



From black nationalists to integrationists, scholars are reconsidering the contributions of Booker T. Washington.

## Black empowerment: recasting 'Uncle Tom'

By Salim Muwakkil

A stifling ideological orthodoxy has left the African-American community adrift and rudderless during a period in history when it is particularly vulnerable. But that may be changing with the emergence of a new group of theorists who are touting the once-maligned ideas of Booker T. Washington as the next new thing.

Washington is an unlikely figure for veneration. Although he was black America's leading figure at the dawn of the 20th century, his reputation had fallen on hard times. In fact, Washington's name virtually had become synonymous with the derisive term "Uncle Tom." But because this country's current racial crisis has sent theorists scouring through history looking for

lessons unlearned, increasing numbers of them have found merit in Washington's teachings.

The popularizers of Washington's ideas are sprinkled along the ideological spectrum, and they enter the beleaguered black leader's orbit from different directions. From left to right, from black nationalists to dedicated integrationists, from the bourgeoisie to the underclass, all are finding something to like in Washington. While some openly acknowledge their debt to him, others are more circumspect.

Among their ranks are Shelby Steele, a professor of English at San Jose State University and author of the well-received book *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America*; Stanley Crouch, a New York-based writer and critic who wrote *Notes of a Hanging Judge*; Harold Cruse, professor emeritus of history at the University of Michigan and author of *Plural but Equal*; Robert Woodson, president of the Washington, D.C.-based National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise; Molefi Kete Asante, chairman of Temple University's African-American studies program and author of *Afrocentricity*; Tony Brown, a television producer and syndicated columnist; and Benjamin Hooks, executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

These men have little in common save their admiration for Washington's foresight and forbearance. And while the movement is mostly male, a small core of black women are beginning to make their presence known. Elizabeth Wright, editor of the New York-based conservative newsletter *Issues & Views*; and Hoover Institution scholar Anne Wortham, whose book, *The Other Side of Racism*, debunks many of the civil-rights movement's most cherished notions, are two rising stars of the new Washingtonians.

**Up from slavery:** Born a slave in Virginia in 1856, Washington was black America's most prominent figure from the 1890s until his death in 1915. He graduated from Hampton Institute, a black college in his home state, and in 1881 he founded Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama.

Washington generally is classified as an "accommodationist" who adopted a conciliatory stance toward the racial discrimination that was the code of the South. He perhaps is best known for his exhortation during a 1895 speech at the International Exposition in Atlanta for blacks to "cast down your buckets where they are." He wrote a book in 1901 entitled *Up from Slavery* that remained an enormous best-seller throughout the early 1900s. Because of his gradualist philosophy and apparent acceptance of the racist status quo, Washington has been harshly judged as an apologist for white supremacy.

But Washington also believed in principles of self-help, racial solidarity, economic empowerment, vocational education and the cultivation of moral values—principles currently in vogue, via the Nation of Islam and the Afrocentric movement. He created the National Negro Business League in 1900 to institutionalize those principles. Now his admirers have recast his accommodationist stance as a tactical ploy to divert white attention while ensuring black empowerment.

The thesis at the core of Steele's new book echoes Washington's belief that it is more important for black Americans to focus on character development and enterprise than on racial protest. "We need to inspire and encourage blacks rather than blame them or others for past failures," Steele said in an interview in the fall 1990 *New Perspectives Quarterly*. "This attitude has nothing to do with liberal or conservative politics; it's a very old message in black America that can be traced back to the views of Booker T. Washington ... who constantly reminded black people of that slim margin of choice open to them and who challenged blacks to seize any and all opportunity to develop."

Washington's approach emphasized practical education, moral discipline and political quiescence. Rather than advise African-Americans to waste resources on social protest, Washington urged more energy be focused on developing the civic skills destroyed by centuries of slavery. In *Up from Slavery*, he wrote, "The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremist folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that

will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than artificial forcing. No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is long in any degree ostracized."

**The way they were:** For Washington, "the surest road to racial equality for blacks was through black economic enterprise, not civil-rights legislation as a programmatic priority," Cruse wrote in *Plural but Equal*. Historically, Washington's ideas stood in contrast to those of the prominent black scholar, journalist and organizer W.E.B. DuBois, who argued that blacks should increase their involvement in higher education, social agitation and political protest. Conflicts between the DuBois reformers and Washington's "Tuskegee Machine" accommodationists often were acrimonious.

And though the differences—and similarities—between Washington and DuBois are more complex than a simple rivalry of reformer vs. accommodationist, their differing responses to U.S. racism clearly identify a recurring dialectic in African-American history. The reformer strain—the civil-rights movement and the left—has been dominant since the '40s. Thus Washington's "Uncle Tom" image.

But now, even his critics judge him in a kinder light. "Accommodation for Washington was a political style, not a political philosophy," wrote socialist Manning Marable in his 1985 book *Black American Politics*. "His long-range goal was to create ... racial parity within the political economy of capitalism. To ensure the success of this strategy, Washington publicly accepted racial segregation codes and political disenfranchisement."

**Clout meister:** One of his most ambitious projects was

## INSIDE STORY

the attempt to develop trade connections between African-Americans and Africans. It was Washington's entrepreneurial example that inspired Marcus Garvey to establish his Universal Negro Improvement Association. In fact, Garvey left his native Jamaica in 1915 at Washington's behest.

During his lifetime Washington wielded more clout within the black community than anyone had before or perhaps since. His power emanated from his widespread political influence and popularity with major philanthropists. For example, Washington served as a political adviser on Negro affairs to presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. All black men who were appointed to presidential offices during that time were first recommended by Washington. According to historians August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, no black schools received contributions from major donors, including Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, without Washington's approval.

Among Washington's new acolytes are many former detractors. Philosophical conservatives such as economists Thomas Sowell and Walter Williams spread his self-help gospel, as do the firebrand orators of the Nation of Islam and the various neonationalist groups that follow its lead. More remarkably, Hooks, though he heads the NAACP—an organization created in 1909 specifically to counter Washington's Tuskegee Machine—recently has embarked on a separate program that is quintessentially Washingtonian.

Hooks was recently named executive chairman of the newly formed National Association of Black Organizations (NABO), a group dedicated to promoting black self-help and self-reliance (see *In These Times*, Oct. 16). Although he heads the nation's premier civil-rights organization, Hooks understands the need for new approaches to stem the spiraling decline of black America.

"We must take control of our destiny," Hooks said at NABO's founding convention this summer. "We have a moral responsibility to attack the problems in our community with the best weapon at our disposal: black unity." Booker T. would have been proud. □

## CONTENTS

Editorials .....	1 & 14
Inside Story: Back to Booker T. ....	2
Chicago-style polling in Pakistan .....	3
The First Stone/In Person .....	4
In Short .....	6
Rainforest loses big in Brazilian election .....	7
Minority stew in Yugoslavia .....	8
A brave new Guatemala .....	9
Hungary's economic quagmire and political vacuum .....	11
Am-Bushed by Gulf policy .....	12
Letters/Sylvia .....	15
Viewpoints: Free-market firebrands in Eastern Europe .....	16
Polls point to Walesa .....	17
Life in the U.S.: Civilian patrols—vigilantes up the ante .....	18
In the Arts: Fresh tracks on the trail of Robert Johnson .....	19
In Print: The anything-but-peaceful Pacific .....	20
A different kind of literary underground .....	21
Classifieds .....	23
The sources of pain, the pain of sources .....	24

(ISSN 0160-5992)

Published 41 times a year: weekly except the first week of January, first week of March, last week of November, last week of December; bi-weekly in June through the first week in September by Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647, (312) 772-0100. The entire contents of *In These Times* are copyright ©1990 by Institute for Public Affairs, and may not be reproduced in any manner, either in whole or in part, without permission of the publisher. Second-class postage paid at Chicago, IL, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 1912 Debs Ave., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 15, No. 3) published Nov 21, 1990, for newsstand sales Nov. 21-Dec. 4, 1990.

By John P. Canham-Clyne

**U**S. SUPPORT FOR "DEMOCRACY" IN THE post-Cold War world faces a major challenge in the country that receives more American aid than any other except Israel and Egypt.

Evidence points to the likelihood that Pakistan's military-backed Islamic Democratic Alliance—or IJI, by its Urdu initials—stole numerous seats from the People's Democratic Alliance (PDA), led by ousted Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in the October 24 National Assembly elections.

Nevertheless, a group of international observers organized by the U.S.-funded National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) has given the new government a veneer of legitimacy by issuing a statement two days after the polling describing the election as "generally open, orderly and well-administered" on the local level.

U.S. law requires the administration to certify Pakistan's elections as "free and fair" before sending any more aid. At a November hearing before House Asian and Pacific Affairs Subcommittee Chairman Stephen Solarz (D-NY), Assistant Secretary of State John Kelly indicated that the administration will rely heavily on NDI's findings in the certification process.

Other international monitors, however, came to less sanguine conclusions than the NDI team. A group of French observers from the International Federation for Human Rights reported, "The results giving a very large majority to the IJI ... can be partly explained by a mechanism of highly sophisticated rigging which would have occurred between the polling stations and the offices responsible for collecting results at the [district] level."

On the surface, Pakistan's electoral laws would seem to preclude a major fix. The election commission assigns a "presiding officer" to each of 33,500 polling stations across the country. On election night, presiding officers are required to open the ballot boxes in the polling stations and count the votes in the presence of certified polling agents of the parties contesting the elections.

When the count is complete, the presiding officer transmits a tally signed and certified by all the polling agents to a "returning officer." The returning officer adds the tallies from all polling stations for a specific seat and submits the result to the election commission. By law, the polling agents also must be provided with a tally sheet, so that each party contesting the election can make an independent count to verify the results.

**Elections Chicago-style:** But an analysis of PDA complaints to the chief election commissioner, sworn depositions from PDA workers, reports in the Pakistani press and eyewitness observations by international monitors document instances in which polling agents were barred from polling stations in at least 34 of the 206 districts.

The PDA claims it never received tallies from polling stations in 96 of the districts. Bhutto has called for another vote in these districts.

In certain cases, honest election officials refused to certify the results. In National Assembly District 127 in Punjab, some presiding officers refused to sign the tallies because PDA polling agents had been barred



Ousted Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto: calling for new elections in 96 of 206 districts.

## Election irregularities point to stolen Pakistan assembly seats

from voting stations across the district at lunchtime. According to a letter of complaint from PDA Information Secretary Iqbal Haider to the chief election commissioner, the district returning officer nevertheless informed PDA polling agents that the PDA had won the seat 43,000 to 32,000. That night, however, the results on Pakistan TV included an additional 29,000 IJI voters, with the IJI winning the seat 61,000 to 43,000.

It is between the end of the vote counts at the polling stations and the announcement of results on television that the PDA claims the most massive rigging took place.

Apparently, a political authority outside the election commission directed the fraud. A member of the NDI team made a copy of a letter received by an election commission official in Balochistan province giving him instructions to report his results to a provincial "election cell" before giving them to the district returning officer.

This would allow the riggers to receive a running count of the results and then direct the production of enough fraudulent votes to capture the seat. The reporting of partial results to anyone outside the election commission is a blatant violation of Pakistani election law.

Similar evidence of political pressure on election officials can be found in a sworn deposition from a PDA polling agent in National Assembly District 85 in Punjab. The polling agent claims that the presiding officer at his polling place told him he had "instructions from the top" to withhold the signed certificate of the results.

**Vote early, vote often:** The IJI reportedly also found ways to manufacture votes during the day. The Peshawar daily *Frontier Post* reports that a provincial intelligence agency in Punjab has alleged that each IJI candidate in the region of Multan handed out 3,000 to 4,000 bogus national identification cards to loyal party workers. The workers, each armed with 10 to 20 of these fake

IDs bearing his or her picture but a different name, address and birth date, registered and voted at several different polling stations. The newspaper reported that the party workers were provided with a substance that allowed them to remove the supposedly indelible ink from their thumbs after they imprinted their ballots.

In four of seven districts in Multan, voter turnout was up by an average of 20,000 per seat, or more than 15 percent. Six of the seven seats in Multan were won by the PPP in 1988. But this year the IJI took five seats, with another going to an IJI-allied party called the JUP. Only one seat went to the PDA.

The tactics were even less subtle in National Assembly District 160 in Bhutto's home Sind province, where the former prime minister's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, squared off against Ghulam Murtaza Khan, the son of then-caretaker Prime Minister Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi. Three people died and 20 were injured in the election-day intimidation. Khan himself reportedly oversaw the closing of several polling places and the seizure of the ballot boxes.

In an interview in the November issue of the Pakistani monthly *Newsline*, Barnett Rubin, professor of political science at Columbia University, recounted being in the home of the election commissioner of the neighboring Sukkur area as the commissioner received phone reports from throughout Sind province. Rubin, one of only two Urdu speakers on the NDI delegation, said, "They told us, as these returns were coming in, that the PPP had won in all three constituencies of Sukkur district. In addition, they told us that [Khan] had been defeated in his Nawabshah constituency by Asif Ali Zardari. ... So my friend and I were quite surprised to wake up the next morning to find the election commission had declared [Khan] the winner."

**Spin control:** The October 26 statement by the NDI team has become an embarrass-

ment. The *New Republic's* Hendrik Hertzberg, himself a member of the delegation, closed his November 19 "Pakistan Diarist" column with a long fit of handwringing. "I am left with a feeling of unease. Perhaps our report should have mentioned that most of us had never been to Pakistan before, that we had little or no familiarity with Pakistani politics or culture, that we did not speak the language, that Pakistan is vast and our team's resources small and that we had no way of independently verifying the vote count."

Perhaps they shouldn't have made a report at all. In the *Newsline* interview, Rubin explains that the delegation's interpreters were provided by the government, and in one case refused to translate loud complaints by a large group of voters.

Observer delegations such as the NDI group are ill-equipped to detect sophisticated fraud, "especially on short order," Rubin said. "So there is an inherent danger in such missions that, for lack of evidence, they may end up certifying elections which are fraudulent."

While the NDI report noted various irregularities—including violence against candidates, polling officials and party workers; unbalanced access to Pakistan state-run television; and the establishment of the "election cell"—it concluded that "the delegation does not believe the above-mentioned problems significantly altered the outcome of the elections."

Ken Wollach, executive vice president of NDI and a member of the delegation, said the team made its statement so soon because a contingent of journalists expected it, and not to do so would have been irresponsible.

This explanation caused near-apoplexy for one influential congressional staffer, who, on condition of anonymity, said, "I find it unbelievable that they would issue a statement without the facts. While I'm not prepared to say that the will of the people of Pakistan was thwarted in [October's] election's, there's no way on God's Earth that 40 people who visited 500 polling stations out of 33,500 for 30 minutes each could know either. To please an audience of 1,000 journalists, they have certified what may be a fraudulent election as free and fair. The NDI report is devastating for democracy in Pakistan and devastating for the NDI."

NDI's efforts at spin control have taken on a farcical tinge. Earnestly slamming the barn door after the horse escaped, NDI President J. Brian Atwood sent a letter to Secretary of State James Baker on October 30. In it, he wrote, "Some members of Congress have expressed concern that the administration may base a certification [of the election's fairness] on the NDI's October 26 preliminary statement. I am sure you would agree that this would be inappropriate." But Atwood's hedging came too late. State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler issued an endorsement of the election that afternoon, citing the statement as authority.

It seems that much of the proof of sophisticated fraud will have to be found in statistical analysis of voting patterns. NDI's analysis is being conducted by Lee Feldman, a member of the delegation and head of Global Analysis, Inc. Feldman's analysis is expected to be completed this week.

But the delegation's confidence in Feldman thus far seems unwarranted. In the

*Continued on page 10*

IN THESE TIMES NOV. 21-DEC. 4, 1990 3