

# Documents for In-Class Exam

HIST 118, Professor McDaniel

March 27, 2013

## Document A

### **An African-American Newspaper Praises President Theodore Roosevelt (1901)**

Editorial from the *Washington Bee*, October 19, 1901

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

*The Lie Nailed that he is Opposed to the Negro. The First President to Entertain A Negro. Booker T. Washington Dined.*

The many false reports that have been circulated that President Roosevelt was opposed to the negro has been eliminated by the many kind acts that he has done prior to his election, and while he was Vice President and since he has been President. . . . When he assumed the office of vice President his first act was to appoint a colored man an executive messenger against the protest of certain officials. Since he assumed the office of President he entertained Prof. Booker T. Washington in the Executive Mansion on last Wednesday evening.

The first President of the United States to entertain a colored man.

These many acts of recognition of the negroes show that President Roosevelt is a man.

## Document B

### **President Roosevelt Defends Racial Policy to a Prominent South Carolinian (1902)**

[Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to James Adger Smyth](#), November 26, 1902

My dear Sir:

I am in receipt of your letter of November 10 . . . in reference to the appointment of Dr. [William D.] Crum as collector of the port of Charleston.

In your letter you make certain specific charges against Dr. Crum, tending to show his unfitness in several respects for the office sought. . . . After making these charges you add, as a further reason for opposition to him, that he is a

colored man, and after reciting the misdeeds that followed . . . negro domination in [Reconstruction] South Carolina, you say that “we have sworn never again to submit to the rule of the African, and such an appointment as that of Dr. Crum to any such office forces us to protest unanimously against this insult to the white blood” . . . The great majority of my appointments in every State have been of white men. . . . But it has been my consistent policy in every State where their numbers warranted it to recognize colored men of good repute and standing in making appointments to office. . . .

I do not intend to appoint any unfit man to office. So far as I legitimately can I shall always endeavor to pay regard to the wishes and feelings of the people of each locality; but I cannot consent to take the position that the door of hope—the door of opportunity—is to be shut upon any man, no matter how worthy, purely upon the grounds of race or color. . . .

## Document C

### A New York Newspaper Reports on a Speech by a Southern Senator (1903)

[News clipping](#) from February 1903.

We have had two speeches by southerners in this city during the past ten days on the subject of the negro and his rights. The first was by Senator Tillman of South Carolina. . . . Senator Tillman, speaking first, systematically, from the beginning to the end of his speech, said “niggers” instead of “negroes” when he alluded to the colored race. Here are some of his choicest passages:

. . . Three months ago the President of the United States wrote a letter in which he said that where a negro had qualified for public office he was unwilling to shut the door of hope in his face. Now in South Carolina and Mississippi there are 250,000 more negroes than there are whites. We are educating them and what does it mean? Take Booker T. Washington or any other nigger and raise him as high in the scale of civilization as you want to. What are you doing when you do this? I’ll tell you: you are shutting the door of hope in the face of the white man. You are starting to turn this government over to Africans.

To prevent this the people of the south are willing to take the bloodiest of measures. . . . You’ve heard it said that I am in favor of lynch law; that I advocate it. I say to you to-night that while I was governor of South Carolina I would gladly at any time have led a party of men who were out to lynch a black man who had ravished a white or a colored woman.

## Document D

### **President Theodore Roosevelt Writes to Novelist Owen Wister on “Negroes” (1906)**

Letter dated April 27, 1906, from Washington, D.C.

Now as to the Negroes! I entirely agree with you that as a race and in the mass they are altogether inferior to the whites. Your small German scientific friend had probably not heard of the latest scientific theory—doubtless to be superseded by others—which is that the Negro and the white man as shown by their skulls, are closely akin, and taken together, differ widely from the round skulled Mongolian. But admitting all that can be truthfully said against the Negro, it also remains true that a great deal that is untrue is said against him.

...

Now remember, Dan, what I am saying has nothing to do with the right of the Negro to vote, or of his unfitness generally to exercise that right. It has to do simply with the consistent dishonesty championed and gloried in by your special southern friends. ... I may add that my own personal belief is that the talk about the Negro having become worse since the Civil War is the veriest nonsense. He has on the whole become better. Among the Negroes of the South when slavery was abolished there was not one who stood as in any shape or way comparable with Booker Washington. ...

You cannot be more keenly aware than I am of the fact that our effort to deal with the Negro has not been successful. Whatever I have done with him I have found has often worked badly; ... I am not satisfied that I acted wisely in either the Booker Washington dinner or the Crum appointment, though each was absolutely from every proper standpoint save that of expediency. ... and absolutely all I have been doing is to ask, not that the average Negro be allowed to vote, not that ninety-five per cent of the Negroes be allowed to vote, not that there be Negro domination in any shape or form, but that these occasionally good, well-educated, intelligent and honest colored men and women be given the pitiful chance to have a little reward, a little respect, a little regard, if they can by earnest useful work succeed in winning it. ...

## Document E

### **An African American Newspaper Criticizes President Roosevelt (1906)**

In August 1906, a prominent white man in Brownsville, Texas, accused a black soldier in the 25th U.S. Colored Infantry Regiment of sexually assaulting his wife. Without any evidence of the soldiers' guilt, and with all of the soldiers claiming innocence, President Roosevelt decided to dishonorably discharge the entire regiment for refusing to turn in the alleged perpetrator. This editorial from

the newspaper *The New York Age* typified the anger many black Americans felt about the decision.

President Roosevelt has ordered the dishonorable discharge of every man of Companies, B, C, D of the 25th Infantry, for alleged complicity in the Brownsville fracas of August 13. . . . It is not alleged that all the men of this battalion were concerned in the fracas, but it is alleged that they refused to give such information whatever concerning the affair as would lead to the apprehension of the alleged guilty parties.

This action of the President is . . . carrying into the Federal Government the demand of the Southern white devils that innocent and law-abiding black men shall help the legal authorities spy out and deliver practically to the mob black men alleged to have committed one sort of crime. The principle involved is not only vicious and contrary to the spirit of our Constitution, but is an outrage upon the rights of citizens who are entitled in civil life to trial by jury and in military life to trial by court-martial.

Any black man in any part of the United States who offers to enlist in the United States army to fill the places of these innocent but dishonorably discharged men should be hated and spurned by . . . the Afro-American people at large. . . . If we cannot get justice in the army, we are not compelled to enter it.

## Document F

### **Booker T. Washington Expresses Regret about Brownsville Affair (1906)**

Letter from Washington to Oswald Garrison Villard, November 10, 1906

My dear Villard: I have just read your editorial on [Roosevelt's] punishing the colored troops [in Brownsville]. . . . I did my full duty in trying to persuade him from the course not only when I saw him, but wrote him strongly after reaching New York. I am not going to give up. As soon as he returns I expect to have a conference with him with a view of arranging some plan to do justice to innocent men. There is no law, human or divine, which justifies the punishment of an innocent man. . . .

## Document G

### **President Roosevelt Addresses Congress on Lynching (1906)**

Speech delivered December 3, 1906.

The greatest existing cause of lynching is the perpetration, especially by black men, of the hideous crime of rape—the most abominable in all the category of

crimes, even worse than murder. Mobs frequently avenge the commission of this crime by themselves torturing to death the man committing it; thus avenging in bestial fashion a bestial deed, and reducing themselves to a level with the criminal. . . .

There is but one safe rule in dealing with black men as with white men; . . . Reward or punish the individual on his merits as an individual. Evil will surely come in the end to both races if we substitute for this just rule the habit of treating all the members of the race, good and bad, alike. There is no question of “social equality” or “negro domination” involved; only the question of relentlessly punishing bad men, and of securing to the good man the right to his life, his liberty, and the pursuit of his happiness as his own qualities of heart, head, and hand enable him to achieve it.

Every colored man should realize that the worst enemy of his race is the negro criminal, and above all the negro criminal who commits the dreadful crime of rape; and it should be felt as in the highest degree an offense against the whole country, and against the colored race in particular, for a colored man to fail to help the officers of the law in hunting down with all possible earnestness and zeal every such infamous offender. . . .

The members of the white race on the other hand should understand that every lynching represents by just so much a loosening of the bands of civilization; . . . No man can take part in the torture of a human being without having his own moral nature permanently lowered.

## Document H

### **President Theodore Roosevelt Speaks on the Expansion of the White Races (1909)**

There is one feature in the expansion of the peoples of white, or European, blood during the past four centuries which should never be lost sight of, especially by those who denounce such expansion on moral grounds. On the whole, the movement has been fraught with lasting benefit to most of the peoples already dwelling in the lands over which the expansion took place. . . . Taking into account the Indians of pure blood, and the mixed bloods in which the Indian element is large, it is undoubtedly true that the Indian population of America is larger today than it was when Columbus discovered the continent, and stands on a far higher plane of happiness and efficiency.

. . . There have been very dark spots in the European conquest and control of Africa, but on the whole the African regions which during the past century have seen the greatest cruelty, degradation, and suffering, the greatest diminution of population, are those where native control has been unchecked. . . . Of course the best that can happen to any people that has not already a high civilization of its own is to assimilate and profit by American or European ideas, the ideas of civilization and Christianity, without submitting to alien control; but such control, in spite of all its defects, is in a very large number of cases the

prerequisite condition to the moral and material advance of the peoples who dwell in the darker corners of the earth. . . .

## Second Exam, HIST 118

Professor McDaniel

Read the packet of documents distributed in class. Then answer all of the three questions using the space provided. If you need more room to write, you may request more paper.

### **Question 1**

Look at the image on the screen. The caption reads “Dinner Given at the White House by President Roosevelt to Booker T. Washington, October 17th, 1901.” Suppose you heard an historian claiming that this image demonstrates Theodore Roosevelt’s commitment to racial equality. What information about this image would you want to gather before determining whether it supports the historian’s claim?

## **Question 2**

For class, you read an article by the editor of the Margaret Sanger Papers, Esther Katz. In it, Katz talks about how she responds to journalists and activists who frequently contact her to ask, “Was Margaret Sanger racist?”

Now imagine that you are the editor of the Theodore Roosevelt Papers. A journalist has contacted you to ask, “Was Theodore Roosevelt racist?” Using the specific documents distributed with this exam as your evidence, how would you respond?



*See the back page for a final question.*

### **Question 3**

Write one new historical question generated by your examination of these documents. When relevant, use information from the documents themselves *or* from other readings in the class to ensure that your question is both specific and illustrative of historical thinking.