of 1870 and 1898, and I contend that white supremacists were only able to commit atrocities due to the active and passive support of mass programs such the legal system, statewide economic structures, and the press.¹¹

After the press and racial violence, a third important theme in this study is the long Reconstruction, or the idea that North Carolina's history between the Civil War and the

⁹ Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 280-325. Public violence and devaluation of black life are also themes of Ashra Rushdy's 2012 *American Lynching*. Rushdy emphasized the role of textual reporting of lynchings, identifying a "lynching discourse" across the South that described violence against blacks as necessary for preventing future crime. Built around "myths, narratives, and imagery" of black sexuality similar to the Democrats' 1898 rhetoric, Rushdy's "lynching discourse" was a powerful mobilizing tool because it allowed white supremacists to justify their actions as a defense of sexual purity—an ideal "more important than the constitution" to which ex-Confederates were forced to swear allegiance. Ashraf H. A. Rushdy, *American Lynching* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 94-95.

¹⁰ Jennie Lightweis-Goff, *Blood at the Root: Lynching as American Cultural Nucleus* (New York: SUNY Press, 2011), 13.

¹¹ It is worth noting that, as Lightweis-Goff writes, "the crusade by whites against African-Americans cannot be separated from religion." Lightweis-Goff, *Blood at the Root*, 11. Although religion is not a primary focus of this work, my thinking was also influenced by Jackson Lears's *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*. Lears argues that Protestantism, and especially a Protestant desire for public and personal regeneration in the wake of military defeat, drove white Southern actions after the Civil War. In this narrative, the white South turned to forceful exhibitionism to reinforce personal and community identities. Lears further asserts that patterns of increased physical violence in the late 1800s coincided with a hardening of racial divisions and a reemergence of white masculinity as the bastion of Southern culture. While I do not see Protestantism as the primary driving force behind either the Kirk-Holden War or the Wilmington Coup, Lears's idea of muscular white manhood is useful in explaining lynchings as an alternative to legitimate political control. For Lears's argument, see Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010).

twentieth century should be studied as a single continuum rather than separate eras such as “Reconstruction” and “Redemption.” I believe a long Reconstruction approach is particularly necessary for studies of racial violence and stereotype, as separating history into clearly demarcated periods tempts the observer to conclude that each period marks an automatic step toward racial equality and a twilight of certain types of ignorance. Lightweis-Goff summarized the dangers of such thinking when she wrote that, “because many Americans believe that racial justice has moved in a linear progressive fashion since Emancipation...Americans disavow the nearness of racism and the potential for continued vulnerability to its discipline.”¹²

I seek to add to this varied historiography in two primary ways. Firstly, I want to use the idea of the long Reconstruction to connect two seemingly-disparate case studies by focusing on shared themes. Secondly, I hope to begin the process of applying modern media theory, and especially Stuart Hall’s idea of cultural coding, to the historical press. Although journalism looked and functioned much differently in the nineteenth century than today, scholars should not assume that historical readers were any less analytical or critical than present-day consumers. Looking past the hypodermic media model, then, future studies should combine analysis of the written page, the material situation, and pre-existing societal

¹² Lightweis-Goff, *Blood at the Root*, 8. Several studies influenced my thoughts on the long Reconstruction in North Carolina. The foremost of these works was Eric Foner’s *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution*, in which Foner treads a middle road between historiographical camps of revisionism and post-revisionism to argue that Reconstruction created real change through Constitutional amendments and black enfranchisement even as white resistance defeated more idealistic programs. While the chronology of Foner’s study technically ends in 1877, his work is useful in arguing for a long Reconstruction because he frames Reconstruction as “the beginning of an extended historical process” defined by racism and disputes over control of labor and land rather than an era with a distinct end in 1877. Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), xxv. For the long Reconstruction in North Carolina, see also Michael Perman, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics: 1869-1879* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Gregory P. Downs, *Declarations of Dependence: The Long Reconstruction of Popular Politics in the South, 1861-1908* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); and Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under our Feet*, 123-25, 265-67.

prejudice to understand rhetoric's power to inspire action in the nineteenth century press. No previous study has attempted such an analysis of rhetoric in North Carolina in 1865 and 1898, and while much remains to be done, it is my hope that scholars will begin to seriously consider the impact of visual and written culture upon readers' actions and ideas of race.

The Kirk-Holden War and the Wilmington Coup occurred in distinct historical moments and different places. Beneath these differences, however, the campaigns and tragedies of 1870 and 1898 shared several connecting themes. These themes included aggressive anti-black rhetoric, white political anxiety, organized campaigns by the conservative elite to regain power, and the threat of physical violence. Although the KKK largely disappeared from the state following Democrats' return to power in the early 1870s, Wilmington and a host of other lynchings prove that racial tensions boiled just beneath the surface of public life.¹³ Most importantly for this study, both events saw newspapers calling for immediate revenge after news appeared of black assault.

The following chapters expand on these shared themes by emphasizing the connected nature of political control, public rhetoric, and private prejudice in nineteenth-century North Carolina. Chapter one covers the events surrounding the Kirk-Holden War, or the confrontation between Republican Governor William Woods Holden and the Ku Klux Klan of Alamance and Caswell Counties in 1870. Racial violence was a serious threat in both the late 1860s and the 1890s, but the Reconstruction-era press in many cases rejected the Ku

¹³ The statistics of post-Reconstruction racial violence in North Carolina, as across the wider South, are staggering. A 2008 study by Vann R. Newkirk identified fifty-four confirmed lynchings between 1877 and 1898, with fifty-three more killings occurring between 1898 and 1941. This total of 108 attacks does not include the myriad incidents which did not attract newspapers' attention or which have been lost from the historical record. Statistics compiled from Vann R. Newkirk, *Lynching in North Carolina: A History, 1865-1941* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2008), 169-170.

Klux Klan's existence or deflected responsibility from white attackers to their black victims. This chapter discusses the press's efforts to deny racial violence and the very personal interactions between government officials and editors—and especially between Holden and Josiah Turner—during the period. By discussing racial stereotypes in North Carolina journalism and public thought through 1870, I argue that the press actively misrepresented the KKK and vilified Holden to turn Republicans against him.

After covering the Kirk-Holden War, I turn to the event commonly known as the “Wilmington Race Riot” of 1898. The 1890s marked a period when the state's long-ruling Democrats faced a legitimate political challenge from a biracial coalition of Republicans and Populists. Democrats responded by using their political and press machines to launch campaigns of racially-charged propaganda which aimed to bring all white men, regardless of class, onto the white Democratic fold. This strategy bore tragic consequences in Wilmington on 10 November 1898, when white citizens destroyed a black editor's printing press, indiscriminately fired into Wilmington's largest black neighborhood, and forced the legally-elected municipal government to resign and leave the city. My second chapter seeks to understand the rhetoric and public memory of the only successful coup in the history of the United States. Specifically, I conclude that the press contributed to the Wilmington Coup by pummeling readers with Reconstruction-style rhetoric of “negro rule,” Republican fraud, and black sexual predation in the months leading to the 1898 elections.

We must understand that the media, in the nineteenth century as today, both shapes and reflects public opinions on politics and race. In a war-weary world of increasing racial and political complexity, the North Carolinian press during Reconstruction began to accept and project the lie that racial violence was inevitable. This rhetoric cultivated a culture of

passivity toward racial violence that reaped tragic dividends in Caswell County, Wilmington, and at untold atrocity sites into the mid-twentieth century. Scholars Pat Watters and Reese Cleghorn commented in the 1960s on the danger of racial callousness in words as applicable to the 1890s as their own time, writing that the media's sensationalist tendencies created "the amoral tendency to view a profound moral crisis in the South in cliché perspective, so that it came to seem like a baseball game, complete with box scores of broken heads."¹⁴

¹⁴ Pat Watters, *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Arrival of Negroes in Southern Politics* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967), 73. A note on terminology: Any historical study of rhetoric must give special weight to terminology. Although the events discussed in the following pages are now commonly known as the "Kirk-Holden War" and the "Wilmington Race Riot," it is vital to note that these names were adopted and popularized by a partisan press. Editors chose to describe these tragedies as "War" and "Riot" for distinctly political reasons. Turner and his allies described the militia's arrest of Klansmen in 1870—during which no prisoners died or received serious injury—in violent terms to incriminate Holden and the Republican legislature before the reading public. The naming of the violence in 1898 is more contested, with government and historical commemoration groups continuing to employ the phrase "Wilmington Race Riot" regardless of connotations changed by late twentieth-century racial unrest across the United States. While the phrase "Kirk-Holden War" effectively portrays the personal vitriol between Holden and the Klan, it is also my belief that describing the violence against Wilmington's black community as a "race riot" obscures the organized white plot that is the subject of the second chapter. I employ the press's use of the phrase "Kirk-Holden War" while choosing to avoid "Wilmington Race Riot," electing instead to use dates, "massacre," "violence," or the phrase "Wilmington Coup"—a designation that emphasizes the political goals and government turnover which distinguished the event.

CHAPTER ONE:

RIVALRY AND RETRIBUTION IN THE KIRK-HOLDEN WAR

On the cold night of 21 May 1870, a group of white brothers and their black friends kept an uneasy watch around the Caswell County courthouse in Yanceyville, North Carolina. They were looking for Republican state senator John Stephens, a champion of racial equality who left for a Democratic political rally at the courthouse the previous evening but had not returned. Racial violence reigned in the piedmont in those days, and the biracial posse feared the worst. Morning light justified their fear: Stephens's body lay in a locked storage room on the ground floor, gagged and stabbed in the neck and heart. Public outrage and confusion followed, much of it directed at the local Ku Klux Klan. Thirty-five interviews by the sheriff—himself a Klansman—predictably brought no suspects to light, and the state's conservative press blamed the area's black population. "Evidence is becoming more palpable that the negroes killed him," cried the Raleigh-based and heavily Democratic *Sentinel*. "It is known that most of the crimes committed in this State, have been done by disguised negroes."¹⁵

The language describing Stephens's murder is significant because editors in the Reconstruction South significantly influenced public thought. As articles circulated through public meeting spaces and newspapers reprinted one another's stories to save costs, a single editor could extend his political influence far beyond the limits of local circulation. In North Carolina, the editor of the Republican *Rutherford Star* acknowledged his paper's power by writing that "the political opinions and sentiments of the great mass of our people are molded by the press." Historian Richard Abbott has argued that Reconstruction-era Southern

¹⁵ Raleigh *Sentinel*, 2 June 1870, in Jim D. Brisson, "Civil Government was Crumbling around Me: The Kirk-Holden War of 1870," in *The North Carolina History Review* 88, no. 2 (April 2011): 141.

newspapers did in fact wield more political power than their Northern counterparts due to a comparative lack of rhetoric-bearing public institutions in the former Confederacy.¹⁶

The *Sentinel's* rhetoric is also important because it was untrue. Stephens had not been killed by “disguised negroes,” but rather by a group of white supremacists which included some of the most respected men in the county. His death was a racial hate crime, and outcry against the murder was not limited to the press. Within weeks, North Carolina Governor William Holden called up a militia from Western North Carolina and Eastern Tennessee, arrested dozens of known Klansmen, and suspended the writ of *habeas corpus* until the prisoners could be brought before a military tribunal. Holden’s actions proved to be political suicide, as the Democratic Party turned public opinion against the Governor to gain an electoral landslide in 1870 and the nation’s first impeachment of a state governor.

The narrative of Klan violence and Holden’s militia is known today as the “Kirk-Holden War,” a misnomer created in newspapers. Its popularity and persistence shows the power of the press to shape public memory. Holden’s action against the Klan involved no deaths or battles—indeed, the only casualties of the “war” were the Klan’s Republican victims. Regardless, conservative papers through the summer and winter of 1870 downplayed Klan culpability and repeatedly described Holden’s actions as warfare against his own people for personal gain. By combining the rhetoric of war with political warnings about the danger of black Republican rule, Democratic editors effectively tapped the

¹⁶ Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 62; *Rutherford Star*, 27 April 1867, quote reproduced in Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, 54. Abbott’s argument regarding the disproportionate influence of the Southern press aligns with the work of Charles Postel, who in his 2007 *The Populist Vision* argued that Populist organizers of the late 1800s transferred their faith in the organizational power of the Post Office into a reliance on 2nd-class deliveries of weekly newspapers to reach remote rural communities in the agrarian South.

emotions of bitter ex-Confederates to retake the state legislature in 1870, remove Holden from office in 1871, and cripple Reconstruction's prospects in North Carolina.¹⁷

The Kirk-Holden War served as the culmination of a racially-charged process rather than a random outburst of violent rhetoric. North Carolina's partisan press regularly featured racist representations of formerly enslaved people in the years after the Civil War.

Democratic newspapers printed images of threatening black personas and headlines warning of "negro rule," appealing to white voters of all classes to unite behind the Democratic party and save North Carolina from black corruption and Republican fraud. Viewed as the culmination of a historical process, the "War" addresses questions on rhetoric and press representations. What did editors argue, who did they target, and who did they ignore? More broadly, how did Democratic editors use the press to oppose Reconstruction policies and contribute to a failure of civil government in North Carolina so complete that by 1870 the state's governor chose to ignore the constitution to maintain order?

This chapter studies the strategies and violent consequences of Democratic newspaper rhetoric during Reconstruction. To understand how representations of black and white Republicans affected public opinion and appealed to white prejudice in the late 1860s, it is helpful to review ways that early historians thought about Reconstruction in North Carolina. The first major historian of North Carolina was J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, who applied "Dunning School" analysis and repeated much Democratic-era racial rhetoric in his 1914 *Reconstruction in North Carolina*. Hamilton argued that the KKK in North Carolina served

¹⁷ The term "Kirk-Holden War" appears to have been widely accepted for public discussion by early 1871, partly because the event was so often before the public's eye during Holden's impeachment trial. For a recent, brief discussion of the press's role in creating the "Kirk-Holden War" label, see Jim D. Brisson, "The Kirk-Holden War of 1870 and the Failure of Reconstruction in North Carolina," (M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, 2010), 38-48.

as a violent yet necessary reaction to black crime against whites. As formerly enslaved people led by opportunistic white villains “*unconsciously* set about the destruction of civilization in the South,” the Klan arose and “lifted the South from its slough of despond.” Hamilton’s negative view of freedmen carried over to his opinions on white Republicans and especially to Governor Holden; Hamilton titled his chapter on the Kirk-Holden War “The Reign of Terror” and characterized Holden as a political opportunist who used violence to consolidate control. In contrast, Hamilton described the Klan as a basically apolitical group which defended white property and honor against “secret leagues,” only indirectly influencing political change. After a brief span of irresponsible rule by blacks and Republican enemies of the white South, Hamilton wrote, North Carolina’s government “had come into the hands of the class best fitted to administer government, and the supremacy of the white race and of Anglo-Saxon institutions was secure.”¹⁸

Challenges to Hamilton’s Dunning School interpretation emerged by the 1970s, analyzing Democratic rhetoric as negative racial propaganda and identifying the KKK as a political organization pursuing white supremacy rather than opposing black villainy. One of the first major rebuttals against Hamilton’s work was Otto H. Olsen’s “The Ku Klux Klan: A Study in Reconstruction Politics and Propaganda,” which appeared in the *North Carolina*

¹⁸ Although Hamilton’s bias is clearly evident to modern-day readers, his interpretation is crucial because it represents the dominant perspective from which historians and educated white Southerners viewed Reconstruction for decades. Here, as always, rhetoric serves as a two-way lens which reveals both writer and subject. Joseph Grégoire de Roulhac Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina* (1914; repr., Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1964), 453. Hamilton serves as the best example of “Dunning School” in North Carolina historiography. The Dunning School emerged in the early twentieth century after William Dunning published *Reconstruction, Political and Economic* in 1907. Dunning argued that former Confederates sought peaceful reconciliation with the Union after 1865 and that Radical Republicans took advantage of Southern debt to force black suffrage upon the South. See William Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1907). Historian Eric Foner wrote in 2005 that this “Dunning School” interpretation rested on a fundamental “assumption of ‘negro incapacity’”—the idea that formerly enslaved people were “ignorant dupes manipulated by unscrupulous whites...their primal passions unleashed by the end of slavery.” Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), xxii.

Historical Review in 1962. Olsen challenged the prevailing idea that the Klan arose in response to black and Republican crime, arguing against the image of Klansmen as men upholding the law and protecting white women.¹⁹ Olsen's article also served as one of the first studies to emphasize the press's crucial role in Reconstruction politics. Olsen concluded that the concept of an honorable Klan had been created by the press, or by "Conservative propagandists, who sought to encourage, excuse and profit" from racial chaos.²⁰

During his impeachment trial, Holden estimated that the KKK had forty thousand members in North Carolina by 1870.²¹ Every modern historian of this widespread organization, and of Southern racial violence in general, owes a debt to Allen Trelease. Trelease's 1971 *White Terror* serves as one of the most significant revisionist studies of the Ku Klux Klan, taking a state-by-state approach to the topic and devoting ample space to North Carolina's Klan actions in 1868 and 1869. Trelease highlights editors' efforts to deny Klan violence, mirroring Olsen's interpretation and concluding that Holden took reasonable action to preserve legal government.²²

Klan violence masked a sustained effort by North Carolina's conservative elite to retain the political and cultural dominance threatened by increased racial equality after the

¹⁹ Reconstruction studies went throughout two major shifts in the mid-twentieth century. Firstly, revisionist scholars of the 1950s and 1960s launched a broad attack on Dunning thought by stressing positive, progressive Republican accomplishments. Post-revisionists of the following decades adopted a more tempered view by arguing that Reconstruction was a basically conservative period limited by the unwillingness of white Southerners to accept change. Historians such as Eric Foner fall between the revisionist and post-revisionist camps, arguing that meaningful change occurred but that that change was always tempered by racist resistance. For Olsen's argument, see Otto H. Olsen, "The Ku Klux Klan: A Study in Reconstruction Politics and Propaganda," in *The North Carolina Historical Review* 39, no. 3 (July 1962): 340-62.

²⁰ Otto H. Olsen, "The Ku Klux Klan: A Study in Reconstruction Politics and Propaganda," 343.

²¹ *Trial of William W. Holden, Governor of North Carolina, Before the Senate of North Carolina, on Impeachment by the House of Representatives for High Crimes and Misdemeanors*, vol. 1 (Raleigh: Sentinel Printing Office, 1871), 36, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

²² Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

Civil War. Paul D. Escott's 1985 *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* claims that North Carolina's semi-autocratic, conservative political culture remained unchanged during the second half of the nineteenth century, with elite white North Carolinians uniting against freed blacks and working-class whites throughout the period. Although Democratic newspaper rhetoric appealed to lower-class voters during election season in both 1870 and 1898, the core classes of both parties remained largely static into the twentieth century.²³

This chapter contends that rival Democratic and Republican presses in 1860s North Carolina described their opponents in heavily biased terms and that conservative editors such as Josiah Turner attempted to justify racial violence in defense of white supremacy. Conservative papers denied the existence of the Ku Klux Klan for months after its North Carolina emergence, and published personal attacks against Holden's honor even after his impeachment. Dismissing Senator John Stephens's death and the Kirk-Holden War as it spawned as detached outbursts of racial violence ignores those tragedies' as the culmination of a newspaper campaign of racist rhetoric. This campaign is worth studying, for while rhetoric alone did not cause the tragedy of Stephens's death, it played an undeniable role in

²³ Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985). Escott shares his emphasis on the endurance of Conservative rule with another notable work: Mark Bradley's 2009 *Bluecoats and Tar Heels: Soldiers and Civilians in Reconstruction North Carolina*. Bradley begins his study by emphasizing the disjointed progress of Reconstruction from 1865 to 1870, showing how changes in leadership and the Reconstruction Act of 1867 turned white North Carolinians against the Republicans. Bradley also argues that Union troops occupied an awkward social space between emancipated blacks and resentful whites, and that the racial tension of this situation occasionally spilled into violence. Bradley's work is useful as a study which frames the Democrats' rise to power as a campaign for public opinion—a campaign heavily dependent on the press. Mark Bradley, *Bluecoats and Tar Heels: Soldiers and Civilians in Reconstruction North Carolina* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009).

shaping public views on race and on the terrorists willing to kill a state senator in a broom closet.²⁴

Editors in Reconstruction North Carolina worked in a devastated state. Beyond the psychological toll wrecked by forcible emancipation and military occupation by Union troops, North Carolina suffered tremendous casualties during the Civil War. North Carolina mobilized 125,000 soldiers, and that 40,000 of them died.²⁵

North Carolina editors responded to the losses of the Civil War by producing a partisan press with strong representation on both sides of the political spectrum. Aggressive headlines were nothing new—North Carolina had a tradition of political press activism during the Civil War, during which the state’s coast and mountain regions featured relatively strong Union sympathies.²⁶ Unionist feeling continued after the surrender, as five of twenty-seven pro-Union papers in the former Confederacy were published in North Carolina. While strong Unionism suggested possible support for Republican party-building in the state, Republicans discovered that North Carolina’s political scene—and especially its political press—was a difficult place to prosper.²⁷ The state experienced heavy political turnover in

²⁴ The phrase “Kirk-Holden War” is itself proof of journalism’s impact on both this period of NC history and on history passed down to popular memory, as Conservative papers coined the term to criticize Holden’s use of the militia and to exaggerate juvenile behavior of Kirk’s troops. See Brisson, “Civil Government was Crumbling around Me: The Kirk-Holden War of 1870,” 126.

²⁵ Bradley begins his study of North Carolina during Reconstruction with the stark phrase, “Financial and material losses in North Carolina were catastrophic.” Bradley, *Bluecoats & Tar Heels*, 2.

²⁶ This Unionist feeling led to an early example of the North Carolinian editorial activism when W. I. Vestal of the New Bern-based *North Carolina Times* helped found the “Heroes of America,” a Piedmont secret society which encouraged Confederate soldiers to desert. In addition to the Vestal’s *Times*, war-time North Carolina Unionist papers included *Old North State* (Beaufort), and *Herald of the Union* (Wilm.). See Richard Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, 16-20.

²⁷ Political volatility during Reconstruction was not unique to North Carolina, of course, but the changing tides of political control may provide a model against which to measure other states’ experiences. One should always keep the national narrative in view: President Johnson’s moderate 1865 Reconstruction Plan disappointed Republicans in Congress and essentially allowed prewar elites to retain their dominating cultural influence across the South. In 1865-66, these (white) elites passed “Black Codes” in state legislatures across the South to

the late 1860s, and the *Weekly Progress*, a Raleigh-based anti-Confederate paper founded during the war, exemplified this constant tension by becoming one of four Unionist papers in the South to turn on the Republican Party after 1865.²⁸

Political turnover posed an especially serious challenge to newly-freed blacks, who struggled to make abstract abolition a reality throughout Reconstruction.²⁹ The press constituted a forum for blacks to assert their newfound freedom. Statistics regarding black papers are difficult to locate, but Raleigh featured at least two notable black papers immediately after the war in the *Raleigh Republican* and the *Journal of Freedom*. The latter paper ran an interesting masthead over its first issue, declaring “Equal Rights before the Law for All Men—Social Conditions Will Regulate Themselves.”³⁰ Ideologically, black editors in

restrict ex-slaves’ liberty. Congress attempted to assert control over Reconstruction and formulate a more aggressive agenda of racial equality with the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and passage of the 14th Amendment, both of which Johnson vigorously opposed. “Congressional Reconstruction” continued with an act in 1867 which divided the South into five military districts and appointed Major General Daniel Sickles as the temporary commander of North and South Carolina. Conservative editors predictably denounced the 1866 and 1867 acts in North Carolina as elsewhere, setting the stage for the rivalry between Holden’s Republican Party and his Conservative and Democratic opponents. See Bradley, *Bluecoats and Tar Heels*, 2-4.

²⁸ The other Unionist papers were the *Raleigh Weekly Progress*, *Nashville Union*, *Vicksburg Herald*, and *Savannah Daily Herald*. Richard Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, 23. Abbott’s book remains one of the only thorough studies of the Reconstruction-era Republican press on a national scale. Abbott traced the publication dates and political affiliation of 430 Republican newspapers printed in the Confederate states between 1857 and 1877. Abbott’s primary reference tools to compile his list included George Rowell’s *American Newspaper Directory* and the Online Computer Library Center.

²⁹ Bobby Frank Jones, “An Opportunity Lost: North Carolina Race Relations During Presidential Reconstruction,” (M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina, 1961), 2.

³⁰ Henry Lewis Suggs, *Black Press in the South, 1856-1979* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983), 258.

Unfortunately for the *Journal*’s editors and supporters, blacks’ “social conditions” in the Reconstruction South depended largely on external Republican support. This support eroded by the late 1860s and collapsed in the 1870s as Republicans in the North and South lost faith in freed blacks’ ability to contribute as workers in the American economy. While it is tempting to frame racial prejudice as a solely Southern process of Republicans’ abandonment of black workers, Heather Cox Richardson attributes this shift to class-based arguments in Northern political and popular presses. As the political high of Congressional Reconstruction passed in the late 1860s, Richardson argues, exaggerated press claims of black political corruption and black calls for radical social change across the South touched a nerve of class apprehension which changed the popular image of freedmen from industrious workers to miscreants. Northern readers came to see formerly enslaved people freed slaves as a menace defined by both race and class, a popular force intending to “harness the government to the service of disaffected workers, who hoped to confiscate the wealth of others rather than to work their own way

North Carolina adopted a hardline view against black Democrats throughout the 1860s. The *Raleigh Republican*, a staunchly-partisan black paper, described blacks who voted for the Democratic Party as “poisonous rattlesnakes or copperheads crawling about trying to bite or poison the minds of their Republican sentiments.”³¹ This description reflects a political atmosphere of racial polarization along partisan lines in which blacks who voted Democratic tickets faced the possibility of public black outrage. In the 1866 election, a Yanceyville black man named Tom voted Democratic before being attacked by a black mob of hundreds. When a white posse arrived, one of the white men remarked that “they had Tom on a rail and were carrying him around, singing and shouting as they went.”³²

Although most white Republican editors in North Carolina supported abolition and defended black suffrage, not every writer shared the same degree of moral conviction. Some Republicans stood against slavery not out of concern for the rights of the formerly enslaved, but rather due to slavery’s negative effects on white politics, non-slaveholder rights, and Southern economic growth. One example of this trend was Valentine Dell of the Republican *Fort Smith New Era*, who remarked that slavery was “a curse to the white man.”³³

Other Republican editors exhibited blatant white supremacist belief. An example of this trend is Thomas Cook, a *New York Herald* correspondent who came to North Carolina in 1864, settled in Wilmington after Appomattox, and bought and edited the Wilmington

to economic success.” Heather Cox Richardson, *Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 82.

³¹ *Raleigh Republican* quote of 30 November 1867 reprinted in Henry Lewis Suggs, *Black Press in the South, 1856-1979*, 258

³² John G. Lea, “Statement on the killing of John W. Stevens,” reprinted in Richard L. Zuber, *North Carolina During Reconstruction* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1969), 23.

³³ Richard Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, 30. Dell’s quote about blacks’ negative impact on the economy reflected a trend of class-based criticisms of freed blacks which proliferated in both the Northern and Southern Republican press by the late 1860s. Heather Cox Richardson traces this shift in the white reading public’s class perceptions in *Death of Reconstruction*, arguing that whites came to view black workers as freeloaders who devalued the labor of honest citizens and capitalists.

Herald as a moderate Republican sheet throughout Reconstruction. Cook believed in both abolition and Anglo-Saxon superiority, and although he may not have seen these beliefs as contradictory, his ideology draws unfortunate parallels to the prejudice encountered by African Americans as large groups of their Republican allies slowly abandoned the cause of racial equality in favor of political compromise by the late 1860s.³⁴

While the *Journal of Freedom* dreamt that social conditions would “regulate themselves,” Republican editors across North Carolina soon discovered that funding issues and circulation rolls would not. Republican papers struggled financially during Reconstruction due to low literacy among target black and poor white populations, white businessmen’s refusals to advertise in opponents’ papers, and technical shortcomings. Black papers faced particularly steep challenges with their average circulation of five hundred lagging far behind white sheets of both parties.³⁵

Democrats’ superior wealth enabled them to gain press control by paying for larger press runs and thereby creating larger circulations. Weekly Democratic papers circulated approximately one hundred more copies than their Republican rivals, gaining a significant advantage in coverage. Republicans founded 478 newspapers in the Confederate states from 1861 to 1877, while Democrats established 970. Democratic papers also lasted longer, with 41 percent of their sheets remaining in publication for at least five years compared to only 19 percent of Republican papers.³⁶

³⁴ Cook’s ideology suggests that political ideology during Reconstruction depended on both class and race, with Republicans able to support abolition while simultaneously advocating a white-dominated economy due to class prejudice against impoverished former slaves. See Jones, “An Opportunity Lost: North Carolina Race Relations During Presidential Reconstruction,” 11.

³⁵ Southern papers typically cost less to found but had significantly higher operating costs than their Northern counterparts. Factors contributing to this trend included the cost of newsprint and the higher cost of operating mechanically-primitive presses, less than 10 percent of which were steam-powered even in 1880. Richard Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, 41-43.

³⁶ Richard Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, 70.

As these statistics suggest, Democrats dominated the press during those years. Although North Carolina's postbellum Republican press was strong compared to most of the South, conservatives controlled the majority of the state's wealth and owned much of the infrastructure necessary to distribute printed information. These material conditions combined with ideological differences regarding race within the Republican Party to weaken the Republican press's ability to reach readers prior to 1869. A few black papers struggled to gain subscriptions during this time, and most failed. Black papers suffered due to a distinctly partisan slant in the Democratic press. Twentieth-century ideals of objective journalism were not pervasive in the years directly after the Civil War—rather, most editors viewed themselves as providers of moral direction and partisan arguments. Seaton Gales, co-editor of the Democratic Raleigh *Sentinel* from 1866, articulated the political element to his work when he outlined the “dignity and responsibility of the position, and its instrumentality for good or evil—especially at a time like the present, when the Press is looked up to for wholesome counsel and co-operation.”³⁷

Unity was a great strength of the conservative press in North Carolina. Democrats criticized black political aspirations and complained that black politicians depressed their state's industry and culture. The Democratic *Wilmington Post* wrote in 1869 that ignorant blacks seeking office “a generation ahead of time” handicapped the region against its Northern rivals: while “all the intellect, the virtue, and religion” abounded in the Northern states, industry suffered in the black-plagued South, where “all the contrary elements cling to us and we have an awful weigh to lift.”³⁸

³⁷ *Sentinel*, 1 January 1866, reprinted in Elizabeth P. Smith, “Having Their Tales Told: Female Deviance as Reconstruction's failures, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1865-1876,” (M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina, 2005), 7.

³⁸ *Wilmington Post*, 11 July 1869.

Class-based arguments impacted the rhetoric of papers of both parties. Poor whites constituted a major voting bloc in North Carolina, and Democrats wrote that these white men had been deceived into supporting a Republican Party which blacks both motivated and controlled. The *Wilmington Post*, for example, cried that poor whites suffered from a “mental slavery...more dangerous to peace and good order than the old slavery of the Negro race.”³⁹ The only way out of this “slavery,” in the eyes of the Democrats, was allegiance to the white political order. Democrats appealed to poor whites’ honor by linking their poverty to a heroic Confederate defeat. The *Wilmington Journal* wrote that “The true test of a patriot is that his fortunes grow with the growing fortunes, and decline with the declining fortunes of his country.”⁴⁰ Such appeals to lost heroism encouraged white readers to resist the new Republican state by uniting across class lines. This pattern of racial solidarity was a favorite Democratic tactic.

The conservative press strengthened appeals to whites across the class spectrum by separating military and moral defeat and arguing that the Civil War did not constitute moral justification for racial equality. “The sword simply declared that we were unable to cope with our Northern brethren in arms, without deciding, or attempting to decide, the question of right between the belligerents,” wrote the *Journal*. “This and this alone is the decision of the war...thus far, and no further do we accept it.”⁴¹ The Democratic *Charlotte Carolina Times* went further in its criticism of Northern occupiers and white Republicans, writing that “the

³⁹ Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, 97.

⁴⁰ *Wilmington Journal*, 10 March 1866.

⁴¹ *Wilmington Journal*, 15 July 1866.

South is now under a more grinding despotism than has heretofore found a place on the face of the earth.”⁴²

Republicans countered Democratic appeals to the working class by urging whites to recognize the discrimination they continued to face from Democratic elites. Republican Governor Holden wrote that “Southern aristocrats and secession oligarchs” caricatured the working classes as “mean whites, poor whites, and greasy mechanics.”⁴³ Republicans also noticeably simplified the physical appearance of their messages to workers—rather than featuring the typical essays on party platforms and anti-Democratic rhetoric, one 1867 *Standard* broadside led with the headline, “those voting for Free Suffrage will vote the following ticket:” followed by forty simple repetitions of “approved.”⁴⁴

In a pattern repeated throughout the years leading to the Kirk-Holden War and again in the months before the Wilmington Coup of 1898, Democratic rhetoric drowned out Republican biracial appeals to workers. One of the Democrats’ most useful tactics was to tap white Southern anger at black political action to manifest a fear of armed insurrection and “negro rule.” The specter of Nat Turner’s 1831 revolt loomed especially large during December 1865, when whites across the former Confederacy expressed panic over the rumor that blacks were planning a violent revolution for the Christmas holiday. In North Carolina, this whisper of violence particularly affected whites in Wilmington, whose city featured one of the largest and economically-stable black populations in the state. Wilmington citizens

⁴² Charlotte *Carolina Times* excerpt, reprinted in Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 168. Hamilton reprinted the editorial to criticize the federal government’s interference with newspaper editors during Reconstruction. *Times* editor Robert Waring was arrested in December 1865 for the editorial and charged with spreading “seditious writing within a district under martial law” before proudly pleading guilty, being found guilty, and paying a fine of \$300. Clearly, then, North Carolina’s print sphere was a space in which critiques of government were neither unknown nor entirely unwelcome.

⁴³ Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, 111.

⁴⁴ “North-Carolina standard--extra : those voting for free suffrage will vote the following ticket: approved,” *Standard Broadside*, 1867, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

submitted July reports to Governor Holden that blacks were “armed and drilling at night” before asking for one hundred Spencer rifles and revolvers for a nervous police force.⁴⁵ No uprising materialized during the Christmas season, and the plot was revealed to be rumor.

Democratic papers across the state regularly raised the specter of “negro rule.” While blacks had not risen in military revolt in 1865, the argument ran, Radical Republican policies had enabled the state’s black population to seize the state government and rule without political experience or moral competency. The result, white readers were told, would be sexual predation, racial revolution, and general chaos. An example of the “negro rule” line appeared in a September 1868 *Sentinel* article entitled “What Radicalism has done,” in which Republican courts came under fire as “notoriously incompetent,” and the paper’s editors wrote that “negroes...this day rule North Carolina, and, indeed the whole South...It is his vote that enables these desperate and wicked out-casts to humiliate, degrade, and injure the white people of all classes.”⁴⁶

In addition to portraying fears of armed insurrection and “negro rule,” Democratic publications during Reconstruction attempted to shift blame for racial tension from white supremacists to the formerly enslaved. Democrats described the South as a place of racial cooperation unknown in Northern states due to the longevity of Southern interracial commerce and white paternalism—any problems, therefore, fell to African Americans and their Northern allies. In a broadside addressed to “the Freedmen of Western North Carolina,”

⁴⁵ Dan T. Carter, “The Anatomy of Fear: The Christmas Day Insurrection Scare of 1865,” *The Journal of Southern History* 42, vol. 3 (August 1976): 347-48. Holden responded cautiously to the requests by Wilmington’s white citizens, affirming black freedom and denying the existence of a plot while assuring conservatives that “if they [blacks] resist the laws and shed blood, they must abide by the consequences”; quote in Elizabeth Gregory McPherson, ed., “Letters from North Carolina to Andrew Johnson,” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 27 (July 1951): 360-61.

⁴⁶ *Sentinel*, “What Radicalism has Done,” 26 September 1868, reprinted in Smith, “Having Their Tales Told,” 13-14.

a frustrated Charlotte native chided black Southerners that “If Southern men are your enemies, it is your bad behavior that has made them so...the fact is that you do not know how to appreciate your freedom, and have grossly abused it.”⁴⁷

Studying the political developments of the late 1860s, and especially the types of attacks launched by newspapers, provides crucial context for explaining the mindsets and effectiveness of partisan editors during and after the Kirk-Holden War. 1868 was a particularly notable year, featuring two crucial moments in the press’s relationship to the politics of race. Firstly, William Holden won re-election as governor for the Republican Party, which he officially helped found in North Carolina in 1867 from a combination of Unionists, formerly enslaved people, and western yeomen dedicated to opposing elite Conservatism. Already embroiled in a personal feud with Josiah Turner of the Raleigh *Sentinel*, Holden’s return to power gave the Democrats a public target for scorn and gave Holden the platform to push for more aggressive racial reform.⁴⁸

Secondly, 1868 featured two important political conventions. The Conservative and Republican Parties both held their meetings on 6 February. The Republican meeting was important due to Holden’s nomination for the governorship, ardent black ally Albion Tourg  e’s nomination for the state supreme court, and the strategic decision to target “the old non-slaveholding class, and, by arousing class prejudice, to excite them against the

⁴⁷ “Circular to the Freedmen of Western North Carolina and adjoining districts of South Carolina,” (Charlotte: Freedmen’s Bureau, 1865) North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁴⁸ Olsen, ed., *Reconstruction and Redemption in the South*, 164. Holden’s nomination for Governor was not without press opposition. One of the most outspoken opponents of Holden and his Republican allies was H. H. Helper, who published a campaign newsletter entitled *The Holden Record* which featured reprinted quotes from Holden’s *Standard* intended to question Holden’s competence and highlight his tendency for political waffling. Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 283.

Conservatives.”⁴⁹ Republicans recognized the importance of gaining poor white support in 1868, and they attempted to do so largely through class rhetoric: the Republican press printed and distributed copies of Governor Vance’s pro-Confederacy speeches to arouse anti-conservative sentiment.⁵⁰

While strategies adopted after the Republican Convention showed that Holden and his allies recognized the power of the political press, the Conservative Convention also held serious consequences for racial violence and the Kirk-Holden War. This meeting marked the beginning of what one scholar has termed “a pervasive new political unity among the state’s ruling elite.” After formally renouncing the Reconstruction Acts of 1867, the Convention issued a statement which laid bare the party’s fear of racial equality. “The great and all absorbing issue,” stated the Conservatives, “is negro suffrage and negro equality, if not supremacy...the white man is to be placed politically, and as a consequence socially, upon a footing of equality with the negro.”⁵¹ This fear of political and social equality motivated the Convention to call for racial solidarity to end “all former party feeling and prejudice” between white men.⁵²

Many former Confederates had yet to take the Oath of Allegiance necessary to qualify for public service, meaning that the Constitutional Convention of 1868 was a biracial meeting of 13 Democrats and 107 Republicans, 15 of whom were black men.⁵³ The Republican-led Convention produced a new state constitution which extended suffrage to all

⁴⁹ Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 282.

⁵⁰ Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 281-282.

⁵¹ Olsen, ed., *Reconstruction and Redemption in the South*, 168; Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 278-279. For a detailed account of the Conservative Convention, see Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 279.

⁵² Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 279.

⁵³ Ricard L. Hume and Jerry B. Gough, *Blacks, Carpetbaggers, and Scalawags: The Constitutional Conventions of Radical Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 298-302.

men regardless of race or wealth, extended the governor's term to four years, and called for public institutions including free schools and a state prison system.⁵⁴

Rhetoric of the Republican and Democratic presses during the 1868 Convention established partisan patterns which continued through 1870. On the Republican side, the *Standard* looked upon the biracial legislature and commended it as "one of the ablest, most dignified and most patriotic bodies that ever assembled in the State." The *Sentinel*, meanwhile, reeled in disgust, spitting headlines such as "The Constitutional Convention (So-Called)," "Corn Field Dance and Ethiopian Minstrelry!," and "Ham Radicalism in its Glory!"⁵⁵ Democrats directed particular venom against the constitution drafted by the Convention, calling the document the "black and tan constitution" and widely railing against its provisions for black suffrage and the direct election of judges.⁵⁶

Partisan Democratic press coverage helped give the Republican state legislature from 1868 to 1870 a reputation for financial corruption and moral degeneracy among both contemporary observers and historians in the early twentieth century. The Conservative-Democrats utilized their wealth and dominance of the state's press to slander every move and highlight every mistake of the government. In the words of one historian, the Conservative press spun "a web of distortion and slander that abused and confounded Republicans and ultimately made them scapegoats for all the ills of the state, including those left by the war."⁵⁷

⁵⁴ 1868 Constitution, in Hugh Talmage Lefler, ed., *North Carolina History Told by Contemporaries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 334-40.

⁵⁵ See *Standard*, 21 February 1868; *Sentinel*, 18-19 March 1868, both in Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 247.

⁵⁶ For discussions on the reception and deconstruction of "black and tan constitutions," see Hume and Gough, *Blacks, Carpetbaggers, and Scalawags*, 248-76.

⁵⁷ Olsen, ed., *Reconstruction and Redemption in the South*, 170.

Democratic editor Josiah Turner of the Raleigh *Sentinel* exemplified his party's bias mere days before the 1868 Convention, writing in a personal letter that "I am greatly troubled to think that no one will open the campaign against Holden, Secret Societies and the negroes."⁵⁸ Turner's strong words were but a microcosm of the editor's partisanship: while by no means the only conservative editor active during the Kirk-Holden War, Turner's *Sentinel* provided a foil for Holden's *Standard* and expressed core Democratic positions on the Republican legislature's ineffectiveness, race, and politics. Turner's aggressive rhetoric eventually turned many Democrats away, but historians have agreed on the editor's ability to tear down his opponents in print: "Perhaps no man of equal importance in the history of North Carolina," wrote scholar Robert Digges Wimberly Connor, "combined greater capacity for destruction with less capacity for construction."⁵⁹

Turner is also notable because of his repeated personal attacks on Holden and the bitter personal feud which developed between the two men. Their rivalry ultimately helped derail Holden's career by inspiring the rashness which figured prominently during Holden's impeachment trial. Although some Democratic papers tired of the *Sentinel*'s aggressive rhetoric and intrusive personal attacks, Turner is worthy of study as a critical member of the Democratic press during Reconstruction.

Turner took command of the Raleigh *Sentinel* from William Pell on 1 December 1868 after buying the paper with his father's financial assistance. Observers across the state expected much from the outspoken, brazen editor. Pell described Turner as "a gallant knight,

⁵⁸ Josiah Turner to William Alexander Graham, 2 January 1868, reprinted in *The Papers of William Alexander Graham* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History), vol.7, 439. Searchable copy of vol. 7 available via North Carolina Digital Collections at <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p249901coll22/id/456853>.

⁵⁹ Robert Digges Wimberly Connor, *North Carolina: Rebuilding an Ancient Commonwealth, 1584-1925* (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1929), quote reproduced in Olsen, ed., *Reconstruction and Redemption in the South*, 170.

who wields a trenchant blade” in his final article, and those expectations were not disappointed.⁶⁰ Turner set his paper’s activist tone in a sweeping mission statement printed in his first issue:

The Raleigh *Sentinel*...will be a zealous and fearless advocate of the Constitution of the United States...it will unsparingly lash and denounce all that set themselves up in opposition of the Federal Constitution and hold up to the public indignation, corruption and imbecility in high places.⁶¹

These words did not go unnoticed by either party. The *Wilmington Journal* welcomed its newest ally by writing that “if there is one man more than others the Radicals have cause to dread, it is ‘Jo Turner’”.⁶² Even Turner’s Republican foes at the *Standard* acknowledged his intensity, crooning “hush, Mr. Standard, put up your pen, leave Jo Turner alone; the Devil knows who belongs to him and he’ll take care of his own.”⁶³ With this shot across the rhetorical bow, the *Standard* opened one of the great newspaper feuds in North Carolina history.

Turner immediately began attacking every branch of the Republican state government. A series of December 1868 articles established Turner’s strategy of describing the Republicans as illegitimate, disgraceful to the state’s tradition, and doomed to fail. Holden’s government was “one to be lived under and sustained...until it can be changed by peaceful means,” with the governor himself a “white-livered miscreant” and a traitor “rejected and flouted, over and over again, by the people of old North Carolina.” Republican state legislators were nothing more than “the personification of stupidity and meanness,” and

⁶⁰ *Sentinel*, 30 November 1868, in Scott Reynolds Nelson, *Iron Confederacies: Southern Railways, Klan Violence, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 109.

⁶¹ *Sentinel*, 1 December 1868.

⁶² *Wilmington Journal*, 27 November 1868.

⁶³ *Standard*, 2 December 1868, reprinted in Claire Atkins Pittman, “Josiah Turner, Jr., and the Raleigh Sentinel, 1868-1876” (M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1968), 40.

corruption was rampant: a small number of dishonest carpetbaggers held the “radical part of the legislature in their pocket.”⁶⁴

Turner based many of his attacks around the claim that a “ring” of railroad managers and corrupt Republican legislators controlled the state senate and embezzled public funds. After George Swepson and Milton Littlefield were exposed as heading a bond fraud scheme with the North Carolina railroad, Turner blamed Holden for the crime and charged the governor with complicity without evidence.

Holden had had enough. Fearing political damage to his party and himself if he did not defend his honor, he retorted that “the editors of the *Sentinel* seem to care little for logic, less for the truth, and nothing at all for common sense... [A]mong Christian men such a newspaper and its editors merit loathing and execration.”⁶⁵

In addition to attacking Holden and the Republican legislature, Turner targeted the state’s judicial system by writing against Republican Judge Albion Tourgée. Crossing the line from public to private insult, Turner questioned Tourgée’s adoption of a black girl with the remark that “this is very generous of the Judge—very generous! Is Tourgée a married man?”⁶⁶ The freedom with which Turner made such personal insults reflects the personal nature of Reconstruction politics. As the masters of the newspaper sphere, Turner and his allies printed anything they thought could emotionally appeal to the white masses.⁶⁷ Media

⁶⁴ *Sentinel*, 1, 3, and 10 December 1868. For “hog trough” quote, see Zuber, *NC during Reconstruction*, 25.

⁶⁵ *Standard*, 13 January 1869. For national coverage of the Swepson-Littlefield episode, see “The Case of Milton S. Littlefield,” *The New York Times*, 29 July 1879.

⁶⁶ *Sentinel*, 20 April 1869.

⁶⁷ We should note that Turner’s personal attack habits divided Democratic opinion and drew the ire of more moderate Democratic editors. One example of such division occurred when a disagreement developed between Turner and William J. Yates, editor of the conservative Charlotte *Democrat*. Yates represented a widespread opinion within the Democratic party that Turner’s aggressive editorial policies were harmful to the Conservative cause, to which Turner claimed that Yates, since he critiqued the *Sentinel*, was in fact Holden’s ally. Turner also refused Yates’s request to appeal to Republicans and thus widen his paper’s appeal by critiquing Democrats as well as Holden, writing in February 1870 that “when we have beaten down the

coverage kept the issues of partisan politics and racial violence before North Carolina's readers throughout 1869 and 1870, laying the ground for public denunciation of the governor's actions during the Kirk-Holden war.⁶⁸

Democratic editors did not write unopposed. In light of their domination of North Carolina politics for decades following Reconstruction, hindsight tempts one to dismiss any opposition to white supremacist voices as brooms attempting to sweep back the rhetorical sea. It is important to note, however, that North Carolina Republican papers provided a vital counterweight to Democratic ideology throughout the late 1860s. Although Democrats possessed more resources, Republicans used the press to their advantage whenever possible.

Republican editors spent much of their time defending the actions of Congressional Reconstruction, which conservatives constantly attacked as corrupt. Republican papers stressed that, beyond the rhetoric, the legislature could boast several notable accomplishments in addition to its more public failures. Chief among these accomplishments were the ratification of the 14th and 15th amendments, the reinstitution of the state militia, and the establishment of the state penitentiary.⁶⁹

oppressors of the people, we can then turn on each other." Such brazen refusals to honor his Party elders began to erode Turner's prestige within North Carolina's Democratic ranks in the months before the Kirk-Holden episode. See Pittman, "Josiah Turner, Jr., and the Raleigh Sentinel, 1868-1876," 49.

⁶⁸ One example of attempted violence covered by the papers occurred in spring 1869, when a group of Republican extremists including Holden's son Joseph forced their way into Turner's office and attempted to assassinate him in the spring of 1869 before losing their nerve and surrendering to police. Emboldened by his attackers' failure, Turner blamed Holden for the attempted murder. No evidence surfaced connecting Holden to the crime, and the governor, concerned with rising Klan violence across the Piedmont, largely ignored the accusation. The *Standard* painted the editor as a coward: after Joseph Holden's first attempt on Turner's life, the paper joked that "there are now, so we understand, in his establishment, 28 shotguns, pistols, muskets, rifles, bludgeons, bowies and other 'running gear' common to cowards." The failed attempts on Turner's life may seem inconsequential today, but his vigorous response illustrates a lesson with deep and abiding repercussions: physical force did not defeat rhetoric wholly believed. See *Standard*, 27 March 1869. For a full retelling of the multiple assassination attempts against Turner, see Claire Atkins Pittman, "Josiah Turner, Jr., and the Raleigh Sentinel."

⁶⁹ Zuber, *North Carolina during Reconstruction*, 21-22.

Republican editors also pointed out that reform legislation coincided with earnest appeals from Republican leaders for racial rights. Holden argued for racial equality in a direct appeal to the state's public which the *New York Times* reprinted in 1865.⁷⁰ Albion Tourgée echoed Holden's rhetoric in 1867, writing in a broadside that "the aristocracy of slavery is dead" and arguing for equal government in North Carolina. Annoyed by former slaveholders' efforts to perpetuate white supremacy, Tourgée contrasted North Carolina's Civil War death toll against the nation's as a whole to prove America's commitment to freedom.⁷¹

Tourgée's writings expressed several of the key ideals shared among North Carolina Republican leadership during Reconstruction. These ideals included disdain for moderate politics from national-level leaders, dedication to black suffrage, and belief in the need for strong, conscience-driven leadership in the face of criticism. Tourgée expressed these sentiments in a January 1868 letter commissioned by the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* in response to nationwide Democratic victories in 1867. In this widely-printed piece, Tourgée considered the Democrats' successes in North Carolina and elsewhere a natural consequence of the timidity of national Republican leaders and of their willingness to politicize moral (and especially racial) issues. His letter urged fearful Republicans to avoid a reactionary turn to a Democratic Party "which is never disturbed by questions of Right and Wrong" and which sought "government designed especially for the white man." From his editorship of the radically Republican Geensboro *Union Register*, a post which he held from 1866 to 1867, Tourgée wrote that Republicans' willingness to compromise on racial matters constituted

⁷⁰ "NORTH CAROLINA: Proclamation by William W. Holden, Provisional Governor. To the People of North Carolina," *New York Times*, 12 June 1865.

⁷¹ Mark Elliott and John David Smith, eds., *Undaunted Radical: The Selected Writings and Speeches of Albion W. Tourgée* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 25-27.

political short-sightedness. Rather than compromise, Tourgée advocated rededication to racial equality to hold back a conservative counter-Reconstruction throughout the South. The “moderately inclined, constitutionally timid portion of the Republican party...worship present success beyond all other gods,” wrote Tourgée, and they erred greatly when they “insist that their Congressional leaders have been too fast, too radical.” The South, North Carolina included, needed decisive executive action against racism rather than moderate, waffling politics.⁷² Holden shared Tourgée’s desire for definitive action, but the problems of the Kirk-Holden war would show the practical limits of idealism in a state dominated by conservative wealth.

Holden’s and Tourgée’s political ambitions faced challenges from both Democratic opponents and from ideological divisions within the Republican Party. North Carolina’s Republican editors did not agree on the extent of racial equality to be granted the state’s black population, leading to public arguments over issues such as voting rights and school integration. The Republican *Rutherford Star* took a strong stance against integration, writing that “such a policy *will not be tolerated*.”⁷³

This division reflected national trends in the Republican Party, which Paul Abbott has divided into “radical” and “centrist” camps. Centrist or moderate editors supported the national Republican platform while focusing on gaining white business-class and elite allies. In North Carolina and elsewhere, these writers opposed sanctions against former Confederates in attempts to reconcile the Republican Party to old-line white voters. Conversely, radical editors built their readership by appealing freed blacks, white Unionists, working-class readers, and yeomen farmers. These class-savvy editors advocated racial

⁷² Elliot and Smith, eds., *Undaunted Radical: The Selected Writings and Speeches of Albion W. Tourgée*, 28-34.

⁷³ Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, 120.

equality and hoped for a Southern Republican Party which could survive without pandering to conservative whites for support.⁷⁴

Divisions in the Republican Party caused the most harm after Ulysses Grant's presidential election in 1868—an event which some Republican editors interpreted as an end to Reconstruction and a beginning of sustained Republican rule. This miscalculation led papers across the South to turn inward, focusing on consolidating the party's existing voter base rather than attracting larger numbers of working-class whites. Internal dialogues eventually led to political division, with moderate Republican editors in several states folding into the Democratic Party when the radical legislators in power refused to compromise.⁷⁵

North Carolina's Republican press reflected Abbott's model of radicals and centrists. While Holden toed the line between radical and moderate editorship in the years after Appomattox, Tourgée rested firmly in the radical camp. Tourgée advocated black suffrage and equal representation before the law, and he provided a window into the challenge facing North Carolina's Republicans in a culture of Klan violence and fear in an 1870 letter to the *Standard*. A state senator from Graham had publically accused Tourgée of advancing “negro rule” and undermining justice by dismissing a guilty verdict in the larceny case *The State v. Dennis Haines*. Tourgée had been the presiding judge, and he wrote the paper to defend his

⁷⁴ A majority of North Carolina's Republican editors were radical in 1865. This situation changed over the years partly due to the difficulty of securing federal printing patronage. In 1867 and 1868, House of Representatives clerk Edward McPherson awarded federal contracts to two papers in each state. Competition for this guaranteed funding was fierce, with some editors switching sides and other disqualified due to ideology. Tourgée provides a case-in-point: although he was well-known and respected by Northern Republicans for his wartime loyalty, McPherson did not award a contract to Tourgée's Greensboro *Union Register* due to the judge's opposition to Holden. Tourgée had regularly published articles questioning Holden's loyalty due to the governor's Democratic past and his willingness to compromise with former Confederates after 1865, and McPherson judged that Holden was too important to the state's future to award a potential rival a contract. Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, 124-25, 130.

⁷⁵ The most dramatic episode of such division occurred in Georgia in 1869 and 1870, when Governor Rufus Bullock's proposal to return the state to military rule rather than unseat black legislators divided the Republican press. Democrats used this division to retake the state in 1870, and Bullock fled to New York. Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, 133-41.

honor in the case. After describing the senator's accusations as ridiculous, he described the trial: instead of presenting evidence to prove Haines's guilt, the Democratic prosecutor had called one witness, asked one unrelated question, and then left the decision to a pro-Klan jury. Both juries returned guilty verdicts, and Tourgée threw them both out. In his published account, Tourgée acknowledged that his decisions went against the public's wishes while arguing that, given the Klan's widespread influence in the Piedmont in 1869-1870, officials should act on personal conviction rather than caving to public opinion. "Had I done otherwise," Tourgée wrote, "I should have avoided the clamor and abuse that has been heaped upon me, but I should have despised myself forever."⁷⁶ Although Tourgée was no stranger to using political rhetoric himself—he founded the *Union Register* to serve as an explicitly Republican media voice—his willingness to suffer public backlash reflected the highest ideals of the state's divided Republican leadership even as the party, and especially its black members, came under attack by the Ku Klux Klan.⁷⁷

Details regarding the Ku Klux Klan's genesis in North Carolina remain cloudy, but widespread Klan activity began during the 1868 presidential campaign, suggesting a political purpose which should not be overlooked. As one historian remarked, "the Ku Klux Klan was mainly a political organization which covered its actions with excuses in the same way they covered their bodies when they made their visits."⁷⁸ Although individual Klansmen may have viewed night raids and lynching as means to experience comradery or combat the perceived threat of black sexuality, the group as a whole existed to intimidate black voters and to

⁷⁶ A. W. Tourgée to *Standard*, 28 January 1870, in Elliot and Smith, eds., *Undaunted Radical: The Selected Writings and Speeches of Albion W. Tourgée*, 43-46.

⁷⁷ Jim Wise, *Murder in the Courthouse: Reconstruction and Redemption in the North Carolina Piedmont* (Charleston: The History Press, 2010), 83.

⁷⁸ Zuber, *North Carolina during Reconstruction*, 27. The North Carolina Klan's first documented initiation ceremony occurred the day before the 1868 Presidential Election. *Trial of W. W. Holden*, 1581.

perpetuate local white power. The Klan's political nature shone through in Alamance and Caswell Counties in November 1868, when the local Freedmen's Bureau reported that hundreds of poor blacks were evicted from their houses for voting in that year's election.⁷⁹

Following a relatively lax period in the fall of 1868 which historian Alan Trelease attributes to Holden's willingness to work with elder, moderate Klan leaders to police the group's more violent elements, 1869 began with a bloody wave of attacks.⁸⁰ The episodes are numerous and well-documented. Masked gunmen shot Caswell Holt of Alamance County for suspected thievery, and he was denied a fair trial when he filed suit against his attackers. An undisguised white mob seized and murdered four black men awaiting trial in a Lenoir County jail. Moore County Klansmen shot a black mother and her five children before burning their home around them. Perhaps the most brazen group defiance of law occurred on the night of 26 February 1870, when a mob of masked, torch-wielding Klansmen belonging to the so-called "White Brotherhood" rode into the town of Graham. The group sought Wyatt Outlaw—a town commissioner and the most prominent black man in Alamance County. Armed with axes, the mob tore down Outlaw's door and hanged him from a tree in the town square before retreating. Outlaw's murder and its aftermath served as a graphic reminder of the impotence of the state's justice system to confront the specter of racial violence: juries

⁷⁹ Trelease, *White Terror*, 193. The Klan's political nature was further shown by the locations in which it operated. Klansmen were relatively inactive in areas with sizable black majorities or counties in which conservatives held an unassailable advantage. Klan violence was thus concentrated in the North Carolina Piedmont, where a mix of Republican and Democratic sympathies left elections and power in doubt. For a list of KKK atrocities from 1868 through Holden's actions in mid-1870, see Trelease, *White Terror*, 189-207, and Jesse Parker Bogue, Jr., "Violence and Oppression in North Carolina During Reconstruction," (PhD dissertation, University of Maryland, 1973), 218-20.

⁸⁰ Orange County gives the best example of Holden's cooperation with moderate Klan leaders. Rather than raising a militia, Holden appointed Dr. Pride Jones as his representative and authorized Jones to offer amnesty to local Klansmen for all past crimes if they agreed to stop the violence. This offer led to a decrease in the county's violence and the Orange County Klan's virtual disappearance by late 1870. Holden's unwillingness to pursue such appeasement in other counties points to the decentralized nature of the Klan—in areas without moderate, respected leaders, appeasement was an unrealistic option. Bogue, Jr., "Violence and Oppression in North Carolina During Reconstruction," 223.

indicted eighteen men for the lynching, but none faced charges due to a lack of witnesses. Conservative papers completed the farce by slandering Outlaw's personal character on 3 March.⁸¹

Republicans did not silently accept the threat of vigilante violence. In addition to local sheriffs and individuals such as Senator John Stephens arming themselves against raids, Republicans used a primarily-black secret organization known as the "Union League" to protect lives and property, to organize black voters in a solid bloc for the Republican Party during Reconstruction, and, in the words of the Greensboro *Register*, "to Kuklux the K.K.K."⁸² While the Union League appeared in North Carolina in 1866 and thus pre-dated Klan activities, Leaguers stepped up their efforts after Klansmen began lynching in 1868, directing their anger mostly toward Democratic property, with arson being by far the most common accusation against them.⁸³

The existence of a Republican secret society allowed conservative newspaper editors to take their attention off Klan atrocities and ultimately resulted in the Union League being blamed for white supremacist violence. Although Turner recognized the Klan's culpability in numerous incidents of arson and terrorism during 1869, for example, he focused most

⁸¹ Carole Watterson Troxler, "'To look more closely at the man': Wyatt Outlaw, a Nexus of National, Local, and Personal History," in *The North Carolina Historical Review* 77, no. 4 (October 2000): 403. The tendency to belittle Outlaw's character was continued in the conservative Dunning school historiography. In Hamilton's discussion of the murder, Outlaw was characterized as "a blatant negro" who shot at Klansmen without provocation and "put fire to mills, barns, and houses" while the Klan practiced restraint. Hamilton also wrote that a "semi-idiotic negro" named William Puryear discovered the raiding party on the night of Outlaw's death, and that Puryear "disappeared that night and was found some weeks later in a neighboring pond." Reflecting the conservative bent of early twentieth-century scholars, Hamilton downplayed the Klan's culpability in both murders by writing that "all attempts to discover the perpetrators of these two murders were unavailing...many believed that the Ku Klux Klan had nothing to do with Puryear's death"; Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 471.

⁸² *Register* quote reproduced in Trelease, *White Terror*, 208.

⁸³ For a discussion of Union League actions against Democratic property, see Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 339-42.

heavily on the actions of Leaguers and blamed Holden, the *Standard*, and the Republican-dominated legislature for creating an atmosphere which allowed and sometimes necessitated the Klan's citizen-led violence.⁸⁴ Turner claimed that examples of increased arson in summer 1869 should "be traced to the Leaguers and the Ku Klux. The Leaguers being most guilty."⁸⁵

Although papers of both parties singled out the Ku Klux Klan as the Union League's primary opposition, it is important to note the decentralized nature of organizations which terrified North Carolina in the fateful years of 1869 and 1870. The KKK organized in 1865 in Pulaski, Tennessee, but it was not a national monolith. Stephen Hahn emphasized the group's composite nature by writing that "the Klan was less a formal organization than a rubric embracing a variety of secret vigilante and paramilitary outfits showing the marks of their local settings."⁸⁶ North Carolinian dens fit this mold and did not take their orders from a central national administration. Rather, three separate Klan groups called the Constitutional Union Guard, the White Brotherhood, and the Invisible Empire appeared in North Carolina in 1868, recruiting disillusioned whites and managing raids on the local level. This decentralized nature allowed members to claim deniability in court while diffusing leadership to local elites such as Caswell Sheriff Jesse Griffith or John Lea, opening the way for racial vigilantism to settle local scores.⁸⁷

The North Carolina Klan succeeded and spread due to rampant county-level legal corruption. The Klan dodged justice by faking alibis, stacking juries with sympathetic locals,

⁸⁴ Pittman, "Josiah Turner, Jr., and the Raleigh Sentinel," 45.

⁸⁵ Turner's targeting of the Union League drew from his racism and from his personal feud with the governor—Holden served as president of the Union League Grand Council in North Carolina from 1866 to 1867, providing critical leadership and tying together local groups during the League's formation. *Sentinel*, 27 July 1869. The Union League is also discussed in Pittman, "Josiah Turner, Jr., and the Raleigh Sentinel," 44.

⁸⁶ Hahn, *A Nation Under our Feet*, 267.

⁸⁷ Brisson, "Civil Government was Crumbling around Me: The Kirk-Holden War of 1870," 129-30; Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 267.

and intimidating officials and witnesses. Klansmen traded targets with groups in neighboring counties but also sometimes operated brazenly in their own towns, confident that black victims would not testify and that juries of their white neighbors would not convict. Corruption ran deep enough for some raiders to murder and assault blacks without masks—as Trelease noted, “for Klansmen the main safeguard lay not in their secrecy but in their ability to thwart legal processes if they were identified.”⁸⁸

Neither was the bench pure from corrupted views of race: following his release from prison during the Kirk-Holden war, Klansman and Stephens’s murderer John Lea visited the nearby home of U.S. judge James E. Boyd. Boyd confessed that he had been “a Ku Klux” before the Kirk-Holden episode and promised not to expose Lea or the local Klan’s secrets in court.⁸⁹ Additionally, Lincoln County judge David Schenck wrote in his diary in 1869 that “The Anglo-Saxon and the African can never be equals in Government. One or the other must fall.”⁹⁰ This, then, was the depth of prejudice against which Holden and judges such as Tourgée struggled.

The press aided corruption by lambasting any attempt by the state government to adjust the legal process to ensure fair trials. In this racially-charged environment, conservative papers cast efforts to ensure justice as tyranny or the first stage in “negro rule.” When judges sided with blacks against the Klan, even moderate Democratic papers did not miss the chance to complain of a Republican plot. One such complaint occurred in June 1869 after the North Carolina Supreme Court ruled that a group of 109 lawyers, Josiah Turner among them, acted

⁸⁸ Trelease, *White Terror*, 201.

⁸⁹ John G. Lea, “Statement on the killing of John W. Stevens,” in Zuber, *North Carolina During Reconstruction*.

⁹⁰ David Schenck Diary, 18 December 1869, David Schenck Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

in contempt of court when they petitioned against judicial interference in political affairs. The interference the lawyers opposed was nothing more than a local judge's decision to reject jurors for a case involving the Union League. Several Leaguers had been accused of arson on flimsy evidence, and the judge astutely decided that the jurors originally selected were pro-Klan and would return a conviction regardless of proof. When the Supreme Court ruled against the lawyers, the *Charlotte Democrat* lamented, "is not such action judicial tyranny of the worst sort?"⁹¹

The Democratic press's obstruction of justice carried into its coverage of the Ku Klux Klan. Officially, most papers condemned vigilantism. The *Sentinel* wrote in June 1869, for example, that "good men should endeavor to suppress and put down both the Union League and Ku Klux Klan as dangerous to the peace and good order of the society."⁹² Practically, however, conservative editors rhetorically aided the Klan. North Carolina's Democratic press expressed initial interest in the Klan's purpose before either denying its existence or ignoring it altogether after the Klan's strategy of racial violence became apparent in mid-1868.⁹³

One of the most egregious examples of the North Carolina press deflecting attention from Klan actions surrounded the murder of Sheriff O. R. Colgrave of Jones County, a Northerner who settled with his brother in North Carolina after the Civil War and who challenged the Democratic Party in his county due to his Republican affiliation with a sizable local black population. Nine or ten members of the Lenoir County Constitutional Union Guard ambushed Colgrave on a secluded road on 28 May 1869, killing the sheriff and his black companion. Rather than acknowledging the guilt of the KKK, the Democratic press attacked

⁹¹ *Charlotte Democrat*, 5 June 1869; in Pittman, "Josiah Turner, Jr., and the Raleigh Sentinel," 41-42.

⁹² *Sentinel*, 27 June 1869.

⁹³ See Brisson, "Civil Government was Crumbling around Me: The Kirk-Holden War of 1870," 126.

Colgrave's personal character, justifying the murder by claiming Colgrave had a criminal record before moving from New York. Holden responded in the *Standard* by denouncing both racial vigilantism and Republican threats to retaliate, writing that "this is all wrong. The law and the law alone has the power to punish the guilty."⁹⁴

Josiah Turner joined in the conversation, ignoring evidence of the Klan's power and continuing to deny reality for months. "We do not pretend to know the objects and purposes of the Ku Klux," read the *Sentinel*. "Indeed we do not know that there is such an organization; we have always doubted the existence of a general organization of that kind for political or other purposes."⁹⁵ Turner's rhetoric mirrored that of other conservative papers: the day after the *Sentinel* questioned the Klan's existence, the *Weldon News* blamed the KKK's rise on Holden's *Standard*, claiming that the governor wrote of the secret organization "with a view of masking some damnable evil which his party would hurl upon an innocent people."⁹⁶ This combination of confusion regarding the Klan and editorial attacks on the legitimacy of the state's government resulted in an atmosphere which made it seem that civil authority could no longer protect its citizens from themselves. These tactics only gained in strength during the Kirk-Holden War, with conservative editors framing Holden's militia campaign as a Republican scheme for Piedmont political domination rather than a response to Klan violence.⁹⁷

By denying or ignoring the Ku Klux Klan, North Carolinian editors joined a regrettable trend in the national media. The public, press-driven debate over the Klan's existence, even

⁹⁴ *Standard* quote reproduced in Trelease, *White Terror*, 192. For further coverage of the passive alliance between the Klan and the Southern Democratic press, see Carl R. Osthaus, *Partisans of the Southern Press: Editorial Spokesmen of the Nineteenth Century* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 130-132.

⁹⁵ *Sentinel*, 14 October 1869.

⁹⁶ *Weldon News*, in *Standard*, 15 Oct 1869.

⁹⁷ Holden repeatedly used militia to react to KKK atrocities from 1868 to 1869, but his support of the Shoffner Bill suggests an escalation in his efforts to curb the violence. See Harris, *William Woods Holden*, 278-87.

in the context of undeniable examples of Klan violence after 1867, resulted in a paradox. As Historian Elaine Parsons has noted, while “the Klan was central to national discourse” from 1868 until the election of 1872, even the efforts of papers as large as Horace Greeley’s *New York Tribune*, which ran more than 1,400 articles on Klan activity, could not quell “the position that the Klan did not exist at all.”⁹⁸ Regardless of editorial attempts to deny knowledge of the KKK, however, the press was instrumental in spreading knowledge and fear of the group. Historian Allen Trelease has remarked that “the primary role in spreading the Ku Klux Klan was played, not by General Forrest and his cohorts, but by the Southern Democratic newspaper press.”⁹⁹

Simmering racial tensions in the press and politics of North Carolina burst to light on the night of 26 February 1870, when a mob of masked, torch-wielding Klansmen belonging to the so-called “White Brotherhood” rode into the town of Graham. The group sought Wyatt Outlaw—a town commissioner and the most prominent black man in Alamance County. Armed with axes, the mob tore down Outlaw’s door and hanged him from a tree in the town square before retreating. Outlaw’s murder and its aftermath served as a graphic reminder of the impotence of the state’s justice system to confront the specter of racial violence: juries

⁹⁸ Elaine Frantz Parsons, “Klan Skepticism and Denial in Reconstruction-Era Public Discourse,” in *The Journal of Southern History* 77, no. 1 (February 2011): 55. While Parsons presents useful data on national press coverage of the Klan in her article, I do not think that North Carolina’s history supports her assertion that “denial of the existence of a real and violent Klan was the normative (though not universal) position of Democratic paper and Democratic politicians...during the entire period of the Klan’s existence.” Parsons, “Klan Skepticism,” 58. Based on Turner’s calls for Democratic voters to avoid all secret societies and the *Sentinel*’s specific appeals to Klansmen to cease violence, however, I find it more useful to argue that the Democratic press viewed the Klan as a political and rhetorical tool to mold public opinion. By printing anonymous reports of Klan violence while denying the group’s organized nature, editors could throw their communities into a state of confusion and attempt to instill fear in local black leaders. Conversely, acknowledging the Klan’s existence and writing that its terrorism should cease allowed the papers to appear as defenders of the public good. Whether or not this rhetoric was sincere is irrelevant—what matters is that the Democratic press was a Janus-faced institution on the Klan issue and that the Klan consistently appeared in the papers.

⁹⁹ Trelease, *White Terror*, 62.

indicted eighteen men for the lynching, but none faced charges due to a lack of witnesses. Conservative papers completed the farce by slandering Outlaw's personal character on 3 March.¹⁰⁰

And then, against a combustible backdrop of costumed night raiders and editors calling for violent retaliation, Klansmen murdered State Senator John Stephens and dumped his body in a storage closet.

The limits of newspapers' power were shown by what they did *not* report following the Stephens murder—namely, an eyewitness account and a description of the murderers' motives. Tourgée reported the gruesome nature of Stephens's stabbed corpse and the wider themes of Carolinian violence to a national audience in a letter published in the *New York Times*, publicly wondering if the local courts would (or could) bring the assassins to justice. Since no Klansmen came forward, however, the viewpoint of the murderers themselves was predictably absent.¹⁰¹

The perpetrators' story did not appear in print until 1 October 1935, when a statement by John G. Lea—made to the North Carolina Historical Commission in July 1919 on condition of secrecy—was released to the public after Lea's death. Lea's confession frames the murder as a political affair resulting from Conservatives' anger and sense of lost agency after defeat,

¹⁰⁰ Carole Watterson Troxler, "'To look more closely at the man': Wyatt Outlaw, a Nexus of National, Local, and Personal History," in *The North Carolina Historical Review* 77, no. 4 (October 2000): 403. The tendency to belittle Outlaw's character was continued in the conservative Dunning school historiography. In Hamilton's discussion of the murder, Outlaw was characterized as "a blatant negro" who shot at Klansmen without provocation and "put fire to mills, barns, and houses" while the Klan practiced restraint. Hamilton also wrote that a "semi-idiotic negro" named William Puryear discovered the raiding party on the night of Outlaw's death, and that Puryear "disappeared that night and was found some weeks later in a neighboring pond." Reflecting the conservative bent of early twentieth-century scholars, Hamilton downplayed the Klan's culpability in both murders by writing that "all attempts to discover the perpetrators of these two murders were unavailing...many believed that the Ku Klux Klan had nothing to do with Puryear's death"; Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 471.

¹⁰¹ "Life in North Carolina: The Murder of Senator John W. Stephens—A Terrible Scene—Shall His Assassins Be Amnestied?" *New York Times*, 26 February 1873, in *Undaunted Radical: The Selected Writings and Speeches of Albion W. Tourgée*, 47-51.

when “a bummer named Albion W. Tourgée came to Caswell County and organized a Union League, and they were drilling every night and beating the drums.” Stephens sealed his fate by approaching ex-Caswell sheriff Frank Wiley at a Democratic convention and asking the Klansman to run on a moderate ticket, thinking that placing a moderate Democrat in local office would mollify the Klan and protect black citizens. This was a profoundly unwise move. Lea considered Stephens a race traitor and justified his murder by claiming that “J. W. Stevens burned the hotel in Yanceyville and a row of brick stores.” This baseless claim falls in line with Democratic press accusations of Union League arson, suggesting that the Klan read and understood the media argument regarding their actions.¹⁰²

Even while admitting to the murder, Lea sought to present the Klan as a legitimate, though vigilante, organization. “Stevens was tried by the Ku Klux Klan,” Lea wrote, “and sentenced to death. He had a fair trial [in absentia, of course] before twelve men.” Perhaps the clearest connection between Lea’s confession and the press’s rhetoric was Lea’s idea that Stephens had earned his punishment through prior crimes and by continuing to resist the Democratic status quo. In the sentence *directly after* describing Stephens being “stabbed in the breast and also in the neck,” Lea asserted that “it was currently believed that Stephens murdered his mother” and “kept his house...in a state of war all the time with doors and windows barred.” Stephens’s paranoia is perhaps understandable when the courage to stand with your county’s black population results in a loss of credit and the threat of physical violence in the courthouse.¹⁰³

¹⁰² John G. Lea, “Statement on the killing of John W. Stevens,” in Zuber, *North Carolina During Reconstruction*.

¹⁰³ John G. Lea, “Statement on the killing of John W. Stevens,” in Zuber, *North Carolina During Reconstruction*; for a summary of Stephens’s political career in North Carolina and his specific actions in defiance of the Klan, see Trelease, *White Terror*, 212-13.

Holden viewed the Klan's murder of Stephens as proof that he had to act. Facing the possibility of escalation and convinced that local law enforcement could not protect the white Republican and black populations, the governor declared states of insurrection in Alamance County on 17 March 1870 and in Caswell on 6 June.¹⁰⁴ The specific wording of Holden's statements was notable. He declared both counties in insurrection not due to crimes by the Klan, but rather due to the inaction of local police and civilians to combat terror. "The civil authorities of the County of Alamance are not able to protect the citizens of said County in the enjoyment of life and property," Holden wrote. "I have waited to see if the people of Alamance would assemble in public meeting and express their condemnation of such conduct by a portion of the citizens of the county, but I have waited in vain." This public sphere of group meetings and political expression was the domain of the press, and Democratic editors had effectively silenced any systematic outcry against the Klan in Holden's view. Since "every citizen, of whatever party or color, must be absolutely free to express his political opinion, and must be safe in his own house," the state's highest executive would take direct control of the situation through force. Holden began preparing to raise a militia to restore order and to arrest local Klansmen.¹⁰⁵

Holden was able to take such drastic steps due the Shoffner Bill, passed by the North Carolina legislature on 21 January 1870. Introduced by T. M. Shoffner of Alamance, the Bill gave the governor power to declare counties in states of insurrection and to use the state militia to suppress unrest. Notably, however, Democrats succeeded in striking out the Governor's ability to suspend writ of *habeas corpus*—a change against which Holden would

¹⁰⁴ Pittman, "Josiah Turner, Jr., and the Raleigh Sentinel," 53.

¹⁰⁵ "A Proclamation by the Governor of North Carolina," Executive Department, Raleigh, 7 March 1870, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/broadsides_bdsnc031696/, accessed 24 Aug 2015.

soon rebel.¹⁰⁶ As in every other stage of the story, the Democratic press aggressively politicized the bill, reading Schoffner's legislation as a Republican power play against personal freedom. Turner described it as "one of the most alarming events of the time" and assumed that a political conspiracy headed by Holden lay behind the legislation.¹⁰⁷ Following Stephens's murder, Turner warned Caswell and Alamance citizens that Holden planned to raise a militia: "This policy is to draw off the attention of the voters...from the acts of the party since it came into power...ostensibly for the purpose of enforcing the laws, but really to influence the elections."¹⁰⁸

Holden moved quickly after declaring Alamance and Caswell insurrectionary. At a meeting in Raleigh on 8 June, the governor decided to raise a militia from the Union-friendly mountains of North Carolina and eastern Tennessee. Holden's more significant choice, however, was to try his prisoners by military tribunal. This decision explicitly overstepped the Shoffner Act and was thus kept from the press until after the actual arrests. Holden awarded command of the militia to George W. Kirk, a former Union officer with a reputation for harsh tactics and a record of fighting Confederate soldiers in the Appalachians. Kirk

¹⁰⁶ Democratic hatred of the Shoffner Act was made clear in when the Orange County KKK voted to assassinate Shoffner and send his corpse to Holden as a warning against using executive power against the Klan. During Holden's impeachment trial, evidence was brought forth that Klansman James Boyd had told Dr. John Moore that "they [Orange County Klan] are going to suspend Shoffner's writ of habeas corpus tonight." Shoffner was not home on the night of the attempted assassination, and Moore intercepted Shoffner's would-be assassins at the Alamance-Orange county line and convinced them to go home, allowing Shoffner to later flee to Indiana. Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 470; Zuber, *North Carolina During Reconstruction*, 28-29; Pittman, "Josiah Turner, Jr., and the Raleigh Sentinel," 48; Brisson, "Civil Government was Crumbling around Me: The Kirk-Holden War of 1870," 131.

¹⁰⁷ *Sentinel*, 6 January 1870.

¹⁰⁸ *Sentinel*, 14 June 1870. Democrats decried not Holden's use of force itself, but the way in which that force was directed (solely against Democrats) and the militia point of origin (Tennessee). Turner, in fact, boasted the advances of the modern state in the North Carolina legislature in 1861 by asserting that "we are all coercionists. We create constables and sheriffs for the purpose of coercing." See "Speech of Josiah Turner, Jr., of Orange: delivered in the Senate, January 1861," 13, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

predictably drew the ire of the conservative press, which considered him little more than “a guerilla bandit from Tennessee.”¹⁰⁹

Over six hundred men volunteered for the militia, which received its marching orders in Alamance County on 15 July. Those orders were remarkably simple: Holden had compiled a list of approximately 100 suspected Klansmen through Republican sources in Alamance and Caswell Counties, and Kirk’s troops were to arrest them all. In less than a week, the jails overflowed with prisoners, including both counties’ sheriffs, poor farmers, and former congressman John Kerr.¹¹⁰

The Kirk-Holden war devolved into a public relations disaster for Holden immediately after the first arrests. Kirk’s negative reputation preceded him, and the militia drew criticism as undisciplined and barbaric. In the words of one prisoner, Holden “had every prominent citizen arrested by a regiment of cutthroats, who could neither read nor write, from western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee.”¹¹¹ Unsurprisingly, one “prominent citizen” listed for arrest was Holden’s old rival, the incomparable Josiah Turner.

Turner used the gendered rhetoric of chivalry and masculinity to provoke Holden into action, suggesting in a public *Sentinel* article that failure to arrest Turner would make the governor an unworthy man: “Gov. Holden: You say you will handle me in due time. You white-livered miscreant, do it now. You dared me to resist you. I dare you to arrest me... You villain, come and arrest a man, and order your secret clubs not to molest women and

¹⁰⁹ Harris, *William Woods Holden*, 291. Conservatives’ opinions of Kirk and of the militia’s aims were further dampened by the wording of a handbill distributed by Holden to mountain recruits: men were needed “in putting down disloyal midnight assassins,” wrote the Republicans, and “the blood of your murdered countrymen, inhumanely butchered for pinion’s sake, cries from the ground for vengeance.” Brisson, “Civil Government was Crumbling Around Me,” 145.

¹¹⁰ Trelease, *White Terror*, 216-21; Harris, *William Woods Holden*, 290-95; Brisson, “Civil Government was Crumbling around Me,” 146.

¹¹¹ John G. Lea, “Statement on the killing of John W. Stevens,” in Zuber, *North Carolina During Reconstruction*.

children.”¹¹² Although Holden always denied ordering Turner’s arrest, Turner’s provocation bore fruit on 5 August, when twelve of Kirk’s militia arrested him near the Hillsboro train station. Understanding the rhetorical significance of his imprisonment, Turner politicized the event by complaining of his treatment while in Holden’s custody. During the governor’s impeachment proceedings, Turner stated that he was repeatedly drenched with water while sleeping, that his soap was stolen, that his windows were shut, and that he was held in the same room in which John Stephens had been assassinated.¹¹³ Other witnesses helped Turner’s cause by reinforcing his story, including one account which claimed that Turner and ex-sheriff Wiley slept “in jail with a crazy negro who holloed all night long.”¹¹⁴

With Turner and dozens of suspected Klansmen in custody, Holden faced the question of how to proceed. The political difficulty of his position became apparent when the prisoners’ lawyers secured writs of *habeas corpus* from North Carolina Supreme Court Justice Richmond Pearson and presented the writs to the governor. Within days of his seeming triumph, Holden was legally obligated to release the men whom he held responsible for the “state of insurrection.” Faced with what he later framed as a moral choice beyond politics, Holden denied the writs. The prisoners remained in prison, and media criticism of Holden’s unconstitutional action crossed the state.¹¹⁵

¹¹² *Sentinel*, 3 Aug 1870.

¹¹³ Pittman, “Josiah Turner, Jr., and the Raleigh Sentinel,” 57-59. Turner’s arrest provides a key example of rhetoric’s active role during political crises: although Holden denied ordering Turner’s arrest before and during his trial, it is certain the Democratic press’s repeated accusations shaped public opinion against the Governor and influenced the ultimate framing of the impeachment charges. In cases of rhetoric, volume and circulation often matters more than fact.

¹¹⁴ John G. Lea, “Statement on the killing of John W. Stevens,” in Zuber, *North Carolina During Reconstruction*.

¹¹⁵ A representative article in the typically pro-Republican *New York Times* described Holden as “the enemy of the law, and as the arbitrary, unrestrained military ruler of a State in which civil authority should be supreme.” *New York Times*, 2 August 1870, in Harris, *William Woods Holden*, 292. Even at this tension-filled moment, however, the social influence of certain members of the press could override politics: a Raleigh editor named John Spellman came to Holden and convinced him to release John Lea on leave after the first writs of habeas

Holden justified his unconstitutional action by referencing the spirit, if not the letter, of the Shoffner Act. Since he had been granted the power to declare counties in insurrection, Holden reasoned, he had the obligation to hold and try prisoners in a manner sure to bring about the end of said insurrections. Holden clarified this belief in a letter to Pearson after refusing the judge's first writs, writing that "in my judgement, your Honor and all the other civil and judicial authorities are unable *at this time* to deal with the insurgents."¹¹⁶

This was liberal interpretation of the law and a mistimed judgment of the sociopolitical climate: Holden planned to try his prisoners by state-organized military courts, but a higher authority ultimately undermined his plans. Pearson refused the prisoners' request for a writ of bodily attachment against Kirk, after which the Democratic prisoners appealed directly to U.S. District Court Judge George W. Brooks. To Holden's disbelief, Brooks granted writs of *habeas corpus* to all prisoners who asked, including Turner.¹¹⁷ Dismayed, Holden wrote to Ulysses Grant and asked the President to override Brooks's actions. After consulting attorney general Amos Akerman on the matter, Grant sided against Holden based on a strict interpretation of the law and Holden's unfortunate lack of direct evidence. Holden had no alternative but to release every prisoner from military control to civil courts for trial in mid-August—an act which crippled his political legitimacy and practically guaranteed his impeachment.¹¹⁸

corpus were ignored. John G. Lea, "Statement on the killing of John W. Stevens," in Zuber, *North Carolina During Reconstruction*.

¹¹⁶ Holden to Pearson, 26 July 1870, in Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 514.

¹¹⁷ Brooks issued the writs of *habeas corpus* of 6 August 1870 based on the Habeas Corpus Act of 1867, which allowed any state prisoner to appeal to federal authorities for relief if the prisoner felt that he/she had been wrongly imprisoned. Since Holden did not have physical evidence directly linking his prisoners in Alamance and Caswell counties to the KKK, Brooks felt that he had no option but to grant the prisoners' requests. Harris, *William Woods Holden*, 295.

¹¹⁸ "William Woods Holden," in *Documenting the American South*, accessed 8 November 2015, http://docsouth.unc.edu/bios/pn0000761_bio.html. For additional discussion of Grant's reasoning in rejecting Holden's request for executive intervention, see Brisson, "The Kirk-Holden War of 1870," 41.

The trials which ensued for Holden's prisoners proved the civil government's inability to convict Klansmen in Reconstruction North Carolina. One group of prisoners faced Judge Brooks in Salisbury, but an inept prosecution offered no evidence and allowed all the accused to go free. The trials of the remaining prisoners ended in similar disappointment: although Judge Pearson indicted forty-nine prisoners based on the state's evidence, he moved the trial from Raleigh to local courts in Alamance and Caswell Counties. Protected in their hometowns by false testimony and sympathetic juries, all forty-nine suspects escaped conviction.¹¹⁹ In a final stroke of bitter irony, the Democratic press throughout the trials accused Holden of violating the Fourteenth Amendment rights of his Klansmen prisoners by denying due process.¹²⁰

While Holden reeled from his abandonment by the federal government, his former prisoners rode a flood of media celebration as the Democratic Party began the work of transforming public opinion into political control. The press took its typical place at the symbolic front of the Democratic wave. On the day of Turner's release from prison, for example, the *Sentinel* published an article politicizing Turner's deliverance, crying "Thank God, it is true... The integrity of his purposes and aims, the honesty with which he has fearlessly labored to redeem NC from misrule and robbery will be vindicated... when the name of Holden... will be held up to scorn and ridicule."¹²¹ Turner set to work vilifying

¹¹⁹ For information on the trials of Holden's prisoners, see Harris, *William Woods Holden*, 295-296 and Trelease, *White Terror*, 221-222.

¹²⁰ For an individual perspective from one of the arrested men, see John G. Lea, "Statement on the killing of John W. Stevens," in Zuber, *North Carolina During Reconstruction*; Richard Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, 147.

¹²¹ *Sentinel*, 10 August 1870. It is difficult to overstate Holden's feeling of betrayal by Grant's government. Prior to appointing Kirk as militia commander, Holden received a handwritten assurance from Grant that federal troops would be sent to reinforce the North Carolina militia if the Klan forcibly resisted. Further, Holden met with the President in person in Washington on 30 June and received Grant's promise of moral and physical support. Grant's refusal to override Brooks's actions thus constituted more than a simple political defeat for

Holden throughout late 1870, characterizing the Governor as a “trickster and political desperado” and claiming that the militia campaign had been intended to “inflict injustice, supercede the civil law, or provoke collusion.”¹²² Predictably, Turner did not mention the racial violence which motivated Holden’s actions.

Republican newspapers attempted to counter the Democrats’ anti-Holden language with political rhetoric of their own. At the height of the public outcry against Kirk’s militia and Holden’s unconstitutional acts, the *Standard* argued that “the civil law has proved powerless” to protect black citizens against racial violence, and that “nought save the strong arm of military power” would be sufficient to restore order.¹²³ Regardless of the logic behind such claims, Republican rhetoric proved ineffective due to smaller circulations and the accumulated racial prejudice to which Democratic papers such as the *Sentinel* appealed.

Newspaper rhetoric was only the beginning of the Democratic victory tour. Crowds of conservative Raleigh citizens celebrated Turner as a returning war hero, with one local remembering that “They had a great demonstration in Raleigh. There was a street parade, cannon were fired, tar barrels burned and speeches by a great many prominent men were made.”¹²⁴ Turner followed this raucous reception with a tour around central North Carolina, attending banquets featuring brass bands, barbecue, and anti-Holden speeches in towns throughout the Piedmont. Turner played the hero at every stop: former Governor William Alexander Graham remembered that “bouquets, fruits, etc., were sent to him...and at

Holden—having placed his faith for years in the Union, the governor lost irreplaceable faith in the federal government’s dedication to the public good. Harris, *William Woods Holden*, 288-89.

¹²² *Sentinel* quotes in Brisson, “The Kirk-Holden War of 1870,” 43.

¹²³ *Standard*, 20 July 1870, in Brisson, “Civil Government was Crumbling Around Me,” 154.

¹²⁴ John G. Lea, “Statement on the killing of John W. Stevens,” in Zuber, *North Carolina During Reconstruction*.

Hillsborough there was a general turnout, with torches, at 11 o'clock at night, cannon firing, etc. and he was drawn in a carriage into town."¹²⁵

Holden's embarrassment and Turner's triumph in the Kirk-Holden War paralleled their parties' respective fortunes in the 1870 state election. The tactics of the campaign are familiar to any student of post-Civil War Southern politics. The *Sentinel* published appeals to white workers, shouting "negro rule" while also making half-hearted attempts to woo black voters with claims that they had been mistreated and underappreciated by Republican leadership. The *Standard* replied through appeals to both races which echoed Holden's charges in 1867-1868 that "Southern aristocrats" had objectified and relegated their working-class fellows as "mean white, poor white trash, and greasy mechanics."¹²⁶

What differentiated the 1870 campaign was the Democrats' return to power and the unusually violent backdrop against which North Carolinians cast their ballots. With the election occurring during the first week of August, the Democrats played heavily on negative public opinion of Kirk's militia throughout the summer. It seems likely indeed that readers' opinions of Republicans declined as page after jaded page described Holden's sanction of arrests by barbaric mountaineers. These attacks were strengthened by shameless calls from Turner and his peers for the Klan to stop the violence. "We call upon the Ku Klux to cease their lawless course," read the *Sentinel* in March. "Good men can't justify it."¹²⁷ The Democratic press thus positioned itself as both a virtuous voice against racial violence and a

¹²⁵ William Alexander Graham to William Alexander Graham, Jr., William Alexander Graham Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; see also Pittman, "Josiah Turner, Jr., and the Raleigh Sentinel," 62.

¹²⁶ See *Sentinel*, 21, 24 June 1870; and *Standard*, 30 October 1867. 1870 election discussed in Richard Abbott, *For Free Speech and Equal Rights*, 110. The two papers' rivalry was especially intense during the summer of 1870 because Holden appointed his son Joseph, the very man who had attempted to assassinate Holden mere months before, as editor of the *Standard* during the campaign. General hatred ensued. Pittman, "Josiah Turner, Jr., and the Raleigh Sentinel," 52.

¹²⁷ *Sentinel*, 16 March 1870.

victim of corrupt government oversight, backing their opponents into a corner. The reward was great: the election, held the day before Turner's arrest, resulted in a resounding Democratic victory—the Party gained a two-thirds majority in the state senate and elected five new congressmen. North Carolina was back in conservative hands. In the view of many, order had been restored.¹²⁸

The newly victorious Democrats practically tripped over themselves to introduce impeachment charges against Holden in the North Carolina House of Representatives on 9 December 1870. This was not a surprise: papers on both sides anticipated Holden's impeachment throughout the fall, rightly regarding his actions during the Kirk-Holden War as a political death knell. The *Standard* even expressed impatience with the Democratic state legislature: "Innocent or guilty, let us have a verdict. If the Dem. members of the Legislature fail to make good the charges made by them during the campaign, they are worse men than the Governor."¹²⁹ The trial which resulted stands as a testament to the press's power to influence political change.

The senate introduced eight impeachment articles directed against Holden. The most damning charges dealt with Holden suspending *habeas corpus* and using troops against citizens without probable cause. Article III was different, focusing specifically on Turner's arrest and making Josiah Turner the first person referenced by name in the document. Article VII continued the focus on the Turner-Holden feud by claiming that Holden "did thrust into a loathsome dungeon Josiah Turner, junior."¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Pittman, "Josiah Turner, Jr., and the Raleigh Sentinel," 61-62.

¹²⁹ *Standard*, 6 December 1870.

¹³⁰ Turner was the first, but not the only, prisoner to be mentioned by name in the impeachment charges. Article IV specifically named John Kerr as one of four unlawfully detained Caswell citizens; Article V addressed the denied writ of habeas corpus for Adolphus Moore; finally, Article VII accused Holden of empowering Kirk's men to hang William Patton and Lucien Murray for interrogation. Holden denied condoning torture under any

In addition to naming Turner explicitly in the impeachment charges, the prosecution used documents relating to Turner's arrest as some of the trial's most specific attempts to sully Holden's honor. On the trial's seventh day, 3 February 1871, Turner's attorneys introduced a handwritten petition from Turner to Judge Brooks from the previous August in which Turner claimed to be a citizen of Orange County and to have been captured and detained "in violation of the constitution and law of the United States...under the orders of William W. Holden."¹³¹ The prosecution then presented the writ issued by Judge Brooks against Kirk on 6 August 1870, making sure to emphasize that President Grant opposed Holden on the issue of Turner's arrest. Holden and Kirk were made to look even worse when the prosecution introduced the printed reply of Kirk to Judge Brooks, in which Kirk wrote that he held Turner "on the charge of conspiring with divers other citizens of the state to overthrow the government of the State of North Carolina."¹³² The idea of a Democratic editor working against the state's best interest would have appeared ridiculous to the trial's largely Democratic audience. Taking the wording of these charges into account, it seems clear that media conflict generally and Turner specifically figured prominently in public perception of the Kirk-Holden war.

Holden presented his defense in court on 23 January 1871. After emphasizing the breakdown in civil order that motivated him to form the militia, Holden turned to the question of Turner. In response to impeachment article III, Holden argued that due to "a desire to advance his political prospects and a hope to increase his patronage as a citizen and

circumstances. Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 545-46; *Trial of William W. Holden, Governor of North Carolina*, 2542, 2553.

¹³¹ *Trial of William W. Holden*, 205-206.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 207.

editor,” Turner “did resort to various ways and means to procure his own arrest.”¹³³ Here was a case of press and politics merged—the remainder of Holden’s defense played out as a physical representation of the two men’s rhetorical feud. Turner took the stand, and when asked if he had publically advocated forcible resistance to Kirk’s militia, responded that “I never did advise forcible resistance. I did myself repeatedly in conversation say that they ought to be shot and hung up like dogs in the woods, but I never in any public speech said anything of the kind.”¹³⁴ Later in his testimony, Turner continued the personal attacks by describing relations between himself and Holden as “just as they ought to be between a good and a bad man.” Holden rose, said that “I do not mean to stay to be insulted,” and left the courtroom, never to return during the trial.¹³⁵

While the partisan court decided Holden’s fate, the state’s black citizens waited in frustrated silence. The prosecution completely ignored the reality of Klan atrocities, focusing on technical legal arguments and skipping over the practical motivations which drove Holden to overstep his constitutional authority. As it became increasingly, tragically clear that Holden would be convicted, North Carolina’s black population turned to informal measures—popular assembly, fasting, and prayer—to plead their case. Black ministers across the state designated 13 January 1871 as a day of prayer and fasting for Governor Holden. All black North Carolinians were asked to leave work and pray for “God to bring our good friend the Governor triumphantly through this ordeal.” Black leaders additionally published an “Address to the Colored Citizens of North Carolina” which criticized the Democrats and claimed that Holden’s only mistake was that “he thwarted the designs of a band of

¹³³ *Trial of William W. Holden.*, 44.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 912.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 907.

Assassins.” Such an appeal to a higher power suggests a public hope that racial reform—albeit gradual—was inevitable in North Carolina. “Justice will not sleep forever,” wrote the ministers. “If we call upon God he will hear and answer us.”¹³⁶

Justice would indeed eventually awake for blacks in North Carolina, but 1871 was not the time. The legislature found Holden guilty of six of eight charges on 22 March, convicting the disgraced leader with a loud huzzah. Tod R. Caldwell—who had assumed the role of Lieutenant Governor after the 1868 state constitution created the office—succeeded Holden, who was barred from holding public office in North Carolina’s state government. Shut out from the state for which he had done so much, Holden worked as the political editor of the *Washington Daily Chronicle* before returning to Raleigh as postmaster in 1872 and remaining active in community life until his death in 1892.¹³⁷

Regardless of the complex politics and murky moral judgments which led to Holden’s conviction, the nation’s memory of the first gubernatorial impeachment was indelibly shaped

¹³⁶ “Address to the Colored Citizens of North Carolina.” The Address is available at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s North Carolina Collection and is reprinted in Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 544. Hamilton characterized the black leaders’ address as a pointless act and accused Holden of appealing to blacks’ sentiment to win public support. The clearest evidence of Holden’s supposed pandering occurred when he was publically baptized at Raleigh First Baptist in December 1870 despite never before participating with the Baptist denomination. The Northern press accused Holden of manipulating public opinion with his baptism: according to the *Nation*, “No record of any similar preparation for impeachment is, we believe, to be found in the books, and the effect of it will be watched by jurists with deep interest.” *Nation*, 22 December 1870, reprinted in Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 545.

¹³⁷ Holden biographical information from “William Woods Holden, 24 November 1818-2 November 1892,” *Documenting the American South*, at http://docsouth.unc.edu/browse/bios/pn0000761_bio.html, accessed 23 January 2016. Holden remained active in journalism through his later years, delivering a speech entitled “Address on the History of Journalism in North Carolina,” to the North Carolina Press Association in 1881. This speech is available online and serves as an excellent survey of politically-active editors in the state during Reconstruction. Holden does not mention Turner, the *Sentinel*, or his own impeachment; however, he does speak in positive terms of William J. Yates, editor of the *Charlotte Democrat* and outspoken critic of Holden during the late 1860s. This willingness to publically affirm Democratic editors suggests a professional comradery between North Carolina journalists. I was unable to locate a study on the state Press Association, but further work on this topic could help reveal the depth to which professional and personal beliefs mixed in the late 19th century. See William Holden, “Address on the History of Journalism in North Carolina” (Raleigh: News and Observer, 1881), published online at <https://archive.org/details/addressonhistory00holdrich>, accessed 23 January 2016.

by a press which helped depose Holden, ignored the governor's concern for North Carolina blacks, and recast the Kirk-Holden War as a personal feud fed by pride and based in a newspaper rivalry. Thus, as has too often been the case in examples of American racial violence, history was rewritten and its causes reframed in white by those who controlled the means to print.

Former North Carolina Klansmen testified before Congress as part of a national investigation into the terrorist group in early 1870s. Their testimony established the extent of Klan activity in North Carolina and brought the severity of Holden's problems to national attention. Alamance County Klansman J. W. Long stated, for example, that membership in his county's Klan grew from three hundred to seven hundred from 1869 to 1870 alone.¹³⁸ Even with such testimony, Congress's final assessment lessened the Klan's culpability and ultimately failed to recognize the motives behind Holden's action by hiding behind the technical accusation that "[Holden's greatest mistake was] his assuming the right to enlist a force and arm it, to take money from the treasury without any authority of law, to pay a force to go and arrest some of his old political enemies, men who it is said he personally hated."¹³⁹ Personal vendettas obscured wider patterns of prejudice in Congress's report, leading to the false assumption that the causes of the state's worst racial problems were past.

Although isolated lynchings continued in North Carolina throughout the late nineteenth century, large-scale raids by extremist groups such as the KKK largely ceased in the state by the early 1870s. Lack of systematic night rides by the Klan did not mean that

¹³⁸ Brisson, "Civil Government was Crumbling around Me," 131.

¹³⁹ Congressional Joint Select Committee on the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, *Report of the Joint select committee to inquire into the condition of affairs in the late insurrectionary states, so far as regards the execution of the laws, and safety of the lives and property of the citizens of the United States and Testimony taken* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872), 484.

white supremacy or racial hatred had died away, however. Rather, violence abated relatively early in North Carolina simply because Democrats regained power earlier there than in other states. With their political goals secured, the North Carolina Klan simply had no reason to exist.¹⁴⁰

As the Klan faded from public view, Democrats assumed the role of “Redeemers” and consolidated their control of the state. Historian Mark Bradley has noted an increase in cordiality between state political leaders and Federal officials in North Carolina after the mid-1870s, and he explains this change in terms of a betrayal by the national government:

The Redeemer Democrats had established “home rule” in the Tar Heel State. As a result, they felt secure enough to reciprocate federal soldiers’ conciliatory gestures. Thereafter, bluecoats participated in public ceremonies with Confederate veterans and found that white society had at last opened doors to them. After a dozen years of taking on “Mission Impossible”—the juggling act that combined protecting blacks and conciliating former Confederates—the army abandoned the freedpeople for the sake of sectional reconciliation.¹⁴¹

Federal abandonment and Democratic control led to a predictable decrease in Republican printing—as patronage funding for pro-Republican papers ceased, papers which catered to still-impoverished black and white Republicans shriveled on the vine in North Carolina’s cities. While the 163 Republican papers printed across the South in 1871 represented 29 percent of the regional total, only 43 Republican papers, a paltry 10 percent of the total, remained in the former Confederacy by 1880. As Democrats consolidated their power, Democratic rhetoric crowded out legitimate rivals in the public sphere.¹⁴²

It is encouraging to note that some editors and readers in North Carolina retained a far-sighted hope in racial progress even after the nation largely ignored their state’s suffering.

¹⁴⁰ Bradley, *Bluecoats and Tar Heels*, 6-7 and entirety of chapter 9.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴² Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, 182.

Asheville Pioneer editor Pinckney Rollins described in 1872 a bright future “for those worthy men in the South whose stumbling block in the road to political and social advancement was their poverty and whose stigma...consisted in earning their bread by the sweat of their brow.”¹⁴³ Too few of Rollins’s peers shared his optimism, however, and those few who did faced a state whose media and legislation degraded blacks from birth. Press, politics, and race continued to revolve in a deadly cycle—a cycle which reached especially ghastly heights during the North Carolina Democrats’ next attempt to regain political control of the state. This attempt came in 1898 in the form of a coordinated white supremacist press campaign and the subsequent “Wilmington Race Riot.” It is to this massacre, and the press’s role in causing its tragedies, that this study now turns.

¹⁴³ *Asheville Pioneer* quote in Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, 183-84.

CHAPTER TWO:

“TO NE’ER BE NEGROIZED”:
RHETORIC AND RAGE IN THE WILMINGTON COUP, 1898

“Take up the White Man’s burden,”
Be ye of white man’s breed
This burden lift and shoulder;
It may be thing of need
As ‘twas when taken boldly,
Along with belching gun,
To change the situation
In grand old Wilmington.

“Take up the White Man’s burden,”
To ne’er be negroized,
Though official Washington
Was seemingly surprised
That taking up the burden,
By taking up the gun,
Is in accord with logic,
In grand old Wilmington.

“Take up the White Man’s burden,”
Be it but song to tell
“Father, tall and strong, is white
And mother’s white, as well.”
Chorus add, and sign it loud,
White, worthy, nobly son;
“When they took the burden up,
They shot in Wilmington.”

“Wilmington’s Burden,”
from the *Wilmington*
Messenger,
12 March 1899

Despite North Carolina's threatening racial climate after Reconstruction and its return to conservative white rule shortly after Holden's impeachment in 1870, democracy in the Old North State had a chance. Determined to change their state's economic condition and to regain local political power denied them by the Democratic leaders who redeemed the state after Holden's impeachment, North Carolina's farmer-backed Populists joined with white and black Republicans under a banner of "Fusion" to win the legislature in 1894 and elect Republican Daniel L. Russell governor in 1896. Stung by these defeats, Democratic papers across the state lost no opportunity to pillory the political legitimacy and personal quality of black Republican officials and their white allies. Reverting to language reminiscent of an 1868 article calling North Carolina's constitutional convention a "kangaroo konvenshun," one disgusted politician wrote that a gathering of black Republicans in Raleigh "looked like a dark cloud rising over the room." Although Democrats targeted Fusionists at all levels of public service, black legislators attracted the most pointed insults.¹⁴⁴

Biracial support allowed Fusion government to survive the initial waves of press criticism. The large and relatively affluent black population in Wilmington made New Hanover County a particularly important Fusion stronghold. Wilmington Fusionists drew popular support from a legacy of black public involvement which included abnormally-

¹⁴⁴ Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 34-35; "Konvenshun" quote reproduced in David Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom: Abraham Galloway and the Slaves' Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 200; final quote in "A Disgusted Republican," 1898 Democratic broadside, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Although an in-depth discussion of Fusionism lies beyond the purview of this study, it is important to note that "Fusionism" in North Carolina did not result in a formal merging of the Republican and Populist (People's) Parties. These Parties disagreed on issues such as the gold standard, but they fundamentally agreed on enough state-level issues, including notably a repeal of the County Government Act of 1877 and an increase in public education funding, that Party leaders agreed to support joint tickets. Ironically, the separate nature of Populists and Republicans eventually made low-status members of both Parties, and especially Populist farmers, targets for Democratic race-based identity propaganda in 1898. See Ronnie Faulkner, "Fusion Politics," *North Carolina History Project*, published 2016, accessed 15 February 2016, <http://www.northcarolinahistory.org/commentary/58/entry>.

lenient antebellum slave contracts and a postwar black community noted for its political militancy. The North Carolina Equal Rights League, a militant advocacy group for equal black rights, had moved its offices from Raleigh to Wilmington in January 1866, and one conservative paper wrote in 1875 that “There are now nearly, or quite as many negro [militia] companies in this city, as there are white companies throughout the limits of North Carolina.” Although this claim may have been exaggerated, the sociopolitical repercussions for both races were clear: Wilmington’s blacks knew and enjoyed their rights, and they were willing to sacrifice a great deal to preserve them. When Fusionism triumphed for a brief span two decades later, it seemed that the city’s blacks would finally be led by a government reflecting their own decades-long struggle for representation.¹⁴⁵

And then, at nine o’clock on the morning of 10 November 1898, chaos erupted on the streets of Wilmington. A mob of two thousand armed white men marched on the office of the *Daily Record*, a local black newspaper whose editor had written an editorial questioning the sexual innocence of southern white womanhood. The men smashed the *Record*’s printing press, posed for a photograph, and looked on as the building burned. By the afternoon, tensions exploded into gunfights which left an unknown number of black men lying dead in the streets. Political turnover accompanied the violence: Wilmington’s Democrats forced the Republican municipal government to resign and appointed a new mayor, chief of police, and board of aldermen as chaos reigned by the Cape Fear River. As the Democrats consolidated their rule and the local press lauded the revolution it had helped create, black citizens hid in

¹⁴⁵ Quote from *Wilmington Journal*, 19 December 1875, in David Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom*, 215. This moment of representation did not last, however, and it was pulled down by the power of the Democratic press. Armed with anecdotes of irresponsible black councilmen and other officials from across the state, Democratic papers pointed to black excess as justification for white rule. For example, John C. Dancy, black customs collector at Wilmington’s port, received special criticism in 1898 due to his high salary and his support for legalizing interracial marriages. Criticism of Dancy found in “Five Lessons for North Carolina Voters,” 1898, Democratic broadside, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

the surrounding swamps or joined the over 2,100 refugees who fled the city. By the night of 10 November the guns were silent in Wilmington. Modern America's only successful putsch had ended; the tragedy named by its perpetrators as the Wilmington Race Riot was complete.¹⁴⁶

But what, exactly, had happened? Democratic sympathizers described the coup as a spontaneous response to both the *Record*'s sexual accusations and "negro domination." The massacre's victims knew better. Race relations had been turbulent before the editorial, but tensions turned to violence only after the white press took up the issue. The *Record* editorial was incorporated into an ongoing campaign in the state's Democratic papers to achieve a specific political goal; scholars now agree that the violence "was not a spontaneous event, but was directed by white businessmen and Democratic leaders to regain control of the city." In the more pointed words of a Wilmington Democrat after a summer meeting in 1898, "it was decided that this city and county should be redeemed."¹⁴⁷

How did Democratic leaders orchestrate such a plot? The answer, obvious in 1898 if obscure today, is the press. The coup was the culmination of a joint campaign by the state's Democratic Party and Democratic press, the seeds of which were sown on a quiet afternoon in March 1898 when three men held a meeting at the Chatawka Hotel in New Bern, North Carolina. The men were Furnifold Simmons, chairman of the North Carolina Democratic

¹⁴⁶ *Kansas City Star*, 14 November 1898, reproduced in Geoff Suiter, "Outside Newspaper Coverage of the 1898 Coup in Wilmington, North Carolina," (n.p.: Geoff Suiter), 8; "Wilmington Race Riot Draft Report Offers Revelations," in Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition: A Norton Critical Edition*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), 272-273; 1898 Wilmington Riot Commission, "Front Matter" of *Wilmington Race Riot Report, May 31, 2006*, www.history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/report.htm; A useful narrative of the riot itself may be found in chapters four and five of H. Leon Prather, *We Have Taken a City: Wilmington Racial Massacre and Coup of 1898* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1984).

¹⁴⁷ "Wilmington Race Riot Draft Report Offers Revelations," in Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, ed. Sollors, 272; George Rountree, "Memorandum of my Personal Recollection of the Election of 1898," Henry G. Conner Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 3.

Party; Charles Aycock, future governor of North Carolina; and Josephus Daniels, editor of the heavily-partisan *Raleigh News and Observer*. Leading North Carolina Democrats, the three men discussed strategy for the months before the election of 8 November—an election in which they hoped to break the alliance between Republicans and western-based Populists that had captured control of state politics in 1894, had ruled under the name of Fusionism, and had elected Daniel Russell to the governorship in 1896.¹⁴⁸

The strategy that Simmons, Aycock, and Daniels developed revolved around publishing racial rhetoric daily in the North Carolina press—a press which Daniels and his fellow Democratic editors used from March to November as a political tool of visceral efficiency. This is the story of the arguments these men made and the tragedy they helped create—the relationships between the press, the Democrats’ 1898 campaign, and the Wilmington Coup. Drawing from modern scholarship on Wilmington and primary sources including partisan editorials, political broadsides, and eyewitness accounts of the violence, this chapter asks two questions critical to our understanding of 1898. Namely, what rhetorical strategies did the Democratic press employ during the 1898 campaign, and how did this coverage impact the violence in Wilmington itself?

While the Democrats’ press campaign was highly organized, its rhetorical strategies were not subtle. A single 1898 broadside shouted capitalized headlines including “BLACKS PROPOSE TO COLONIZE AND CONTROL NORTH CAROLINA,” “NEGRO RULE DRIVES AWAY INVESTORS,” and “THE MENACE TO WHITE WOMANHOOD.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Glenda E. Gilmore, “Murder, Memory, and the Flight of the Incubus,” in *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy*, ed. David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998): 74; Stephen Kantrowitz, “The Two Faces of Destruction,” in *Democracy Betrayed*, ed. Cecelski and Tyson, 105.

¹⁴⁹ “Negro Supremacy Against White Supremacy in North Carolina,” 1898 Democratic broadside, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

This pointed language made the themes of 1898 clear: as in 1870, the months before Wilmington were marked by white political anxiety, a concerted effort by the conservative elite to regain power, and a threat of physical violence undergirded by aggressive, often sexualized anti-black rhetoric. Journalism in 1898 North Carolina was not intended for passive consumption—readers were called to feel, to identify, and to act in drastic ways.

The Democratic press aggravated pre-existing racial tensions while suggesting avenues through which white Wilmingtonians directed and justified violence. The press did not solely cause the Wilmington coup, but it was an essential factor in the riot's coming: tapping the deep southern roots of honor, sex, and race, Daniels and his peers gave Wilmington's whites the rhetorical tools needed to tip order into chaos. To understand newspapers' role in the violence in Wilmington, we must consider both the theoretical arguments and the practical consequences of racist journalism throughout 1898. This study reveals similarities to partisan editors during the Kirk-Holden War: by ignoring the complex causes at the heart of racial violence in favor of sensationalist rhetoric, editors in both cases created narratives of black aggression, Republican fraud, and Democratic saviors. These narratives have proven remarkably durable, with North Carolina's state legislature pardoning Holden only in 2011 and no well-contextualized memorial to the victims of 1898 standing in Wilmington's downtown streets even today. These case studies are relevant and thematically connected stories, then, for anyone interested in the press's historical role at the intersection of history, stereotype, and public opinion.

The historiography related to the Wilmington Coup is diverse, but this chapter draws specifically from works discussing Democratic rhetoric, Republican responses and failures, and ways in which rhetoric influenced public opinion and action toward Wilmington's black

population. This link between language and reality is essential, for Democratic newspapers' textual representations of black vulgarity throughout 1898 aggravated a pre-existing culture of racism and supplied language that allowed white Wilmingtonians to justify their actions on 10 November.

Democratic papers dominated North Carolina in the 1890s much as Josiah Turner and his fellow editors had controlled public discourse during the Kirk-Holden War. The partisan tactics Democratic editors adopted played to pre-existing racism and helped create a shared language of racism and anti-Republican feeling during the 1898 campaign. Democratic rhetoric also influenced early studies of the Wilmington Coup: Historian James Sprunt adopted a Democratic perspective and reproduced the press's rhetoric of black aggression in his 1916 *Chronicles of the Cape Fear*, arguing that the white mob showed remarkable restraint in not lynching Manly and that the Coup was necessary to restore order from Republican chaos. Sprunt's account remained largely unchallenged until Helen G. Edmonds's 1951 *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina, 1894-1901*. Edmonds argued that conservative actions to deny black political power—including Democratic press campaigns and racist cartoons—were manifestations of Democratic anxiety at the prospect of racial equality.¹⁵⁰

Conservative anxiety and partisan rhetoric combined to produce widespread prejudice against blacks and manipulation of poor whites during the 1898 campaign. The relationship between rhetoric and action was discussed in a 1998 volume edited by David S. Cecelski and

¹⁵⁰ See James Sprunt, *Chronicles of the Cape Fear River, 1660-1916* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Co., 1916); and Helen G. Edmonds, *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina, 1894-1901* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951). H. Leon Prather further explored the theme of conservative anxiety in 1984 with *We Have Taken a City: Wilmington Racial Massacre and Coup of 1898*. Prather's study is notable for two reasons. Firstly, *We Have Taken a City* stressed the coup's interrelated economic and racial causes, citing rising Wilmington unemployment in addition to Democratic propaganda as key motivations for the white mob. Secondly, Prather claimed that the riot was a watershed, arguing that racial violence throughout the Progressive Era followed Wilmington's example of violence which was "organized, collective in strength and in daylight, and against concentrations of blacks in their own ghettos." Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 166.

Timothy B. Tyson and entitled *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy*. In “The Two Faces of Domination,” Stephen Kantrowitz examined the mix of racial appeals and economic threats levied against common white voters by Democratic journalists in 1898. As conservative leaders sensed their place in society threatened, Kantrowitz argued, Democrats viewed poor whites as a tool to regain political power. Michael Honey examined the function of racial rhetoric on black men in “Racial Violence and the Delusions of White Supremacy,” arguing that the simultaneous de-masculinization and hyper-sexualization of black men in printed media played a role in both the lead-up to and memory of 10 November. Memory and rhetoric also intertwine in “Captives of Wilmington,” in which Laura F. Edwards argued that historians have robbed black victims of agency by focusing solely on Democratic motivation in explanations of Wilmington.¹⁵¹

In this glut of studies concerning Democratic rhetoric, it is easy to forget that Republican editors in the 1890s were never completely silenced. Editors such as Alexander Manly served as outnumbered yet outspoken opponents of the Democratic press, appealing to readers of both races to recognize the ridiculous nature of Democratic rhetoric. Manly’s 1898 editorial merely served as the most visible example of a larger historical trend within the black Republican press. In Wilmington as across the South, however, Republican arguments failed to prevent conservative elements from retaining political control and imposing physical violence. Richard Abbot examined the failings of anti-Democratic rhetoric across the South in *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, concluding that Republican editors both white and black typically folded after Reconstruction due to ideological tension within the Republican party, the fact that many formerly enslaved people were illiterate, and the

¹⁵¹ All essays referenced may be found in David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson, eds., *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

difficulty of securing financial support from white businessmen. Black editors faced especially difficult financial challenges, and Henry Lewis Suggs focused on their struggles in *The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979*. This chapter complements Abbott and Suggs's work by suggesting that Republican editors in Wilmington—as in the Piedmont during the Kirk-Holden War—struggled to disseminate their views due to opposition by the Democratic press.¹⁵²

Democrats used their domination of North Carolina's communication and transportation systems to strengthen their appeals to common whites throughout the 1890s. The Democratic Party assumed the cost of mailing Democratic weeklies, including most notably the *Raleigh News and Observer*, to at least twenty-five thousand independent North Carolina voters during the summer of 1898. Simmons judged the mailing campaign a success and subsequently paid pro-Democrat presses to print and distribute approximately fifty thousand broadsides, or supplemental sheets of two to four pages addressing a specific political issue. These Democratic broadsides featured some of the campaign's most vicious language and regularly contained confessions of repentant ex-Republicans. Democrats

¹⁵² Charles Simmons also furthered discussion of the black press in his 1998 *The African American Press*. Although Simmons's analysis is neither as broad nor as well-documented as Suggs's, *The African American Press* is useful due to Simmons's focus on violence and his inclusion of an anecdote involving female editor Ida B. Wells of the Memphis *Free Speech and Headlight*. After white city officials defended lynching as a necessary deterrence against would-be black rapists in 1892, Wells published an editorial blaming white women for instigating alleged rapes. Incensed by Wells's article, a white mob forced Wells from the city and destroyed the *Free Speech's* offices in an episode similar to the burning of the Wilmington *Daily Record* after Alexander Manly's editorial in August 1898. Discussion of the *Free Speech and Headlight* incident found in Charles A. Simmons, *The African American Press: With Special Reference to Four Newspapers, 1827-1965* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1998), 19-20. Other studies referenced include Richard H. Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights: Republican Newspapers in the Reconstruction South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004); and Henry Lewis Suggs, ed., *The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983).

distributed more than two million pieces of campaign literature in all, testifying to Simmons's ability as organizer and the logistical reach of the Democratic press machine.¹⁵³

Most often, this literature traveled by rail—nine of every ten southerners lived in counties with railroads by 1890, and the Democrats cultivated friendships with rail companies to facilitate distribution. Wilmington's 1898 Democratic campaign committee, for example, conspired with the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad to lower rates for literature distribution and to hire detectives to spy on blacks for propaganda material.¹⁵⁴

Control of North Carolina's infrastructure also allowed the Democrats to organize and publicize mass meetings which extended the reach of political rhetoric. Newspapers helped the cause by printing logistical details of the meetings and circulating previous speeches by Democratic leaders expected to attend. In one particularly notable instance, the Democrats invited Benjamin Tillman—South Carolina senator and white supremacist who blamed election violence in his home state in 1900 on Republicans who “wanted to put white necks under black heels”—to speak at rallies in Fayetteville and Rock Springs.¹⁵⁵ Papers celebrated the rallies in the following days, allowing Democrats and undecided voters across the state to engage with the Party's ideology. Another mass meeting in Goldsboro on 28 October 1898 achieved particular notoriety after being described locally by the *Goldsboro Argus* and statewide by the *Raleigh News & Observer*, the *Raleigh Morning Post*, the *New*

¹⁵³ For discussion of paper and broadside distribution, see chapter 3 of 1898 Wilmington Riot Commission, *Wilmington Race Riot Report*, available at <http://www.history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/Chapter3A.pdf>; Mary Evelyn Underwood, “The Struggle for White Supremacy in North Carolina,” (M.A. Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1943), 7.

¹⁵⁴ Railroad statistics in R. Scott Huffard Jr., “Infected Rails: Yellow Fever and Southern Railroads,” in *The Journal of Southern History* 79, no. 1 (February 2013): 80; Rountree, “Memorandum of my Personal Recollection of the Election of 1898,” 4.

¹⁵⁵ *Fayetteville Observer*, 13, 20 October 1898; “Speech of Senator Benjamin R. Tillman, March 23, 1900,” in Richard Purday, ed., *Document Sets for the South in U. S. History* (Lexington, MA.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1991), 147.

Bern Journal, and the *Winston Journal*. The Goldsboro rally serves as an excellent example of the logistics of North Carolina's 1890s Democratic machine—to maximize attendance, railroads such as the Southern and the Atlantic Coast Lines ran special routes from Greensboro and decreased rates by fifty percent.¹⁵⁶

Throughout the months leading to the election of 8 November and the violence of 10 November 1898, Democratic papers utilized their logistical advantage to attack the Fusionist incumbents with reprinted political speeches, broadsides, cartoons, and open letters from disgruntled Republicans. By emphasizing “negro domination” in eastern North Carolina, Fusionists’ mismanagement of state funds, and the sexual threat of rape of white women by black men, Democratic editors described blacks’ nominal gains in politics and economics as a constant threat to every white male voter in the state. “Our people were writing for the papers that summer,” a Democratic leader later reflected, “and rendering most efficient service.”¹⁵⁷ If the campaign’s success was obvious in Democratic victory at the polls, its effect on the common white mind was made evident two days later when two thousand men watched the *Record* office burn in the name of a single printed page.

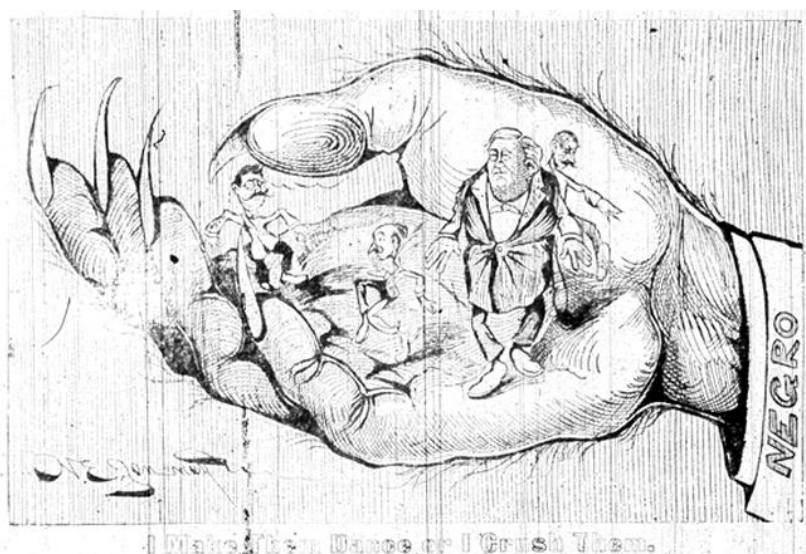
To North Carolina’s Democratic vanguard, many of whom were ex-Confederates, few images held more rhetorical force than that of white southerners subjugated to black political rule. Editors understood this, using both words and pictures to describe whites’ grip on state government as fragile and under concentrated attack. According to the 1898 narrative, white Fusionists had been duped by a black conspiracy: using the combined Republican and Populist vote to remove Democrats from power, the black populace would

¹⁵⁶ H. Leon Prather, Sr., *Resurgent Politics and Educational Progressivism in the New South* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1979), 159.

¹⁵⁷ Rountree, “Memorandum of my Personal Recollection of the Election of 1898,” 4.

somehow wrest political power from their white allies and rule North Carolina along race lines. Political reality did not reflect the black power described by the Democrats' campaign, so rhetoric was used to amplify what little power blacks possessed to threatening levels. After complaining on 24 October of five black magistrates and two black postmasters in Columbus County, a prominent Durham County Democrat exaggerated the racial politics involved, arguing that these appointments indicated an organized plot by which the "Republican-Populist fusion administration" wished to "set up the negro to rule over white men."¹⁵⁸

In a drastic reversal of Sambo and Zip Coon stereotypes, Democrats in 1898 cast black politicians as powerful, unified opponents. "It is absurd to speak of the white Republicans and Fusionists playing for the negro vote," declared one paper—"The truth is the negroes play for the white vote." The *News and Observer* argued this point with a 12 October cartoon in which white politicians stood in the palm of a gigantic black hand above the slogan, "I Make Them Dance Or I Crush Them."¹⁵⁹ (figure 1).



¹⁵⁸ J. S. Carr to Van Sparrow, 24 October 1898, "The Issues of the Campaign Stated," North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

¹⁵⁹ "I Make Them Dance or I Crush Them," in 1898 Wilmington Riot Commission, *Wilmington Race Riot Report*, <http://www.history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/Chapter3A.pdf>.

Figure 1: “I Make Them Dance Or I Crush Them,” *News & Observer*, 12 October 1898, NCSU Libraries, *Civil War Era NC*, accessed 29 April 2015, <http://history.ncsu.edu/projects/cwnc/items/show/553>.

How an inexperienced minority population could legitimately gain control was irrelevant—more important was white fear that “The Negroes are solidly united” while white factions continued to squabble.¹⁶⁰ The theme of black oppression continued with a cartoon of 13 August which featured a black shoe crushing a beggar labeled “white man” into the dirt. The cartoon’s political message, legible to even the least literate reader, was summarized by the title: “How Long Will This Last?”¹⁶¹ (figure 2).



Figure 2: “A Serious Question, How Long Will This Last?” *News & Observer*, 13 August 1898, UNC Libraries, *The 1898 Election in North Carolina*, accessed 29 April 2015, <http://exhibits.lib.unc.edu/exhibits/show/1898/item/2178>.

If the Fusionists won in November, Democratic papers moaned, black Republicans would overthrow the “slight vestige” of white power that remained before establishing “a sovereign negro state.” Continuing the political nightmare, papers claimed that black

¹⁶⁰ “Negro Supremacy Against White Supremacy in North Carolina,” 1898 Democratic broadside, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

¹⁶¹ “A Serious Question—How Long Will This Last?” in *News and Observer*, 13 August 1898, in 1898 Wilmington Riot Commission, *Wilmington Race Riot Report*, <http://www.history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/Chapter3A.pdf>.

Republicanism would attract black immigrants from across the South. One broadside legitimated this claim with an anonymous quote from South Carolina and Virginia blacks to the editor: “If North Carolina goes Republican again,” the source said, “we intend to go over there. The negro has more rights there than anywhere else.”¹⁶²

Democratic papers often explicitly addressed warnings of black colonization to white readers in western North Carolina—a region far removed from black political presence yet home to the core of the state’s Populist population. Democrats rightly identified western Populists, many of whom were semi-literate farmers, as the key to the 1898 election and couched political headlines and economic articles in language directly relevant to life on North Carolina farms. One Republican’s corruption was calculated at “482 bales of cotton” rather than in dollars and cents, transforming Fusionist ineptitude into a legible cost for Populist readers.¹⁶³ Democrats also projected into the future for their western readers, asking Populists to consider a future in which blacks held as much power in the mountains as they reportedly wielded in the east. If Populists continued to support the black Party, Democrats argued, black policemen would soon roam mountain streets, and mountain teachers would soon “see a colored visitor enter their schools.”¹⁶⁴ Democratic editors strengthened their appeals by quoting western community leaders whenever possible—a Reverend Stringfield of King’s Mountain stated that “The patriotic white men of the West ought to come to the rescue of their brethren in the East at the ballot box in November.” Stringfield’s quote casts the western yeoman as North Carolina’s cultural savior while linking east and west and

¹⁶² “Negro Supremacy Against White Supremacy in North Carolina,” 1898 Democratic broadside, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

¹⁶³ “Dr. Thomson Says,” 1898 Democratic broadside, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

¹⁶⁴ “Negro Supremacy Against White Supremacy in North Carolina,” 1898 Democratic broadside, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

making Democratic expectations of Populist readers clear—white men, regardless of place, were to identify with their race, to vote, and to vote Democratic.¹⁶⁵

Capitalizing on Populist discontent, Democratic leadership supported their political attacks by publishing reports of Fusionist mismanagement of state funds. In the typical economic attack, editors chose statistics which contrasted irresponsible Fusion management and greed with a halcyon era of Democratic rule in the early 1890s. In an open letter of late October, for example, increases in state budget expenses were compared for spans from 1891 to 1893 and from 1895 to 1897, revealing an increase of \$2,499,444 under the Democrats compared to \$2,713,383 under the Fusionists.¹⁶⁶

While arguments regarding the state operating budget as a whole were common, the Democratic press devoted some of its most pointed economic rhetoric to attacks against the Board of Agriculture and western penitentiary systems, indicating that Populists were once again the primary target audience. Fusionist management of funds was described as criminal, as the Democrats claimed the Board of Agriculture spent an average of \$6,172 more annually than had the previous leadership while raising expenditures on the state penitentiary system by \$9,644 in 1897 alone.¹⁶⁷

In addition to criticizing Fusionist accounting, Democratic economic rhetoric presented North Carolina as an isolated, primitive state due to pre-1898 black political

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. The tone of Populist papers throughout 1897 and 1898 suggests that Democratic appeals found sympathetic readers among their western target audience. The *Progressive Farmer*, the most important Populist paper in the state throughout the 1890s, reflected profound disgust with the perceived apathy of Fusionist lawmakers on 23 February 1897, writing, “let the miserable pie-hunters go to work or go home.” The *Caucasian* was even more pointed on 27 February 1897, stating that “up to this date the legislature is a damnable disgrace to the state.”

¹⁶⁶ J. S. Carr to Van Sparrow, 24 October 1898, “The Issues of the Campaign Stated,” North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 14.

¹⁶⁷ “Dr. Thomson Says,” 1898 Democratic broadside, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

involvement. Josephus Daniels moaned that Fusionist spending had “made the state a by-word” for corruption, and another broadside complained that “all the states south of us are holding up North Carolina as a horrible example” and that northern investors “have been prevented from locating in our midst.” Daniels strengthened his point by printing letters allegedly written by disgusted northern visitors, including one capitalist who regretted the fate of Wilmington, “a fine country, with the greatest possibilities, ruined of its prospects, through the baleful influences of a race that few white men and no white women can trust.”¹⁶⁸

If political and economic rhetoric appealed to the minds and livelihoods of Democrats and Populists in 1898, Democrats’ third rhetorical category—that of sexual imagery—cast a more visceral, more fundamental, more sinister net. Following the planning meeting of Simmons, Aycock, and Daniels at the Chatawka hotel, stories of rapes of white women by black men began appearing in Democratic newspapers across the state. As with claims of “negro domination,” claims of widespread sexual assault were built on fabricated data. Based on the annual reports of the North Carolina Attorney-General, historian Glenda Gilmore has concluded that no appreciable increase in reported sexual assaults occurred from 1897 to 1900.¹⁶⁹

Accuracy hardly mattered, though. Building on their earlier claims of whites’ political and economic emasculation, Democratic papers used sexual imagery to argue that Fusionist victory would remove the white man’s final reservoir of power—the ability to control and

¹⁶⁸ Speech by Josephus Daniels of the National Democratic Executive Committee, Lemon Springs, Moore County, 1 October 1898, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; J. S. Carr to Van Sparrow, 24 October 1898, “The Issues of the Campaign Stated,” North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 10.

¹⁶⁹ Glenda E. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 82-89.

protect his family's physical bodies. White wives and daughters were vulnerable to rape while their men worked, and black labor would force white workers out of the workplace. The papers lambasted a Fusionist inheritance tax which they claimed would leave widows and orphans destitute, robbing the father's ability to provide for his dependents after death. Finally, Democrats claimed that Republicans "spare not even the dead," giving paupers' corpses to medical students for dissection without family approval.¹⁷⁰ By presenting the Fusionist government as a regime which disrespected the sanctity of human life, Democratic papers sought to motivate white men through fear—fear of subjugation and violation at the hands of an inferior race.

Democrats' sexual arguments were accompanied by the most pointed visual rhetoric of the 1898 campaign. To enforce the threat of black sexuality to white families, cartoons depicted white women harassed or seduced in public by caricaturized blacks—one example from late October, entitled "Why The Whites Are United," showed an uncomfortable white woman accosted by monkey-faced black men at a post office (figure 3).

¹⁷⁰ "Five Lessons for North Carolina Voters," 1898, Democratic broadside, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



Figure 3: “Why The Whites Are United,” *News & Observer*, 28 October 1898, UNC Libraries, *The 1898 Election in North Carolina*, accessed 29 April 2015, <http://exhibits.lib.unc.edu/items/show/2240>.

Democratic representation of black sexuality in 1898 was always less about specific events than an ambiguous, omnipresent sense of dread, and this ambiguity is seen in the regular portrayal of the black sexual threat in non-human images.¹⁷¹ One cartoon described North Carolina womanhood’s “appeals to the ballot” as a white woman clinging to a white man whose arm, clutching a ballot, extends against a black cloud labeled “negro domination” on the horizon (figure 4).

¹⁷¹ Ashraf Rushdy has argued that this ambiguous definition of black sexuality was a central feature of the “lynching for rape discourse” which permeated the South after Reconstruction, as printed attacks against individual perpetrators lost a measure of rhetorical power after the offender was killed. See chapter four, and especially pages 94-95, of Rushdy, *American Lynching*.

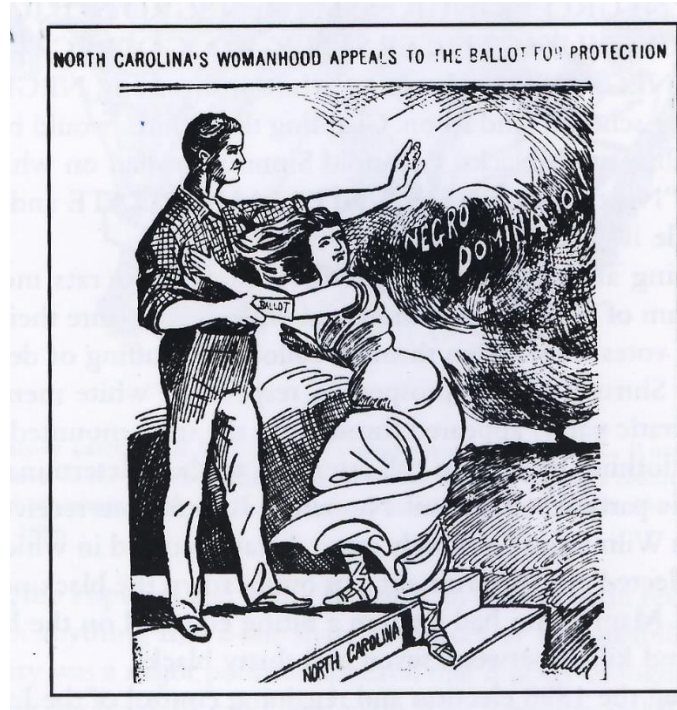


Figure 4: “North Carolina’s Womanhood Appeals To The Ballot For Protection,” *News & Observer*, image reproduced at <http://www.prisource.com/Projects/SHEN/20101001SubmissionIllustrations/>, accessed 30 March 2016.

In a more explicitly sexual example, the *News and Observer* ran a picture of a vampire with a stylized black face and grotesque wings labeled “negro rule.” Fleeing from the black vampire’s claws to both sides of the frame, representing the danger to both eastern and western North Carolina, was a group of fashionably-dressed whites.¹⁷²

Newspapers inserted gendered language into their non-rape stories as well, forcing the imperative to protect white womanhood upon any readers who were paying attention. White men were not mere observers, but the “sturdy manhood” of the state. White indignation was not a passing temper, but a fury that “burst forth from a pent up volcano”

¹⁷² The referenced cartoon appears in “Negro Supremacy Against White Supremacy in North Carolina,” 1898 Democratic broadside, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Unfortunately, the image has not yet been digitized; “The Vampire that Hovers Over North Carolina,” *News and Observer*, 27 September 1898, reproduced in chapter 3 of 1898 Wilmington Riot Commission, *Wilmington Race Riot Report*, available at <http://www.history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/Chapter3A.pdf>.

and which was “thrust to the front.”¹⁷³ In such a sexualized climate, the simple act of voting was equated with defending the race, and the fair sex was used as the passive logo of the Democratic ballot. Again, the *News and Observer* provides a useful example: on the morning of election day, a simple cartoon ran which featured a white woman and a ballot box, the lady staring directly at the reader and asking, “Have you voted the White Man’s Ticket?”¹⁷⁴ (figure 5).



Figure 5: “Good Morning! Have you voted the White Man’s Ticket?” *News and Observer*, 8 November 1898, UNC Libraries, *The 1898 Election in North Carolina*, accessed 29 April 2015, <http://exhibits.lib.unc.edu/items/show/2248>.

¹⁷³ *Wilmington Messenger*, 1 November 1898; Gilmore, “The Flight of the Incubus,” 83.

¹⁷⁴ “Good Morning! Have you voted the White Man’s Ticket?” in *News and Observer*, 8 November 1898, reproduced in chapter 3 of 1898 Wilmington Riot Commission, *Wilmington Race Riot Report*, available at <http://www.history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/Chapter3A.pdf>.

Some women supplemented their passive roles as rhetorical objects with political action of their own. White women appeared at Democratic rallies, either addressing the crowd or standing by the speaker to provide an example of the purity at stake in the white man's fight. Wives participated in the campaign by influencing their husbands' votes: one postmaster wrote to his local paper that he had changed parties after his wife asked if he would vote "against her or against the negroes." While the press nearly always presented white women as symbols or objects rather than actors, white Wilmingtonian women physically imposed on black women in public spaces, with at least one street fight being reported in the weeks leading to the election. In the moments before the violence on 10 November, white women combined their rhetorical and physical roles by waving the mob on from Wilmington's balconies.¹⁷⁵

Neither were female Democrats the only women who participated in the 1898 campaign. Rather than accepting the press's attacks upon their race, black women around Wilmington formed their own Republican organization to encourage black men to vote. Details of the movement are frustratingly few, but it is clear that the women involved recognized both their ability to shape the election and the press's role in influencing voter behavior: the group published a statement in the *Daily Record* supporting its embattled editor, organized voter registration drives, and threatened to punish any black men who succumbed to Democratic pressure "in a way that will not be pleasant."¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Postmaster quote from "Negro Supremacy Against White Supremacy in North Carolina," 1898 Democratic broadside, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Fight between a group of white women and one black woman reported in *Raleigh News and Observer*, 8 September 1898; Gilmore, "The Flight of the Incubus," 82-83; Waving women described in Mr. Nutt's testimony, Minutes of the Organizational Meeting of the Association of Members of the Wilmington Light Infantry at Lumina, Wrightsville Beach, 14 December 1905, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

¹⁷⁶ Quote in *Daily Record* statement reprinted in *Raleigh News and Observer*, 22 October 1898; Gilmore, "The Flight of the Incubus," 83.

Very little was pleasant for Wilmington's black men in 1898—a trend best shown by the firestorm of press controversy which surrounded Alexander Manly, the former painter and future refugee who served as the editor and owner of Wilmington's *Daily Record*. As a black businessman and a journalist, Manly occupied a conspicuously public position at the intersection of Wilmington's racial, economic, and political tensions, and he would pay a conspicuously public price.

On 18 August 1898, Manly published an editorial in which he directly replied to an incendiary speech delivered by Rebecca Felton at an Agricultural Society meeting in Georgia. Felton's speech was a paradigm of white supremacy rhetoric: if southern religion, justice, and manhood were not sufficient to curb black lust, Felton said, "then I say lynch; a thousand times if necessary."¹⁷⁷ Manly responded in strong terms, challenging Felton's generalizations by writing that many alleged rapes were in fact consensual unions and that black men were often "sufficiently attractive for white girls of culture and refinement to fall in love with them." In a final racial jab, Manly accused white men of commonly raping black women, warning that if whites "sow the seed—the harvest will come in due time."¹⁷⁸

Sensationalistic press campaigns rely on provocative headlines, and the tone and timing of Manly's editorial provided such a headline for Democratic editors across North Carolina from August to November 1898. In an atmosphere of sexually-charged cartoons and public rallies, Manly's accusation of moral shortcomings among whites was taken as an assault on the race as a whole, providing both focus for the final stage of the Democrats' press campaign and the trigger for the violence of 10 November. Democrats across the state

¹⁷⁷ Felton speech reproduced in Larae Umfleet, *A Day of Blood: The 1898 Wilmington Race Riot* (Raleigh: North Carolina Office of Archives and History, 2009), 20.

¹⁷⁸ Manly's editorial, originally published in *Daily Record*, 18 August 1898, reproduced in Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, ed. Sollors, 254-257.

denounced Manly as predatory, and even moderate blacks distanced themselves from the editor. The Democratic *Wilmington Journal* reprinted portions of Manly's article daily after its first appearance, with 300,000 copies of the editorial printed for special statewide distribution. Papers across the nation acknowledged Manly's role in the violence after the riot ended: the *Atlanta Constitution* wrote that "it was broadcast through North Carolina" with "tremendously effective" results, and another paper wrote that Manly's work "furnished, not a justification, but a great provocation, to the mob."¹⁷⁹ Perhaps the clearest Democratic response to Manly's editorial appeared in the *Raleigh News & Observer* on 3 November 1898, when Democratic state chairman Furnifold Simmons published an editorial detailing his party's opinions on the editorial's motivations and effects. Due to "the insolence and aggressiveness which his sudden elevation to power has engendered in the negro," Simmons wrote, "a leader and representative of that race dared openly and publically to assail the virtue of our pure white womanhood." Simmons described the editorial as the event which solidified white supremacy as the paramount issue in the campaign, arousing white anger which "swept like a tornado over the State."¹⁸⁰

It would be a mistake to assume that Republicans did not attempt to answer Democratic attacks throughout 1898. Similarly to the Republican press in the months before the Kirk-Holden War, Republican and Populist editors in 1898 repeatedly drew attention to the bias of Democrats' political, economic, and sexual tactics, accusing their opponents of racial hypocrisy and urging readers to vote with their minds and morals rather than by race.

¹⁷⁹ For a biographical sketch of Manly and discussion of the popular reaction to his editorial, see Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 68-80; For an analysis of the editorial's political impact, see Michael C. Glancy, "The Wilmington Riot of November 10, 1898," unpublished research report, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Multiple Abilities Program, New Hanover County Public Library; Final quote in *Outlook*, 19 November 1898; For citations of Manly's article in national papers, see *Atlanta Constitution*, 11 November 1898; *New York Evening Journal*, 10 November 1898; and *Baltimore Sun*, 12 November 1898.

¹⁸⁰ *Raleigh News & Observer*, 3 November 1898.

The fallacy of “negro domination” drew the majority of Republican criticism, with the same officeholder statistics used by Democrats often recycled to show the small degree of actual political power held by blacks. “There is not even a school committee in all North Carolina the majority of whose members are negroes,” wrote a Populist editor, “and yet they tell us we have negro rule! Great Caesar!”¹⁸¹

Republicans also highlighted Democrats’ racial hypocrisy by printing personal testimonies of public interracial cooperation. One Republican pamphlet claimed that Douglas Williams, a black public notary in Warren County, had been recommended for appointment by a white Democratic state legislator in 1887. After Williams began his duties as notary, he apparently “privately examined, separate and apart from her husband,” Mrs. Sallie Long, the white daughter of North Carolina’s Lieutenant Governor. The Democratic Mr. Long did not object to his wife’s private examination by a black man, leading the Republican author to mock 1898 attacks on blacks’ public competency as mere race-baiting. “They strain at a gnat and swallow a camel,” the pamphlet read. “O! Consistency, thou art a jewel.”¹⁸²

The example of Douglas Williams provides in brief form the core arguments of the Republican press in 1898. Firstly, Republican and Populist papers claimed that Democratic politicians shifted their viewpoints on acceptable racial roles due to the political situation rather than to genuine personal belief. Secondly, as evidenced by Williams’s success as notary, Republicans showed that some blacks in public office enjoyed Democratic support prior to the 1898 campaign. Finally, Republicans emphasized that racial tensions, and any threat of sustained black power, were less intense away from the North Carolina coast.

¹⁸¹ *The Progressive Farmer*, 8 November 1898.

¹⁸² “White Man, Read! Douglas Williams, Negro, Takes the Private Examination of Mrs. Sallie Long, White Lady,” 1898 Republican pamphlet, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Regardless of the logic behind such appeals, the Democrats' financial and logistical power limited the impact of the Republican and Populist message. The North Carolinian Republican press had been in decline since the withdrawal of Federal printing contracts at the end of Congressional Reconstruction, and white businesses' refusals to advertise in opposition papers caused major financial difficulties for editors across the state. As the incumbent government, the Fusionists also faced the difficult task of protecting the democratic process while avoiding accusations of voter intimidation from their more vocal opponents. While the presence of state militia at polling places raised cries of voter intimidation and fraud, one Populist paper scowled on the morning of the election that "if there are no troops...and bloodshed occurs, the Democratic machine will say that the fusionists are to blame for the loss of life...To attempt to please them is useless."¹⁸³

What are we to think, then, of the papers' rhetoric and their fixation on Manly in 1898? What can the campaign teach of us of the press's role in instigating and sustaining racial conflict? On a surface level, Democratic rhetoric was effective due to a logistical situation which enabled Democratic printers to reach far more readers than their opponents. On the level of rhetoric itself, however, two traits of the Democrats' writing merit attention. Firstly, Democratic propaganda succeeded due to use of racial synecdoche—its ability to subsume individual identity within an entire race. An attack on a single white woman constituted an attack on whiteness as a whole; embezzlement by one senator condemned an entire party as criminals; the displacement of one white worker by a black man signified impending black rule. Additionally, papers typically described sexual atrocities in vague language and as having occurred at locations distant enough from their readers to avoid panic

¹⁸³ *The Progressive Farmer*, 8 November 1898.

yet near enough to create worry. Papers regularly reported rapes or black militants as being in the next town or county, but rarely in the same town or on the opposite side of the state. This geographical control over propaganda—this rhetorical proximity—helps explain why the Manly editorial, as a specific example set in Wilmington itself, yielded a drastic response.

The location of the violence on 10 November was not coincidental. Although Democratic propaganda throughout the 1890s described North Carolina as overrun by black vampires and Fusionist frauds, Wilmington was perhaps the only city in North Carolina where this racial fantasy correlated to a demographic reality. In 1890, the final census taken before the riot-induced exodus recorded 20,055 inhabitants, 11,324 of whom were black. Black businesses were common on Wilmington streets, and the degree of black involvement in city government led one historian to write that “never before and never since had blacks occupied such a central place in a city’s political and economic life.”¹⁸⁴

The public roles of Wilmingtonian blacks led to competition between the city’s businessmen and laborers across race lines. Democrats recognized this fact, preying in 1898 on rivalries which stretched from the early nineteenth century. Wilmington’s skilled slaves were renowned for their relative professional freedom throughout the antebellum era, often ignoring state law to form contracts and undercut white laborers without a master’s knowledge. White merchants from forty businesses responded by forming the city’s first Chamber of Commerce in 1853.¹⁸⁵ Tempers spilled over in 1857, when a white mob destroyed a building being constructed by black artisans and left a note threatening that “a

¹⁸⁴ Census data from US Federal Census for 1890 reproduced in Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 31; quote in *ibid.*, 22-23.

¹⁸⁵ Alan D. Watson, *Wilmington: Port of North Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), 70.

similar course would be pursued, in all cases against all buildings erected by negro contractors or carpenters.”¹⁸⁶

Regardless of Wilmington’s large and relatively-affluent black population, the 1890s were years of sustained racial tension. Newspaper readers across North Carolina realized in 1898 that racial and political passions in the city were especially high—the Democrats printed a letter from Wilmington’s Republican postmaster in which he worried that “there is a greater feeling of unrest...than I have ever seen, and many, even the most conservative, feel that a race conflict is imminent.” An anonymous letter from a Wilmington native stated on the morning of the election that “I consider no man safe here who dares have an idea different from the [Democratic] gang who are attempting to take control.”¹⁸⁷

If the increasing militancy of Wilmington’s racial situation remained unclear to any black leaders after the Manly firestorm, the morning of 1 October 1898 removed all doubt. On that morning, according to an enthusiastic report in the *Wilmington Morning Star*, black community leaders were invited to the riverbank for a private demonstration of the Wilmington Light Infantry’s recently-purchased Colt machine gun.¹⁸⁸ While the black audience’s opinions of the gun are unknown, they could not have missed the significance of the demonstration’s timing—mere days earlier, in a broadside published on 27 September, a handwritten letter from Wilmingtonian blacks to a Greensboro hardware company was reproduced beneath the headline, “Wilmington Negroes are Trying to Buy Guns.” By printing stories of alleged black armament in Wilmington, the Democratic press helped

¹⁸⁶ *Wilmington Journal*, 31 July, 7 August 1857, quote reproduced in Alan D. Watson, *Wilmington, North Carolina, to 1860* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2003) 138.

¹⁸⁷ “Can any Reasonable Man Longer Doubt?” 1898 Democratic broadside, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; *The Progressive Farmer*, 8 November 1898.

¹⁸⁸ *Wilmington Morning Star*, 1 October 1898.

legitimize the presence of firearms and the potential use of force by whites in questions of race.¹⁸⁹

In addition to serving as a tool of intimidation for local Democrats, the press weakened Governor Russell's credibility in the eyes of Republicans of both races by printing stories emphasizing his abandonment of local whites and his inability to protect local blacks. In an instance of cruel foreshadowing, the *Charlotte Daily Observer* wrote on 5 November that Russell's recent trip to the coast was probably "to incite a race conflict, and if that is what he went for he will never come out alive." A *News and Observer* cartoon of 30 September entitled "The Source of the Governor's Inspiration" featured a miniature black man climbing Russell's shoulder to whisper into the governor's ear.¹⁹⁰ The climax of this campaign came on the eve of the election, when Wilmington papers printed a circular which Russell had written to the city's blacks. Urging blacks to "make no objections to them [Democrats] or to their County ticket," Russell indicated the pre-determined nature of the election by warning his followers to "not depart from the agreement made with the merchants and businessmen."¹⁹¹

The "merchants and businessmen" referenced were twenty white Democrats headed by George Rountree who financed the 1898 press campaign in New Hanover County. In addition to paying for papers, these Democratic leaders negotiated with local Republicans for a transfer of power in return for civil order on election day. Newspaper tales of interracial tension—white women attacked by blacks, black citizens arming, white passions barely

¹⁸⁹ "Negro Supremacy Against White Supremacy in North Carolina," 1898 Democratic broadside, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

¹⁹⁰ "The Source of the Governor's Inspiration" reproduced in chapter 3 of 1898 Wilmington Riot Commission, *Wilmington Race Riot Report*, available at <http://www.history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/Chapter3A.pdf>.

¹⁹¹ *Charlotte Daily Observer*, 4 November 1898; J. Allen Kirk, "A Statement of Facts Concerning the Bloody Riot in Wilmington, North Carolina of Interest to Every Citizen of the United States," 1898, unpublished essay, New Hanover County Public Library, 3.

restrained—enhanced the bargaining power of the Democratic professionals, as Republican leaders came to fear the possibility of post-election violence. In the face of these fears, Republicans conceded local defeat in a doomed attempt to preserve peace: Russell agreed to allow Democratic candidates to run unopposed in New Hanover county-level races. Thus, while Republicans did not participate directly in planning the riot, Governor Russell's weak rhetoric and willingness to negotiate emboldened New Hanover white supremacists and created a situation in which Democratic dominance was assured at the county, if not the city, level. Wilmington's Fusion government was to be an island in a Democratic sea, and black voters were ordered by their friends throughout 1898 to watch the tides rise.¹⁹²

Although Wilmington was a racially-charged city without the press's input, newspapers continued to forecast black aggression and white retaliation in the weeks before the waves broke on 10 November. At the center of this campaign, valued by both races as tools for social networking and control, were the city's churches. In a show of racial solidarity, the Wilmington-based Interdenominational Ministerial Union declared its support for Manly before the election and encouraged all black congregants to subscribe to the *Daily Record* to help the paper recover from lost advertising. The thoroughly-white *Wilmington Messenger* criticized this move, warning IMU ministers to reconsider else "resignations and non-residence be enforced."¹⁹³

Papers of both parties continued their appeals to the city's faithful through election week. Sensing an opportunity to spur voters on with religious fervor in addition to socioeconomic and sexual rhetoric, the *Wilmington Daily Messenger* advised white pastors to preach on Isaiah 17:14 and Jeremiah 25:35 on the Sunday before the election, and a majority

¹⁹² Kirk, "A Statement of Facts Concerning the Bloody Riot in Wilmington, North Carolina," 3.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

of ministers complied. These verses speak of robbery by night and innocents trapped without hope of escape—powerful emotional appeals to white congregations’ fears of racial uprising.¹⁹⁴ While some ministers preached, other whites traveled between black churches and interviewed black ministers about the content of their sermons. Although no violence was reported on that Sabbath morning, the events of 10 November suggest both that Christians took up the sword and that at least a few white rioters took the papers’ association of black churches with black militancy to heart: rioters pointed cannons at black church doors during the violence, and one black pastor remembered that “white ministers carried their guns to kill Negro Christians and sinners.”¹⁹⁵ In the press and in the pulpit, it seemed that Wilmington’s soul was on the ballot.

Except, on the municipal level, nothing was on the ballot at all. As Russell’s circular to black voters on 7 November made clear, neither Wilmington’s Republican mayor nor its aldermen were eligible for re-election. This fact led to a relatively smooth election on 8 November. Although voter intimidation and fraud seems likely from available vote totals—with thirty white and 313 black registered voters in the fifth precinct of Wilmington’s first ward, the results listed an incredible 456 Democratic and 151 Republican votes—there was no widespread violence during the election itself. Democratic congressional and state senatorial candidates won office, black voters largely followed Russell’s advice to vote and return immediately home, and approximately five hundred Democrats held a torch-lit victory

¹⁹⁴ King James translations of the referenced verses read as follows:

- Isaiah 17:14 – “And behold at eveningtide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.”
- Jeremiah 25:35 – “And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape.”

¹⁹⁵ Kirk, “A Statement of Facts Concerning the Bloody Riot in Wilmington, North Carolina,” 1-2, 10.

parade through the city streets.¹⁹⁶ And yet, although the Democratic Party had succeeded in its statewide campaign, the violence which erupted two days later shows that the electoral victory was hollow to Wilmington's agitators. A more definitive, more tangible action was now required, and it was required of all respectable white men.

If Democrats stood victorious after elections in the first week of November, why did the relative peace of election day devolve into chaos? What so inflamed the white community that citizens of a city with a bi-racial government might draft a "White Declaration of Independence" and gun down its own citizens in broad daylight?¹⁹⁷ Once again, the answer involves the press. After months of reading editorials on the imminent threat of black control and viewing provocative visuals of black men as sexualized vampire, Wilmingtonian whites were unwilling to accept that Wilmington's Fusionist politicians and black professionals were beyond the reach of the ballot. Manly's editorial was merely the final, most visible push in a swell built on pre-existing tensions and aggravated by newspapers. Democratic editorials and cartoons did not create white racism, but they did enflame it: the press's rhetoric, and especially its sexual accusations, had been too effective for Wilmington's white men to accept anything less than a drastic, immediate, and permanent change. The white leaders of 10 November knew that their homes and businesses were secure, and they did not care. The violence was about not safety, but dominance—in the words of one historian, "they wanted their honor back."¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Vote totals found in 1898 Wilmington Riot Commission, *Wilmington Race Riot Report*, 110; J. Allen Kirk, "A Statement of Facts Concerning the Bloody Riot in Wilmington, North Carolina," 4; Kantowitz, "The Two Faces of Domination," 106.

¹⁹⁷ The "White Declaration of Independence" was a document prepared by the so-called "Committee of Twenty-Five"—a group of Wilmington's leading white men. Waddell read the document to a Democratic town meeting on the night of 9 November. The Declaration gave African American leaders 12 hours to expel Manly from the city. Manly had in fact already fled, but the black community's response was not communicated to Waddell for unknown reasons. For more information, see note 229.

¹⁹⁸ Gilmore, "The Flight of the Incubus," 84.

If Wilmingtonian whites considered themselves dishonored in November 1898, this self-identification reveals a crucial goal of the Democratic press campaign. Rather than acknowledging the social and racial complexity of post-Reconstruction North Carolina, papers routinely reduced every argument, whether political, economic, or racial, to a morally-charged binary. Republican fraud, Democratic good management; black rapist, white saint; Fusion ineptitude, Democratic experience; black anger, white patience—Josephus Daniels and his fellow editors understood that political revival depended on distancing white voters from their black peers regardless of shared class or faith, and they classified any violence which moved society closer to the white side of the divide as just. The papers wanted Wilmington’s white men to identify with race before class and to act forcefully on this identity—as the *Wilmington Messenger* warned white man and Fusionist politician B. F. Keith on 7 September, “there is no middle ground upon which white men may stand.”¹⁹⁹

According to white eyewitnesses, the Wilmington riot came as a shock. United States Army officer Hugh McRae, whose name now adorns one of Wilmington’s most popular public parks, was lodging at a hotel near the river and later claimed to be completely surprised by men shouting of street violence on the morning 10 November. McRae recovered quickly from his surprise, however, grabbing a bag next to his bed which contained “my riot gun and about seventy five pounds of riot cartridges and two pistols and a bowie knife or two.” Toting this curiously pre-packed armory, the reluctant leader McRae led a group of men first to form a “skirmish line” and later to capture suspected black instigator Bill Mayo, who was ordered to flee for his life before being shot down by “at least forty guns of all

¹⁹⁹ *Wilmington Messenger*, 7 September 1898; Kantowitz, “The Two Faces of Domination,” 106. The irony to this argument, of course, is that white racial unity broke down in favor of class-based labor disputes after the Democrats assumed control of the city.

descriptions.”²⁰⁰ While the violence of McRae’s story is tragic, it is far from unique in the context of the Wilmington riot. What distinguishes McRae’s actions—and the actions of dozens of other white men whose testimonies have survived—are the specific ways in which they correspond to racial responses justified and encouraged by the Democratic press during the preceding months.

White Wilmingtonians’ responses to the press began to accelerate on the morning of 9 November. On that morning, in the same issue which declared Democratic victory at the polls, the *Wilmington Messenger* ran an advertisement under the headline “ATTENTION WHITE MEN,” announcing that a town meeting would be held later that day. “Full attendance is desired,” the paper exclaimed, “as business in the furtherance of White Supremacy will be transacted.”²⁰¹

The basic events of the white town meeting of 9 November are well-known: a majority of the town’s middle-class and professional white men appeared in the crowd; the crowd claimed Democrats’ statewide victory as justification for seizing control of Wilmington; a committee of twenty-five led by Alfred M. Waddell was appointed to represent white interests, and this group issued the “Committee of Colored Citizens” (CCC) a list of ultimatums requiring Manly to leave the city in twelve hours and Mayor Wright to resign.²⁰² The *Evening Dispatch* later published an account of the meeting which praised the

²⁰⁰ Minutes of the Organizational Meeting of the Association of Members of the Wilmington Light Infantry at Lumina, Wrightsville Beach, 14 December 1905, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

²⁰¹ *Wilmington Messenger*, 9 November 1898.

²⁰² Kirk, “A Statement of Facts Concerning the Bloody Riot in Wilmington, North Carolina,” 3-4; “Hell Jolted Loose,” in chapter 5 of 1898 Wilmington Riot Commission, *Wilmington Race Riot Report*, available at www.history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/report.htm.

whites' restraint by claiming that Manly would have been lynched in any other southern city.²⁰³

Nonetheless, this illusory patience was at its end. The committee of twenty-five drafted a "White Declaration of Independence" which allegedly represented white popular opinion. The Declaration contained seven separate proclamations, and each of these sections reflected the political, economic, or sexual arguments disseminated in Democratic papers. Politically, the city was "ruled by negroes" and "unscrupulous white men." Economically, Republican policies of employing blacks, which had caused business to stagnate and "progress to be out of the question," should be replaced. Sexually, the white mob vowed to protect their families from blacks such as the "vile and slanderous" Manly. The Declaration ended with a final threat against the Republican press: the committee demanded that the *Daily Record* cease publishing and ordered that its printing press be shipped from the city. This demand revealed Democratic opinion on the importance of print coverage and resulted in removal of opposing political voices. The press's call for racial defense had resulted in a literal muting of the public black organ and the promise of violence if that voice continued. When a messenger misplaced the CCC's response on the morning of 10 November, reportedly leaving the paper in a mailbox instead of delivering the message in person, the Declaration's promise of force was realized in the march of two thousand whites, the destruction of the *Record*, and the outbreak of violence along Forth and Harnett Streets and throughout the black neighborhood of Brooklyn.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ *Evening Dispatch*, 11 November 1898; Kirk, "A Statement of Facts Concerning the Bloody Riot in Wilmington, North Carolina," 3-4.

²⁰⁴ Copy of "White Declaration of Independence" available in chapter 4 of 1898 Wilmington Riot Commission, *Wilmington Race Riot Report*, at <http://www.history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/Chapter4.pdf>.

As in the case of Hugh McRae's pre-packed riot gun, the narrative of 10 November contains traces of personal interaction—conversations between white patrols and black citizens, victims hiding in cemeteries and swamps, cannons pointed at churches—which reveal the Democratic press's impact upon individuals' actions during, and perceptions of, the riot. Such encounters are few in the historical record, but they are numerous enough to suggest that whites' individual identities had been absorbed in a sort of groupmind based on papers' rhetoric. United States Army Colonel Walker Taylor had a chance to dissolve the white mob as it gathered to march on the *Daily Record*, but, taking the press's position that racial violence was necessary to cleanse Wilmington of "negro domination" and "unscrupulous white men," Taylor instead did nothing. "As I was Post Commander at that time and my duty would have been to disband them," he wrote in 1906, "I did not go down."²⁰⁵

The mob did go down, however, venting their frustration on the *Record* and drawing a confused and angered group of black workers from Sprunt's Cotton Press into the streets. When this group asked George Rountree, "what have we done, what have we done?" in the face of the Wilmington Light Infantry's machine gun, rhetoric's reach was again present: Rountree realized in a jolt that no crime but race was involved. "I had no answer," he later wrote, because "they had done nothing." The papers' association of black religion and black militancy reaped direct results hours later when a group of Naval Reserves searched Wilmington's black churches for gunmen after the shooting began. The whites found no guns—the failure of Wilmingtonian blacks to arm themselves had in fact been well-

²⁰⁵ Colonel Walker Taylor's testimony, Minutes of the Organizational Meeting of the Association of Members of the Wilmington Light Infantry at Lumina, Wrightsville Beach, 14 December 1905, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

reported—but the troops did find a stockpile of the campaign’s true weapons in the stacks of Republican campaign literature which filled the abandoned pews.²⁰⁶

Mere blocks from the empty churches and convinced by printed rape accusations that Wilmington’s streets were “not safe for a lady by herself,” J. F. Maunder joined a group of sentries who strip-searched blacks suspected of carrying weapons in the days after the riot. In a clear valuation of race over gender, these sentries searched black women in broad daylight. Although Maunder later justified his actions as a service to white womanhood, his account reflects the moral ambiguities created by papers’ sexual rhetoric: when an elderly black woman suspected of hiding a razor in her stockings offered to “show you right here,” Maunder let her pass, refusing to search her because “there were ladies across the street.”²⁰⁷ In each of these individual examples, the political, economic, and sexual rhetoric of Democratic papers became tangible through the motivation and warped worldview it provided Wilmingtonian whites. While the individual black victims of 10 November were innocent, the race’s guilt, established by the press through an authority of volume, spurred the riot on.

The press’s rhetoric thus instigated violence which led to a very real exodus of Wilmington’s black population in the weeks after 10 November—fearful of white vengeance, black citizens fled into surrounding swamps or crowded onto railcars leaving the city. Although specific statistics regarding black flight are unavailable, the 1900 census showed that whites enjoyed a majority population for the first time in decades. Republican mayor

²⁰⁶ J. Van B. Metts’s testimony, Minutes of the Organizational Meeting of the Association of Members of the Wilmington Light Infantry at Lumina, Wrightsville Beach, 14 December 1905; Rountree, “Memorandum of my Personal Recollection of the Election of 1898,” 14.

²⁰⁷ Kirk, “A Statement of Facts Concerning the Bloody Riot in Wilmington, North Carolina,” 5; Gilmore, “The Flight of the Incubus,” 85.

Silas Wright, the Populist chief of police, the city treasurer, the city attorney, and all black aldermen and policemen were forced to resign, their offices filled by members of the Democratic elite. Armed guards marched political prisoners both black and white to the rail station on 11 November, and white crowds cheered as trains carried the alleged villains “beyond the limits of the state.” Members of the black professional and laboring classes who managed to remain were forced from their posts as Democrats consolidated control. The *Wilmington Messenger* reported on 4 January 1899 that six black members of the New Hanover Board of Education resigned or were forced from office. Rather than considering the effect of such turnover on the city’s children, the editor interpreted the move as an indication of progress and a return to racial normalcy, proclaiming that “the south would be helped if 5,000,000 negroes in 1899 remove to the North.”²⁰⁸

As black Wilmingtonians fled their homes for the swamps or the depot, some found time to record their plight in writing. The most jarring black experiences of the riot are not recorded in newspaper columns—indeed, journalistic accounts from the victims’ perspective are nearly non-existent. The lack of black newspaper voices combined with Democratic attacks on Republican politicians largely eliminated the public’s chance to understand black victims’ suffering after 10 November. Instead, black memory of Wilmington survived in letters addressed to President William McKinley which are now preserved in the National Archives. The content of these notes is a mixture of disbelief, disorientation, desperation, and a common belief in the power of the press to shape public opinion on race. A black citizen wrote to the White House on 13 November, begging President McKinley “to do something on the Negro’s behalf.” The author was hiding in terror of her white neighbors, yet her

²⁰⁸ Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 142-144, 148; *Wilmington Messenger*, 4 January 1899.

greatest complaint was an utter lack of press coverage: “The outside world only knows one side of the trouble here, there is no paper to tell the truth about the Negro here, or in this or any other Southern state.” A letter of 15 November echoes this feeling of helplessness, stating that “over four hundred women, and children are driven from their home far out into the woods... for God Sake help them now that old confradate flage is floating in Wilmington North Carolina.” In addition to their desperation, these letters shared an anonymity born in terror. The letter of 12 November closed with the admission that “I cannot sign my name and live. But every word of this is true;” the writer of 15 November wrote that “I would give you my name but I am afraid. I am afraid to own my name.”²⁰⁹

White Republicans shared the fears of their black allies when they contributed their stories to the press: the *Independent* reported on 24 November that its contacts in North Carolina asked that their names be omitted, “as in that case they would be compelled to leave their homes, if, indeed, their lives would not be in danger.” At the close of one *Independent* article, a nameless white author wrote that “this true tale might cost me my comfortable residence in my native State were I known as the writer. Alas, the day when I should be ashamed of the State that gave me birth!”²¹⁰

In the days following the riot, as black Wilmingtonians cowered in Cape Fear swamps and Waddell’s regime consolidated its bloody control, a battle for public opinion erupted in the local and national press. Articles by Republicans, Democrats, northerners, southerners, ministers, politicians, and eyewitnesses appeared in sheets from Wilmington to

²⁰⁹ Letters found in Appendix J of 1898 Wilmington Riot Commission, *Wilmington Race Riot Report, May 31, 2006* at www.history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/AppdxJ.pdf.

²¹⁰ *The Independent*, 24 Nov. 1898, 1514, reprinted in Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, ed. Sollors, 288, 290-291.

Atlanta to New England, and everywhere the question was the same: what exactly had happened along the Cape Fear, and why?

Local Democratic accounts of the violence were predictably unrepentant. The *Wilmington Messenger* of 11 November described the destruction of the *Daily Record* as a measured response against an editorial for which “there is not punishment, provided by the courts, adequate.” According to the *Messenger*, the violence escalated only after a black crowd “made insulting remarks about the white men and their guns” and after “one of the negroes drew a pistol and fired deliberately at the whites.” Thus, any lethal force used by the white mob was almost instantly categorized as defensive by the local press.²¹¹ This defensive rhetoric continued in an account of the riot by Mayor Waddell that appeared in late November. After describing his many efforts to save the buildings around the *Record* from destruction and of guarding political prisoners against lynching, Waddell claimed that “we really didn’t have anything to do with” the mayor’s resignation and that the Fusionists themselves were implicitly responsible for any continued political chaos. Finally, Waddell claimed that local blacks, many of whom still crouched in the woods, were “as much rejoiced as the white people that order has evolved out of chaos.”²¹²

²¹¹ Quotations from *Wilmington Messenger*, 11 November 1898. North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The *Messenger* stepped up its defense of local whites on 18 November, when the paper published a three-column article entitled “Northern Papers Slandering Wilmington.” The primary Northern paper discussed was the *Washington Star*, which had claimed that the whites had “baited the negroes” and “deliberately created a condition after election which was no less than anarchy.” The *Messenger* attacked the *Star*’s words as “misplaced sympathy” and “ill-advised censure,” arguing that “the south has extraordinary conditions altogether unlike those of the north. It knows Sambo and Josh and Bill as no yankee ever knew him. It is determined...to protect its women and children from villains and brutal rapists, and to maintain honest government.” Here we see sexual and sectional rhetoric in high form. Quotes from *Wilmington Messenger*, 18 November 1898, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

²¹² *Collier’s Weekly*, 26 November 1898, 3-5, reprinted in Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, ed. Sollors, 293-297. Even using only Wilmington’s Democratic papers as evidence, it is obvious that the black community was in fact deeply distressed by the violence: in the *Messenger*’s initial article on Coup, the writer acknowledged that several white men “discharged their fire arms” as the *Record* burned, and that “the children in the negro school nearby were thrown into a state of great alarm” at the disturbance. One can only imagine the rhetoric

Local efforts to justify the Democrats' actions and downplay the violence continued for months. In a selective lapse of memory, the *Wilmington Messenger* exulted on 1 January 1899 that a "vicious, depraved government" had fallen "without the firing of a gun," and that "the reign of roughs and toughs ends with the return of the Anglo-Saxon to power. Esto perpetua!"²¹³ The goals of these accounts seem to be three-fold: by justifying the coup as legal, local Democrats sought to discourage federal intervention on behalf of the displaced Fusionists; by emphasizing the mob's paternalism, Waddell tried to entice unskilled black laborers to return to their jobs; finally, by describing the order which prevailed in Wilmington, the Democrats attempted to establish their legitimacy as a rational regime in the eyes of the white community—an especially important task as white class divisions reappeared in the course of daily post-campaign life. Victorious with the ballot and the gun, the Democrats now faced the considerable challenge of ruling a stratified race their papers had previously defined as equal.

The 1898 press campaign sought to impress an inflamed racial stereotype upon the state's white minds, and the Democrats' efforts bore fruit in the printed opinions of their enemies. *The Progressive Farmer*, North Carolina's most influential populist paper and an outspoken critic of Democratic tactics throughout 1898, experienced a remarkable change of heart following the election and the violence in Wilmington. "The people of Wilmington," an unnamed contributor wrote, "are beginning to realize that in giving employment almost wholly to negroes they have made a serious mistake. The country negro is in nearly every instance quiet and inoffensive, but when he goes to town, he speedily changes."²¹⁴

which would have resulted had the races in question been reversed. *Wilmington Messenger*, 11 November 1898. North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

²¹³ *Wilmington Messenger*, 1 January 1899.

²¹⁴ *The Progressive Farmer*, 15 November 1898.

National newspapers joined local Wilmington sheets in shaping the public's historical memory of the Wilmington Coup. Although individuals of both races criticized the Democrats' use of violence in November 1898, the national narrative largely cast black men as aggressors and the white mob as a stabilizing force.²¹⁵ The cover of the 26 November *Collier's Weekly*, for example, featured an illustration by Hugh W. Ditzler in which a large, chaotic black mob fire guns at unseen opponents while a black man lies dead in the street. The sketch features no white men and has an indistinct, primal sense of energy, presenting black men as unorganized and dangerous instigators. The *Hartford Courant* of 11 November provides a textual example of the national turn toward blaming the black community. Beneath a capitalized headline reading "EIGHT NEGROES DEAD," the *Courant* laid out the following chain of events: "Mob Destroys a Colored Newspaper Office – Negroes Open Fire Upon Whites – Troops Called Out – New Municipal Government in Charge." Such a succinct summary allowed Connecticut readers, like their peers across the nation, to consider the Coup as a direct, legitimate result of black aggression. The *Atlanta Constitution* further justified the violence as a gendered defense of white honor, writing that the riot had been a necessary response against the "criminal element of the blacks," who ensured that "white ladies and children were constantly annoyed and insulted when on the streets." By ignoring the complex causes of the massacre, depictions such as the *Collier's* cover, the *Courant*

²¹⁵ Some individuals who spoke out against the violence took political action to attempt to prevent future race massacres. Such was the case in Cleveland, where black men Frank Lee and William Bundy teamed with black pastors to form the "Brotherhood of African Descent," the goal of which was "to prevent such occurrences as that at Wilmington." I was unable to find references to the Brotherhood after its initial advertisement in the *Washington Post*, but it appears that the founders intended their organization to become a national group. See "African Descent Brotherhood. National Organization to Prevent Race Riots Like that at Wilmington," *Washington Post*, 21 December 1898. Scan of page available at http://sb.dhpress.org/wilmingtonraceriort/?attachment_id=2077.

headlines, and the *Constitution*'s rhetoric created public stereotypes of black violence in Wilmington which survived deep into the twentieth century.²¹⁶

Conversely to the Democratic response, the national Republican press emphasized the ridiculous nature of "negro domination" rhetoric, drew attention to election-day intimidation of black voters, and criticized white Wilmingtonians' disregard for freedom of the press. Whereas Democrats described Wilmington as a primarily racial event with political consequences, Republicans called the riot a political act with racial overtones. One paper flatly called the violence "a political war between two parties...yet there was nothing specific that they were so crazy about." The *New York Times* ridiculed Waddell's claims of civility, writing that white Fusionists were called "White niggers" at the Wilmington polls. Other papers looked past the riot itself for signs of violence to come. "North Carolina is not a negro State...actual negro domination is impossible," wrote the *New York Tribune*. Rather, the riot was best viewed as an ominous sign of the South's desire for "the elimination of the negro as a voter."²¹⁷

²¹⁶ The *Hartford Courant* is also an example of early national accounts describing the violence as a riot—the first sentence of the paper's article of 11 November reads "Eight negroes were killed and three white men were wounded to-day as the result of race riots." For the *Hartford Courant* headlines and article, see Margaret M. Hodgson, "For the Record: Revisiting and Revising Past and Present 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Narratives," (M.A. Thesis, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, 2010), 70. For the *Collier's Weekly* cover image from 26 November 1898, see http://sb.dhpress.org/wilmingtonraceriot/?attachment_id=2075. That the riot acted as a political and cultural taboo for decades is proved by the existence of the "1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission," a 13-member research group commissioned by the North Carolina General Assembly in 2000 to "develop a historical record of the event and to assess the economic impact of the riot on African Americans locally and across the region and state." The Commission held public meetings and seminars to research the community's view of the violence in addition to reading available histories, publishing their final report in 2006. The Commission's full report is available online at <http://www.history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/>. *Atlanta Constitution* quote reprinted in *Wilmington Messenger*, 12 November 1898.

²¹⁷ *Independent*, 24 November 1898; *New York Times*, 15 November 1898; *New York Tribune*, 25 November 1898; *Independent* and *Tribune* articles reprinted in Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, 291. Regardless of a sheet's political allegiance, national papers recognized the Wilmington riot as a response to a radicalized press. This recognition led to questions over freedoms of the press in sensitive areas such as race relations. In a debate which mirrored modern discussions of appropriate media practice, the Charlottesville Weekly Chronicle expressed a prevalent view: "the press should be free, but not licensed to say words which make trouble." *Charlottesville Weekly Chronicle*, 17 November 1898, reproduced in Geoff Suiter, *Outside Newspaper Coverage of the 1898 Coup in Wilmington, North Carolina* (n.p: Geoff Suiter, 1999).

Mirroring the media's interest in 10 November, white and black citizens from across the nation wrote letters to editors and political leaders in the hope of printing their opinions of the massacre. These letters reveal a deep belief in the press's ability to sway public opinion on questions of race. In a testament to newspapers' speed, a black man named Harry Jones wrote President William McKinley from Denver, Colorado on 12 November, expressing the outrage of that city's black population after reading of "negroes shot down like dogs and deprived of the right of ballot." Placing press coverage on equal footing with military intervention, Jones asked McKinley to "give us some protection or one kind word through the press." Della Johnson of Winston, North Carolina echoed this call for printed support, asking the President "to issue a Proclamation that may awaken consciousness in the hearts of white citizens."²¹⁸

Representing the opposite view, a letter in the *Washington Post* of 22 November, written by Ernest Green of New Bern, North Carolina, criticized the northern press for what he considered an unfairly-critical version of the violence in Wilmington. "Knowing nothing of the circumstances," wrote Green, Northern papers had begun "lappuring the people of Wilmington with their favorite weapon—the pen." Letters by men such as Green—who had not witnessed the violence himself—reveal the effectiveness of the southern press's efforts to shift blame for 10 November to the Republicans and reflects the beginnings of an insular cultural shift which defined North Carolina during the subsequent decades of Democratic rule. The racial politics of North Carolinians, Green and others like him claimed, could only

²¹⁸ Letters available in Appendix J of 1898 Wilmington Riot Commission, *Final Report*, at www.history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/AppdxJ.pdf.

be understood and accurately represented by the very local presses which fanned the rhetorical flames.²¹⁹

Whatever the theoretical impact of newspaper coverage upon public opinion, the riot led to a drastic drop in prestige and labor conditions for Wilmington's remaining black population. Industries previously dominated by black workers experienced dramatic turnover, with ninety percent of all restaurateurs and eighty percent of all barbers driven from the city. The connections between race and labor in post-1898 were more complex and more class-conscious than simple race loyalty, however: after the violence died down and Waddell took control, local white business owners segregated against both the remaining black workers and foreign whites. At a 9 January 1899 meeting, Wilmington's White Labor Union passed a resolution requiring white businesses to give available jobs to white Wilmington residents who had supported the 1898 campaign. The *Messenger* applauded the measure in a next-day editorial, remarking that participants in the riot should be rewarded above those unskilled white workers creating a labor excess by migrating to Wilmington in large numbers after the riot. Having secured the press's goals of political control and racial subjugation, the Democrats were free to exploit for commercial gain the white class differences decried as deadly mere months earlier. In a perversely ironic testament to the press's role in creating the turnover, the White Labor Union began using a new gavel to open its meetings on 29 January 1899. The wood, no doubt cleaned of smoke and dust, was from a table in Alexander Manly's *Daily Record* office. *Esto perpetua*, indeed.²²⁰

²¹⁹ *Washington Post*, 22 November 1898; Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, ed. Werner Sollors, 283.

²²⁰ For a discussion of the riot's demographic cost, see Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 147-150; *Wilmington Messenger*, 10 January 1899.

If, as American historian Philip Davidson has argued, effective propaganda reflects “the thinking and prejudice of the people,” the sociopolitical and racial thoughts of North Carolinians in the late 1890s were decidedly volatile.²²¹ Democrats published hundreds of thousands of newspapers and broadsides emphasizing the dangers of black rule, black sexuality, and Republican fiscal irresponsibility, and these arguments struck a resounding chord at the polls in November 1898. By urging white men to act manfully and to uphold white supremacy in their communities, the press advocated violence in communities where electoral politics could not quickly enough strip blacks of power. Wilmington was one of the most visible of these communities in 1898, and thus the setting of the most violent manifestation of press rhetoric.

The tendency is to demonize the Democrats who published newspapers across North Carolina and fired machine guns in Wilmington in 1898, but this is a short-sighted, pointless view. It is more useful to view Josephus Daniels, Alfred Waddell, Furnifold Simmons, and their fellow Democratic leaders as what they were—complex men capable of reason when secure and of atrocity when threatened. Most importantly, they understood, even as they chose to discredit, the humanity of their black victims. Walter Johnson has written in his work on Mississippi-Valley cotton planters that historians’ desire to classify slavery’s violence as dehumanization “lets them [planters]—and us [readers]—off the hook.”²²² Johnson’s point is doubly true in the case of the 1898 campaign; just as the blacks in Democratic cartoons were humans, so also were the journalists who wrote and the vigilantes who read the papers before firing their guns. The challenge, then, is less to demonize

²²¹ Philip Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 103.

²²² Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 207.

atrocities than to understand and contextualize their causes. In 1898 Wilmington, as in many cases today, the misused press was a catalyst. Violence sprang from a concerted anti-black campaign of political, economic, and sexual rhetoric, and Wilmington, its churches filled with papers and its politics run from the shadows, paid a terrible price.

CONCLUSION

The latter decades of the nineteenth century were a precarious time for African Americans across the South. Post-emancipation North Carolina, rather than marking the beginning of more equitable age, featured a web of violence and racial suppression in which the Kirk-Holden War and the Wilmington massacre were merely two of the most visible strands. The press played a key role in sustaining racial inequality. Media's role in blacks' continuing struggle was brought to light in the U.S. House of Representatives on 5 February 1900, when North Carolinian George Henry White—black representative from Bladen County and the only African American Congressman at the time of his retirement in 1901—rose and denounced a *Raleigh News and Observer* article. The article, entitled “The Colored Member” and composed in the white supremacist afterglow of the Wilmington massacre, questioned the manliness of the state's voters before complaining that “North Carolina should have the only nigger congressman” and claiming that White possessed neither the popular mandate nor the personal morality to remain on Capitol Hill. White denounced the slander in clear terms—he did not retract his belief that both white and black rapists should

be “hung by the neck until dead,” but neither did he falter in his belief that justice should be “done by the courts, not by an infuriated mob such as the writer of that article would incite.”²²³

White’s remarks and the *News and Observer* article which inspired them echoed the 1898 campaign’s press attacks against Manly and the subsequent violence in Wilmington. The true significance of White’s statement, however, lay in his conscious use of the article to illustrate a larger trend in the South. “This article,” White stated, “is but an evidence of what we have gone to contend with—an absolute perversion and slanderous misrepresentation of the truth.”²²⁴

Combined with the case studies discussed above, George Henry White’s story shows that racist rhetoric endured in the North Carolina press from Reconstruction into the twentieth century. It is an unfortunate reality that Reconstruction and Gilded-age editors of all parties latched onto examples of racial violence and mined those images for political gain for years. Holden’s 1871 impeachment serves as a primary example: in the months before the 1872 election, a Republican broadside highlighted the Democrats’ persecution of Holden as evidence of the incumbent’s fraud. The Republicans specifically targeted the Democratic press’s reporting on the impeachment trial—a \$61,000 affair that Turner and his peer reported at just over \$13,500 to the reading public. Such manipulation of the facts for political gain, Republicans claimed, was “a *Democratic* way of telling the truth.”²²⁵

²²³ Stephen Middleton, ed., *Black Congressmen During Reconstruction: A Documentary Sourcebook* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 391-93, 410.

²²⁴ Middleton, ed., *Black Congressmen During Reconstruction*, 411.

²²⁵ “Read and Circulate,” Republican Party broadside, 1872, Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/readcirculate/readcirculate.html>.

This public misrepresentation of the facts was the danger and the power the press wielded in North Carolina from Reconstruction into the twentieth century. With emancipation technically assured, editors and readers alike used rhetoric and popular pressure to reassert a system of white social control and to pressure allies of blacks and supporters of true socioeconomic equality into political oblivion. White died in 1918, but his prediction in Congress bore fruit well past his years: “those whom the Constitution of these United States...has enfranchised are to be reduced once more to the condition of goods and chattels,” White argued, “if such men as the one who edits the *Raleigh News and Observer* can have the control of affairs in North Carolina.”²²⁶

White’s fears were realized in the decades after 1898, during which time Democrats directed North Carolina’s politics and conservative editors exerted considerable public influence. This thesis has examined two earlier examples of that influence, tracing the North Carolina press’s role in perpetuating stereotypes and encouraging racial violence around the Kirk-Holden War and the Wilmington Coup. As I argued earlier, editors in the postwar South could significantly impact public opinion. As articles circulated through public readings and newspapers reprinted one another’s stories, a single editor could extend influence far beyond a single town’s borders.

Josiah Turner epitomized this model of personal impact during the Kirk-Holden War of 1870-1871. By personally attacking Governor Holden and publishing articles questioning the existence or culpability of the Ku Klux Klan, Turner helped turn public opinion against Holden’s attempts to arrest Klansmen and restore order. The press openly celebrated the release of Turner and other prisoners from Holden’s custody, creating an atmosphere in

²²⁶ Middleton, ed., *Black Congressmen During Reconstruction*, 411.

which Democrats swept to power in 1870. Holden's impeachment was the logical culmination of this press-backed campaign.

Although no individual editors of Turner or Holden's stature dominated the Democratic press in the months before 10 November 1898, the campaign is notable for its targeted vision and sheer scale. Motivated by the specific goal of reclaiming the state legislature from Fusionists, Democrats published hundreds of thousands of newspapers and broadsides emphasizing the dangers of black rule, black sexuality, and black fiscal irresponsibility. These arguments struck a resounding chord at the polls in November 1898. Alexander Manly's editorial provided the most pointed thrust of this campaign, with calls to protect white women—always a passive symbol in Southern Democratic ideology—motivating the white mob which destroyed the *Daily Record* office and violently reclaimed the city's government.

In both cases, then, rhetoric inspired action, and action led to tragedy. Historian Robert Wiebe once described the general feeling in post-Reconstruction America by claiming that “a pall of thwarted opportunity, of frustrated dreams, hung over large parts of the nation.” North Carolina's Republicans in 1870 and 1898 could have easily identified with Wiebe's disappointed vision, for the legacies of the Kirk-Holden War and the Wilmington Massacre are of stunted justice, racial rhetoric, and unrealized dreams.²²⁷ While black citizens discovered the limits of legislation's power to define citizenship, former Confederates struggled to reassert themselves as a political force and abandoned legality to inflict terror. The tragedy of these events is compounded by the fact that many voices from both

²²⁷ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 7.

Wilmington and the Kirk-Holden War, including the majority of black citizens and the Republican minority, are lost. The primary source of government-produced history regarding the summer of 1870 resulted from Congressional hearings on Klan activity which sought to understand “who is responsible for the anarchy which has been brought about in that region?”²²⁸ Turner himself testified before Congress, and his efforts bore fruit when Congress concluded that the fiasco had been primarily a political power play by Holden and his Republican circle. “In the examination made by the committee of the Senate during the last Congress into the affairs of North Carolina,” the report concluded, “it was shown that Governor Holden *attempted to carry the elections* by declaring martial law in several counties and placing them under the control of a military force commanded by Kirk and Bergen, two imported cutthroats.”²²⁹ And thus the case was closed, a testament to the power of rhetoric to influence national memory of the past.

In addition to Holden’s political legacy, the governor’s personal image has also been hotly contested. Public opinion of Holden’s impeachment and subsequent loss of state citizenship appears mixed. The *New York Times* reported in 1885 that many North Carolinians were petitioning the legislature to remove any stigma from the former governor in his old age, and that there were “many Democrats who favor it.” Leading Democratic papers refused, arguing that Holden’s case should act as an example to future executives that “the laws must be upheld...and that the liberties of the people are sacred.”²³⁰ Political reality changed as the Kirk-Holden war faded from memory, however, and the North Carolina legislature pardoned Holden in 2011. One state senator described the gesture as the act of

²²⁸ Congress, “Report on the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States,” 483.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 483. Emphasis added.

²³⁰ “EX-GOV HOLDEN’S DISABILITIES: SOME NORTH CAROLINIANS WANT HIM RESTORED TO CITIZENSHIP,” *New York Times*, 10 January 1885.

righting “a 140-year-old wrong,” but even the pardon’s supporters must have realized that such a move would do little to change public memory of Reconstruction-era violence.²³¹

Public memory of the Wilmington Coup is also muddled, due both to the lack of a contextualized public memorial and a paucity of sources from the viewpoint of the riot’s anonymous victims. Although local pastor J. Allen Kirk published a memoir claiming to speak for both races in 1898, minority views on the riot survived primarily in oral traditions and fictitious accounts.²³² The first notable black author to write on the Wilmington riot was David Bryant Fulton, a journalist and Pullman operator in Wilmington during the 1880s whose pseudo-documentary novel *Hanover, Or Persecution of the Lowly* described Wilmington’s blacks as victimized by an oppressive elite class. *Hanover* was followed by the most notable piece of historical fiction on Wilmington: Charles W. Chesnutt’s *The Marrow of Tradition*, a thinly-veiled fictionalization of the riot based on interviews with black victims and published in 1901 as a direct challenge to the sensational accounts circulating nationally. Chesnutt gives Wilmington’s unskilled black laborers a voice in the character of Josh Green, a fictional composite of two black Wilmingtonians who died in the massacre. Although these sources are not historical studies, they provide essential counterpoints to pro-Democratic contemporary accounts.²³³

²³¹ “N. C. state senate pardons governor who stood up to Klan,” *Reuters*, 12 April 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/12/us-northcarolina-pardon-idUSTRE73B80V20110412>, accessed 12 October 2015.

²³² For Kirk’s account, which was crucial to this project, see “A Statement of Facts Concerning the Bloody Riot in Wilmington, N.C. Of Interest to Every Citizen of the United States,” 1898, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/kirk/kirk.html>.

²³³ Laura F. Edwards, “Captives of Wilmington: The Riot and Historical Memories of Political Conflict, 1865-1898,” in *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy*, ed. David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 116. Fictional works referenced include Jack Thorne, *Hanover, or, The Persecution of the Lowly: Story of the Wilmington Massacre* (M.C.L. Hill, 18--?), <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/thorne/thorne.html>; and Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition: A Norton Critical Edition*, edited by Werner Sollors (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012).

What closing lessons can we draw from the men who rushed to condemn and the press which profited by editorializing violence in North Carolina in 1870 and 1898? Firstly, stories such as the Kirk-Holden War and the Wilmington Coup have much to teach because mainstream journalism in the United States, regardless of modern-day claims to “objectivity,” continues to foster a bias toward violent imagery and racial type-casting. While the press is no longer explicitly partisan, media’s focus during moments of racial unrest remains on watershed moments and apex tragedies rather than the long processes of community organizing, generational prejudice, and systematic inequalities which perpetuate poverty. As Charles Payne wrote in his study of Civil Rights organizing in the Mississippi Delta, the media’s “inability to convey a sense of process meant that much of what the movement was could not be presented.”²³⁴ ABC reporter Paul Good went a step further, describing national coverage of the Civil Rights Movement as “crisis reporting” which “crimped perspective and often substituted the superficial glance for the needed long look.”²³⁵ In 1950s Mississippi, this press blindness obscured the efforts of local organizers and activist women; in 1860s North Carolina, personal feuds and enflamed rhetoric blinded the population to the rise of racial extremism. The danger with event-centered journalism lies in its tendency to deny perspective—when readers see only racial crises, calls for immediate, reactionary reform typically outweigh the long-term and multi-faceted responses necessary to effect real change.²³⁶

²³⁴ Charles M. Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 393.

²³⁵ Paul Good, *The Trouble I’ve Seen: White Journalist, Black Movement* (Washington: Howard University Press, 1975), 59.

²³⁶ Examples of the media trends described in this paragraph have become all too common in the United States over the last years. For representative articles on the Baltimore riots in response to the death of the Freddie Gray, see the Huffington Post at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/28/baltimore-media->

Secondly, the events discussed in this study show the dangers of substituting political and racial stereotypes for genuine public dialogue. Although formerly enslaved people showed a willingness to participate in politics in 1865 and Wilmington's black population constituted a stable section of the city's economy in 1898, readers across the state proved too willing to accept printed portraits of lazy, ne'er-do-well blacks as representative of the race as a whole. The North Carolina press's tendency to embrace stereotype fit with national trends: as Wiebe wrote in his description of the Gilded Age, the mainstream press in Gilded Age America did not foster honest dialogue. Rather, "in place of communication, antagonists confronted each other behind sets of stereotypes, frozen images that were specifically intended to exclude discussion."²³⁷ To a distressing degree, Wiebe's analysis holds true today.

The interconnected histories of race and the press present interesting avenues for future study of North Carolina, the South, and the United States as a whole. Scholars of North Carolina face the challenge of looking past the traditional eras of "Reconstruction" and the "Gilded Age" to reconsider the state's postwar politics and culture as part of a long Reconstruction throughout the South. Currents of political control and social change which began before 1865 did not stop in 1877, and the subsequent years deserve studies which can bring to light the racial climate and public rhetoric of Democratic rule. One possible way to frame a long press history of Reconstruction could be by studying the North Carolina Press

coverage_n_7164064.html and Slate at http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/culturebox/2015/04/baltimore_freddie_gray_riots_why_cnn_is_incapable_of_understanding_why_violence.html?wpsrc=sh_all_dt_tw_ru_

²³⁷ Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 96.

Association—a group comprised of white newspaper editors which was founded in 1873 and which featured annual keynote addresses on the state of journalism in North Carolina.²³⁸

We also need more studies of the black press in the South, particularly during the years of Democratic dominance after the Redeemers gained power in the 1870s. Although scholars such as Henry Suggs and Paul Abbott have worked admirably to compile lists of Republican and black papers across the postwar South, studies of black editors' ideology, circulation, and general effectiveness are few. Sources present a problem, as most black papers of the era used low-quality newsprint which quickly decomposed. As more sources are discovered, however, we should seek to understand the cultural position of newspapers in the South's black communities and the role played by editors who dared oppose the reigning powers.

I close this study with an anecdote of the press's power to inspire and divide. On 14 December 1905, a group calling itself the Association of Members of the Wilmington Light Infantry held a meeting in Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina. All recorded attendees were white men, and each of them had participated or approvingly observed the Coup seven years prior. Colonel Walker Taylor called the meeting to order and immediately ordered minutes to be recorded and distributed to local newspapers. Although I could not locate evidence that the *Wilmington Post* or any other paper printed these minutes, Taylor's words show that these men continued to believe in the press's power to shape public opinion and establish events in public consciousness: the Association did not seek to print their stories to gain

²³⁸ North Carolina Press Association Records for 1873 to 1887 are available in hardcopy and on microfilm in the North Carolina Collection at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

personal honor, but rather because they viewed the Coup as “history which should not be erased from our minds.”²³⁹

The meeting which followed Taylor’s opening served as a microcosm of the common passions and anxieties which motivated violent racial extremism in 1870 and 1898. One citizen testified to shooting at blacks and then removing flowers from a black man’s grave; a man named Boylan spoke of forming a picket line in Brooklyn and remarked that “I enjoyed it to some extent”; a young man named Orrell was only a child in 1898, yet he spoke from prideful memory, boasting that “I have never heard of an event that was arranged and carried out so perfectly.” A total of ten men gave individual public testimonies of participation in the Coup, and each story reflected the white, masculine, conservative South’s desire for political and personal rebirth and reassertion of power in response to black freedom which marked the Kirk-Holden War and Wilmington Coup. The Light Infantry’s meeting also reflected the Democratic South’s desire to maintain social order: each man described the Coup in terms such as “the best-managed thing that ever did happen,” even though every man also denied prior knowledge of the Democrats’ plans and no one reported killing innocent blacks. Faith also made an appearance at the meeting, as Reverend Bishop Strange closed the council with a benediction dedicated to the health of the city. It is as if the white men present lived separate identities in their political, religious, social, and racial selves, and that only by regaining dominance in all four of these spheres could they consider their worlds at peace.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Association of Members of the Wilmington Light Infantry, minutes of 14 December 1905 meeting, NC Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

²⁴⁰ My analysis of the Light Infantry meeting, and of the broader similarities between conservative actions in the 1860s and 1890s, is heavily influenced by the work of Jackson Lears in *Rebirth of a Nation*. Lears frames the years between the Civil War and World War I as a national quest for regeneration/rebirth during which many Southern white men clung to a forceful, “muscular” version of Protestantism to overcome anxiety over loss of political control. These white men sought legitimacy through acts of violence both legal (sports, imperialism) and extremist (lynching). I see both the KKK raids and the Wilmington Coup as overflows of this forceful urge to reassert control. For an introduction to Lears’s idea of the post-Civil War era as a period of rebirth, see Lears,

I was unable to locate minutes of future meetings of the Association of Members of the Wilmington Light Infantry. It is entirely possible that the group never met again after 1905 and that their personal stories faded from the community's memory. Based on the rhetoric used to describe black citizens who remained after the Coup, however, it is safe to assume that blacks faced much residual racial hatred from their white neighbors. For the language of 1898, and the language of 1870, did not easily disappear. When a North Carolina editor could greet a group of black soldiers returning from the Spanish-American War in January 1899 by openly writing that "a visit of smallpox would not be as much dreaded," the lasting impact of rhetoric—and the hatred it can inspire—is clear.²⁴¹ It falls to each generation to combat the spread of such hate and to resolve that calls to "ne'er be negroized" will neither characterize their future nor disappear from their remembrance of the past.

WORKS CITED

Archival Collections

Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

David Schenck Papers

William Alexander Graham Papers

Henry G. Conner Papers

North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Special Collections, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Public Library

Rebirth of a Nation, 1-11. For the intersection of racial politics and white concepts of manhood, see 90-110. For the effect of "muscular Protestantism" on white Southern racism, see 102-110.

²⁴¹ Kinston *Daily Free Press*, 13 January 1899.

Online Databases

“Civil War Era NC.” North Carolina State University College of Humanities and Social Sciences. <http://cwnc.omeka.chass.ncsu.edu/>.

“Documenting the American South”, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/>.

Duke University Library Digital Collections

Newspapers.com

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The New York Times*

Published Primary Sources

Congressional Joint Select Committee on the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, *Report of the Joint select committee to inquire into the condition of affairs in the late insurrectionary states, so far as regards the execution of the laws, and safety of the lives and property of the citizens of the United States and Testimony taken*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872.

Elliott, Mark and John David Smith, eds. *Undaunted Radical: The Selected Writings and Speeches of Albion W. Tourgee*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 2010.

Holden, William Woods. *Memoirs of W. W. Holden*. Durham: The Seeman Printery, 1911. Accessed 18 January 2016. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/holden/menu.html>.

Lefler, Hugh Talmage, ed. *North Carolina History Told by Contemporaries*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934.

Middleton, Stephen, ed. *Black Congressmen During Reconstruction: A Documentary Sourcebook*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002.

Articles

Brisson, Jim D. "Civil Government was Crumbling around Me: The Kirk-Holden War of 1870." *The North Carolina History Review* 88, no. 2 (April 2011): 123-163.

Carter, Dan T. "The Anatomy of Fear: The Christmas Day Insurrection Scare of 1865." *The Journal of Southern History* 42, vol. 3 (August 1976): 345-364.

Olsen, Otto H. "The Ku Klux Klan: A Study in Reconstruction Politics and Propaganda." *The North Carolina Historical Review* 39, no. 3 (July 1962): pgs. 340-362.

Parsons, Elaine Frantz. "Klan Skepticism and Denial in Reconstruction-Era Public Discourse." *The Journal of Southern History* 77, no. 1 (February 2011): 53-90.

Troxler, Carole Watterson. "'To look more closely at the man': Wyatt Outlaw, a Nexus of National, Local and Personal History." *The North Carolina Historical Review* 77, no. 4 (October 2000): 403-433.

Reports/Theses/Dissertations

Brisson, Jim D. "The Kirk-Holden War of 1870 and the Failure of Reconstruction in North Carolina." M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, 2010.

Glancy, Michael C. "The Wilmington Riot of November 10, 1898," unpublished research report, UNC Multiple Abilities Program, New Hanover County Public Library.

Jones, Bobby Frank. "An Opportunity Lost: North Carolina Race Relations During Presidential Reconstruction." M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina, 1961.

North Carolina General Assembly. 1898 Wilmington Riot Commission. *Wilmington Race Riot Report*. May 31, 2006. www.history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/report.html.

Pittman, Claire Atkins. "Josiah Turner, Jr., and the Raleigh Sentinel, 1868-1876." M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina, 1968.

Smith, Elizabeth P. "Having Their Tales Told: Female Deviance as Reconstruction's failures, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1865-1876." M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina, 2005.

Suiter, Geoff. "Outside Newspaper Coverage of the 1898 Coup in Wilmington, North Carolina." Unpublished report, Special Collections, New Hanover County Public Library, 1999.

Books

Abbott, Richard. *For Free Press and Equal Rights: Republican Newspapers in the Reconstruction South*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004.

Blondheim, Menahem. *The Telegraph and the Flow of Public Information in America, 1844-1897*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.

Blumler, Jay G. and Elihu Katz, eds. *The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1974.

Bowers, Claude. *The Tragic Era: The Revolution After Lincoln*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929.

Bradley, Mark. *Bluecoats and Tar Heels: Soldiers and Civilians in Reconstruction North Carolina*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009.

Brown, Joshua. *Beyond the Lines: Pictorial Reporting, Everyday Life, and the Crisis of Gilded Age America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Cecelski, David S. and Timothy B. Tyson, eds. *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Chesnutt, Charles W. *The Marrow of Tradition: A Norton Critical Edition*. Edited by Werner Sollors. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012.

- Downs, Gregory. *Declarations of Dependence: The Long Reconstruction of Popular Politics in the South, 1861-1908*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. *Black Reconstruction in America: Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880*. 1935. Reprint, Cambridge: Belknap, 2003.
- Edmonds, Helen G. *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina, 1894-1901*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951.
- Escott, Paul D. *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.
- Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. New York: Harper and Row, 1988.
- Gilmore, Glenda E. *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Hahn, Steven. *A Nation Under our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Hall, Stuart. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. London: Macmillan, 1978.
- Hamilton, Joseph Grégoire de Roulhac. *Reconstruction in North Carolina*. 1914. Reprint, Gloucester: P. Smith, 1964.
- Harris, William C. *William Woods Holden: Firebrand of North Carolina Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987).

- Hume, Ricard L. and Jerry B. Gough. *Blacks, Carpetbaggers, and Scalawags: The Constitutional Conventions of Radical Reconstruction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008.
- Kuypers, Jim. *Partisan Journalism: A History of Media Bias in the United States*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013.
- Lazarsfeld, Paul, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet. *The People's Choice*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1948.
- Lears, Jackson. *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*. New York: HarperCollins, 2010.
- Lightweis-Goff, Jennie. *Blood at the Root: Lynching as American Cultural Nucleus*. New York: SUNY Press, 2011.
- Lippman, Walter. *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922.
- Litwack, Leon. *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.
- Newkirk, Vann R. *Lynching in North Carolina: A History, 1865-1941*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2008.
- Olsen, Otto H., ed. *Reconstruction and Redemption in the South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980.
- Postel, Charles. *The Populist Vision*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Prather, Sr., H. Leon. *We Have Taken a City: Wilmington Racial Massacre and Coup of 1898*. London: Associated University Presses, 1984.
- Richardson, Heather Cox. *Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

- Rushdy, Ashraf H. A. *American Lynching*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.
- Simmons, Charles A. *The African American Press: With Special Reference to Four Newspapers, 1827-1965*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 1998.
- Sprunt, James. *Chronicles of the Cape Fear River, 1660-1916*. Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Co., 1916.
- Suggs, Henry. *Black Press in the South, 1856-1979*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983.
- Trelease, Allen W. *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
- Wise, Jim. *Murder in the Courthouse: Reconstruction and Redemption in the North Carolina Piedmont*. Charleston: The History Press, 2010.
- Zuber, Richard L. *North Carolina During Reconstruction*. Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1969.