

Climbing the Mountain: The African American Fight for Real Equality

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At first impression, history is often seen as black and white: massacring Indians was bad, winning a war was good, enslaving Africans was bad, gaining legal freedom from slavery was good, and so on. Historical events like the passing of the United States' 13th amendment forbidding the buying, owning, and selling of human beings often paint an image of pure, unhindered success for blacks; they are free, what more could they need? Sara J. Duncan, an African American woman from Georgia, discussed the overlooked gray area in her 1906 novel *Progressive Missions in the South*. Her work included a multitude of brief biographies of her coworkers, friends, and family, as well as a distinct window into the past. The southern United States at the onset of the twentieth century was, in hindsight, part of a rapidly evolving nation. The population grew drastically, helped by the explosion of European immigration. Minorities, particularly African Americans, saw great fluctuations in their political rights, both in gains and losses. The standard of living improved for everyone, though at different rates. This allowed more people to take advantage of education, specialized occupation, and dedication to religious pursuits. Duncan rigorously illustrated these occurrences, their effects, and the distinct efforts to fully participate in the nation's politics and economy as a southern African American in the early 1900's. Her book revealed that although African Americans were still being systematically and brutally oppressed by those in power in the early 1900's, they managed to persevere by shifting occupations, taking advantage of education, and dedicating their lives to the will of God.

The federal government's legal proclamation ending slavery, although passed by a slim majority, certainly emitted a newfound tone of acceptance for these African Americans in 1865. However, vast numbers of white citizens still viewed blacks as inferior and found explicit ways

to show it for decades to come. Duncan's book affirmed that although African Americans were economically, politically, and physically oppressed by those in power, they managed to make significant political gains.

Duncan made it clear that a specific group of people were oppressing blacks. She wrote of blacks rivaling the accomplishments of the "Anglo-Saxon" race and going down in history "side by side with the predominant races."¹ These two terms were interwoven to suggest that Anglo-Saxons, or Old English, were the dominant race in the U.S. during this time. Because the dominant race held the power, they could either protect or allow the destruction of the African American demand for equality. Duncan consistently alluded to Anglo-Saxons as African Americans' competition; they were never in league together, but rather opposing one another. This notion was already confirmed by definition: in the U.S., Anglo-Saxon became a reference to those of English descent, particularly Old English.² When non-Anglo-Saxons used the term in writing, the tone was often one of disapproval; they believed that Anglo-Saxons wielded disproportionate financial and social power simply because of precedent.³ Indeed, the predominant race during this time was "white" and able to legally classify someone as "black" if they had any black ancestry, or "one drop of black blood."⁴ They had enough power to pass laws

¹ Sara J. Duncan, *Progressive Missions in the South and Addresses; with Illustrations and Sketches of Missionary Workers and Ministers and Bishops' Wives* (Atlanta, GA: The Franklin Printing and Publishing Co, 1906) [source on-line]; available from <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/duncan/duncan.html>; Internet; accessed 27 February 2011.

² John Cannon, "Anglo-Saxons," in *Encyclopedia* (HighBeam Research Inc, 2011) [encyclopedia on-line]; available from <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Anglo-Saxons.aspx>; Internet; accessed 12 March 2011.

³ "White Anglo-Saxon Protestant," in *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [encyclopedia on-line]; available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Anglo-Saxon_Protestant; Internet; accessed 12 March 2011.

⁴ "One Drop Rule," in *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [encyclopedia on-line]; available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One-drop_rule; Internet; accessed 13 March 2011.

resulting in the disenfranchisement and segregation of the vast majority of blacks.⁵

Whites in power managed to oppress African Americans through both political and economic means. Duncan claimed that her race suffered “prejudice,” “small wages,” “discrimination,” and that they were once seen as nothing more than “hewers of wood.”⁶ She alleged that, had prejudice not been so high, her race would have gone “down in history side by side with the predominant races and not be compelled to prepare a history of our own.”⁷ Indeed, prejudice was a common occurrence during this time. Jim Crow laws, or laws pitted directly against African Americans, were a prime example, forbidding intermarriage, ordering businesses and public institutions to keep black and whites separate, and forbidding the hiring of African Americans for most positions.⁸ Small wages for blacks could have easily been a result of prejudice, and they undoubtedly hit hard economically. The prevalence of small wages for blacks was allowed by the political system, the same one that should have ensured equal opportunity by prohibiting racial discrimination; small wages were an economic attack accomplished through politics. African Americans during this time received smaller wages than any other group of people, including European and Asian immigrants.⁹ This was at least in part because whites refused to work in professions they considered below them, preferred to hire whites into higher status positions, and oftentimes felt that blacks did not deserve higher wages.¹⁰ African

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Duncan, *Progressive Missions*.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Vernellia Randall, “Examples of Jim Crow Laws,” *Udayton Academic* [on-line]; available from <http://academic.udayton.edu/race/02rights/jcrow02.htm>; Internet; accessed 10 March 2011.

⁹ Lorenzo Greene and Carter Woodson, *The Negro Wage Earner* (Wildside Press LLC, 2008), 56-57.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Americans were also unable to receive training in better-paying professions, as illustrated by the Jim Crow laws. For example, many Jim Crow laws segregated schools by color which resulted in African American exclusion from advanced training, while others simply forbid the hiring of African Americans into high status professions.¹¹ On top of Jim Crow laws, African Americans were also the victims of “grandfather clauses” in the late nineteenth century. In order to prevent the black vote, southern states created obstacles to voting, such as taxes, property qualifications, or literacy tests; but because this would also disqualify many poor whites, they introduced the “grandfather clause” which simply exempted voters from restrictions if their grandfather had voted, leaving newly freed African Americans the sole victims.¹² “Hewers of wood,” in context, appears to equate to the lowly, degrading position forced upon African Americans by the dominant race. The phrase comes from a sentence in the King James Bible which states, “And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose.”¹³ “Hewers of wood” is a disgraced, possibly cursed, position of work.¹⁴ Yet Duncan insists that African Americans “are making strides that forces [sic] us to be recognized as fit for other positions than the “hewers of wood and drawers of water.”¹⁵

However, this advancement was hindered by extreme, ongoing violence. Duncan wrote that blacks had gone through “trials, temptations, mobs, lynchings, lash and oppressions of every

¹¹ Vernellia, “Examples of Jim Crow Laws.”

¹² “Grandfather Clause,” *United States History* [on-line]; available from <http://www.u-shistory.com/pages/h426.html>; Internet; accessed 5 May 2011.

¹³ “Joshua 9:23,” *Biblos* [on-line]; available from <http://bible.cc/joshua/9-23.htm>; Internet; accessed 10 March 2011.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Duncan, *Progressive Missions*.

kind.”¹⁶ “Mobs” of rowdy, rebellious people always ended up breaking the law and physically hurting someone. Angry mobs formed when whites got frustrated with black progress: between 1865 and 1900, at least ten infamous massacres occurred that each left dozens of African Americans dead, many more injured, and many buildings destroyed, always without backlash.¹⁷ “Lynching” is defined as the execution, usually hanging, of a person by a mob of people taking the law into their own hands in order to control a group of people.¹⁸ The victim was almost always legally innocent, but accused of some perceived slight against the dominant race. Lynching began in 1865 with the organization of the Ku Klux Klan in Tennessee by six middle class former confederate veterans who wanted to keep control of blacks using terrorism.¹⁹ Between 1882 and 1900 alone, 1,751 African Americans were lynched.²⁰

Yet despite these relentless attacks, African Americans made significant political gains. For example, Duncan alluded to “the awakening” of the black race.²¹ In context, the awakening appears to be a term of racial revival, a way of uniting and paving the way for successful ventures. Indeed, the great awakening referred to is the African American national revival that began after the federal government left the South in 1877, which was seen as an end to any sort of government assistance for African American progress, and lasted until all forms of

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ “African American History Timeline: 1801-1900,” *Blackpast* [on-line]; available from <http://www.blackpast.org/?q=timelines/african-american-history-timeline-1800-1900>; Internet; accessed 30 March 2011.

¹⁸ “Lynching,” in *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [encyclopedia on-line]; available from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynching>; Internet; accessed 30 March 2011.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ “Time Line of African American History, 1881-1900,” *The Library of Congress* [on-line]; available from <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aap/timelin2.html>; Internet; accessed 25 March 2011.

²¹ Duncan, *Progressive Missions*.

segregation were made illegal in the second Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's.²² The awakening began with a widespread realization that if progress was to be attained, it had to be fought for by the African Americans community. Activists such as W.E.B. DuBois radiated the spirit of the great awakening. DuBois encouraged black pride and advocated fighting for complete social equality. He also helped to found the NAACP to challenge Plessy's ruling, a Supreme Court case which upheld the racist policy of segregation by legalizing "separate but equal" facilities for blacks and whites.²³ Another example of post-slavery political uprooting in Duncan's text was the claim that blacks had managed to become "Senators" and "Representatives" in the United States Congress.²⁴ This was not only a huge accomplishment, but also the best path for progress. Two African Americans served as Senators, both from Mississippi: Hiram Revels and Blanche K. Bruce.²⁵ They both worked towards equality; Bruce advocated desegregation of the United States Army, and condemned the violence that plagued Mississippi during the Presidential and gubernatorial elections in 1875.²⁶ Twenty African Americans served as Republican Congressmen between 1870 and 1901, half of them former slaves and all from the South as the vast majority of blacks lived in the South and were able to vote them into office.²⁷ Finally, Duncan used phrases such as "grand and queenly women of our

²² "The Civil Rights Era (1865-1970)," *Spark Notes* [on-line]; available from <http://www.sparknotes.com/history/american/civilrights/summary.html>; Internet; accessed 13 March 2011.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Duncan, *Progressive Missions*.

²⁵ Stephanie Browner, "African American Congressmen," *Faculty Berea* [on-line]; available from <http://faculty.berea.edu/browners/chesnutt/classroom/afpolitics.html>; Internet; accessed 27 March 2011.

²⁶ "(1876) Senator Blanche K. Bruce," *Blackpast* [on-line]; available from <http://www.blackpast.org/?q=1876-senator-blanche-k-bruce-appointing-committee-investigate-election-practices-mississippi>; Internet; accessed 27 March 2011.

²⁷ "Past & Current African American Congressmen," *Black Wall Street* [on-line]; available from <http://blackwallstreet.org/blk.resources.dir/god.html>; Internet; accessed 27 March 2011.

race” to refer to numerous great African American women who managed to succeed using the judicial system.²⁸ An example of this is Lola Houck of Texas who brought a lawsuit against the Southern Pacific Railway for the racial violence she endured in an effort to use her first class ticket, violence that ended in her miscarriage, and won the case.²⁹ Even with politically oppressive laws, African Americans pushed their case for equality.

The political progress achieved by African Americans, despite efforts of whites to the contrary, allowed for economic achievement as well. Duncan’s book revealed that the shifting national economy and increasing opportunities brought drastic changes in African American occupations. This shift occurred abundantly in agriculture, industry, and specialized or higher class positions.

In agriculture, there was a shift from dependent to independent farm work. Duncan declared that “the Negro is possessed of wide domains of land; immense tracts have been brought into cultivation, and this people have become producers of the most valuable staples of this whole Southern country” [emphasis added].³⁰ The historical record confirms Duncan’s claim that lands were attained. African Americans went from owning three million acres of farmland in 1875 to twelve million acres in 1900.³¹ Most of this was in an area known as the “Black Belt”: Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, Arkansas, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and

²⁸ Duncan, *Progressive Missions*.

²⁹ “Texas Joins the Battle: African American Women, 1890s,” *Texas State Library* [on-line]; available from <http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/exhibits/suffrage/battle/aawomen.html>; Internet; accessed 16 March 2011.

³⁰ Duncan, *Progressive Missions*.

³¹ Abayomi Azikiwe, “African American Farmers Win Compensation,” *Workers World* [on-line]; available from http://www.workers.org/2010/us/african-american_farmers_0304/; Internet; accessed 13 March 2011.

Mississippi.³² This independent ownership removed African Americans from sharecropping, which equated to dependence on a land owner for all daily needs.³³

But after about 1890, many African Americans left agriculture altogether and went into industry. Duncan caught the beginning of this shift in her book. She stated that her race had “industrial enterprises of which we need be proud; also mechanics and builders of which few races can boast.”³⁴ Indeed, between 1893 and 1913, black businesses increased from seventeen thousand to forty thousand, and there was a steady shift from “agriculture, forestry, and fishing” to “manufacturing and mechanical” occupations.³⁵ The number of factories skyrocketed after Reconstruction and during the “Gilded Age” of big business.³⁶ This can be attributed to the fact that the United States became the world’s leading industrial nation, particularly after completing the Transcontinental Railroad. This in turn led to a seventy-five percent increase in annual income for non-farm workers.³⁷ Also, advancements in transportation, machinery, and techniques for mass production allowed for natural resources to be fully exploited.

The most important occupational shift, however, was in the upper class because it was a clear display of African American upward mobility. Duncan focused largely on these prominent

³² Ridgely Muhammad, “The Black Belt That Should Have Been,” *The Final Call* [on-line]; available from <http://whgbetc.com/mind/black-belt.html>; Internet; accessed 13 March 2011.

³³ “Reconstruction era of the United States,” in *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [encyclopedia on-line]; available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconstruction_era_of_the_United_States#Freedmen_and_the_enactment_of_Black_Codes; Internet; accessed 10 March 2011.

³⁴ Duncan, *Progressive Missions*.

³⁵ “The Social and Economic Status of the Black Population in the United States: An Historical View, 1790-1978,” *Bureau of the Census* [document on-line]; available from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED175974.pdf>; Internet; accessed 9 March 2011.

³⁶ “Industrial Expansion: 1860-1890,” *Emayzine* [on-line]; available from <http://www.emayzine.com/lectures/Indust~1.htm>; Internet; accessed 13 March 2011.

³⁷ “History of the United States (1865-1918),” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [encyclopedia on-line]; available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_United_States_%281865%E2%80%931918%29; Internet; accessed 12 March 2011.

positions with terms such as “institutions of learning,” “Senators,” “Representatives,” “grand and queenly women,” “ministers, lawyers, doctors and teachers,” “philosophers, poets, authors, editors...and every calling that the white race has had.”³⁸ Each of these terms demonstrated a position of increased success for freedmen. Whether a doctor, author, or Congressman, it was a huge step up from slavery a mere half century before. According to Duncan, African Americans were obtaining these positions more frequently. These African Americans served as pioneers to their race, paving the way for future generations to enter into equally specialized professions. For instance, African American Dr. Daniel Hale Williams founded the first black owned and operated hospital in the United States, the Provident Hospital, and was the first man in the world to perform heart surgery in 1893.³⁹ By 1906, there were 1,734 African American physicians, one hundred and sixty of which were female.⁴⁰ Duncan also described pharmacists when she wrote that “the Negro keeps his own store, can mix his own drugs, visit and prescribe for his race in sickness.”⁴¹ A pharmacist acts as a secondary physician, and must be medically knowledgeable so as to inform customers about the uses, side effects, and hazards of a drug.⁴² They tend to be actively involved with patients and the community, and they usually end up being a business leader, taking on managerial positions in order to run their pharmacy.⁴³ By 1906, there were one

³⁸ Duncan, *Progressive Missions*.

³⁹ “Pioneers in Academic Surgery,” *U.S. National Library of Medicine* [on-line]; available from <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/aframsurgeons/pioneers.html#douglass>; Internet; accessed 23 March 2011.

⁴⁰ Robert Wortham, “W.E.B. Du Bois and Demography: Early Explorations,” *Sociation Today* [on-line]; available from <http://www.ncsociology.org/sociationtoday/dubois/phila.htm>; Internet; accessed 25 March 2011.

⁴¹ Duncan, *Progressive Missions*.

⁴² “Pharmacist,” *The Princeton Review* [on-line]; available from <http://www.princetonreview.com/Careers.aspx?cid=111>; Internet; accessed 25 March 2011.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

hundred and sixty African American drug stores in the United States, created in order to accommodate the rapidly increasing number of African American hospitals.⁴⁴ Another example of a profession of successful eminence was as a university dean. For example, Hallie Quinn Brown served as the dean at the Allen University and as the dean of women at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.⁴⁵ Duncan's list of occupations was also confirmed by the fact that in the late 1890's, there were over fifteen thousand African American teachers, twelve thousand clergymen, nine hundred surgeons, and hundreds of lawyers and judges.⁴⁶

Of course, in order to enter into many of these professions, African Americans had to first acquire the proper education. Duncan's book illustrated the emphasis African Americans placed on education in the early 1900's. Duncan went to great lengths to convey the importance of education for her race and appeared to be very proud of their educational progress since slavery. This is evidenced by her use of the terms "education," "institutions of learning," "accumulate wealth," "graduate our own ministers, lawyers, doctors and teachers," "finest school buildings in America," "twenty-five thousand teachers and professors," "fifty thousand educated men and women," "respectable education," "higher education," and "greatest legacy...is an education."⁴⁷ It is worth noting that Duncan did not simply claim education success, but specifically listed statistics that revealed the exact extent of success. This tells the reader that Duncan was thorough and resourceful, probably with a decent education herself. In any case, her claims were correct. Between 1870 and 1900, the number of all Americans in school doubled

⁴⁴ Wortham, "W.E.B. Du Bois and Demography: Early Explorations."

⁴⁵ Jone Johnson Lewis, "Hallie Quinn Brown," *About* [on-line]; available from http://womenshistory.about.com/od/aframer18631900/p/hallie_brown.htm; Internet; accessed 16 March 2011.

⁴⁶ Abdul Alkalimat, "Intro to Afro-American Studies," *Eblackstudies* [on-line]; available from <http://www.eblackstudies.org/intro/chapter8.htm>; Internet; accessed 9 March 2011.

⁴⁷ Duncan, *Progressive Missions*.

while the number of blacks in school increased tenfold.⁴⁸ These schools were founded by the government and religious groups, fueled by the fact that more Americans viewed education as a path to upward mobility and a reliable way to obtain vocational training.⁴⁹ Georgia, Duncan's home state, and Mississippi led the states in African American school attendance.⁵⁰ School also became important to a later age than before with the number of high school graduates doubling between 1890 and 1900.⁵¹ Many even continued on to medical school, which Duncan alluded to when she write about the "institutions of learning" that graduate doctors. By the second half of the 19th century, there were six black medical schools which graduated enough physicians to staff the forty-two private black hospitals existing in 1906.⁵² Driven by exclusion from all-white hospitals, African Americans ensured their own community health care and education.⁵³

Although education was a key factor in African American progress, the core of their passion rested in theology. Duncan indentified religion as vital to the lives of southern African Americans during this time period, with social outreach being placed at the forefront of priorities.

Duncan's book utilized terms indicative of Christianity more than anything else. She used phrases from the Bible like "Watchman, what of the night," "hewers of wood," and "Ethiopia

⁴⁸ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Census Reports: Volume II, Population, Part II," *United States Census Office* [document on-line]; available from http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/33405927v2_TOC.PDF; Internet; accessed 15 March 2011.

⁴⁹ Jacqueline Jones, et al, *Created Equal: A History of the United States* (Pearson Education Inc, 2009), 219; U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Census Reports."

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Jones, *Created Equal*.

⁵² "Black History Month: A Medical Perspective," *Duke University Medical Center Library* [on-line]; available from <http://www.mcliclibrary.duke.edu/hom/exhibits/blkhist/>; Internet; accessed 23 March 2011; Wortham, "W.E.B. Du Bois and Demography: Early Explorations."

shall stretch forth her hand.” She wrote about the “African Methodist Episcopal Church,” and mentioned the “bible,” “hymn book,” “churches,” “Son of God,” and “gospel.” She implored her race to “ask him religiously,” and finally claimed that “religion is the grandest theme of earth.”⁵⁴ Her choice of words was an excellent demonstration of the religious fervor gripping the African American race at the onset of the nineteenth century, as it was clearly the topic she was most passionate about. She kept Christianity in focus by repeating biblical quotes. For example, “Watchman, what of the night?” was the title of a section of her book, and Duncan deferred to the Watchman at least ten times in the three page text. “Watchman, what of the night” was a phrase from the King James Bible where, in context, the Watchman was a prophet of God.⁵⁵ An emphasis on Christianity was not unusual for the time, as most Americans were Christian.⁵⁶ But this quote was particularly important in Duncan’s message because the question asked whether or not there would be deliverance from tribulation.⁵⁷ As an analogy, the “night” for African Americans had been open racism in the form of slavery, Jim Crow laws, education disparities, disenfranchisement, terrorist acts, and overall substandard versions of everything offered in America, all evidenced by Duncan’s writings.⁵⁸ When Duncan implored African Americans to ask the Watchman what to do, she pointed them to God, religion, and the bible. Duncan used the phrase “hewers of wood,” which was also from the King James Bible.⁵⁹ She also discussed the

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Duncan, *Progressive Missions*.

⁵⁵ “Isaiah 21.11,” *Biblos* [on-line]; available from <http://bible.cc/isaiah/21-11.htm>; Internet; accessed 8 March 2011.

⁵⁶ Jones, *Created Equal*.

⁵⁷ “Isaiah 21:11.”

⁵⁸ “Racism in the United States,” in *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [encyclopedia on-line]; available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racism_in_the_United_States#Racism_against_African_Americans; Internet; accessed 8 March 2011.

⁵⁹ “Joshua 9:23.”

“African Methodist Episcopal Church”, a sect of Protestantism, one of the three major divisions of Christianity, that evolved out of a larger Methodist Episcopal Church thanks to the Free African Society.⁶⁰ Methodism was a movement of Protestant Christianity that rejected the apathy of its Church of origin, the Anglican Church, and emphasized personal religious enthusiasm.⁶¹ This personal enthusiasm was what made Methodism so appealing. Its introduction to America signaled the First Great Awakening, a massive religious revival in the 1700’s.⁶² Despite their affinity towards a more personal religion, African Methodists abided by episcopacy, a system of church government in which bishops are the chief clergymen in the hierarchy.⁶³ The African Methodist Episcopal Church was started in 1787 by a former slave from Delaware, Richard Allen, and by 1880 it had four hundred thousand members. This church’s mission was to minister to all needs of all people by spreading the gospel through word and deed. Allen and others rejected the Methodist Episcopal Church’s interpretation of the Bible that left African Americans as second class citizens; they rejected slavery and the discrimination that they faced within the larger Methodist Episcopal Church.⁶⁴

Christianity at the beginning of the twentieth century was not an end in itself, however; its set of beliefs entailed helping others. Social activism was a crucial component of Christianity for African Americans. Many terms in Duncan’s book illustrated this component of Christianity.

⁶⁰ “AMEC: African Methodist Episcopal Church,” *African Methodist Episcopal Church* [on-line]; available from <http://www.amechurch.com/>; Internet; accessed 30 March 2011.

⁶¹ David Cody, “Methodism,” *Victorian Web* [on-line]; available from <http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/methodist.html>; Internet; accessed 1 April 2011.

⁶² “Methodism: United States,” in *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [encyclopedia on-line]; available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodism#United_States; Internet; accessed 1 April 2011.

⁶³ “episcopacy,” *The Free Dictionary* [on-line]; available from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/episcopacy>; Internet; accessed 1 April 2011.

⁶⁴ “AMEC: African Methodist Episcopal Church.”

She discussed the “Women’s Home and Foreign Missionary Society” and “the awakening.” She wrote of the “missionary” in “Liberia” that offered “life and peace” to the “heathen.” Finally, she resolutely stated that “this gospel shall be preached.”⁶⁵ The “awakening” was a term used to describe newfound passion, particularly religious passion. Indeed, it referred to what we now call the Third Great Awakening, which was an American religious revival that lasted from 1860 to 1900. It gathered strength from the belief that Christ would make his second earthly appearance only after mankind had reformed the entire world. The awakening caused the Social Gospel Movement which applied Christianity to social issues. Religious leaders advocated systematic outreach towards non-believers to achieve worldwide reformation.⁶⁶ The Women’s Home and Foreign Missionary Society was a group who sent missionaries to domestic and foreign lands in order to give aid and convert others to said religion. A missionary was indeed a member of a religious group sent somewhere to evangelize or minister through services like education, social justice, economic development, and health care.⁶⁷ Within Christianity, however, it was done in obedience of Jesus’ command to make disciples of all nations.⁶⁸ It should be noted that the Progressive Era in the United States, 1890 to 1910, saw a huge rise in humanitarian work which corresponded to missionary work.⁶⁹ The Women’s Home and Foreign Missionary Society, however, was a female society subordinate to the American Methodist Episcopal Church

⁶⁵ Duncan, *Progressive Missions*.

⁶⁶ “Third Great Awakening,” in *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [encyclopedia on-line]; available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_Great_Awakening#cite_ref-1; Internet; accessed 13 March 2011.

⁶⁷ “Missionary,” in *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [encyclopedia on-line]; available from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Missionary>; Internet; accessed 31 March 2011.

⁶⁸ Jualynne Dodson, “Engendering Church: Women, Power, and the A.M.E. Church,” *Princeton* [on-line]; available from <http://www.princeton.edu/~jweisenf/northstar/volume5/Dodson.html>; Internet; accessed 30 March 2011.

⁶⁹ Jones, *Created Equal*.

Missionary Department and whose primary goal was to assist in missionary work through raising funds and volunteering to be missionaries.⁷⁰ Duncan was actually the President of the society in 1900.⁷¹ It focused mainly on the South and, with the Women's Mite Missionary Society in the North, spread quickly to Africa.⁷² Christianity seriously entered Africa when Catholic European missionaries arrived in the 1400's and 1500's. However, it did not reach the interior until the late 1700's when Protestant missionaries and former slaves arrived from America. This was because of the different methods employed: the Catholic European missions were characterized by colonization efforts, or force, whereas the American Protestants emphasized voluntary acceptance, a much more successful method. For example, people like Ajayi Crowther, a former slave who became the first African bishop, stressed the importance of active participation, setting up Africans themselves as leaders, giving them a responsibility to spread God's word, and taking note of the common ground that Christianity and African values shared.⁷³ Duncan talked a lot about spreading Christianity throughout Africa, especially Liberia, by offering life and peace to the heathen, or non-believer. Liberia, a country in Africa situated along the Atlantic Coast, was founded in 1822 due to the American Colonization Society's need to settle freed American slaves back in Africa.⁷⁴ Because of this genesis, Liberia had maintained close ties with the U.S.

⁷⁰ African Methodist Episcopal Church, "The doctrines and disciplines of the A.M.E. Church," *Google Books* [on-line]; available from http://books.google.com/books?id=FmDUAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA328&lpg=PA328&dq=AME+%22women%27s+home+and+foreign+missionary+society%22&source=bl&ots=xIjIUscXl4&sig=hBcq9LfpYf0ah36v5ZsUPQaJepk&hl=en&ei=AyCVTYsrB4SqsAOkz8DTBQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=10&ved=0CFEQ6AEwCQ#v=onepage&q=AME%20%22women%27s%20home%20and%20foreign%20missionary%20society%22&f=false; Internet; accessed 31 March 2011.

⁷¹ Dodson, "Engendering Church."

⁷² "Women's Missionary Society, African Methodist Episcopal Church," *Bookrags* [on-line]; available from <http://www.bookrags.com/tandf/womens-missionary-society-african-tf/>; Internet; accessed 31 March 2011.

⁷³ "Christianity in Africa," *Novel Guide* [on-line]; available from http://www.novelguide.com/a/discover/aes_01/aes_01_00085.html; Internet; accessed 1 April 2011.

⁷⁴ "Liberia," *Info Please* [on-line]; available from <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107718.html>; Internet; accessed

and that's why missionaries so often chose to give aid there.⁷⁵

Through her writing, Duncan demonstrated that African Americans were persecuted in the time leading up to the nineteenth century, yet they still made progress. She lamented the injustices her race faced, but then optimistically emphasized the barriers they had overcome. Whether in politics, the economy, occupation, education, or religion, African Americans had indeed improved in the decades preceding Duncan's writings despite the merciless opposition of whites. Like many others, Duncan felt compelled to give credit to God, and she stressed the importance and joy of religion. It appears that both education and religion served her well. In the face of racial oppression, she pressed on by focusing on accomplishments and utilizing her faith in God. Most importantly, though, was her attitude: she was a fighter. "We must fight our way," she said, "and if the way seems not to be found, make it."⁷⁶ This was the attitude that ensured the very success she celebrated. There was no reason whites would suddenly change their entire social system to accommodate an apathetic race, so this was indeed an important trait, one worth learning from. When faced with hardship, unequal opportunity, or discrimination of any kind, fight for what is right; be active. African Americans made progress by uniting, working hard to better themselves, and voting. With the voting percentage of the American population so incredibly low and the percent of Americans with a college education still small, the 1900 African American passion is clearly one to learn from.

31 March 2011.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Duncan, *Progressive Missions*.