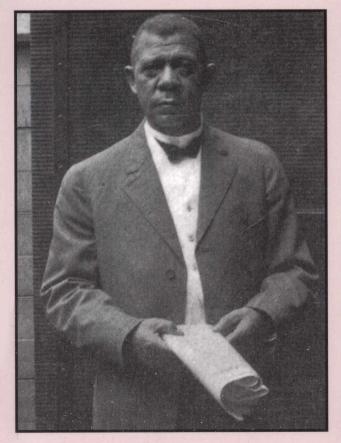
UP FROM SLAVERY

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON



EDITED BY WILLIAM L. ANDREWS

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION



A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

Booker T. Washington UP FROM SLAVERY

AUTHORITATIVE TEXT CONTEXTS AND COMPOSITION HISTORY CRITICISM

Edited by

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Preface

Since his rise to international fame a century ago, Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) has remained one of the most controversial figures in African American history. Guarded and often enigmatic to those who were closest to him, conniving and devious to many who have studied him, Washington liked to represent himself publicly as a plain man impatient with pretense and show, a straightforward man of facts, a seeker of consensus, a striver for the common good. Many in his own time believed implicitly in this Washington and celebrated him as a genuine American hero who had proved himself amply qualified to lead black Americans, particularly those in the South, into an era of unprecedented progress and harmony between the races. More analytical assessments of Washington, however, enhanced by extensive investigations of his private papers in recent years, have unveiled a considerably more complex figure who carefully cultivated an image of the plainspoken altruist for public consumption while operating behind the scenes as a savvy, sometimes ruthless, political infighter. Not surprisingly, late-twentieth-century views of Washington tend to be more mixed than those that prevailed after the publication of his widely applauded autobiography, Up From Slavery (1901).

Up From Slavery, one of the few African American texts that can legitimately be termed a classic, does not provide a definitive answer to longstanding arguments about who "the real" Booker T. Washington was. Today's response to Washington's autobiography might parallel that of the nameless protagonist in Ralph Ellison's novel, Invisible Man (1952), as he ponders the meaning of the statue of Washington with a freed slave, a statue that has become a landmark on the campus of Tuskegee Institute (now University) in Alabama, founded by Washington in 1881. In the sculptor's idealized rendering, Washington appears to be a visionary lifting a veil from the eyes of the freed slave. But Ellison's Invisible Man, not unlike many readers of Up From Slavery today, remains tantalized by the nagging question of "whether the veil is really being lifted, or lowered more firmly into place." Was Up From Slavery designed to raise or lower a veil between Washington and the predominantly white audience that his autobiography was aimed at? None of the reviews and criticism that have been selected to accompany Up From Slavery in this Norton Critical Edition offers a fully satisfactory viii Preface

answer to such a question. Instead, the contextual materials, reviews, and criticism in this volume have been gathered with an eye toward representing the range of problems and issues that must be taken into consideration before such questions can be fairly posed.

In general, the most extreme judgments of Washington, both the positive and the negative, betray a one-sided, superficial understanding of the man, his historical situation, his socioeconomic program, his political agenda, and his sense of the literary traditions that he—as an African American—had at his disposal. It is crucial to dispel simplistic notions of Washington, especially ahistorical ones that superimpose the assumptions, values, and goals of today onto a figure who was very much a man of his own time. My motive in creating this Norton Critical Edition of Up From Slavery does not arise from a belief that at this juncture Washington is in need of either tough-minded revision on the one hand or zealous rehabilitation on the other. What Washington deserves, and what over the past three decades he has increasingly received, is a serious reading from students of history, culture, and literature. The goal of this Norton Critical Edition of *Up From Slavery* is to acknowledge the body of useful analysis and criticism that Washington's autobiography has earned, and by reprinting the most salient commentary from this research and criticism, to encourage more of its kind. I hope this edition will both exemplify and justify the idea that what makes Up From Slavery important, if not essential, to an understanding of its author and his time is the manner in which Washington, a former slave who became the most powerful African American of his era, rhetorically converted his liabilities into assets that, when organized into an autobiographical narrative, became one of the most compelling personal myths in the history of American literature.

This Norton Critical Edition of *Up From Slavery* is divided into three parts. The text of Washington's autobiography reproduces exactly the first book edition of *Up From Slavery*, published by Doubleday, Page and Company in New York in March 1901. Preceding this edition was a serialized version of *Up From Slavery*, which appeared in *The Outlook* magazine, edited by Hamilton W. Mabie, from November 3, 1900, to February 23, 1901. When the serial version of the autobiography was reset for book publication, the only changes made in the text were the anglicizing of the spelling of certain words ("labor" to "labour," "color" to "colour") and the capitalization of the word "Negro," a stylistic point on which Washington insisted. The index that appends the first book edition of *Up From Slavery* has been retained, although the original page numbers have been altered to reflect the reset pagination of the Norton Critical Edition.

The purpose of "Contexts and Composition History" is threefold. To shed light on the process by which *Up From Slavery* was written, I have reprinted selections from Washington's correspondence that reveal the

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dialogues he had with his publishers about the purpose and style of his autobiography. To suggest the flavor of contemporary reaction to *Up From Slavery*, three reviews of the autobiography are included. The comments from *The Nation* and from the eminent American novelist William Dean Howells, in the *North American Review*, testify to the warm response that *Up From Slavery* received in most of the popular white press. Comparatively few reviews appeared in the African American press, although the observations from *The Colored American Magazine* in 1905 indicate that Washington's black supporters did their best to ensure *Up From Slavery*'s success in the African American reading community. The excerpt from Washington's last autobiography, *My Larger Education* (1911), is included to show how conscious Washington was of Frederick Douglass's prior example and of the inevitable comparisons that would be made between Douglass, the first great African American spokesperson, and himself.

"Criticism" reprints selections from the most original and influential analyses and critical evaluations of Up From Slavery in particular and Washington's social, economic, and political program in general. Two standard assessments of Washington by W. E. B. Du Bois and Kelly Miller open the discussion. Du Bois's "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others," arguably the most famous essay in The Souls of Black Folk (1903), marked a turning point in the popular reception of the Washington myth as retailed in Up From Slavery. Until Du Bois's 1903 critique. Washington's program had received the tacit, if not always the emphatic, endorsement of the large majority of African American intellectuals—indeed, in July 1901, when Du Bois first reviewed Up From Slavery for The Dial, he too had been careful to modulate his doubts about the wisdom of Washington's methods. But with "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others" Du Bois fired the salvo that split African American leadership into two camps, the civil rights militants, marshalled by Du Bois, and the conservative "Bookerites," who defended their embattled chief to his death. In 1908 Kelly Miller, a professor and dean at Howard University, epitomized the differences between the two groups in his judicious essay, "Radicals and Conservatives," which was one of the first studies of Washington to contrast him systematically to Frederick Douglass.

A cursory look at the "Criticism" section of this edition will reveal a large historical hiatus between the turn-of-the-century assessments of Washington by Du Bois and Miller and the selections from the writings of August Meier and Louis R. Harlan in the 1960s and 1970s. Several books about Washington were published between his death in 1915 and the onset of the work of Meier and Harlan, among them Emmett J. Scott and Lyman Beecher Stowe's Booker T. Washington: Builder of a Civilization (1917), which Washington commissioned shortly before his death, and Basil Mathews's Booker T. Washington, Educator and Inter-

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racial Interpreter (1948), the first attempt at a scholarly biography. But until the work of Meier and Harlan, no scholar had examined Washington systematically and dispassionately in the context of the racial ideologies of his era. This is one of the main reasons why Meier's "Booker T. Washington: An Interpretation" was a milestone in the historical assessment of Washington's significance. Although Harlan's definitive two-volume biography of Washington cannot be excerpted in any satisfying way, his seminal essay, "Booker T. Washington in Biographical Perspective," affords a reader a remarkably intimate glimpse at the man behind the autobiographical mask.

The final four critical estimates of Up From Slavery in this edition, by Sidonie Smith, James M. Cox, Houston A. Baker, Jr., and William L. Andrews, represent some of the more productive approaches that recent literary critics and literary historians have taken in reevaluating a text that for so long was regarded as simple, self-evident, and artless. In addition to pointing out multiple affinities between Up From Slavery and the Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, Smith was among the first literary critics to detect Washington's strategic adoption of a mask, especially that of Christian self-abnegation, and to argue the constraints that such a mask placed on him as an African American autobiographer. Cox's thoughtful analysis, "Autobiography and Washington," is perhaps the most sensitive study of the style of Up From Slavery, "inertial" and infelicitous in many respects and yet profoundly expressive of Washington's sense of himself as a black man attempting to build a power base for himself in the South. Baker's incisive comments on Washington from Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance call attention to the importance of Washington's exploitation of the minstrel mask in his autobiography and to the import of his text as a literary herald of African American modernism. Andrews's examination of Washington's crucial revision of the image of slavery in Up From Slavery helps to identify his role in establishing a peculiar brand of realism, yet another major mode of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century African American literature that owes much to Washington's autobiographical experiment.

Although the bibliography that concludes this edition lists a number of texts basic to a multidisciplinary study of Washington and his autobiography, it would be a mistake to conclude that the existing scholarship on this fascinating figure has exhausted his potential. More attention to the evolution of Washington's various autobiographies and autobiographical personae is needed to complement the recent studies of this topic by Donald B. Gibson. Feminist analysis of Washington's autobiographies is sorely lacking. Washington's influence on African American autobiography in the first half of the twentieth century needs to be traced as carefully as Robert B. Stepto and James Olney have scrutinized Washington's adaptation of earlier forms, such as the nineteenth-century slave narrative. Some of Washington's favorite themes in his auto-

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biographies—such as his idea of the natural, his concept of the agrarian life, his notion of what a fact is, his sense of what is inherently African or Negro, his obsession with order, cleanliness, and self-control—all need unpacking. The more we engage in these kinds of investigations of the mind and art of the author of *Up From Slavery*, the more likely we are to come to terms with the contradictions that made Washington famous as both the Sage of Tuskegee and the Wizard of the Tuskegee Machine.

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The Text of UP FROM SLAVERY An Autobiography

UP FROM SLAVERY

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BY

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

AUTHOR OF "THE FUTURE OF THE AMERICAN NEGRO"



NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & CO.
1901

This volume is dedicated to my Wife MRS. MARGARET JAMES WASHINGTON And to my Brother MR. JOHN H. WASHINGTON

Whose patience, fidelity, and hard work have gone far
to make the work at Tuskegee successful

Preface

This volume is the outgrowth of a series of articles, dealing with incidents in my life, which were published consecutively in the *Outlook*. While they were appearing in that magazine I was constantly surprised at the number of requests which came to me from all parts of the country, asking that the articles be permanently preserved in book form. I am most grateful to the *Outlook* for permission to gratify these requests.

I have tried to tell a simple, straightforward story, with no attempt at embellishment. My regret is that what I have attempted to do has been done so imperfectly. The greater part of my time and strength is required for the executive work connected with the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, and in securing the money necessary for the support of the institution. Much of what I have said has been written on board trains, or at hotels or railroad stations while I have been waiting for trains, or during the moments that I could spare from my work while at Tuskegee. Without the painstaking and generous assistance of Mr. Max Bennett Thrasher² I could not have succeeded in any satisfactory degree.

Up From Slavery was first published in Outlook magazine from November 3, 1900, to February 23, 1901.

A researcher and ghostwriter for Washington who helped outline, draft, and edit the final version of Up From Slavery.

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Up From Slavery

Chapter I

A Slave among Slaves

I was born a slave on a plantation in Franklin County, Virginia. I am not quite sure of the exact place or exact date of my birth, but at any rate I suspect I must have been born somewhere and at some time. As nearly as I have been able to learn, I was born near a cross-roads post-office called Hale's Ford, and the year was 1858 or 1859. I do not know the month or the day. The earliest impressions I can now recall are of the plantation and the slave quarters—the latter being the part of the plantation where the slaves had their cabins.

My life had its beginning in the midst of the most miserable, desolate, and discouraging surroundings. This was so, however, not because my owners were especially cruel, for they were not, as compared with many others. I was born in a typical log cabin, about fourteen by sixteen feet square. In this cabin I lived with my mother and a brother and sister till after the Civil War, when we were all declared free.

Of my ancestry I know almost nothing. In the slave quarters, and even later, I heard whispered conversations among the coloured people of the tortures which the slaves, including, no doubt, my ancestors on my mother's side, suffered in the middle passage of the slave ship while being conveyed from Africa to America. I have been unsuccessful in securing any information that would throw any accurate light upon the history of my family beyond my mother. She, I remember, had a halfbrother and a half-sister. In the days of slavery not very much attention was given to family history and family records—that is, black family records. My mother, I suppose, attracted the attention of a purchaser who was afterward my owner and hers. Her addition to the slave family attracted about as much attention as the purchase of a new horse or cow. Of my father I know even less than of my mother. I do not even know his name. I have heard reports to the effect that he was a white man who lived on one of the near-by plantations. Whoever he was, I never heard of his taking the least interest in me or providing in any way for

According to Louis H. Harlan's Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856– 1901, Washington was born in 1856 on a modest tobacco farm belonging to James Burroughs.