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American Solipsism: How Sectional Differences in American Culture Affected the Reception of the Congo Reform Movement, 1890-1905

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Research Statement: Initially, I began my research with common source readings in class including primary and secondary sources provided by Dr. Thompsell, *King Leopold's Ghost*, and *King Leopold's Soliloquy*. *King Leopold's Soliloquy* was actually a book that I borrowed from Drake's collection in addition to sources I later added to my research including *In Search of Brightest Africa* and Interlibrary Loan material *Congo Love Song*. In addition to these resources I also made a research appointment with Linda Hacker where we further explored the Library of Congress newspaper database *Chronicling America*. Ms. Hacker also helped me locate external sources on Booker T. Washington to support the African American perspective in my paper. I selected several states as representatives of sectional values and chose a number of newspapers that supported and contradicted my thesis and narrowed down the results to those most relevant to the subject of the paper: King Leopold's regime. Aside from this there was not a lot of narrowing to do because I was always consulting sources with the framework of my paper in mind.

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HST 390 Research Methods

Dr. A. Thompsell

12 December 2019

**American Solipsism: How Sectional Differences in American Culture Affected
the Reception of the Congo Reform Movement, 1890-1905**

Abstract: This paper seeks to look at how Civil War sentiments regarding slavery, and Africans by extension, influenced American reporting on the Congo crisis by comparing news reports from the North, South, and African Americans. There were varying publications criticizing Leopold II's reign while others glorified his work for its industrial development. The author's goal was to look at these varying opinions and see how they corresponded with the values of the former Union and Confederate states to determine if there was a connection and if it supported their idea that the call for reform would be from the same source as the call for abolition. The text focuses on individual newspaper reports from the period that are contextualized by modern scholarship.

The Congo Free State has been a problem in American foreign relations since its creation. The United States was the first nation to recognize Leopold's claim to the territory, partially because of his humanitarian façade and the existing desire to depopulate the United States of African Americans as a means of ensuring continued white supremacy. This narrative began to change, especially between 1903 and 1905 as information came out of the Congo detailing the atrocities committed against the Congolese including but not limited to murder, physical mutilation, starvation, and the exploitation and theft of raw materials for Leopold's personal profit.

The Congo Free State initially gained support through the United States' official recognition of Leopold II's sovereignty over the area. Support was initially granted because of the facade that all actions taken in the Congo had humanitarian intentions with a promise to develop and civilize the Congo area.¹ Further recognition was given to the Belgians to keep the territory away from France and Germany as there had been conflict regarding who should control the territory. In reality, the Congo was being used to fund King Leopold II's desires.² At first the majority of profits originated in the ivory trade but the focus shifted to the rubber industry as demand increased.³ During the rubber regime of the 1890s, forced labor was rampant with mutilation and cannibalism at an all time high. For every bullet used, the State's men were expected to bring back the right hand of a Congolese.⁴ These cruelties continued in varying degrees until the reform movements gained traction. Prior to the use of photography by missionaries like Alice Seeley Harris and her husband there was a small petition for reform,

¹ Adam Hochschild. *King Leopold's Ghost*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 87.

² Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 87.

³ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 159.

⁴ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 165.

primarily in England, led by E.D. Morel and Roger Casement.⁵ While their work was significant and contained classified information leaked by inside members of the Congo Free State and other missionaries on the ground in the Congo, including Casement's own consular report, it became more popular when the public had images of severed hands to contend with.⁶

This paper seeks to look at how residual sectional differences from the American Civil War shaped American reception to the Congo Reform Movement. The sectarian division epitomizes American solipsism by demonstrating the rigid position within the antebellum sentiments that have led each region to live within their own worlds, refusing to acknowledge other viewpoints or experiences. African American leaders and journalists represent another population affected by Civil War divisions and were the earliest responders to the atrocities as represented in the direct action taken by African American activists at the time, which was then supplemented by the Black Press and leaders like Booker T. Washington. They were soon followed by the states that formerly comprised the Union, and finally those that made up the Confederacy. The differences in responses are due to their different positions on slavery and Black liberation. It is significant to consider this approach to the material to further the existing historiography about the American Congo Reform Movement and why it was less successful than its British counterpart.

Jeanette Jones claims the Congo Reform Association's movement was not successful in convincing most Americans that Africa was not a continent of mystery and savagery.⁷ Her argument will be incorporated in exploring the thesis of this paper through the analysis of

⁵ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 185.

⁶ Marouf Hasian Jr. "Alice Seeley Harris, the Atrocity Rhetoric of the Congo Reform Movements, and the Demise of King Léopold's Congo Free State," *Atlantic Journal of Communication* 23 no. 3, 180, doi-org.brockport.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/15456870.2015.1047495.

⁷ Jeannette Eileen Jones. *In Search of Brightest Africa*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 80.

primary sources. Earlier newspaper articles focus on the “savagery of the natives,” and such language continues throughout this period of scrutiny. The Congo, and thus Africa by the media’s natural extension, was presented as savage through the Congolese behaviors that did not follow the rules of white civility. Africa was first presented as a source of mystery needing exploration in the Scramble for Africa. This concept continued in reports as Africa was presented as a vast opportunity for power and capital gain.

Dean Clay suggests that the movement was unsuccessful due to a lack of unity. Issues arose over the religious rhetoric used by Barbour, a leading activist of the American Congo Reform Association. Robert Park, secretary of the Boston Congo Reform Association and associate of Booker T. Washington, was focused on establishing the ACRA as an independent organization.⁸ This hyper focus on being independent from Morel’s movement created a disagreement about how the information should be presented to the public, with Park insisting on rewriting Morel’s articles while maintaining the byline.⁹ Dean Clay indicated that the aforementioned tensions resulted in fracturing within the American branch of the C.R.A which rendered their efforts ineffectual. Clay also proposes that the unfulfilled desire for more significant English action encouraged the United States to remain passive in the situation. Clay also believes that the primary cause for the failure of America’s Congo reform efforts was stressed communication between the British campaigners and the American ones.¹⁰ Americans and reform leaders were generally unphased by the British reform efforts, remaining skeptical of the intentions behind the activism.¹¹ This paper will add to the historiography provided by Clay

⁸ Dean Clay. “Transatlantic Dimensions of the Congo Reform Movement, 1904–1908,” *English Studies in Africa* 59 no. 1, 21, DOI: 10.1080/00138398.2016.1173274.

⁹ Clay. “Transatlantic Dimensions of the Congo Reform Movement, 1904–1908,” 22.

¹⁰ Clay. “Transatlantic Dimensions of the Congo Reform Movement, 1904–1908,” 20.

¹¹ Clay. “Transatlantic Dimensions of the Congo Reform Movement, 1904–1908,” 19.

by presenting an alternate rationale for domestic disunity. His argument centers on the lack of a unified movement with a focus on communication between domestic branches of the C.R.A. and the center of the movement in the United Kingdom. This paper provides a different perspective to explain the lack of harmony, and thus the lack of an effective reform movement in America. Response to the atrocities varied at the state level because of individual values as to national or international politics. The movement had an ebb and flow pattern based on differences in sectional values.

This paper's goal to acknowledge the difference in reporting atrocities or denouncing Leopold and or his state will add to the historiography about the United States' failure to inspire reform. This paper also touches on American intentions behind activism as explained by residual sectional differences from the American Civil War. Just as Americans were skeptical of British intentions for African improvement, we should be skeptical in exploring our own country's interests and biases.

Northern states begin to mention atrocities prior to their Southern counterparts. This is because of their position in the postbellum era. In the Civil War, the Union North supported emancipation, but did not advocate for racial equality. As such, these states respond to the events in the Congo sooner and more critically than the former Confederate States, but not as quickly or passionately as the Black Press and African American leaders who are personally connected to the issues in Africa.

Connecticut newspapers began reporting on atrocities as early as 1895. *Waterbury Democrat* published an article claiming that atrocities were being "authentically reported."¹² Furthermore, traders had reported that Leopold maintained the largest slavery empire and had

¹² "The Distress in the Congo: Almost Incredible Atrocities are Authentically Reported," *Waterbury Democrat*, November 18, 1895, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

completely destabilized existing culture and civilization with his demand for rubber.¹³ The indigenous people had no say in their transition to forced labor. Cooperation got the Congolese killed, and rebellion resulted in massacre.¹⁴ Connecticut papers continued to circulate accusations against the Congo Free State. In 1903, *Waterbury Evening Democrat* printed a piece on the Congo atrocities, discrediting the previous defense that the claims were baseless, and citing the idea of the Congo Free State as the ““curse of Africa.””¹⁵ Though Connecticut was one of the earlier responders to the rumors about Leopold’s cruelty, their reports had not always been critical. In 1890, *The Press* put out an article encouraging young men to go to Africa and make an immense profit trading rubber.¹⁶ Similarly in 1891, *Waterbury Evening Democrat* produced a piece about the missionary progress in reducing “human sacrifices and tribal wars,” directly claiming that the European influence on the Congolese people is responsible.¹⁷ The Connecticut Press was a trailblazer in reporting on the cruelties in the Congo despite a lack of unanimity.

New York, on the other hand, does not wholly criticize King Leopold as early as Connecticut newspapers do. In 1901, *The New York Tribune* reported on the Congo as a significant source of ivory and rubber of indispensable value privately owned and operated by King Leopold. The article also suggested that the Belgian Congo was treating African labor equal to that of Belgian labor, which allowed the territory to be more productive than its French

¹³ “The Distress in the Congo: Almost Incredible Atrocities are Authentically Reported,” *Waterbury Democrat*, November 18, 1895, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

¹⁴ “The Distress in the Congo: Almost Incredible Atrocities are Authentically Reported,” *Waterbury Democrat*, November 18, 1895, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

¹⁵ “Congo Free State: The African Nation Over Which King Leopold Reigns,” *Waterbury Evening Democrat*, April 09, 1903, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

¹⁶ “Young Man, Go to Africa!” *The Press*, January 30, 1890, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

¹⁷ “Conquering the Congo: Remarkably Rapid Spread of Missionary Posts Through That Region,” *Waterbury Evening Democrat*, April 29, 1891, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

counterpart.¹⁸ Similarly in 1895, *The Sun* included an article suggesting that the atrocities reported were nothing more than exaggerations and fabrications.¹⁹ Given the information available now, it is clear there were some false reports being made.

That being said, they do not ignore the possibility of atrocities altogether. Even before the 1901 article, *The Sun* published a piece about Leopold's response to reported atrocities he claimed to be false. The reports detailed personal slave trading, keeping concubines, murdering "negro boys," and other similar crimes.²⁰ Leopold defends himself against the report by citing the impossibility to supervise officials spread across such a wide area, and furthermore recalls how State officials have also freed slaves by defeating slave hunters.²¹ He also claims that hostility toward the Congo Free State operations or himself in that regard is the result of unsatisfied travelers in the Congo, such as George Washington Williams, thus creating a temporary relief from personal blame.²² In 1897, *The Sun* presented the myths and realities of the Congo Free State. While the State was accused of maintaining a monopoly, it did exist within its legal rights. However, the conditions established were quite comparable to a monopoly.²³ Also discussed were the claims of cruelty, which initially admitted to on an individual and remote basis, were believed to be more widespread, but not just throughout the Congo. To criticize Leopold's State for cruelty against "natives" requires similar criticism towards other European

¹⁸ "Conditions in the Congo: King Leopold's Great African Dependency Which He Wishes Belgium to Annex," *New York Tribune*, June 30, 1901, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

¹⁹ "Lies About the Congo: The Remarkable Stories that are Now Told," *The Sun*, November 10, 1895, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

²⁰ "Scandals from the Congo: King Leopold Commentson Ugly Stories About the State He Founded," *The Sun*, April 14, 1891, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

²¹ "Scandals from the Congo: King Leopold Commentson Ugly Stories About the State He Founded," *The Sun*, April 14, 1891, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

²² "Scandals from the Congo: King Leopold Commentson Ugly Stories About the State He Founded," *The Sun*, April 14, 1891, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

²³ "The Truth About the Congo," *The Sun*, October 18, 1903, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

colonizers.²⁴ Finally, *The Sun* also addressed the idea of the civilizing mission through industrial improvement, and ultimately credits the occupying government as beneficial to the area.²⁵

In New York, *The Sun* was the primary newspaper publishing a multitude of varying observations of the Congo State. *The Sun* included reports that erred on the side of European influence. In an era of white supremacy, it is only reasonable for whites to believe the colonizer influence over the Congolese people's report. Overall, the general consensus reached by the New York reports from 1890-1905 is that there is likely some truth to the injustices committed by Leopold's State officials in the Congo, Leopold having admitted such to some degree, but that the Congo Free State's imposed government was also a positive influence for the Congolese people and international markets.

Newspapers in Ohio reflected a similar position to the press in New York. Ohio was more reserved in its criticism of the Congo Free State and Leopold II but still questioned the cruelty prior to the turn of the century. The press was conservative throughout the period in question. Stanley vocalized support for the Southern proposal of African American emigration to the Congo Free State, going as far as to suggest that they were the only ones capable of colonizing the area.²⁶ The article also contains blatant racism to suggest that the persons of color that emigrated to the Congo could revert to the "savagery" of the indigenous people. In order to gain power and success in the Congo, African Americans would need to carry themselves within the definition of white civility as deemed by the European colonizers.²⁷ Ohio papers continue to be

²⁴ "The Truth About the Congo," *The Sun*, October 18, 1903, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

²⁵ "The Truth About the Congo," *The Sun*, October 18, 1903, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

²⁶ "Riches in the Congo," *Belmont Chronicle*, January 29, 1891, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

²⁷ "Riches in the Congo," *Belmont Chronicle*, January 29, 1891, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

reserved even later in the reform movement. In 1904, *The Stark County Democrat* published that the cruelties in the Congo would be investigated upon the reception of formal charges against the Congo Free State.²⁸ However, it is difficult to credit or criticize Ohio for this publication as it reflected the opinion of the federal government. It does at the very least, acknowledge that the reports of cruelties are gaining traction and require validation before diplomatic action can be taken. Despite the evidence to suggest that Ohio was indifferent to cruelty in the Congo, two years prior, an Ohio paper had published testimony from Captain Guy Burrows corroborating the suggestions of cruelty based on his own experience. Burrows claims that the Belgians had removed civility from the Congolese, intentionally employed cannibals, and turned “natives” over for the purpose of being eaten.²⁹ Overall, it seems that Ohio was more conservative than New York, and far from being as critical as Connecticut.

Representing the former Union states view is Mark Twain, It was difficult to choose where to assign Twain in this argument. On one hand he could represent a minority within Southern opinion, but he also more closely represents Northern ideas and was living in the North when writing *King Leopold's Soliloquy*. Furthermore, his other writings carry messages of emancipation, which was the antebellum sentiment of the North, but it is difficult to ignore his fame from his time on the Mississippi river. I have chosen to include him in the Northern perspective given his choice to live in Connecticut in a postbellum America and that being his location when writing the pamphlet.

King Leopold's Soliloquy is a pamphlet written by Mark Twain and published by the American Congo Reform Association in 1905. The pamphlet contains the imagined response of

²⁸ “To Investigate: Abuses in the Congo Free State,” *The Stark County Democrat*, May 31, 1904, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

²⁹ “Rubber: Obtained at an Awful Price,” *Akron Daily Democrat*, January 3, 1902, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

King Leopold to reports from missionaries and other reform agents as he “reads” the documents into the monologue. For example, Leopold remarks that the reports he is reading should have been silenced by shame.³⁰ Twain criticizes Leopold’s Congo Free State harshly claiming that the Congolese people are treated cruelly, for their labor the State “provides nothing in return but hunger, terror, grief, shame, captivity, mutilation, and massacre.”³¹ While the pamphlet isn’t the true journalism this argument is centered on, Twain’s position supplements that Northerners were more critical of Leopold, and increasingly so with the C.R.A’s efforts becoming more focused.

Southern states and their representative did not respond with the harsh tone of Northern reporters. While the South is not entirely ignorant to the situation the Congolese face within the forced labor system of the rubber regime, they are largely less focused on the human rights violations and other fatal happenings in the Congo. Instead there is a focus on the economic gain to be made from the Congo’s abundant resources and cheap labor or the potential for African Americans to thrive there as a means of repatriation. One such state that demonstrates this is Louisiana.

Early publications in Louisiana focus on the “savagery of the natives.” A piece was published in 1890 by *The Opelousas Courier* suggesting large amounts of cannibalism and describes the behavior in great detail.³² Louisiana is less critical of Leopold even after the reform movement begins to pick up. In 1904, *The Meridional* circulated an article describing King Leopold as a “Captain of Industry.”³³ Verner praises Leopold as a genius whose financial

³⁰ Mark Twain. *King Leopold’s Soliloquy*, 1905. (East Germany: Seven Seas Books, 1961), 32.

³¹ Twain, *King Leopold’s Soliloquy*, 49.

³² “Cannibalism in Africa: Millions of Savages Indulge in the Horrible Practice,” *The Opelousas Courier*, April 26, 1890, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

³³ Samuel Phillips Verner, “King Leopold as a Captain of Industry,” *The Meridional*, October 08, 1904, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

proress is superior to the American system, and is only more impressive in his ability to form a vast and profitable empire without ever going to the Congo.³⁴ In 1901, *St. Tammany Farmer* published a piece suggesting that Belgium would be annexing the Congo Free State and that there was still hope for the Congolese to become “useful members of society.”³⁵ This evidence is not to suggest that Louisiana was supportive of the events in the Congo. In 1902 *The Jennings Daily Record* circulated an article similar to that of the aforementioned testimony of Guy Burrows with an additional paragraph on the actions that Leopold II had taken, criticizing their lack of enacting actual change.³⁶ However, Louisiana's *The True Democrat* was focused more on the profits and resource monopoly over ivory and rubber.³⁷ Louisiana's reports indicate there is a greater value for the money to be earned in Africa than the lives of the Congolese people who are being used for forced labor to earn said capital. Furthermore, the considerations to send “the negroes” to colonize the Congo is rooted in the tradition of slavery. The *Lake Charles Commercial* proposed that the tobacco industry should be made important once emigration has occurred because of African Americans having experience with the crop from working on Southern plantations.³⁸ Thus it is reasonable to conclude that Louisianan concern for the Congolese is superficial at best with a greater interest in the economic gain of the venture.

The Georgian papers publicizes the Congo atrocities more frequently than its other southern compatriots. Georgian newspapers circulate the theme of “savagery” as most states do

³⁴ Verner, “King Leopold as a Captain of Industry,” *The Meridional*, October 08, 1904, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

³⁵ “Rich in Resources, Congo Free State Soon to be Annexed to Belgium,” *St. Tammany Farmer*, August 24, 1901, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

³⁶ “Congo Free State: The Conditions There Worse Than Can Be Imagined,” *The Jennings Daily Record*, January 7, 1902, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

³⁷ “Its Prosperity,” *The True Democrat*, October 26, 1901, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

³⁸ “Congo Free State: Movement to Colonize Negroes from the United States,” *Lake Charles Chronicle*, July 13, 1895, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

in the early 1890s and as some southern states continue to do in the early 1900s. In the earlier years prior to the greater call for reform, Georgia published articles on cannibalism in the Congo, going as far as to claim that there were at least twenty million “maneaters.”³⁹ After acknowledging the “savagery,” the piece then focuses on the resources of the Congo that should be imported into the United States, including rubber and ivory.⁴⁰ In the fall of 1904, *The Savannah Morning News* published two articles about Congo atrocities. First in October, the paper reported on Booker T. Washington’s presence at a meeting to discuss the cruelties.⁴¹ At the meeting, Leopold II’s policies were denounced by E.D. Morel, Reverend Morrison, and Booker T. Washington and were defended by George Herbert Head of England.⁴² The following month the paper ran an article on Reverend Vass’ observations as a missionary. While in the Congo he saw the area as a giant slavery operation powered by greed and violence.⁴³ While many Southern states exposed the existence of cruelties and conveyed the call for reform, Georgia papers stand out amongst Southern publications in their firm position. Other newspapers were still denying the severity of atrocities or focusing on the profit to be made within the colony. Georgia, however, did not publish such encouragements in the later period when reform was at an all time high.

The most guilty of sectional bias appears to be Alabama. Alabama had fewer relevant newspaper issues containing the word “Congo” than any other former Confederate State. Rather

³⁹ “They Are Maneaters: Some Twenty Million Cannibals in the Congo Free State,” *The Morning News*, January 13, 1895, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

⁴⁰ “They Are Maneaters: Some Twenty Million Cannibals in the Congo Free State,” *The Morning News*, January 13, 1895, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

⁴¹ “Booker Was the Star Guest: At a Banquet in Boston,” *The Savannah Morning News*, October 8, 1904, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

⁴² “Booker Was the Star Guest: At a Banquet in Boston,” *The Savannah Morning News*, October 8, 1904, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

⁴³ “Modern Slavery in the Congo Free State: Rev. L.C. Vass, a Missionary, Discusses Anomalous Conditions,” *The Savannah Morning News*, November 14, 1904, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

the term Congo results in articles and advertisements relating to a style of canes.⁴⁴ The only digitized paper that spoke about the Congo Free State was informative with more information on the missionary William Henry Sheppard and his wife Lucy Gaunt than the actual conditions in Leopold's territory.⁴⁵ One of the other pertinent results also does not speak to life in the Congo Free State. Instead, the article focuses on King Leopold II's predicament in paying his dues before the death of Carlotta which holds no value to this paper's focus.⁴⁶ A lack of reports speaks almost as loudly as a plethora of articles. It is possible that Alabama was so indifferent to the atrocities in the Congo that they did not report on them at all, or that if they did the reports were so few that there is little digital record to corroborate such.

Representing the Southern States is Senator John Tyler Morgan. Senator Morgan was encouraged by Sanford to support the Congo as it would provide a second Liberia of sorts to repatriate African Americans.⁴⁷ Senator Morgan was not alone in this campaign, it was also supported by Senator Butler.⁴⁸ Repatriating African Americans to Africa is not a new idea proposed by these leaders. It has been a solution proposed since emancipation, one Lincoln is believed to have endorsed at one point. In both Northern and Southern antebellum and postbellum sentiments, there was a conviction that persons of color were not and could never be of equal socioeconomic status. Such an idea was realized with the kickstart of Liberia and was hoped to be revived with the apparent prosperity of the Congo. The beliefs of Senator Morgan

⁴⁴ "The Newest in Canes," *Birmingham State Herald*, April 12, 1896, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

⁴⁵ "A Colored F.R.G.S...A Product of Tuskalooosa Becomes One of the Most Eminent Men in the South," *Birmingham Age-Herald*, October 28, 1894, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

⁴⁶ "King Leopold's Plight: Why He Wants to Sell Belgium's African Holdings," *Birmingham State Herald*, March 22, 1896, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

⁴⁷ Hunt Hawkins, "Mark Twain's Involvement With the Congo Reform Movement: 'A Fury of Generous Indignation.'" *The New England Quarterly* 51, no.2 (1978): 152, DOI: 10.2307/364304.

⁴⁸ "Riches in the Congo," *Belmont Chronicle*, January 29, 1891, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

and his comrades are echoed within the Southern press as the publications choose to write about the profits and prosperity of the Congo Free State even as reports about cruelties begin to circulate.

The historical record of African American responses to the Congo is sparse. The Black Press is difficult to trace. *Chronicling America* has thousands of digitized pages from 89 African American newspapers. Of these 89, only 22 align with the period of study. Even fewer contain relevant results, if any at all. One of the few reports we have on record from the Black Press about the Congo states that cannibalism is active in the Congo Free State.⁴⁹ From the same publication is earlier recognition of the atrocities and condemning Belgium for their brutality.⁵⁰ Other periodicals report briefly on the root of the issue, blaming the Congolese refusal to recognize the Belgian government.⁵¹ One significant Black periodical not included in the *Chronicling America* database is *Southern Workman*. *Southern Workman*, a monthly journal circulated by Hampton Institute, is known for its influence in developing Afro-American literary culture, directly inspiring the creation of *Colored American Magazine*.⁵² This descendent periodical, and other Black publications at the time were focused on domestic issues rather than foreign affairs of the Congo. Thus there are such few records that survive of The Black Press' reports on the Congo survive, if they existed, despite the massive support coming from prominent Black leaders such as W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington.

⁴⁹ Race News: Gathered From Various Sources," *The Seattle Republican*, August 25, 1905, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

⁵⁰ "Realm of Religion: Among the World's Christians and Quasi Christians," *The Seattle Republican*, October 18, 1901, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

⁵¹ "The Use of Money." *Richmond Planet*, March 4, 1905, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

⁵² Jones. *In Brightest Africa*, 148.

While Booker T. Washington is famous for his development of Tuskegee Institute, he was also an activist for African reform. As the most influential African American leader of his time, he also took an active role in the Congo Reform Movement. In fact, his prominence was essential to the movement as it gave him a loftier position from which he could spread information, not only to the public but to people with authority.⁵³ Louis R. Harlan, Washington's biographer, explained Washington's position very neatly: "The Negroes' position in American society at the turn of the twentieth century was, after all, roughly analogous to that of Negroes in the African colonies."⁵⁴ Washington's reform efforts centered on his belief that research and African improvement would further the goals and pursuits of African Americans.⁵⁵ His main goal was to create a better life for Blacks in America. Washington encouraged African Americans to stay in the United States, especially within the Southern (formerly Confederate) states, as a challenge to Senator Morgan's proposal of deportation to Africa.⁵⁶ His overall goal, as with other Black leaders like W.E.B. DuBois, was to fight "white efforts to render the African Americans a settler class in Africa."⁵⁷ The priority was to protect African Americans in their pursuit of upward mobility from former slavery and sharecropping without being pushed into an equally white powered Africa.

While this research explores the main areas of sectional bias, it is still rather preliminary. It would be great to see additional sources that may support this argument that I did not have access to such as Booker T. Washington's papers from the years of Congo Reform activism and newspapers from significant Black newspapers from the late 19th century. Another point of

⁵³ Ira Dworkin. *Congo Love Song: African American Culture and the Crisis of the Colonial State*. (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2017), 83.

⁵⁴ Ira Dworkin. *Congo Love Song*, 79.

⁵⁵ Dworkin. *Congo Love Song*, 79-80.

⁵⁶ Dworkin. *Congo Love Song*, 78.

⁵⁷ Dworkin. *Congo Love Song*, 81.

consideration is American foreign affairs of the period. During the earlier years that this research focuses on, America was engaged in the Spanish-American War, leading to significant efforts to establish colonial control over the Philippines and in limited ways, Cuba. It is possible that America was simply disinterested in the Congo and the isolated reform efforts because there was a larger threat to American economic and political stability or that Americans felt they had no grounds on which to intervene in the Congo Free State given the atrocities they were causing themselves.

Because most African Americans were slaves or had immediate relatives who had been slaves, they were more receptive to the Congo reform movement and took a more direct role in reporting on atrocities within their leadership that is not as frequently reflected on in periodicals. Northern states took the position of anti-slavery during the Civil War and these values led them to respond to the Congo atrocities sooner and more critically than Southern states. Southern states had been pro-slavery and wanted to depopulate America of African Americans after emancipation, their primary involvement was advocating for the Congo as an area for repatriation like Liberia, and thus they proved to be less critical of Leopold or the Congo Free State. The narrative became more wholesomely disapproving after the reform efforts intensified and the Harris' photographs damned the mission. However, prior to the point where there could no longer be denial sectional biases played the major role in determining what was published and where, thus shaping the influence of the movement altogether.

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