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Paper entitled:

From Darkness to Light:

The Instructive Experiences of Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington in Nineteenth-Century United States

الملخّص:

كانت الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية خلال النصف الثاني من القرن 19 على وجه الخصوص مسرحا للعديد من الأحداث التي غيرت مجرى التاريخ بشكل عميق. و لعلّ أهم المسائل التي طغت على الساحة الأمريكية آنذاك مشكلة العبيد الأفارقة واستمرار العبودية كنظام اقتصادي قائم بذاته في ولايات الجنوب التي كانت تعتمد أساسا على الزراعة. و لم تكن الحرب الأهلية (1861-1865) التي نشبت بين الشمال الاتحادي و الجنوب الكنفدرالي إلاّ دليلا على مدى أثر هذه المشكلة على المجتمع الأمريكي. وإدراكا منهم لأهمية العلم كمدخل رئيسي لعالم الثقافة بشتى فروعه و إختلاف صوره، تفانى - و تفنّن - بعض الأمريكان السود خلال القرن 19 في طلب العلم في ظروف كانت فيها حظوظ تحصل شخص من أصول إفريقية في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية عامة، و في ولايات الجنوب خاصة، على تعليم متوازن ضئيلة جدا، إن لم تكن منعدمة تماما. و قد كان من أبرز المثقفين السود الذين تركوا بصماتهم على صفحات التاريخ الأمريكي خلال القرن 19 نذكر على سبيل المثال فريدريك دوغلاس (1818-1895) و بوكر تاليافيرو واشنطن (1858-1915) اللذان كرسا حياتهما لخدمة قضية السود و ناضلا من أجل النهوض بمستواهم و تحسين أوضاعهم على جميع الأصعدة. أثبت هذين الرجلين ما يمكن للإنسان أن يحققه بفضل العلم، و أعطيا دروسا في تفاني المثقف في أداء واجبه نحو مجتمعه، و قدرته على حمل المسؤولية، و مثابرته في العمل بالرغم من التهديدات و كثرة العراقيل و قلة الإمكانيات. و بالرغم من المرتبة الاجتماعية المنحطة التي

فرضت على السود آنذاك استطاعت هاتين الشخصيتين أن تكسبا احترام و تقدير الأمريكان البيض أنفسهم.

Abstract:

Nineteenth-century United States was characterized by a great interest in the issue of the African Americans. The institution of slavery was put into question, and debates upon this mode of exploitation of man by another were frequently held. Like many other countries, the United States abolished slave trade by the beginning of the century (in 1808). Voices denouncing the perpetuation of slavery, mainly in the South, became more outspoken, especially after the famous Emancipation Proclamation issued on 1st January, 1863, by the American President Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865). In this respect, two remarkable nineteenth-century African American figures deserve great attention and consideration because of their full devotion to the cause of their fellows, and the deep impact they left on the African American community through their achievements. These were Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington. Indeed, these two figures stand apart from the other black leaders in that they exerted a great influence on the American public opinion vis-à-vis the black Americans' issue, and drew the world's attention to their problems. Moreover, an examination of the conditions of their upbringing reveals the strength of their respective personalities, the greatness of their love for freedom and dignity, and the profound effect of education on their lives.

The aim of this article is to show the role of education and knowledge in shaping the personality of an individual who, in return, can contribute to the improvement of a given society, despite difficulties and lack of means.

Introduction:

An important amount of literature was produced by black writers in the nineteenth century – most of whom were fugitives or manumitted slaves – who received rudimentary education that allowed them to tell their experiences as slaves. Their writings enlightened the public on the grievances of the Blacks, and supported the abolitionists' arguments against slavery.**(1)** There were poets, playwrights, novelists, historians, and newspaper editors.

Some prominent African Americans who rose in the nineteenth century helped improve the social and political conditions of their race. They condemned slavery and the hardships inflicted upon the African slaves. They also proved that the Black was as capable of literary or scientific achievements as the White had he been given the same opportunities as the latter. Their works supported the arguments of antebellum anti-slavery and abolitionist organizations. Although slavery was officially abolished during the Civil War, the disillusionment of the newly emancipated slaves was not long to

1- For examples of former slaves' writings during the nineteenth century, see, for instance, John Hope Franklin and A. A. Moss Jr., **From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans**, Vol. 1, McGraw-Hill Inc, 7th Edition, 1994, pp. 163-164.

come. They realized that their new status as freemen was not so different from that of a slave, for they still faced lynching, denial of civil rights, discrimination, and the Whites' contempt. The role of the black leaders, like Douglass and Washington, in voicing their fellows' aspirations was, therefore, as important as it had been before the war.

- Frederick Douglass:

He was born in slavery as Frederick Augustus Washington Baily (or Bailey) in 1817 (or 1818), on Holmes Hill Farm, near the town of Easton, Maryland. His mother, Harriet Baily (who died when he was seven years old), was a slave, and his father (about whom he knew almost nothing) was a white master. He was separated from his mother at the age of six, a practice that was very common in Maryland Douglass would state later.[(1)] His mistress taught him the alphabet and a few simple words although it was unlawful to teach a slave to read and write. Unfortunately for Douglass, when his master heard about it, he became very furious and asked his wife to stop teaching him which she did immediately. However, Douglass was already well aware that knowledge and freedom were closely connected. He, therefore, decided to rely on himself to continue his learning, and used poor white children as teachers, paying them with pieces of bread.

After reading Baltimore local newspapers and speeches dealing with freedom and democracy, thirteen-year-old Douglass got

1- Frederick Douglass, **Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself,** New York, 1968 (orig. pub. in 1845), p. 22.

in touch with abolitionist ideas, started to hate slavery, and grew fonder of liberty. He soon became a teacher to a group of young Blacks. However, his learning process was very often disrupted by his continuous movement from one master to another, and from one farm to another.

While still a teenager, Douglass suffered from humiliation and subjection, as he experienced frequent whipping and serious beating on the part of his masters. At the age of sixteen, he was hired for a year to Edward Covey, a farmer who was reputed to be a 'slave breaker.' After bearing Covey's mistreatment for six months, one day Douglass grabbed his master from the throat while he was being tied for a whipping, showing his refusal to more submission. The two men fought each other for about two hours until Covey gave up.**(1)** This first act of resistance was very beneficial to Douglass, since Covey never tried to whip him again during the last six months he spent with him. This made him come to the conclusion that: "he is whipped oftenest, who is whipped easiest."**(2)** This event fostered his desire to break away from the institution of slavery, and kindled his enthusiasm for freedom, so he started to plan his escape to the North.

After an unsuccessful attempt (which cost him a week in prison), and despite his master's promise to free him at the age of twenty-five,**(3)** Douglass was determined to put an end to his slave

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1- Peter Kolchin, **American Slavery: 1619-1877**, Penguin Books, 1993, p. 160.
2- Quoted in Kolchin, ibid., p. 164.
3- Benjamin Quarles, 'Douglass' Mind in the Making,' *Phylon*, 1st Quarterly, 1945, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 6.

status. Indeed, in 1838 he took the direction of the North, travelling under the false identity of a free seaman. From Baltimore (Maryland) to Wilmington (Delaware), and then to Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), the trip was very hazardous and uncertain, and on several occasions he thought he was uncovered, because of the important contrast between the description on the identification papers he had borrowed and his own appearance.[(1)] However, he successfully passed to New York City on September 4, 1838.

Douglass's successful escape to the North had a deep effect on his life, and constituted a decisive step in the launching of his career as a great black leader. The first important thing he did upon his arrival to New York City was to change his name from Frederick Baily to Frederick Douglass to make his capture difficult for slave catchers. His first direct involvement in the abolitionist movement was in 1841, at the annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in Nantucket (Massachusetts).[(2)] Possessing a great potential as a speaker, Douglass was employed by the Society to go on a tour of the northern states with other abolitionists to publicize the cause of the slaves and narrate his own experience as a fugitive slave.

Douglass's tour was a total success, and he showed a great ability to communicate with his audience. "He was endowed with the

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1- Kolchin, op. cit., pp. 157-158.
2- Franklin and Moss, op. cit., p. 182.

physical attributes of an orator: a magnificent, tall body, a head crowned with a mass of hair, deep-set, flashing eyes, a firm chin, and a rich, melodious voice."[1] Besides talking about his life and condemning slavery, Douglass started to drew people's attention to the racist question in the North, where many free Blacks suffered from racial discrimination and segregation.

However, Douglass's oratorical skills became soon a source of scepticism about his words. Indeed, people started to question the soundness of his declarations and the veracity of his stories. To prove that he was telling the truth and at the risk of being identified and seized by his former master, Douglass decided to publish his autobiography, with his real name, and the real names of the people and places involved in his life story. The book, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, appeared in May, 1845, and became quickly a best-seller. In fact, it was often praised as "… one of the most important books ever published in America. It has been called the single most significant slave narrative and the fount from which modern black prose has flown…."[2] A few weeks later, Douglass travelled to England and started a tour of the British Isles, which lasted for twenty-two months, to plead the cause of the slaves, denounce the institution of slavery, and gain support for the American anti-slavery movement.

1- Ibid.

2- John Sekora, ' "Mr. Editor, If You Please": Frederick Douglass, My Bondage and My Freedom, and the End of the Abolitionist Imprint,' *Callaloo*, Spring, 1994, Vol. 17, No. 2, p. 3.

Douglass's tour was an unqualified success, and his objective to rally the British public opinion behind the anti-slavery and abolitionist movements was attained. Nevertheless, his wish to return to the United States was mingled with the omnipresent fear of recapture. This issue was finally resolved when two of his English friends raised the money required to buy his freedom and sent it to his master who officially freed twenty-eight-year old Douglass on December 5, 1846.

On his return to the United States, Douglass carried on his mission to help improve the conditions of his brothers, especially those who were still in slavery. "Few antislavery leaders did so much [as did Douglass] to carry the case of the slave to the people of the United States and Europe in the generation before the Civil War."**(1)** He continued his lectures throughout the northern states, and with a certain difficulty launched a weekly newspaper, *The North Star*, in December, 1847, which was renamed *Frederick Douglass' Paper* after 1851. The paper's aim was to fight the institution of slavery and claim black equality. Moreover, Douglass was a very active abolitionist who strongly opposed all the emigration schemes and back to Africa movements,**(2)** and stated that the Blacks' place was in the United States, where the struggle for freedom was to be held. He became firmly involved in the famous 'Underground Railroad,' the systematic work of anti-slavery individuals and groups to assist

1- Franklin and Moss, op. cit., pp. 182-183.

2- These were movements which emerged particularly in nineteenth-century United States, and called for the return of the exiled Africans to Africa as the only way to put an end to their sufferings in the western hemisphere.

runaway slaves from the South to pass to the North and Canada. He sheltered and fed hundreds of fugitives, and condemned the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which threatened the physical security of runaway slaves and increased their hardship.

The sufferings endured by the slaves, especially the recaptured fugitives, convinced Douglass that the price of their liberty would be high. Besides, he started to lose faith in the pacifist policy to fight slavery (that he had always advocated), and realized that the Blacks' solidarity was a prerequisite for their salvation. In fact, Douglass' doubts about the efficiency of peaceful means to resist the institution of slavery, and about the ability of political reforms alone to end it were such that in one of his speeches, he called the Blacks to unite and get ready for heavy sacrifices to get their freedom.[(1)] Like some of his predecessors, Douglass came to believe that non-violence by itself could not put an end to slavery; and that the Blacks' solidarity and unity were necessary to achieve such an objective.

When the American Civil War broke out between the Union states of the North and the Confederate states of the South in April, 1861, President Lincoln's priority was to save the Union and not to put an end to slavery. However, for Douglass and his abolitionist friends it was the opportunity to eradicate an institution which had caused so much wrong and abused the black people in the United

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1- For an explanation of the development of Douglass's views on the use of violence for the abolition cause, see Leslie F. Goldstein, 'Violence as an Instrument for Social Change: The Views of Frederick Douglass (1817-1895),' *The Journal of Negro History*, January, 1976, Vol. 61, No. 1, pp. 61-72.

States. He, then, sought to achieve two important goals: the emancipation of the slaves in the Confederacy,[1] and the enlistment of black soldiers in the Union troops to fight against the secessionist states. His patience and great efforts gave their fruits when President Lincoln proclaimed that on 1st January, 1863, "all persons held as slaves within any State, or designated part of the State, the people whereof shall be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free." The joy and gladness of Frederick Douglass, and millions of Blacks and white abolitionists, were indescribable, for they witnessed the realization of one of their most cherished dreams. In the same year, the Congress gave the Blacks the right to enlist in the Union army. Douglass contributed by serving as recruiting agent, and urged his brothers to earn their equality and show their patriotism by participating in the war against bondage.

The end of the Civil War on April 9, 1865, after the capitulation of the secessionist South, was for Douglass a victory over slavery. Nonetheless, he realized that his brothers still needed him, because many problems such as racial discrimination, lynching, poverty, and insecurity undermined their recently won freedom. He, therefore, carried his fight for Blacks' civil rights, especially the right to vote. Again, the reward was not long in coming, for in April 1866, the Congress passed the Civil Rights Bill over President Andrew

1- The Confederacy was composed of eleven southern slave states (Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas) with a population of nine million people, including three and a half million slaves.

Johnson's (1808-1875) veto.[1] The bill guaranteed full citizenship to Blacks along with all the rights enjoyed by all Americans. In 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment, which had been submitted to the states for ratification, was finally adopted. This amendment guaranteed a wider exercise of the franchise to all citizens, regardless of their race.

After 1870, Douglass held several important posts, and received many honours. In 1871, the American President Ulysses S. Grant (1822-1885) appointed him assistant secretary to the commission of inquiry for the annexation of Santo Domingo, a post from which he resigned before the completion of the mission.[2] In 1874, he was appointed president of the Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company, a bank that had been chartered in 1865 exclusively for black people to encourage them to invest and save their money.[3] In 1877, he was offered a political post as U.S. Marshal for Washington, D. C. In 1880, he was appointed as recorder of deeds for Washington, D. C., a post which entailed the management of the department that made records of property sales in the capital. Finally, in 1889, Douglass accepted the post of American Minister to Haiti and Chargé d'Affaires for the Dominican Republic. He again resigned from this diplomatic post in 1891 and returned home. On February 20, 1895,

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1- Franklin and Moss, op. cit., p. 226.

2- Santo Domingo (or Hispaniola) was the name of the small Caribbean island occupied by the Dominican Republic to the east, and the Republic of Haiti to the west. For a clearer account about this issue, see Daniel Brantley, 'Black Diplomacy and Frederick Douglass' Caribbean Experiences, 1871 and 1889-1891: The Untold History,' *Phylon*, 3rd Quarterly, 1984, Vol. 45, No. 3, pp. 197-209. See also Merline Pitre, 'Frederick Douglass and American Diplomacy in the Caribbean,' *Journal of Black Studies*, June, 1983, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 457-475.

3- Franklin and Moss, op. cit., p. 236.

Frederick Douglass died in Washington, D. C., at the age of seventy-seven, after a massive heart attack.

For some historians, like Franck Schoell, Douglass's involvement in politics and the honours he received after the Civil War diverted him from his mission as an African American leader and spokesman for his race; for his words did not have the effect they used to have in the antebellum period.[(1)] Nevertheless, Douglass was a great nineteenth-century black leader who devoted his life to the betterment of the Blacks' conditions. His words affected and inspired generations of black people in the United States and elsewhere. His struggle to bring slavery to an end, his efforts to publicize the sufferings of the slaves and to rally the American and world public opinions against such an institution owed him the admiration and respect of his fellows.

- Booker Taliaferro Washington:

Nineteenth-century America saw the emergence of another prominent black leader, who exerted an outstanding impact on the post-bellum generations of Blacks, and won the admiration of many Whites. This brilliant figure was Booker Taliaferro Washington. He was born in slavery in a large plantation near Hale's Ford, in Franklin County, Virginia. As records of births of black people were not carefully reported at that time, Washington gives his birth year as

1- Franck L. Schoell, ***Histoire de la Race Noire aux Etats Unis: du 17ème Siècle à Nos Jours***, Paris, Payot, 1959, p. 115.

either 1858 or 1859.[1] His mother was a slave on the same plantation, and was employed as the cook for the owners. About his father he knew almost nothing, except that he was a white man. Unlike Douglass, Washington did not experience the hardships of slavery, because he was just four or five years when he became free, after President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

After freedom, Washington moved with his family (mother, brother, and sister) to Malden, West Virginia, to join his stepfather who had already found a job in a salt furnace there. Because of the family's dire poverty, nine-year old Washington was alternatively employed in salt furnaces and coal mines until about 1871. This affected his education, for his stepfather did not allow him to attend the school in Malden when it was first opened. Despite the great disappointment caused by such a decision, Washington's thirst for knowledge did not die out. His ambition to learn was fired when he saw "… a young colored man among a large number of colored people, reading a newspaper...."[2] His great determination convinced his stepfather to permit him to go to school half of the day. The condition was that he would get up very early each morning to do as much work as possible before going to school.

When he first entered the public school, Washington was embarrassed by the fact that he did not possess a surname like the

1- Booker T. Washington, **Booker T. Washington's Own Story of His Life and Work**, Naperville (Illinois), J. L. Nichols & Company, The Authentic Edition, 1915, p. 15.
2- Ibid., p. 23.

other pupils. When his teacher asked him about his full name, he told him 'Booker Washington,' a name he would bear until his death. After a sporadic education, which vacillated between school, tutorage, and self-teaching, Washington's firm resolution to get an education led him to the Hampton Institute in Virginia where he was enrolled in 1872. The Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute was founded in 1868 by Samuel Chapman Armstrong (1839-1893).[(1)] The institute was a vocational training school established to meet the Blacks' educational needs. Actually, Armstrong "…believed that through a system of industrial education a trained economically successful Black group would emerge which would be significant and would inspire the mass of Blacks to seek to better their conditions."[(2)]

The years that Booker T. Washington spent at the Hampton Institute had a deep impact on his life, and shaped his future conception of a better standard of living for the African Americans. He was strongly influenced by General Armstrong's stress on the merits of a practical and utilitarian education. He graduated in 1875 and returned to Malden, where he taught children and adults for two years. After that, he joined the staff of the Hampton Institute, where he served as housefather to a group of Indian students in night school,[(3)] until General Armstrong recommended him for the position of principal of the newly established 'Tuskegee Normal and Industrial

1- A Union general during the American Civil War who commanded the Ninth Regiment, an exclusively black troops corps

2- Booker T. Gardner, 'The Educational Contributions of Booker T. Washington,' *The Journal of Negro Education*, Autumn, 1975, Vol. 44, No. 4, p. 505.

3- John P. Flynn, 'Booker T. Washington: Uncle Tom or Wooden Horse,' *The Journal of Negro History*, July, 1969, Vol. 54, No. 3, p. 263.

Institute' in Tuskegee, Alabama. This institute, which he headed until his death in 1915, was destined to become Washington's greatest achievement with regard to the education of African Americans and the betterment of their conditions.

The Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute was opened on July 4, 1881, as the 'Tuskegee State Normal School,' with the aim of training black teachers. However, instead of taking existing curricula applied in other Normal schools, the first thing Washington did once in Tuskegee was to make a study of the conditions of black people in Alabama. He then designed an educational programme that was likely to meet their needs and improve thereby their conditions.[(1)]

The Tuskegee State Normal School had two small frame buildings and almost no material or financial resources. To expand the activities of the school and help the students support themselves, Washington made them perform various tasks, like clearing the grounds, erecting buildings, and raising foodstuffs for the boarding department and feed for the animals of the institution.[(2)] Thus, the word 'industrial' was added to the original name. Washington's great determination to help people of his race made of this institution an outstanding educational centre (which was elevated to university status in 1985).

1- Monroe N. Work, 'Booker T. Washington, Pioneer,' *The Journal of Social Forces*, January, 1925, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 310.

2- Allen W. Jones, 'The Role of Tuskegee Institute in the Education of Black Farmers,' *The Journal of Negro History*, April, 1975, Vol. 60, No. 2, p. 252.

Like Frederick Douglass, then, Washington advocated an industrial and vocational kind of education for the black people which, he believed, was the solution to the racial problem in the United States. His educational philosophy was based on the importance of relating education to economic needs and achievements. "Along with the idea of the dignity of labor," Work wrote, "Booker T. Washington also advocated that education should be made common, that is not only should it be placed within reach of all; but it should also have as subject matter the common things of life."[(1)] Besides, Washington considered that the former slaves had not been prepared to freedom, for they had not been shown how to achieve economic and social improvement and independence through labour, thrift and hard work. He, therefore, sought to inculcate such American middle-class values in the African Americans. In other words, he aimed at making the Blacks self-supporting, useful, reliable and competent citizens; and hence win the respect of the Whites. Accordingly, "… prejudice [against the black race] would diminish and the barriers of discrimination would fall."[(2)]

Tuskegee Institute was founded at a time when racial problems were increasingly intensifying in the United States, especially in the South. African Americans were constantly faced with racist acts on the part of Whites. Lynching was a widespread practice, especially by

1- Work, op. cit., p. 311.
2- Gardner, op. cit., p. 510.

members of the famous Ku Klux Klan;[1] disfranchisement became commonplace; and discrimination was a glaring phenomenon. The greatest part of the Southern black population was still living in poverty. Although agriculture was the dominant activity among the Blacks, they remained largely unskilled labourers. For this reason, Tuskegee Institute aimed, at the beginning, to train the students to be skilled agricultural labourers; and encouraged Blacks to own homes and lands, and to develop farms.[2] Nonetheless, as the number of students grew throughout the years, the programmes of the Institute soon diversified to include other subjects, such as brick-making, carpentry, printing, cabinet-making, wagon-building, harness-making, and shoe-making.[3] For Washington, before learning about such sophisticated subjects as mathematics, science, physics and the like, the African Americans had to be trained in the skills they needed in their everyday life. In this way, he argued, they would ameliorate their conditions, and achieve their progressive acceptance by and integration into the American society. Classical education was, then, unsuitable for them, he believed. Furthermore, Flynn argued that two main factors encouraged Washington to opt for a vocational type of education for the people of his race: the availability of important philanthropic funds in favour of such educational purposes, especially

1- A secret white organization founded in Tennessee, in 1866, to restore white supremacy in the South, and oppose social change and black emancipation brought about by the Civil War. It was responsible for whipping and executing many black people and their white supporters in night terrorist attacks.

2- Robert Russa Moton, 'The Scope and Aim of Tuskegee Institute,' *Journal of Educational Sociology*, November, 1933, Vol. 7, No. 3, Negro education, p. 152. Robert Moton (1867-1940) had been Principal of Tuskegee Institute from 1915 until his forced retirement in 1935 because of declining health.

3- Gardner, op. cit., p. 507.

from the North; and Washington's awareness of the needs and desires of the majority of the Southern black population, who wished to own land and property. He, therefore, sought to train a class of African Americans capable of owning and managing land, and equip them with the necessary skills to handle property.[1]

Well aware of the devastating effects of slavery on the black woman, and realising the decisive role she might play in the betterment of the whole black race; Washington paid her a special attention. Actually, slavery destroyed the very moral foundation of the slaves' family life. They could not raise 'normal' families, because the members of a slave family could be sold and separated at any moment. The slave woman ignored her elementary duties and responsibilities as a wife and a mother, which were generally transmitted from one generation to the next in African societies through special social ceremonies of initiation, during which not only women but also men were taught their future roles in society as wives and husbands. Moreover, "… often the last shred of morality and self-respect was torn from her [the salve woman] as she was made to yield herself in turn to her master, her master's sons, the overseer, and to any slave selected for his good breeding qualities."[2]

1- Flynn, op. cit., pp. 269-270.

2- Jennie B. Moton, 'The Tuskegee Program for the Training of Women,' *Journal of Educational Sociology*, November, 1933, Vol. 7, No. 3, p. 185. In this valuable article, Moton gives a detailed account of the women's training programme in the Tuskegee Institute.

To mend this dramatic damage, the founder of Tuskegee conceived a curriculum that would allow the female students to cope with their real life situations. In addition to literary and academic courses, the programme included dressmaking, laundering, cooking, soap-making, mattress-making, dairying, poultry raising, and flowers and vegetables growing. Furthermore, personal cleanliness, neatness, well-kept rooms, habits of work and study, courtesy, and cheerfulness were all taken into consideration in the evaluation of the women students.[1] Emphasis was put on the women's actual achievements rather than on the number of hours studied. This meant that a woman was evaluated according to whether she was able or not to perform a given task. The objective was not only to train black women how to fully master the accomplishment of the aforesaid activities, but also to be able to teach and diffuse their knowledge in their respective communities.

Unlike Frederick Douglass (and most of his black contemporaries), Washington did not seek racial equality, nor did he consider the Blacks' civil rights. "Washington believed that African Americans should be discouraged from exercising their right to vote, run for public office, or pursue equality in the realm of civil rights,"[2] wrote Gregory Mixon. Actually, Washington assuaged the Southern Whites' fears of the black freedmen by accepting segregation as a system that was likely to make it possible for black and white people

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1- Ibid., pp. 185-186.

2- G. Mixon, 'Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine: Black Leadership in the Nineteenth Century,' *The Journal of Negro History*, Autumn, 1994, Vol. 79, No. 4, p. 369.

to live peacefully within the same society. He expressed these views in a momentous speech (known in history as the 'Atlanta Compromise'), delivered on September 18, 1895, at the opening of an exposition held in Atlanta, Georgia. Among other things, Washington stated: "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." These ideas rejoiced white Northerners who considered Washington's educational programme as a reliable solution to the African Americans' problems and the racial issue in the United States. On the other hand, white Southerners approved Washington's acceptance of racial segregation and disinterest in political matters.

In fact, the 'Wizard of Tuskegee' did not follow his nineteenth-century predecessors' methods of protest against the Blacks' conditions. He rejected confrontation with white America, and adopted instead an accommodative vision to the Whites' supremacy. He was well aware that second-class citizenship and subordination were a reality that African-Americans were permanently living throughout the post-Civil War years. Mixon stated that:

> **His [Washington's] outlook was pointed toward the approaching twentieth century and an acceptance of racial restrictions being institutionalized in the late nineteenth century…. He was part of an African American leadership that embraced the idea that the race**

needed to crawl before it attained full citizenship.[1]

He believed that in order to define its role and future status in the United States, an economically successful African American class needed cooperation rather than confrontation with the White race.

Washington's efforts vis-à-vis his race were not confined solely to African Americans. Indeed, and with regard to Africa, Washington tried to export his philosophy of self-help and industrial education to continental Africans, believing that it would help them improve themselves and their societies. He showed a great interest in West Africa's economic development, considered the establishment of his educational programmes among the Blacks in South Africa, and expounded the possibilities of setting up Tuskegee-type schools throughout the African continent. In addition, Washington had contact with and strongly influenced some African leaders, who either visited the Tuskegee Institute or corresponded with him to seek advice, support, and guidance.[2]

Conclusion:

In comparison to other regions of the New World, the institution of slavery in the United States was known for its declared

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1- Ibid., pp. 376-377.

2- For an insightful account of Washington's projects and activities in Africa, his relationships with some African leaders, and the impact of his educational programmes on continental Africans, see W. Manning Marable, 'Booker T. Washington and African Nationalism,' *Phylon*, 4th Quarterly, 1974, Vol. 35, No. 4, pp. 398-406.

inhuman treatment of slaves. As a result, the slaves expressed their discontent with their lot and resisted their masters in different ways, as has already been showed. However, the aim was the same: to break the shackles of bondage and put an end to the debased status under which they had been forced to live for generations. This struggle gave birth to a number of black leaders, many of whom saw it their duty to better the conditions of their enslaved brothers.

Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington stand among the most brilliant African American figures, because they spent their lives trying to improve the conditions of their brothers in every possible way. Their careers provide us with valuable lessons in patience, perseverance, and devotion. They proved that enough determination can turn obstacles into ambitions and difficulties into encouragements. Besides, they showed that education is (and will always be) the key of success of individuals and societies. Therefore, ‘to learn or not to learn’ determines the position and fate of people and nations.

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