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A history and analysis of selected National Urban League discourse, 1910–1985

Cali, Dennis D., Ph.D.
The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1986
A HISTORY AND ANALYSIS OF SELECTED
NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE DISCOURSE, 1910-1985

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in
The Department of Speech Communication,
Theatre, and Communication Disorders

by
Dennis Cali
B.A., Southeastern Louisiana University, 1981
M.A., Colorado State University, 1983
May 1986
This poetry of representation, depicting an ideal world, is a great cohesive force, binding whole peoples to the acceptance of a design and fusing their imaginative life.
DEDICATION

To Rose and Vincent, my parents;
To Steve and Ed and Allison, my friends;
and, to Sante Ferrante, my late grandmother,
who had a special affection for black people.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is in many ways a triumph. Least of these ways is my personal satisfaction at seeing a project to its completion. In so many other, more triumphant ways, this dissertation is a collective accomplishment.

I should like to acknowledge my committee: Andrew King, Harold Mixon, J. Donald Ragsdale (speech); Burl Noggle (history) and Carl Freedman (English). Special thanks to Owen Peterson, major professor and true gentleman.

I share the rewards of this project with my parents, whose constant support among the fast changes of my graduate school years strengthened my personal resolve.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributory Studies</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapters</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endnotes</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2 - BOOKER T. WASHINGTON AND IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS: 1895-1910</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Pre-Conditions</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Construct</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Construct</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro as cheap labor</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro as self-help philosopher</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Construct</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radicals</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberals</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal statute</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booker T. Washington's Rhetorical Response</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical Outlook and Rhetorical Foundations</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endnotes</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3 - EUGENE KINCKLE JONES AND SUSTAINED CONSERVISM: 1918-1941</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Social Conditions</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frivolity</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostility</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifference</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones' Rhetorical Response</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922 Address</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935 Address</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

vi
This dissertation is a critical analysis of selected annual conference addresses of National Urban League (NUL) executive directors. It may be regarded as a "movement study" inasmuch as it traces the conceptualization of an idea, equality, from 1910 to 1985.

Richard Weaver's philosophy, theory, and critical methodology of rhetoric provide the analytical framework by which this study was conducted. Specifically, Weaver's hierarchy of arguments, which may be taken as a model of his philosophy and theory, served as this dissertation's research tool. The hierarchy includes argumentation from four perspectives, ranking from ideal to base: genus, similitude, cause-effect, circumstance.

The dissertation analyzes the conference addresses of the following NUL directors: Eugene Kinckle Jones, Lester Blackwell Granger, Whitney M. Young, Vernon E. Jordan, and John E. Jacob. In designating Booker T. Washington as the ideological father of the National Urban League, the study also examines the philosophical and rhetorical foundations of this early leader.

Most recurrent in these leaders' pattern of discourse, as the dissertation concludes, is the pairing of
ideal argumentation (genus) with circumstantial argumentation. Such a rhetorical phenomenon almost seems to defy Weaver's theory that speakers typically argue from one characteristic argumentative perspective. Still, this study observes that what helped to keep the NUL mainstream persona secure was the strong commitment to an American ideal of equality that transcended fleeting circumstances.

To the extent that this dissertation serves as a test case of Weaver's critical methodology, it notes some limitations of the argumentative hierarchy. Nevertheless, it presents these limitations as areas that ought to be refined, not as faulty methods of analysis. Furthermore, it commends the heuristic, epistemic, and philosophic contributions an application of Weaver's methodology can enable. As the dissertation concludes, Weaver's model has "excellent potential for telling us who we are and showing us what we can become."
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Public schools, railroad cars, industrial factories, and voter precincts have operated for many years as unhappy workshops of racial segregation. Individually they have exhibited in microcosmic form the impregnable forces in society at large that have wedged blacks and whites seemingly forever apart. In the past, government was framed on "negro-fusion" or negrophobe political platforms. Plant jobs have been set along race-before-skill lines. And town neighborhoods have been segregated into white-black zones.

Indeed, certain social fixtures have functioned as miniature models of an enacted system of racial segregation. They have demonstrated that discriminatory attitudes have been cast onto many levels of working society, attesting to the complexity and brute force of enduring racism.

Attempts at measuring this brute force, however, have not been conclusive. C. Vann Woodward explains the historian's plight:

There would seem to be no convenient way of measuring the incidence of tolerance, courtesy, and humaneness in a society. Yet the historian may
discern between periods significant variation in
the prevalence of these virtues.¹

Woodward raises two historiographic problems; one he
corrects, another he sets aside. First, he addresses the
question of when segregation emerged, which raises the
problem of setting arbitrary boundaries where they may not
precisely exist. Woodward acknowledges this problem and
proposes a solution:

What is needed is a theory, a model, perhaps a
typology of race relations that would conceive of
the problem of segregation not as one of dating
origins at a point in linear time, but of account­
ing for the phenomenon in whatever degree if
appears.²

Accounting for the phenomenon gives rise to the
second potential burden of the historian. Phenomena
(events) are not experiences (interpretations of events).
In other words, while phenomena are invaluable informants
of the past, they do not report personalized experiences.
And to equate phenomena with meaning is to assert a
tenuous one-to-one correspondence between stimulus and
perception of that stimulus.

A more defensible posture (way of solving the second
problem within Woodward's analysis) would be to consult a
participant's verbal symbolic expression of an experience for a clearer understanding of the experience. While we cannot measure segregation, we can measure rival conceptualizations of it. An analysis of crucial speeches given on certain topics and at given times hangs on such a concept.

The public discourse of any organization reveals a strategic vision, a paradigm of reality that is deliberately constructed for the partisan goals of the organization. Organizations struggle to make their conception of reality prevail, and their public discourse is a record of this hermeneutic struggle. In analyzing what is arguably the most enduring racial reform organization of this century, the National Urban League, I recognize many ideological features—barometers of experience—within the discourse of Urban League leaders.

**Purpose**

This dissertation seeks to gain further insight into the National Urban League meaning of equality through the analysis of speeches and, thereby, to report the experience of responding to racial inequality through one black organization's represented perspective.

**Significance of Study**

The National Urban League is generally thought to be characterized by great skill in manipulating multiple
audiences (a heritage of all organizations representing relatively powerless groups who must depend on the assistance of powerful allies). Its ideological father, Booker T. Washington, was characterized by a lively sense of the limitations of the moral and political climate of America.

The longevity of this organization and its moderate adaptive and pragmatic posture thereby represent a challenge to Richard Weaver’s theory that only organizations with a commitment to an enduring moral position founded in an unwavering conception of human nature can endure in social climates characterized by great issues, divisive movements, and rapid social change.

Further, Weaver contends that every organization signals its moral posture through its discourse. This posture can be revealed through the application of Weaver’s theory of argumentation. According to Weaver, the predominance of a particular pattern of argument indicates the ideological signature of its sponsoring group. Only a careful analysis of NUL’s argumentative hierarchy (or, stated differently, its argumentative perspective) can determine whether their notable success represents a glaring exception (or even a refutation) of Weaver’s theory.

Accordingly, among the contributions this dissertation can make beyond its primary exposition of the NUL
argumentative perspective and its conceptualization of segregation is that it serves as a test case of Weaver's theory of argumentative form. The NUL, an apparent exception to Weaver's theory, produced 75 years of public discourse from which judicious selections can be made to trace the course of its predominant public signature.

Statement of the Problem

The National Urban League (NUL) in 1985 celebrated its 75th anniversary of responding to segregation and to its genus inequality. As such, the NUL commemorated its unique and on-going experiences of adjusting to crisis and massive social upheaval. In doing so, the NUL raises curiosity as to its historic conceptualization of reality and to its peculiar manner of response.

Several specific research questions suggest themselves:

1. What has sustained the NUL for 75 years?
   a. Has the NUL held to one overarching vision? If so, what has been the NUL vision? What is distinct about this vision? How has the vision been expressed? If not, what other rhetorical features account for NUL endurance?
   b. What recurrent rhetorical features characterize the League?
c. What features diverge from NUL rhetorical norms? With what effect to the League sustenance do these features diverge?

2. What has sustained an NUL self-perception of being a mainstream organization?

3. What kind of corporate image has the NUL communicated/sought to communicate to its publics?

Contributory Studies

The history of the National Urban League has been the subject of three major studies. Each is a book, and each is thorough in achieving what it sets out to accomplish.

Nancy Weiss' *National Urban League, 1910-1940* is an account of the national problems that confronted the League within the time treated. It tells of the changes in League activities directed to meet impinging demands.

The study has at least two limitations. First, it stops at 1940. It does not consider the entire second half of NUL history. Second, in showing how the NUL adapted to various racial and economic exigencies, the study begs the question of how the NUL could preserve a consistent public persona. Likewise, although conceding that the NUL's efforts toward removing racial barriers in the economy have often been fruitless, Weiss does not account for NUL resilience.

*Blacks in the City: A History of the National Urban League* expands the scope of analysis to include the
Written by long-time NUL staff members Guichard Parris and Lester Brooks, it profits from the primary material to which Parris and Brooks had access. What results, however, is a sympathetic narrative, rather than a critical exposition of the history of the NUL.

Jesse Thomas Moore, Jr.'s *A Search for Equality: The National Urban League, 1910-1961* has two particular strengths. One quality of the study is that it considers, albeit journalistically, the ideological foundations of the NUL. A second strength of *A Search* is that it charts the changes in the NUL programs.

Notwithstanding its contributory value, this text leaves important questions unresolved. After tracing the turns in NUL movement, Moore concludes by assessing that during the years between 1916 and 1961, "the NUL did not adjust to the times to the degree that it should have." One question raised in response to Weiss's study applies here: What has upheld the NUL vitality or composure (if, indeed, the NUL has adapted poorly)? One other question prompted in this text is, what has happened to the ideological framework laid in the 1910s as the NUL confronted racial and economic changes in society at large ("psychological, educational, political, social, attitudinal, and geographic")?
Methodology

Three major methodological considerations of this dissertation are: (1) the selection of speeches and speakers; (2) the conceptualization of social movements as leader-centered; and (3) the components of Richard Weaver's theory of argumentation. A discussion of each follows.

This dissertation, first, analyzes speeches of the executive directors and other major NUL figures during select periods of historic significance. Such League leaders include Booker T. Washington (ideological father); Eugene Kinckle Jones, Lester Blackwell Granger, Whitney Moore Young, Jr., Vernon Eulion Jordan, Jr., and John E. Jacob (executive directors/presidents of the League). The particular kind of speeches are conference addresses (and other related types) because the nature of keynote conference addresses dictates that the speaker proclaim therein the broadest principles of the body he/she represents. Such addresses seem to be especially demonstrative of corporate values. The auditors of these speeches were primarily NUL members, but wide press coverage of NUL conferences extended the audience far beyond the immediate actual presentations.

A second methodological matter requiring explanation is that this dissertation is a leader-centered approach to history and analysis of the rhetoric of the NUL. As such,
this study proceeds from four basic assumptions: (see discussion of Weaver, below, for further development).

(a) a group's consistent mode of argumentation is an index of the group's moral and philosophical posture;
(b) leaders personify the attitudes, beliefs, and values of the movement they lead;
(c) audiences influence the premises upon which speakers build their speeches;
(d) analysis of a speaker's method of argumentation can help to chart the ideological changes over time of an organization.

A third methodological feature also demands explanation. Since Richard Weaver's rhetorical theory guides the proposed project, his theory and components therein deserve explanation. In referring to Weaver's theory of argumentation, I apply the term to refer to a speaker's argumentative perspective (which is moral philosophical), not to refer to his formal method of logical inferencing (which is the setting forth of premises and conclusions, etc.).

Richard Weaver's rhetorical theory is axiological in nature, closely resembling Plato's theory in The Phaedrus. In his "Language is Sermonic" essay, Weaver discusses at length the office of rhetoric:
Rhetoric seen in the whole conspectus of its function is an art of emphasis embodying an order of desire. Rhetoric is advisory; it has the office of advising men with reference to an independent order of goods and with reference to their particular situation as it relates to these. The honest rhetorician therefore has two things in mind: a vision of how matters should go ideally and ethically and consideration of his auditors. Toward both of these he has a responsibility.

In fulfilling this responsibility, the orator can choose from a basic stock of forms of argument. According to Weaver, these argumentative forms constitute a hierarchy of persuasive discourse, from ideal to base. Since rhetoric "seeks to reanimate [the soul]" by "holding up to its sight the order of presumptive goods," the highest order of appeal, says Weaver, is argument from genus, "definition or the nature of a thing." This form of rhetoric seeks to prompt consideration of essences:

what is most permanent in existence, or what transcends the world of change and accident. The realm of essence is the realm above the flux of phenomena, and definitions are of essences and genera.
The practical application of arguments from genus, says Weaver, are embodied in the rhetoric of Abraham Lincoln, who argued from the nature of eight ideals, including the nature of all government, the nature of majority rule, and the nature of the office of the chief magistrate. The task of the rhetor who chooses this form of argument is to begin with the nature of a thing and then to show its application.

Weaver ranks argument from similitude next on his hierarchy. This form of argument invokes correspondence. Thinkers of the analogical sort use this argument chiefly because of the uniformity of nature it invokes:

it expresses belief in a oneness of the world, which causes all correspondence to have probative value. Proponents of this view tend to look toward some final, transcendental unity...

Weaver elsewhere expresses the legitimacy of this type of argument: "The user of analogy is hinting at an essence which cannot at the moment be produced."

The least exalted form of argument, the cause-effect method, is of two sub-varieties, according to Weaver. Users of this form are said to be characteristically pragmatic. Consequences, first, are "completely devoid of
reference to principle or defined ideals." Weaver spells out the applications:

Those who are partial to arguments based on effect are under a temptation to play too much upon the fears of their audience by stressing the awful nature of some consequence or by exaggerating the power of some cause. Modern advertising is prolific in this kind of abuse.

The second sub-variety, the appeal to circumstance, ranks as basest of all methods of argument, says Weaver. This "least philosophical of all" forms amounts to a surrender of reason. Its arguments are urgent: "Either you change fast or you get crushed." This type of plea is myopic; it stops at the level of perception of fact. It is not transcendent; it is expedient.

These four methods of argument—genus, similitude, cause-effect and circumstance—comprise Weaver's hierarchy of rhetorical arguments. They are argumentative rank-orderings in a "scheme of values." They are also critical tools in illuminating the values and the meanings of the rhetor(s) under study.

Justification

Analysis of the National Urban League seems justified for three reasons: (1) because of the historic prominence of the NUL in directing race relations; (2) because of
peculiar NUL exercises of rhetorical principles in its search for racial equality; and (3) because of the insights to an understanding of both equality and social movements an application of Weaver's ideogram can contribute.

(1) The prominence of the NUL is evident in several ways. The NUL anniversary in 1985 reminds us of NUL durability. The celebration of 75 years as a vibrant organization demonstrates a certain sort of fortitude that invites consideration of the nature of that fortitude. Also, the enacted purpose of the NUL affirms the importance of the League's functions. Co-founder Eugene Kinckle Jones delineates his observations that the League has contributed to the field of social work through its various urban programs, it has raised the hopes and enlarged the opportunities of blacks in America, and it has served the nation as a whole by marshalling blacks into crucial positions manufacturing war materials, for example, during the two World Wars.\(^{13}\) Nobler still is the NUL's pursuit of racial equality, which is, of course, ultimately beneficial to everyone. Founder Ruth Standish Baldwin pointed to the broad goal of the NUL:

Let us work, not as colored people nor as white people for the narrow benefit of any group alone, but together as American citizens for the common good of our common city, our common country.
Another manifestation of the NUL prominence occurs in its dual loyalties to ends and means. Self-described as a "dreamer and a doer," the NUL has somehow been able to sustain an apparently consistent transcendent vision of equality while retaining a characteristic philosophy of pragmatism. Former NUL Director Vernon E. Jordan, Jr. sums:

Born out of idealism, [the NUL] has embraced practicality to create a unique institution that never promises more than it can deliver, and delivers what it promises.¹⁵

But while such a duality renders the NUL unique, it does not radically differentiate the NUL from its social reform counterparts. Indeed, the NUL champions causes similar to those which many other reform organizations promote: self-determination, social equality, job opportunity, etc. A study of NUL's acts of endurance over 75 years may thus be generally instructive.

(2) A second justification for the proposed study of the National Urban League is that such an examination would unflesh the NUL's matchless application of rhetorical principles, thus further informing the speech discipline. The NUL seems especially suited as a case study in rhetorical adaptation because of its self-described
"unswerving faith in the power of persuasion and conciliation."^®

Also noteworthy are the uncommon ways in which the NUL has defined controversial terms. Lester Granger in 1931, for example, defined militancy as having non-violent connotations:

an inner meaning which is far deeper (than picket lines and placards and the hurling of epithets and denouncing of public figures). In such a sense it is determined by faith in a cause, by willingness to endure opposition to the cause, by determination to stick to a job until completed, and not to be distracted by glory parades and soft sitout corners. In this sense I challenge any national organization in this country to match its record for militancy with that of our Urban League.^ 17

Whitney Young offered an interesting rendition of "black power" at the 1968 convention of the Congress of Racial Equality: "[that] which emphasized price, self-respect, participation and control of one's destiny and community affairs."^® Young's definition of racism in his keynote address at the 1968 NUL conference is equally unconventional:

many...interpret racism to mean overt brutality and fail to see the dangers to social order which it
represents through the economic injustice and rebellious anger it fosters."^{19}

From the same conference, "ghetto power" to Young has come to convey, above all, pride and community solidarity.

We are NOT calling for separatism...And we specifically reject violence."^{20}

Perhaps most provocative of the definitions is that which the NUL delivers in depicting equality or equal opportunity. These notions, central to this dissertation, seem most distinct in NUL ideology. Racial equality seems consistently correlated with economic equality and, therein, opportunities in jobs, housing, and education. Writing of its first executive secretary, an NUL anniversary publication characterizes its whole constitution: "Jones believed that once black economic equality was achieved, [black Americans] would truly know the meaning of equal opportunity."^{21}

Such peculiar manners of interpreting race-related terms warrants scholarly attention. How people conceptualize an idea through symbols (i.e., through words) reveals how they have internalized that concept; it discloses the idiosyncratic meaning they have attached to experiences of reality. Weaver's ideogram of arguments
seems especially suited to gauging these meanings. It espies such symbolic interpretations and traces their logical and philosophical implications. As such, employing Weaver in undertaking a history and analysis of NUL argumentation seems both methodologically sound and philosophically solicited.

(3) Such a study would also seem to bear implications to other groups' efforts to achieve economic, political, and social equality. This is to say that in examining the ways in which the NUL has assessed and responded to unfavorable conditions, we would likely uncover philosophical inferences and rhetorical strategies that could exert relevance to other social movements.

Specifically telling might be the investigation of the League's rhetorical response to its very trying history. Included in its chronology of pressing circumstances are what can be regarded as rhetorical exigencies: the NUL was born in contradistinction to the radical protest ideology of the Niagara Movement and its prodigy the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); the NUL almost went broke several times; the NUL confronted and included itself in ideologically incongruous civil rights concerns.

Yet the NUL's response to such divergent demands has remained largely--and curiously--tempered and self-effacing. From its earliest days of inception, champions
of the NUL philosophy have urged blacks to "cast down your buckets where you are." NUL leaders have espoused self-help programs and have sought educational funding toward this end. Moreover, they have made philanthropic appeals to varied audiences, often appearing to cater to white establishment values. And while today the NUL inherits a more recusant bent, it has still not shed its conciliatory complexion.

The NUL's unique grasp for equality can thus further acquaint us with the nature of equality. Analysis of the NUL's method of attaining equality can also equip the speech scholar with case material on the rhetorical history of a reform organization and thereby enhance our understanding on the nature of social movements.

Movement studies (specifically, that one proposed here) are justified for several compelling reasons.

(a) They may help to affirm the role of persuasion in empowering social movements.

Steven Lucas suggests generally that analysis of the rhetoric of a movement may help to illustrate "the ways rhetoric helps to propel the movement from stage to stage or to retard its evolution."22 Leland Griffin concurs in commenting that analysis of rhetorical strategy, of which argument is a part, may help explain "the evolving sequence of discourse that plays itself out, through
successive stages of adherence, within the temporal framework of the larger, more encompassing 'theoretical movement.'"  

David Zarefsky summarizes: "[the movement leader's] rhetoric should be studied so that we will know more about the use of persuasion in efforts to mobilize for or to resist social change."  

(b) They may help to substantiate the ideal function of the movement leader as being that of defining, as Simons claims:  

Statements of ideology must provide definition of that which is ambiguous in the social situation, give structure to anxiety and a tangible target for hostility, foster in-group feelings, and articulate wish-fulfillment beliefs about the movement's power to succeed.  

(c) It may accomplish several heuristic functions. Griffin recognizes the value to research:  

Any perspective that enables a critic to achieve insight into the rhetorical workings of a movement is to the benefit of us all, and experimentation with a variety of approaches is certainly to be desired.  

McGee notes the tangible data such a study affords the critic:
The rhetorical artifacts which warrant claims of "movement" also give us a concrete object of study, for we can point to changes in patterns of discourses directly, in a way conceptually impossible if we conceive of "movement" as existing apart from the consciousness and/or independent of the discourse which communicates consciousness.27

Zarefsky encapsulates the heuristic justification for embarking on a movement study, a method for which this dissertation proposes:

[Movement studies]...yield hypothesis, axioms, and some of the data from which more general theories may be built...Understanding of history will be enhanced by attention to its rhetorical dimension...[Movement studies] suggest possibilities as well as pitfalls.28

Hence we may conclude that a movement leader's method of argument can present the rhetorical critic with a wealth of information concerning rhetorical--and philosophical--matters of concern. Weaver's argumentation theory can thus be seen as a means of illuminating a myriad of noteworthy subjects: the National Urban league, conceptualizations of equality, and the rhetoric of social movements. In sum, this dissertation is justified by what it
can contribute to our understanding of speakers, speeches, and humankind itself.

**Chapters**

A summary of chapter contents and corresponding chapter headings follow.

Chapter 2: BOOKER T. WASHINGTON AND IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS: 1895-1910. This chapter examines the racial conditions which precipitated black resistance and the subsequent ideology and rhetoric of Booker T. Washington, ideological father of the NUL.

Chapter 3: EUGENE KINCKLE JONES AND SUSTAINED CONSERVATISM: 1918-1941. This chapter examines Jones' relentless conservatism in the context of a period characterized by frivolity, hostility, and indifference. The chapter also analyzes Jones' NUL 25th anniversary address.

Chapter 4: LESTER GRANGER AND TRANSITIONAL YEARS: 1941-1961. This chapter examines the rhetoric of the leader whose administration sustained a strategy of quiet diplomacy while involving the League in public concerns. During this administration, the NUL:

--confronted the lingering effects of the Great Depression
—underwent its first major change in staff
—saw a crucial Supreme Court decision over-
turned.

Chapter 5: WHITNEY YOUNG AND NEW DIRECTIONS: 1961-1971. This chapter examines the rhetoric which facilitated the incorporation of civil rights matters into the NUL agenda.

Chapter 6: RECENT LEADERSHIP AND CURRENT TRENDS: 1971-1985. This chapter examines the contemporary rhetorical directions of Vernon Jordan and John Jacob.

Chapter 7: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.
ENDNOTES


6 _________, p. 212.

7 _________, p. xi.


10 _______, Ethics, pp. 85-114.

11 _______, Ethics, pp. 56-57 and 213-215.

12 _______, "Language is Sermonic," Language is Sermonic, p. 212.


16 George Daniels and Pat Patterson, "The Great Depression Years, 1930-1939," in 70th Anniversary, p. 29.


20 _______, 70th Anniversary, p. 87.

21 Eugene Kinckle Jones, as adapted in 70th Anniversary, p. 73.
26 Griffin, 228.
27 Michael Calvin McGee, "'Social Movement': Phenomenon or Meaning?" CSSJ 31 (Winter), 243.
28 Zarefsky, 253.
Coming to terms with any leader's philosophy is no easy task. It involves discovery of explicit declarations (as within public announcements, manifestos, and the like), knowledge of the individual's record of action, and understanding the circumstances which may have engendered that person's reaction.

All three means of identification confirm the ideology of Booker T. Washington that ultimately correlated racial equality with inter-racial cooperation. Washington's most famous address, analyzed in this chapter, is emblematic of his lifetime of pressing for self-attained racial/economic progress. His philosophy and rhetoric were conciliatory.

Washington framed his vision of equality within public discourse dispatched in the wake of intensified racial attitudes. He promoted a specific method of coping with oppressive conditions while preserving the virtues of the society which housed those conditions. For his charter role in setting forth NUL directions, Booker T. Washington may be considered ideological father of the National Urban League.

In order to fully appreciate the nature of the directions set forth by Washington, the situational exigencies
which helped to comprise "the black experience" require description. Indeed, the segregationist practices between 1877 and 1910 lodged themselves in the internalized experiences of the people who attached meaning to them. They were the precipitators of early NUL rhetoric. Since these experiences make up the social context out of which the NUL was borne, this chapter gives considerable attention to them. Analysis of Booker T. Washington's 1895 Exposition address, undertaken in this social context, follows.

Thus, this chapter attempts three goals: (1) to describe the racial pre-conditions to which Washington may have been responding; (2) to analyze the rhetorical response of Washington with a view toward how it defines the ideal of equality; and, (3) to identify the early philosophical/social outlook and its associated rhetorical foundations.

Racial Pre-Conditions

Segregationist practices, primarily confined to the South during the years under study, may be organized as follows:

1) **Social Construct** - uninstitutionalized public indicators (symbols) of segregation;

2) **Economic Construct** - these indicators in the employment sphere;
3) **Political Construct** - segregationist practices and attitudes in the institutionalized policies they became.

Briefly said, this analysis reconstructs early 20th century segregationist phenomena in terms of the cognitive constructs through which those phenomena were experienced. This study suggests those pervasive forces that triggered Washington to lay the ideological groundwork for the NUL.

**Social Construct Philosophy**

While segregation presented itself in many diffuse incidents of daily life, the underlying philosophy which guided it was not amorphous. Woodward describes the early 20th century social theory as consisting of "inevitable and rigidly inflexible" patterns of racial thought.¹ In an essay entitled "The Ideology of White Supremacy," James W. Vander Zanden seems to concur with Woodward, specifying three grounds on which a social construct stood:

1) Segregation [was] part of the natural order and as such [was] fixed.

2) The Negro [was] inferior to the white or, at the very least, [was] "different" from the white.

3) The break-down of segregation in any of its aspects...[would] inevitably lead to racial
amalgamation, resulting in a host of disastrous consequences.²

Woodward conceives of these principles as occurring in two forms of race relations: (1) paternalistic—a "benevolent despotism" in which the white serves in a "master" role while the black is regarded as "childish," "irresponsible," and "lovable"; (2) competitive—a state of challenge and rivalry among the two races which are in theory equal groups but operate in practice in "sharp competition."³

The white supremacist ideology, however described, found support in the folkways and mores of Southern life. Indeed, as Woodward notes, segregation was so firmly embedded in the social life of the South that laws imposing segregation seem to have been almost unnecessary.⁴ "Whites Only" signs were restrictive enough to "legislate" black status in a white-supremacist society. In fact, laws do not serve as accurate indices of the true preponderance of racial inequality, says Woodward.⁵

Practices

Period literature has made notable attempts at depicting the early 20th century Southern Negro. Whether that person is Tom Sawyer's roustabout "colored friend" or Jules Chandler Harris' "Uncle Remus," such literature often romanticizes the image of the true black Southerner of this period. A more focused view of the social
practices through which segregation operated is less endearing of the experiences that blacks faced routinely.

Ironically, even churches adopted segregationist practices. As far back as 1863, the Presbyterian Church, South, had passed a resolution declaring slavery a divine institution. Following the Civil War, a Methodist bishop affirmed that segregational instincts were "supreme," that like oil and water, blacks and whites could not form "chemical union." This view reinforced assumptions that blacks were not sufficiently familiar with American institutions and denominational creeds and that connection with the churches of former masters was probably ill-advised anyway. With such justification, separate churches were borne and sustained. Woodward claims such religious separation was "the rule."

Railroads had their "rules," too. The Northern press denounced what August Meier has called "miserable accommodations" of blacks, who were systematically denied first-class privileges. Such restrictions were social norm long before they were legal practice. Nonetheless, Jim Crow laws later empowered the railway brakeman or the streetcar conductor with the authority to enforce segregationist transportation practices.

Residential areas brought the discrimination closer to home. Woodward delineates five types of neighborhood segregation that were manifested across the South. One
arrangement designated all-black and all-white blocks in areas that had otherwise been mixed. Atlanta and Greenville adopted this method. Another type, adopted by Roanoke and Portsmouth, Virginia, divided up voting districts, allowing only one race to reside in each of those districts. A third type, similar to the first, created zones according to the majority of people already on those blocks. It prohibited anyone to live in any block "where the majority of residents on such streets are occupied by those with whom said person is forbidden to intermarry." Norfolk applied yet another type. More complex than the others, it based the race-residence decision on both previous occupancy of areas and property ownership. Finally, New Orleans required that anyone seeking residence in any area first secure the agreement of the majority of occupants of that area.11

Education bore the same segregationist complexion. The Florida Supreme Court ruled, for example, that Negro Virgil Hawkins could not be admitted to the all-white University of Florida. The familiar "segregation-is-a-natural order" premise held.12 However, colleges were not the only educational institutions that saw fit to segregate. Arguments over elementary and secondary schools raged, too. Many whites feared that integration would jeopardize the quality of white education. Again such proponents enlisted the "universal law of nature" to
defend such a system. Interestingly, some blacks maintained that black teachers were best suited to teaching black students. Others contended in the same vein that integration victimized black teachers, who were left unemployed in the mix. But many others believed that segregation offered the best prospects of assuring equality among the races in the educational arena.

The institution of marriage faced the same attitudinal constraints. At least two perspectives resisted inter-marriages between blacks and whites. Some whites worried that the "superior" race would be diminished by sexual relations with the "inferior" race. Some black commentators, also, opposed the practice on much the same grounds of racial pride. Inter-marriage between the races diluted black distinctiveness, the commentators asserted. In general, blacks were not so adamant on this issue. Nonetheless, white supremacist attitudes kept the practice at a controlled minimum.

**Economic Construct**

The economic manifestations of segregation augmented segregationist attitudes. They captured in wages and jobs what were otherwise only social norms. While country stores appear to have dealt honestly with their black patrons, in the occupational fields, equality was a barren crop. The average per capita income of Southern blacks, largely employed as agricultural workers, was two-thirds
that of Southern whites.\textsuperscript{15} Per capita income of Southern whites was itself about half that of the national figure.\textsuperscript{16} Such statistics belie the stories of individual hardships many blacks "stuck on the farm" faced as a result of having been deprived of agricultural education. These blacks lacked even the skills to operate small independent farms; their knowledge of fertilizer, tools, and equipment was hardly sufficient to survive an agricultural system built on racially chauvinistic and oppressive attitudes.

Blacks were left with two options, indicative of two basic philosophies.

**Negro as cheap labor**

Characteristic of the ideology which held that blacks were inherently inferior (at least "different"), the Negro largely retained menial positions of unskilled labor as tenants and farmers, servants and hackmen.\textsuperscript{17} A University of Virginia faculty member professed the attitude:

\begin{quote}
The Negro race is essentially a race of peasant farmers and laborers... As a source of cheap labor for a warm climate he is beyond competition; everywhere else he is a foreordained failure...\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

Any compassion the "superior race" may have shown to blacks was likely of the paternalistic sort. Farm owners may have provided for their black laborers, but the force
behind the spirit of "compassion" was likely a self-indulgent protectiveness of what was held to be "my nigger."

Negro as self-help philosopher

With the growth of industry in the Solid South came a second range of career options, accompanied by a second self-conceptualization of the Negro as self-help philosopher. August Meier articulates the prospects of this new Negro attitudinal alternative:

[B]y the acquisition of wealth and morality—attained largely by their own efforts—Negroes would gain the respect of white men and thus be accorded their rights as citizens.18

Meeting in Nashville as far back as 1879, a national conference of leaders in the black community recorded the emerging emphasis thus:

We are to a great extent the architects of our own fortune, and must rely mainly upon our own exertions for success. We, therefore, recommend to the youth of our race the observation of strict morality, temperate habits, and the practice of acquiring of agriculture, the advancing of mercantile positions, and forming their way into the
various productive channels of literature, art, science and mechanics.\textsuperscript{19}

This self-help philosophy was the approximate black correlation to the white \textit{competitive} paradigm, which conceived of blacks and whites as vying contestants, or competitors, in the very same stretch for success. We have no difficulty, then, in seeing how these two co-existing factions may have mutually invited segregated institutions as a means of protecting their own self-interests.

The upshot of the imminent black frustration over cheap wages (and untrustworthy political advocacy) was that Negroes began to view wealth as a symbol of success.\textsuperscript{20} The seduction led them to Southern cities, where iron mills offered the promise of "successful" employment, and to Northern cities, where war-time preparations also summoned available labor. In both cases, "the closer proximity of blacks to whites," reports the National Urban League, "bred a new mistrust, exacerbated old wounds and opened new ones."\textsuperscript{21} Once again blacks found themselves unskilled and untrained, with the lowliest of jobs and, even then, in competition with European immigrants. Black women pulled their weight in a special way, too, by working as domestics, often at the expense of their unattended children.\textsuperscript{22}

While not all blacks, of course, were relegated to subservient occupations (see p. 31, Moore, for a sample
list of black professional occupations in 1900), the plight of the average black man and woman seems to have been unmistakably dismal. Indeed, the low black economic status was sustained at every turn. Urban ghettos stood as cheap memorials to the beset black laborer. Industrialization, strengthened by black shoul­dering, worked invidiously to reconstitute the boundaries of segregation; it reinforced black-white disparity with labor-capitalist machinations.

**Political Construct**

"Unless economic forces or interests are organized," writes John W. Cell, "they will not long survive, much less succeed in dominating a literate, sophisticated, conscious society." However, "once organized," continues Cell, "these interests at once cease to be merely economic and become political forces."23 Stated another way, economics and politics are cognate bedfellows.

The history of racial segregation affirms Cell's analysis. Pre-Civil War property laws accommodated slavery as a cost-efficient means toward economic success. Reconstruction afforded blacks political power over economic (as well as other) civil practices. And Redemption constrained the hands that reached for economic prosperity as politics registered "separate, but not equal."

The year 1877 was in many ways a political rededication to racial segregation. It was a time when politics
ratified socio-economic tendencies. Federal troops withdrew heavy-handed enforcement of racial protection, precipitating an onslaught of Jim Crow laws. Redeemers acted in turn to establish "Home Rule" in the South, using white supremacy as their voter call. In 1877, though, Negroes continued to vote in large numbers. They also continued to hold numerous offices, both elected and appointed. Further, they brought their cases to courts, with hopes of judicial redress.

Three alternative political philosophies arose out of such black-white jockeying. A conservative strand enjoyed the support of many followers. Radicals did not experience much political success because of the limited effectiveness of their experiments. And the liberal philosophy was "ably expressed" but almost roundly rejected in the competition for political power.

Conservatives

The Conservative's purpose was to conserve, explains Woodward. This meant that the Negro would remain subordinate, yet he would not be ostracized. Blacks would be viewed as inferior, but conservatives did not demand humiliation, degradation, or even segregation.

In fact, the philosophy of paternalism guided the conservative political strand. Governor Thomas G. Jones of Alabama, a leading Democratic Conservative, preached
the noblesse oblige thus: "The Negro race is under us. He is in our power. We are his custodians."28

Such paternalistic care for the underprivileged blacks was welcomed support among some of the members of the black population; however, blacks were not the only parties who stood to gain from such advocacy. Most assuredly, conservatives needed black voter support and so saw fit to court black favor.29 Disaffected factions of the Democratic Party had begun to pose a threat to ideological control, so the black vote became crucial. Some blacks saw the courtship in their self-interest. Having become disillusioned with the increasing disfranchisement in the South and with Republican indifference in the North, these blacks, mainly those of the days of servitude, identified their well-being with the interest of the upper-class whites. This gave Democratic conservatives a black impetus, which despite large black interest in the Republican Party and significant allegiance to a third party, lent important support to the conservative wing.30 The deal has been termed the "fusion principle."31

Results of the deal had both short- and long-term implications. On the short run, Democrats gained some black votes in local elections against dissident Independents, and the Republican control of black votership was diminished.32 Later, blacks became cognizant of the new
restricted political position in which they found themselves. They grew embittered by a restored white control of the Republican Party, and Democrats proved to be untrustworthy and given to fraud when "in a pinch." Caught in the middle, blacks became displaced and apathetic. As had so many other elements of society, politics had failed them too.

Radicals

Populist agrarian farmers, comprised largely of the disaffected Readjusters, Independents, and Greenbackers, led the Radical platform. Such agrarian interest recognized a certain equality of oppression common to lower-class whites and to most blacks. A Texas Populist summed up the agrarian interest in the poverty-stricken blacks: "They are in the ditch just like we are."34

Headed by Tom Watson, the Southern Populists sought to create a "community of feeling and interest" in which the two races could function equally. But the community held little appeal to majority "supremacists" who stood to gain more from separate communities or one community of power and paternalism. The Populists could logically lure only the economically depressed whites, those voting members whom Conservatives had so thoroughly convinced that Negro power posed a threat. The Negrophobe element had been so firmly rooted that, predictably, Radicals did not
present an extended challenge to the dominant Conservative power brokers.35

But radicals did manage to frustrate black political alignments, which contributed to the political confusion and indifference blacks came to experience. Radical political schemers exploited this confusion in assigning blame to blacks for the Populist downfall. Negroes thus became an "accepted object of aggression," a scapegoat.36 The image was to remain. Meire explains that the Populist victimizing led to "a strident prejudice and hatred of Negroes as economic rivals"--the scapegoat--"for the difficulties of the white working and small farmer classes."37

Liberals

The liberal political philosophy exerted influence on racial segregation more through what it did not do than through what it did. Following the Compromise of 1877, Northern liberals were reluctant to agitate the cause of the Southern conservatives. Northern magazines such as Harper’s Weekly and Nation, promoting improved relations between the North and the South, expressed their support of white supremacist thinking. Woodward has explained the ultimate effect of such North-South cooperation:

Just as the Negro gained his emancipation and new rights through a falling out between white men, he
now stood to lose his rights through the reconciliation of white men.\textsuperscript{38}

\textbf{Legal statute}

Going hand in hand with political maneuvering to secure the black vote or to expunge past party failures were a host of laws cementing inferior status for blacks. One such political constraint, with obvious ramifications to political equality, is offered here.

Disfranchisement of blacks would prevent the Democrats from stealing black votes. That it would deprive blacks of the vote was a comparatively minor concern. Manipulation of laws so as to stay within legal grounds made this move possible. Some states erected insurmountable barriers, such as property and literacy qualifications, which blacks assuredly could not satisfy.

Whites could circumvent such barriers through a loophole provision called "the grandfather clause." This stipulated that the voter's grandfather must have enjoyed certain civil privileges and powers that black grandfathers clearly had been denied. The poll tax, too, worked to decimate the black vote. Like other legal concoctions to disfranchise blacks, it, too, was highly successful.\textsuperscript{39} So when blacks withdrew from politics, they did not do so voluntarily.
In short, segregation was not a one-dimensional concept. Southern blacks during the approximate period of 1877-1910 confronted racist segregation in their schools, in their jobs, and in their voting privileges.

I have presented such segregational practices as oppressive phenomena. But I have also cast these phenomena into cognitive constructs so as to extend the analysis onto the experience of segregation and to provide the perspective out of which the NUL shaped its response. In other words, I have described what prompted the dialectical rejoinder which ushered the NUL into existence.

**Booker T. Washington's Rhetorical Response**

The pervasive racial discrimination that was for two centuries held such a stronghold on American thought began to lose its grip when it reached the 20th century. While color chauvinism crossed the timeline in the forms of social, economic, and political oppression, the early decades of the 1900s saw a rise in organized black resistance. With glimpses of Reconstruction still fresh in their memories, many blacks recognized the power they could collectively exert in determining their own destiny, so they rallied behind particular leaders to better their condition. Perhaps most notable among these leaders was Booker T. Washington.

Booker T. Washington's brand of racial reform earned him the designation "leading spokesman and theoretician of
the New Negro Capitalist whom he was trying to mold into existence." There can be little doubt that what Washington also molded into existence was an ideology that came to characterize the NUL.

Washington's means for fostering the New Negro Capitalist made him uniformly a "conciliator" and a "compromiser." Indeed, Washington's "something-for-everybody" style of appeal has marked him, in William Toll's terms, a "referee at large...sole spokesman for the Negro race."42

As leader of the National Negro Business League (NNBL) and founder of the Tuskegee Institute, Washington found many sources through which to convey his philosophy; nowhere, however, was Washington's conciliatory approach to racial equality more evident than in his widely acclaimed "Atlanta Exposition" speech of 1895. There he projected his laissez-faire mindset, which conformed comfortably to the established attitude of the day. He spoke of individualism and capital accumulation.

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

Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions. And in this connection it is well to bear in mind that whatever other sins the South may be called to bear, when it comes to business, pure and simple, it is in the South that the Negro is given a man's chance in the commercial world.  

As such, the equality he espoused would be borne of self-help; the institutions of government would function as benevolent bystanders.

The audience appeals apparent in the "Atlanta Exposition" typified Washington's customary appeals. Throughout his campaign for racial equality, Washington faced a multiplicity of audiences: government officials, financial boosters, black supporters, Tuskegee students, and foreign well wishers. Between 1895 and 1905, Washington directed his appeals to the Southern legislators and governors who would come to respect his conservative approach to black prosperity. To Northern philanthropists, he cast the black American in a struggle to become land owners and store owners. To those who would be successful under his plan, Washington advised that although the freedmen had toiled, they had not learned the
self-discipline that would facilitate their equality. To students at Tuskegee Institute, Washington insisted on a rigid daily schedule, requiring them also to pay their own way in cash or in labor. To European sympathizers Washington projected the progress his movement had made in America. To the DuBois school of thought (which called for immediate, radical changes in race relations), he reminded the radical protestors that there is as much pride in "tilling a field as in writing a poem."

In short, Washington enlisted several divergent interests in the cause he championed. He cast aside the differences that separated his audiences by showing those audiences what each stood to gain from adoption of his policy. The three organizations which he headed, including the NNBL, Tuskegee Institute, and the National League of Urban Colored American Negroes (which became a foundation part of the NUL), helped to carry the philosophy to these publics.

Identifying the audiences to which messages were dispatched gives insights into why these messages took the form they did. As stated, Washington faced concurrent audiences consisting of governors, philanthropists, black unskilled laborers, and Tuskegee students. Such a composite of message decoders almost dictated that Washington's message satisfy all parties without alienating any. His overriding strategy unmistakably stressed
conciliation with the South and reconciliation between the races. Washington referred to the **opportunity** the Atlanta Exposition had provided toward these ends. Other opportunities for black progress surrounded blacks, according to Washington. He used **similitude**, an illustrative anecdote, to argue that equal opportunity is not the white race's to confer but the black race's to share:

A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, "Water, water; we die of thirst!" The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, "Cast down your bucket where you are." A second time the signal, "Water, water; send us water!" ran up from the distressed vessel, and was answered "Cast down your bucket where you are." And a third and fourth signal for water was answered, "Cast down your bucket where you are." The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh, sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River.⁴⁷

Washington showed how the friendly vessel would help the distressed vessel, by showing it how to help itself. Washington did not propose dissolution of all traits that might distinguish the two races. He promoted integration,
not disintegration. Again using **similitude** in a metaphorical gesture, Washington emphasized an equality of cooperation that would eventually "make the interests of both races one": "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." Casting a common ideal beyond the immediate grasp of both races ("upward"), Washington again used metaphorical similitude to signal that cooperation is a defining feature of equality: "Nearly 16 millions of hands will aid you in pulling the load upward, or they will pull against you the load downward."

Washington's famous "cast down your buckets where you are" plea kept blacks "in their place," as conservative whites interpreted, while fostering confidence among many blacks that capital accumulation and industrial or agricultural education, through disciplined labor, would gradually lead to economic success. And this would lead to racial equality. While the white concession would be negligible, the black prosperity would in turn be incremental. Small losses, small gains—Washington's plan was broad-based and long-term.

This approach would not intimidate anyone. Washington revealed his technique: "I have long since made up my mind...always bearing in mind...to use common
sense and not unnecessarily to antagonize anyone. Over time Washington would foster the perception that black development was part of the national economic growth. He envisioned all people would be equal in their common participation in this national growth. Washington's appeals were so broad that they could unite a wide spectrum of divergent interests in common support of a cause. Members of Washington's "audiences" would be the facilitators or the carriers of this multi-appeal message.

Moreover, Washington exhibited in language what he called for in racial reform: moderation. In his showcase "Atlanta Exposition" (or, alternately, "Atlanta Compromise") address of 1895, Washington employed several tactical words to signal his conciliatory goals. For example, he noted that this exposition would "cement the friendship" between the two races. Blacks would offer Southern whites "sympathetic help" in all their racial struggles. And even following a 1905 Atlanta racial riot, Washington urged groups of black and white ministers to meet in a "civil league" to calm the resurgent racial tensions.

To characterize such a strategy in Weaverian terms, Washington argued from similitude. He stood on the principle that equality is not conferred, but self-realized. Washington did not forthrightly state this principle. He used ships and fists and buckets to
indicate his ideal. To Washington, the way the black race was to achieve full acceptance by the white race was to accept, itself, the economic values of the white race. This meant that the capitalist penchant for earning one's own way would have to become the "self-help" philosophy of black aspirants, wherever their buckets currently lay.

Equality for Washington meant of or pertaining to the same whole. All of Washington's audiences would be guided by the same laissez-faire attitude, and the equality that would follow would come at the hands of an eventual realization of economic egalitarianism. Whatever differences remaining in the interim were transitory and without disgrace. Equality transcended such fleeting circumstances; Washington envisioned a higher order.

**Philosophical Outlook and Rhetorical Foundations**

The paradigm of equality Washington set forth in 1895 was the ideological basis upon which the NUL arose. Its most distinguishing social/philosophical features are therefore presented here for an understanding of NUL philosophical and rhetorical roots.

Perhaps most distinguishing of Washington's contributions to race relations was that he created a program to integrate a segregated society. In retrospect, this program does not seem to have promoted integration in the sense in which that concept is applied today; Washington is generally understood to have established the "separate
but equal" principle of segregation. Nevertheless, Washington did devise a means by which the two races could cooperate in an effort toward mutual progress.

Many critics have called Washington's plan a black sell-out. Judging his approach to be timidly paternalistic, they have viewed his strategy as a compromise (surrender) of black principles. Such a criticism, however, was myopic. It ignored the solid self-help attitude Washington promoted. To Negroes Washington was laying a course of self-determination they could track, relying less and less on the whimsical will of benevolent despots. Indeed, Washington fostered the method of interracial cooperation as a means of eradicating paternalism. He preached competitiveness to Negroes, promising them that hard work would obtain for them eventual equality.

Under Washington's plan, the pay-offs (economic first, social later) would be gradual and self-merited:

The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremist folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing.\(^{55}\)

The privileges would be temporarily suspended, but the delay would be because of a necessary course of
evolution. In other words, only after blacks had been empowered to work their way up from "the bottom of life" and whites had seen fit to help educate "head, hand, and heart" could the awaited goal be realized. The essence of equality, as Washington conceived, involved willful cooperation. As such, Washington's reasoning was not just an expedient compromise. Rather, he professed the features of equality, defining it in terms of opportunities both races would provide each other. Stated differently, the pragmatics of this strategy bespoke its essence: opportunity and cooperation were practical and inherent features of equality.

Not surprisingly, when the three parent organizations merged in 1910 to form the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes (later named the National Urban League), the slogan selected to capture the corporate ideology was "opportunity, not alms." More specifically, the defining purpose of the NUL became, then, to promote equal economic opportunity, a distinctly Washingtonian, cooperative ideal. Leaders of the League sought "opportunity to work at the job for which the Negro was best fitted, with equal pay for equal work, and equal opportunity for advancement." As Gunnar Myrdal has assessed, "a primary task of all branches of the League [was] to find more and better jobs. They all function[ed] as employment agencies."
Rhetorically this economic rendition of equality has defied simple explanation. In Weaverian terms, Booker T. Washington focused on creating jobs and acquiring education, which comprised a circumstantial argumentative perspective. The League pursued the same course. What is noteworthy about such reasoning, though, is how those circumstances functioned in Washingtonian rhetoric. Booker T. Washington and NUL leaders until the 1960s utilized jobs and training (economic circumstances) to urge their followers to think beyond. Economic circumstances were not the ends in themselves; they were indicators of an essential, defining feature of equality: cooperation. Booker T. Washington thus initiated the integration of definition (idealism) and circumstance (pragmatism), and the National Urban League has sustained this rhetorical tradition. In philosophy and in word, the Washington-Urban League legacy has envisioned that "far above and beyond material benefits will be that higher good, that, let us pray God, will come [to bring into] our beloved South a new heaven and a new earth."58
ENDNOTES


4 ________, SCJC, p. 32.

5 ________, p. 102.

6 Vander Zanden, pp. 388-389.


8 Vann Woodward, SCJC, p. 31.


11 ________, p. 100.
12 Vander Zanden, p. 386.
14 ________, p. 54.
16 ________, p. 139.
18 Vann Woodward, *SCJC*, p. 95.
19 Meier, *Negro Thought*, p. 44.
22 ________, p. 12.
25 ________, p. 33.
26 ________, p. 45.
27 ________, p. 48.
28 ________, p. 49.
29 ________, p. 57.
32 ________, p. 58.
33 ________, p. 59.
34 ________, p. 61.
35 ________, p. 62.
36 ________, p. 81.
37 Meier, Negro Thought, p. 23.
38 Vann Woodward, SCJC, p. 36.
39 ________, pp. 83-84.
41 Toll, Resurgence, p. 70.
42 ________, p. 70.
44 Toll, Resurgence, p. 48.
45 ________, p. 64.
49 ________.
50 Toll, Resurgence, p. 87.
52 ________, p. 213.


57 , p. 839.

Conservative thought dominated the Jones administration. Eugene Kinckle Jones rose to the helm of the NUL as George Edmund Haynes' successor when the League was still in its infancy, in 1918; fundamentals of NUL philosophy were still fresh in memory. Jones served as executive secretary from this time until 1941, when illness and dwindling support forced his retirement; a lengthy term allowed ample time to solidify ideals.

Jones faced many obstacles to League goals of racial equality within his 23-year tenure. Such negative forces included race riots (and their residual effects), labor resistance, and even class antipathy. In other words, Jones was confronted by noteworthy temptations to redefine NUL strategy. Like his predecessors (Booker T. Washington and Haynes), though, Jones did not yield to discordant pressures.

Jones' allegiance to Booker T. Washington's ideology in the face of social indifference, mob hostility, and devil-may-care frivolity is borne in his discourse. Jones' rhetorical devices reflected an undisturbed hopefulness and a conservative bent in the pursuit of racial
equality. These devices help explain how the NUL, tempered yet determined, remained intact.

This chapter presents pertinent social conditions facing the National Urban League during the decades under study. These conditions demonstrate the severe obstacles of frivolity, hostility, and indifference that might have led the NUL to abandon its conciliatory strategies, to veer from its mainline course. The conditions provide the perspective by which Jones' two extant annual conference addresses should be viewed. Jones' 1922 NUL annual conference keynote address and his 1935 NUL twenty-five year anniversary address are then analyzed in terms of how the League responded to these changing conditions while preserving its conservative ideology. Richard Weaver's ideogram of argumentative perspectives help to describe how the League upheld a consistent vision of equality.

**Early Social Conditions**

**Frivolity**

The 1920s were a frolicsome period in American history. Americans delighted over fads and fashions. Owning a car was chic, seeing a moving picture was thrilling, and listening to the radio was essential. Baseball fans cheered Babe Ruth. Boxing fans heralded Jack Dempsey. And America ticker-taped Charles A. Lindberg. Americans listened to jazz music and anti-prohibitionists. The period was alive.
The intensity of the 1920s—and of the years briefly preceding—fostered curious attitudes. The gaiety and frivolity we associate with this period depicted America as harmless adolescent in a culture marked by social change. However, all this joviality belies the self-indulgence and malignant attitude among the many toward others who were perceived to be in competition for rights.

George Mowry analyzes the intolerance Americans showed to "minority groups, aliens of various types, and to all varieties of radicalism" thus:

The conflict was in some degree waged between an older North European American stock devoted to the Protestant ethic, with its emphasis upon individualism, hard work, sobriety, and frugality, and the newer immigrant folk crowding the cities, by origin from Southern and Eastern Europe, by religion Catholic and Jewish, and by temperament devoted to more personal indulgence and to paternalistic ways of thought inspired by either political or religious consideration.¹

In a time of post-war celebration, people became, at the very least, indifferent toward others' social deprivations; and, the oppressed and their sympathizers were provoked to hostility and extremism in seeking to combat social abuses.
Attorney General Mitchell A. Palmer labelled some political activists "radical socialists," "misguided anarchists," "moral perverts," and "hysterical women." Harvey Wish observes that the intolerance manifested itself also in "chauvinism, racialism, and a middle-class fear that organized labor was plotting revolution." By the 1930s the stock market had crashed, and Americans typically became frustrated and radical. Formal and informal fundamentalist groups demanded what they interpreted to be proper. They urged immediate passage of a bill, urgent control of abuses, or even immediate return (of blacks) to Africa.

Franklin Roosevelt, for example, outlined an aggressive emergency policy in his 1933 inaugural address, indicating he would ask for unusual powers as warranted. The Agricultural Adjustment Act, Federal Emergency Relief Act, National Recovery Relief Act, Home Owners Act and others resulted from Roosevelt’s calls for quick action. The National Labor Relations Act, responding to labor disputes, established The National Labor Relations Board to determine "appropriate collective bargaining units through elections...at the request of the workers involved."  

Hostility

In the summer of 1917, the hostility that would carry into the 1930s developed. As large numbers of black field hands migrated to Northern cities, many labor strikes were
broken. Company bosses hired the eager applicants, angering irritated strikers.5 "Floaters and ne'er-do-wells" also moved north in search of a leisurely life.6 By 1920, 229,000 migrants had re-located from the Central South to a sub-region consisting of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania also increased their regional population by over 100,000.7

On July 2, 1917, inner resentment erupted into violence. Jules Archer describes the scenario:

In East St. Louis, when unionized whites struck an aluminum plant in the summer of [1917], black strikebreakers were hired in their place. Loss of the strike precipitated one of bloodiest race riots in America. Angry white mobs raided the city's ghetto, driving through at top speed and shooting into black homes.

Blacks organized an armed vigilante mob to keep out all whites attempting to enter their district. When two white policemen in a squad car refused to leave, the mob opened fire, killing one officer and mortally wounding the other.

Police rioted, attacking every black in sight. They were joined by a white mob of three thousand crying for vengeance. Blacks were pulled from streetcars, stoned, clubbed, kicked, and shot.
Black homes were set ablaze, and men, women, and children fired on as they ran out. [However, charges against] National Guard Troops were dropped in an arranged deal whereby three officers agreed to plead guilty of rioting, and were fined a token fifty dollars each, paid by the force.®

President Wilson was relatively mute on the outbreak. The New York Evening Post described Wilson's failure to repudiate the East St. Louis riot as "part of a pattern indicating an unsympathetic attitude toward Negroes." Another New York periodical compared Wilson's views toward the Negro plight to those of hardened racists such as Senators Tillman and Vardaman.⁹

In contrast, black protest groups became incensed. At a meeting of the Liberty League of Negro Americans, assembled to protest the East St. Louis riot, Liberty League President Herbert H. Harrison called for a black militancy that would match the brutality of the mobsters:

We intend to fight, if fight we must for the things dearest us, for our hearts and homes. Certainly I would encourage the Negroes in the South, or in East St. Louis, or anywhere else who do not enjoy the protection of the law, to arm for their own defense, to hide those arms, and to learn how to use them, and I would gladly encourage the
collection of funds to buy rifles for those who cannot obtain them for themselves. We Negroes in New York cannot lie down in the face of this proposition. This thing in East St. Louis touches us too nearly. We must demand justice, and we must make our voices heard.10

Members of the Ku Klux Klan exacerbated the tensions. Claiming over 5 million members at its peak, the Klan deported, tarred and feathered, kidnapped, killed and mutilated marked "undesireables." Years after the East St. Louis clash, "Klansmen rarely felt the hand of the law."11

The Chicago Race Riot of 1919 should have come as no surprise. The Chicago Commission on Race Relations reported the background of the riot, observing the intensity of the mutual racial prejudice:

Sunday afternoon, July 27, 1919, hundreds of white and Negro bathers crowded the lakefront beaches at Twenty-Sixth and Twenty-Ninth Streets. This is the eastern boundary of the thickest Negro residence area. At Twenty-Sixth Street Negroes were in great majority; at Twenty-Ninth Street there were more whites. An imaginary line in the water separating the two beaches had been generally observed by the two races. Under the prevailing
relations, aided by wild rumors and reports, this line served virtually as a challenge to either side to cross it. Four Negroes who attempted to enter the water from the "white" side were driven away by the whites. They returned with more Negroes, and there followed a series of attacks with stones, first one side gaining the advantage, then the other.

Eugene Williams, a Negro boy of seventeen, entered the water from the side used by Negroes and drifted across the line supported by a railroad tie. He was observed by the crowd on the beach and promptly became a target for stones. He suddenly released the tie, went down and was drowned. Guilt was immediately placed on Stauber, a young white man, by Negro witnesses who declared that he threw the fatal stone.

White and Negro men dived for the boy without result. Negroes demanded that the policeman present arrest Stauber. He refused; and at this crucial moment arrested a Negro on a white man's complaint. Negroes then attacked the officer. These two facts, the drowning and the refusal of the policeman to arrest Stauber, together marked the beginning of the riot.12
As the Commission tallied, the riot resulted in thirty-eight deaths (fifteen white, twenty-three Negro) and 437 people injured.

**Indifference**

Although these and the numerous other race riots erupting across the nation in the 1920s prompted Congressional consideration of the issue of race relations, lawmakers in the 1920s ranked "black" issues low on the nation's agenda. Representative L. C. Dyer of East St. Louis had been introducing anti-lynching legislation since 1911. However, by his retirement from the House in 1934, Congress had still not passed his proposal.

Seeming almost oblivious to substantiated cases of racial injustice, Congressmen opposing the Dyer legislation which called for federal investigation of the East St. Louis riot did so on the basis that the bill would allow the national government to interfere with a local problem, murder. Discrimination and brutality were camouflaged in this battle for governing power.

Neither did the Supreme Court have much to say in the 1920s (and 1930s) regarding racial discrimination. The American Civil Liberties Union records only one such case before the court. This case bore no apparent significance inasmuch as it was not cited as precedent within these two decades.
Some of the congressional and at-large insensitivity toward racial issues may have been due to the fact that the nation faced many competing concerns. In the 1920s, unions lobbied for work laws while other groups contended for prohibition. In the 1930s the pressures to respond to the sustained economic crisis of 1929 occupied the minds of all legislators, especially as they listened to special interest pleas for financial aid. Both special interest groups and the federal government seemed to care little about black complaints of racial discrimination.

Jones' Rhetorical Response

The extremism or hostility of some special interest groups did not provoke the radicalism among the NUL that it did among these other advocacy groups. Although Eugene Kinckle Jones directed his local executives to "BOMBARD Senators with letters and telegrams 'IN WHAT WE HOPE WILL BE THE LAST DRIVE FOR THE ANTI-LYNCHING BILL,'" the League was merely adapting its case to government agency heads rather than to private corporation heads since the federal government had become the nation's largest single employer. Private persuasion continued to characterize the League's modus operandi. As Nancy Weiss has told, any actions inconsistent with the League's typical "hands-off" policy were exceptions: "the departure was more perfunctory than real."17
In Jones' public rhetoric, "departures" were rare. In discourse Jones consistently focused on the virtues of community sensitivity to NUL goals. As such, Jones functioned as a public cheerleader for a transcendent concept of interracial cooperation. His discourse was thus something of an anachronism; when society was frenzied or apathetic, the NUL held out a consistent commitment to a long-term goal.

Two of Jones' NUL annual conference addresses exemplify the executive director's attitude toward social flux. One address, delivered in 1922, followed a string of riots dating back to 1917 and post-war self-centeredness. The other, commemorating the NUL's 25th anniversary in 1935, came in the midst of a stubborn depression and the radical Marcus Garvey movement, which recommended that all blacks return to Africa. Jones' commitment to racial unity is thus particularly noteworthy.

1922 Address

Jones clearly correlated equality with interracial cooperation in his 1922 address. The address began and ended with precise references to goodwill between the races and was interspersed with these same notions.

Even as Jones offered a nostalgic reflection on the NUL's history, he began to create the impression that the
NUL was integrally bi-racial. Recounting that the League evolved from the Committee for the Improving of Industrial Conditions of Negroes in New York City (CIICN) and from the Committee for the Protection of Colored Women (CPCW), Jones related that fundamental to his organization's history was its interracial nature. Explaining that these two integrated committees merged with the Committee on Urban Conditions Among Negroes (CUCAN) in 1910, Jones again stressed the role of racial cooperation: "It is interesting to note that the prime motive in each of these three constituent organizations was a white person." Shortly hereafter, Jones returned to this same theme:

In every case the interracial feature is made prominent as the board of control and the membership embrace both white and colored people of prominence and understanding. The successive comments celebrated NUL achievements. Jones commended NUL national programs, which he pointed out had collected data, provided fellowships and training, assisted other national organizations, provided relief from race riots, established employment bureaus, sponsored health activities, organized boys' clubs and set up working women's homes.
Despite pervasive problems of unemployment, rioting, and job discrimination, Jones elected to praise these and other positive results of NUL efforts rather than to bemoan the problems that still awaited resolution. In so doing, he resisted the option to stress the urgency of the times. He pointed to no hostility, no indifference, no frivolity. In fact, Jones' extensive delineation of NUL successes in Chicago, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Boston, Brooklyn, Newark, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Detroit and Louisville seem almost designed to counter the widely-documented incidents of racial strife. Recall that waves of blacks from the South had migrated to many of these cities; this had created housing inadequacies, had threatened striking white employees' jobs, and had touched off violent riots. In reference to each city, however, Jones spotlighted incidents in which the NUL had fostered better racial conditions.

Following his litany of NUL and Negro successes, Jones inserted a transition bridging these urban improvements with progress made in the area of blacks in government. This transition was not a conventional one. Instead, it was a break between two main units and an opportunity for Jones to repeat his obvious theme, interracial cooperation:

The national organization is now holding its seventh conference which is bringing together lead-
ing students white and colored of the problems which we [are] discussing tonight.22

A critic contemplating this "transition" might be led to ask "What problems were discussed tonight?" Jones seems to have been determined solely to celebrate the advance toward interracial cooperation.

In his closing comments Jones affirmed this same motif. Thus, in its second decade, the NUL saw fit to ignore the many lingering hardships. In lieu of the oppressive conditions he might have stressed, the NUL's second executive secretary focused his attention on a predominant, transcendent goal:

It is interesting to note that the Urban League is the Interracial organization which antedates every other national interracial movement now operative...The idea has been extended...leading up to the final program of adjustment.

...With a renewed interest and constructive programs in operation and the consideration of the development of higher morale and faith on the part of those who have joined in this effort for interracial good-will, the day is not far when throughout the length and breadth of our land, we shall see this movement in every community where Negroes reside in large numbers.23
1935 Address

Thirteen years later Jones in his NUL 25th anniversary address in 1935 repeated his support of the goal of "interracial goodwill." In content, structure, and tone, the 1935 address was virtually a facsimile of the 1922 speech.

Jones began his silver anniversary address in the same historical, reflective way as he had the 1922 speech. He commended his organization's legacy of promoting cooperation between the races, and he boasted that the NUL had looked beyond surface consideration in pursuit of this goal. He contended that the goal was an ideal and that it was being achieved:

In our efforts to establish the bases and principles of organization we courageously, as we thought, laid down the policy of forming interracial boards...of refusing to undertake any community welfare program without first making a careful sociological analysis and appraisal of the underlying causes of the social maladjustment we wished to correct. We were adopting policies or principles without the tangible evidence we could carry out the program on such an idealistic basis. We were not sure that whites in the South would work on the same boards with Negroes...But in all
Urban Leagues, North and South, interracial board membership is an accomplished fact.\textsuperscript{24}

The list of facts used by Jones to substantiate the ideal of interracial cooperation covered much of the same ground as Jones' 1922 address: literacy, employment, and housing. Using the stylistic element of repetition, he delineated successes attributable to the League in this manner: "Twenty five years ago..." In virtually every instance cited thereafter, Jones claimed the progress was an improvement to society, not just to Negroes. He argued that the successful NUL program was neither "sentimental" nor "emotional"; it was "a sound, sensible, practical proposition--that of raising the standards of living of all the people, black and white."\textsuperscript{25} In short, where Jones documented advances in living standards, the pay-off was to society. These advances were elevating all of America. The accomplishments would lead to an extended destiny.

However, Jones spent little time expounding the problems that lay ahead. Within the brief attention he afforded to persistent obstacles, he all but dismissed their significance. He never described the problems in verbal polemics; he presented them, instead, as challenges to the NUL. Jones embraced these challenges and resolved to meet them in the "Urban League spirit" of cooperation:
The Urban League has made an enviable record during the past quarter of a century but its work has just begun. In every city where there is a League, the effect of its services is felt, but when one considers that there are 147 cities in the United States with over 5,000 Negroes in their population and that there are only forty well organized local Leagues, the goal yet before us is clear. We must find the resources required for this needed expansion. We must provide more fellowships to train added social workers so that the Urban League spirit and methods may be extended through the most potent means possible—a selective process which picks potential leaders of social thought on a competitive basis.26

Jones used the "enviable record" as documentation for his prevailing tone of encouragement. In this speech, as in the 1922 address, Jones maintained focus on a quality of life that transcended the undeniable pervasive hardships.

Jones substantiated his optimism concerning NUL strides toward interracial cooperation particularly well. He cited statistics showing increases in Negro literacy rate, he gave examples of Negroes in governmental positions, and he offered numbers of Negroes who were engaged in trade and in the professions.
Jones' abundant use of such circumstantial evidence of racial progress is ironic. According to Richard Weaver, recurrence of such empirical reasoning undercuts the ideals that exist independent of human ability to comprehend them. Circumstantial reasoning generally disregards ultimate considerations, says Weaver.

Were Weaver's theory to be strictly applied in the analysis of Jones' rhetoric, Jones would seem to have equated equality with ephemeral good living conditions in, for example, Philadelphia and Detroit. Jones' definition of equality in such circumstantial terms would, in such an analysis, account for his abundant optimism. To the extent that Jones could document such encouraging conditions, his enthusiasm would be judged to be well grounded.

Nevertheless, in Jones' 1922 and 1935 addresses, the selection of any positive data (circumstances) from among a multiplicity of potential negative data raises new rhetorical prospects. Finding so many praiseworthy conditions when blacks were so visibly oppressed indicates a disposition to see beyond. Stated differently, Jones' frame of reference in evaluating social conditions was a transcendent goal: interracial cooperation. Consequently, racial discrimination, to the extent to which it existed, did not warrant Jones' rhetorical attention. To
have elaborated on oppressive conditions might have been to recommend quick fixes for old problems. Jones directed attention, instead, toward an end which seemed unrelated to old conditions. While Jones failed to show the features of the essence he was promoting, he was, in effect, denying the features others might have ascribed to it. Equality, Jones argued, was not tied to any single condition or particular set of conditions. This ideal was being actuated through a transformation of the will. In closing his 25th anniversary conference address, Jones acclaimed the NUL's successful reach toward this goal and commended the efforts of those who had facilitated it:

In conclusion may I take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all who by their gifts of ideas, services, and funds have made possible the Urban League's accomplishments of the past twenty-five years—-at the same time giving in advance appreciation and encouragement to all who from now on into the future, may similarly accelerate this forward movement in behalf of mankind.  

Summary and Conclusions
In summary, Eugene Kinckle Jones sustained the same Booker T. Washington strategy of never unnecessarily antagonizing anyone. In the two addresses analyzed in
this chapter, Jones withheld nearly all indication of black hardship or oppression. His rhetoric was characteristically celebratory of progress in achieving racial equality.

This chapter identified Jones' optimistic paradigm in terms of Richard Weaver's hierarchy of argumentative perspectives. Accordingly, Jones relied heavily on circumstances to demonstrate the "forward movement" of the "Urban League's accomplishments." In both speeches analyzed, Jones appears to have followed a rhetorical design of stacking circumstance on top of circumstance, substantiating his claims that equality is attainable.

Drawing critical conclusions from such a rhetorical choice (argument by circumstance) is difficult. Weaver has described circumstantial reasoning as urgent and expedient. The examples he assails call for quick change to correct a problematic situation. Jones, however, did not apply circumstantial reasoning in this same way. Whereas typically the circumstantial arguer decries a social ill, Jones employed circumstances to prove NUL effectiveness and racial progress.

As such Jones' argument by circumstance served a transcendent function. His rhetoric transformed (even ignored) circumstances that would signify discrimination. Instead, Jones recognized potentialities in attitudes and praised the visible efforts (i.e. circumstances) of those
who had pushed society upward in the direction of racial equality.

Therefore, Jones' rhetoric appears to be an exception to Weaver's theory. Jones drew on circumstances to build transcendent arguments. Weaver does not account for the peculiarity of using base forms of arguments to serve such idealistic ends.

Still, Weaver's theory has merit. Weaverian methodology does help to ascertain the predominance of a certain pattern of discourse. Translating this pattern of discourse into philosophical inference, however, requires caution. As this chapter has shown, heavy reliance on circumstances does not deny concern for essences; in this case, it identified the essence of interracial cooperation. Perhaps Weaver's theory can be clarified to say that when circumstances are used to push thinking beyond the immediate, they may serve a noble end.

Therefore, what makes Jones' rhetoric difficult to classify in Weaverian terms was his method of promoting a transcendent goal. Weaver professes that ultimate arguments consist of definitions as to the nature of a thing. Such arguments deal explicitly with the features of some humane ideal. Jones, though, only suggested an ideal which he did not characterize in terms of its features. As stated earlier, he used circumstances to demonstrate how the ideal was operating. Thus, in 1922
and 1935, Jones withheld description of his vision, but he pointed steadfastly in the direction his supporters should look. Booker T. Washington had pointed in the same direction.
ENDNOTES


7Hope T. Eldridge and Dorothy Swaine Thomas. Demographic Analyses and Interrelations, Vol. 3. (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1964), p. 120.

8Archer, pp. 102-103.


11Archer, p. 105.

12Platt, p. 99.

13Weiss, pp. 144-145.

14Grant, p. 158.

15Platt, p. 88.


17Weiss, p. 267.


21________, p. 3.

22________, p. 5. Emphasis mine.


25. ________, p. 4.


27. ________, p. 5.
CHAPTER 4

LESTER BLACKWELL GRANGER AND TRANSITIONAL TIMES

If students of the Urban League movement were to diagram the administration of Lester Blackwell Granger as executive director, they might represent Granger's term with a noticeable linear shift. This is to say that race related events and circumstances in government, in society, and in the NUL between 1941 and 1961 changed fundamentally from the conditions besetting the League of the earlier years. In responding to these exigencies, the League even reassessed its strategy of conciliation.

Thus, there were observable differences in Granger's rhetoric. He departed argumentatively from his compromising predecessors in seeking to tailor the NUL leadership strategy to major changes in race relations. The departure, however, was transitional, not radical. While Granger unquestionably shifted the thrust of the NUL from private diplomacy to public advocacy, the switch was gradual and not militant. (Granger openly resisted ideological and tactical changes.) Nevertheless, Granger's administration bridged the gap between Booker T. Washington's conciliatory approach and Whitney M. Young's 1960s confrontational approach.
That Granger did not abandon his organization's traditional strategy for achieving racial equality, in the face of major societal changes, attests to the fortitude of NUL conservativism during Granger's term. To the extent that Granger did adjust the NUL's heritage of moderation, the adaptations seem to have been unavoidable and well applied.

To place Granger's transitional rhetoric in the context of social conditions of 1941-1961, this chapter surveys pertinent developments in government, in the black psyche, and in the National Urban League. With the use of Weaver's methodology, this chapter then shows that while Granger adapted his ideology to new demands, he did not dispense with conservative convictions. Quite the contrary, as my analysis infers, while Granger made practical demands, his overall argumentative perspective usually transcended immediate concerns.

Social Conditions

Government Transitions

The overriding peculiarity of the Granger administration was that racial problems became governmental. The NUL, conscious of race-related inadequate housing, frequent labor disturbances, police brutality, and segregation, recognized that the government role was crucial in correcting such conditions. However, the
NUL saw discrimination within the government itself. This was particularly true with regard to discrimination in the military. Lester Granger decried the bigotry in government military housing:

I am obliged to declare that the gravest single subversive movement in this country today is to be found in the anti-Negro policies tolerated by the Federal Government and practiced directly through the military and naval arms of defense.  

Accordingly, the NUL, under Granger's leadership, joined others in the quest to reform existing governmental structures. There is evidence that the NUL was apparently successful in this goal. On June 25, 1941, President Roosevelt, responding to pressures from civil rights leaders, issued Executive Order 8802, banning discrimination in employment of workers in defense industries.

The Truman presidency, too, seems to have responded to outcries from anti-discrimination activists. Between 1945 and 1953, Truman sought to protect and expand job opportunities for blacks, to remove racial tensions in urban centers, to establish a Fair Employment Practices Commission, and to raise civil rights on the list of national priorities. Although Truman is criticized for
his only "occasional advocacy" of civil rights, merely keeping the issue alive, in one commentator's opinion, was "a worthy and far-reaching accomplishment in its own right."6

Not only Truman denounced the racial discrimination in the military and in housing. Both the Democratic and Republican parties certified their opposition to racial discrimination. In the 1948 election the Republican platform, for example, deplored racism and supported policies to end it:

One of the basic principles of this Republic is the equality of all individuals in their right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This principle is enunciated in the Declaration of Independence and embodied in the Constitution of the United States...This right of equal opportunity to work and to advance in life should never be limited to any individual because of race, religion, or country of origin. We favor the enactment and just enforcement of such federal legislation as it may be necessary to maintain this right at all times in every part of this Republic. We favor the abolition of the poll tax as a requisite to voting. We are opposed to the ideal of racial segregation in the armed forces of the United States.7
The issue of segregation became the pivotal governmental issue when in 1954 the Supreme Court handed down its Brown v. Topeka Board of Education decision. This historic ruling effectively overturned the Plessy v. Ferguson "separate but equal" decision of 1896. Setting forth a precedent that would direct race relations for decades, the Supreme Court concluded that "in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

The Brown case of 1954 strengthened the role of the government in resolving racial conflicts. Anti-segregationists, empowered by the decision, scored the ruling a major victory. On the other hand, the ruling had some ironic effects. When blacks realized how resistant to implementing the decision some whites were, "bone-deep disillusion set in among millions of black Americans." The Ku Klux Klan and white citizens councils mobilized to resist enforcement of the ruling, further aggravating black frustration.

The upshot of such resistance was a reluctance of blacks to step forward in defense of their Constitutional rights. In fact, even before the Supreme Court articulated black rights, blacks felt the overpowering dangers of "speaking out." When they did, "mass psychosis" resulted because of the depth of black frustration.
Moderate leadership from the black community was quelled, as one correspondent to NUL contributor John D. Rockefeller, Jr. observed:

The whole Negro community suffers from a lack of leadership, white and colored. On the whole, Negro psychology at present discourages the development of conservative or practical leadership. Once a person becomes identified as a race leader, he becomes subjected to pressures which to a large degree nullify his usefulness as a constructive worker. 12

NUL Transitions

As the role of the government in race-relations changed, the NUL reassessed its strategy for improving race relations. Granger recognized the government's active interest and asked the NUL board to establish a committee to advise him on legislation proposed in Congress. 13 Along with this more public outreach, the League began to send letters to mayors and governors across the nation. 14 From the early 1940s, the League, working sometimes with other national organizations, surveyed local conditions, gathered information, organized career clubs, pursued civil rights, and challenged the NAACP, rendering the NUL no longer an exclusively private agency. 15 Granger gave the NUL a more visible role "in
making the American dream a reality for Negroes."\textsuperscript{16}
Retaining its social work orientation, the NUL, during Granger's term, added positive action to its operations in efforts to improve race relations.\textsuperscript{17}

Other circumstances in the NUL prompted League changes. Waning finances, first, jeopardized the survival of the League. NUL president Lloyd K. Garrison called the struggle "a hand-to-mouth existence." Garrison remembered "too many payless paydays" and that "from month to month the question was how the organization was going to survive."\textsuperscript{18} League members feared potential results of dangerously small incomes, as Guichard and Parris recalled:

Will the poor deserving agency cover its expenses this year? Will the plucky employees find a paycheck in their envelopes next month? Will Lester Granger move the big foundation (or company) to give that contribution?...And also: Will NUL and the New York League be able to divide up the fund receipts without a fight?\textsuperscript{19}

A second major peculiarity of the NUL in the 1940s was the break in continuity in national staff leadership. George Edmund Haynes, the League's first executive director, had left to accept a federal position. T. Arnold Hill, acting director, and Jesse O. Thomas, Southern Field
Director, both left in protest of NUL policy. Other League staffers departed for other reasons. These internal problems still did not break the NUL's mainstream ideology. Lester B. Granger preserved the thinking of Booker T. Washington, even in steering the League onto more public, more civil rights fronts. Balancing social work with political activism characterized Granger's incumbency as a twenty-year period of transition.

**NUL Rhetorical Responses**

Throughout the first half of Lester Granger's administration, Granger upheld an unwavering conceptualization of equality. He consistently described the concept in terms of a shared vision, interracial cooperation, and teamwork. Such depictions had been the NUL tradition; Granger was, to this extent, conservative in his philosophical convictions.

Following the 1954 Supreme Court ruling on "Brown v. Board of Education," however, Granger showed signs of redefining the concept. He used rhetorical devices much more circumstantial in nature (extensive examples and statistics) to signal his organization's more pragmatic thrust.

Granger revealed his transcendent convictions in three representative speeches of the 1940s: his conference speeches of 1940, 1941, and 1946. He revealed his
adjustment of commitment in 1954 (following the Supreme Court ruling on segregation) and in 1960 (marking the League's 50th anniversary).

Addresses of 1940, 1941, and 1946

Granger began his 1940 and 1941 speeches by asserting that the official purpose of the National Urban League remained the same as its founders had intended. In 1940, he announced that "the program of the League" had become, in fact, even "more sharply defined" as the League had "recognized the meaning" of social and economic problems facing urban blacks.21 In 1941, Granger confirmed that though his administration was a transitional one, the NUL retained traditional League precepts:

Indeed a backward glance is really necessary—not only to measure what is before us but comparing the distance we have come, but also to make certain that we are still on the main path mapped out for the League in the 1940 Green Pastures Conference.22

In all three years studied here, Granger revealed within his conference addresses that the League had become increasingly committed to its traditional conceptualization of equality. He professed that the League had understood its purpose more clearly because it had come to understand more fully how social and economic problems fit
into a broader scheme. In other words, Granger claimed enlightenment on a principle he was trying to actuate.

As the NUL understood its purpose more precisely, Granger was able to define equality with clarity. In 1940, he echoed the theme of *interracial cooperation* as well as the self-help principle Booker T. Washington had set forth. He spoke of "the support of Negro and white citizens" and of the NUL "professional competency."^23 Thus he kept the focus on the cooperative nature of equality. He said, in essence, "we have something to contribute; we have something to gain." If people "cannot make their proper contribution," they "cannot receive their adequate reward."^24 Again in 1941 he indicated that both races would have to act on the challenge to cooperate:

- education of the white community regarding the real meaning of Democracy as it affects race relations;
- education of the Negro community regarding the responsibilities that Negroes must share for building Democracy even while they fight for a part of the Democratic heritage.^25

Granger found a suiting synonym for cooperation in 1946 when he noted the theme of the 1946 Conference: "American TEAMWORK works."^26 In stressing that a basic problem confronting America in 1946 was the disunited vision of
Americans, Granger defined what equality—or, teamwork—was not. Granger introduced this concept of "teamwork" in the opening lines of his 1946 address, expressing its centrality to the thesis of his speech:

here at home, governmental and civic leadership continue to demonstrate that the American people are not even unified in their concept of a sound peace or how its benefits may be secured for 140 million American citizens.\(^\text{27}\)

Likewise, in 1940 Granger defined what interracial cooperation was not: intolerance. Intolerance was, in fact, the opposite of equality:

It is a symbol of low-grade citizenship incompatible with the democratic ideal; it is a sign of persistent intolerance disrupting our national unity and corrupting our national life; it is a danger to the American nation because it is opposed to the true American spirit.\(^\text{28}\)

And what was "the true American spirit"? To Granger it involved "an opportunity to live, grow, expand and contribute to the common welfare to the fullest limits of [people's] abilities."\(^\text{29}\) Granger explained that this end—equal opportunity—was a Negro goal and a national purpose, a shared vision.
Granger further showed his conceptualization of equality to be patriotic, or mainstream. His definition of equality indicated that the nation's concern was the Negro's concern. He presented an "equality" that involved shared experience of "the national life." This equality also included "unanimity of opinion" and "gratification to all." 30

Granger emphasized the patriotism of the NUL paradigm in several other ways. He assured his audience of black allegiance to America.

Negro citizens have clearly shown where their hearts lie and to what lengths they are anxious to go in demonstrating their deep love of country. 31

He also conjured images of Americana: family, good citizenship, and group relationship:

As heads of families they recognize the importance to the state of the family unit, realizing as never before that a secure nation depends upon good citizenship--that inherent in good citizenship are the essential qualities of a disciplined personality, sound character traits, good health, and sound group relationships. 32

Granger applied an elaborate metaphor (i.e., similitude) to underscore that equal opportunity "to live,
grow, expand and contribute" was an American essential:

Passengers on a transcontinental flyer may not observe the yard mechanic who passes swiftly along the great train as it stands momentarily at station. They may not notice how he taps with a hanger at each wheel, while listening with a critical ear to the sound of the blow. Nevertheless, that mechanic is testing the wheels for any cracks there may be present, not visible to the naked eye, yet presenting a serious danger to every passenger and crew member on the train. A faulty wheel, giving way as the train takes a curve at seventy miles an hour, can mean disruption to the road schedule, the loss of hundreds of lives.33

The road schedule was equal opportunity.

One other similarity in Granger's rhetoric of 1940, 1941 and 1946 was Granger's deliberate avoidance of circumstantial arguments; Granger cautioned against reliance on government, policies, or particular racial practices as bases for drawing any meaningful conclusions. In 1940, he recognized the dangers of entrusting one's destiny to the capricious whims of the federal government. Granger secured the NUL aspirations in a more stable ideal:

No group situated as the Negro at present can afford to leave programs for its betterment to the
wisdom of the government. A government which today is a proponent for the rights of a minority may tomorrow be indifferent to or even hostile according to the shifts of public opinion or possible change in administration.\textsuperscript{34}

Following President Roosevelt's Executive Order to integrate the military in 1941, Granger applauded this particular policy but also commended the measured process that had brought it forth. He triumphed in the carefulness (as opposed to the expedience) of the NUL persuasive campaign: "The Order was the result of patiently developed, carefully-moulded and expertly-led public opinion, and no one can honestly deny the part that we have played in developing that opinion."\textsuperscript{35} Granger was himself careful in placing this policy in broad perspective. It (the policy) would serve a higher good. The policy itself was therefore not the \textit{cause celebre}. Granger set the goal of interracial cooperation beyond a single presidential act. He advocated faith in an extended goal. He cautioned also against myopic attention to incidents of racial discrimination, which to Granger would only breed despair:

indignation must not be allowed to breed hysteria, defeatism, or dangerous chauvinism...They are tendencies against which League leadership must
align its forces and organize an intelligent, far-reaching public opinion.\textsuperscript{36}

In 1946 Granger reiterated that equal opportunity does not come from concentrated objection to discriminatory circumstances or from blind trust in the government. Granger argued that NUL successes had involved teamwork:

[They were the result of] many Americans of different sorts and backgrounds who are united on one central conviction that the fulfillment of American democracy is the sternest challenge and the greatest opportunity of our times, and that it is an end which can be realized only when American citizens pull together in teamwork that works.\textsuperscript{37}

In the 1940s Granger sustained the traditional NUL paradigm of equality as shared vision.

\textbf{Addresses of 1954 and 1960}

Granger's administration functioned most observably as transitional during the second half of Granger's term as executive director. In definition of the NUL purpose of equality, and in the interpretation of racial circumstances, Granger shifted the NUL philosophical thrust toward the pragmatic end away from the generic.
The 1954 Supreme Court decision introduced a concept of equality that required NUL reflection on how the League's definition of the concept jibed with the High Court's rendition. Granger asserted that the Supreme Court had fortified his organization's basic ideals. On a subliminal level, however, he revealed a certain confusion as to what the function of the League had become:

[The National Urban League Conference] is an opportunity for analyzing the old and new challenges which lie before us, challenges which we must accept in order to justify our function as a community organization agency working to equalize opportunity for better living in the American community.38

By 1960, Granger had adopted a new purpose for the NUL. Whereas the League of pre-1950s had served as "an agent of interracial cooperation," in 1960 it had embraced a "fact-finding mission":

Here, then, is a clearly-marked assignment for the Urban League in the decade ahead--to intensify our fact-finding and interpretive facilities in cities throughout the country, and especially in the national headquarters, so that the various news-media and key leadership organizations may have facts, figures and interpretation....39
Similarly, Granger found new words by which to conceptualize equality. He no longer conceived of the concept as shared vision or teamwork. He now understood equality to mean assimilation. Whereas "interracial cooperation" and "teamwork" had allowed for a "separate but equal" understanding of equality, "assimilation" required a blending, an "absorption," of the two races. Granger demonstrated that equality exists within day-to-day circumstances, not just in Americans' wills or in shared idealistic commitments:

For the Negro-newcomer and old resident alike--assimilation has been arbitrarily denied--through cultural isolation and economic discrimination practiced not against individuals but against an entire racial group. Thus, in such cities as New York, Chicago, or St. Louis, we have always-present evidence of the non-assimilation, the non-integration of the Negro "newcomer," to the point where the children and the grandchildren of families originally from the South display in their attitudes and mannerisms and their imperfect social adaption many of the attributes of the raw newcomer from the rural South.

This shift in definition of equality (from cooperation to assimilation) seems evolutionary. Critics could
claim that the NUL had advanced in its thinking from a goal of shared vision to a goal of shared circumstances. However, in 1954 Granger pointed to some hazards of losing sight of a transcendent vision:

This danger is that we might tend to concentrate so heavily on this particular phase of current public interest as to neglect the other continuing and still-important challenges which have faced us for more than forty years.  

In 1954, therefore, Granger rejoiced over a single Supreme Court ruling but he sustained the conviction that integration of circumstances (schools, for example) lies below integration of spirit (willful cooperation). When Granger paid excessive attention to this judicial decision, however, he departed from the NUL rhetorical tradition.

In 1960, Granger departed noticeably. He turned measurably from the broad classification of equality to a marked reliance on statistics. Note the following three statistical excesses:

(1) Washington and St. Louis Universities produced information showing that only 10% of the Negro population enjoy family incomes of more than $6,000 a year? Thirty percent have family incomes of less
than $3,000 a year, 40% between $3,000 and $4,000 a year, and 20% between $4,000 and $6,000? How can the "middle-class" group comprising 10% of the total perform a leadership, guidance and indoctrination job for the 90% which is submerged economically, educationally and culturally?\textsuperscript{43}

(2) At the same time white collar and technical employment has increased by 50% to approximately 3-1/2 million workers. But Negro employment has reflected little of such change. In 1959, there were 28,000 engineering graduates from schools and universities throughout the country but only 200 of these were Negroes. Not 2,800, which would correspond to the proportion of Negroes in the population, but 200, less than 1 percent.\textsuperscript{44}

(3) As a result, in 1957 while the median education level of whites between the ages of 29 to 39 was slightly over the twelfth grade, that of Negroes in the same age bracket was slightly over the tenth grade.\textsuperscript{45}

None of these statistical clusters or any of Granger's attacks against the press or white citizens councils represented any radical shift in NUL philosophy. In both his 1954 and 1960 addresses, Granger preserved the features of the term he had selected to denote equality.
Still, these statistics did surround Granger's new definition, and that they did carries significance.

Richard Weaver has contended that predominance of circumstantial reasoning (statistics, policies, data) signal a philosophy that is morally base. I have shown that Granger did not argue solely from circumstance in 1954 and in 1960; in 1940, 1941, and 1946, he seldom used this least exalted form of argumentation. Nevertheless, we must infer that when Granger substituted "assimilation" for "social cooperation," he reduced the integrity of the ideal he was espousing. This is not to say that assimilation is not a worthy ultimate term. What Weaver might say is that inasmuch as Granger "explained" assimilation in circumstantial terms, he surrendered some of the moral potency that "interracial cooperation" had enjoyed. Granger spoke of cooperation and teamwork in broad, generic terms, capturing the essential features or principles of the concepts. He spoke of assimilation in statistical terms, concealing some essential principles of the concept.

The transition from cooperation to assimilation, and from generic to circumstantial, is subtle and a matter of degree. Notwithstanding the subtlety, it is interesting to note that when Granger's successor, Whitney Young, assumed office in 1961, NUL executive rhetoric became overtly confrontational. Granger gave way to a rhetoric and a League less attached to old ideals.
ENDNOTES


3 Moore, *Search*, p. 87.

4 __________, p. 93.


9 __________, pp. 22-23.

10 Parris and Brooks, *Blacks in the City*, p. 364.

11 __________, p. 296.

102
12________, p. 351.
13________, p. 294.
14________, p. 302.
15________, p. 357.
16Moore, Search, p. 95.
17Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the City, p. 313.
18________, p. 349.
19________, pp. 351-352.
21Lester B. Granger, "The Urban League Looks Forward," manuscript delivered to NUL Thirtieth Anniversary Dinner, n.p., NUL copy, Nov. 8, 1940, p. 2. Hereafter cited as Granger, 1940.
22________, "Action Forward," manuscript delivered at NUL Annual Conference, NUL copy, Jackson, Michigan, August 30, 1941, p. 1. Hereafter cited as Granger, 1941.
23________, 1940, p. 2.
24________, p. 5.
25________, 1941, p. 2.
28________, 1940, p. 6.
29__________.
30__________, p. 3.
31__________.
32__________.
33__________, p. 7.
34__________, p. 9.
35__________, 1941, p. 4.
36__________, p. 6.
37__________, 1946, p. 8.
40__________, p. 6.
41__________, p. 7.
42__________, 1954, p. 7.
43__________, 1960, p. 7.
44__________, p. 10.
45__________, p. 11.
CHAPTER 5
WHITNEY YOUNG AND NEW DIRECTIONS: 1961-1971

Civil rights emerged during the 1960s as a distinctive focus of the National Urban League and as a major topic of legislation in the United States Congress. This chapter surveys the Congressional and NUL struggle to achieve civil rights during this era, and analyzes the identity crisis that both America and the NUL experienced at this time. The chapter chronicles this crisis and argues that the NUL's appearance of detachment from the core of American principles in the 1960s is, in reality, a representation of them; a disavowing Whitney M. Young, Jr. paid implicit homage to a disarrayed American value system.

The chapter reviews the 1960s civil rights debates in the U.S. Congress to provide a frame of reference for understanding the rhetoric of the NUL in the 1960s. It also analyzes Whitney Young's alternative criticism and praise of American attitudes on race and concludes with a discussion of how these arguments sustained the NUL persona as a mainstream organization.

America's Ultimate Terms
America suffered an identity crisis in the 1960s. The nation found itself embroiled in a volatile
controversy over race relations. The arguments struck at
the core of the American value system because they
centered around three basic principles: justice, liberty,
and equality.

While the conflict manifested itself largely on
college campuses and in marches and boycotts across the
nation, it was fought with equal—or perhaps even
greater—intensity in the U.S. Congress; this was
especially true with regard to race relations. The Senate
debate on the 1964 Civil Rights Bill, for example, was the
longest in its history. The positions of all partici­
pants in this controversy—the President, civil rights
leaders, the clergy, the press, segregationists, labor
leaders, constitutional literalists, and others—were
generally posited in the legislative branch of government.
Legislators in turn labored to determine the proper
involvement of government in guaranteeing equal rights to
racial minorities without unduly intruding on the rights
of private enterprise. America was pressed to decide how
to define its ultimate terms.

Three major civil rights acts characterized this
struggle: the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights
Act of 1965, and the Civil Rights Act of 1968. What were
the events of this period that culminated in the enactment
of these major civil rights laws?
In 1960 sixty percent of the registered black voters may have been the deciding factor in propelling John F. Kennedy into the presidency. Not unconscious of the Negro bloc, the Kennedy administration nevertheless was less than impressive in pushing through legislation dealing with race relations. Administratively, Kennedy did authorize the federal government to intervene in Mississippi to enforce desegregation laws, but he merely followed an Eisenhower precedent in doing so. Further, Kennedy proposed to eliminate the poll tax requirement for voting, but Kennedy never saw the proposal make its way to Congress during his administration. Also, although Kennedy did sponsor what came to be the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it was his successor who was responsible for bringing the bill to fruition. Kennedy's major contribution to the civil rights movement was through executive fiat, not through legislative mandate; it was also often rendered behind the scenes. All this considered, Kennedy's premature death in 1963 left much ground for Congress to cover in resolving racial problems.

In November of 1963, a group of black civil rights leaders, meeting in New York City, sought to resume the unfinished business of President Kennedy. Although from historically and ideologically dissimilar perspectives, leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League (NUL),
and Congressional Organization for Racial Equality (CORE) joined in urging Congress to enact strong and prompt civil rights legislation.6

With pressures from these black leaders, as well as from labor and other interest groups, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in January of that year. The eleven provisions of the bill, abbreviated as follows, clarified the U.S. position on civil rights. The Civil Rights Act:

--legislated against inconsistent literacy tests between blacks and whites;
--forbade discrimination in public accommodations, facilities, and education;
--extended the life of the Civil Rights Commission;
--withdrew federal assistance to any program which discriminates on the basis of race, color, or national origin;
--prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in hiring, paying, promoting, or firing workers;
--directed the Federal Commerce Department to compile statistics on the number of eligible voters and the number of persons registered and voting in certain specified areas;
--revised legal codes concerning allegations of denial of civil rights;
--created the Community Relations Service to assist communities in desegregating. 7

Such a breadth of legislation misrepresents the gaping division between Americans as they wrestled over how America would ideologically define herself. Republican and Democratic debate on the Civil Rights Bill consumed 83 days of chamber cross-fire. 8 This Congressional conflict paralleled an apparent philosophical conflict among a sizeable group of individual Americans. Interestingly, nearly one-fourth of Americans polled who considered themselves typically as "ideological conservatives" (i.e., held conservative convictions) regarded themselves on this legislation as "operational liberals" (i.e., supported liberal policies). 9 The nation was in conflict with itself.

This conflict warrants some digression here because—as will be shown later—it is reflected also in the NUL’s public discourse. Indeed, its Congressional resolution was possible only through one of three alternatives:

(1) America was so unshakeably conservative that a liberal act of Congress was perceived as inconsequential and bearable;

(2) America adjusted its traditional, conservative thinking on governmental authority versus personal rights so as to blur the distinctions
between "ideologically conservative" and "operationally liberal";

(3) America did not mind, with regard to civil rights, the inconsistency of believing in one set of principles abstractly (government governs best which governs least) while adhering to another set of principles practically (The Civil Rights Act of 1964).

The conservative Republican platform of 1964 officially supported the liberal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and thereby embraced one of these alternatives. This Republican endorsement, however, sustained the crisis of identity America faced at large and at every turn. America held to personal rights but called on the government to assure them. Some GOP supporters attempted to show the act's consistency with American ideals. For example, ranking Republican Representative William M. McCulloch, of the House Judiciary Committee, professed prior to the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act: "The civil rights bill now before us for final consideration is in accordance with the best traditions of America." But Georgia Congressman Charles L. Weltner, Democrat, noted how fragile support for the Civil Rights Act truly was:

I believe a greater cause can be served. Change, swift and certain, is upon us, and we in the South
face some difficult decisions. We can offer resistance and defiance, with their harvest of strife and tumult. We can suffer continued demonstrations, with their wake of violence and disorder. Or, we can acknowledge this measure as the law of the land. We can accept the verdict of the nation.\(^{11}\)

With much difficulty, Congress had nonetheless established a priority of the nation's values. In effect, the legislative branch of government elevated the freedoms to vote and to be equitably employed. The Civil Rights Bill of 1964 thereby increased the power of the federal government to oversee the affairs of local and state governments as well as the private sector. Final passage of this bill effectively defined America's identity, at least for the moment. However, this identity, as would be shown later, was still tenuous.

While pressure from black civil rights leaders came to bear heavily on Congressional passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1964 enjoyed an added impetus in securing Congressional approval. Following reports from the Civil Rights Commission that voting privileges had been abridged, the Justice Department exerted its influence in endorsing the 1965 legislation. Publicity regarding discriminatory voting practices in Selma, Alabama, intensified the drive for legal action.
In Selma, voter registration occurred only twice a week. Voter applicants were required to fill out over 50 forms, write a section of the Constitution from dictation, answer four particular questions on the Constitution, and sign an oath of loyalty both to the United States and to Alabama. Since local authorities exercised considerable latitude in interpreting these rules, there was plenty of room for racist abuse and little recourse for redress.

Accordingly, the Civil Rights Commission in hearings held in February, 1965, recommended to Congress a course of action to rectify voter discrepancies. The major provisions of what grew out of these recommendations, sketched below, are what comprise the August enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The act:

--authorized voting examiners to determine an individual's qualifications to vote and to require enrollment of qualified individuals, laying out a formula for triggering judicial action in voting discrepancies and specifying qualifications of the voting examiners;
--suspended literacy tests that would be found to be discriminatory;
--established a process of appeal for state and local governments charged with discriminatory voting regulations;
--required that any new voter qualifications have the prior approval of the U.S. Attorney General;
--provided a system by which voters could file challenges to voting requirements;
--ruled that poll taxes deny or abridge the constitutional right to vote, citing the authority of the 14th and 15th amendments;
--directed studies to report on voter laws and practices of the Armed Forces.\textsuperscript{14}

The quick segue of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (just over one year after the Civil Rights Act of 1964) suggests that America was on a fast flight to a new (renewed) value system. Civil rights seemed to top the nation's agenda. However, rejection of civil rights legislation in 1966 reminded us that the sixties were a capricious period. In 1966 the trend toward liberalizing civil rights stalled. During the early months of this year, one civil rights bill after another languished in Congress.\textsuperscript{15} Congressional hesitancy to continue on the new course toward federal involvement in civil rights culminated in September with the Senate defeat of the Civil Rights Act of 1966, which would have extended federal anti-discriminatory authority over private housing facilities. Rejection of this bill represented the first time since 1957 that an administration's legislative proposal to Congress had been denied.\textsuperscript{16}
Once again the American people re-evaluated their ultimate terms. Senate Majority Leader Everett McKinley Dirksen (Republican, Illinois) called the 1966 bill "full of mischief" primarily because of its open housing provision. Robert C. Byrd (Democrat, West Virginia) voiced an unwillingness to affirm extended federal authority at the surrender of personal rights. Byrd called the 1966 measure "governmental invasion of property rights and federal interference in private property transactions." He joined the majority of senators in arguing the more cherished American value of property rights:

When government ceaselessly crusades it becomes despotic. When government declares a holy war against social evil, the result inevitably is that freedom is lost for all, the good as well as the evil.

This Congressional verdict, rendered soon after Congress had voted for more governmental authority, was more of a hung jury than an unequivocable statement of national priorities. Not surprisingly in light of his commitment to civil rights, President Johnson again proposed civil rights legislation in his State of the Union address of 1967.

But notwithstanding Johnson's and others' renewed efforts toward further federal involvement, the 1967 Civil
Rights Act met with even more resistance than had the defeated 1966 bill. Proponents of the bill, attempting to salvage as much of the legislation as possible, decided to split the single act into several measures with each section of the bill becoming a separate bill. Even with this strategy, only the extension of the Civil Rights Commission succeeded in passing. For a second year, conservative values had prevailed.

In 1968 Congress re-examined arguments it had rejected in 1966 and 1967. President Johnson characterized the indecisiveness of Congress as "fiddling and piddling." By this time, too, many Americans were urging Congress to combat riots and crime, overshadowing concern for civil rights legislation. Some major periodicals speculated that the untimely assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King on April 4 ironically (solely) freed the Civil Rights Act of 1968 from its Congressional quagmire. Passage of this bill guaranteed (i.e., provided federal power to assure) "fair housing to all," according to Johnson. It also tilted the ideological pendulum left, in the direction of increased governmental authority, at least over matters of racial equality.

This legislation and the civil rights acts considered in 1964, 1965, 1966, and 1967 reflected America's ideological identity crisis. One pollster interpreted the legislation that was approved to have signalled a liberal
trend of policies and programs tracing back to Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal Administration. The pollster added, though, that the mercurial, hit-miss success of legislative efforts to revive civil rights legislation revealed little secure underlying foundation. As The Christian Century criticized, civil rights legislation (of the sort passed in the acts of 1964, 1965, and 1968) "should have been passed years ago as a matter of course." Lamented The Century, "That such moral struggle was required is itself disturbing."

The National Urban League's Reflexive Rhetoric

Speeches by prominent National Urban League leaders throughout the 1960s roughly paralleled the Congressional shifts of disposition in this same time period. Although no individual speech by an NUL official posed an ideological dilemma, over the decade Whitney Young, president, argued from two markedly different philosophical positions in his conference addresses. Taken together, Young's speeches reflected America's soul-wrenching debates over ultimate terms.

The Role of the Urban League in the Past

Whitney Young's reflective 60th Anniversary Address (July, 1970) is a profitable place to begin analysis of the League of the Sixties. It features Young's reconstruction of the NUL during and prior to the 1960s. It
also offers a practicable framework into which the League of the Sixties can be cast.

In this speech, Young acknowledged the fundamental shift in the NUL mode of operation:

For, in this our sixtieth year, the Urban League has evolved far from the limited functions envisioned by its founders. The social services we once provided newcomers to the cities of the North have had to be supplemented and replaced by a much more comprehensive organization of the black community.\(^{26}\)

More than the NUL's comprehensiveness, however, has changed. Young recognized as much in observing three phases of Negro pursuit of equality which, if modified, characterize the evolution of NUL leadership up to the 1970s.

Young labeled the strategy for gaining equality during the earliest days a "strategy of conciliation." "The Freedmen and their sons tried to work with whites and convince them to act with decency," explained Young.\(^{27}\) Though not naming him, Young alluded to the leadership and reasoning of Booker T. Washington. This was a strategy "to squeeze short-term gains under adversity."

A "strategy of organization" followed, according to Young. In this phase, "the institutional structure of the
black community took shape," including "educational, civil, religious and business associations." For the NUL, this meant the period between 1910 through 1940.

A "strategy of confrontation" arose surreptitiously during the 1960s. However, Young legitimized this new thrust as a matter of due course:

...institutions of the black community staged a frontal assault on the pillars of racism [and] proud, determined black men and women...insisted on equality.

The Role of the Urban League Today

There can be little doubt that Whitney Young employed this latter strategy in ushering the NUL into the sixties. However, as my analysis later in the chapter shows, Young was something of a chameleon in his alternation between attacks and defenses of American society. I turn first to his censures of America's value signification.

America's Faults

Young launched his frontal assaults on American society as early as 1962 and, interestingly, held to them at least every year thereafter during which Congressional civil rights action was denied or not considered. He struck with rhetorical devices stressing urgency, causes and effects, and circumstantial divisiveness of racism--base forms of Weaver's rhetorical construct.
In his 1962 NUL annual conference address, Young stressed the urgency of his demands: "Time is not our ally in this struggle." Clearly demarcating his perceptions from those of previous NUL leaders, Young extended the urgency to 1967:

The failure of the piecemeal approach of recent years has shown the urgent necessity for a total commitment—a Domestic Marshall Plan...open housing is an urgent national necessity.

Provisions for open housing would help to eliminate the arch-evil racism, which Young most extensively described in 1968. Note below the causal inferences throughout Young's depiction of the concept. Such reasoning characterizes a pragmatic and morally base philosophy, according to Richard Weaver.

But what—in fact—is racism? Racism is the assumption of white over black—and the arrogance that goes with such an assumption. Racism reduces the paycheck of a black worker to half that of a white worker. Racism puts one out of three black teenagers out of work this summer while only one out of ten white teenagers are unemployed. Racism produces cities that are daily becoming blacker while the suburbs around them are 95% white.
Racism causes deteriorating slums where overcrowding for black families increased 20% in a decade--while overcrowding for white families declined. Racism tolerates welfare bureaucracies which keep half the people entitled to benefits off the roles. Racism is reflected in the ghetto here in New Orleans, where, as in other cities, half the people are unemployed, and despair and frustration have become the rule rather than the exception.32

Young documented the effects of racism vociferously in his 1966 address, wherein he used an inordinate amount of statistics to identify racism. Young reported monies spent on war in terms of the gross national product. He cited tax cuts, degrees of urban segregation, percentages of census tracts with non-white populations, the government's poverty standard, the median family income of Negroes versus whites, rural-urban Negro population shifts, North-South Negro ratios, and the unemployment rate. For example, in discussing urban segregation, he mounted a series of statistics to make his point:

The degree of racial segregation in our cities is truly staggering. The segregation index in housing here in Philadelphia is 87 percent. In Chicago it is 92.6 percent. In St. Louis it is 91 percent; in
Cleveland it is 91 percent; in all of our cities, it is far too high and it is rapidly getting worse.

Here in Philadelphia the number of census tracts with a non-white population of 80 percent or more, nearly tripled in the period from 1950 to 1960.33

Young's expedient urgings, causal inferences, and numerous statistics, illustrated above, were rhetorical devices comprising Young's argumentative perspective. As Weaver posits, such devices tell of a pragmatic philosophy concerned with immediate change irrespective of some higher, transcendent good. Weaver might say that such rhetorical methods show a lack of commitment to an ideal.

Young's language style reinforced his concern for prompt change. His choice of words was overtly confrontational. In 1965, Young proclaimed a "more impatient, and justifiably a more angry Negro American," whom he congratulated for engendering "a more intelligent, a more socially sensitive and cosmopolitan white American."34 Young's 1966 presidential address commenced with even harsher words, befitting his organization's "attack on the cancer of hate, the disease of prejudice."35 Young unleashed yet more biting comments in his 1967 address. There he declared a "revolution of responsibility" in lambasting American morality and American people.36 Young
chose the words of disgruntled young people to declare his own views that "America, which wraps itself in pious ideals, is a racist and hypocritical state." In the confusion typical of the age, white youngsters, said Young, are "rebels without a cause." Negro youngsters, by contrast, "have a cause." Young also declared America "morally bankrupt" and that "it will never give up the privileges and advantages gained at the expense of Negroes.

Racism was creating "the shock troops of rebellion," bringing about "urban crisis." In a blistering indictment of white society, Young professed that eighty percent of American white people "need remedial education in decency."

Even in 1968, the year in which the Civil Rights Act guaranteed "fair housing to all," Young availed himself of the Kerner Commission's charge of white people as "guilty." Young depicted the problem of racism as almost ingrained: "the vast majority lack the emotional security or the moral courage to correct traditional attitudes and behaviour." To emphasize the endemic nature of the problem, Young restated the attack: "It is not a question of money, it is a question of heart. America lacks the will and the determination to bring justice to its poor."
In 1969, the year America put two men on the moon, Young castigated America for the "stunt" that left despair untouched:

For the nearly thirty million poor Americans, white and black, the moon walk has no effect, except perhaps to taunt a child with dreams of accomplishment the system places beyond his reach, or to flaunt affluence and power in the face of a man who can't find a job or feed his family...For the poor imprisoned in urban slums, it seems just another stunt, a circus act, a marvelous trick, that leaves their lives unchanged, their despair untouched.\(^44\)

In this same speech, Young spoke through the voice of young people surveyed in *Fortune Magazine*: "American society is characterized by injustice, insensitivity, lack of candor and inhumanity."\(^45\) Again in 1970, Young concluded, "white society...lacks courage and...imagination."\(^46\)

**America's Virtues**

Although it may be said that Young's rhetoric was typically confrontational, his occasional salutations to American values moderated his protests. His comments on American virtues lifted his reasoning out of its base expedience.
Still, in identifying American virtues or in revealing his implicit faith therein, Young did not aim his remarks toward some *definitional* end. (Recall that Weaver contends that definitional argumentation speaks of essences and is thus the most morally sound and sustainable form of argumentation. Weaver explains that definitions push thinking beyond the observable, toward some transcendent end; they direct attention to the ontological nature of a thing.)

Young's comments on American virtuosity did not indicate his understanding of the nature of equality, freedom, justice, democracy, or America. These comments were not *genus* arguments. Yet, they also lack the expedient character of his criticisms of America; they are also not base forms of argumentation. Young's praises of America, instead, are unsuppressible announcers of NUL conservatism.

An example of Young's conservatism occurred when he demonstrated concern for "my country" in 1962 when he expressed fear of "unnecessary national suicide." The focus in this reference was not merely on black victimage but on the dangers to the whole of American society. Indeed, Young commended national interests. In 1965, Young pronounced the climate of racial equality as favorably suited to NUL goals:
we assemble in a socio-political-economic and moral climate wherein equal opportunity has dramatically become a compelling national imperative, and an ideal fraught with unprecedented possibilities for achievement.48

Passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 may account for the uncharacteristically pleasant tone of this speech. Parting from his norm, Young did not direct attention to the particular political differences that had divided Congress the past two years; instead, he labeled the issues nondescriptively, between "right and wrong." For example, he assessed that "the circle of love is much larger than the circle of hate" in 1965.49 Young also praised "American teamwork and American success"—this in diametric opposition to his rhetorical attacks of 1962 and other years, especially when civil rights bills failed in Congress.50

Young further demonstrated implicit faith in America in this speech by picturing Negroes within "the American way":

Negro youngsters would rather stay in school than drop out;...negro adults would rather work than draw welfare checks, and...negro parents, too, desperately desire a stable family life. And this they all know comes only when a father works and
can provide for his family, and they in turn, can live in a home, not in a hovel.\textsuperscript{51}

While the definition of equality was not explicit, two genus characteristics of the concept as Young conceived it are evident. Both are mainstream conceptualizations:

\begin{enumerate}
\item racial equality is correlative to economic equality (possible only through a father's working);
\item racial equality means equal opportunity to join in the features of the American way (going to school, working, having a stable family).
\end{enumerate}

By casting his vision of equality as consistent with a traditional paradigm of American way of life, Young hinted at an essence without freeing it from ambiguity. By suggesting that his goals were similar to general American goals, Young therefore argued from what Weaver calls similitude in promoting racial equality. More than once, Young also refrained from attacking American institutions. In 1965, for example, Young diverted attention away from any inherent American flaws:

We should be angry at the unethical merchant, the exploiting landlord, the parasitic loan shark, the ever-present vice and dope peddler, and the public officials--elected or appointed--who permit them to exist. And let me remind you that they
come in all colors. No race has a monopoly on exploitation, cynicism, or cruelty.\footnote{52}

Even in "off" years (i.e., during those years of Congressional rejection of civil rights legislation), Young disclosed his faith in America. In 1967, Young referred to the nation as "the country we love."\footnote{53} Again, he placed before America a "path of reason and responsibility," adding "we believe that America has the wisdom and the maturity to follow it."\footnote{54}

Young sharpened his use of \textit{similitude} in the years of Congressional affirmation of civil rights. Young spoke in the Booker T. Washington vein in announcing in 1965 that "families will be encouraged to make greater use of existing resources and leadership for more constructive living experiences."\footnote{55} In 1968 Young struck the same chord:

\begin{quote}
We will build the economic institutions of the ghetto through the development of black owned business, cooperatives, consumer unions and black-owned franchises.\footnote{56}
\end{quote}

Young re-applied the self-help philosophy of both Booker T. Washington and American capitalist society in some form within each of his presidential addresses throughout the decade. He thereby affirmed his and his organization's allegiance to America. These were not mere
token comments; he included them deliberately to re-affirm a conservative and mainstream spirit. In 1968, Young confessed his American allegiance: "But the Urban league—in the face of all that has happened this year—retains its faith in the promise of America and the inherent decency of people."\(^57\)

Two other lines of analysis point to the conservative or mainstream persona of the NUL. First, Young often directed attention back in time to more basic American values. These values he sought to widen, not to replace: "Our efforts have been to open the white-organized and white-oriented institutions to blacks."\(^58\) In other words, in the 1960s, Young attempted to regain American ideals. When he openly assaulted national elements, he opposed not America, but the compromise of American values. He had recalled American essences and sought then to reactivate them:

The great adventure of space exploration must be succeeded by the great adventure of regaining the American dream of equality and justice for all. The will and the resources that made the moon-landing possible must now be poured into the great national adventure of ending poverty and inequality.\(^59\)

Thus, the NUL goals were consistent with American values. When Young assailed American features, he objected to a
reduced America. He was promoting the higher order of American potentialities borne in earlier days:

We call on all Americans to rediscover the best in the American spirit—the energy, the competence, the sense of high purpose—that can revitalize our country.60

Stated differently, as Young did in his 60th anniversary address in 1970, Young argued in behalf of an unfulfilled society, "to bring it back to its senses."61 While Negroes unquestionably would be the principal benefactors of his rhetorical demands, Young showed through his method of argumentation that his goals were America's most basic goals, thus sustaining the NUL mainstream nature.

However, Young never specified America's goals or the NUL's goals. Whitney Young did not argue definitionally; he only alluded to American essences he did not or could not describe in words. This rhetorical phenomenon is important; its occurrence can lead to a second explanation for the NUL preservation of its mainstream image.

Secondly, Young and the NUL could not define ultimate terms of equality or justice because America itself had not enunciated its own unambiguous meaning for these concepts. The NUL was, therefore, paradoxically "American" in swaying between praising and blaming American values; it reflected the existing ideal-torn America. Whitney
Young recorded the schizophrenic condition of society in numerous ways throughout the decades, sometimes commending the changes, often condemning them.

In 1962, he identified "changing challenges."62 He spoke of a "new climate" in 1964 but by 1967 claimed America experienced a "summer of conflict."63 America had become "just like two nations fighting."64 In 1969, Young diagnosed America to be "a nation torn by confusion and doubt."65 In his 60th anniversary address, Young pondered this national "split":

There comes a time in the life of every great nation when it finds itself at the crossroads—on one side, the path of division, decline, and oblivion; on the other, the path of progress, purpose, and decency. There is every indication that this nation, almost two centuries after its birth by fire, is at that crossroads.66

But not only America wavered in its ideological contemplations. The NUL itself altered its definitions of its own purposes. In 1962, Young declared the NUL purpose thus: "we are in the business of providing services."67 He clarified in that same speech that his organization catered to the middle-class Negro, "between [those] living in a fabulous house in the suburbs [and those living] in a
In 1966, Young stated a contrasting purpose:

We are weary of constantly hearing the Urban League referred to as a middle class organization. I doubt that there is another organization in the country so often labelled on the basis of whether its staff wear ties or not.

In 1968, Young reiterated this version of the NUL purpose: "my point is that we are not serving the middle class; we are serving the poor." Just two years earlier the NUL seemed to function as a facilitator simply to foster better race relations:

We will always keep the Urban League an instrument of cooperation and meaningful dialogue between the races. This always has been, is now and always will be the basic organic core of the Urban League Concept.

Because the League had embraced irresolute American ideals, it follows that the NUL would define ultimate terms ambiguously. In 1968, Young submitted a new definition for black power. There he offered a mainstream conceptualization of an otherwise parochial term. "Black power," said Jordan, has "come to convey, above all, pride and community solidarity." According to Young, this end
entails "giving a voice to the voiceless, power to the powerless and pride and self-respect to the downtrodden..."72

In defining "ghetto power" by negation, Young affirmed his support for mainstream American values:

We are NOT calling for separatism. Developing the institutions of the black community, and bringing power and self sufficiency to the ghetto does not imply a turning away from the larger society. Neither can it possibly be interpreted as a withdrawal behind the ghetto's walls. What the Urban League proposes to do is no more nor less than what every other ethnic group has done in the past. We seek the means by which to enter an Open Society—not to remain in the Closed Society.73

Later he added, "And we specifically reject violence."74 Young here clearly distinguished his meaning for ghetto power from the conventional understanding of the term prevalent in the 1960s. He implicitly allied the NUL with American ideals, most pointedly a sense of unity-in-diversity. Young announced in 1966 his organization's plans to "translate equal rights into something more meaningful--equal opportunity."75 Young never precisely defined "equal opportunity." However, Young defined its immoral counterpart, "racism," in base terms; he used
causal reasoning in showing the effect of racism. Although Young was even less specific in translating "equality," he did reveal that his notion of this ideal was essentially American. He loosely correlated racial equality with economic equality among the races. He also couched the concept in American images of working, studying, and raising a family. Such images connote a familial equal opportunity. "We insist on a fair share of the pie as a matter of right, for it is not the possession of anyone to give or deny, but is ours to have and to hold."76

Conclusion

In summary, throughout the 1960s, the NUL managed to portray a mainstream persona. Such a persona, however, did not define NUL in ultimate terms. To say that the NUL extolled or censured American values says little precisely of what the NUL valued. However, we may draw two important conclusions about the League of the 1960s. First, the NUL of this decade departed from its 50-year-old strategy of conciliation, substituting a strategy of confrontation. Second, the NUL in the 1960s renewed its covenant with American capitalism, reminding society that it was axiologically a part (i.e., ideologically conservative), even if rhetorically oft times apart (i.e., operationally liberal).
The NUL in the 1960s consistently upheld American values in that it mirrored the American struggle in defining those values. Perhaps the same dynamic spirit that carried America through the 1960s in the face of its own crises sustained the NUL during this period. Both the nation and the NUL struggled to define the ultimate terms they had accepted in faith.

Young's inconsistencies throughout the 1960s arose from that fact that he had the double burden of defining equality not just in broad, idealistic terms, as Weaver recommends, but in terms acceptable to the American rendition of the ultimate concept. That the NUL exercised considerable flexibility in defining terms, therefore, does not necessarily indict the NUL ideology, as Weaver might.

What does compromise the moral base of NUL reasoning in the Weaverian construct, however, is the recurrent sense of urgency and the heavy reliance on causal reasoning. Young argued excessively from a circumstantial argumentative perspective. Statistics, circumstances of hardship, and condemnation/recommendation of particular acts of Congress and society bespeak Young's causal argumentation and his organization's pragmatic philosophy in the 1960s.

Fully considered, Whitney M. Young, Jr.'s rhetoric reflected urgency and frustration as much over the
uncertainty of the American value system as over the certainty of an evil antagonist. Accordingly, when Whitney Young paralleled the phenomena of American confusion in his rhetor in the 1960s, he may have serendipitously placed more faith in America than she did in herself. His allusions to American virtue, however few, were timely. As young has said and seems to have conveyed subliminally, in borrowing from Eleanor Roosevelt: "It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness." Despite over-reliance on circumstantial reasoning, Young kept the flicker of NUL conservatism alive throughout the decade of 1960s.
ENDNOTES


2 ________, vol. 113, June 20, 1964, p. 10, col. 5.

3 James C. Harvey, Black Civil Rights During the Johnson Administration (Jackson: University and College Press of Mississippi, 1973), p. 5.


5 ________, pp. 35-36.

6 ________, pp. 35-36.


8 ________, p. 10.


11 ________, p. 1331.

12 Wolk, The Presidency, p. 61.

13 ________, p. 29.

15 Harvey, Black Civil Rights, p. 37.


22 Wolk, The Presidency, p. 47.

23 See The Christian Century, April 24, 1968, p. 507, for example.


27 ________.

28 ________, p. 10.

29 ________. 


Young, 1966, pp. 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 14, and 22.


Young, p. 3.

Young, p. 4.

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Young, p. 5.

Young, p. 15.
42 __________, 1968, p. 3.
43 __________, p. 5.
45 Young, 1969, p. 16.
47 __________, 1962, p. 8.
49 __________, p. 2.
50 __________, p. 3.
51 __________, p. 4.
52 __________, p. 12.
53 __________, 1967, p. 15.
54 __________, p. 19.
55 __________, 1965, p. 8.
56 __________, 1968, p. 16.
57 __________, p. 9.
58 __________, p. 11.
60 __________, 1969, p. 17.
61 __________, 1970, p. 3.
62 __________, 1962, p. 5.
64 __________, 1967, p. 2.
65 ________, 1969, p. 6.
68 ________, p. 6.
69 ________, 1966, p. 20.
71 ________, 1966, p. 9.
72 ________, 1968, p. 15.
73 ________, p. 17.
74 ________, p. 18.
76 ________, p. 8.
CHAPTER 6

RECENT LEADERSHIP AND CURRENT TRENDS: 1972-1985

Each generation of Urban League leadership has had to confront its own obstacles to full equality. From the early days of the first administration, each NUL president has had to face the particular local and national circumstances that threatened to impede the quest for racial equality. For example, Eugene Kinckle Jones had both the Great Migration and the Great Depression; Whitney Young had the lures of militancy which threatened to undermine his and his agency's circumspect style of "change from within."

Still, each generation seems to have survived the many obtrusions to racial equality which presented themselves along the way, with the NUL's mainstream image kept safely intact. In fact, not until the 1960s did the League assume the role of civil rights advocate; it had until then functioned primarily as a self-help promoter of economic opportunity and educational advancement.¹

With the selection of Vernon Jordan as president of the League in 1971, however, the league abandoned its sycophantic support of status quo policies. Jordan's rhetoric resembled Young's departure from the "equality-can-wait" approach of their forebearing predecessors.

141
Nonetheless, even Jordan's attacks on Capitol Hill positions, and more measurably, John Jacob's diplomatic pursuits of priorities, sustained the conviction not to reconstitute the American economic value system but to extend its virtues to deprived Americans.

Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.

Jordan revealed his philosophy on at least two prominent occasions: at the NUL National Convention in 1977, which followed the election of Jimmy Carter as president, and at the NUL Convention in 1981, following the election of Ronald Reagan as president. The speeches delivered on these occasions seem representative of Jordan's rhetorical nature because they remained consistent in method of argumentation even while the objects of attack, the philosophies of the two administrations, had changed markedly.

Just six months after the inauguration of Jimmy Carter as president, Jordan charged the administration with failed policy and compromised will:

The Administration has formulated a new foreign policy, a new defense policy and a new energy policy. But it has not adequately addressed itself to a new domestic policy. We have no full employment policy. We have no welfare reform policy. We have no national health policy. We have no urban revitalization policy. We have no
aggressive affirmative action policy. We have no national solutions to the grinding problems of poverty and discrimination.²

He proceeded to depict the NUL's reaction to Administrative policy as the black reaction, and that one of resentment and impatience:

Black people, having tasted the sweetness of victory in November, resent the sour taste of disappointment in July. Black people and poor people resent the stress on balanced budgets instead of balanced lives. We resent unfulfilled promises of jobs, compromises to win conservative support, and the continued acceptance of high unemployment.³

He focused his attack on Carter, Congress, and the Courts. He censured Carter first:

The sad fact is that the list of what the Administration has not done far exceeds its list of accomplishments. The sad fact is that the Administration is not living up to the First Commandment of Politics—to help those who helped you.⁴

Jordan assailed the Congress, too, for having misappropriated national priorities:
The Congress seems more anxious to ban busing, to limit affirmative action programs and to bar medicaid funds for abortions than it is to improve the schools, enforce civil rights, or to enable meaningful life after birth.5

Jordan also criticized the Courts:

The symbol of institutional retreat is the Supreme Court. Once the proud defender of the rights of minorities and disadvantaged, this Nixon-dominated Court has become a source of denial of equal opportunities. The protector of our rights has slowly slid into the position of becoming the enemy of those rights.6

Jordan was equally trenchant in his 1981 criticisms although he focused his remarks more exclusively on President Reagan. He fired a series of reproofs against the President's new ideas. The Administration he said had "dropped from the political vocabulary the one word that makes government relevant to the governed...compassion."7 Jordan alleged that Reagan was "ramming down the throats" the conservative ideology. Reagan's programs, he said, "reinforce the meanest instincts of selfishness. They cut society loose from its moral bearings." Further, Jordan alluded to several circumstances that were a major cause
for black embitterment, including cuts to the Food Stamp program, CETA, and compensatory job programs.  

As evident from the above excerpts, Jordan's attacks were on particular policy decisions; his overriding concern was for the expedient. However, these excerpts belie the fact that for every assault on an unfavorable decision, Jordan tempered the attack with words affirming faith in American institutions. He castigated the Presidents, not the presidency, the Congress, not the Congressional "process," the Courts, not the Supreme Court system.

Although Jordan did unleash a series of pointed verbal assaults, he still offered advice on how the government could/should extend economic (and civil) prosperity to all. Jordan depicted the problems as demanding immediate attention but he held out the goal of economic and civil equality as transcendent of expedient concerns.

Although he characterized the United States as a flawed society, Jordan hardly referred to the nature of the American value system except in terms of its "national willingness to tolerate poverty...and despair." In other words, Jordan aimed his attacks sharply on policies (circumstances), not genus concerns (democracy, free enterprise, etc.). In fact, Jordan spoke so derivisely and vociferously about American policies that one could almost conclude that Jordan despised the entire American economic
ethic; in his extensive list of assaults on particular flaws, the system, as it were, almost became by induction itself the object of attack.

In spite of Jordan's fierce indictments, he did not lessen the significance of the numerous other expressions of his support for American virtues. Jordan has said that "always, black people have revived their faith in America." His discourse reflects that faith. Further, critics have charged that Jordan was too comfortable in the American establishment; they criticized Jordan's lifestyle which included a chauffeur-driven Mercury, Brooks and Brothers suits, and expensive wines and cigars.

Indeed, Jordan characterized even the racial, economic struggles of the late 1970s as virtual civics lessons in the American way. Indicating that the NUL would use conventional methods of securing policy changes, Jordan remarked:

In some ways, ours has been a learning experience...We are learning that we must raise our voices and must use our political power with the same determination as do those who oppose us.10

Even after presenting a litany of complaints against American Administrative actions, Jordan in 1977 reaffirmed his confidence in America:
I am confident that we can succeed, we shall overcome. The path, as always, will be difficult, but it is an American path, and that is why I am confident.

Last year I was in South Africa and two weeks ago I was in Russia. Seeing oppressive dictatorships of the right and the left convinces me that however far America may be from attaining its national goals and ideals, America is fertile soil for human fulfillment.^{11}

In the 1981 address as well, Jordan demonstrated his and his organization's desires to work in a cooperative effort to affirm the virtues of American society: "We will play our part in the national dialogue about the future of the nation we love so much and for which we have sacrificed so much."^{12} Jordan thus gave credibility to his claim that he cherishes American opportunities. His people, after all, had helped to facilitate such opportunities:

[Returning to fundamental American principles] means reminding America's institutions that black people are Americans too, that our blood, sweat and tears helped make this country what it is, and all we want is our fair share.^{13}
Thus Jordan was able to move from arguments from circumstance and from an equality of parity to a definition of equality as "of or pertaining to the same whole." The American values to which he alluded were not goals in conflict with those virtues most Americans embrace; Jordan remained, at times at least, in the mainstream in this generic appeal.

So the attacks of Jordan did result in a quasi-transcendent plea. His arguments were often generic (definitional) in nature. Implicit in his reasoning was a claim of essences that racial equality rests within the moral fibre of the American will.

However, Jordan's definitional appeals contrast sharply with those of Booker T. Washington. While Washington supported a laissez-faire approach to economic progress, Jordan insisted that only the federal government could assure economic equality.

The generic appeals of Jordan lost some of their transcendency, therefore, in Jordan's relentless opposition to both a liberal Democratic president and a conservative Republican president. Jordan anchored his generic appeals on the nature of equality to circumstantial arguments on the urgency of certain government policies. Unless Americans would enact or overturn certain policies, to Jordan economic equality (and hence, racial equality) could not be achieved satisfactorily. In arguing thus, he
believed equality bore no absolute potency or life-sustaining vitality of its own.

In short, when Jordan spoke *circumstantially*, he defined equality in *expedient* terms; to be equal meant having CETA programs, and the like. But when he acknowledged the virtue of American society, Jordan extended the essence of equality beyond particular policies; he pointed to the ideals of the "land of opportunity." Thus he rendered an equality transcendent of particular policy concerns. Thus Jordan preserved the reputation of the NUL as a mainstream organization.

**John E. Jacob**

John Jacob ascended to the helm of NUL leadership at a curious time in the League's history. The concern for civil rights that the League inherited in the 1960s was still the official League program in the 1980s. Moreover, Jordan assumed presidential status when the image of the League, at least the image of its top spokesman, seems so opportunistic and tenuously mainstream.

Events in the 1980s would seem to have encouraged NUL petulance. The hardships of John Jacob's administration existed early in the 1980s. January, 1982, was a month of new developments; the first full year of "new federalism" programs, implemented in 1981, offered hope to many that the stubbornly sagging economy would improve in 1982. But
while in January it was still too early for most Americans to realize fully the effects of the new Administration's programs, year-end reports from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the housing industry, state legislatures, and the NAACP revealed improvement to some sectors would come at a cost to other sectors.

The government lifted bans on tax exemption for private schools, inciting civil rights groups to allege racism and undermining progress that had been hard to achieve. Although the President later urged Congress to outlaw tax exemptions to schools which discriminate, he left the problem of black unemployment unresolved. Unemployment among non-whites ages twenty and older stood at 12.2 percent among men and 12.5 percent among women. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projected continuing hardship in the time to come, and the nation's unemployment rate had already climbed to its highest rate since May, 1975.

To worsen matters, Congress had tightened the eligibility requirements for the welfare program's main service, Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Funds to this program were cut by 23 percent. State governments proved to be no salvation to the thousands affected by these and other such federal cuts. A New York Times headline on January 12, 1981, read, "Few states seek to ease effects of cuts to the poor." The sub-head read, "None
found planning to offset full U.S. slash." States were either unwilling or unable to replace federal aid previously available. It is no wonder, therefore, that the primary beneficiaries of the federal programs cut in the "Reagan revolution" found it difficult to appreciate the new fiscal policies.

This backdrop of reduced employment, tighter welfare and food stamps funding, lower unemployment benefits, and curtailment of other social programs continues to the present. By 1985, Congress had intensified its interest in reducing the soaring trade deficit. The Washington Post reported that "tensions were high" as Congressmen disputed not whether to reduce the national debt, but how to do so. Among the cuts inevitably would be funding for social programs of which many black American's had been beneficiaries. Lower inflationary rates could not offset the threat of hardship to NUL constituencies incurred by a sluggish economy and the nation's determination to control her negative balance.

John Jacob faced these issues in his July 21, 1985, keynote conference address on the NUL's 75th anniversary. His argumentative perspective and rhetorical style signalled a turning back to fundamental NUL traditions. Most notably, Jacob venerated the NUL strategy of the League founders, as had Vernon Jordan. Jacob spoke of any philosophical differences between present and early past
as evolutionary, not episodic. In fact, he linked the NUL of 1985 with its founders of the 1910s in one, common, distressing struggle:

We, who are gathered here today, are the heirs of those pioneers. They struggled in a national climate of hate and despair. Today, we struggle in a national climate of selfishness and despair.

They battled against a system of segregation and mass oppression. Today, we struggle against entrenched discrimination and gross inequities.

Their enemies were the institutions of a racist society that kept black people apart and impoverished. Today, we fight against adversaries who cloak themselves in pious statements about how we've become a color-blind society while too many black people remain apart and impoverished.

Much has changed since the Urban League movement was founded in 1910, but much--too much--remains the same for too many people.17

In comparing the conditions NUL "pioneers" faced to those of their "heirs," Jacob refrained from naming root causes. Instead, he variously depicted the NUL as "bridge-builder and healer in a divided society." He was also much less pointed in naming the "enemy" than his counterpart of the 1960s, Whitney Young.
Continuing his reflections on NUL founders, Jacob differed from Young also in the way he depicted progress in attaining equality. He was decidedly more approving in his report card of racial assimilation. In Jacob's mind, the NUL had achieved some fundamental goals:

If those founders of our movement were to return to us today, they would be amazed at the transformations in Black America. They would see black mayors, black corporate executives, and black astronauts.

And they would say: "Yes, this is what we were fighting for. This is what we meant when we preached to a cruel nation, 'not alms, but opportunity.'" 18

Jacob exhibited traits of Booker T. Washington here and elsewhere throughout the speech. Like Washington, Jacob's rhetoric was conciliatory.

Further, Jacob focused attention not on policies, but on general conditions: drugs, erosion of families, unemployment, poverty. Jacob championed no cause-effect assertions. He merely observed broad problematic areas that he advised needed further attention.

Jacob conjured images that placed black Americans in symbolically close proximity to America's will. Rather
than striking from afar, Jacob urged his followers to negotiate judiciously:

   We come to the seat of national power to plead our righteous cause.

   We come to the capitol of the free world to remind our nation that we are far from achieving a just society—still far from realizing the American Dream.

   And we come to the capitol of our nation to protest the policies that have driven more and more black people deeper and deeper into poverty.  

Thus Jacob labored to characterize the NUL as members of a broader society, holders of an essentially American ideal. Jacob's remarks were unquestionably mainstream.

   Jacob did fault some recent developments, but he generally withheld indictments of specific policies. Again he avoided naming precise enemies:

   If you're a Yuppie couple, life is all roses and Easy Street. If you're a single mother trying to feed your hungry children, life is all thorns and heartbreak.

   In recent years, a philosophy of selfishness and meanness has take hold instead of a philosophy of caring and sharing that our nation needs. A
mean society says, "I've got mine," but a good society says, "all for one and one for all." 20

Jacob refrained from suggesting that America's problems were inherent. He did not associate the flaws with any ultimate American principles. The American shortcomings were thereby transitory.

Jacob, on occasion, reminded one of Young and Jordan, though, in supporting one side of a major racial issue in Congress. He likened the opponents of affirmative action to the opponents of civil rights in the 1960s. Jordan labeled rival positions as "reactionary" and "upside-down." According to Jacob, hot lunches were being taken away to buy missiles, an action he called "unconscionable." 21

However, Jacob's rhetoric lacked the unabashed assaultiveness of Whitney Young. Although Jacob's discourse was not entirely devoid of emotion, he declined to use ad hominem approaches. He presented problems not as grievances but as human annoyances. He thus reduced the polarity between the sides, positioning himself as negotiating partner in a national dialogue. As a participant among fellow ideologues, he was recommending, not demanding, a certain set of priorities. Jacob challenged opponents' attitudes while preserving a rhetorically polite disposition toward their discrepancies.
Pointedly, Jacob called for changes in budgetary allocations. He again depicted the problem as troublesome but not inherent:

But it's more than a question of management and waste. Congress has the responsibility to ask: What defense strategies do we need, how much do we have to spend to implement them, and how do we get about it? Congress can't continue to be a rubber stamp for the military.\(^{22}\)

Jacob extended his patriotic argument:

Because while we're talking about Star Wars, children right here in Washington, D.C. are going hungry. Children all across the nation are growing up poor, without the nutrition and education they'll need to lead better lives and contribute to our nation.\(^{23}\)

Jacob characterized Star Wars advocates as neither malicious nor uncaring, but misaligned or unaware. For the good of the country, therefore, he argued the nation needed to reverse some of its policies.

However, Jacob's inordinate use of statistics in another, awkward section of the speech revived the circumstantial thrust of the Young legacy. With such a reliance on pragmatics, Jacob revitalized the causal reasoning that
was the hallmark of previous NUL rhetoric, mounting a series of effects blacks were disproportionately experiencing. Such causal arguments were rhetorical remnants of Young's 1966 speech, which was urgent and expedient in its demands.

Jacob differed from Young, however, in his use of statistics. Whereas Young's numerical excesses equated oppression with these figures, Jacob's solitaire use of statistics, in one isolated cluster, served as an illustrative form of support. He then returned the auditor to the nation's concerns, away from special-interest profiles of unemployment, poverty, and single-parent households. His persistent national appeals transcended the singular black appeals underpinning high reliance on statistics. Jacob maintained the position that we are all victims of an oppressor as he rallied resistance against this national threat:

What kind of leadership do we have that thinks the plight of 14 million poor children is none of the government's business? What kind of future will we have if a significant part of our population grows up with open scars of disadvantage in affluent society? What kind of a country are we to tolerate such a situation?\textsuperscript{24}
Jacob digressed briefly to remind the audience of the specific program the League had called for in 1976, the National Youth Employment Program. He did not, however, belabor this point. Following this reminder, he demonstrated a concern more for a desirable end than for a self-aggrandizing means:

Let's not waste another generation of lives. Let's not create a mass of people without hope—people unable to take part in a swiftly changing economy that has no room for the unskilled and untrained.

In previewing what NUL affiliates would be saying in upcoming testimony before the House Labor Committee, Jacob contended that the causes and solutions of unemployment were not attributable to any one segment of society. Jacob stressed that efforts should be made "by government, by private employers, by community-based groups." Jacob made three specific proposals for combatting these problems:

Congress should establish a national welfare level that allows poor families to maintain a minimum living standard so poor children can eat and have roofs over their heads.

Second, America should adopt a voluntary national service program to give disadvantaged
young people skills training, educational experiences and jobs.

Third, we should make a start toward a national full employment program by creating training and work opportunities for unemployed young adults.²⁸

In enlarging the number of participants in the search for equality as illustrated above, Jacob created an image of blacks as a constituency, not a villainous insurgent, which could make a "constructive contribution" to government:

We can help Bill Brock make his Department effective in helping black workers. We can help Margaret Heckler make her Department more effective in dealing with health and family issues that impact on black families. There's even the remote possibility that we can help Ed Meese's Justice Department enforce the law instead of breaking it.

And we can even help George Schulz's State Department understand why South Africa is not a fit partner for a democratic nation.²⁹

The South African reference loomed out—amid references to employment, education, crime and other domestic issues. Nevertheless, in developing this topic, Jacob reaffirmed
his American loyalty by showing that he was concerned for America's will, which extended beyond any single, domestic policy:

America can't just walk away from South Africa. We have a stake in that region. We have to use our leverage to change the system.

Corporate America has to be part of the solution. The real issue is what corporate America can and will do to challenge an evil system and be a more effective force for constructive change.  

Here Jacob was querying America as much as he was recommending a hierarchy of values. At any rate, he spoke as statesman, not as rebel. He claimed black Americans were "working to take our place in the mainstream of a post-industrial society."  

In a surprising turn, Jacob digressed, seemingly to rebuff a goal of assimilation. He commented, "We're still about the hard job of achieving racial parity."  

Such a depiction of equality ("parity") corrupts the definition of equality Jacob had been constructing up to this point. However, Jacob offset this comment with subsequent remarks promoting integration rather than parity, so the comment seemed incidental.

Jacob expounded his self-help philosophy extensively:
We know that the black community has to do more for itself, because even if government was more forthcoming, half our children would still be poor. If Congress passed a full employment bill tomorrow, hundreds of black workers would still be unable to find productive work in the private sector. If we passed a sweeping educational opportunity act tomorrow, many thousands of young people would still fail the tests that lead to decent jobs.

Nobody—not even government—can wave a magic wand and make the accumulated effects of centuries of oppression and of today's disadvantaged disappear.  

Jacob also enlisted the help of the private sector while chastizing it for not having assumed its responsibility to implement affirmative action. Jacob seems to have believed that equality is not anchored in government economic assistance alone. Jacob's method of argumentation reveals his understanding that oppressive conditions and an ideal conquest of them would arise from the internal complex of various segments of American society. Jacob's argumentation suggests that equality became an American birthright, not just a government proviso.
More than any of his modern predecessors, Jacob emphasized the role of black Americans in promoting equality.

But anyone who thinks the black community can evade its responsibility to mobilize and attack the problems it can do something about, is also dead wrong.34

Jacob extended the duties of blacks, saying:

All black people have to become involved in our community institutions and find brotherhood and comfort in a shared effort to make our neighborhoods and our lives better.35

On this 75th anniversary, Jacob commemorated NUL contributions to "make lives better." He paraphrased the conclusions of the Ford Foundation, which had recently awarded the NUL $4.5 million, about the organization, saying it:

--is regarded as the most effective civil rights and human services organization in the communities we serve.
--is the most effective job-developing agency.
--is highly respected by both business and low income minority communities, and has the
capacity to deliver services and fulfill an advocacy function surpassing any other organization.\textsuperscript{36}

Jacob looked ahead to problems confronting his constituency, delineating their oppressors as not entirely racially motivated.

Now the struggle has moved to a different battlefield—it's a fight to make the sons and daughters of those people who fought the fights of the 1950s employed and unemployed—to prevent babies from having babies—to forge a future for kids in single-headed households—to help them grow up without fear—not just fear of the Klan, but also fear of their crime-ridden streets.\textsuperscript{37}

Jacob also looked back in recalling his predecessors' goals:

For we are the heirs of George Edmund Haynes, of Eugene Kinckle Jones, of Lester Granger, of Whitney Young, of Vernon Jordan. We carry their commitment to the ideal of equality and their dream of an America that practices the equality it preaches.\textsuperscript{38}

In summary, a few observations on the discourse of Jacob suggest themselves. First, in his denunciation of
new conservative policies Jacob seems to have tempered them with tact and moderation; he implied a sensitivity to temporary American misguidedness and a faith in America's principal commitments. By contrast, in his argumentative appeals, Jacob often was expedient and urgent; he made circumstantial applications, but of an appeal to equality defined ultimately as belonging to the same whole. Jacob reasserted the recent confrontational strategy of Young and Jordan. He retained a disdain for American policies that might have jeopardized the cause of equality as he conceived of it.

Nevertheless, Jacob all but rejected the combative role his predecessors had adopted the previous 20 years. Instead, he rejuvenated an earlier conceptualization of the nature of equality.

The essence of equality to Jacob lay clearly in being assimilated into the mainstream. Because Jacob had so thoroughly, rhetorically established his organization's commitment to America's moral well-being, he was free to criticize the particular means for actuating those values. John Jacob's argument from circumstance, therefore, rested on his and his organization's conservative ultimate values.

Placed within the frame of time between 1960 and 1985, Vernon Jordan's administration functioned as a transition between Whitney Young and John Jacob. 
argumentative perspective and rhetorical style, Jordan bridged the National Urban league persona from that of civil rights activist, personified in Young, to that of social concerns diplomat, embodied in Jacob.

However, both Jordan and Jacob represent a return to the deferential acknowledgements of American society that Whitney Young had virtually suspended for a decade. Sometimes subtly, often times overtly, Jordan and Jacob reminded their listeners that what they most earnestly desired for their constituents was more happily to share in American opportunity.

To Jordan equality was almost inextricably tied to government programs and people's attitudes. To Jacob equality required the will of both government and the private sector. In neither case was racial equality an independent end. Jacob and Jordan tied its genus features to an American equality.

A neo-Platonist philosopher would insist that ultimate equality transcends American equality. And American equality transcends given policy demands. But even in continuing a pragmatic view toward equal opportunity, both Jordan and Jacob, in their respective ways, reached upward on a chain of transcendency, an American chain of presumptive goods. The two leaders thereupon extended the NUL's mainstream character into its 75th year.
ENDNOTES

4_______, p. 3.
5_______, pp. 13-14.
9_______, 1977, p. 7.
10_______, pp. 4-5.
11_______, p. 20.
13_______, p. 662.


18. Jacob, p. 3.

19. ________, p. 4.

20. ________, p. 5.

21. ________, pp. 7-8.

22. ________, p. 8.

23. ________, p. 9.

24. ________, p. 10.

25. ________, p. 11.

26. ________.

27. ________, p. 12.


29. ________, p. 16.

30. ________, p. 17.

31. ________, p. 18.

32. ________.

33. ________, pp. 18-19.

34. ________, p. 20.

35. ________, p. 21.
36________, p. 23.
38________, p. 27.
CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Throughout the past 75 years, National Urban League executive spokesmen have expressed a relatively consistent paradigm of reality. The NUL has been characteristically pragmatic and adaptive in its positions on public policies. For example, Booker T. Washington, ideological father, is remembered for his something-for-everybody approach to racial reconciliation. Eugene Kinckle Jones, despite racial hostility, rewarded society's progress toward interracial cooperation, aligning himself with establishment values. Amidst stinging comments on American indecency, Vernon Jordan also praised American opportunity, preserving his organization's mainstream persona.

Arguments that proceeded from such positions would ostensibly rank as base on Richard Weaver's argumentative hierarchy. However, this dissertation has argued that these argumentative orientations, though pragmatic, were generally not just expedient or utilitarian. They were usually attached to a higher conceptualization of the nature of American equality. In other words, while the NUL executive directors supported a Congressional bill or opposed a social practice, they held out faith (sometimes
implicit; other times, expressed) in the presumed essence of America. Even in criticizing faults of America, these leaders remained committed to a distinctly American ideal of equality.

**Summary**

In order to apply Richard Weaver's rhetorical theory in analyzing 75 years of "conservative pragmatism," a recapitulation of Weaver's philosophy of rhetoric is necessary. This philosophy rests on a conservative structure of reality and an axiological basis to rhetorical discourse.

**Weaver's Rhetorical Theory**

Stated briefly, Weaver was a Platonic idealist. His philosophical affections lay in ideals, essences and principles; he was decidedly anti-pragmatic and anti-utilitarian. Truth to Weaver transcended the observable. Reality was "a paradigm of essences, of which the phenomenology of the world is a sort of continuing approximation." Or, as Weaver re-stated, the universe is "a set of definitions which are struggling to get themselves defined in the real world."

Accordingly, the function of rhetoric is to elevate man above the flux of phenomena, to push beyond the level of scientific perception or, having intuited essences, the good rhetor seeks to actualize them:
Rhetoric seen in the whole conspectus of its function is an art of emphasis embodying an order of desire. Rhetoric is advisory; it has the office of advising men with reference to their particular situation as it relates to these. The honest rhetorician therefore has two things in mind: a vision of how matters should go ideally and ethically and a consideration of the special circumstances of his auditors. Toward both of these he has a responsibility.¹

In neo-Platonist form, Weaver believed in a rhetoric of transcendence:

rhetoric at its truest seeks to perfect men by showing them better versions of themselves, links in that chain extending up toward the ideal which only the intellect can apprehend and only the soul have affection for.²

NUL Rhetorical Paradox

In a most peculiar way, the rhetoric of the NUL has satisfied Weaver's conceptualizations. Although NUL leaders have often foraged in circumstantial thoughts, never defining ultimate terms, their overall argumentative perspective was transcendent. This argumentative paradox of NOT comprehending essences while invoking them can be
explained. The undefined essences had already been penetrably proclaimed within the American psyche. All able thinkers have understood, even if not articulated, the ultimate terms toward which the NUL was reaching. Though they lagged severely in actual practice, such American ideals had been embraced long ago as worthy principle. The NUL leaders, similarly, had such abiding faith in what Gunnar Myrdal has called the American Creed that its most basic value premise undergirded their overarching argumentative perspective.

And what is the American value premise? Essentially to the NUL leaders it has been that opportunity belongs to all men and women. This principle required no defense or elaboration; it was a principle struggling to get itself defined in practice. The NUL leaders, therefore, gathered what they observed among race relations and cast their observations in a transcendent reach toward this American, if unspoken, transcendent good.

This is to say that the NUL was often liberal in its recommendations (for increased government regulation, for example) and conservative in its convictions (about opportunity and self-determination, for example). This penchant for the pragmatic while adhering to the ideal represents a seeming contradiction. This dissertation has shown, however, that the dual loyalties of the NUL did not create ambivalence or reveal hypocrisy. To the contrary,
the two-fold allegiance sheds light on what has been the defining characteristic of the NUL: the agency has been so committed to an American ideal of equality that it afforded itself considerable latitude in interpreting phenomena or in proposing policy. The commitment has been to a potentiality, an essence at the moment not realized. Even when the NUL became particularly critical toward American society in the 1960s, it maintained a constant vision of an American ideal of equal opportunity.

Again, Weaver's rhetorical theory applauds the NUL paradox. League leaders swam in the stream of social circumstances while never losing sight of fixed ideals. Such is the nature of reality, says Weaver:

Things both are and are becoming. They are because the idea or general configuration of them persists; and they are becoming because with the flow of time, they inevitably slough off old substance and take on new.³

When the NUL shed its conciliatory complexion or relied on more circumstances than typical of itself, it was sloughing off old substance. It was the form toward which League leaders aspired—interracial cooperation and equal opportunity—that remained permanently fixed. Weaver helps us to understand the change that does not disturb the stasis.
Conclusions

Several observations about the utility of Weaver's theory in the study of NUL discourse suggest themselves. They show the peculiarity of NUL rhetoric and the utility of Weaver's critical tool.

(1) In this case study, the recurrent NUL pattern of argument does not readily fit on Weaver's hierarchy. Weaver suggests that a speaker's primary manner of argument will be one of the four types on the hierarchy—generic, similutudinous, causal, or circumstantial. Yet, as I have shown, the circumstances of the leaders' reasoning were almost always surrounded by suggestions of idealistic genus characteristics of the American ethos. League leaders couched the pragmatic in the transcendent.

(2) Consequently, the seeming pragmatic and adaptive manner of the Urban League over the past 75 years does not represent a glaring exception to Weaver's theory. Quite the contrary, a peculiar pattern of transcendent thinking emerges in casting NUL discourse along an argumentative hierarchy. Weaver's model, then, is a useful method of not just describing rhetorical practices but of understanding how different types of discourse work together to create a message greater than the sum of the individual parts. To this extent, Weaver's hierarchy is a valuable critical tool in identifying the overall philosophy of the NUL succession of speakers.
(3) Further, Weaver's theory reveals in this study that the NUL conceptualization of equality is both dynamic and persistent. As this rhetorical analysis suggests, the philosophy rests in a belief that equality exists among people when they have common opportunities and when they share in common aspirations. NUL leaders articulated this philosophy in the complex pattern identified above. On the one hand, they observed many circumstances that indicated equality was not fully realized and, on the other, they showed devotion to ideal American virtues. Within this pragmatic-idealistic argumentative pairing, they sustained a "conservative pragmatic," mainstream, notion of equality. Only Whitney Young's confrontational rhetoric, indigenous of its time, threatened to impair this conceptualization. However, in the final analysis even it was the sloughing off of only substance.

(4) This conceptualization of equality, sustained for 75 years, is distinct. While other activist groups may have pursued an equality based on polarity (a balance of power), or likeness (a similarity of traits), the NUL has remained notably mainstream. Equality to the NUL has neither denied nor stressed black idiosyncracy. NUL leaders have said, instead, that to be equal is to have equal opportunities to avail oneself of the promises of free society.
In short, the National Urban League has merely sought to share privileges it has discerned to be fundamentally American. Synonymous with NUL "equality" for 75 years, therefore, are transcendent notions of interracial cooperation, community solidarity, and American self-determination. Such mainline ideals do not easily evaporate when the rhetoric which upholds them keeps them in view.

Limitations of Weaver's Critical Methodology

Besides identifying a consistent, overarching argumentative perspective of the NUL, this dissertation has uncovered some deficiencies of Weaver's critical methodology. Although Weaver provides a framework for analyzing how discourse works to show us higher versions of ourselves, his typology of argumentative perspectives needs refinement. Therefore, three observations are offered here as limitations of Weaver's rhetorical method.

1. The scope of argumentative perspectives on Weaver's hierarchy is too broad. To describe an argument as generic casts light on the general nature of the argument, but such a description does not produce a set form of principles about genus argumentation. Specifically how does one argue from genus? Nor does Weaver advise what the ultimate Goods are or what the knowable features of these Goods include. The Weaverian
critic, therefore, lacks a distinct standard against which to assess the discourse.

(2) Also, Weaver's critical methodology oversimplifies rhetorical phenomena. As this case study has demonstrated, speakers do not always adhere to one argumentative mode; they may both state broad principles and cite many specifics, blending different types of argumentative methods. To diagnose a speaker's philosophy as morally base because of that speaker's predominance of circumstantial comments may belie the fact that a very solid principle or ideal underlies those comments.

(3) One other potential limitation of Weaver's method is that it relies heavily on the critic's moral frame of reference. Interpretation of discourse in terms of Weaver's broad criteria therefore allows the critic considerable choice in appraising that discourse either transcendent or vile. The Weaverian supposition that rhetoric reveals philosophical choice, not just adaptive strategy, may compound this potential pitfall.  

**Usefulness of Weaver's Critical Methodology**

The weaknesses of Weaver's hierarchy of argumentative perspectives may be its greatest strengths. Rhetorical scholars may view each limitation listed above as an advantage or even a necessity to honest criticism.

(1) Weaver's four argumentative modes allow a breadth of application. A critic using Weaver's construct has the
freedom to discover how rhetoric works in the situation under study. Weaver's instrument avoids the "cooky cutter" syndrome. As Weaverian critics collect examples of how speakers use words to create transcendent images, they will generate principles to describe more precisely how various forms of argument operate. Therefore, the liberality of Weaver's method serves a heuristic function. Further, as critics observe those transcendent images, they engage rhetoric's epistemic function. When the critic illuminates the rhetor's conceptualization of ideals, those ideals perhaps become clearer or more meaningful to us all. Indeed, Weaver warned against the perils of prescriptiveness: "...the fewer particulars we require in order to arrive at our generalization, the more apt pupils we are in the school of wisdom."5

In search of both rhetorical principles and absolute Goods, the critic should appreciate and demand such methodological privilege.

(2) The second criticism of Weaver's methodology has some merit; discourse does appear to be more complex than Weaver has suggested. Still, recognizing that Weaver's hierarchy has many applications does not deny its verity or its utility. In fact, it invites further research to explore such applications.

(3) Finally, the critic is wise to resist imposing his/her moral paradigm unknowingly in the analysis of
discourse, as admonished above. In fairness to a Platonic idealistic paradigm, though, we must acknowledge that the risk of imposing moral assumptions in interpreting any rhetorical symbols is not unique to a neo-Platonist approach. Perhaps the critic does best to define his/her moral paradigm before undertaking analysis. Doing so might help to set aside scholarly bias more easily. Or, more importantly, it could help to promote better understanding of the nature of rhetoric and, therefore, the nature of reality.

Suggestions for Future Research

Briefly stated, this dissertation invites further application of Weaver's critical methodology. It does so in at least four areas.

First, we should apply Weaver's critical hierarchy to other genres of speeches. Such genres might include presidential inaugural and farewell addresses, protest rhetoric, inspirational discourse, and campaign messages. In exploring these forms of rhetoric, the Weaverian critic might be able to account for the relative success or failure of historic movements or particular speeches therein; Weaver's method helps to identify rhetorical references toward both matters that are permanent and matters that change, and this could shed light on why a speech or a movement faired the way that it did.
Secondly, we should apply Weaver's critical methodology to single speeches for closer textual analysis. As critics examine all the nuances of particular speeches, perhaps we could begin to specify the components of each of Weaver's modes of argumentation. Doing so would make Weaver's critical methodology a more nearly complete critical system. Moreover, applying Weaver's hierarchy across a broad spectrum of individual speeches on a single ideal, such as equality, could enhance our understanding of the nature of that ideal.

Thirdly, critics should apply Weaver's method to other organizations. Perhaps the conclusions of this dissertation result from the rhetorical peculiarities of the National Urban League. Testing Weaver's methodology on, for example, what has sometimes been a rival of the NUL, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, could affirm or modify conclusions I have drawn.

Finally, any rhetorical analysis which seeks to better understand what ultimately compels people's interests or shapes their values ought to be pursued. Weaver's philosophy of rhetoric and its attendant theory and critical model have excellent potential for telling us who we are and showing us what we can become.
ENDNOTES


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182


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