“By a Black Woman of the South”:
Race, Place, and Gender in the Work of Anna Julia Cooper

Vivian M. May

Introduction: A Politics of Location

Across her life’s work as a writer, educator, and activist, early African American feminist Anna Julia Cooper (1858-1964) asserted the simultaneous and interlocking nature of her identities as a black female Southerner. Cooper’s conception of the fundamentally interwoven quality of the political implications and the lived meanings of race, gender, and region is perhaps most readily apparent in the full title of her 1892 volume, *A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South*: right from the title page, she marks out her multifaceted rhetorical, theoretical, and experiential positions. She reiterates her locatedness on the third page of her preface. Using capitalization to emphasize the value of her identities with regard to her analysis of the nation’s ‘woman question’ and ‘race problem,’ Cooper remarks that if her words “can in any way help to a clearer vision and a truer pulse-beat in studying our Nation’s Problem, this Voice by a Black Woman of the South will not have been raised in vain.” Likewise, in her 1893 speech before the Congress of Representative Women at the Columbian (Chicago) World’s Fair, Cooper reminds her audience, “I speak for the colored women of the South because it is there that the millions of blacks in this country have watered the soil with blood and tears, and it is there too that the colored woman of America has made her characteristic history, and there her destiny is evolving.”

Instead of conceiving of race, gender, and region as separable or even as sequential identity markers, and rather than place them in rank order (and thereby posit one as primary over the others), Cooper insists on a more nuanced and complex political and theoretical standpoint that is fundamentally matric or intersectional. Moreover, she asserts that the lived experience of marginality lends access to knowledge not readily available to those positioned at a culture’s center. That she does so is a somewhat dicey rhetorical move because she claims three marginalized positionalities (that when taken in concert might be considered even less authoritative than each in isolation). Yet Cooper rejects the notion that acknowledging one’s location as a writer or social critic is a negative. Putting her readers on notice, she writes, “may I hope that the writer’s oneness with her subject both in feeling and in being may palliate undue obtrusiveness of opinions here.”

Vivian M. May, Assistant Professor of Women’s Studies, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.
Cooper repeatedly asserts her right to speak and maintains that her lived experience adds nuance and value to her claims: “The colored woman of to-day occupies ... a unique position in this country ... She is confronted by both a woman question and a race problem, and is as yet an unknown or an unacknowledged factor in both.”

Refusing to equate marginality with an all-encompassing victimization, Cooper speaks from a space of resistance and points to what today would be recognized as a standpoint of an “outsider within.” Moreover, she daringly marks her work as embodied: rather than posit an ostensibly “universal” writing body or speaking voice, she insists on the value of knowledge gained by lived experience and writes “her body into the text.”

Such insistence on having all aspects of her personhood recognized, however, can lead Cooper into an ontological and philosophical dead end or “perplexing cul de sac” as she called it. For instance, she recalls wondering whether she should head toward the “Colored” waiting room or the “Ladies” waiting room at an unspecified southern train station. During the Christmas holidays of 1892, when she returned home from Washington, D.C. to her family in Raleigh, N.C. after the publication of A Voice from the South, Cooper was herself evicted from the “Ladies” waiting room. In other words, this resolution to recognize multiple identities as simultaneous does not go unnoticed. In fact, it can often get Cooper and other black women into trouble in the white public sphere, particularly in the South, where, she remarks, they are frequently treated more as “whipped” dogs than as human beings.

She reminds her readers that for insisting on remaining in their seats (rather than move to the Jim Crow car once the train crosses the Mason-Dixon line), black women have been “forcibly” thrown off of trains and have suffered “instances of personal violence,” including torn clothing and physical harm.
Cooper writes from a position of plurality and claims her right to fully occupy and represent the categories of race, gender, and region while documenting how she and other black women are repeatedly harassed and punished for doing so.

Who Speaks for “The Race”?

In maintaining her right to speak of and from the South as an African American woman, Cooper highlights the lengths to which white Southerners will go to forcibly maintain the artifice of segregation and to falsely lay claim to the South as “theirs” alone (both to define and to preside over). Simultaneously, however, she also challenges the idea that “the race” can be represented or understood by sole reference to black men’s experiences and needs. First, just because one is a man, Cooper argues, does not mean that one necessarily has the best interests of the race in mind: she points to the fact that black women in the South are a largely unrecognized political force who do not advocate assimilation, “race disloyalty,” or “voting away” hard-earned rights (while some black men apparently do).¹⁴

Moreover, she finds that the fundamental enmeshment of race and gender politics is too often ignored by black men, leaving “the colored woman ... hampered and shamed by a less liberal sentiment and a more conservative attitude on the part of those for whose opinion she cares most.”¹⁵ In contrast to some of her peers involved in the uplift movement and black women’s club movement (e.g., W.E.B. Du Bois’ focus in The Souls of Black Folk [1903] on the role of the “talented tenth” or Mary Church Terrell’s rather top-down approach to uplift),¹⁶ Cooper did not advocate elitist notions of “culture” or “civilization,” and she deplored the ill-conceived idea of building a future built on hierarchical distinctions, whether between the “educated” and the “folk” or whether between black men and women.¹⁷

Cooper contends that presuming equivalence between “the race” and masculinity lead eminent black leaders like Kelly Miller (1863-1939) to make some foolish recommendations about how to move forward. Miller was an influential “race” man and prominent lawyer who taught at Howard University. He was active in the NAACP, the Niagara Movement, and the American Negro Academy or ANA,¹⁸ and other racial uplift organizations, many of which denied black women meaningful leadership roles. Miller openly opposed suffrage for all women, since, from his view, women are protected by men and have no real need of the vote: paradoxically, he advocated that, to achieve freedom, African Americans practice what Cooper derisively calls “self-effacement.”¹⁹

Cooper boldly rejects Miller’s proposal that black women’s labor (both inside and outside of the home) should be considered less productive
“surplus” labor that is a drain on African Americans’ economic stability.  

She counters his idea that adhering to and modeling white patriarchal norms of masculinity is the correct path to follow on the journey to full liberation: Cooper maintains that black women, just as much as black men, “have a right to claim at least that [we] shall have fair play and all the rights of wage-earners in general” and rejects treating black women’s labor productivity as secondary, unnecessary, or even as implicitly deviant (because not in line with white gender norms). Moreover, she contends that black women perform undue amounts of unpaid labor in the home and, simultaneously, engage in underpaid labor in the workforce. In contrast to “killing off” the surplus women, as she reads Miller to be proposing if one follows his (patriarchal and ill-conceived) logic to its end, a more adequate proposal for advancing the race, she explains, would be to advocate for black women to receive a fair wage for their labor (whether productive or reproductive, public or private) and to have all of their forms of work be recognized as labor proper.

Moreover, those who dismissed women’s claims to a rightful wage (i.e., Kelly and his followers) must be called what they are – thieves for stealing away black women’s apt compensation! She fully realizes that arguing for women’s labor in the home to become waged work went against the grain of dominant logics. Reiterating her radical solution that women’s work in all its forms should receive fair recompense, Cooper refuses to buttress a saccharine idealization of motherhood (twinned with a romantic yearning for patriarchal power) that denies women’s work by naturalizing it as a calling and that, paradoxically, romanticizes women’s dependency in order for “the race” to be independent.

Yet she also anticipates her readers’ internalization of sentimental norms of motherhood and marriage and writes: “But, say you, the highest services can not be measured by dollars and cents. It is sordid to talk about paying mothers to be mothers, and giving a wage to wife to be wife!” Nevertheless, she contends, a romanticized notion of motherhood and women’s roles as wives is no excuse to deny them pay, though it may serve as a useful rationalization to keep women dependent instead of in a true “partnership.” Cooper thoroughly dismisses a narrow and “one-sided masculine definition” of womanhood, as if a woman has “no God-given destiny, no soul with unquenchable longings and inexhaustible possibilities – no work of her own to do and give to the world – no absolute and inherent value, no duty to self, transcending all pleasure-giving that may be demanded of a mere toy.”

Adamant that women in general, and black women in particular, have plenty to offer the world and should be treated as subjects in their own right, Cooper repeatedly maintains that “no man can represent the race” and emphasizes that no matter his prominence, even an eminent
leader and “unadulterated black man” such as Martin R. Delany (1812-1885) “can never be regarded as identical with or representative of the whole.”25 Too often, she suggests, “we ... mistake individuals’ honor for race development and so are ready to substitute pretty accomplishments for sound sense and earnest purpose.”26 She further contends, “We might as well expect to grow trees from leaves as hope to build up a civilization or a manhood without taking into consideration our women.”27

**Combating the Prejudice of ‘Snobs’ and ‘Prigs’: White Solipsism, Elitism, and Women’s Rights**

In addition to critiquing black men in positions of leadership in the racial uplift movement for their short-sighted vision and foolish investment in emulating white patriarchy, Cooper illustrates how narrow “either/or” (race or gender) thinking and an unacknowledged investment in white supremacy also plagued much white feminist organizing. For instance, Cooper offers examples of white feminists’ adherence to race supremacy. She illustrates how “Mrs. Mary A. Livermore .... was dwelling on the Anglo-Saxon genius for power” when, in a speech, she arrogantly remarked that an “unoffending Chinaman” was beaten on the streets because he was perceived as effeminate and weak.28 Cooper also ridicules Anna Howard Shaw (who would later become president of the NAWSA [National American Women Suffrage Association] from 1901 to 1915) for her exclusionary politics and myopic thinking. Shaw posed the problem of “women’s” rights as that of “Woman versus the Indian,” so that women become “plaintiffs” in a ludicrous lawsuit Cooper fittingly names “Eye vs. Foot.” In response, Cooper queries, “Why should woman become plaintiff in a suit versus the Indian, or the Negro or any other race or class who have been crushed under the iron heel of Anglo-Saxon power and selfishness?”29

Calling prominent white feminist leaders out on the carpet, she writes, scathingly, “It cannot seem less than a blunder, whenever the exponents of a great reform ... allow themselves to seem distorted by a narrow view of their own aims and principles. All prejudices, whether of race, sect or sex, class pride and class distinctions are the belittling inheritance and badge of snobs and prigs.”30 Cooper refuses any solipsistic notion of womanhood or feminism as white and states, “The cause of freedom is not the cause of a race or a sect, a party or a class, – it is the cause of human kind ... It is not the intelligent woman vs. the ignorant woman; nor the white woman vs. the black, the brown, and the red, – it is not even the cause of woman vs. man.”31

At her speech before white feminists at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where Cooper was one of six African American women asked to speak about the “progress” of black women (as if they were “behind” or “lower” on the ladder of civilization), she clarifies her posi-
tion further.\textsuperscript{32} Subtly reversing the terms of progressive and civilizationist discourse (which assumes whites to be more advanced), she suggests that it is, instead, white feminists who need to “progress” to a greater vision of liberation (which black women already have). Pointing out the problematic logic of embedding racism within feminist liberation, Cooper remarks that

The colored woman feels that woman’s cause is one and universal; and that not till the image of God, whether in parian or in ebony, is sacred and inviolable; not till race, color, sex, and condition are seen as the accidents, and not the substance of life; not till the universal title of humanity to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is conceded to be inalienable to all; not till then is woman’s lesson taught and woman’s cause won.\textsuperscript{33}

However, black women’s insistence on being included in the definition of womanhood and considered central to the past, present, and future of women’s rights did not necessarily go over well. As Cooper’s critique of “Wimodaughsis (... a woman’s culture club whose name was created using the first few letters of wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters)” illustrates, too often, it is as if “Pandora’s box is opened in the ideal harmony of this modern Eden without an Adam when a colored lady, a teacher in one of our schools, applies for admission to its privileges and opportunities.”\textsuperscript{34} Sarcastically making her point, Cooper renames the Kentucky women’s club “Whimodaughsis” to emphasize and expose the tacit whiteness at the heart of the club’s notions of ostensibly universal womanhood.\textsuperscript{35}

Of course, many of these white feminist leaders whom Cooper critiques, whether directly or indirectly, would continue to be bound by the same small-mindedness over the next decades. For example, in 1903, the NAWSA board “endorsed the organization’s state’s rights position, which was tantamount to an endorsement of white supremacy in most states.” In addition, “Despite endorsement of black suffrage, Anna Howard Shaw had been accused of refusing to allow a black female delegate at the Louisville suffrage convention in 1911 to make an antidiscrimination resolution.”\textsuperscript{36}

“Ladies” versus “Women”: White Supremacy and Southern Gender Politics

In continually claiming the simultaneous nature of gendered, racial, and regional identities, Cooper refused to cede the terrain of each category to its dominant or more widely recognized members. Consequently, while critiquing white feminists’ fallacious equivalence of the needs and
interests of white womanhood with a movement that should serve and address all women’s rights, Cooper also contests prevailing notions of the South as a region characterized by white gentlemanly chivalry and benevolence. Instead, she highlights what she knows about the South from her “peculiar coigne of vantage” by speaking from her “insider” status as a Southern, black woman. Thus Cooper emphasizes the sheer brutality of white supremacy in the South, citing lynchings and mob rule, rape and sexual exploitation, tenant farming, chain gangs, and many other examples of domination: white Southern men are not portrayed as gentlemen by Cooper. She also characterizes the region as a pouting, petty, spoiled, white “obstreperous Miss” named “Arabella” who manipulates her older brother (the North) into giving her everything she wants, including the right to keep her “pets” and to have her pet institution (slavery) live on de facto if not de jure.

Here, Cooper interrupts problematic familial metaphors of the nation (as a “pure” family bound together by “blood”), figurative descriptions used to justify exploitation and rationalize domination. In fact, she argues, racist metaphors and ideologies of “blue blood” and supremacy are seeping, like literal blood, from the body of the South across the corpus of the entire nation. According to this (white) southern logic, fast becoming the nation’s logic, the “Negro is not worth a feud between brothers and sisters.” This means that even the more seemingly benevolent white southern woman (as opposed to the openly racist “Arabella”) “would like to help ‘elevate’ the colored people ([but only] in her own way of course and so long as they understand their places).”

From Cooper’s point of view, the average white Southern woman (whom she also nicknames “Miladi,” Queen of the drawing room) is invested, above all, in caste privilege rather than in a humanistic vision of equality and a transformative vision of the body politic. Moreover, she argues, white Southern “ladies” like to maintain, at all costs, race privileges as part and parcel both of their class status and femininity: hence the strict racialized distinction between white “ladies” and black or colored “women” that Cooper notes and debunks throughout A Voice from the South. By example, then, “Miladi” teaches other whites to follow suit: in the literal family and in the metaphoric family of the nation, she passes down racist hatred as a means of maintaining her own privileges.

In other words, women’s social reproductive labor in the home and in the culture at large is not de facto virtuous or principled simply because it is work performed by a woman. Cooper argues that women’s social labor should have broad-minded justice and equality at its heart, but implies that simply being female is an insufficient criterion for gaining a critical (and feminist) consciousness or a humanistic vision of freedom and equality. She concludes that the South, like the nation
at large, is bound by the “provincialisms of [white] women who seem
never to have breathed the atmosphere beyond the confines of their
grandfather’s plantations.”

Redefining the Politics of Home

In contrast to a small-minded interpretation of womanhood, restrict-
tive philosophy of the purpose of home life, and narrow definition of the
domestic realm as a distinct and separate ‘‘sphere,’ including primarily
the kitchen and the nursery,” Cooper advocates a vision of the home as
a political space, both in her writing and in the way she lived her own
life. Of course, this is not unique to Cooper: as Paula Giddings docu-
ments, “Black women saw no contradiction between domesticity and
political action.” First, Cooper writes, the home should not be a place
where one focuses on keeping up “appearances.” Second, because the
home is where women are charged with the gendered work of shaping
“character,” the domestic is a realm that always already has a public and
political role, whether anyone cares to admit so or not. Black women,
therefore, must be considered pivotal to debates about the future of the
race: their social reproductive labor is “the ground work and starting
point” of potential progress. In fact, “No other hand can move the lever.
She must be loosed from her bands and set to work.” Cooper adds that
black women must be understood as “at once both the lever and the ful-
crum for uplifting the race.”

Cooper refutes the idea that the domestic realm should be envisioned
or lived in as a space grounded in frivolity, isolated from public life, and
cut off from political concerns. Contending that “no woman can possibly
put herself or her sex outside any of the interests that affect humanity,”
she mocks the notion that the home is a space to house “lisping, cling-
ing, tenderly helpless, and beautifully dependent creatures.” Further,
she calls black men to task for holding onto the patriarchal romantic no-
tion “that women may stand on pedestals or live in doll houses, (if they
happen to have them) but they must not furrow their brows with thought
or attempt to help men tug at the great questions of the world.” Instead,
black men should acknowledge that the black woman “finds herself in
the presence of responsibilities which ramify through the profoundest
and most varied interests of her country and race.” “Such is the colored
woman’s office,” Cooper concludes: “She must stamp weal or woe on
the coming history of this people.”

As in her writing, in her own life Cooper did not draw a sharp line
between public and private life, or between the domestic and the socio-
political realms. For instance, Cooper’s T Street home in Washington,
D.C. served as a meeting space for art and culture salons (alternating with
meetings hosted by the Reverend Francis Grimké and Charlotte Forten
Later in her life, Cooper opened her home to Frelinghuysen University classes and to house the registrar’s office for more than a decade when a racist accreditation movement in the 1930s put the school for working adults at risk of closing down. Thus her home served as a pedagogical space for Washingtonians from across both racial and class divides. About her Washington D.C. home, she recalls that she never “drew” a color line when it came to guests and clarifies that a home, in her view, is “not merely a house to shelter the body, but a home to sustain and refresh the mind, a home where friends foregather for the interchange of ideas and agreeable association of sympathetic spirits.”

It is important to note, as well, that Cooper and other black women in Washington frequently manipulated stereotypes of domesticity and womanhood to their own ends: they used seemingly innocuous “feminine” or “women’s” spaces (including the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, the Social Settlement House, and the meetings of the Colored Women’s League and the Book Lovers’ Club) for extensive political organizing and community advocacy. These clubs and organizations were financially and structurally independent from white oversight and monetary support (even the YWCA, of which Cooper was a founding board member, refused to join the official offices of the national “Y” movement since it would mean being under the thumb of the national leadership). Cooper was especially interested in issues of fair housing, access to preschool and adequate food for children, and equal education for all (including working adults).

In her writing, she makes an intensive argument for black women’s education because education releases women from dependency on marriage for meeting their basic needs, from relational roles defined primarily by their capacity to please or to worship men, and from artificial confinement in the home when they have so much to offer the world around them. In the first two chapters in *A Voice* (“Womanhood: A Vital Element in the Regeneration and Progress of the Race” and “The Higher Education of Woman”), Cooper also contends that many of those involved both in the church and in black education have completely overlooked black women and girls, especially in the South, “girls being a sort of *tertium quid* whose development may be promoted if they can pay their way and fall in with the plans mapped out for the training of the other sex.”

Here, she refers specifically to her own educational experiences after slavery at St. Augustine’s Normal School and Collegiate Institute (founded in 1867, opened to students in January 1868) in Raleigh, North Carolina, where Cooper was one of two female scholarship students in the inaugural class, and where she later taught as a faculty member. Cooper explains that she had to argue with the administration for her right to take courses in Latin, Greek and mathematics, all designed to prepare young
black men for lives in the public sphere, particularly in the ministry. There was no expectation that young women would or even could take these courses (though Classics, mathematics, and languages would later become some of Cooper’s academic specialties as a student and as an educator). In addition, the St. Augustine’s principal clearly assumed that female students were only in school to meet future husbands and so saw young women’s pursuit of more “masculine” subject matter, and even of a college-level education in general, as rather pointless.

Reflecting back on this childhood experience, Cooper argues that the “atmosphere, the standards, the requirements of our little world do not afford any special stimuli to female development. ... I constantly felt (as I suppose many an ambitious girl has felt) a thumping from within unanswered by any beckoning from without.” And, lest her readers assume her experience in Raleigh was unique and can therefore be discounted as anomalous, Cooper adds: “Now this is not fancy. It is a simple unvarnished photograph, and what I believe was not in those days exceptional in colored schools, and I ask the men and women who are teachers and co-workers for the highest interests of the race, that they give the girls a chance!”

**Whose South?**

While critiquing myriad race and gender politics at work in Southern white feminist organizations as well as in black racial uplift institutions, Cooper also asks her readers to attend to the fact that the majority of African Americans live in the South – it is *not* predominantly a white space. She contends that the South must therefore be where African Americans’ “progress” is measured. Consequently, she focuses on African Americans’ experiences living, working, and traveling across the South (including experiences of exploitation, terror, and violation). Cooper rarely names specific locations where these instances occur, though she does specify, for instance, the bloody Wilmington, North Carolina massacre where all black citizens and sympathetic whites who were not killed were run out of town. Cooper also exposes the hypocrisy of institutions like the Corcoran in Washington, D.C., who admit a black woman on the basis of her work, but deny her entry once she shows up in person. In addition, she examines and compares data from the 1880 census about morbidity and mortality rates for whites and African Americans in D.C.: she reveals how institutionalized segregation and lack of access to basic housing, and not biological or genetic inferiority, lead to preventable poverty, malnutrition, and eventual illness and death for the capital’s black citizens.

But despite occasional reference to specific Southern locales, Cooper’s preference is to critique the region in general. While this may
seem to suggest that she reads the South as a monolith, I would argue that, in order to more fully emphasize the ubiquity of such experiences of living with violent inequalities, Cooper’s careful rhetorical decision is to focus on the general over the particular, since one of her central goals is to thoroughly condemn Jim Crow across the South as a whole as well as the supremacist logics she sees as leaching, like poison, out from the South and infiltrating the nation at large.

Denouncing segregation altogether, she again refers to her own lived experiences of living in and traveling across the South. She explains, “When I seek food in a public café or apply for first-class accommodations on a railway train, I do so because my physical necessities are identical with those of other human beings … I can see no more ‘social equality’ in buying lunch at the same restaurant, or riding in a common car, than there is in paying for dry goods at the same counter or walking on the same street.” Further noting that “there is nothing irretrievably wrong in the shape of the black man’s skull, and that under given circumstances his development, downward or upward, will be similar to that of other average human beings,” Cooper then contends that it is in the South where the many obstacles to advancement must be eradicated, whether in education, the church, labor rights, housing, or the law.

In addition to offering different measures of “progress” as well as signifiers of what or who “counts” as southern, Cooper underscores African American contributions to southern culture, and to American culture at large, particularly in the areas of folklore and folk-song, both of which comprise “the most original and unique assemblage of fable and myth to be found on the continent, … the only distinctive American note which could chain the attention and charm the ear of the outside world.” In a 1902 speech, Cooper reiterates this idea that the future of both the race and the nation have to be grounded in, rather than distanced or alienated from, African American cultural traditions and collective memories. Redefining the canon by tracing an alternative genealogy of American cultural production, Cooper asserts, “the plantation melodies and corn songs form the most original contribution to [American] music … [T]he national web is incomplete without the African thread that glints and ripples thro it from the beginning.”

Simultaneously, Cooper sarcastically notes what she perceives to be the barren nature of the white South, which she describes as “personally indolent and practically stupid.” Using inversion, she ascribes to white Southerners the characteristics stereotypically attached to African Americans. Embellishing her claim, she adds that the region is “without wealth, without education, without inventions, arts, sciences, or industries, without well-nigh every one of the progressive ideas and impulses which has made this country great, prosperous and happy.” In other words,
without the industrious (and exploited) labor of African Americans over a period of 250 years, and without African American folklore and song, the South would have little of note to claim.\textsuperscript{78}

Here, in addition to inverting dominant logic as a way of using it against those who dominate, Cooper refuses to silence or trivialize African American folk traditions: she places a legacy of 250 years of physical labor alongside more abstract forms of survival and resistance demonstrated in the determination to maintain cultural traditions and memories. While these less tangible legacies of struggle are often denied, minimized, and even derided (both outside of and within African American communities), Cooper uses them as the foundations of her analysis of how, economically and culturally, African Americans have always been pivotal to America in general and to the South specifically.

**Refusing Silence, Asserting Subjectivity**

Thus in asserting that she rightfully “belongs” simultaneously to the South, to womanhood, and to the race, Cooper redefines the substance and scope of each term: she both stretches the parameters of these identities and insists on radical changes to their basic meaning. This, she maintains, means that “we must ... break away from dear old landmarks.”\textsuperscript{79} Accordingly, prevailing epistemological, political and aesthetic conventions must be fundamentally transformed, not merely tinkered with. She underscores that normative ideologies of gender, race, and region are constructs, not givens – but they are carefully, even violently enforced so that they seem natural and unchangeable. Consequently, at the same time that she critiques the false exclusivity of each category (womanhood, blackness, and Southerness), she also highlights the systemic violence and willful ignorance required to maintain and regulate this narrowness.

Emphatically asserting her black, female, and southern identities, Cooper knowingly occupies potentially hostile territory (so much so that she even uses war metaphors about violent white southern men in the “enemy camp,” but does not do so naïvely.\textsuperscript{80} Instead, she highlights the radical asymmetries of power working against her, making her wonder aloud if she will be able to receive a “fair trial” from her readers since in the past, black women’s “ideas could not claim a hearing at the bar of the nation.\textsuperscript{81} The white woman could at least plead for her own emancipation; the black woman, doubly enslaved, could but suffer and struggle and be silent.”\textsuperscript{82} Cooper underscores how past expectations and practices continue to shape interpretive abilities in the present: the legacies of what may seem to some to be a bygone era of slavery live on and transmogrify.

Cooper therefore points to the ways in which African American voices have been and continue to be “muffled” or misunderstood. More-
over, black women’s voices have been especially “mute” – there has been “no word from the Black Woman,” even though her story of resistance and survival, if documented and heard, “would furnish material for epics.”

In contrast, Cooper describes the white and feminine “Silent South” coyly staying to the side of national affairs: “like the Sphinx she inspires vociferous disputation, but herself takes little part in the noisy controversy.” Here, she characterizes the (white) South’s silence and attempt to sidestep racial inequality and the legacies of slavery by means of a gendered script of chivalrous gentlemen and demure ladies as a power move, an instance both of mock innocence and of willful ignorance. Silence, in other words, can be unjustifiably imposed or willfully chosen, and she intends to break open both forms.

However, Cooper also realizes that when it comes to narrow-mindedness, it is not simply a question of speaking up or of rhetorical persuasion, but rather of how differences in power and social positioning affect whether one is heard or understood. While she openly acknowledges that she embodies the three identities from which and about which she writes, which should be perceived as adding value to her analysis of race, gender, and regional politics, she fears that, like Abraham in the biblical parable about the rich man and Lazarus, her voice will not be heard. Cooper remarks that the “King” [i.e., Alexander Crummell (1819-1898)] has already spoken on the matter (in his influential 1883 pamphlet, *The Black Woman of the South*) – and “if they hear not him, neither would they be persuaded though one (i.e., Cooper) came up from the South.”

Karen Baker-Fletcher explains, “Just as Abraham told the rich man that ‘though one came up from the dead’ none would hear him,” Cooper questioned her audience’s ability to hear what she had to say.

Debunking notions of a democratic rhetorical terrain, Cooper exposes the problem of power and cognitive authority for marginalized groups in general and for black women in particular. Though she faces an uphill battle, she refuses passivity or nihilism: Cooper lifts her voice while, simultaneously, naming the anticipated difficulty of being understood, especially since she does not plan to “mirror” or mime dominant notions. She explains,

> White America has created a *terra incognita* in its midst, a strange dark unexplored waste of human souls from which if one essay to speak out an intelligible utterance, so well known is the place of preferment accorded the mirroring of preconceived notions, that instead of being the revelation of a personality and the voice of a truth, the speaker becomes a phonograph and merely talks back what is talked into him. It is no popular task today to voice...
the black man’s woe. It is far easier and safer to say that the wrong is all in him.  

Cooper suggests that in this so-called “progressive era” (which, she clarifies, is regressive – it is “the most trying period of all [colored people’s] trying history in this land of their trial and bondage”\(^{89}\)), white Americans would prefer to avoid reform by maintaining hierarchy, engaging in imperial expansion, and by relishing in the unwarranted but self-congratulatory comforts of privilege. The white “American conscience would like a rest from the black man’s ghost,” Cooper asserts, and would rather indulge in “self complacency, … commercial omnipotence and military glorification.”\(^{90}\)

In addition to identifying ontological and epistemological forms of inequality (e.g., in terms of both speaking position and authority), Cooper points to many other examples of overlooked or wilfully ignored power asymmetries which prevent African Americans in general, and African American women specifically, from having access to full membership in the polity. These more tangible forms of inequity institutionalized by Jim Crow include economic and wage disparities, tenant farming, unequal access to social or cultural capital, educational inequality and lack of housing.\(^{91}\) Given Cooper’s vision of education as a site of resistance, she especially highlights the role of education for both individual self-realization and for collective freedom. She calls for furthering black education (for girls as much as boys, and for the more elite and less privileged) across the South, particularly because of her own experiences with navigating the obstacles of both sexism and class privilege in black educational institutions.\(^{92}\)

Importantly, whether addressing issues of structural inequality faced by African Americans in general, or gendered inequality within the race, Cooper focuses on how these asymmetrical relationships are artificial and socially created, not inherent. Thoroughly discounting racist and sexist biological determinist “explanations” of inequality, she focuses on institutionalized forms of oppression as well as the use of brute violence to maintain the status quo. In other words, present asymmetries in wealth, education, and even life span are the result of “inequality of environment,” not biology.\(^{93}\) It is the law, for instance, that can be faulted for creating false distinctions where “He [i.e., God] recognized none.”\(^{94}\)

Even worse is the widespread use of legally and socially sanctioned mob rule and lynching to terrorize and destroy African American communities.\(^{95}\) Cooper adds, “Ku Klux beatings with re-enslaving black codes became the sorry substitute for the overseer’s lash and the auction block.”\(^{96}\) Carefully exposing the machinations and violence needed to maintain the mythos of a chivalrous, white South, Cooper makes it
patently clear that supremacy is a construct, and not a natural outcome of nature or of God’s will. Consequently, unequal gender roles and inequitable race opportunities are political and institutional constructs that must be dismantled. Whether through analyzing legalized segregation, historical omission, unequal education, lynching, sexual terrorism, objectifying stereotypes and scientific practices, or within the intimacies of everyday life, Cooper illustrates how racist and sexist norms are taught, legally enforced, and naturalized to such an extent that we often fail to challenge them or, equally dangerously, incorporate these dominant logics into our liberation politics, be they racial uplift or feminism.

**Cooper Addresses the “Race Problem”**

With total disassembly of structural inequality in mind, Cooper focuses much of her attention in *A Voice from the South* and in her 1902 speech, “The Ethics of the Negro Question,” on the “race problem.” Her analysis of this “problem” is three-pronged: first, she rejects a deficit-model approach to African American culture and community and instead identifies what she believes to be the real problems at work; second, she identifies various inadequate ideas that have been proffered as the answer to the “problem”; and third, she proposes her own array of more adequate strategies and tactics for real and meaningful change.

Importantly, Cooper argues that there *is* in actuality a “race problem” in this country, but that this fact is something to celebrate and to nurture, not to fret over or eradicate. She explains that a diverse society is an advanced society that holds much promise for the future: “We would not deprecate the fact, then, that America has a Race Problem. It is guaranty of the perpetuity and progress of her institutions, and insures the breadth of her culture and the symmetry of her development.” She finds much promise in racial and cultural differences, when they are in balance and not in a hierarchical relationship, because the alternative is a society that suppresses difference and enters “the passivity of death,” “stagnation,” monotony, and a false “unity without variety.” Constant conflict and debate, moreover, are as natural as “the very air we breathe, which seems so calm, so peaceful, [but which] is rendered innocuous only by the constant conflict of opposing gases”: in other words the “co-existence of radically opposing or racially different elements” is the core of America’s potential, not its problem. In fact, without a “race problem,” the United States would be liable to become a land characterized by a “dominant race” and by “tyranny and exclusiveness” run amok.

If we continue along the path of race hatred, xenophobia, and Jim Crow tyranny, Cooper implies that the United States will become an increasingly supremacist nation rather than pursue the promise of a truly democratic polity. Pressing her audience to understand the urgent need
to leave the path of racist domination, she writes: “Caste and prejudice mean immobility. One race predominance means death. The community that closes its gates against foreign talent can never hope to advance beyond a certain point. Resolve to keep out foreigners and you keep out progress.”

Moreover, since the United States was forged out of multiplicity and conflict, to forget this legacy would be a mistake. Cooper reminds us, “The fact is this nation was foreordained to conflict from its incipiency…. Exclusive possession belongs to none…. There was never a time since America became a nation when there were not more than one race, more than one party…. Hence no one is or can be supreme. All interests must be consulted, all claims conciliated.”

However, many in the nation seem to have been fooled by the red herring threat of “Negro domination” or by the bogus but powerful myth of the black rapist: consequently, prevailing wisdom perceives racial diversity (i.e., the presence of African Americans) as the dilemma to be resolved, not the promise of the future. Fear-mongering tactics used by white supremacists have successfully diverted the general public’s attention away from the actual problems and threats at hand. This has led to some misguided ideas about how to “solve” the ostensible calamity of racial diversity.

First, is the proposal to move even more systematically toward homogeneity and the “monomania” of race supremacy in all social institutions. Instead of this route, there is always the less brutal yet still wholly ineffective option of empty rhetoric and endless abstraction about the source and future of the “problem,” with no action in mind. Another suggestion is for African Americans to submit like good children to white benevolence or charity, even though “charity does not study [the Negro’s] needs as an individual person” and even if such charity turns out to be eugenicist race hatred hiding within the cloak of religious piety. She thoroughly dismisses relying on external help in the forms of altruistic or magnanimous gestures, which should be treated with deep suspicion since they are often the outcome of egotism and “selfishness”

Alternatively, African Americans could simply wait passively for change to happen, could blame each other as victims of oppression by adhering to an individualist, bootstraps ideology, or could engage in foolish appeasement with whites, as in “Booker Washington’s proposal of the solid hand and separate fingers,” even though “human selfishness will always rise as the domineering thumb to over ride and keep down every finger weak enough to give up the struggle.” If these strategies seem distasteful, Cooper dredges up the proposed solution that African Americans simply internalize oppression, or engage in “imitation” – the “worst of suicides” – and try to “become white.” The final alternative at hand is to leave the country altogether by moving away to Africa or...
other parts of the world (almost anywhere so long as it means leaving the United States) via policies of “amalgamation, deportation, [and] colonization.” As Cooper’s sarcasm reveals, she finds none of the so-called experts’ proposed solutions to the nations “problem” very impressive or even remotely viable.

Since what others take to be the “Race Problem” (i.e., racial diversity, conflict, debate, and even uncertainty) is not, according to Cooper, the true problem at all, what dynamics do, in fact, comprise the nation’s actual problems? The answers to this question, Cooper suggests, are patently clear but willfully overlooked. Slavery and its ongoing legacy is one key factor that we must come to terms with as a nation. Repeatedly ignoring the implied and stated meaning of the constitution and legalizing segregation to accommodate capitalist profit over democratic principles is an additional issue. Jim Crow’s unequal opportunities comprise yet another central concern, as does gender inequality and the lack of opportunities and rights for women. Finally, ignoring rampant “colorphobia,” fostering deep-seated prejudice, and encouraging hatred are all practices that together shape yet another aspect of the true “problems” facing the nation.

Conclusion: Cooper’s Platform for Change

After delineating the actual problems at hand and after debunking and dismissing a cadre of inadequate and ill-conceived “solutions,” Cooper offers forth her own range of proposed methods to address structural inequality and widespread prejudice. Some of her solutions are simple (as in, please just leave us alone) or are made in jest (though there is truth hidden therein). For example, she proposes that to get on with real progress, we could simply sedate the “Southern patient,” who has fallen ill with a dangerous viral hatred. Cooper also puts forward the idea that some kind of missionary work might be in order to help “‘elevate’ the white race”: after all, she remarks, “If the cultivated black man cannot endure the white man’s barbarity – the cure, it seems to me, would be to cultivate the white man.”

When it comes to her less ironic suggestions, Cooper first asks that we remember and then address in a focused and systematic way the “hideous handicaps” and obstacles hindering disenfranchised groups. Concomitantly, we must move toward “universal reciprocity” as a core principle rather than supremacy or domination. She explains that cultural autonomy and ethnic pride are fine, so long as these are disentangled from a supremacist ideology: “Men will here learn that a race, as a family, may be true to itself without seeking to exterminate all others.” A key way to ensure a balanced and reciprocal society, rather than an unequal and hierarchical one, is to invest in universal and equal education, including
education for all women and all African Americans – in fact, reparations
in the form of school funding for black education may be in order.\textsuperscript{121} It
also means that the full gamut of educational training be made available
to all people, no matter their background or identity.

Another major element of Cooper’s platform for change is advocating
for real and meaningful gender equity (in the nation at large and within
the race specifically). If we are unable to work “shoulder to shoulder”
as men and women, and if men choose to keep women both constrained
and considered lower on the scale of human worth, then no meaningful
transformation of the nation’s troubles will be possible, she argues.\textsuperscript{122}
Cooper repeatedly makes the case for the need to promote and support
black women’s agency, political status, educational opportunities, and
economic standing so that, in concert with black men and in coalition
with white women, they can participate actively and fully in the public
sphere as much as the domestic realm.

Once more, she asks her readers to see things from where she stands,
in 1892: “To be a woman in such an age carries with it a privilege and
an opportunity never implied before. But to be a woman of the Negro
race in America, and to be able to grasp the deep significance of the
possibilities of the crisis, is to have a heritage, it seems to me, unique in
the ages.”\textsuperscript{123} Cooper famously concludes, “Only the BLACK WOMAN
can say, ‘when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my
womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage,
then and there the whole Negro race enters with me’.”\textsuperscript{124}

Finally, Cooper maintains that African Americans must address the
psychological risks and dangers of living with domination: she offers
advice for ways to survive systemic oppression. Rather than succumb to
passivity, nihilism, or self-denigration (all of which are very real threats
when one lives surrounded by hatred and inequality), Cooper asks that
African Americans put shame aside, be proud, and speak up with their
own voice. She writes, “‘Know Thyself.’ Keep true to your own ideals. Be
not ashamed of what is homely and your own. Speak out and speak hon-
estly.”\textsuperscript{125} She realizes this is not always easy, particularly because resisting
hateful ideologies is difficult, but there are nuggets of wisdom that can be
shared to help teach the importance of shifting one’s perspective. Cooper
explains, “There is an old proverb ‘The devil is always painted black – by
white painters.’ And what is needed, perhaps, to reverse the picture of the
lordly man slaying the lion, is for the lion to turn painter.”\textsuperscript{126}

An essential element of African Americans moving from object to
subject and “turning painter” entails building on a unique legacy of folk-
lore, music, and linguistic patterns while also remembering the past as a
means of fueling resistance, since “the memory of past oppression and
the fact of present attempted repression only serve to gather momentum
for [the race’s] irrepressible powers.”

Cooper contends that folk songs, tales, and idioms are the building blocks of a future flowering in African American culture which, though it has yet to come into full bloom, will thrive once everyone acknowledges that you cannot “prophesy with another’s parable.” What African Americans require above all, she writes in an 1894 “Folklore and Ethnology” column, is release and liberation from standards and norms of whiteness: “I heard recently of a certain great painter, who before taking his brush always knelt down and prayed to be delivered from his model and just here as it seems to me is the real need of deliverance for the American black man.”

Speaking overtly from her lived experience and refusing to comply with the status quo, Cooper effectively raises her voice to make a case for the need to foster every person’s agency, to promote and support each individual’s fullest potential. Arguing from the position that racism and sexism are interrelated forms of domination that must be eradicated simultaneously rather than sequentially or separately, she offers a radically different vision of the possibilities ahead. Rather than a nation characterized by its distinction between first and second-class citizens, its segregated educational and public facilities, and its denial of basic rights and amenities to countless of its people, Cooper insists that we must all work in coalition toward a fully democratic and diverse polity. I would argue that one of Cooper’s most significant intellectual and political contributions is her tireless advocacy of widespread political and social transformation: she insisted on a coalitional model of realizing change and refused to give up her ground or stay in her expected or prescribed “place” as a black, southern woman.

Notes

1 Born into slavery in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1858, Anna Julia Cooper led a remarkable 105-year life, much of which she spent working as an educator in the South (in Raleigh, in Kansas City, Missouri, and, for the bulk of her adult life, in Washington, D.C.). Struggling against racist, sexist, and economic “discouragements to ... higher education” (Anna Julia Cooper, A Voice from the South [1892: 77]), she earned her B.A. (1884) and M.A. (1887) at Oberlin, and Ph.D. (1925) at the Sorbonne. After studying at Oberlin and working at Wilberforce in Ohio and at her alma mater, St. Augustine’s, in 1887 Cooper became a teacher at (and, from 1901-1906, principal of) the “M Street” high school (later named Dunbar High) in Washington, D.C. Cooper’s teaching gained international recognition in a 1905 book by Félix Klein, a French priest who was invited by the President of the United States to tour schools in the nation’s capitol: controversially (because of Jim Crow politics and eugenic notions of white intellectual superiority), Klein wrote that Cooper’s teaching was the most illustrious he had observed in the capitol but also in his nation-wide examination of American education (see Klein, Au pays de “La vie intense”). Cooper also came under the spotlight as principal of M
Street because she fought Congress for the right to offer a full liberal arts and technical curriculum at M Street: she won this contest, but lost her position as principal and went to Missouri to teach for a few years at Lincoln University. Cooper returned to Washington and to M Street in 1911, where she remained until her retirement in 1930. Then, she took up the presidency of Frelighuysen (1930-1941), a college for working adults (open to both black and white students). In addition to her work as an internationally renowned educator, activist, and orator, Cooper was an innovative scholar. Her important black feminist text, *A Voice from the South* (1892), is well known for, among other things, its insightful analysis of the interlocking nature of race and sex politics. And, though less widely known, her 1925 Sorbonne thesis *l’Attitude de la France à l’égard de l’esclavage pendant la Révolution* (now readily available in English: see Frances Richardson Keller [Ed. and Trans.], *Slavery and the French and Haitian Revolutionists* [2006]), in which she examines the dialogic interplay of French and Haitian politics in the Age of Revolution and excoriates France’s unethical dependency on slavery and exploitation in its vision of democracy, is also significant.

2 Cooper explores the politics of race, region, and gender in some of her later work as well. However, given the focus of this special issue of *The Southern Quarterly*, the discussion herein will emphasize Cooper’s work primarily in the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth century.

3 Cooper (1892: iii).


5 Cooper (1892: 42).

6 Ibid., p.134.

7 For more about the outsider within, see Patricia Hill Collins (1986).


9 Cooper (1892: i).

10 Ibid., p.96. Cooper does not specify the location of this train station. Rhetorically, her focus is on pervasive regional Jim Crow practices and logics across the South as a whole.

11 Lawson A. Scruggs (1893: 209).

12 Cooper (1892: 88).

13 Ibid., p.91.

14 Ibid., p.139.

15 Ibid., p.135.

16 For instance Terrell (1863-1954) often promoted a problematic charity model of activism, disparaged poor black women, and distanced herself from them. See Karen Baker-Fletcher (1994), Jacqueline Jones (1985), and Margaret Nash (2004).

17 In her dissertation *By Custom and by Law: Black Folklore and Racial Representation at the Birth of Jim Crow* (2006), Shirley C. Moody illustrates how Cooper’s work in the 1890s (at the Hampton Institute in Virginia and in Washington, D.C.) focused on folklore as a site of knowing that should be preserved by African Americans on their own terms, and not eradicated or denigrated: Cooper refused classist and condescending “uplift” as a means of group liberation. Moreover, Moody highlights how Cooper critiques and even mocks the very notion of “civilization,” though a cursory reading of Cooper might lead one to overlook this. See especially Moody’s chapter two, “The Hampton Folklore Society and the Crafting of a Black Folk Aesthetic” (pp. 68-133). Thus while some critics read Cooper as fundamentally elitist, e.g., Kevin K. Gaines...
(1996) or Mary Helen Washington (1988), others see her as working within dominant logics as a means of undoing them, e.g., Hazel Carby (1987) or Todd Vogel (2004). In *Anna Julia Cooper: Visionary Black Feminist* (2007), I build on these insights to illustrate how accounting for the full range of Cooper’s life work as an educator, intellectual, and activist offers a more complex portrait. While Cooper certainly had cultural capital, due to her extensive education, her role as an educator, and her participation in the Club Movement, she was not as financially secure as many of her colleagues and struggled as a single parent to raise her five adopted children and her two foster children. Pedagogically, Cooper’s vision of education is far more radical than many of her peers. In her later writings, she calls for a constructivist approach to teaching and highlighted the dangers of rote learning and of biased statistical measures and testing methods; she also developed curricular materials at the elementary, secondary, and collegiate levels that included Black history both in the U.S. and abroad.

18 Note that Cooper was one of a few women asked to speak before the ANA.
20 Anna Julia Cooper (1899).
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Cooper (1892: 50-51).
24 Ibid., p.65.
26 Cooper (1892: 29).
27 Ibid., p.78.
28 Livermore, was an abolitionist, journalist, and leader both in the suffrage and temperance movements; Cooper (1892: 53-54).
29 Ibid., p. 123.
30 Ibid., p.118.
31 Ibid., pp.120-121.
32 The others were Hallie Quinn Brown (c. 1849-1949), Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911), Fannie Barrier Williams (1855-1944), Fanny Jackson Coppin (1837-1913), and Sarah J. Early (1825-1907).
34 Cooper (1892: 80-81).
35 Ibid., p.81.
37 Cooper (1892: 138).
40 Cooper (1892: 252-253).
41 Ibid., p.95.
42 Ibid., pp.105-106.
43 Ibid., pp.103-104.
44 Ibid., p.108.
46 Ibid., pp.32, 83, 90, 96, 100, 108.
47 Ibid., p.87-88.
48 Ibid., p.121.
49 Ibid., p.83.
50 Cooper (1892: 142).
51 Paula Giddings (1984: 52).
52 Cooper (1899: 295-298).
53 Cooper (1892: 21).
54 Ibid., p.28.
55 Ibid., p.45. For additional information about black women’s negotiations of the discourse of both racial uplift and womanhood, see Frances Smith Foster (1993); Carby (1987); Shirley Logan (1999); and Adenike Marie Davidson (2007).
56 Ibid., p.143, 66.
57 Ibid., p.75, 142, 145.
58 Anna Julia Cooper (1951, I: 8-9).
63 Cooper (1892: 61-75).
64 Ibid., p.44.
65 St. Augustine’s, an HBCU still in existence today, was founded by a partnership between the Episcopal Church and the Freedmen’s Bureau. Cooper was in the inaugural class of students and quickly became a peer tutor (to help earn money for home) and later a teacher.
66 Ibid., pp.75-78.
67 Ibid., p.31.
68 Ibid., pp.25, 89-95, 237-239, 244-250, 254-255.
70 Cooper (1892: 113).
71 Ibid., pp.247-249.
72 Ibid., p.111.
74 Ibid., pp.18, 36-37, 44-45, 61-68, 75-78, 106, 111, 130, 150, 255-256, 261.
75 Ibid., p.24.
77 Cooper (1892: 101).
78 Ibid., p.239.
79 Ibid., p.45.
80 Ibid., p.25.
81 Ibid., p.ii.
83 Cooper (1892: i, ii); “Intellectual” (1998: 202).
84 Cooper (1892: i).
85 Ibid., pp.231-232.
86 Ibid., p.24.
By a Black Woman of the South


Cooper (1892: 24).


Ibid., p.209.

Cooper (1892: 77, 130, 150, 252-255); Cooper (1899); Cooper, “Ethics” (1998: 212).

Ibid., pp.78-79. For instance, Cooper not only faced gender bias while a student at St. Augustine’s, but also as a teacher there: even after she earned her degrees from Oberlin, they would not treat her with the same respect and standing as they did black men with equivalent training. Moreover, due to financial constraints at home (her mother worked as a domestic worker until she retired and her brothers were married with families of their own), Cooper began working as a peer tutor and then as a teacher to pay for her own schooling around the age of eleven. In fact, Cooper worked while pursuing every level of her education, from her high school diploma to her Oberlin B.A. and M.A., and later her Sorbonne Ph.D. The sexism she experienced at a young age at St. Augustine’s was nothing compared to the racist-sexist backlash she faced while Principal of the prestigious “M Street” high school in Washington, D.C. Behind the scenes, the Booker T. Washington “machine” ensured that Cooper would lose her job (though she won the battle and M Street maintained its full curriculum). The way in which she was publicly discredited was outrageous: she was portrayed as weak, feminine, and coddling — and, when that tack was refuted, Cooper was portrayed as if she were an immoral black woman having an affair with her foster child and student John Love. Later in life, as president of Frelinghuysen University, Cooper sought the help of Walter White (1893-1955) of the NAACP education campaign, as well as of Mordecai Johnson (1890-1976), first African American president of Howard University, to try to challenge Congress’ racist school accreditation practices — but was basically ignored and treated as an inane old lady. Saving a school like Frelinghuysen, which was accessible to the least powerful of Washington’s black citizens did not fit the integration and school desegregation agendas of the NAACP (even though Frelinghuysen was open to all races and to all economic levels). For more information about these and other incidents, see my book Anna Julia Cooper, Visionary Black Feminist (2007).


Ibid., pp.210-211.


Note that in 1900, Cooper was one of only two African American women invited to address the first Pan African Congress in London, where she gave a paper, “The Negro Problem in America,” while her longtime friend and colleague, Anna H. Jones, a black educator, club activist, and linguist who lived in Kansas City, Missouri, presented, “The Preservation of Race Individuality.” See Hutchinson (1981: 110-11).

Cooper (1892: 173).

Ibid., pp.149-150, 152.

Ibid., pp.150-151.

Ibid., p.155.

Ibid., p.160.

Ibid., p.164.


Cooper (1892: 164, 219).
Cooper (1892: 29, 204, 67, 137).
110 Cooper (1892: 232, 175, 172).
111 Ibid. 
112 Ibid., p.106. 
113 Cooper, “Ethics” (1998: 207); Cooper (1892: 129, 137).
115 Cooper, “Ethics” (1998: 208); Cooper (1892: 116).
116 Cooper (1892: 215).
119 Cooper (1892: 165).
120 Ibid., p.168.
121 Cooper, “Ethics” (1998: 212); Cooper (1892: 75-78, 193, 244); Cooper (1899).
122 Cooper (1899).
123 Cooper (1892: 144).
124 Ibid., p.31, italics and capitalization in original.
125 Ibid., p.226.
126 Ibid., p.225.
127 Cooper, “Ethics” (1998: 213); Cooper (1892: 224, 145). Much later in her career, in a 1930’s article about education, Cooper would continue this call to remember and build on African American folk traditions, not shun or be ashamed of them. She writes about the pressures faced by an African American teacher in a segregated school system: without segregation, she might “taste a literary tang in the idiosyncrasies [of language] that she now turns from in horror and disgust because she dreads and fears any out-cropping of what may be considered ‘Southern’ … that is to say, racial.” Anna Julia Cooper “The Humor of Teaching (1930)” (1998: 234-235).
128 Cooper (1892: 176).
129 Cooper (1894:133).

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