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Populist Dreams and Negro Rights: East Texas as a Case Study

LAWRENCE C. GOODWYN

NEARLY A CENTURY LATER the Populist decade lingers in historical memory as an increasingly dim abstraction. The very word "Populism" no longer carries specific political meaning. It is now invoked to explain George Wallace, as it was used to explain Lyndon Johnson in the sixties, Joe McCarthy in the fifties, and Claude Pepper in the forties. Though afflicting principally the popular mind, this confusion is at least partly traceable to those historians who have insisted on concentrating on Populism as exhortation, so that Ignatius Donnelly's utopian novels or Mary Lease's pronouncements on the respective uses of corn and hell become the explanatory keys to agrarian radicalism. For scholars who mine political movements with a view to extracting cultural nuggets, the focus has been chiefly upon the word, not the deed; in the process the agrarian crusade has become increasingly obscure.¹

Much of the difficulty centers on the subject of race. There is essential agreement that, on economic issues, Populists were men of the Left, primitive to some, prophetic to others, but leftists to all. But did their banner indicate a highly selective nativist radicalism for whites only, or did they grapple with the inherited legacies of the caste system as part of an effort to

¹ Such careful inquiries as C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South* (Baton Rouge, 1951); Woodward, *Thomas Watson, Agrarian Rebel* (New York, 1938); and Walter T. K. Nugent, *The Tolerant Populists* (Chicago, 1963), demonstrate how regional and state studies can reconstruct the milieu within which men performed their public political labors. Both historians are careful to set the words of Populists, Democrats, and Republicans against their respective acts. In contrast Richard Hofstadter and Norman Pollack, though in healthy disagreement in their assessment of the quality of Populist agitation, both rest their analysis on elusive cultural and ideological categories that often seem far removed from the inner workings of the agrarian crusade. In *The Populist Response to Industrial America* (Cambridge, 1962), Pollack strains to find an authentic socialist basis for Populist criticisms of American capitalism. The attempt has the effect of diminishing the provincial generosity and innocence of Populism as well as socialist claims to ideological consistency; it also carries Pollack's inquiry toward the upper reaches of the party hierarchy in a manner frequently unrelated to the substance of third-party survival at the local level. The scholarly assault on Hofstadter's *The Age of Reform* (New York, 1958) has been both telling and recurring—the recurrence a testament to the vitality of this creative and persuasively written book. The criticism that Hofstadter selected a small number of Populist writings as a basis for sweeping generalizations about the nature of the agrarian crusade remains as true as ever.

create what they considered a more rational social and economic order? The analysis of Populist rhetoric has left us with contradictory answers.

While party platforms can be useful tools in determining professed attitudes, the gap between asserted ideals and performance is sufficiently large to defeat any analysis resting on the implicit assumption that political manifestos have an intrinsic value apart from the milieu in which they existed. In America the distance between assertion and performance is especially evident in matters of race; as a result, on this issue above all, the context of public assertions is central to the task of their political evaluation.² An inquiry into the murkiest corner of Populism, interracial politics, should begin not merely with what Populists said but what they did in the course of bidding for power at the local level. What was the stuff of daily life under Populist rule in the rural enclaves where the third party came to exercise all the authority of public office, including police authority? What can we learn not only about Populist insurgency but also about the orthodoxy the third party opposed?

GRIMES COUNTY, TEXAS, was one of many counties scattered across the South and West where the People's party achieved a continuing political presence in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Located some sixty miles north of Houston in the heart of what the natives call the Old South part of Texas, Grimes County displayed the cotton-centered economy typical of rural East Texas in 1880. Its largest town, Navasota, contained 1,800 persons in 1890 and its second largest town, Anderson, the county seat, only 574 persons as late as 1900. Farms in Grimes County ranged from plantation size in the rich bottomland country of the Brazos River on the county's western border to small, single-family agricultural units on the poorer land of the northern part of the county.³ The 1890 census revealed a county population of 21,312, of which 11,664 were black.⁴

Populism in Grimes County is the story of a black-white coalition that had its genesis in Reconstruction and endured for more than a generation.

² For example, a central aspect of race relations in the South concerns the question of which classes in Southern society took the lead in the successive processes—black disfranchisement being one of the more essential ones—by which the antebellum caste system, in altered form, was reinstitutionalized after Reconstruction. Analysis of rhetoric that is not intimately related to these processes as they occur cannot be expected to produce evidence that bears on the crucial causal relationships involved. In this connection a recent study by William I. Hair touches directly on one of these processes—the violent suppression of black trade unionism. Hair asserts that the gentry “embraced the kind of Negrophobia elsewhere usually attributed to ignorant poor whites.” When Louisiana planters crushed a Knights of Labor strike in the lower delta parishes in 1887 casualties among cane field workers “ran into the hundreds.” *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics, 1877–1900* (Baton Rouge, 1969), 184.

³ The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Marcus Mallard of Navasota, chairman of the Grimes County Historical Society. Mr. Mallard provided social, economic, and genealogical information on the county and many of its prominent families.

⁴ Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, Abstract with Supplement for Texas* (Washington, 1913), 620; *Texas Almanac, 1910* (Dallas, 1910), 133.

In time this coalition came to be symbolized by its most enduring elected public official, Garrett Scott. The Scotts had roots in Grimes County dating back before the Civil War. Their sons fought for the Confederacy and returned to face a postwar reality by no means unique in the South; possessing moderately large holdings of land but lacking necessary capital to make it productive, the Scotts did not achieve great affluence. During the hard times that continued to afflict undercapitalized Southern agriculture through the 1870s Garrett Scott became a soft-money agrarian radical.⁵ His stance was significant in the political climate of Grimes County in the early 1880s. During Reconstruction Negroes in the county had achieved a remarkably stable local Republican organization, headed by a number of resourceful black leaders. When Reconstruction ended and white Democrats regained control of the state governmental machinery in Texas, Grimes County blacks retained local power and sent a succession of black legislators to Austin for the next decade.⁶ The local effort to end this Republican rule took the usual postwar Southern form of a political movement of white solidarity under the label of the Democratic party. In supporting the Greenback party Garrett Scott not only was disassociating himself from the politics of white racial solidarity, he was undermining it.

In 1882 a mass meeting of various non-Democratic elements in Grimes County nominated a variegated slate for county offices. Among the candidates were black Republicans, "lily-white" Republicans, and Independent Greenbackers. Garrett Scott was on the ticket as the Independent Greenback candidate for sheriff.⁷ Not much is known about the racial climate in Grimes County in 1882, but it must not have been wholly serene, because the "lily-white" nominee for county judge, Lock MacDaniel, withdrew from the ticket rather than publicly associate with black candidates.⁸ Garrett Scott did not withdraw, and in November he was elected. Also elected, as district clerk, was a black man who became a lifelong political ally of Scott, Jim Kennard.⁹ Thus began an interracial coalition that endured through the years of propagandizing in Texas by the increasingly radical Farmers Alliance and through the ensuing period of the People's party. The success of the coalition varied with the degree of white participation. After the collapse of the Greenback party in the mid-eighties visible white opposition to the Democratic party declined for several years before Grimes County farmers, organized by the Alliance, broke with the Democracy to form the nucleus of the local People's party in 1892. Scott and Kennard were the most visible symbols of the revitalized coalition, but there were others as well. Among them were Morris Carrington, a Negro school principal, and Jack Haynes,

⁵ *Galveston News*, Sept. 10, 1882; *Navasota Tablet*, Nov. 11, 1900.

⁶ Harrell Budd, "The Negro in Politics in Texas, 1877-1898" (master's thesis, University of Texas, 1925), 83; J. Mason Brewer, *Negro Legislators of Texas* (Dallas, 1935), 64, 74-75, 81.

⁷ *Galveston News*, Sept. 10, 1882.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Sept. 21, 1882.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Nov. 11, 1882.

both staunch advocates of Populism in the black community, as well as J. W. H. Davis and J. H. Teague, white Populist leaders. These men led the People's party to victory in the county elections of 1896 and again in 1898.¹⁰

A subtle duality creeps into the narrative of events at this point. To the world outside Grimes County in the 1890s, to both Populists and Democrats, Garrett Scott was simply another Populist officeholder, distinguished for his antimonopoly views and his generally radical approach to monetary policy. To his white supporters within Grimes County he was doubtless respected for the same reasons. But to the Democrats of Grimes County the sheriff symbolized all that was un-Southern and unpatriotic about the third party. Under Populist rule, it was charged, Negro school teachers were paid too much money; furthermore, in Scott's hands the sheriff's office hired Negro deputies. The two Democratic newspapers in Navasota were fond of equating Populist rule with Negro rule and of attributing both evils to Scott. The Navasota *Daily Examiner* asserted that "the Negro has been looking too much to political agitation and legislative enactment. . . . So long as he looks to political agitation for relief, so long will he be simply the means of other men's ambition."¹¹ To the Navasota *Tablet* Scott was simply "the originator of all the political trouble in Grimes County for years."¹² Both these explanations oversimplify Grimes County politics. The political presence and goals of blacks were definite elements of local Populism, as was, presumably, the personal ambition of Garrett Scott. But the Populists' proposed economic remedies had gained a significant following among the county's white farmers, and this was of crucial importance in inducing white Populists to break with Democrats and ally themselves with blacks. Garrett Scott was a living embodiment of white radicalism; he did not cause it.¹³ Beyond this the political cohesion of blacks was a local phenomenon that

¹⁰ Carrington and Haynes as well as Kennard had been active in the county Republican organization prior to the emergence of the third party. The information from contemporary sources on the political lives of Negro leaders in Grimes County that was used in this paper was augmented by oral interviews with their descendants. The author wishes to express his gratitude to Maurice Lyons and B. T. Bonner, both former students at the University of Texas, for their assistance in the conduct of oral interviews in the black communities of Navasota, Anderson, Plantersville, and Richards in Grimes County. Largely through the efforts of Mr. Lyons and Mr. Bonner, the author was able to locate the descendants of every known black leader of the People's party in Grimes County. With respect to the third party's white leadership, the political histories of Teague, Davis, and Scott, traced through both oral interviews and contemporary sources, stand as examples of the diverse sources of Southern Populism. Teague, like Scott, spent his entire political life in opposition to the Democratic party—but as a Republican rather than as an agrarian radical. Quietly progressive on the race issue, Teague possessed considerable administrative talents and eventually became chairman of the third party for the first congressional district of Texas. He was elected county judge in 1896 and was re-elected in the local third-party sweep of 1898. Davis, a Democrat, became quite radical on economic issues, broke with his party, and became a third-party editor. He displayed an ambivalent stance on the race issue and was not prominent in the events described in this paper.

¹¹ Navasota *Daily Examiner*, Oct. 13, 1898.

¹² *Tablet*, Nov. 11, 1890.

¹³ The characterization of third-party rule as "Negro rule" was common in the Democratic press in counties where Populism was strong. Such accounts must be weighed against other stories, appearing in the same newspapers, that acknowledged the strong appeal of the People's party among white farmers. In this connection, see the *Examiner*, Nov. 4, 1898.

had preceded Scott's entry into Grimes County politics and had remained relatively stable since the end of the war. The ease with which Democratic partisans saw the fine hand of Garrett Scott in Negro voting was more a reflection of their own racial presumptions than an accurate description of the political dynamics at work in the county.

Through the election of 1898 Democrats in Grimes County had labored in vain to cope with the disease of Populism among the county's white farmers. Finally, in the spring of 1899, the Democrats moved in a new direction. The defeated Democratic candidate for county judge, J. G. McDonald, organized a clandestine meeting with other prominent local citizens and defeated Democratic office seekers. At this meeting a new and—for the time being—covert political institution was created: the White Man's Union. A charter was drawn providing machinery through which the Union could nominate candidates for county offices in elections in which only White Man's Union members could vote. No person could be nominated who was not a member; no person could be a member who did not subscribe to these exclusionary bylaws; in effect, to participate in the organization's activities, so adequately expressed in its formal title, one had to support, as a policy matter, black disfranchisement.¹⁴ Throughout the summer and fall of 1899 the White Man's Union quietly organized.

Writing years later McDonald explained that care was taken not to launch the organization publicly "until the public attitude could be sounded."¹⁵ By January 1900 the covert organizing had been deemed sufficiently successful to permit the public unveiling of the White Man's Union through a long story in the *Examiner*. During the spring the *Examiner's* political reporting began to reflect a significant change of tone. In April, for example, the *Examiner's* report of a "quiet election" in nearby Bryan noted that friends of the two mayoral candidates "made a display of force and permitted no Negroes to vote. All white citizens went to the polls, quietly deposited their ballots for whom they pleased and went on about their business."¹⁶ The *Examiner* had progressed from vague suggestions for disfranchisement to approval of its forcible imposition without cover of law.

The first public meetings of the White Man's Union, duly announced in the local press,¹⁷ occupied the spring months of 1900 and were soon augmented by some not-quite-so-public night riding. The chronology of these events may be traced through the denials in the local Democratic press of their occurrence. In July the *Examiner* angrily defended the county's honor against charges by the Negro Baptist State Sunday School Conference that the county had become unsafe for Negroes. The Austin *Herald* reported from the state's capital that the Sunday School Board, "after mature thought and

¹⁴ The bylaws of the White Man's Union were published in the *Examiner*, Jan. 6, 1900.

¹⁵ J. G. McDonald to E. L. Blair, July 10, 1928, in E. L. Blair, *Early History of Grimes County* (Austin, 1930), 197.

¹⁶ *Examiner*, Apr. 4, 1900.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Apr. 2, 3, June 4, 6, 11, July 17, 18, 19, 20, 30, 1900.

philosophical deliberation," had decided to cancel its annual meeting scheduled for Navasota.¹⁸ The *Examiner* cited as "irresponsible slush" the charge that Negroes were being threatened and told to leave the county, but within weeks reports of just such events began cropping up in the *Examiner* itself.¹⁹ One example of terrorism left no one in doubt, for it occurred in broad daylight on the main street of the county seat: in July Jim Kennard was shot and killed within one hundred yards of the courthouse. His assailant was alleged to be J. G. McDonald.²⁰

Intimidation and murder constituted an even more decisive assault on the People's party than had the ominous bylaws of the White Man's Union. The Populist leadership recognized this clearly enough, and Scott went so far as to attempt to persuade Southern white farmers to shoulder arms in defense of the right of Negroes to vote.²¹ Beyond this we know little of the measures attempted by the local Populist constabulary to contain the spreading terrorism. A well-informed member of the Scott family wrote a detailed account of these turbulent months, but the manuscript was subsequently destroyed. In the early autumn of 1900 members of the White Man's Union felt sufficiently strong to initiate visits to white farmers with a known allegiance to the People's party. Under such duress some of these farmers joined the White Man's Union.²²

In August the Union, aided by a not inconsiderable amount of free publicity in the local press, announced "the Grandest Barbecue of the Year," at which the "workings of the White Man's Union" would be explained to all. The leadership of the People's party objected to announced plans to include the local state guard unit, the Shaw Rifles, in the program. After some discussion the Texas adjutant general, Thomas Scurry, placed at the discretion of the local commander the question of the attendance of the Shaw Rifles

¹⁸ Austin *Herald*, reprinted in *Examiner*, July 17, 1900.

¹⁹ *Examiner*, Sept. 4, 13, Oct. 19, Nov. 5, 1900.

²⁰ Carrie Meacham, private interview near Plantersville, Texas, Aug. 12, 1970. Mrs. Meacham is the daughter of the slain Populist leader. W. F. McGowan, private interview in Navasota, Apr. 14, 1970. Mr. McGowan, now ninety-four years old, was a personal friend of Jim Kennard. A. P. Wickey, private interview in Anderson, May 14, 1970. Mr. Wickey is the source of the statement attributing Kennard's death to Judge McDonald. Mr. Wickey's stepfather was a prominent member of the White Man's Union; the younger Wickey, now in his eighties, was present in Anderson the day of the slaying. His account is supported by Mrs. Meacham: "Judge McDonald shot my father off his horse on the main street of Anderson."

²¹ The Navasota *Tablet* accused Scott of attempting to rally Populists in defense of Negro voting rights, describing his public appeals as "raving speeches." *Tablet*, Nov. 11, 1900.

²² Edith Hamilton, private interview in Richards, Texas, May 24, 1970. Though specific information about the night-riding activities of the White Man's Union can occasionally be found in the local Democratic press, that source cannot be characterized as zealous in its reporting of extraparliamentary aspects of the campaign of 1900. Accounts of intimidation of Negro Populists have been preserved in the oral tradition of Grimes County Negroes; accounts of intimidation of white Populists have been preserved in the oral tradition of the Scott family. Mrs. Hamilton, now eighty years of age, is the niece of Garrett Scott. Richards, Texas, is located in Grimes County, a few miles from the county seat of Anderson. The lost "Populist history" of Grimes County was written by Mrs. Hamilton's father. It was destroyed after his death by his wife, Cornelia Kelly, because, says Mrs. Hamilton, "my mother felt we had all suffered enough and no purpose would be served by keeping my father's manuscript."

in a body. The commander, Captain Hammond Norwood, a leading Navasota Democrat and a member of the White Man's Union, exercised his option, and the Shaw Rifles appeared en masse at the function. Populist objections were brushed aside.²³

Shortly after this well-attended barbecue had revealed the growing prestige of the White Man's Union as well as the inability of the People's party to cope with the changing power relationships within the county, a black exodus began. People left by train, by horse and cart, by day and by night. The *Examiner*, with obvious respect for the new political climate its own columns had helped engender, suggested elliptically that the exodus could produce complications. Some citizens, said the *Examiner*, "are beginning to feel a little nervous as the thing progresses, and lean to the idea that the action will bring on detrimental complications in the labor market."²⁴

The next day, however, the paper printed a public address that it said had been "ordered published by the executive committee of the White Man's Union in order to combat the many reports that are calculated to injure the Union." After reaffirming the Union's intent to end "Negro rule" in the county, the report concluded with a message "to the Negroes":

Being the weaker race, it is our desire to protect you from the schemes of those men who are now seeking to place you before them. . . . Therefore, the White Man's Union kindly and earnestly requests you to keep hands off in the coming struggle. Do not let impudent men influence you in that pathway which certainly leads to trouble. . . . In the future, permit us to show you, and convince you by our action, that we are truly your best friends.²⁵

Fourteen days later a black Populist leader, Jack Haynes, was riddled with a shotgun blast by unknown assailants. He died instantly in the fields of his cotton farm.²⁶

²³ *Examiner*, July 30, Aug. 8, 17, 18, 24, 1900. The affair of the Shaw Rifles was described in the *Examiner*, Aug. 21, 1900. The *Examiner* had by this stage become quite committed to the cause of extraparliamentary disfranchisement. On August 24 the paper described the White Man's Union picnic in terms of triumph, asserting that five thousand people had feasted at "1500 feet of tables . . . laden with well-turned and thoroughly seasoned barbecue, pork and mutton." Replying a week later to out-of-town dispatches that Grimes County politics had become complicated by the presence of four political tickets (Democratic, Republican, Populist, and White Man's Union), the paper replied: "Grimes County is in better shape politically than most counties in Texas. There is only one ticket and one piece of a ticket in the field. Anyone who viewed the Anderson picnic parade last week would have left little room for doubt as to which side would win." *Examiner*, Aug. 31, 1900.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Sept. 13, 1900.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Sept. 14, 1900. The promptness of the reply by the White Man's Union to the *Examiner's* gentle admonition may be taken as an indication of the confidence and aggressiveness of the organization's leadership.

²⁶ Jack Haynes, Jr., private interview, Navasota, Texas, Apr. 14, 1970. Mr. Haynes is the son of the slain Populist leader. W. F. McGowan, interview, Apr. 14, 1970. The *Examiner*, Sept. 27, 1900, carried a one-paragraph story on Haynes's murder without, however, attributing to it any political implications. Haynes was not identified as a Populist leader. The murder of another black Populist leader, Morris Carrington, was also reported in the same issue, again without specifying Carrington's role in the People's party. This report had no foundation in

The White Man's Union held a rally in Navasota two nights later that featured a reading of original poetry by one of the Union's candidates, L. M. Bragg. The verse concluded:

Twas nature's laws that drew the lines
Between the Anglo-Saxon and African races,
And we, the Anglo-Saxons of Grand Old Grimes,
Must force the African to keep his place.²⁷

Another White Man's Union rally held in Plantersville the same week displayed other Union candidates whose conduct won the *Examiner's* editorial approval: "They are a solid looking body of men and mean business straight from the shoulder."²⁸ Apparently this characterization of the Plantersville speakers was not restricted to approving Democrats; Populists, too, responded to events initiated by the men who "meant business." In October the Plantersville school superintendent reported that only five white families remained in his school district and that all the Negroes were gone. The superintendent stated that twelve white families had left that week, and "the end is not in sight."²⁹

Amid this wave of mounting terror the People's party attempted to go about its business, announcing its nominating conventions in the local press and moving forward with the business of naming election judges and poll watchers. But there were already signs of a fatal crack in Populist morale. The People's party nominee for county commissioner suddenly withdrew from the race. His withdrawal was announced in the *Examiner*, and no explanation was offered.³⁰

Throughout the late summer and autumn of 1900 the demonstrated power of the White Man's Union had protected McDonald from prosecution in the Kennard slaying. Nothing short of a war between the Populist police authority and the White Man's Union could break that extralegal shield. An exasperated and perhaps desperate Garrett Scott angrily challenged a White Man's Union official in October to "go and get your Union force, every damn one of them, put them behind rock fences and trees and I'll fight the whole damn set of cowards."³¹ That Scott had to use the first person singular to describe the visible opposition to the Union underscores the extent to which terror had triumphed over the institutions of law in Grimes County. By election eve it was clear that the Populist ticket faced certain defeat. The third party had failed to protect its constituency. White

fact and was printed either through error or by design to frighten the county's black population. Mr. Carrington died in 1923. The value of received oral traditions in correcting primary—and partisan—sources is briefly discussed at the conclusion of this paper.

²⁷ *Examiner*, Sept. 29, 1900.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Oct. 24, 1900.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Oct. 30, 1900.

³¹ *Tablet*, Nov. 11, 1900.

Populists as well as black were intimidated. Many would not vote; indeed, many were no longer in the county.³²

Over 4,500 votes had been cast in Grimes in 1898. On November 6, 1900, only 1,800 persons ventured to the polls. The People's party received exactly 366 votes. The Populist vote in Plantersville fell from 256 in 1898 to 5 in 1900. In the racially mixed, lower-income precinct of south Navasota the Populist vote declined from 636 to 23. The sole exception to this pattern came in a geographically isolated, lower-income precinct in the extreme northern part of the county that contained few Negroes and thus, presumably, fewer acts of terrorism. The Populist vote in this precinct actually increased from 108 to 122 and accounted for one-third of the countywide vote of 366. In north Navasota, also almost all white but not geographically isolated from the terror, the Populist vote declined from 120 to 3.³³ An additional element, nonstatistical in nature, stamped the election as unusual. The underlying philosophy of the South's dominant political institution, the Democratic party, has perhaps never been expressed more nakedly than it was in Grimes County in 1900 when "the party of white supremacy," as C. Vann Woodward has called the Southern Democracy, appeared on the official ballot as the White Man's Union.³⁴

On the way to its landslide victory the Union had grown more self-confident in its willingness to carry out acts of intimidation and terrorism in defiance of the local Populist police authority. Now that that authority had been deposed and a sheriff friendly to the White Man's Union had been elected, would terrorism become even more public?

On November 7, 1900, the morning after the election, a strange tableau unfolded on the streets of Anderson, the tiny county seat.³⁵ Horsemen began arriving in town from every section of the county, tied their horses all along the main street, and occupied the second floor of the courthouse. In a

³² The *Examiner's* pre-election issue foresaw a "quiet election" despite "some unmistakable bitterness in some quarters." The paper reported that "everything points to the success of the White Man's Union ticket." *Examiner*, Nov. 5, 1900.

³³ *Examiner*, Nov. 10, 1898, Nov. 9, 1900. Official Texas election returns are available in the state archives only on a countywide basis.

³⁴ The twenty-five per cent decline in the Democratic vote showed that not everyone was wholly content with the climate of violence that had developed. The *Examiner* somewhat opaquely expressed this anxiety. After noting that the Negro exodus was not confined to Grimes County, the White Man's Union and its tactics having spread to other counties, the newspaper felt constrained to add: "Yet there is a positive indication that something deep is at the bottom of the removal—some source for the frightful, unchristian and willful fabrications circulated." *Examiner*, Nov. 5, 1900. The *Examiner* can perhaps be pardoned for its failure to comment on its own role as a "source" if not of fabrications then of the advantages of the exclusionary administration of the ballot.

³⁵ The ensuing account of the events of November 7–11 is derived from a variety of sources. Both Navasota newspapers published versions of the Anderson affair, the *Tablet*, in a lengthy story on November 11 and the *Examiner* on November 8–10. The *Galveston News* carried increasingly detailed accounts on November 8–12. In addition to those persons cited elsewhere herein, a number of Grimes County residents supplied information on a basis not for attribution. In the black community the effect of the terrorism of 1900 has not yet run its course. The adjutant general's account, which is available in the Texas State Archives, Austin, is quite brief. *Report of the Adjutant General, 1899–1900* (Austin, 1900).

nearby house Garrett Scott's sister, Cornelia, and her husband, John Kelly, watched the buildup of Union supporters on the courthouse square, not fifty yards from the sheriff's official residence on the second floor of the county jail. They decided the situation was too dangerous to permit an adult Populist to venture forth, so the Kellys sent their nine-year-old son with a note to warn Scott not to appear on the street.

At about the same time that this mission was carried out Garrett Scott's younger brother, Emmett Scott, came into town from the family farm, rode past the growing clusters of armed men, and reined up in front of the store belonging to John Bradley, his closest friend in town. Bradley was a Populist but, as befitting a man of trade, a quiet one. His store was adjacent to the courthouse.

Cornelia Kelly's son found the sheriff at Abercrombie's store across the street from the jail and delivered the warning note. As Scott read it an outbreak of gunfire sounded from the direction of Bradley's store. Scott stepped to the street and peered in the direction of the fusillade. Rifle fire from the second floor of the courthouse immediately cut him down. Upon hearing the gunfire Cornelia Kelly ran out of her house and down the long street toward the courthouse. The gunsights of scores of men tracked her progress. Seeing her brother's body in the street she turned and confronted his attackers. "Why don't you shoot me, too," she yelled, "I'm a Scott." She ran to her brother and, with the assistance of her son, dragged him across the street to the county jail. He was, she found, not dead, though he did have an ugly wound in his hip. Inside Bradley's store, however, three men were dead—Emmett Scott, Bradley, and Will McDonald, the son of a Presbyterian minister and a prominent member of the White Man's Union. McDonald had shot Scott shortly after the latter had entered the store; the two men grappled for the gun, and the fatally wounded Scott fired one shot, killing McDonald. Bradley was killed either by a shot fired from outside the store where Union forces had gathered near the courthouse or by a stray bullet during the struggle inside.³⁶

The siege of Anderson continued for five days, with the wounded sheriff and his deputies—black and white—in the jail and the White Man's Union forces in the courthouse. Shots crossed the fifty yards between the two buildings intermittently over the next several days. On the evening of the fatal shooting another member of the Scott clan, Mrs. W. T. Neblett, had left

³⁶ The *Tablet* leaves open the question of how Bradley's death occurred. White oral tradition holds that Scott killed Bradley. This is disputed by the Scott family oral tradition, supplied by Mrs. Hamilton, that Bradley was Scott's "best friend." The *Galveston News* supports Mrs. Hamilton's version: "As a result of some words, McDonald emptied his revolver into Emmett Scott, killing him, hitting him every time. He grabbed Scott's pistol, and the two began scuffling when a shot rang out and Bradley fell." *News*, Nov. 8, 1900. A subsequent bulletin, also printed in that issue, revises the story: "It was first thought Bradley received an accidental shot from Scott's pistol but later reports say he was shot by someone else. It is claimed Bradley had nothing to do with the fight between Scott and McDonald." The *News* described all three victims as men "prominent in the county."



The scene of the postelection gun battle between Populists and supporters of the White Man's Union. The photograph was taken in about 1915 and is an accurate picture of Anderson at the time of the battle. The courthouse is at the end of Main Street. Photograph courtesy of Barker History Center, University of Texas.

Navasota for Austin to plead with the governor, Joseph D. Sayers, for troops. On Friday she returned, accompanied by the adjutant general of the State of Texas, Thomas Scurry—the same official who had earlier acquiesced in the participation of the state guard in the White Man's Union barbecue. After conferring with the contending forces Scurry pondered various methods to get the wounded Scott out of town and into a hospital; gangrene had set in. For protection, Scurry suggested that he be authorized to select a group of twenty prominent citizens of Navasota to escort the sheriff from the jail to the railroad station. Since most of the "prominent citizens" of Navasota were members of the White Man's Union, it is perhaps understandable that Scott declined this offer. The adjutant general then suggested that the Shaw Rifles be employed as an escort. This idea was respectfully declined for the same reason. Asked what he would consider a trustworthy escort, the wounded sheriff suggested a state guard unit from outside the county.³⁷

On Saturday, four days after the shooting, a company of Houston light infantry of the Texas Volunteer State Guard detrained at Navasota and marched the eleven miles to Anderson. On Sunday morning Garrett Scott was placed on a mattress, the mattress put in a wagon, and the proces-

³⁷ *Report of the Adjutant General*, 12. Both the *Tablet*, November 11, 1900, and Mrs. Hamilton agree in principle on this summation of the conversation between Garrett Scott and the adjutant general.

sion began. In the wagon train were most of the members of the large Scott clan—Emmett Scott's widow and children, the Kelly family, and the Nebletts, all with their household belongings piled in wagons. A file of infantrymen marched on either side as the procession formed in front of the jail, moved past hundreds of armed men at the courthouse and onto the highway to Navasota, and then boarded a special train bound for Houston.³⁸

THUS DID POPULISM leave Grimes County. From that day in 1900 until well after mid-century Negroes were not a factor in Grimes County politics. J. G. McDonald regained his judgeship and served for many years. The White Man's Union continued into the 1950s as the dominant political institution in the county. None of its nominees, selected in advance of the Democratic primary, was ever defeated.³⁹ The census of 1910 revealed the extent of the Negro exodus. It showed that Grimes County's Negro population had declined by almost thirty per cent from the 1900 total.⁴⁰ School census figures for 1901 suggest an even greater exodus.⁴¹

To this day the White Man's Union, as a memory if no longer as an institution, enjoys an uncontested reputation among Grimes County whites as a civic enterprise for governmental reform. In this white oral tradition the general events of 1900 are vividly recounted. Specific events are, however remembered selectively. The exodus of Negroes from the county is not part of this oral tradition, nor is the night riding of the White Man's Union or the assassination of the Negro Populist leaders.

As for Garrett Scott, he endured a long convalescence in a San Antonio hospital, regained his health, married his nurse, and moved to a farm near Houston. He retired from politics and died in his bed. He is remembered in the oral tradition of the black community as the "best sheriff the county ever had." Kennard and Haynes were killed because they "vouched" for Scott among Negroes.⁴² In this black oral tradition the Negro exodus plays a central role. It is perhaps an accurate measure of the distance between

³⁸ *Galveston News*, Nov. 12, 1900; *Tablet*, Nov. 11, 1900; *Report of the Adjutant General* says that eight men and six women had taken refuge in the jail (p. 12).

³⁹ On this point all oral traditions in Grimes County correspond.

⁴⁰ *Thirteenth Census*, 822. The Negro population declined from 14,327 in 1900 to 9,858 in 1910. In 1890 the black population of Grimes had been 11,664.

⁴¹ *Scholastic Population and Apportionment of Available School Fund for 1901* (Austin, 1901), 7. While school census figures are available for 1901, I have been unable to locate comparable data for 1900. Nearest available figures prior to 1901 are for 1889. The 1901 school census, though taken a year after the exodus and presumably reflecting the return of some Negroes in addition to in-migration encouraged by the labor shortage, reveals a decline in the number of Negro pupils of fifteen per cent from the 1889 total, despite the fact that census returns show an increase of almost twenty per cent in Negro population between 1890 and 1900. This comparison suggests that the thirty per cent decline in Negro population evident from the census returns for 1900 and 1910 probably substantially minimizes the actual exodus that occurred in the late summer and fall of 1900. An exodus in the range of from forty to fifty per cent probably would be a reasonable estimate.

⁴² W. F. McGowan, interview, Apr. 14, 1970.

the races in Grimes County today that two such contradictory versions of famous events could exist side by side without cross-influence.

To these two oral traditions a third must be added—the Scott tradition. The Scotts were, and are, a proud family. One by one, as they died, they were brought home to be buried in the family plot in the Anderson cemetery, little more than a mile from the site of the bloody events of 1900. Tombstones of female members of the clan bear the Scott middle name, defiantly emblazoned in marble. Edith Hamilton of Richards, Grimes County, was ten years old in November 1900 and remembers vividly the day her nine-year-old brother carried her mother's message to Garrett Scott. She remembers the defiance of her mother, the political commitment of her father, the acts of intimidation by the White Man's Union, the Negro exodus, and what she calls the "intelligence of Uncle Garrett." "They said that Uncle Garrett was a nigger-lover," recalls Mrs. Hamilton. "He wasn't a nigger-lover, or a white-lover, he just believed in being fair to all, in justice."⁴³

The Scott oral tradition—similar to the black oral tradition and at odds with the white tradition—is virtually the only legacy of the long years of interracial cooperation in Grimes County. Beyond this the substance of political life that came to an end in Grimes County in 1900 cannot be measured precisely from the available evidence. Very little survives to provide insight into the nature of the personal relationship that existed between Garrett Scott and Jim Kennard, between any of the other Populist leaders of both races, or between their respective constituencies. Scott and his third-party colleagues may have been motivated solely by personal ambition, as the White Man's Union charged; on the other hand, the impulses that made them Populists in the first place may have led them toward public coalition with blacks. It is clear that such stridently white supremacist voices as the *Navasota Tablet* were unable to project any reason other than personal ambition to explain the phenomenon of white men willingly associating themselves politically with black men. To what extent this attitude reflected Populist presumptions is another question. White Populists and black Republicans shared an animosity toward the Southern Democracy that grew in intensity during the bitter election campaigns of the 1890s. Democratic persistence in raising the cry of "Negro domination" to lure Populist-leaning voters back to the "party of the fathers" was effective enough to keep white Populists on the defensive about the race issue throughout the agrarian revolt in the South. The circumstance of a common political foe nevertheless provided Populists and Republicans with a basis for political coalition that was consummated in a bewildering variety of ways—and sometimes not consummated at all. The stability of local black organizations and their demonstrated capacity to withstand Democratic blandish-

⁴³ Edith Hamilton, interview, May 13, 1970.

ments or acts of intimidation were only two of the factors governing the complex equation of post-Reconstruction interracial politics. A stable, local black political institution existed in Grimes County, and its enduring qualities obviously simplified the organizational task confronting Garrett Scott. What might be regarded as “normal” Bourbon efforts to split blacks from the Populist coalition—mild intimidation, petty bribery, campaign assertions that the Democrats were the Negroes’ “best friends,” or a combination of all three—failed to achieve the desired results in Grimes County in the 1890s. The precise reasons are not easily specified. The *Navasota Tablet*, seeing the world through lenses tinted with its own racial presumptions, ascribed the credit for Negro political cohesion solely to the white sheriff. In the face of all Democratic stratagems, the third party’s continuing appeal to Negroes was, in the *Tablet’s* view, a thing of “magic.” A white supremacist view does not automatically exclude its holder from rendering correct political analyses on occasion, and it is possible that the *Tablet’s* assessment of the cause of Negro political solidarity was correct; however, such an analysis does not explain how the Negro Republican organization was able to send a succession of black legislators to Austin in the 1870s and 1880s, before Garrett Scott became politically active. It seems relevant that when Grimes County Democrats decided upon an overt campaign of terrorism, the men they went after first were the leading black spokesmen of Populism in the county rather than the third party’s white leadership. To this extent the actions of Democratic leaders contradicted their public analysis of the causal relationships inherent in the continuing Populist majorities.

Before they indulged in terrorism the Democrats already possessed another method of splitting the Populist coalition: regaining the loyalty of white Populists. Against the historic Democratic campaign cry of white supremacy, the People’s party had as its most effective defense the economic appeal of its own platform. The persuasiveness of Populism to white farmers in Grimes County was confirmed by newspaper accounts of the public reaction to the Populist-Democratic debates that occurred during the years of the agrarian uprising. While the reports in the *Examiner* were uniformly partisan and invariably concluded that Democratic spokesmen “won” such debates hands down, the papers conceded that Populist speakers also drew enthusiastic responses from white residents. The absence of reliable racial data by precincts renders a statistical analysis of the Populist vote in Grimes County impossible; however, the fragmentary available evidence suggests that the People’s party was generally able to hold a minimum of approximately thirty per cent of the county’s white voters in the four elections from 1892 to 1898 while at the same time polling approximately eighty to ninety per cent of the Negro electorate. The inability of the Democratic party to “bloc vote” the county’s white citizenry, coupled with the party’s failure to win black voters by various means or, alternatively, to diminish the size of the Negro electorate, combined to ensure Democratic defeat at the polls. The

fact merits emphasis: both the cohesion of black support for the People's party and the maintenance of substantial white support were essential to the local ascendancy of Populism.

This largely deductive analysis, however, reveals little about the internal environment within the third-party coalition during the bitter struggle for power that characterized the decade of Populist-Democratic rivalry. However scrutinized, the bare bones of voting totals do not flesh out the human relationships through which black and white men came together politically in this rural Southern county. In the absence of such crucial evidence, it seems prudent to measure the meaning of 1900 in the most conservative possible terms. Even by this standard, however, a simple recitation of those elements of Grimes County politics that are beyond dispute isolates significant and lasting ramifications.

An indigenous black political structure persisted in Grimes County for thirty-five years following the Civil War. Out of his own needs as a political insurgent against the dominant Southern Democratic party, Garrett Scott decided in 1882 to identify his Greenback cause with the existing local Republican constituency. Once in office as sheriff he found, among other possible motives, that it was in his own self-interest to preserve the coalition that elected him. It is clear that the style of law enforcement in Grimes County under Scott became a persuasive ingredient in the preservation of black support for the People's party. The presence of black deputy sheriffs and Scott's reputation within the black community seem adequate confirmation of both the existence of this style and its practical effect. The salaries paid Negro school teachers constituted another element of third-party appeal. Comparisons with white salaries are not available, but whatever black teachers received, partisans of the White Man's Union publicly denounced it as "too much." It is evident that Grimes County Negroes supported the People's party for reasons that were grounded in legitimate self-interest—an incontestable basis for political conduct. The point is not so much that the county's Negroes had certain needs, but that they possessed the political means to address at least a part of those needs.

From this perspective the decisive political event of 1900 in Grimes County was not the overwhelming defeat of the local People's party but the political elimination of that part of its constituency that was black. Scott was valuable to Negroes in short-run terms because he helped to translate a minority black vote into a majority coalition that possessed the administrative authority to improve the way black people lived in Grimes County. In the long run, however, it was the presence of this black constituency—not the conduct of a single white sheriff nor even the professed principles of his political party—that provided the Negroes of the county with what protection they had from a resurgent caste system. As long as Negroes retained the right to cast ballots in proportion to their numbers they possessed bargaining power that became particularly meaningful on all occasions when whites

divided their votes over economic issues. Disfranchisement destroyed the bargaining power essential to this elementary level of protection. Arrayed against these overriding imperatives for Negroes such questions as the sincerity of Garrett Scott's motives fade in importance. Whatever the sheriff's motives, both the political realities that undergirded the majority coalition and Scott's ability to respond to those realities shaped a course of government conduct under the People's party that was demonstrably of more benefit to Negroes than was the conduct of other administrations before or since. The permanent alteration of those realities through black disfranchisement ensured that no other white administration, whether radical, moderate, or opportunistic, would be able to achieve the patterns in education and law enforcement that had come to exist in the county under Populism. Stated as starkly as possible, after 1900 it was no longer in the interest of white politicians to provide minimal guarantees for people who could not help elect them.

Beyond this crucial significance for the county's black people, disfranchisement also institutionalized a fundamental change in the political environment of whites. More than a third party passed from Grimes County in 1900; in real political terms an idea died. Though a new political idea invariably materializes in democratic societies as an expression of the self-interest of a portion of the electorate, the party that adopts the idea in the course of appealing for the votes of that sector of the electorate inevitably is placed in the position of having to rationalize, defend, explain, and eventually promote the idea. If the concept has substance, this process eventually results in the insinuation of the idea into the culture itself. In this sense it is not necessary to know the precise depth of the commitment to Negro rights of the Grimes County People's party to know that the *idea* of Negro rights had a potential constituency among white people in the county as long as black people were able to project its presence through their votes. Given the endurance of this real and potential constituency, one could reasonably intuit that twentieth-century politics in Grimes County would have contained one, or a dozen, or a thousand Garrett Scotts—each more, or less, "sincere" or "ambitious" than the Populist sheriff. Disfranchisement destroyed the political base of this probability. A political party can survive electoral defeat, even continuing defeat, and remain a conveyor of ideas from one generation to the next. But it cannot survive the destruction of its constituency, for the party itself then dies, taking with it the possibility of transmitting its political concepts to those as yet unborn. It is therefore no longer possible to speak of two white political traditions in Grimes County, for the White Man's Union succeeded in establishing a most effective philosophical suzerainty. Seventy years after disfranchisement Mrs. Hamilton can recall the racial unorthodoxy of Uncle Garrett; she cannot participate in such activity herself. "The Negro people here don't want this school integration any more than the whites do," she now says. "They're not ready

for it. They don't feel comfortable in the school with white children. I've talked to my maid. I know."⁴⁴

While Garrett Scott's memory has been preserved, the local presence of the creed of his political party died with the destruction of that party. There has been literally no political place to go for subsequent generations of Scotts and Teagues, or Kennards and Carringtons. This absence of an alternative political institution to the Democratic party, the party of white supremacy, has been a continuing and unique factor in Southern politics.⁴⁵ The circumstance is based on the race issue, but in its long-term political and social implications it actually transcends that issue.

THE POPULIST ERA raises a number of questions about the interaction of the two races in the South, both within the third party and in the larger society. It is widely believed, by no means merely by laymen, that after the failure of Reconstruction meaningful experiments with the social order were finished in the South and that the aspirations of blacks were decisively thwarted. The example of Grimes County suggests, however, the existence of a period of time—a decade perhaps, or a generation—when nascent forms of indigenous interracial activity struggled for life in at least parts of the old Confederacy. Was some opportunity missed and, if so, how? How widespread through the South, and the nation, was this opportunity?

The White Man's Union was organized and led by men who considered themselves the "best people" of the South. If this attitude was typical, major adjustments must be made in our understanding of precisely how, and for what reasons, the antebellum caste system, in altered form, was reinstitutionalized in Southern society a generation after the formal ending of slavery. Was the "red-neck" the source of atrocity, or was he swept along by other stronger currents? And what of the Populist role? To what extent was agrarian racial liberalism in Texas traceable to an overall philosophy within the third-party leadership? Through what intuition of self-interest did the radical organizers of the Farmers Alliance, the parent institution of the People's party, accept the political risks of public coalition with blacks? What were their hopes and fears, and where did they falter? And, finally, what does the substance of their effort tell us about the Democrats in the South and the Republicans in the North who opposed them?

Answers to these questions rest, in part, on detailed knowledge of such events as those in Grimes County, but they require more than compilations of local histories, just as they assuredly require more than cultural assessments based on novels, speeches, and party manifestoes considered apart from

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, May 24, 1970.

⁴⁵ V. O. Key, *Southern Politics* (New York, 1949), is an authoritative study of the forms of Democratic orthodoxy in the various states of the old Confederacy, including the dominating orthodoxy of white supremacy; Vincent P. DeSantis, *Republicans Face the Southern Question* (Baltimore, 1959), summarizes the Republican failure to cope with the same imperatives.

their organic milieu. These answers will not provide much of a synthesis—Populism was too diverse, too congregational, and too ideologically thin—but they should tell us more about the larger society that, along with the Populists, failed to erect the foundations for a multiracial society in the nineteenth century. As the inquiry proceeds, it should be remembered that Populism perished before developing a mature philosophy—on race, on money, or on socialism. One must generalize, therefore, not only from contradictory evidence but, more important, from incomplete evidence. An analogy, doubtless unfair, could be made with the plight that would face modern historians of Marxism had that movement been abruptly truncated at the time, say, of the Brussels Conference in 1903. Who could have predicted on the evidence available to that date the Stalinist reign of terror that evolved from the mature, victorious revolutionary party of 1917? By the same token sweeping generalizations about what Populist radicalism could have become are not only romantic but historically unsound.

It should be sufficient to observe that in the long post-Reconstruction period—a period not yet ended—during which the social order has been organized hierarchically along racial lines, Populism intruded as a brief, flickering light in parts of the South. For a time some white Southerners threw off the romanticism that has historically been a cover for the region's pessimism and ventured a larger, more hopeful view about the possibilities of man in a free society. Under duress and intimidation this public hope failed of persuasion at the ballot box; under terrorism it vanished completely.

The Grimes County story dramatically illustrates this failure, but in the insight it provides into the underlying politics of black disfranchisement and the achievement of a monolithic one-party political environment in the American South it is not unique. Other Populists in East Texas and across the South—white as well as black—died during the terrorism that preceded formal disfranchisement. In Texas the extraparliamentary institutions formed by white Democrats to help create the political climate for disfranchisement bore a variety of local names: the Citizens White Primary of Marion County; the Tax-Payers Union of Brazoria County; the Jaybird Democratic Association of Fort Bend County; and the White Man's Union of Wharton, Washington, Austin, Matagorda, Grimes, and other counties.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ J. A. R. Moseley, "The Citizens White Primary of Marion County," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 49 (1946): 524–31; Pauline Yelderman, "The Jaybird Democratic Association of Fort Bend County" (master's thesis, University of Texas, 1938); Millie L. Kochan, "The Jaybird-Woodpecker Feud: A Study in Social Conflict" (master's thesis, University of Texas, 1929); Ira Brandon, "The Tax Payers Union in Brazoria County," *Texas History Teachers Bulletin*, 14 (1926): 86–92. Roscoe Martin reflects a knowledge of these extraparliamentary institutions, though the closest the author comes to exploring the topic is the following footnote: "One who is willing to undergo the hardships involved may learn many interesting things concerning the White Man's Party from those who have a first hand knowledge of the organization. Practically nothing, however, has been written on the subject." *The People's Party in Texas* (2d ed.; Austin, 1970), 236n. Other than accounts reflecting the perspective of the founders of these institutions, the statement is as true in 1971 as when Martin wrote in 1933.

The available historical material concerning each of these organizations comes largely from the founders themselves, or their descendants, reflecting an incipient or a mature oral tradition—one oral tradition.⁴⁷ The secondary literature based on these accounts, including scholarly works used in graduate schools as well as primary and secondary textbooks, is correspondingly inadequate.⁴⁸

A surprising amount of uninterpreted material from violently partisan white supremacist sources has found its way into scholarly literature. One example from the Grimes experience pertains directly to the scholarly characterization of Negro political meetings during the Populist era. It is worth attention as an illustration of the impact of white supremacist modes of thought on modern scholarship. The sunup-to-sundown work routine of Southern farm labor obviously precluded daytime political meetings. Accordingly, Kennard, Haynes, and Carrington campaigned among their black constituents by holding political meetings in each of the towns and hamlets of the county at night. Democratic partisans termed these rallies “Owl Meetings” and characterized black Populist leaders as “fluence men.” Drawing upon their own party’s time-honored campaign technique with Negroes, Democrats further asserted that owl meetings were more concerned with sumptuous banquets and whisky than with politics. If partisans of white supremacy had difficulty finding reasons for white acceptance of political coalition with blacks, they were culturally incapable of ascribing reasons for Negro support of the third party to causes other than short-run benefits in terms of money and alcohol. The point is not that Democrats were always insincere in their descriptions (as white supremacists they were quite sincere),

⁴⁷ J. A. R. Moseley is the son of the founder of the Marion County Citizens White Primary. Both the Yelderman and Kochan manuscripts on the Jaybird Democratic Association rest on versions supplied by founders, as does the Brandon article on Brazoria County. The following extract from Brandon may be taken as indicative of the style of this genre: “On the night before the returns were canvassed, a comparatively small band of determined, conservative, honest, white, Christian, representative men of the county assembled . . . and the result of their deliberations was the creation of the present Tax Payers’ Union of Brazoria County. . . . According to the rules, only white men can be members of this union and . . . vote in the ‘Tax Payers’ Primary.’” “Tax Payers Union,” 87. Douglas G. Perry makes no inquiry into the structure of the party at the local level, in Grimes or any other Texas county, nor does he investigate the politics of black disfranchisement as it affected the People’s party. “Black Populism: The Negro in the People’s Party” (master’s thesis, Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1945).

⁴⁸ Dewey Grantham, *The Democratic South* (Athens, Ga., 1963), is but one of the more recent manifestations of a long scholarly tradition in the South reflecting an unconscious assumption that reform politics is a function of white Southerners and that the observable victims of “Negrophobia” are Southern white progressives who are forced to employ race-baiting demagoguery in order to prevail at the polls. In this context see also Grantham’s *Hoke Smith and the Politics of the New South* (Baton Rouge, 1958), 178: “The publicity given [Smith’s] anti-Negro measures during the years 1905–1909 stamped him in the eyes of the nation as a Southern demagogue. It was unfortunate for his reputation as a Progressive leader that his work should have been marred in this respect.” The failure of this kind of monoracial Southern scholarship rests less in its detail than in its underlying perspective on the qualifications for being “Southern” and the criteria upon which progressive “reputations” are based. Negroes lived desperately “political” lives during the period covered by Professor Grantham’s books, though the substance of this politics, after disfranchisement, rarely took the form of decisions made at a ballot box.

but that scholars have subsequently accepted such violently partisan accounts at face value. The darkly sinister picture of “fluence men” corrupting innocent blacks with whisky at surreptitious owl meetings served to justify, at least to outsiders, the use of terrorism as the ultimate campaign technique of Democratic interracial politics. This sequential recording of events has found its way into scholarly monographs that otherwise demonstrate no inherent hostility to the Populistic inclinations of Southern farmers, black or white. In *The People's Party in Texas* Roscoe Martin precedes his brief allusion to the White Man's Union with a resumé of owl meetings and “fluence men” that reflects in detail the bias of white supremacist sources.⁴⁹ Other scholars writing broadly about Gilded Age politics have routinely drawn upon such monographs as Martin's, and by this process “fluence men” have materialized as an explanation of Negro political insurgency in the nineties.⁵⁰ In the heat of local political combat, however, Democratic leaders often were able to face a wholly different set of facts in the course of persuading their followers, and the citizenry as a whole, to adjust to the necessity of terrorism. As the time approached for actual precinct campaigning in Grimes County in the autumn of 1900, the executive board of the White Man's Union published a notice of the Union's intentions, climaxed by a “fair distinct warning” to the county's Negro leadership. The statement is revealing—not only of the transformation visited upon normal campaign practices when they were viewed through the cultural presumptions of white supremacy but also of the dangers of uncritical acceptance of such perspectives by scholars relying upon monoracial sources. The notice read in part:

The Union is largely composed of the best citizens of the county. . . . They are the tax payers, representing the worth, the patriotism, the intelligence, and the virtues of the county. . . . We are not fighting any political party or individuals, but only those who band together under any name, who seek to perpetuate negro rule in Grimes County. [Good citizens] are astounded at the manner in which the children's money has been expended. Colored teachers with fat salaries and totally incompetent have been appointed for political “fluence.” Our white teachers, male and female, enjoy no such fat salaries as these colored politicians or these sweet colored girls. . . . One of the most corrupting practices in the past has been the system of Owl Meetings which has been in vogue for years. . . . This is the school and hot bed where the negro politician received his inspiration, and riding from one end of the county to the other as an apostle of his race, corrupting his own people who may be in the honest pathway of duty. We give fair warning that any effort to continue these Owl Meetings—by the appointment of special deputies sheriffs to organize and carry them on—will be prevented. No threat of shot-guns will deter us from the discharge of this duty.⁵¹

Even without recourse to other perspectives this view of the existing political situation in Grimes County contains serious internal contradic-

⁴⁹ Martin, *People's Party* 179–83, 236.

⁵⁰ See, for example, H. Wayne Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley* (New York, 1969), 382.

⁵¹ *Examiner*, Sept. 13, 1900. Jack Haynes was murdered two weeks after publication of this statement.

tions. Black Populist leaders were “incompetent” but as “apostles of their race” they had been so effective that their efforts needed to be stopped. Black teachers were paid “fat salaries” solely for political reasons, but among those receiving such gross patronage were “sweet colored girls,” who obviously were not conducting owl meetings. The assertion that black teachers were actually paid more than white teachers must be rejected out of hand. In addition to the compelling fact that such an arrangement would have constituted poor political behavior on the part of a third party strenuously endeavoring to hold a substantial portion of the white vote and the further reality that such expenditures were unnecessary since parity for blacks in itself would have represented a notable accomplishment in the eyes of Negro leaders, Democrats had access to the records of all county expenditures and no such charge was ever leveled, much less documented, at any other time during the Populist decade. Whites complained that Negro teachers received “too much,” not that they received more than white teachers. In any case, it seems necessary only to observe that American political parties have routinely utilized night gatherings without having their opponents characterize them as owl meetings and that persons who benefited from incumbency were not presumed to be acting in sinister ways when they campaigned for their party’s re-election. The only thing “special” about Garrett Scott’s deputies was that some of them were black. Viewed as some sort of black abstraction Jim Kennard might appear convincing as a shadowy “fluence man,” but as an intelligent and determined voice of the aspirations of Negro people he merits scholarly attention from perspectives not bounded by the horizons of those who murdered him. To an extent that is perhaps not fully appreciated, decades of monoracial scholarship in the South have left a number of Jim Kennards buried under stereotypes of one kind or another. They sometimes intrude anonymously as “fluence men,” but they simply do not appear as people in books on Southern politics.

This circumstance suggests that not only the broad topic of interracial life and tension but the entire Southern experience culminated by disfranchisement needs to be tested by a methodology that brings both black and white sources to bear on the admittedly intricate problem of interpreting a free society that was not free. At all events, evidence continues to mount that monoracial scholarship, Northern and Southern, has exhausted whatever merit it possessed as an instrument of investigating the variegated past of the American people. The obvious rejoinder—that written black sources do not exist in meaningful quantity—cannot, of course, be explained away; at the same time, this condition suggests the utility of fresh attempts to devise investigatory techniques that offer the possibility of extracting usable historical material from oral sources. The example of the erroneous report in the *Navasota Examiner* of Morris Carrington’s death⁵² illustrates, perhaps as well as any single piece of evidence, not only the dangers inherent in

⁵² See note 26 above.

relying on such "primary sources" for details of interracial tension in the post-Reconstruction South but also the value of received oral traditions in correcting contemporary accounts. Nevertheless, the problem of evaluating such source material remains; white and black versions of the details of racial conflicts are wildly contradictory. When they are measured against other contemporary evidence, however, the interpretive problem becomes considerably less formidable; indeed, the task of penetrating the substance behind partisan contemporary accounts may be lessened through recourse to available oral sources, as I have attempted to demonstrate.

Since much of the *Realpolitik* of the South, from Reconstruction through the modern civil rights movement, rests on legal institutions that, in turn, rest on extralegal methods of intimidation, the sources of political reality may be found less in public debate than in the various forms of intimidation that matured in the region. However determined a historian may be to penetrate the legal forms to reach this extralegal underside of the political culture of the South he is, in our contemporary climate, blocked off from part of his sources by his skin color. For black scholars there are limits to the availability both of courthouse records in the rural South and of responsive white oral sources. There are corresponding limits to the information white scholars can gain from interviews in black communities. Here, then, is fertile ground for scholarly cooperation. Methods of achieving this cooperation need to be explored. In its fullest utilization the subject is not black history or Southern history but American history.