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IMAGINING HAITI: REPRESENTATIONS OF HAITI IN THE AMERICAN PRESS DURING THE U.S. OCCUPATION, 1915-1934

by

MOLLY MARISA BAROCO

ABSTRACT

Throughout the United States occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934, the U.S. government and its supporters were forced to defend the legitimacy of American action. In order to justify it to the American public, officials and journalists created a dichotomy of capacity between an inferior Haiti and a superior U.S., and they presented the occupation as a charitable civilizing mission. This vision of Haiti and Haitians was elaborated in a racialized discourse wherein Haitians were assigned various negative traits that rendered them incapable of self-government. In examining how the *New York Times*, the *National Geographic Magazine*, and the *Crisis* represented Haiti, I demonstrate how race was the primary signifier, and how these representations were used to either perpetuate or challenge the American racial social hierarchy.

INDEX WORDS: Haiti, United States foreign relations, New York Times, National Geographic Magazine, Crisis, W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and Imperialism

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MOLLY MARISA BAROCO

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by

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Chapter 1

Introduction

My thesis is about how representations of the enactment of U.S. overseas imperialism were related to contestations over the racial social order in the U.S. Specifically I will consider how, during the United States occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934, Americans produced and displayed an imaginary Haiti that served to simultaneously perpetuate their dominant position as an occupying force, and reinforce domestic social hierarchies. When the U.S. invaded and occupied Haiti on July 28, 1915 the overt violation of Haitian sovereignty forced the Wilson administration and its supporters to defend the legal and moral legitimacy of American action. In order to justify the occupation to the American public, U.S. officials described a dichotomy of capacity between Haitians and Americans, and they presented the occupation as a charitable civilizing mission. The mainstream white press elaborated these tactics and rationalized American policy and action by generating a racialized discourse wherein Haitians were assigned various negative traits that rendered them incapable of self-government. At a time when the assumed integrity of national identity was being challenged, representations of white U.S. dominance abroad by the press for the reading public at home reinforced the contested paradigm of the empowered and entitled American white, Anglo-Saxon man.

With the Spanish-American War of 1898, the United States pursued an aggressive policy of overseas expansion. U.S. war aims involved a sweeping assertion of American power across the Caribbean and the Pacific. With Spain's defeat, the U.S.

acquired Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico, and it militarily occupied Cuba. Concessions from the newly independent, U.S.-backed Panama enabled the construction of the Panama Canal to begin in 1903, and it was opened in 1914. Further interventions took place in Mexico and Central America. Moreover, by invoking the Monroe Doctrine, the Roosevelt Corollary, and Taft's dollar diplomacy the U.S. began to replace Britain as the dominant commercial and financial power in Latin America.[1]

On the eve of World War I, the U.S. perceived German commercial interests and naval ambitions in Haiti as its greatest security threat in the Caribbean. Diplomats warned that political instability in Haiti made it susceptible to foreign interference and domination. As the war in Europe escalated, American bankers with valuable investments in Haiti intentionally inflamed the State Department's concern over German intentions in the hope that the U.S. would intervene in Haitian affairs to their advantage. The National City Bank of New York had become a principal participant in the national bank of Haiti as well as in the Haitian national railway. The Haitian government's refusal to make certain concessions to the bankers exacerbated their deteriorating financial position and placed American investments at risk. With the weight of the American business community in Haiti behind them, the bankers put pressure on the State Department and exaggerated the German threat.[2] Thus the murder of Haitian

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[1] For a discussion of the Spanish-American War, see Thomas David Schoonover, *Uncle Sam's War of 1898 and the Origins of Globalization* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003). For a narrative of U.S. overseas expansion from 1898 to 1920, see Michael C. Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), chap. 2.

[2] Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers, 1902-1915* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), chap. 7; Hans Schmidt, *The United States*

President Jean Vilbrun Guillaume Sam at the hands of an angry mob, an act of grief and revenge for the execution of political prisoners, became an opportune moment for the intervention by the United States. The next day, on July 28, 1915, Wilson ordered marines to seize Port-au-Prince under the pretense of protecting American life and property. The United States immediately took control of Haiti's treasury and customs houses, and by early September it had installed a client-president and instituted martial law and strict press censorship. Although Haiti was effectively under American military control, the U.S. sought legal sanction through a treaty with Haiti, which it pushed through the Haitian Senate in November and was ratified by the U.S. Senate in February of the following year. The treaty legalized the occupation for a term of ten years, established an American-run constabulary, an American financial advisor to control Haitian revenue and finances, and mandated American control of public works.

From the beginning of the occupation Haitian military resistance against the marines was carried out by cacos, nationalist peasant guerrilla fighters organized by local or regional chiefs. American troops quickly pacified the caco bands, which were most active in the rural interior and the northern mountains, through bribery and military force. Consequently, caco resistance did not become a significant problem for the marines in the first few years of the occupation.[3] However, the brutal conditions and violent enforcement of the corvee, a marine-instituted road-building program that depended on the forced labor of Haitian peasants, led to caco uprisings against American troops in 1918. Although the military officially abolished the corvee by October

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Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), chap. 3.

[3] Schmidt, 82-83.

1918, the practice continued illegally in the northern and central Haiti. Caco resistance intensified into a full-scale guerrilla war against the marines by 1919 under the leadership of Charlemagne Peralte. The marines assassinated Peralte later that year and quelled the insurrection, but news of the violence reached the American public and helped set in motion a reassessment of the occupation.

The occupation, however, received little attention from the Wilson administration, during which the only major policy developments were the passing of the new Haitian Constitution of 1918 and a twenty-year extension of the 1915 treaty.[4] After the war, during the negotiations of the Paris Peace Conference, Wilson was confronted by the hypocrisy of his rhetoric about the self-determination of small and weak countries in the face of the American military occupation of Haiti. In response to such criticism and in light of the obviation of German designs on Haiti, he tried to withdraw troops from Haiti in 1919 but could not because the marines were fully engaged in a guerilla war with the cacos. Further efforts to reassess American policy in Haiti were abandoned when the occupation became an issue in the 1920 presidential campaign.

In 1920, a confluence of events led to an investigation and reorganization of the occupation. The NAACP sponsored an investigation of the situation in Haiti by James Weldon Johnson, and his subsequent reports, published from July through September in the *Nation* and the *Crisis,* exposed the exploitation and abuse behind the U.S. occupation, and challenged its legitimacy. The *New York Times* reported on a campaign speech in September by Republican presidential candidate Warren G. Harding in which he blasted the Wilson administration's imperialist policies in Haiti and other Caribbean

[4] Ibid, 108-109.

republics.[5] Press coverage of the occupation increased, and journalists began calling for an official investigation, especially after the *New York Times* published, in October, a private letter written by Brigadier General George Barnett, former Commandant General of the Marine Corps, to the commander of the Marine forces in Haiti that stated his shock and dismay over what he believed were the "indiscriminate killing of natives" in Haiti.[6]

The navy conducted its own internal investigation of alleged marine atrocities in Haiti, and though its findings minimized any wrongdoing on the part of the marines, it was soon followed by a U.S. Senate Inquiry in late 1921 and early 1922. The inquiry resulted in a reorganization of the occupation. The main policy revisions involved the centralization of authority in the form of an American High Commissioner, the transfer of exclusive control of Haiti's national bank to an American bank, the consolidation and transfer of Haiti's foreign debt to American creditors, and a new emphasis on agricultural and industrial education for Haitians. The U.S. also took the opportunity to replace client-president Philippe Sudre Dartiguenave with the more conciliatory, pro-American Louis Borno. The occupation, as it was restructured in 1922, was effective in maintaining relative political, economic, and social stability in Haiti until strikes and riots broke out in 1929.

In Haiti in the fall of 1929, economic distress caused by the collapse of the coffee market, increased government taxes, the cancellation of the 1930 popular elections, and opposition to the apparent continuation of the unpopular client-president Borno's

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[5] "Constitution or League—Harding," *New York Times*, September 18, 1920.
[6] "Reports Unlawful Killing of Haitians By Our Marines," *New York Times*, October 14, 1920.

term in office, all combined with the general population's hatred of the occupation to provide a powder keg of discontent that ignited student strikes in October.[7] The strikes and demonstrations spread quickly throughout the nation, and by early December they had turned into a nation-wide general uprising. On December 6, in a clash near the town of Cayes a detachment of twenty marines opened fire at point-blank range on a group of fifteen hundred peasants armed with stones, machetes, and clubs. Occupation officials counted 12 dead and 23 wounded, and the Haitian press listed 24 dead and 51 wounded.[8] Although the strikes and riots were quelled soon after the Cayes massacre, they shattered the complacency of the occupation, and marked the beginning of its end.

President Herbert Hoover sent an investigatory commission to Haiti in February 1930 to determine when and how the U.S. could withdraw, and what to do in the meantime.[9] The report by the presidential commission, chaired by former governor of the Philippines W. Cameron Forbes, was critical of certain aspects of the occupation. It stated that "race antipathies lie behind many of the difficulties which the United States military and civil forces have met in Haiti" and went on to suggest that these antipathies, along with American efforts to "broaden the base of the articulate proletariat and thus make for a sounder democracy," hindered collaboration between occupation officials and the Haitian elite.[10] The commission's report focused, however, on the beneficial results brought about by the occupation, particularly material progress, improved public

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[7] Schmidt, 196.
[8] Ibid, 200.
[9] *Report of the President's Commission for the Study and Review of Conditions in the Republic of Haiti*, Washington, D.C., 1930, 1.
[10] Ibid., 18-19.

health and sanitation, and restored public order. The report concluded with specific recommendations to help facilitate American withdrawal.

In response to the strikes in 1929, U.S. officials rescheduled the 1930 popular elections—the first such elections held in Haiti since the U.S. seized control—and as expected they resulted in the defeat of all pro-American candidates. Sentiment in Washington and among the American public also did not favor the continuation of the occupation. The economic depression in the U.S. made the ongoing expenditure of American resources in Haiti overly burdensome, and President Hoover viewed the military occupation as having a negative effect on American relations with other Latin American and Caribbean countries. He stated his general disinclination toward U.S. military interventionist policy in the introduction to the presidential commission report in 1930, "I have no desire for the representation of the American Government through our military forces."[11] Amidst active political opposition from Haitian nationalists and continued outbreaks of public disorder, the U.S. abandoned its policy of a gradual withdrawal of the occupation.

The U.S. government reached an agreement with the nationalist Haitian government in the Executive Accord of August 7, 1933 that expedited Haitian independence while protecting American bondholders invested in Haiti. Under the agreement, the U.S. would retain limited control of Haitian finances until Americans bonds were paid out, and American troops would withdraw by October, 1934, a year and a half earlier than the withdrawal date stipulated by the existing treaty. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, on a visit to Haiti in July 1934, announced the early withdrawal of

[11] Ibid., 1.

American troops by August 15 as a gesture of goodwill, and almost exactly nineteen years after American marines invaded Haiti, they departed peacefully on the scheduled date.[12]

The Haiti occupation was not the first such project undertaken by the United States. The transfer of the Philippines from Spain to the U.S. provoked the American-Philippine War in 1899. The subsequent pacification and organization of the new colonial state engendered new racial formations. According to Paul A. Kramer, the overt and violent racism of the U.S. military during the war gave way to a strategy of collaboration with the Filipino elite. The binary division of the population between the elite, largely propertied, urban, Christians or Chinese, and the rural masses, including Muslims, served as the primary racial and civilizational hierarchy. The participation of the elite Filipinos in the colonial state and the maintenance of American dominance were thus informed by a discourse that excluded poorer and darker Filipinos on the grounds of incapacity.[13]

By the time the U.S. invaded Haiti, ostensibly anti-imperialist Democrats were ascendant in Washington, and their efforts to advance Philippine independence put U.S. imperialists on the defensive. As American administrators recast the Philippine colonial state, the U.S. was consolidating control of Haiti and generating a new imperial discourse. The Philippines provided a sort of laboratory for the Haitian occupation, demonstrating the effectiveness of divisive strategies in managing a colonized population. However, there was no formula for realizing these strategies. Unlike the

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[12] Schmidt, chap. 11.
[13] Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

splitting of Filipinos along religious fault lines, Americans differentiated themselves from Haitians, but not necessarily Haitians from each other, by the transcendent determinant of race.

Authors of the American press invented a culture and character for Haitians that rested on their own position in the American racial social hierarchy. As Kramer explains in reference to the political order of the U.S. colonial state, "The politics of recognition hinged on the maintenance of justifiable hierarchies of difference that legitimated varying degrees of disenfranchisement. Among the most powerful and flexible of those hierarchies in the modern world, if far from the only ones, were hierarchies of race."[14] Articles from the press during the U.S. occupation of Haiti demonstrate that many stereotypes differentiated Haitians from Americans, but that race was the most powerful.

The mainstream press played a major role in what Walter Lippman has described as the "manufacture of consent" for U.S. policy in Haiti, and in the reproduction of white American hegemony for the domestic public.[15] Concomitantly, the opposition press used the occupation as a platform to denounce white supremacist ideas and policies. In my thesis, I will investigate how the American press represented Haiti during the occupation and analyze the discursive strategies it used to inscribe hierarchical difference between white Americans and Haitians. I will also examine how these representations were used both to reinforce and to challenge the racial social order in the U.S. My analyses will demonstrate that the Haiti that Americans came to know during the early twentieth century through the press was a reflection of American

[14] Kramer, 19.
[15] Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion* (New York: Free Press, 1965), 158.

anxieties rather than a realistic description of Haitian culture, history, and political processes. My goal is to provide insight into how race may be used in the context of American imperial projects not only to justify coercive, undemocratic policies but also to deal with social power contestations in the U.S.

During the early twentieth century magazines and newspapers were the nation's primary mass media. They not only helped develop American consumer culture, but also more broadly contributed to forming an American national identity.[16] Editors, authors, and advertisers published images and descriptions of the U.S. that reflected the self-image and aspirations of the dominant social group: the ideal American was white, bourgeois, and Anglo-Saxon, and the U.S. was rational, democratic, and benevolent. At the same time, this discourse reflected the social and political contestations around which it evolved. As the press considered imperialism and domestic social conflicts, such as those arising from anti-immigrant sentiments and the oppression of African-Americans, it mobilized and adapted stereotypes and divisive strategies in order to preserve the status quo.[17] Thus subaltern groups and foreign peoples became inscribed with oppositional, inferior characteristics that served to reinforce their marginal or subordinate position in American politics and society. As the circulation of periodicals steadily increased, more and more readers participated in this

[16] Tamar Y. Rothenberg, *Presenting America's World: Strategies of Innocence in National Geographic Magazine, 1888-1945* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 4-5.
[17] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad*, 1876-1917 (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000).

"imagined community," and a racialized discourse that described Americans as morally and culturally superior was constructed.[18]

It is important to consider the extent to which representations of Haiti were influenced by racism and recycled nineteenth century racial stereotypes. Eric T. Love in *Race Over Empire* defines racism as "exclusionary relations of power based on race," and "more specifically as the sum of culturally sanctioned beliefs, practices, and institutions that establish and maintain a racial social order." He goes on to explain that the "principal goal of the late-nineteenth-century racial social order was the exclusion of those racial and ethnic groups cast as 'nonwhite' from equal access to and participation in America's economic, political, social, and cultural mainstream."[19] White supremacist ideology was shaped in the nineteenth century in part by anxieties engendered by the question of how and to what extent to incorporate the non-white populations of foreign territories annexed by the U.S., such as Hawaii and the Philippines, into the American nation-state. Despite the American foreign policy shift after 1898 away from annexation, similar anxieties were pervasive in the early twentieth century resulting from social tensions and policy debates over the massive influx of immigrants into the U.S., U.S. interventions in Mexico and Caribbean countries, and racial violence and oppression. White supremacist elites met these challenges with various strategies such as exclusionary and oppressive legislation, the dissemination of racist pseudoscientific discourses, such as craniology and eugenics, and government sponsored expositions

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[18] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
[19] Eric T. Love, *Race Over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), xii.

that merged science and entertainment to showcase “evidence” of white racial superiority to the general public.

In the years that spanned the occupation, American white supremacists aggressively asserted their agenda against social equality and civil rights for black Americans. Jim Crow laws, race riots, and the lynching of black Americans were part of the domestic landscape. In 1915, the year the U.S. invaded Haiti, white supremacists founded the second Ku Klux Klan. It reached its peak membership, which numbered into the millions, in the mid-1920s. While some white Americans opposed the often violent oppression of black Americans, racism was a paradigm in American society institutionalized not only through legislation, but also through scientific, educational, artistic, and popular media productions. Negative portrayals of black Americans had become naturalized within the discourse of racism, which in turn affected domestic social policy. Throughout the same period, anti-racism activists fiercely and systematically contested the institutionalized racial inequality, oppression, and violence in the U.S. Thus Haiti, as a black nation subjected to domination by white Americans, became a site onto which these racial conflicts in the U.S. were reflected.

Haitians have historically negotiated the constraints of white hegemony from a unique position. As the world’s only nation founded by ex-slave revolutionaries, Haiti figured into slavery debates and generated racist policies at its inception, and its racial significance came to directly bear on American foreign policy, domestic social policies, and discourse on slavery and racial issues throughout the nineteenth century. Keeping in mind that the American discourse on Haiti during the occupation was generated in the context of white supremacist hegemony, I will consider how Haiti’s racial significance

figured into contestations over American identity and enfranchisement in an increasingly multinational and multicultural society.

While some editors and authors opposed the occupation, especially after the early phase, most contributed to the notion of Haitian inferiority through their representations of Haiti and Haitians. In the first wave of coverage following the invasion, the majority of periodicals uncritically supported U.S. action, generally characterizing it as a paternalistic effort mandated by Haitians' incompetence. For the next several years press coverage languished and the American public was generally ignorant of American policy and action in Haiti. In 1920, the occupation became a controversial news topic and presidential campaign issue when allegations of excessive violence and oppressive policies surfaced. Although opposition to the occupation grew, even its critics continued to characterize Haitians as an inferior population, and evaluated the level of success the U.S. had achieved in uplifting them. As government officials, politicians, and the press debated U.S. withdrawal in the latter half of the occupation, memoirs and travel books that exoticized Haiti were published to great success. By the end of the nineteen years of the occupation, the majority of the American public imagined Haiti as its primitive, violent, ignorant, and heathen neighbor.

The intent of my analysis is to shed light on the discourse that effectively constructed Americans' knowledge of Haiti during the occupation. More broadly, I hope to discern how representations of Haiti and the occupation in the press helped preserve or threatened the position of the elite in the American social hierarchy. I do not mean to present a catalogue of commentary about Haiti, nor tally who advocated and opposed the American intervention. Instead, I have selected case studies that have an

exemplary significance for my inquiry. The hegemonic conception of Haiti was formed in relation to its opposition. To avoid the trap of cultural relativism I will include analyses of counter-hegemonic representations: descriptions of Haiti that were in contrast to the prevailing discourse and created from the viewpoint of opposition to white supremacy. For this perspective I have selected a publication that had a wide circulation, and was therefore a viable and influential alternative for the public. To achieve these goals I will examine articles published by the *New York Times*, the *National Geographic Magazine*, and the *Crisis*. I will present analyses of these publications as three separate chapters, each chapter representing a separate but related case study.

In the first year of the occupation, the press led the way in the formation and consolidation of American public opinion about U.S. policy in Haiti. While the U.S. waged war in Europe, the press and the public paid little attention to events in Haiti, and throughout the country commentary on the occupation was negligible. Although Haiti did appear in a few news stories, the *New York Times* published no editorials about the occupation in 1917 and 1918. Likewise, neither the *National Geographic Magazine*, nor the *Crisis* featured any articles on Haiti during this period. In 1920, allegations of marine atrocities, journalistic investigative reports, and the attacks on the Wilson administration's Haitian policies in the 1920 presidential campaign thrust the occupation to the fore of the American imagination, and the American press published a flurry of commentary. The fervor died down after the navy's initial defense of the actions of marines in Haiti, and even with the increase in news coverage during the strikes and riots in Haiti in 1929, there were relatively few editorials published in the remaining years of the occupation. Therefore, I will study the early phase of the occupation, from

1915 to 1921, particularly focusing on the formative periods of the first several months after the U.S. invaded Haiti and from 1920 through 1921.

The *New York Times* was already considered the leading national paper during the period in question. Its editorial perspective broadly reflected the dominant views of the government, big business, and the social and cultural elite. With the exception of the years 1917 and 1918, when like other periodicals it was distracted by the U.S. entry into World War I, it devoted an exceptional amount of coverage to the U.S. occupation of Haiti. It also had the distinction of exclusively publishing several key statements and reports issued by U.S. diplomatic and military officials about the occupation.

From 1915 through 1919, the *New York Times* editorials were supportive of the occupation and condescending toward Haiti. Even when the paper briefly became critical of the occupation in 1920, its editorials continued to represent Haitians as an inferior people. By 1921 they had resumed their support of U.S. action in Haiti. In chapter 2, I will examine editorials published by the paper from 1915 to 1921, and demonstrate that in the paper's persistent defense of American policy in Haiti it used different but related discursive strategies to rationalize the military occupation for its readers. These strategies of rationalization can be identified as paternalism, depoliticization, and differentiation. In its editorials, the paper couched the U.S. domination and oppression of Haiti in terms of a paternal relationship in which the U.S. was a fatherly guide, at once benevolent and disciplinary, to Haiti, its childlike, unruly, ward. Another tactic employed by the editorial board in its descriptions of Haiti was the obviation of Haitians as political actors and Haitian political processes. Editorial commentaries portrayed Haitian insurgents as criminals and Haitian heads of state as

farcical and despotic, and they ahistoricized Haiti. The negation of Haitian political agency made the idea of American violation of Haiti's sovereignty and Haitians' political rights seem oxymoronic, and thus undercut ideological objections to the occupation. Finally, the paper emphasized difference between Americans and Haitians. It described Haiti in ways that were antithetical to the ideals and values that Americans claimed as their own. The most significant marker of difference was race: the *New York Times* conceived of Haiti as a black nation and America as a white nation. The various racialized negative characteristics assigned to Haiti had the effect of creating an inferior Other to whom readers would not be able to relate.

The *National Geographic Magazine* arguably had the strongest ties to the U.S. government of the popular periodicals of its day. Many of its board members and writers were government officials. Several sitting and former U.S. presidents contributed to the magazine's pages. Its long-time editor, Gilbert Grosvenor, regarded it as a "semi-official" publication.[20] Because the *National Geographic Magazine* positioned itself as a scientific institution, and in part because of its governmental affiliations, it enjoyed an unparalleled reputation as a scientific authority. Its readers considered the knowledge that it produced to be objective, factual, and expert.

The *National Geographic Magazine* helped forge American national identity by describing and defining non-American peoples and by idealizing a bourgeois, male, Anglo-Saxon point of view. It also helped construct a national narrative that encompassed U.S. overseas imperialism. In chapter 3, I will analyze the magazine's articles on Haiti during the early phase of the occupation to identify the ways in which

[20] Rothenberg, 12.

they furthered its agenda. While employing the same strategies of rationalization as the *New York Times*, the *National Geographic Magazine* was more explicit in using derogatory, racialized representations of Haiti to help define and reinforce white supremacist ideology. As a champion of U.S. imperialism, it valorized U.S. military action in Haiti, portraying it as a civilizing mission by the superior Anglo-Saxon race to inferior non-whites. My analysis of the *National Geographic Magazine* articles will reveal how its descriptions of Haiti during the occupation simultaneously promoted U.S. imperialism and the white supremacist American social status quo.

The *Crisis*, the official magazine of the NAACP, was one of the only periodicals to oppose the occupation from its very beginning and to do so from a pro-Haitian perspective. The leading African-American periodical of the period, the *Crisis* dedicated its pages to the struggle for racial equality and justice in the United States. Because I argue that race was a transcendent factor in the American conception of Haiti, the *Crisis* is a particularly valuable source that offers an alternative to the dominant view of the mainstream white press. In chapter 4, I will discuss how the *Crisis* represented Haiti during the occupation, and how it used the occupation as a platform for its campaign against white supremacy and racial violence in the U.S. From the outset of the U.S. invasion, it drew analogies between the inherent racism of the U.S. occupation and the pervasive racism of U.S. society and politics. Such connections support my contention that racism shaped representations of Haiti in the press.

Considering that the nineteen-year occupation of Haiti was the second longest in U.S. history, there are surprisingly few English language scholarly historical studies of the subject. Hans Schmidt's *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* is the

most comprehensive. Schmidt has plumbed American, Haitian, and French sources, especially U.S. official records and reports, to yield a detailed analysis of the occupation. By providing political, economic, and cultural context for American action and policy, he illuminates how the occupation was shaped by both Haitian resistance and domestic U.S. cultural and racial tensions. Schmidt demonstrates that racial prejudice drove the attitudes of American officials and marines toward Haitians. He concludes racism poisoned relations with Haitians and ultimately undercut the effectiveness of American policies. His evidence of this racism primarily consists of both official and unofficial policies enacted by the American occupation authorities, records of unsanctioned actions by marines, and off-the-record comments by officials.[21] Schmidt's work supports my belief that race was a fundamental factor in American conceptions of Haiti. I hope to expand upon his conclusions by examining more closely race and empire as exemplified in American press commentary.

In her article "The Afro-American Response to the Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934," historian Brenda Plummer correlates the attitudes of black Americans toward U.S. policy in Haiti with their approach to racism in the U.S.[22] She explains that the indifference with which African Americans initially viewed the occupation shifted to active and persistent opposition after World War I, and that this shift reflected their move away from accommodation to a more confrontational struggle against racial

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[21] Schmidt, 136-137: Schmidt explains that American marines introduced concepts of racial discrimination that flattened out the nuances of skin color and class that structured the Haitian social hierarchy. According to Schmidt, racial tensions were exacerbated by the arrival of American wives, at which point Americans instituted Jim Crow racial segregation.

[22] Brenda Plummer, "The Afro-American Response to the Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934," *Phylon* 43, no. 2 (2nd Qtr. 1982): 125-143.

inequality in the U.S. Furthermore, it indicated their growing sense of racial identification on a global level. She studies letters protesting the occupation written by black intellectuals, church groups, missionaries, social groups, political groups, and journalists addressed to American secretary of states and presidents, and to the black press. Her analysis finds that black Americans' opposition was motivated by a sense of racial solidarity with Haitians. Citing Hans Schmidt, Plummer links the severity of U.S. policies and marine violence in Haiti to the racism of occupation officials, and notes that heightened racial tensions in the U.S. made Haiti an important issue to blacks. Washington's failure to include black Americans in meaningful positions in the occupation administration and in the various investigatory commissions appointed throughout its duration reflected the underlying racism of U.S. policy and exacerbated black Americans' opposition. Plummer concludes the political pressure that black Americans exerted against the occupation at the end of World War I, and which intensified in the early 1920s, influenced U.S. officials to finally mitigate the military's blatantly coercive policies in Haiti.

John W. Blassingame's "The Press and American Intervention in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, 1904-1920" is a survey of sixty-nine periodicals.[23] He determines that most editors supported the interventions from 1904 to 1919, but they became critical of the U.S. occupation of Haiti in 1920. He suggests that racial prejudice against Haitians and Dominicans figured into their opinions, but concludes that concern over American security was the main reason for journalistic support for the interventions. His conclusions are somewhat limited because he treats the U.S. occupation of Haiti and its

[23] John W. Blassingame, "The Press and American Intervention in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, 1904-1920," *Caribbean Studies* 9, no. 2 (July, 1969): 27-43.

intervention in Santo Domingo as a homogeneous event, and makes references that are chronologically arbitrary. For instance, directly following a citation from a Chicago *Tribune* article from 1916 that characterized the interventions in Haiti and the Dominican Republic as part of America's imperial destiny, Blassingame states, "some periodicals went beyond the *Tribune* and fervently endorsed the idea of annexation," and cites periodical articles from 1904. Although he treats these references contiguously as if they were part of the same topical discourse, the latter reference was published over a decade earlier than the first, before the U.S. intervention in Haiti, and was referring specifically to proposals by the press to annex the Dominican Republic. He continues to go back and forth chronologically in his references without making clear distinctions between debates over U.S. policy in the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

In *Taking Haiti,* Mary A. Renda investigates the relationship between American culture and the occupation.[24] She focuses on the U.S. marines, and argues that the military used a paternalist discourse when it deployed them for empire-building in Haiti. She describes paternalism as, "a form of domination, a relation of power, masked as benevolent by its reference to paternal care and guidance, but structured equally by norms of paternal authority and discipline."[25] While the marines perpetuated this culture of paternalism in Haiti, they also transformed it through processes of resistance and adaptation. Renda also studies how the occupation affected American culture domestically through 1940 by examining marines' memoirs, popular narratives, and advertisements that commoditized Haiti. She shows that the occupation was co-opted

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[24] Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).
[25] Ibid., 13.

by both sides of debates over gender equality, imperialism, and race. While she acknowledges the importance of racism and the exoticization of Haiti in American discursive productions, Renda views them as manifestations of paternalism, which she maintains was the dominant discourse of the occupation and the most effective tool for persuading the U.S. public to support empire and the violence that it required. I hope to expand upon her findings by investigating how discourse supported not only imperial violence but also the position of American elites in the U.S. social hierarchy.

In *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination* J. Michael Dash, a professor of Francophone literature, studies how Haitians and Americans define themselves in relation to each other by analyzing Haitian and American literature from the early nineteenth century period through 1994.[26] He employs Said's and Foucault's concept of textuality to demonstrate that American authors used literary themes and stereotypes to create an essentialized, inferior Haitian Other. This mythological construct not only served to better define American national identity, but also was used to justify its foreign policies. Dash deconstructs Haitian literature to reveal how Haitian self-identity was in turn shaped by its relationship to the U.S. He devotes a chapter to the analysis of American and Haitian literature published during the occupation, wherein he divides the American authors into apologists and "defenders of negro primitivism," all of who essentialized and exoticized Haiti.[27] Dash argues that the prevalent themes and stereotypes that emerge in American literature about Haiti not only reflect commonly held prejudicial attitudes, but also affect policy-

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[26] J. Michael Dash, *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).
[27] Ibid., 25.

making and bolster institutional racism. Although Dash's method is primarily literary critique, his purpose and conclusions are closely aligned with my own endeavor. Significantly, Dash locates the origins of the negative stereotypes that characterize the American discourse about Haiti in the defense of U.S. racial slavery in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution. Likewise, I argue that representations of Haiti during the U.S. occupation were bound up with tensions over the U.S. racial order as people of color and immigrants challenged the Anglo-Saxon character of American-ness and whiteness.

The new cultural history of race and empire draws on theories of discourse and ideology. Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* may serve as a guide to understanding the relationship between American imperialism and the knowledge production of Haiti during the occupation.[28] Said defines Orientalism as a discourse contrived by Western Europeans to describe the "Orient," an arbitrary geopolitical designation, as an oppositional, inferior, Other. According to Said, beginning in the late eighteenth century, British and French politicians and writers assigned negative political, cultural, and moral characteristics to the "Orient," and over time these attributes became an institutionalized body of knowledge that helped rationalize and facilitate various forms of imperial subjugation of the "Orient." Inspired by Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony in capitalist rule and proletarian opposition, Said emphasizes the importance of power relations between the authors and subjects of the discourse. Orientalism emerged in the context of British and French efforts to know and then dominate the "Orient." In historicizing Orientalism Said exposes the discursive and ideological mores

[28] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

of texts and criticizes the political agendas that they served. We can see similar operations in journalistic commentary on Haiti.

Finally, Tamar Y. Rothenberg examines how the *National Geographic Magazine* helped shape American identity in relation to the rest of world, and how it contributed to the exercise of U.S. empire from 1888-1945.[29] She historicizes the magazine, describing its early ties to the federal government and how the magazine was intrinsically linked to the rise of U.S. overseas imperialism. Invoking Mary Louise Pratt's concept of "strategies of innocence," Rothenberg argues that the magazine used various strategies to establish its scientific authority while actively promoting a distinct political and social agenda.[30] Using the seemingly objective power of photography, for example, the *National Geographic Magazine* produced paternalist, racist, and gendered discourses that valorized white, Anglo-Saxon, male supremacy and U.S. empire in depicting other peoples as primitive or backward.

The secondary scholarship and the primary sources selected from the American press will enable me to highlight the various ways in which U.S. representations of Haiti in the early twentieth century reflected, reinforced, and undermined the American racial social hierarchy. The discourses generated about Haiti were fraught with the social tensions being played out in the U.S. and were complicit in the struggle to establish criteria for American political and social entitlement. I will examine how commentaries on the occupation and Haiti challenged or protected ideals of American-ness, and how

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[29] Tamar Y. Rothenberg, Presenting America's World: Strategies of Innocence in National Geographic Magazine, 1888-1945 (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007).
[30] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

in doing so the press produced a one-dimensional, racialized Haiti for the American imagination.

Chapter 2

Strategies of Rationalization: The *New York Times*

On July 29, 1915, the headlines on the front page of the *New York Times* alerted its readers that the president of Haiti had been brutally killed by a mob, and in a "Special to the *New York Times*" informed them that Admiral Caperton had landed a force of U.S. Marines at Port-au-Prince to "protect property and lives and to prevent the 'further spread of rioting.'"[31] The front page carried another news article providing further details and background for the dramatic events of the previous day. The same day's paper also featured an editorial about the current revolution in Haiti and a summary of Haitian history on page eight. Thus began the *New York Times* coverage of the U.S. occupation of Haiti.

This issue of the *New York Times* set the tone for how the paper represented Haiti for the next two decades. It provided detailed, breaking news citing both Haitian and U.S. official sources in a seemingly objective journalistic voice. But the editorial reduced Haitian history to a series of failed attempts at government characterized by corruption, farce, and violence:

> A corrupt and despotic sway, dictatorship, won by revolution and punctuated copiously with assassinations, has been the actual form of government since the Declaration of Independence in 1804 and the massacres of the whites by governor, afterward emperor, Dessalines: a weary list of toy kings, emperors, presidents, of revolutions, exiles, suicides, slaughters, corruption, a civilization, in spite of the great name of Touissant L'Ouverture, which has been sinking, and is brutal and permeated with magical rites. [32]

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[31] "Haitians Slay Their President; We Land Marines," *New York Times*, July 29, 1915.
[32] "The Latest Revolution in Haiti," *New York Times*, July 29, 1915.

While this passage suggests that Haiti has a history and a civilization, they are described together as decadent, regressive, and brutal. Instead of progressing along the lines of an enlightened civilization, Haiti is politically and culturally degrading. Furthermore it is a pagan society, “permeated with magical rites.” The editors go on to describe examples of vodou and magic in the government, and make the point that the recent violence was to be expected as par for the course.

The editorial’s derisive, superficial treatment of Haiti reflected the prevailing view among American newspapers at the time that an American intervention was necessary because Haitians were incapable of self-governance. And like most papers, the *New York Times* was unambiguously supportive of the occupation until 1920, when allegations of marine misconduct and mismanagement surfaced, and it began to question U.S. policy in Haiti. But the paper’s critical view of the occupation quickly waned as its editors accepted the government’s defense of its policies and actions. The paper soon resumed describing Haiti in terms that minimized the occupation’s coercive nature.

The *New York Times* regularly featured news stories about the occupation throughout its duration, although there were very few in 1917 and 1918 when the country’s attention was focused on its participation in World War I. The news articles were purportedly objective and journalistic, sticking to fact-based reporting and printing statements from U.S. officials and politicians, both supportive and critical, as well as occasional statements from Haitian political leaders. Explicit analysis and interpretation, for the purpose of supporting or criticizing U.S. policy, was reserved for editorials.

However, the *New York Times'* news articles as well as its editorials helped create a discourse about Haitians as an inherently disorderly, violent, and needy people.

Three general discursive strategies can be detected at work in the *New York Times* editorials and news features on Haiti: paternalism, depoliticization, and differentiation. Paternalism rested on the idea that the U.S. occupation of Haiti was a civilizing mission, and cast the role of the U.S. as a fatherly guide for Haitians, who were primitive, ignorant, and undisciplined. The paper effected the depoliticization of Haitians by criminalizing oppositional resistance to American troops in Haiti, and by obscuring Haitian history and political processes. Differentiation encompassed the various ways in which the editors portrayed Haitians as fundamentally different from Americans. They described Haitians as culturally, racially, and morally inferior to Americans. The combined effect of these strategies worked to construct Haiti as an inferior Other or a negative void for the readers of the *New York Times*.

In this chapter, I will explore the ways in which the *New York Times* described Haiti during the early phase of the occupation, particularly focusing on two key periods: the first few months following the landing of American marines in Haiti at the end of July, 1915, and the period from 1920 to 1921, when U.S. policy in Haiti became a source of controversy in the American press and politics. Both of these periods, during which the occupation garnered significant press coverage, were formative in the discursive construction of Haiti. I will analyze how the *New York Times'* editorials and news articles rationalized the U.S. occupation and how their representations of Haitians bolstered a white, bourgeois American ideal.

When Adolph Ochs became the publisher of the *New York Times* in 1896, he set out to establish a paper dedicated to informative, unbiased news. He quickly adopted the motto "All the News that's Fit to Print" as a statement directed against yellow journalism. Although Ochs avoided any financial obligations to parties and businesses in order to ensure its independence, the paper positioned itself as fiscally conservative, and generally supported the Democratic Party and big business.[33] Ochs cultivated close ties to powerful political and business leaders, including U.S. presidents, and the paper became influential in American politics.[34] Governor of New Jersey Woodrow Wilson, after winning the Democratic presidential nomination, said he owed his victory to an editorial in the *New York Times*.[35] As the historian Willard Grosvenor Bleyer wrote in 1927, "One of the remarkable achievements in American journalism during the first quarter of the twentieth century was the rise of the *New York Times* from bankruptcy to a position as the leading newspaper in this country."[36] With its national readership, thorough and consistent coverage of the occupation, including exclusive information and key statements issued from U.S. officials, and regular editorials, the *New York*

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[33] Willard Grosvenor Bleyer, *Main Currents in the History of American Journalism* (Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1927), 406.
[34] Harrison E. Salisbury, *Without Fear or Favor: "The New York Times" and Its Times* (New York: Times Books, 1980), 26-27. Salisbury notes Ochs's relationship with J.P. Morgan, one of the most powerful business leaders in the world, who helped Ochs finance his purchase of the *New York Times*; J.P. Morgan was financially affiliated with the National City Bank of New York, which controlled the national Haitian bank during most of the occupation and funded the loan that consolidated Haiti's external debt in 1922. See Schmidt, 132-133.
[35] Elmer Davis, *History of the "New York Times," 1851-1921* (New York: The New York Times, 1921), 250.
[36] Bleyer, *Main Currents in the History of American Journalism*, 404.

Times was one of the most important American newspapers for presenting the occupation to the American public.[37]

In the first year of the occupation, the *New York Times* published five editorials on the subject. We have seen an example of how the first editorial, printed the same day of the invasion, reduced Haitian history to violence and decadence. The piece elaborated on this theme then expressed caution against American intervention in Haiti and the hope that the current Haitian President Bobo would help bring a peaceable solution. The second editorial, entitled "A Strange Suggestion," is scornfully critical of the suggestion by John F. Fort, former New Jersey Governor and head of a presidential commission sent to Haiti, that the U.S. should intervene in the Haitian government.[38] The editors warn that the U.S. has more important foreign policy concerns and that it should be focused on the possibility of an intervention in Mexico, "where American interests are infinitely more important than in the squalid island of Obeah and voodoo." Furthermore, the editorial suggests the U.S. leaves it to Dr. Bobo and his political rivals to fight it out in front of the national palace as they "drive away the goats and pickaninnies." With these comments the editors dismiss the significance of Haitian politics and government. Furthermore, they convey contempt for Haiti in racial and cultural terms: Obeah and vodou were considered heathen, barbaric beliefs associated with African slaves and their descendants, and "pickaninnies" was a derogatory term for black children. It has painted a picture of Haiti for its readers as a "squalid" nation whose culture and government cannot be respected.

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[37] The paper had a daily circulation of 342,553 by 1920. Davis, 403.
[38] "A Strange Suggestion," *New York Times*, July 31, 1915.

The favorite themes of Haitian incapacity and its violent history appear right away in editorials about the occupation and they are used over the next two decades to rationalize U.S. policy in Haiti. The ambivalence of these initial editorials towards American intervention can be attributed to the fact that U.S. policy in Haiti had not been clarified. The editors had not anticipated the scope of the occupation and, while generally supportive of U.S. action, were wary of more extensive involvement. However, as U.S. policy became more apparent in the outlines of the proposed treaty, the paper's approval followed in step. Appearing just one month into the occupation, the third editorial argues that, "the proposed protectorate over Haiti was inevitable."[39] No longer a "strange suggestion," the paper now views the idea of American control of Haiti's customs receipts as an obvious course of action based on Haiti's history of violence, a familiar sketch of which commences the piece, and leads to the point that "Haiti is clearly incapable of self-government without assistance, and the assistance the United States will render may tend to restore order and develop the administrative capacity among the citizens." The U.S. presence, then, will not only inhibit Haitian violence but will also cultivate Haitian capacity for governance. The editorial goes on to state that the proposed treaty with Haiti "cannot arouse serious objection" in the U.S. Senate, but warns that occupation officials must be selected carefully to avoid graft, which would compromise the U.S. administration of Haiti. It concludes that the success of the occupation will depend as much on Washington's discretion as on "the traditional indisposition of Haitians to do things in an orderly way."

[39] "Haiti," *New York Times*, August 27, 1915.

One week later on September 3, 1915, the U.S. military declared martial law and press censorship in Haiti, and shortly thereafter the Haitian Senate ratified the treaty that legalized U.S. control of Haiti's government and finances.[40] In reporting on the treaty, the *New York Times* explained the terms of U.S. control, referring to Haiti as "the West Indian republic, which has hitherto been unable to manage its own affairs." It went on to assert that the U.S. Senate should also accept the treaty because its enactment will "restore peaceful conditions and promote commerce and industry."[41] This news report characterizes Haiti as an incompetent country and the U.S. intervention as an opportunity for Haitians to benefit from American guidance.

After the flurry of pieces in 1915 and 1916, the *New York Times* did not editorialize on Haiti in 1917 and 1918, when the press and the American public were preoccupied by the war in Europe. In October 1919, an editorial appeared with an evaluation of the situation in Haiti for its readers. Referring to Haiti as the "Black Republic," the new editorial regurgitated the same litany of violent successions of Haitian rulers summarized in previous accounts and goes on to contrast the peaceful presidential election under U.S. supervision to conditions before the occupation: "A Haitian election was formerly an orgy of murder."[42] The editorial then describes the progress the U.S. has made in training the Haitian constabulary and teaching Haitians how to govern themselves and practice good hygiene. Once again the overall effect is to remind readers that Haiti, left to its own devices, is a black, ignorant, violent, and dirty

[40] Schmidt, 74-75.
[41] "The Haitian Treaty," *New York Times*, September 19, 1915.
[42] "Haiti Today," *New York Times*, October 26, 1919.

nation, and that the U.S. is engaged in a mission to introduce basic aspects of civilization to Haitians.

In 1920, revelations about the exploitation and oppression behind the occupation were published in the press, which in turn fueled calls for an investigation. The Republican presidential candidate Warren G. Harding condemned the Wilson administration's Haitian policy in a campaign speech printed in the *New York Times,* referring to its blatant imperialism as the "rape of Haiti and Santo Domingo by the present administration."[43] In response to the attacks in the press, Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby issued a statement, also published in the *New York Times,* defending U.S. policy in Haiti. He declared that the U.S. was engaged in Haiti solely for benevolent purposes and explained that the U.S. had been forced to intervene: "for many years prior to 1915, the island of Haiti was the scene of many revolutions and chronic disorder. The revolutions were sometimes accompanied by wholesale massacres and fatalities. Public authority had broken down and the people in rural districts were frequently reduced to starvation." This unacceptable state of affairs, according to Colby, culminated in the murder of Haitian President Vilbrun Guillame Sam, which left Haiti in such turmoil that it was vulnerable to European aggression. The U.S. invoked the Monroe Doctrine to protect Haiti and restore order. Colby goes on to state that due to the U.S. presence in Haiti, "complete tranquility exists throughout the republic."[44] The impression made by Secretary Colby's official statement is that Haiti was an inherently violent and anarchic country that had reached a state of such chaos that the U.S. was

[43] "Constitution or League—Harding," *New York Times*, September 18, 1920.
[44] "Colby Gives Policy in Occupying Haiti," *New York Times*, September 21, 1920.

forced to intervene to restore peace, thus ensuring the security of both Americans and Haitians.

The *New York Times*, which had supported President Wilson and was currently endorsing Harding's Democratic opponent, James M. Cox, responded to Harding's attack with an editorial. The first on the occupation in nearly a year, the editorial described the occupation as a benevolent mission to assist the "Black Republic," and dismissed Harding's allegation of the slaughter of thousands of Haitians as "hysterical." The editorial recounts a specific incident earlier in the year in which cacos, "or outlaws from the northern forests," were killed by marines in Port-au-Prince. "It was not pleasant work for the marines, but a lesson was taught the Haitian banditti, who were probably the tools of cowardly politicians in Port-au-Prince."[45] Hans Schmidt defines a caco army as consisting of "part-time military adventurers and conscripts recruited and loosely organized by local military strongmen."[46] During the occupation the cacos were the primary force of violent resistance against the Americans, whose efforts, according to Schmidt, "were eventually directed solely toward the nationalistic political objective of driving the Americans into the sea."[47] But here cacos are "outlaws" and "banditti" rather than anti-American, nationalist insurgents or rebels—the editors discount any notion that the cacos are themselves politically motivated, and portray them instead as criminals.

The editorial goes on to explain the real purpose of the United States' efforts in Haiti, which is to "pacify the country, develop its valuable resources, construct public

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[45] "The Americans in Haiti," *New York Times*, September 22, 1920.
[46] Schmidt, 42.
[47] Ibid., 83.

improvements, and set up an orderly, efficient and responsible government." The paper, like the State Department, insists that Haiti needs to be disciplined and developed by the U.S. Because Haitians are incapable of creating or maintaining a legitimate and orderly government, the U.S. will do it for them. As a matter of fact, according to the editorial, since the Americans took control a Haitian "constabulary of 2,500 natives has been organized, hundreds of good roads have been built, Port-au-Prince has been cleaned up and modernized, and work has been made for thousands of people who had always lived from hand to mouth and in squalor."[48] The Haitians, in other words, lived in a state of filth and poverty until the Americans arrived to clean things up and develop basic elements of a modern state's infrastructure.

Public outcry against alleged marine brutality in Haiti forced the navy to defend itself. Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels directed both General John A. Lejeune, Commandant General of the Marine Corps, and his predecessor, General George Barnett, who commanded the marines from the time of the intervention in 1915 until June, 1920, to conduct an investigation in Haiti on the matter. General Lejeune's report appeared on October 6 in the *New York Times*. Lejeune stated "the mission of the marines stationed in Haiti is the suppression of banditry and the maintenance of peace and tranquility."[49] Because of the nature of the public allegations, in this statement the navy was no longer encompassing development in its mission. Instead the focus was solely on the justification for the presence of the marines in Haiti as a coercive and violent force. Lejeune's report elaborated on the problem of Haitian "banditry:" "throughout the history of Haiti banditry has been prevalent, the bands being recruited

[48] "The Americans in Haiti," *New York Times*, September 22, 1920.
[49] "Says Haitians Approve Our Actions," *New York Times*, October 6, 1920.

from released or escaped criminals and from the class of men who prefer to live by robbing the industrious, peaceful people in the valleys rather than by earning their bread by their own labor. Banditry has been one of the greatest evils which the Haitian people have had to contend with."

Lejeune reduces the nationalist insurgents, or cacos, to robbers. He stated that he found that occupation officials had handled the "bandit situation" in a "masterly manner," and that the marines had successfully "dispersed" what he characterized as bands of robbers. By negating the political agency of the cacos and turning their resistance into petty, illegal acts of violence, the general is obscuring the reality of violent, nationalist opposition to the occupation. Furthermore, Lejeune reports that in his investigation he "found no evidence of hostility on the part of the natives," who he describes as grateful for marine protection against Haitian bandits. The marines continue to patrol the interior of Haiti "not only to prevent banditry, but also to assure the natives that they will be protected from depredations by bandits. This has had a very beneficial effect, and throughout Haiti we found the natives busily at work cultivating their farms and carrying their produce to market." Lejeune characterizes Haitians as either criminals or as naive, primitive, helpless, "natives" grateful for marine protection from their own native criminal element. He concludes, "Until banditry has been completely stamped out, however, it is essential for the welfare of Haiti that the present disposition of Marine Corps forces in the interior should not be changed." Later, General

Barnett would testify at the Senate Hearings that in the first five years of the occupation 2,250 Haitians were killed as compared to 14 or 16 marines.[50]

The day after publishing General Lejeune's report, the *New York Times* featured an editorial about it. For the editors, the most important aspect of the report was Lejeune's statement that there was no hostility towards the marines by the "natives," which clearly proved Republican presidential candidate Harding's charges false. The editors reiterate Lejeune's assertion that Haiti is peaceful and "safe for law-abiding and industrious people," suggesting that only criminals are targeted by marines. The editors go on to describe the skirmish between cacos and marines earlier in the year in Port-au-Prince:

> The marines made examples of the outlaws. It was not pleasant work, but it had to be done. A notorious element, and not patriotic Haitians, suffered. It would be grotesque to make a parallel with the brave people who resisted the French in the Napoleonic era and won their independence. There has been no "caco" leader during the American occupation who bore the slightest resemblance to Toussaint L'Ouverture.[51]

Once again, the cacos are "made examples of." The description of the marines' killing of oppositional forces in this way trivializes the violence and lends it a paternalistic character. The murder of cacos by the marines is couched in language suggesting a parent who does not enjoy punishing a child but does it for their own good. The cacos are "notorious" "outlaws," and the editors emphasize their criminal motives by explicitly countering any notions of them being driven by nationalistic ideology—they are not "patriotic," and to attribute any laudable political ideals to them would be "grotesque."

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[50] Actually, Hans Schmidt found that Marine Corps records indicate that in the period between March 1919 and November 1920 a total of 3,071 Haitians were killed by marines. Schmidt, 103.

[51] "General Lejeune's Report," *New York Times*, October 7, 1920.

The editorial describes “peaceful and law-abiding” Haitians grateful for marine protection, and “busily at work cultivating their farms and carrying their produce to market.” This reiterates the official scenario that the presence of the marines facilitates Haitian production and industry. It concludes, “the Haitian peasantry at work in their fields, and friendly, tells the story of a humane and honorable occupation.”

However, after an internal U.S. Marine Corps letter from General Barnett to John H. Russell, marine brigade commander in Haiti, was leaked to the press that referred to the “indiscriminate killings of natives,” the paper began to question U.S. military action in Haiti and, like many others, called for an investigation.[52] Nevertheless, the paper’s wavering support for the occupation did not change the way it portrayed Haiti; relevant editorials contained no descriptions of Haiti, focusing instead on the evidence behind the allegations and the subsequent naval inquiry. And despite its criticism of U.S. policy and its reports of atrocities on the part of marines in the fall of 1920, the *New York Times* quickly accepted the military’s defense and retreated from its critical position. By the beginning of 1921, the paper was confident once again in its support of U.S. action in Haiti and resumed depicting Haiti in familiar negative terms. On January 4, 1921 the paper printed a news article entitled, “Natives in Haiti Ate Marines” which relayed reports by marines of cannibalism, mutilation, and other atrocities committed by Haitians.[53]

This was followed by an editorial in February that resurrected the theme of Haiti’s penchant for violence and inherent incapability of governing itself. It described the

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[52] "Reports Unlawful Killing of Haitians by Our Marines," *New York Times*, October 14, 1920.
[53] "Natives in Haiti Ate Marines," *New York Times*, January 4, 1921.

revolutionary events leading up to the murder of President Sam on July 27, 1915 in a derisive tone, referring to a military skirmish as being carried out “in the burlesque Haitian way with much waste of ammunition,” and quoted Admiral H. S. Knapp, the U.S. administrative commander of Haiti: “if Haiti were now left to herself there would be a slipping back into barbarism.” The article goes on to reiterate the incompetence of Haitian rulers: “political life in Haiti had been one tragedy of misrule after another, and every administration was a ghastly travesty of real constitutionalism. Presidents came to violent ends, or took ship in haste to escape the bullet or machete.”[54] The way in which Haiti is characterized through these descriptive statements not only depoliticizes the struggles surrounding government in Haiti, but also makes the notions of the State and sovereignty in the Haitian context seem absurd.

A few days after this editorial another one appeared, entitled “In Santo Domingo,” which discusses the simultaneous U.S. occupation of Haiti and Santo Domingo. It is notable that the editors are compelled to compare it to Haiti:

> No complaints have reached the United States that the marines in Santo Domingo were guilty of inhumanity in any form. They were dealing with a more civilized and rational people than the Haitians are. Compared with them the Dominicans are progressive and enlightened. Insurrections have not been uncommon in the history of Santo Domingo since the Spaniards withdrew in February 1844, but seldom have they been marked by acts of cruelty to the defeated. Massacres have been unknown. The political leaders, although never a happy family, were often men of education, sometimes of literary ability.[55]

Although the two nations share the same island and had a shared history, the editors do not offer any insight into how their histories, and their relationships with the United States are intertwined. Instead they focus on a superficial comparison of the degree of

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[54] "The Problem of Haiti, " *New York Times*, February 16, 1921.
[55] "In Santo Domingo, " *New York Times*, February 20, 1921.

civilization possessed by each. Presumably the recent allegations of “indiscriminate killings” of Haitians by marines motivate the comparison, which insinuates that the Haitians are themselves to blame because they are uncivilized and irrational. Their comments on the history and leadership of Santo Domingo are allusions to Haiti’s violent past; a recurrent theme in the paper’s editorials which when recounted often begins with “Dessalines’ massacre of the whites.” These allusions are made with the assumption that the readers are familiar with these supposed characteristics of Haiti’s history. And if they had been following the paper’s editorial coverage of the occupation they would be. At this time Americans very rarely traveled to Haiti and studied it less, so the readers of the *New York Times* most likely obtained their knowledge of Haiti and Haitian history through its pages. The editorial’s assumption that such allusions would be understood give us some indication of the effectiveness of the readers’ reception of knowledge produced by the paper.

After its confidence in the occupation was restored in 1921, the editorials of the *New York Times* continuously supported the occupation until it ended in 1934 and presented variations on the theme of Haitian inadequacy. The inscription of Haiti with negative attributes helped to construct the paternalistic relationship that the paper posed as a strategy to rationalize U.S. action. Because the Haitians were allegedly incapable of governing themselves or maintaining basic standards of civilization, the U.S. deemed itself obliged to step in to help guide, correct, and sometimes punish them with a firm fatherly hand. This theme appears repeatedly as editors describe the deficiencies of Haitians as a foil against the improvements and progress brought about by the U.S in Haiti. In addition to paternalism, there were other important discursive

strategies used by the *New York Times* to justify the occupation. These tactics often overlapped and reinforced each other as they degraded Haitians and diminished their political and historical agency.

From the outset of the occupation the editors at the *New York Times* dehistoricized Haiti. By doing so they decontextualized it as a state and Haitians as a people, and obscured Haiti's own national narrative. They replaced it with a demeaning story that did not reflect any political processes or ideals, making the concepts of Haitian sovereignty and Haitian patriotism seem incongruous to its readers. Another way in which the paper depoliticized Haitians during this period was by using language that characterized Haitians who offered armed resistance to American marines as criminals rather than political agents. Thus the violence inherent in the American military occupation is reconceptualized as police work—the marines are fighting against criminals rather than a political faction. The invalidation of the cacos' political motivation denies the existence of an armed political opposition, which in turn obscures the fact that the occupation is predicated on coercive action on the part of the U.S. With the ongoing U.S. military violence both rationalized and minimized, the concept of the occupation as a charitable mission remains intact. And with Haiti's history, national narrative, and political agents and processes negated, its sovereignty is rendered meaningless. In addition to paternalism and depoliticization, the paper used a strategy of differentiation to encourage its readers' support of the occupation. It achieved this by ascribing characteristics to Haitians that were different from and inferior to the hegemonic American national self-image. Editors used various tropes: Haitians were incompetent, dirty, violent, ignorant, corrupt, and savage, and black.

A racial hierarchy structured U.S. society during the years of the occupation of Haiti. While some Americans challenged this hierarchy, many more consented to it. The racial order included varying degrees of whiteness, with Anglo-Saxons at the top, but it revolved around a racial binary between whiteness and blackness. Hans Schmidt has demonstrated that much of the failed U.S. policy in Haiti during the occupation was due to the lack of recognition of race and class distinctions in Haiti by American officials and troops, who, according to Schmidt, were largely racist and viewed all Haitians as black, and thus inferior.[56] Whether or not editors and authors directly alluded to race, the *New York Times'* readers understood it to be an inherent determinant when imagining Haiti. Haiti was commonly referred to as the "Black Republic" in the *New York Times* and other periodicals, indicating that its blackness was an essential quality of its identity as a nation. This explicit racial differentiation facilitated other terms that authors used to portray Haiti as an Other. Taken together these negative terms used by the *New York Times* in its representations of Haiti during the occupation reflect the paper's support of U.S. policies in Haiti and promote the idealized self-identity of the American ruling class.

[56] Schmidt, chap. 7.

Chapter 3

Apologist for Empire: The *National Geographic Magazine*

Throughout the occupation of Haiti, U.S. diplomatic officials and military officers justified the enforcement of American authority and the coercive implementation of controversial policies by casting these actions as a benevolent effort to bring order and civilization to a violent and primitive country. As the imperial state apparatus enacted and institutionalized this discourse, it reached the American public through the press as newspapers and magazines printed official statements, reports, and testimonies. The mainstream white press, seeking to provide context for the events unfolding in Haiti, described the country for its readers. It generated racialized representations of Haiti as an ignorant, uncivilized, inferior people living in a regressive state in contrast to American moral and material superiority. This discursive dichotomy bolstered the American racial social order at a time when black Americans and immigrants were challenging ideas of American-ness, and struggling to increase their ability to participate in economic, social, and political spheres.

White supremacists and nativists turned to science and anthropology to reinforce the racist paradigm that idealized the white, Anglo-Saxon American. Often in collaboration with the U.S. government, they disseminated through various institutions pseudo-scientific theories and anthropological narratives that both reinforced the domestic racial social order and supported U.S. imperial projects. Scientific and educational literature, world's fairs and expositions, and museums illustrated hierarchies of race and described the diffusion of progress, enlightenment, and civilization from

white Americans to non-white foreigners. One of these institutions was the National Geographic Society and its popular journal the *National Geographic Magazine*.

The National Geographic Society was founded in January 1888 by a group of wealthy Washington D.C. elites, the majority of who were federal geological and naval officials interested in exploring and cataloguing the world in conjunction with U.S. and British overseas imperialism. The society began publishing its journal, the *National Geographic Magazine,* later that same year. The magazine, whose slogan was "the increase and diffusion of geographic knowledge," captured and displayed myriad subjects curio-cabinet style for its white upper middle class and elite readers. While it featured wide-ranging topics, the bulk of its content included ethnographies that exoticized non-Westerners and glorified colonization.[57] The scientific authority possessed by the *National Geographic Magazine* conveyed factuality while its contributing authors inscribed hierarchical differences between its readers and the subjects of its reports.

The *National Geographic Magazine* published four lengthy articles dedicated to the subject of Haiti, all of which appeared in the early phase of the U.S. occupation from 1915 to 1920. Like the editors and other contributors to the *New York Times*, the authors of these articles used paternalism, depoliticization, and differentiation as discursive devices to rationalize U.S. policy and to reiterate American hegemony. However, the *National Geographic Magazine* was a quasi-governmental scientific institution, rather than a news organization. The magazine evolved from within the

[57] For further discussion on the magazine's representation of non-Westerners, see Linda Steet, *Veils and Daggers: A Century of National Geographic's Representation of the Arab World* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

paradigm of natural history in the context of U.S. overseas imperialism and the consolidation of American national identity in the late nineteenth century, and the ideologies that supported these processes were reflected in its pages. As a proponent and architect of American empire, it advocated American exceptionalism and normalized imperialism in the course of producing knowledge about the rest of the world. Its literary style was closer to the tradition of travel writing than to journalism, and the magazine promoted its agenda under the guise of natural and social sciences. I will examine the *National Geographic Magazine's* articles about Haiti during the occupation to discover how it depicted Haitian inferiority and American superiority.

The magazine's title pages during this period reveal a board of trustees dominated by current and former government officials, including former presidents and vice-presidents of the United States, with the rest being composed of top executives at big business corporations and heads of national academic institutions. A significant number of current and former government officials were also contributing authors. The National Geographic Society and the magazine's omnipotent editor, Gilbert Grosvenor, had powerful ties to the government and the White House. As Robert M. Poole, former editor and writer for the *National Geographic Magazine*, points out in his book about the magazine's history, *Explorer's House,* "presidents, senators, and other dignitaries were happy to attend the organization's annual white-tie dinners. [Gilbert] instituted the first such banquet in 1905 when William Howard Taft, [Gilbert's] cousin by marriage, was the central attraction."[58] In light of such connections, I regard the magazine as a semi-

[58] Robert M. Poole, *Explorer's House: National Geographic and the World It Made* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 65.

official extension of the government. The *National Geographic Magazine* was not only a producer of hegemonic discourse, but also complicit in its institutionalization.

The unsigned article "Wards of the United States: Notes on What Our Country is Doing for Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, and Haiti," appeared in the *National Geographic Magazine* in August 1916.[59] The title of the article immediately sets up the theme of U.S. authoritarian and benevolent paternalism, which reverberates throughout the essay under the pretense of an objective analytical discussion of American assistance to overseas dependencies. Referring to its Caribbean and Central American territories as "wards" delineates a necessary dependence upon the United States as their guardian and protector, and introduces the article's objective of glorifying U.S. imperialism as a civilizing mission among subservient races.

The primary purpose of the article is to extol the progress that the United States has presumably achieved in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Nicaragua. To that end, binaries posit the superiority and effectiveness of the U.S. against the inferiority and incapacity of Haitians. Section titles such as "An Astounding Performance!" and "Our Country's Colonial Achievements" indicate U.S. "progress" in its civilizing mission, glorify colonialism, and promote the idea of American exceptionalism. The article romanticizes the motives behind U.S. imperialism, describing the U.S. as "a nation which covets no territory, which seeks only its own security and the welfare of its unfortunate neighbors," and saying of its intentions, "wherever America has gone, whether to Cuba, whether to Panama, whether to Santo Domingo, Porto Rico,

[59] "Wards of the United States: Notes on What Our Country Is Doing for Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, and Haiti," *The National Geographic Magazine*, August 1916.

Nicaragua, the Philippines, or Haiti, the welfare of the people has been her first concern."[60]

In order to present the American presence as necessary and benevolent, it establishes the moral superiority of the United States, which also affords a contrast to the various immoral characteristics it assigns to Haiti. The article begins with a biased narrative of the circumstances of the U.S. intervention in Santo Domingo, and an enumeration of the resulting positive improvements. Its treatment of Haiti, however, emphasizes race and introduces the tropes such as savagery, barbarity, inauthenticity, irreligiosity, and ineptitude that it attributes to Haitians. It claims that "Conditions have always been unbelievably bad in that Republic. To begin with, it is a place where black rules white."[61]

The first sentence of the article underscores the primacy of race in conceptualizing Haiti: "The island of Haiti, upon which are located the Black Republic of Haiti and the Mulatto Republic of Santo Domingo, is the scene today of two of the most interesting experiments in government that may be found anywhere in the world."[62] The words "black" and "mulatto" indicate that each country has a distinct, and contrasting, racial composition and identity. It is striking that the Dominican Republic is not characterized again in the article as a racially mixed state. Haiti, however, is repeatedly described throughout the article as "black." This device reminds readers of a fundamental difference between not only the two republics, but also, more importantly, between Haitians and the *National Geographic Magazine*'s white American readers.

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[60] Ibid., 145-47.
[61] Ibid., 159.
[62] Ibid., 143.

In this article, the primary marker of Haitians is their race. And among the many defects of their race are practices of idolatry, child sacrifice, and cannibalism. Such customs are evidence of Haitians' barbarity and irreligiosity, and reiterate the idea that Americans are tasked with diffusing civilization to a degraded population. The sensationalism of voodoo was probably familiar to some of the magazine's readers through Sir Spencer St. John's *Hayti or the Black Republic*, published in 1886. Despite its extremely negative and lurid portrayal of Haitians, Sir Spencer St. John's book is treated as a definitive source. Noting that he "was for 15 years British Minister there," the *National Geographic Magazine* quotes his description of Haitians' "revolting practices of the Vaudoux and the cannibals of the country."[63]

In addition to sensationalized descriptions of vodou, the article also associates Haitians with sacrilege and degradation. It casts Haiti as Edenic and its inhabitants as unworthy of this tropical paradise—the extraordinary natural abundance of the land is contrasted to its inhabitants who, by their ineptitude and their indifference to the blessings of their surroundings, fail to draw forth sustenance. In this depiction Haitians are irreverent and derelict—they have soiled and degraded what was naturally an earthly paradise. Sir Spencer St. John is quoted again in describing Haiti: "No country possesses greater capabilities, or a better geographical position, more variety of soil, of climate, and of production, with magnificent scenery of every description, and hillsides where the pleasantest of health resorts might be established, and yet it is now the

[63] Ibid., 159, 164.

country to be most avoided, ruined as it is by a succession of self-seeking politicians, content to let the people sink to the condition of an African tribe."[64]

With this statement St. John is illustrating a state of regression, made more offensive because of Haiti's natural wealth, brought about by Haiti's own political leaders. It serves as evidence of Haiti's inability to govern itself, develop its resources, or maintain a level of civilization that presumably distinguished Haitians from Africans for some period of time. The negative analogy made between Haitians and Africans (who are gratuitously characterized as organized into "tribes" rather than civilized states) suggests a racial connection to their states of degradation. The magazine article goes on to reiterate the supposed laziness and incompetence of Haitians, adding that "[Haiti's] valleys are so fertile that the slightest attention can make them produce like an Eden."[65]

The themes of sloth and dereliction are expanded upon in the association made between Haitians and filth. The article explains that the U.S. intervention, necessitated by Haitian violence and ineptitude, will not only bring about social peace, but will also introduce sanitation to what previously was supposedly "the most foul-smelling...city in the world."[66] It describes the stench and open sewers that met the Americans upon their arrival and adds, "If the American protectorate over Haiti does nothing else but clean up its cities, an infinite service to an indifferent people will have been rendered."[67] These statements echo claims that the U.S. government made throughout the occupation about the ways in which Haiti benefited from the U.S. presence. One of the first and

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[64] Ibid., 159.
[65] Ibid., 177.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., 156.

foremost improvements the American marines credited themselves with bringing about was sanitation, and the discourse about these improvements reinforced the idea that Haitians were a filthy and degraded people to whom Americans would bring basic standards of civilization.

In broaching the subject of Haitian history, the article obviates slavery and dismisses the events of the Haitian Revolution. Instead it dwells on the alleged violence of Dessalines and ridicules the rule of Henri Christophe. It informs readers that from the time Dessalines "defeated the French, massacred their women and children, and set up an independent government," Haiti has had twenty-eight rulers, of whom "only 4 completed their terms in office, 2 died in power, 5 were assassinated, 10 were exiled, 1 committed suicide, and 1 abdicated under compulsion."[68] The enumeration of its rulers' demises indicates Haiti's inherent violence and inability to govern itself. To further establish these negative characterizations the article goes on to describe other Haitian rulers as incompetent, ridiculous, and violent. It describes King Henri Christophe's court as farcical, likening it to an "opera bouffe," and concludes that "Henri Christophe did one wise thing: he shot himself after a burlesque reign of some thirteen years."[69] With tropes of farce and burlesque, Haiti's rulers are rendered inauthentic and their history is reduced to spectacle and violence. Another example of the intertwining tropes of violence and inauthenticity is provided by the description of the period between President Laconte's assassination and the entry of the U.S. as "a nightmare of terror," and that his murder "inaugurated a carnival of crime, and an orgy of revolution such as

[68] Ibid., 164-165
[69] Ibid., 165.

history perhaps never before was called upon to record."[70] By associating Haitian rulers with violence and farce, the article delegitimizes its history and its sovereignty, thereby increasing the moral legitimacy of U.S. intervention and rule.

The article concludes by returning to the image of Haitians as wards and beneficiaries of the United States. Living ignorantly in an Edenic state, they are "a simple population," which "under a firm yet gentle, beneficent guidance, may realize the blessings of tranquil abundance."[71] A paternalist policy is crucial to the nature of the U.S. colonial project and promotion of American exceptionalism. The main goal of the article is to convince readers that the occupation of Haiti is an enactment of the U.S.'s civilizing mission—its "white man's burden." According to the *National Geographic Magazine*, "It has not been without effort or without expense, nor yet without the actual sacrifice of blood and life that our country has stepped in to play the role of Good Samaritan to the peoples of Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, and Haiti."[72]

Published in 1916, this article reviewed the first year of the occupation. The U.S. was still in the process of consolidating its control over Haiti. Some of the most controversial policies, such as the implementation of the new constitution and the introduction of the corvée (a system of forced labor), had not yet been established. Though Haitian resistance was ongoing, there was little American opposition or even awareness of the situation in Haiti. One of the most striking features of U.S. foreign policy in 1916 was that, while maintaining its non-interventionist stance in the World War, the U.S. engaged in multiple imperial projects of its own in Latin America and Asia.

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[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid., 177
[72] Ibid., 147

To justify U.S. colonialism and the reinforcement of the idea of American exceptionalism, the article differentiates between Americans and Haitians. Haitians are assigned negative traits, such as incapacity and violence, that establish a racial hierarchy and work to rationalize the American presence as a civilizing mission. However, although the article consistently denigrates Haitians and denies them any agency, it does not purposefully dehumanize them. They are infantilized, exoticized, and degraded, but the tactic of dehumanization will not appear in the *National Geographic Magazine* until 1920, when the U.S. colonial project in Haiti comes under fierce attack.

The political context in 1920, when the next articles about occupied Haiti appeared in the *National Geographic Magazine*, was very different. As damaging information and criticism about the occupation emerged in the press, U.S. officials were forced to defend American policy and its enactment in Haiti. Amidst calls for an investigation into the occupation, government authorities countered leaks, allegations, and accusations with official defensive reports and statements. American press coverage of the occupation increased, and the controversy catalyzed those voices that supported the U.S. government's position.

Major G. H. Osterhout, Jr. authored the first of three articles that appeared in the December 1920 issue of the *National Geographic Magazine*. He had participated in the takeover and subsequent administration of Haiti. "A Little-Known Marvel of the Western Hemisphere: Christophe's Citadel, a Monument to the Tyranny and Genius of Haiti's King of Slaves" is a lengthy description of King Henri Christophe's Citadel, with some

contextualizing notes on the ruler himself.[73] Right away Osterhout exoticizes Haiti, referring to it as "Mysterious Haiti," despite its proximity to the U.S.:

> It is not surprising that Christophe's Citadel is so little known when consideration is given to the fact that Haiti itself, although only a few hundred miles from the United States, has been so little known as to be termed, until recently, 'Mysterious Haiti.' And for many to whom the geographic location of the island was familiar it was carefully catalogued as one to be avoided, due to frequent domestic upheavals, revolutions, assassinations, and the general uncertainty there of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."[74]

He further explains that "the island's isolation for centuries is drawing to a close" because the U.S. occupation has stabilized its government. This scenario reduces Haitian history to a repetitive cycle of insular violence and chaos, unaffected by progressive, or even transformative, historical processes. Haiti's history was invalid and irrelevant until the U.S. redeemed it, and Americans got to "know" it.[75] By essentializing Haitian history as stagnant and violent, he bolsters the moral position of the United States as a redemptive presence. According to Osterhout, the U.S. has not only drawn Haiti out of its "isolation" but has also brought order to its government. He creates a hierarchical opposition between Haiti and the U.S. by contrasting the "frequent domestic upheavals, revolutions, [and] assassinations" in Haiti and the virtues of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" presumably institutionalized in the U.S.[76] This opposition rationalizes the American presence as a charitable civilizing mission.

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[73] Major G. H. Osterhout, "A Little-Known Marvel of the Western Hemisphere: Christophe's Citadel, a Monument to the Tyranny and Genius of Haiti's King of Slaves," *The National Geographic Magazine*, December 1920, 468-482.
[74] Ibid., 469.
[75] For further discussion on this type of knowledge production, see Said, *Orientalism*, 32-35. Said argues that the Orient does not exist for Orientalists outside Western-constructed knowledge of it.
[76] Osterhout, 468.

Osterhout illustrates King Henri Christophe's rule by referring to "a tradition that Christophe was accustomed to assign a certain distance which a given force of men would have to move a gun each day, and upon their failing to do so he killed every tenth man of the detachment."[77] Throughout the article, he attributes indiscriminate violence, barbarity, and disregard of human life to Christophe to delegitimize his sovereignty. The author racializes these traits by repeatedly reminding his readers of the king's skin color, referring to him as the "black monarch" and the "untutored negro." Under the subtitle, "The Black King's Ornate Palace of Sans Souci," the author gives an explanation for the palace's name, which according to him "serves as a very pointed expression of Christophe's barbaric nature and peculiar twist of mind." He explains that the king, to whom he refers as the "Haitian tyrant," named his palace after a rival in the Haitian Revolution who he "deliberately murdered."[78] The last statement in the article notes that the citadel is "the most impressive monument to a tyrant in our hemisphere."[79]

Appearing in the same month's issue of the *National Geographic Magazine*, the article "Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics" expands upon Osterhout's impressions of Haitian inadequacy by elaborating Haiti's racial inferiority.[80] Sir Harry Johnston, a British explorer and colonial diplomat and administrator who spent much of his career in Africa endeavoring to expand the British Empire there, wrote it. In addition to books on the

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[77] Ibid., 475.
[78] For more on this murder, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995). Trouillot discusses silencing as a part of the production of history. See chapter 2 for his analysis of the meaning and symbolism of Sans Souci in Haitian history.
[79] Osterhout, 481-482.
[80] Sir Harry Johnston, "Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics," *The National Geographic Magazine*, December 1920, 483-496.

exploration and colonization of Africa, he wrote *The Backward Peoples and Our Relations With Them*, published in 1920, in the same year as his article in the *National Geographic Magazine*. In this book, he begins by identifying who the "backward peoples" are and "to what extent they may be retrograde and ineffective as compared with the dominating white race." He explains that the "chief and obvious distinction" between backward and forward peoples is skin color: backward peoples "are of coloured skin" and forward peoples are "white-skinned." He goes on to illustrate his point with a mathematical calculation of the degree of civilization and culture that various peoples around the world have, and he ranks Haiti near the bottom in a group of peoples that "still contain in their midst elements of sheer savagery. Such regions, if left alone by the uncontrolling white man, might easily relapse into the unprofitable barbarism out of which they have been lifted with the white man's efforts during the past fifty years."[81] In this passage, Johnston shares his belief that "backward," or non-white, people naturally exist in a barbaric, uncivilized state, and have profited from being under the control of white men from whom civilization diffuses. If freed from white domination, according to Johnston, any progress or development achieved by such people may be undone.

A familiarity with Johnston's beliefs and career makes it no surprise that he describes Haiti from a racist perspective. He establishes from the outset the importance of race in conceptualizing Haiti when he states that "It is highly improbable that the whole of Hispaniola ever will be under one central government. Santo Domingo will

[81] Sir Harry Johnston, *The Backward Peoples and Our Relations with Them* (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1920), 7-8.

become a yellow or even a white State. Haiti will always be the land of the blacks."[82] He contrasts Haiti's blackness with Anglo-Saxon whiteness in his account of an encounter with an American in Haiti, who he describes as "a white American official of the best type" and a "typical Anglo-Saxon, with fair hair and blue eyes, but a deeply tanned complexion." The author not only admires this American's coloring, but also praises him for having introduced technological and cultural improvements, namely a gramophone, records, and milk, to his "excessively wild" surroundings.[83] The subtext of this passage is that civilization is transmitted by an Anglo-Saxon presence among Haitians.

Johnston's essay is almost entirely devoted to the descriptive study of the people and landscapes of Haiti. He offers the botanical, geographical, and anthropological details of a natural historian, embellished by aesthetic observations. His style is similar to that of the eighteenth-century naturalist travel writers in Africa who historian Mary Louise Pratt analyzes in *Imperial Eyes*. These writers decontextualize indigenous Africans while minimizing the presence of humans in descriptions of landscapes under survey for potential colonial exploitation. They render these territories as uninhabited, unpossessed, and without history, so that European domination may be uncontested.[84] Pratt argues that natural history "elaborated a rationalizing, extractive, dissociative understanding which overlaid functional, experiential relations among people, plants, and animals. In these respects, it figures a certain kind of global hegemony, notably one based on possession of land and resources." She adds that this type of discursive appropriation was seemingly benign in contrast to overt articulations of colonialism and

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[82] Johnston, "Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics," 483.
[83] Ibid., 487.
[84] Pratt, 51.

imperialism. Pratt calls this type of strategic system, which asserts European hegemony while assuming innocence, an “anti conquest”[85]

Sir Harry Johnston adopts a similar strategy. He describes the Haitian landscape in a way that empties it of its inhabitants and identifies and catalogues its “contents” in a possessive manner under the pretense of being a neutral and knowledgeable observer: “The extraordinary relief of the surface—tremendous gorges; wall-like mountain-sides; crumbling peaks; zigzag, white-stoned stream valleys; clusters of pines, pillar-like, 200-feet columns of reddish gray stems; the golden candelabra of the yuccas; the acanthus-like foliage of the handsome *Bocconia Frutescens*, the scarlet fringes of the bell-like fuchsias.[86] This passage continues in the same vein, with more detailed descriptions of Haiti’s flora. Like Pratt’s natural historians, Johnston uses Linnaean names throughout the essay, underscoring his “scientific” approach. His seemingly benign observations convey a quality of dominance and control in contrast with passive and yielding resources in a way that simultaneously legitimizes his exploitative evaluation.

Pratt points out that where indigenous inhabitants do exist they are produced as deculturated objects of formal ethnographic description. They are never allowed self-representation, culture, or history.[87] Johnston uses this tactic to negate any agency or context for Haitians. His observations of a mountainous region are telling: “The mountain people are a vigorous and comely negro race. The fine development of the men made one regret that they did not revert more to the most defensible African custom of wearing very little clothing, for they would evidently have exhibited forms that

[85] Ibid., 38-39.
[86] Johnston, "Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics," 489.
[87] Pratt, 52-53.

would be a delight to the sculptor's eye."[88] He admires these people from an aesthetic point of view, but he has positioned them as objects meant to be evaluated by his expert eye. In making a spectacle of them, he reveals the power differential between the people and his own dominant position.[89] At the same time, he emphasizes the primitiveness of these Haitians by drawing a connection between them and Africans.

Johnston's lengthy and repetitive review of Haiti's geography, flora, and fauna paints it, familiarly, as an Edenic wilderness. He calls the Haitian mountains "earthly paradises."[90] The metaphor of Haiti as a paradise is once again set up as a foil for the degradation of Haitians. He proceeds to note improvements made in Port-au-Prince during the American occupation, for "prior to the advent of the Marines the tourist not infrequently encountered extraordinary muck heaps in the side streets (with occasional dead donkeys)" that were "no doubt, the hot-beds of disease."[91]

While the U.S. intervened in Haiti under the pretense of restoring law and order, occupation officials asserted from the beginning that Americans were also bringing basic standards of civilization to Haiti. As the U.S. government defended the occupation against growing opposition and criticism in 1920, officials emphasized this idea. Sanitation and hygiene were a recurrent theme, and military officials credited marines with having introduced these concepts to Haitians. In September 1920, Secretary of Navy Josephus Daniels issued a public statement in which he praised the efforts of American marines in Haiti, explaining that, "[the marines] had built roads, preserved

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[88] Johnston, "Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics," 489-90.
[89] Pratt, 204-05.
[90] Johnston, "Haiti, the Home of Twin Republics," 488.
[91] Ibid., 493.

order, introduced sanitation, and served Haitian prosperity and Haitian stability."[92] The same week, Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby also issued an official statement defending U.S. policy, stating that the U.S. "is engaged in a task which only has a benevolent purpose." He goes on to explain that the U.S. has obligated itself to Haiti to contribute to the welfare of Haitians and the prosperity of the country and that "much progress has been made in road construction, port works, establishment of telegraphs, etc."[93] These and other social and material improvements were discussed and enacted in terms made familiar by Progressive era reformers in the U.S. After the reorganization of the occupation in 1922, the U.S. policy focused on improving, developing, and uplifting Haiti through civil works, infrastructure improvements, and public education and health programs. Likewise, the discourse about the occupation became increasingly focused on development and progress brought about by the U.S.

"Haiti and Its Regeneration by the United States" is the third article about Haiti featured in the December 1920 issue of the *National Geographic Magazine.* It comes at the end of a string of increasingly derogatory portrayals of Haitians. The article is unsigned. It begins with an explanation for "Haiti's problem," which is "made up of the sum of all the accumulated evils and abuses of more than a hundred fevered, retrograde years—years cursed with tyranny and bloodshed unimaginable." The article then enumerates the various horrors perpetrated by Haitians. Elaborating on the themes of violence and barbarity as inherent Haitian characteristics, it goes one step further and, unlike the previous articles, dehumanizes them:

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[92] "Daniels Defends Marines in Haiti," *New York Times*, September 19,1920.
[93] "Colby Gives Policy in Occupying Haiti," *New York Times,* September 21,1920.

> Here, in the elemental wildernesses, the natives rapidly forgot their thin veneer of Christian civilization and reverted to utter, unthinking animalism, swayed only by fear of local bandit chiefs and the black magic of voodoo witch doctors. And while the peasants thus took to the bush, the middle and upper class Haitians gravitated to the seacoast towns, where they learned the art of living by the expert exploitation ... of the unthinking black animals of the interior.[94]

While the other articles limited Haitians' agency to farcical spectacles, acts of violence, and the generation of filth, this author characterizes them as "unthinking animals," not only stripping them of agency and intelligence, but also of their humanity. This tactic totally negates Haiti's sovereignty as well as its citizenry, and by implication renders the U.S. intervention as an extension of legitimate authority into a space lacking it. Sovereignty, it would seem, abhors a vacuum.

The article's treatment of the Haitian Revolution attributes the least possible amount of agency to the slave population. It reduces the twelve and a half year struggle that resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of black revolutionaries, Haitian civilians, and French, British, and Spanish soldiers to a situation in which the French Revolution weakened the whites so that "the negro slaves arose and with almost indescribable atrocities wiped out almost the entire white population." Because France was engaged in the Napoleonic wars, according to the article, "it had few troops to spare for the transatlantic campaign; so, after desultory fighting, the rebels achieved independence." Although historians Laurent Dubois and Carolyn Fick have both demonstrated that the slave and ex-slave revolutionary fighters of the Haitian Revolution were ideologically aware and politically motivated protagonists, the only

[94] "Haiti and Its Regeneration by the United States," *The National Geographic Magazine*, December 1920, 497-511.

political or military agency the article lends them is the perpetration of atrocities.[95] The article continues by stating that "social disintegration" began with Haitian independence and continues to the present. Its vivid depiction of degeneration and decay induces the reader to understand that what was once "magnificent" under French colonial rule has become "jungle waste," "the retrogression of man," and "the ruin of an abandoned civilization" after Haitian independence.[96] It implies that, once left to govern themselves, Haitians live in squalor, "huddled together like animals" in the "surrounding wilderness."[97]

In its failure to historicize Haiti, the article ignores the repercussions of the defeat of the French in the Haitian Revolution and the declaration of Haitian independence during the height of institutionalized black slavery in the Atlantic world. Rather than suffering from the supposed deterioration of civilization brought about by the end of white French rule, Haiti was subjected to economic disaster when, already ravaged by the long fought war, it became heavily indebted to France for reparations agreed to in exchange for French recognition of Haitian sovereignty and opening of trade. Haiti's neighbor and historic trading partner, the United States, instituted a trade embargo against the new republic and refused to recognize Haitian sovereignty until 1862.[98]

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[95] Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004); Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, 1st ed., (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990).
[96] "Haiti and Its Regeneration by the United States," 499.
[97] Ibid., 500.
[98] For more on U.S. policy on Haiti following Haitian independence, see Tim Matthewson, "Jefferson and the Nonrecognition of Haiti," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 140, no. 1 (March 1996): 22-48.

Vodou is evoked to complete this tableau of Haitian degradation: “In this carnival of barbarism religion also had its place.” This religion is “cannibalism and the black rites of voodoo magic,” a practice which involves “the sacrifice of children.”[99] Moreover, most Haitian rulers “were intimates of the voodoo priests and doctors and many of them were accused of being practitioners of the highest voodoo rite--cannibalism.”[100] While vodou already carried a stigma of sacrilege and depravity for the American public, the supposed link to cannibalism only intensified the perceived immorality and degeneracy of its practitioners.

In setting the scene for the American intervention, the article describes a violent litany of revolutions and murder and then offers a grossly romanticized version of the landing of the marines in 1915. The section title, “Chaos everywhere when the United States Intervenes,” signals a lurid account of a disease-ridden, violently unstable, and therefore inauthentic state.[101] The article argues that there was neither a valid government, nor even a fully human population in Haiti when the U.S. invaded. It denies the agency and humanity of Haitians, a negation based on race. This racism includes implicit support of French colonial slavery. The occupation is likened to the good government of French rule: “For the first time in its history since the French were driven out, the island enjoyed peace and security of life and property.” This statement annihilates a century of Haitian independence as well as disavows the exploitation and

[99] "Haiti and Its Regeneration by the United States."
[100] Ibid., 503.
[101] Ibid., 505.

suffering of the Haitian people at the hands of the French and later the Americans. Historically passive and irrelevant, "Haiti is unequivocally a black republic."[102]

A racialized hierarchy structures the entire discourse about Haiti during the early period of the occupation in the *National Geographic Magazine* and helped facilitate neocolonial state building. At the beginning of the occupation, the American public was barely aware of Haiti and its political situation. The emergence of the United States as an imperial power in Latin America and the Pacific was a more visible concern. When the first article under analysis appeared in the *National Geographic Magazine* in 1916, U.S. policy in Haiti was generally uncontested by the American mainstream press, and the article's tone is optimistic. Paternalist notions of development and progress accompany negative racial characteristics attributed to Haitians. While Haitians are described as violent, barbarous, ineffectual, and degraded, these tropes are applied to an infantilized population. The article's primary objective is to describe Haitian racial inferiority and incapacity as compared to the contrasting image of American superiority and competency worthy of a mission to uplift and civilize the "black republic."

The three articles that appeared in the *National Geographic Magazine* in December 1920 were published at the end of a year marked by intense criticism of U.S. policy and allegations of marine misconduct in Haiti. As opposition to the occupation grew, its supporters became defensive. The *National Geographic Magazine,* unambivalently apologetic for U.S. imperialism, adopted a strategy of differentiation to rationalize the occupation. Its contributors generated a racialized discourse that reiterated Haiti's strangeness and degeneracy in order to reinforce its identity as an

[102] Ibid., 507.

inferior Other to Americans. The general exaltation of U.S. imperialism was no longer the primary intent; instead, the articles focused on invalidating the idea of Haiti's potential for self-government. They obviated Haitians' political agency and history as well as represented them as racially inferior in ways that rendered them incapable of maintaining a civil state. The portrayal of Haiti as ahistorical, its rulers as inauthentic, and its inhabitants as degraded effectively negated any capacity for Haitian sovereignty and thereby justified its occupation by the United States. The *National Geographic Magazine* developed new, negative racial stereotypes in its descriptions of Haiti that served as a foil for American, Anglo-Saxon, white supremacy. This presumed, idealized American superiority underwrote the concept of the occupation as a charitable civilizing project.

Needless to say, the articles do not inform readers about the authors or how they came about their "knowledge" of Haiti and Haitians. The readers are supposed to accept the claims and criticisms based on the magazine's reputation and its proclaimed adherence to fact. The *National Geographic Magazine*'s power to persuade rested on its status as a scientific and educational institution and its public affiliation with high-level government officials. Thus its articles about Haiti were imbued with authoritative, scientific credibility. And yet, the magazine's superficial and tendentious accounts of Haiti hardly assisted the public in understanding why the occupation was controversial in the U.S. or why it was the target of violent opposition in Haiti itself. Readers interested in those questions had to turn to other periodicals to find answers to them.

Chapter 4

Challenging Racism at Home and Abroad: The *Crisis*

Upon learning of the invasion of Haiti, W.E.B. Du Bois, the editor of the *Crisis* magazine, immediately wrote to President Wilson to convey his deep dismay over the U.S. action. In his letter he proposed that if the U.S. offered assistance to Haiti with no infringement on its sovereignty and without economic exploitation, then it would be "a solemn act of reparation on our part for the great wrongs inflicted by this land on the Negro race."[103] This assistance would be ineffective, however, if the U.S. did not have the full support of Haitians, and if African Americans were not assured of its benign intentions. The current situation in Haiti presented an opportunity for President Wilson to improve the reputation of the United States in racial matters and of the Democratic Party, which Du Bois noted as "historically the party of Negro slavery." [104] This request, however, fell on deaf ears. A short while later, in the October 1915 issue of the *Crisis*, Du Bois published an editorial condemning the intervention. It called upon America's "ten million Negroes" to demand that Wilson clarify U.S. intentions and appoint a multiracial commission to help establish the terms of the occupation.[105]

Du Bois's letter and editorial are examples of the significance of Haiti for African Americans in the early twentieth century. Most of the African world had been subjected to European colonialism, and on that continent as well as in the U.S. blacks were oppressed by white supremacy. Haiti's history of revolution and independence made it a

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[103] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Correspondence of W.E.B. Du Bois: Selections, 1877-1934*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 1: 212.
[104] Ibid., 211-12.
[105] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Hayti," *The Crisis*, October 1915, 291.

powerful symbol of black freedom. Now the Haitian people were coming under American rule at a time when African Americans were struggling to survive disenfranchisement, segregation, and outright terror.

Indeed, the early years of the occupation of Haiti were particularly onerous for people of color in the U.S. The year 1915 saw the refounding of the Ku Klux Klan and the premiere of D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*, a film that glorified the KKK and degraded blacks. It became the highest grossing film of its time despite nationwide protests against it organized by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Furthermore, some of the worst years for lynching occurred from 1915 through the early twenties. The summer of 1919 became known as Red Summer as bloody race riots erupted across the country. Haiti was captured by the American imagination amidst these heightened racial tensions.

Although the mainstream white American press varied in its perspective on issues of race and racism, the prevalent discourse reflected the domestic racial hierarchy and excluded most black voices. The black press, however, consistently and actively fought for domestic racial justice and equality.[106] The NAACP's *Crisis* enjoyed a national readership and exerted influence over both black and progressive white opinion around the country. The NAACP had been founded in New York City in 1909 by black and white civil rights activists partly in response to the 1908 race riot in Springfield, Illinois. Its purpose was to eliminate racial prejudice and injustice, and to secure equal rights and equal opportunities for America's "colored citizens." In 1910, W.E.B. Du Bois, a founding member of the NAACP and its director of publications and

[106] William G. Jordan, *Black Newspapers and America's War for Democracy, 1914-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 2.

research, launched the organization's monthly journal, the *Crisis*. While the board of directors of the NAACP, initially almost entirely white, sometimes complained that the *Crisis* was too strident or militant, Du Bois maintained relative autonomy in controlling its contents. He was widely viewed as the leading spokesperson for black Americans, especially after the death of Booker T. Washington in 1915.[107] The journal served as a bridge between the black press and the mainstream white press. In its early years an estimated twenty percent of the *Crisis's* readers were white.[108]

Du Bois stated the mission of the *Crisis* in his first editorial: "The object of this publication is to set forth those facts and arguments which show the danger of race prejudice, particularly as manifested today toward colored people." He counterposed equal rights to white supremacy: "its editorial page will stand for the rights of men, irrespective of color or race; for the highest ideals of American democracy; and for reasonable but earnest and persistent attempts to gain these rights and realize these ideals."[109] Thus, the *Crisis* emphasized political and social commentary and criticism. Not surprisingly, Du Bois was quick to grasp the significance of Haiti in the light of U.S. racism and its projection into Latin America and the Caribbean.

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[107] See Henry Lee Moon, *The Emerging Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois: Essays and Editorials from the Crisis with an Introduction, Commentaries and a Personal Memoir by Henry Lee Moon* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972); David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000).

[108] Jordan, *Black Newspapers and America's War for Democracy, 1914-1920*, 29; Charles Flint Kellogg, *NAACP, a History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), 150; Jordan states that "Black newspapers commented on it frequently, and the government and white Americans viewed it as faithful representation of black opinion," Jordan, 8.

[109] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Our Tenth Anniversary," *The Crisis*, November 1920.

Historian Brenda Plummer has noted that the NAACP was "the first major black organization to oppose the occupation," and its journal, the *Crisis,* commented on it from 1915 through 1934.[110] The magazine editorialized on subjects that raised awareness or otherwise advanced its mission to secure equal civil rights and racial justice for people of color in the U.S., and Du Bois selected letters and other articles for the same purpose. In this case study, I will analyze articles published by the *Crisis* about Haiti to determine how the magazine connected the occupation with racism in the U.S., and how its treatment of the subject furthered its mission. Furthermore, I will explore how the *Crisis* addressed African Americans and their stake in what was happening in U.S.-Haitian relations.

As we have seen, in October 1915, soon after the U.S. invaded Haiti and once its policy had become clear, Du Bois issued a vehement indictment of U.S. action in his first editorial on the subject:

> The United States has violated the independence of a sister state. With absolutely no adequate excuse she has made a white American Admiral sole and irresponsible dictator of Hayti. The anarchy in Hayti is no worse than the anarchy in the United States at the time of our Civil War, and not as great as the anarchy today in Europe. The lynching and murder in Port-au-Prince is no worse than, if as bad as, the lynching in Georgia. Hayti can, and will, work out her destiny and is more civilized today than Texas.[111]

In this opening passage Du Bois reminds his readers that Haiti is a sovereign nation and suggests kinship with Haiti by calling it a sister state. In this case the kinship is "racial" in the sense of a common history of racial oppression—the metaphor invokes racial solidarity and compounds the meaning of the United States' transgression. He

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[110] Plummer, "The Afro-American Response to the Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934," 131.
[111] Du Bois, "Hayti," 291.

goes on to compare the “lynching and murder in Port-au-Prince” to “the lynching in Georgia.” This is a reference to the lynching of Leo Frank, a Jewish victim of mob violence, which is discussed in a commentary that appears contiguous to this editorial. In the same vein, Du Bois states that Haiti is more civilized than Texas--a reference to the burning at the stake of two black men in the state, also reported on in this issue. These comparisons serve several purposes. They undermine the American justification for the occupation by revealing the hypocrisy of the U.S. government in claiming that Haiti was too violent and uncivilized to govern itself while harboring the perpetrators of commensurate violence within its own sovereign borders. The comparisons also delegitimize the lynchers and suggest that their crimes are a national offense--if Haitians are condemned for their violence by the federal government, then so too must the lynchers be punished. Finally, the broader purpose of these comparisons is to draw attention to the issue of lynching. Du Bois has turned his criticism of U.S. action in Haiti into an opportunity to condemn mob violence against black Americans. By doing so he made the occupation fundamentally an issue of racial justice, across borders.

There were fifty-six recorded lynchings of black people in the U.S. in 1915.[112] The NAACP, dedicated to fighting lynching from its inception, generated investigations and publicity and pursued lobbying and litigation under the auspices of the Committee on Anti-Lynching Programme established in 1916.[113] The *Crisis* published annual lynching statistics and reported on individual lynchings and other cases of mob violence. Historian Robert L. Zangrando has argued that aside from the primary purpose of

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[112] Robert L. Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade against Lynching, 1909-1950* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 6.
[113] Ibid., 28.

stopping the lynchings, the NAACP's antilynching campaign used the issue for broader purposes: it drew attention to other racial inequities, offered a platform to urge the federal government to address racial injustice, and served to unify and mobilize blacks in the North and South. He notes that the NAACP could attract sympathizers by showing that the explicit violence enacted in lynchings and their extrajudicial nature threatened Judeo-Christian and democratic values, and thus delegitimized the lynchers. According to Zangrando, "Lynching became the wedge by which the NAACP insinuated itself into the public conscience, developed contacts within governmental circles, established credibility among philanthropists, and opened lines of communication with other liberal-reformist groups."[114] Lynching remained an important reference point for commentary in the *Crisis* about the U.S. project in Haiti.

In November 1915, an editorial commentary entitled "Haitian and Other Savages" appeared in the *Crisis.*[115] It compares the violent events surrounding the murder of Haitian President Guillaume Sam, used by the U.S. to justify the landing of marines in Haiti, to similarly violent events in Europe and the U.S. The comparison serves to undermine the rationale for U.S. action. In particular it contrasts the violence in Haiti and the events in Georgia surrounding the rioting and attempted lynching of Georgia's governor at the hands of a mob after he commuted the death sentence of a convicted murderer. The editorial argues that in the Georgia case the mob had no valid justification for its behavior because the governor's actions were within the bounds of the law, whereas the Haitian mob did have a rational motive because it sought vengeance on a man who massacred, without sanction of a trial, his political opponents.

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[114] Ibid., 18.
[115] "Haitian and Other Savages," *The Crisis*, November 1915.

In other words, the violence in Haiti proved more rational than the violence committed in Georgia; therefore, the U.S. justification for its action in Haiti was hypocritical because the federal government failed to intervene in its natural jurisdiction or condemn the brutality committed by its own citizens. The intent of this argument is not only to question U.S. action in Haiti but also to draw attention to the issue of lynching as a national, and not simply a Southern, problem.

The commentary goes on to suggest that Haitians would not seek assistance from the U.S. in handling their political problems because they had not had a close historical relationship with the U.S., and they have a cynical view of the Monroe Doctrine. The article points out that Haiti, the "first Latin American Republic," went unrecognized by "the slave holding United States," and that no social or intellectual benefits have been conferred upon it by the "great Anglo-Saxon nation of the North." Therefore, Haitians would prefer foreign assistance to come from a state with closer, but more disinterested, ties to Haiti, described in the article as "the one country in world where enlightened Negroes—real Negroes, not merely colored people—enjoy the fullest measure of liberty and fraternity with men of similar tastes and equal attainment."[116] The history of U.S. policy towards Haiti and its treatment of African Americans cancels any claim of stewardship over Haiti and explains why Haitians cannot accept such a subordinate relationship.

The article then turns readers' attention again to the issue of mob violence against blacks in the U.S. with the question, in reference to the idea of U.S. control over Haiti's government, "Can the Haitians accept with equanimity the prospect of paying the

[116] Ibid., 31.

salary of some 'deserving democrat' who may have come from the Texas town where all the inhabitants turned out last month to make a holiday spectacle of the burning alive of a black man merely accused of murder?"[117] By doing so it poses the racial implications of U.S. domination of a black nation. The failure of the federal government to protect the rights of its black citizens produces the reasonable fear that its officials will not treat Haitians justly. Compounding this general concern is the bitterness and distrust Du Bois and other black leaders had towards President Wilson, a Democrat. Many of them had supported Wilson during his presidential campaign, but were cruelly disappointed by his imposition of segregation in the federal government work force and his complacency on racial issues. From the perspective of "one who sees the Black Republic with eyes other than those of Spenser St. John and the incorrigibly negrophobe editors of some of the American papers," Haiti should not be coerced into accepting foreign assistance. The commentary concludes with a rhetorical flourish that suggests Haiti would be better off under German rather than American rule: "But if they must accept enforced subjection to some foreign power rather than submit to a nation controlled by a press which remains callous in the presence of horrors in Texas and Georgia while vociferously condemning German atrocities and Haitian savagery, the Haitians would sooner trust to the tender mercies of Count Reventlow, the Kaiser and Kulter."[118]

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[117] Ibid., 32.

[118] Ibid; Du Bois is not only attacking the American press and exploiting anti-German sentiment. In suggesting that Haiti would prefer assistance from Germany rather than the U.S., he is sarcastically exaggerating the evils of American racism. In an editorial published a year earlier he asserted that Germany's record toward non-whites was "the most barbarous of any civilized people," and that a German triumph in the world war

This statement contains an indictment of the American press's treatment of racial violence in the U.S. It was written several months after Germans sank the British ocean liner Lusitania in May 1915, killing over one hundred American passengers. The American press expressed outrage at what it considered an atrocity committed by Germany, and demanded some form of sanction or reprisal from the U.S. government. The article points out the press's hypocrisy in condemning German and Haitian acts of violence in light of its complacency about the hundreds of African Americans who were killed or terrorized by mob violence each year in the U.S.

Early on during the war Du Bois saw the opportunity that it provided to the race struggle.[119] Despite the pacifism of some of its board members, the NAACP also officially noted and publicized the link between the war and its mission to secure racial equality. The organization sent Du Bois to the Paris Peace Conference as a representative of the NAACP and the *Crisis*. Throughout the course of the war, and during and after the peace settlement Du Bois used the *Crisis* to emphasize the importance of war in the crusade for racial justice and published articles explicitly linking international developments to the domestic racial struggle.[120]

An open letter "To The Secretary of State" is printed in the November 1915 issue. Charles F. Dole, minister, author, and Chairman of the Association to Abolish War, penned the letter to question the secretary about the constitutional and moral legitimacy

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would be a disaster for blacks. W.E.B. Du Bois, "World War and the Color Line," *The Crisis*, November 1914, 29.

[119] See W.E.B. Du Bois, "World War and the Color Line"; W.E.B. Du Bois, "The African Roots of War," *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1915.

[120] Jonathan Rosenberg, "For Democracy, Not Hypocrisy: World War and Race Relations in the United States, 1914-1919," *International History Review* 21, no. 3 (September 1999): 592-625.

of the intervention. He begins by asking if he may venture a question, “over the action of our government in Hayti, unfortunately already attended with bloodshed?” He notes his disapproval of President Roosevelt’s “autocratic” act of establishing a financial protectorate over the Dominican Republic in 1905, and argues that U.S. intervention in both Haiti and the Dominican Republic is illegitimate. Dole points out, “It looks now as if the United States were not welcome to the Haytian people. We are actually engaged in war with them compelling our soldiers to lose their lives in subduing those who doubtless seem to themselves to be defending their liberties.” He goes on to compare the U.S. action to German, Russian, and British imperialism, and concludes with the question that he introduced at the beginning of his letter, “does the United States meditate the conquest of Hayti?”[121]

Dole’s concern over the question of Haitian consent both underscores the coercive nature of the U.S. occupation and acknowledges Haitian political agency. He describes Haitians as political actors fighting for their liberty against American control. He endows Haiti with America’s own self-proclaimed ideals of democracy and freedom at a time when they stood as a foil against European imperialism, which many perceived as the cause of the war in Europe. By making an analogy between U.S. action in Haiti and European imperialism, however, he suggests that U.S. claims to be different are hypocritical. Dole’s anti-imperialist argument is particularly relevant because he has capitalized on the topical currency of the war and its polarizing effect in American public opinion about the U.S. role in world affairs. By describing the U.S. in

[121] Charles F. Dole, "To the Secretary of State," *The Crisis*, November 1915, 32.

terms of conquest and coercion, he has taken advantage of the discourse to which the American public was becoming increasingly attuned.

The anti-imperialist tactic of condemning U.S. action in Haiti is repeated in the January 1916 issue of the *Crisis*, in which there appears a black and white photo of Admiral Caperton, the American naval officer in charge of the intervention, and Haitian President Sudre Dartiguenave standing next to each other. The admiral is in a salute wearing his white naval dress uniform, and the president, standing with a cane in one hand, is wearing a black coat, hat, and gloves. A conventional reading of the image would conclude that the two men, in their dignified dress and stance, were representatives of the elite and more or less equals, and that the president was a willing collaborator with the Americans. However, the caption printed underneath the picture reads, "The southern white usurper in Haiti and the helpless colored President."[122] It conveys the point that the U.S. controlled Haiti through imperial force. The description of Caperton as a "usurper" asserts that he obtained authority over Haiti illegitimately—without due process and the consent of the Haitian people. This idea is reinforced by the reference to the Haitian president as "helpless," suggesting to readers that the president is a puppet of the United States government. The caption also ties together the significance of race to the relationship of power between Haiti and the United States by describing Caperton as southern (he was from Tennessee) and white, a description that epitomized American white supremacists, and Dartiguenave as helpless and black, reiterating blacks' subordinate position in the U.S. racial social order. The caption alludes to the fear that domestic American racism would affect the enactment of U.S.

[122] *The Crisis*, January 1916, 117.

policy in Haiti and invokes the coincidence of American colonial and racial domination over Haiti.[123]

An editorial from the Haitian newspaper *Le Nouvelliste* is reprinted in the same January 1916 issue. It criticizes American hypocrisy in declaring its benign intentions as it engages in a "frank attempt at colonization."[124] It describes U.S. military power on the island as well as its de facto control over Haitian civil departments. It asks how, "can we reconcile all this with the essential attributes of an independent nation?" In addition to criticizing the United States' blatant imperialism and transgression of Haitian sovereignty, it cynically describes the United States' violation of international law as "strange innovations." The ideological significance of U.S. action is underscored by the comment that the occupation and its coercive policies are being enacted "while nearly the whole world is enflamed for the maintenance of the principles safeguarding the weak peoples: respect for Belgian territory and the non-enslaving of the Serbian people."[125] The editorial is making an analogy between the Central Powers' aggression and exploitation and U.S. action to increase the relevance of its argument for readers.

The *Crisis* does not give the date for the Haitian editorial, but the editorial offers a clue in stating that "the events of yesterday were a living expression of the clearly outlined and executed purpose of the Star-Spangled Republic in disembarking its troops." It must have been published some time between the landing of the marines at the end of July, 1915 and before the publication of the January issue of the *Crisis*. It is likely that the editorial was written in response to the ratification of the Haitian-American

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[123] See Schmidt, chap. 7, for a discussion of racial tensions between the American occupiers and their official Haitian counterparts.
[124] "Editorial from Le Nouvelliste, Port-Au-Prince, Haiti," *The Crisis*, January 1916, 133.
[125] Ibid., 134.

Treaty of 1915 by the Haitian Senate on November 12. Regardless, it almost certainly was written after the U.S. military instituted martial law and strict press censorship on September 3, 1915. According to Hans Schmidt, prior to 1920 occupation officials effectively silenced dissent by the Haitian opposition press. Even after 1920, when the strict enforcement of press censorship eased somewhat, they still regularly jailed editors for publishing anti-occupation pieces.[126] Therefore, this editorial offers insight into how the Haitian press challenged the occupation. It may be that couching its opposition in anti-imperialist rhetoric, which was a legitimate and topical discourse in the American press, was a strategy for getting its critique past the U.S. military censors.

The Haitian editorial is accompanied in the *Crisis* by a photo of a slain Haitian, fallen next to a piece of artillery. Presumably the dead Haitian is the victim of an American marine. The photo's caption reads, "Our Christmas Greeting to Haiti: Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men."[127] The article and photo serve as a reminder to readers that the U.S. occupation was predicated on coercion and violence, comparable to European aggressors, and was far from the benevolent civilizing mission that the mainstream American press portrayed.

After a period of silence during the Great War, the *Crisis* published an article in May 1920 written by Bishop John R. Hurst, the leader of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Entitled "Haiti," it recounts the oppressive control exercised by the United States over Haiti. In the face of Haitian resistance, the U.S. imposed martial law and press censorship, prohibited public meetings, and imposed a

[126] Schmidt, 195-196.
[127] Ibid.

new Haitian constitution. He refutes the justifications given by the U.S. for its actions and sums up his critique with an unequivocal condemnation:

> I do not think anywhere in the annals of history is to be found a political crime that corresponds to the one perpetrated upon the weak and struggling people of Haiti. It is but the Negro question in a new form. After one hundred and more years of struggling to fulfill a mission that Providence had entrusted to them, namely, to assist in the rehabilitation of the Negro race, the Haitian people find themselves violently arrested, the work of their fathers pulled down, their traditions shattered and now at the mercy of those whose only right to manage their affairs is that they are strong.[128]

Hurst believes that Haiti had a divinely appointed mission to uplift the black race. This belief reflects Haiti's symbolic power, imbued by its history, for blacks. In shattering "the work" and "the tradition" achieved by Haitians, the occupation is assaulting all people of African descent. When Hurst argues "it is but the Negro question in a new form," he is expressing the view held by other black American writers that the occupation is an iteration of the white supremacist oppression of the black race in the U.S. and in colonial states around the world.

Just as Hurst questions the legality of U.S. rule and reiterates its coercive nature by referring to it as a "political crime," the *Crisis's* reading of a photograph that accompanies the article reinforces the parallel themes of imperial aggression and racial oppression. It depicts a group of men dressed formally and standing in a row, with the caption "The nominal rulers of Haiti with the white usurper in the center at the right of the president." Instead of reading the group portrait as an illustration of political collaboration between the U.S. and elite Haitian politicians, the caption references the

[128] Bishop John R. Hurst, "Haiti," *The Crisis*, May 1920, 34.

American official as a “white usurper.” This choice of words indicates the duality of the American military and racial claim to power.[129]

In February 1920 the NAACP sent its secretary, James Weldon Johnson, to Haiti to investigate the occupation. His subsequent reports, published in the *Nation* and the *Crisis*, briefly thrust the occupation to the forefront of American public opinion and party politics. The *Nation* was closely associated with the *Crisis* through its owner and editor Oswald Villard, a founding member and executive officer of the NAACP. Villard used the *Nation* as a platform to further the NAACP’s mission among a largely white and progressive readership. Like the *Crisis,* the *Nation* became a leading voice of opposition against the occupation. The apex of its critical coverage and commentary was Johnson’s four-part series published in August and September of 1920, at the height of the U.S. presidential election campaign.[130]

In September 1920, the *Crisis* printed James Weldon Johnson’s “The Truth About Haiti: An NAACP Investigation,” a report of his findings on the U.S. occupation of Haiti. Johnson informs his readers that he will provide them with a summary of what he learned of the “political, economic, and social conditions” of Haiti and “the information and impressions” he gained from Haitians themselves.[131] He begins his essay with a brief account of Haiti’s history. Unlike the favorite tactic of the *New York Times* and the *National Geographic Magazine* of superficially summarizing Haitian history as a cycle of failed, corrupt, and grotesque attempts at governance by Haitian leaders, his treatment

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[129] Ibid., 30.
[130] James Weldon Johnson, "Self-Determining Haiti," *The Nation*, (Aug. 28, Sept. 4, Sept. 11, Sept. 25, 1920).
[131] James Weldon Johnson, "The Truth About Haiti: An NAACP Investigation," *The Crisis,* September, 1920, 217.

provides context and in depth detail. He contradicts the familiar derogatory narratives and instead describes the historical singularity of Haiti's past.

Beginning with the Haitian Revolution, he expresses admiration for the Haitian insurgents who enacted it. Anticipating C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins,* published in 1938, Johnson characterizes the struggle as a social as well as political revolution.[132] He provides the context that puts the magnitude of the former slaves' victory in perspective. Turning to Henri Christophe's rule (1807-1820), Johnson refutes the usual portrayal of the king:

> The popular picture of Christophe's court is that of a semi-savage ludicrously playing at king; surrounded by a nobility that took their titles from the names of things they liked best to eat and drink. Christophe was a remarkable man, and a ruler of great intelligence and energy. He declared himself king because he felt that most could be accomplished for Haiti under the strongest possible form of government.[133]

As we have seen, Christophe's palace was an object of rather malign fascination for white travel writers and journalists. Johnson, however, describes the impressive architecture and construction of the palace and citadel and explains that the citadel was intended to serve as a last stronghold against the French in the event that they tried, as they had before, to reconquer Haiti and enslave its black citizens. Neither bad nor mad, Christophe becomes a realist in the power politics of the early nineteenth century.

Johnson sums up his historical account by reiterating Haiti's racial heritage and connecting U.S. control to racial prejudice:

> It is a people of Negro blood, who have produced a Christophe and a Dessalines, who have given to the world one of its greatest statesmen, Touissant L'Ouverture, who have behind them a history of which they have every right to be

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[132] C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd ed. rev. (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).
[133] Johnson, "The Truth About Haiti," 218.

> proud, and who are now threatened with the loss of their independence and have now fallen not only under American political domination, but under the domination of American prejudice.[134]

According to Johnson, there were three grounds on which the U.S. attempted to justify its occupation of Haiti: the violence and anarchy in Haiti were unacceptable, the Haitians were unfit to govern themselves, and the U.S. was in a position to bring about material and social improvements to Haiti. Johnson, however, methodically produces detailed evidence to refute all three claims. Moreover, he also reveals the unlawful killings and other abuses committed by the marines against Haitians. In his view, though, the Americans' pervasive racism was worse than their individual acts of cruelty. Johnson sets out evidence of American racism in Haiti and argues at length that one of its sources was the Wilson administration's appointment of white Southern men to key positions in the occupation authorities. He reproaches the Wilson administration and demands the end of the occupation:

> What the Washington Administration should have known was that in order to do anything worth while for Haiti, it was necessary to send men there who were able and willing to treat Negroes as men, and not because of their ability to speak poor French, or their knowledge of 'handling niggers'.
>
> The United States has failed in Haiti. It should get out as quickly as it can and restore to the Haitian people their independence and sovereignty. The colored people of the United States should be interested in seeing that this is done, for Haiti is the one best chance that the Negro has in the world to prove that he is capable of the highest self-government. If Haiti should ultimately lose her independence, that one best chance will be lost.[135]

Johnson's conclusion demonstrates Haiti's transcendent quality as a symbol of the black race for African Americans. His protest is not simply a moral stand in opposition to

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[134] Ibid., 220.
[135] Ibid., 224.

American imperialism and in sympathy with its victims abroad. It is a stand against a system that rules African Americans as well, a paradigmatic white supremacist racial hierarchy that binds black people in the United States and occupied Haiti. Haiti, a sovereign nation whose very existence was predicated on the defeat of black slavery and white supremacy, was an inversion of this paradigm. The violation of Haiti's sovereignty and the rights of its citizens by the ascending U.S. hegemon threatened not just the survival of this independent Afro-Caribbean state but also the possibility of African American freedom.

The *Crisis* followed up on Johnson's expose, reporting on the political fallout that it precipitated, and the NAACP re-published his four articles from the *Nation* as well as some official documents he obtained in Haiti as a pamphlet.[136] The impact of the report encouraged Du Bois's optimism about an early end to the occupation. In the meantime, he made good use of the information they revealed. In November, Du Bois recapped the recent political and financial events set in motion by Johnson's report in the editorial "Developments in the Haitian Situation." After criticizing the U.S. government's propaganda about Haiti and the occupation and its efforts to co-opt the Haitian legislative process for the benefit of American financiers, he makes a familiar analogy: "an interesting conjecture is the probable attitude of the United States should some government, England, for example, attempt to force it to agree to a similar proposition, with the United States occupying the position Haiti now occupies in the controversy, on the ground that an explosion in Wall Street and the lynching of nearly one hundred

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[136] James Weldon Johnson, *Self-Determining Haiti: Four Articles Reprinted from "The Nation" Embodying a Report of an Investigation Made for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People together with Official Documents* (New York: The Nation, 1920).

citizens each year necessitated ‘benevolent’ interference to ‘maintain order’ and end ‘anarchy’ in the United States.”[137] Here Du Bois is comparing the violence and anarchy that the U.S. has attributed to Haiti and cited as cause for the intervention to a recent deadly anarchist bombing in New York City and the lynchings that regularly occurred in the U.S. By doing so he is challenging one of the derogatory tropes that commonly described Haiti, undermining the validity of the United States’ justification of its actions, and once again calling attention to the issue of lynching.

The *Crisis* continued to raise the specter of U.S. misrule in Haiti and to call for its withdrawal until the occupation ended in 1934. Throughout its coverage the magazine provided first hand accounts from journalists and other observers reporting from Haiti. Giving voice to Haitians, it reprinted articles from Haitian newspapers, published statements from Haitian officials and politicians, and reviewed Haitian literature. It continued to cast U.S. policy in Haiti as imperialist in nature. It also consistently fought against derogatory portrayals of Haiti by providing political, social, and historical context for Haiti and its relations with the U.S. In contrast to the mainstream press, with its static stereotypes of Haiti and Haitians designed to reaffirm the virtues of whiteness and American-ness, the *Crisis* presented race and blackness in Haiti as historical, not cultural or biological.

Du Bois and other contributors to the *Crisis* viewed the occupation as a manifestation of American white supremacist hegemony, and opposed it not only on the basis of the political violation and financial exploitation of Haiti, but also on the grounds that it was a racist regime oppressing a black citizenry. When Du Bois demanded

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[137] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Developments in the Haitian Situation," *The Crisis*, November 1920, 26.

“freedom for our brothers in Haiti” in an open letter to newly elected President Harding, he was invoking racial solidarity between his black readers and Haitians to indicate their common struggle against American racial oppression.[138] Du Bois understood Haiti’s symbolic importance, derived from its singular history and unique position as an independent black republic, and used the issue of the occupation to focus attention on its struggle for racial justice in the United States. As the *Crisis* exposed U.S. misrule, refuted derogatory representations of Haiti, and lobbied for U.S. withdrawal from Haiti, its articles had a racial subtext. However the discursive use of the occupation was not a cynical strategy—the *Crisis* recognized that both African Americans and Haitians suffered from racism, and it was committed to preserving Haiti as a hopeful example of a post-emancipation, post-colonial, counter-hegemonic alternative to white supremacist domination.

[138] W.E.B. Du Bois, "An Open Letter to Warren Gamaliel Harding," *The Crisis*, March 1921, 197.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

During the occupation, the American press consolidated an image of Haiti characterized by incompetency, degradation, ignorance, sacrilege, and squalor. It created this construct, which established a hierarchical difference between Haitians and Americans, from within the American paradigm of racism at a time when minority groups and immigrants threatened white, Anglo-Saxon supremacy in the U.S. The discourse based on this hierarchy simultaneously justified American imperialism and reinforced the domestic social status quo. Both the *New York Times* and the *National Geographic Magazine* were American institutions that had ties to and supported the government and big business, and they reflected the ideals and interests of the ruling class. While the *New York Times* was not an organ of imperialism per se like the *National Geographic Magazine*, which was rooted in Anglo-Saxon colonialism and American imperialism, both supported U.S. imperialist designs by perpetuating discourses of American exceptionalism and Haitian inferiority. They used various tropes to describe Haiti, and their representations were typically superficial and racialized, and often perpetuated American racism.

The *New York Times* and the *National Geographic Magazine* both essentialized Haiti and arbitrarily assigned it negative traits, eliminating social, historical, and political context from their descriptions. Haitians' political agency and processes were either negated or rendered illegitimate. This decontextualization of Haitian history, culture, and society inhibited empathy from American readers and turned Haiti into a negative space

where the idea of American oppression and exploitation was irrelevant. These two pillars of the American press were authoritative institutions perceived as repositories of fact. As such, their portrayals of Haiti depicted “natural” facts, and helped institutionalize the image of an inferior Haiti for the American public.

In contrast, the *Crisis* refuted the negative portrayals of Haiti by the mainstream white press. It provided its readers political context for the occupation and presented meaningful accounts of Haitian history. However, because of Haiti’s symbolic racial importance, it used its opposition to the occupation to further the magazine’s (and the NAACP’s) agenda of pursuing racial justice and equality in U.S. The editor and other contributors to the magazine considered the occupation a manifestation of racial oppression by white supremacists. They drew parallels between the U.S. domination of Haiti and racial oppression in the U.S. and expressed racial solidarity with Haitians as they protested the occupation.

For the *Crisis*, as for many African Americans, Haiti symbolized black power and freedom. Haiti’s racial significance derived from its unique history and the fact that it was an independent black republic: it had existed as an alternative to white, Western dominance since its inception. Thus the U.S. violation of its sovereignty not only proved politically, economically, and socially injurious to Haitians but also threatened what Haiti represented to the black race in the U.S. The *Crisis* writers protested the occupation and protected Haitian independence in part to preserve the integrity of Haiti’s symbolism. Ultimately, in its commitment to serve the black race, the *Crisis* racialized Haiti to the extent that, like the *New York Times* and the *National Geographic Magazine*, it often flattened out its identity for American readers.

Although used to different ends, race became a primary signifier in imagining Haiti for all three case studies, and its priority hindered the possibility of more complex representations. It was a cornerstone of portrayals of Haiti, and the periodicals used it in relation to their stake in the American racial social hierarchy. Race underlay their support of or opposition to the occupation, and their racialized discourses either perpetuated or challenged the social status quo. Together these periodicals helped institutionalize an image of Haiti as black and oppressed for the American public.

It is important to consider the legacy of this conception of Haiti during the U.S. occupation. The reciprocity of cultural and political power suggests that this construct could affect policy and economic investment in Haiti. How has the narrative of Haiti as a black, oppressed, and poor failed state endured, and how has it facilitated later foreign interventions and exploitation? How might it inhibit tourism and capital investment?

The Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie, in exploring similar one-dimensional conceptions of Africa, warns against the danger of a "single story." She identifies the single story of catastrophe for Africa and argues that it prevents the possibility of its recipients from experiencing any feelings more complex than pity and from making a connection with Africans as equals.[139] Americans have a similar relationship to Haiti. In the aftermath of the recent earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, as American and other foreign aid flooded into the country, I repeatedly heard remarks from friends and colleagues about how Haiti was "cursed" and "hellish" and other comments about how exceptionally poor, violent, and oppressed it is. Even the *New*

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[139] Chimamanda Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story" (talk for TEDGlobal, Oxford, UK, July 2009), http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html (accessed October 1, 2010).

York Times, which pursued comprehensive coverage of the aftermath of the earthquake, acknowledged, "Long before its ground started heaving, Haiti was already a byword for a broken place. Its leaders were considered kleptocrats; its people were jaw-droppingly poor."[140] The paper's coverage offered insight into Haitian culture, history, and society, and let Haitians represent themselves in their own words. However, it focused on the rescue and aid efforts of organizations from all over the world. Although the dire circumstances in Haiti rendered its dependency on foreign aid a tragic necessity, it has struck me that the discourse about Haiti generated in early 2010 was an updated version of the discourse of the occupation in the early twentieth century. While no longer overtly racist, the perceived dependency, incompetency, and violence of Haiti still stood in contrast to the apparent U.S. prosperity and benevolence.

These recent descriptions of Haiti, like historic representations, are dangerous because they reinforce a one-dimensional idea of Haiti for Americans. Part of this danger lies in the fact that Haiti has entered the American imagination only at times of disaster, U.S. intervention, or as the setting of fantastic vodou tableaus in popular media. These representations, with their lack of context and complexity, may rob Haitians of their agency and their dignity in the eyes of American readers and viewers. My case studies demonstrate that our understanding of Haiti is in part based on projections from our own efforts to reconcile what it means to be American. In recognizing the origins of this knowledge, we may become more receptive to nuanced narratives in which Haiti is better understood as a rich and varied society whose

[140] Marc Lacey, "Cultural Riches Turn to Rubble in Haiti Quake," *New York Times*, January 23, 2010.

extraordinary history, particularly in terms of race and politics, is interwoven with our own.

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