

**SOCIAL CRITICISM IN EDGAR LAWRENCE DOCTOROW'S
*RAGTIME***



A Thesis

*Submitted to Faculty of Cultural Science Hasanuddin University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain a Sarjana Degree in English Literature
Study Program*

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ENGLISH LITERATURE STUDY PROGRAM

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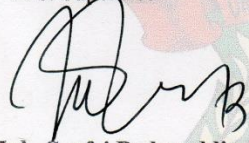
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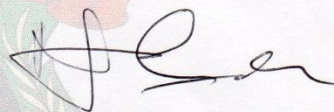
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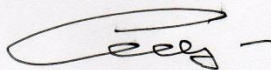


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SOCIAL CRITICISM IN EDGAR LAWRENCE DOCTOROW'S
RAGTIME

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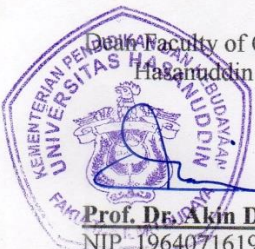
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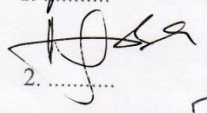

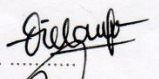
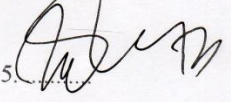
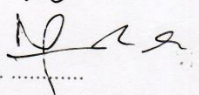

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Today, December 28th, 2020 the Board of Thesis Examination has kindly approved a thesis by ELINDA GAYATRI (No. F21116320) entitled, **SOCIAL CRITICISM IN EDGAR LAWRENCE DOCTOROW'S *RAGTIME***, submitted in fulfillment of one of the requirements of undergraduate thesis examination to obtain Sarjana Sastra (S.S.) Degree at the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University.

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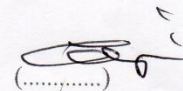
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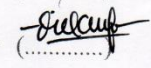
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(Elinda Gayatri)

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The writer realizes that this thesis is still far from perfect. Therefore, all suggestion and criticism for perfection will be most welcome and receive with gratitude. The writer hopes that this thesis will helpfull for all reader who are interested in analyzing the similar topic.

Makassar, 30 November 2020

The Writer

ABSTRACT

ELINDA GAYATRI. *Social Criticism in Edgar Lawrence Doctorow's **Ragtime***
supervised by **Muh. Syafri Badaruddin** and **Nadira Mahaseng**.

The purpose of this research is to analyze social criticism by looking at the social conditions in America in the early twentieth century which are reflected in *Ragtime* and the problems experienced by the characters in the story.

This research uses genetic structuralism in analyzing *Ragtime's* novel. This approach emphasizes three aspects, namely the intrinsic elements of the novel, the social conditions of American society in the early twentieth century (extrinsic), and social criticism of the conditions of American society as reflected in the novel.

The results of this study indicate that there are several criticisms conveyed by the author of the social conditions that occurred in America at that time. The criticism conveyed by the author in the story is about family disorganization that occurs in upper class families due to the failure of family members in carrying out their duties as family members. Another criticism also conveyed was the class struggle carried out by the lower classes in order to achieve a better life in the capitalist system. And finally, the author also criticizes the racism that occurred in America in the early twentieth century which caused riots because the demands of justice from black people were not fulfilled.

Keyword: Ragtime, social criticism, family disorganization, class struggle, racism.

ABSTRAK

ELINDA GAYATRI. *Social Criticism in Edgar Lawrence Doctorow's **Ragtime*** dibimbing oleh **Muh. Syafri Badaruddin** dan **Nadira Mahaseng**.

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis kritik sosial dengan melihat kondisi sosial di Amerika pada awal abad ke dua puluh yang direfleksikan dalam novel *Ragtime* dan masalah-masalah yang dialami oleh para tokoh dalam cerita tersebut.

Penelitian ini menggunakan strukturalisme genetik dalam menganalisis novel *Ragtime*. Pendekatan tersebut menekankan pada tiga aspek yakni unsur intrinsik novel, kondisi sosial masyarakat Amerika pada awal abad ke dua puluh (ekstrinsik), serta kritik sosial mengenai kondisi masyarakat Amerika yang direfleksikan dalam novel.

Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada beberapa kritik yang disampaikan pengarang terhadap kondisi sosial yang terjadi di Amerika pada saat itu. Kritik yang disampaikan pengarang dalam cerita yaitu tentang disorganisasi keluarga yang terjadi pada keluarga kelas atas karena adanya kegagalan anggota keluarga dalam menjalankan tugasnya sebagai anggota keluarga. Kritik lain yang juga disampaikan adalah adanya perjuangan kelas yang dilakukan oleh kelas bawah agar bisa mencapai kehidupan yang lebih baik lagi dalam sistem kapitalis. Dan yang terakhir, pengarang juga mengkritik rasisme yang terjadi di Amerika pada awal abad ke dua puluh yang menyebabkan kerusuhan karena tuntutan keadilan dari orang kulit hitam tidak dipenuhi.

Kata Kunci: Ragtime, kritik sosial, disorganisasi keluarga, perjuangan kelas, rasisme.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of background of study, identification of problems, scope of problem, research questions, objective of study, significance of study and sequence of chapter.

1.1 Background

Humans are social creatures that interdependent with others. Humans live to help each other. They can survive, share each other, feeling love, and are even able to create something and find solutions for an easier and happier life. However, life is not only about good things, many bad things also happen as long as humans live, these bad things are usually problems in social life. Humans as social beings will always be faced with various social problems in their lives. Social problems arise because of social conditions that are not following existing regulations. Social problems in every human society are different from one another because of the different levels of cultural development, the characteristics of a society, as well as the environment.

There are various social problems in life. Social problems include legal, educational, political, religious, and other topics (Roucek, in Astawa 2017:54). Typically, social problems can disturb the stability of social conditions in society. This is related to human expectations that are incompatible with the social realities that occur in society. The incompatibility of reality with expectations tends to cause dissatisfaction and this sense of dissatisfaction has led to social criticism expressed through various media.

Literature is one of a medium for conveying about social criticism. If literary works are used as a medium to convey criticism of social realities that do not side with the interests of society, then literary works actually have a role as social control. This control is the form of a response to various irregularities that occur in society. It is hoped that messages conveyed through literary works will be more effective to receive. In their role in conveying messages, literary works often criticize the social conditions of society. Social criticism is a response aimed at something happening in society. Social criticism arises when there is dissatisfaction with the realities of life that are considered incompatible.

Literature as an oral or written work is the product of the writers who use language as their medium's knowledge, emotional communication, or imagination. In the midst of culture, literary work is born out of the author's imagination and a representation of the social and cultural. Literary works can therefore be interpreted as an illustration of everyday life within society. The novel is one of the literary works. A novel is a work of fiction in the form of long prose which has intrinsic and extrinsic elements. A novel is a form of literary work in which these are cultural, social, educational, and moral values in it as the reflection of reality in human life.

One of the authors who voiced social criticism in his work is Edgar Lawrence Doctorow in the novel entitled *Ragtime*. Edgar Lawrence Doctorow was born in New York, on January 6, 1931, and raised in the Bronx. *Ragtime* was published in 1975. This novel of historical fiction is mainly set in the New York City area from 1902 until 1917.

Ragtime tells the interrelated story between three families living around New York City at the turn of the 20th century who had different social classes. Clearly told about the struggle of the lower classes struggle, others with upper-class families or the bourgeoisie, they have special problems. These three families are related to each other in the novel. At the beginning of the 20th century, there was a big change, namely modernization. Many factories were already using machines, the lifestyle had also changed. Because of this, the mindset of humans in survival has also changed.

Ragtime describes the various social problems that occurred in America during the Progressive Era. These social problems are in the form of social class differences, racism, crimes that occur because of injustice against workers so that at that time groups calling themselves socialists also form. The social criticism contained in the novel has more or less provided knowledge to the public about things that happened at that time.

Based on the explanation, the writer wants to analyze *Social Criticisms In Edgar Lawrence Doctorow's Ragtime*. Through this analysis, the writer will know the social condition in the Progressive Era through the novel, and the social criticism as reflected in Edgar Lawrence Doctorow's *Ragtime*.

1.2 Identification of Problem

After reading the novel, there are some problems that occur in the novel of *Ragtime* novel, as follow:

1. The conflict of the main character.
2. The social condition of America in Progressive Era

3. The social life of imigran.
4. The social problems
5. The struggle of the character.

1.3 Scope of Problem

Based on the identification of problem above, the writer determine to identify the social condition that reflected on the novel. The emphasis of the writing is on the social criticism reflected in *Ragtime*.

1.4 Research Questions

After limiting the scope of the problem, the writer formulated the writer questions into two questions as follows:

1. What are the social condition reflected in *Ragtime* novel?
2. How social criticism are presented in the novel by the author?

1.5 Objective of Study

Based on the writer questions, the objectives of the study are :

1. To describe the social condition reflected in *Ragtime* novel.
2. To provide a description how criticism are reflected in *Ragtime* novel.

1.6 Significance of Study

After conducting this study, the writer hopes this research will be helpfully for:

1. Theoretical purposes; the further writer will have a reference after this research is successfully conducted.
2. Practical purposes; the writer will become an inspiration for many people in Indonesia to know more about social criticism.

1.7 Sequence of Chapter

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter one is introduction, which includes seven subparts, and they are the background of the study, identification of problem, scope of problem, research question, objective of study, sequence of study, and significance of study. Chapter two is literature review, that consist of three subparts, and they are previous study, the theory of genetic structuralism approach in literature, and the theory of social criticism. Chapter three is methodology, including four subparts, namely instrument of research, method of collecting data, method of analysis, and research procedure. Chapter four is finding and disscussion that conclude the data presentation and description of research that consist of data analysis. Chapter five is conclusion that contains the conclusion about the research and significant of the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter consist of theoritical discussion which include of previous study, genetic structuralism, and social criticism theory.

2.1 Previous Study

Ragtime (1975) is a novel by E.L Doctorow which contains many aspects that are interesting to be studied. Based on a search in the Hasanuddin University library, the writer found the research that related in this study to be investigated. Based on that, there are three studies related to the research.

The first research, Indrayana Said (2011) has done a study entitled *Social Criticism in Jacob's Novel "Incident in The Life of A Slave Girl"*. She used genetic structuralism to analyze the social criticism used the intrinsic element of the novel and extrinsic element, including the social system in American society at the time the novel was made. She found the existence in terms of social problems in the 19th century such as the slavery system and discrimination of Black Woman which has been captured by the novel.

The second research, Eko Ajitirta (2015), was a student of the English Department, Faculty of Letters Hasanuddin University. His research entitled *The Social Criticism in Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin*. He used genetic structuralism to addresses the social condition in America before the civil war. The result of the analysis demonstrated that slavery has merely seen as a natural condition in America at the time.

The third research by Nasiruddin (2018) which written *Social Criticism in Lee's Go Set A Watchman*. He used the genetic structuralism approach and descriptive method. The results of the analysis indicate that there are some discriminations which is caused by racist acts in the novel which are reflected as a social condition in the Southern America in 1950s such as voting right revocation, racial segregation, and so on.

The similarity of the previous study in this research is analyzing social criticism using the genetic structuralism approach. The difference between the previous study with this research is the novel as a data source. In this research, the writer analyzes more deeply. The writer focuses on social conditions and social criticism using genetic structuralism.

2.2 Genetic Structuralism

Theory is needed to be used in a research. Literary theory will help the analysis, interpretation, and appraisal that is right in order to be responsible to the reader or the public about the importance of a literary work. With existing theories, literary research is able to uncover the phenomena behind literary objects as expressions of human life.

Theoretical reference used in this research is Genetic Structuralism Approach by Lucien Goldmann. According to Goldmann (in Endraswara 2013:57) genetic structuralism is an approach that sees a literary works of structure, social view group of authors, and external conditions author to find worldview.

According to Endraswara (2013:55), genetic structuralism approach views literary works from two elements, namely intrinsic and extrinsic. The study begins with a study of the intrinsic structure as the basic data, then the research will connect various elements with the reality of society. The work is seen as a reflection of the times, which can reveal social, cultural, political, economic aspects and so on. The important events of his time will be linked directly with the intrinsic elements of literary works.

Genetic structuralism essentially aims to find the views of the author in literary works. This approach exist because of the dissatisfaction with structural studies that were antihistorical and only focused on intrinsic elements, so it was felt necessary to study the historical setting when the literature was created. Hence, in the genetic structuralism, elements studied include intrinsic and extrinsic elements of literary works.

According to Faruk (2014:159) genetic structuralism is a combination of structuralism and Marxism. Genetic-structuralism considers everything in this universe as a structure, including the literature. Therefore, genetic structural efforts to understand literary work focus on finding the structure of literary works. However, for genetic structuralism, all activities and results of human activity not only have structure, but also have meaning. Thus, understanding literary works does not stop at gaining knowledge about its structure, but must arrive at knowledge of its meaning. To understand this, genetic structuralism used marxism.

A simple way to analyze literature with genetic structuralism can be formulated into three steps. First, analyze the intrinsic elements of a literary works as the basis data. Second, analyze the background of the author. Third, analyze the socio-cultural and historical background of the place where the literature is created by the author.

The genetic structuralism consists of the intrinsic and extrinsic element studies which is described as below :

2.2.1. Intrinsic Elements

The intrinsic elements consist of :

a. Character and Characterization

The storyline in the novel is carried out by the character of the story. Characters are fictional individuals who experience events or act in various story events (Sudjiman, 1991:16). Characters are generally in the form of humans, but can also take the form of animals or objects that are imagined.

According to Abram (in Nurgiyantoro 2000:165) that the characters in the story are people who are shown in a work of fiction, interpreted by readers to have moral qualities that are expressed in speech and in action.

In literature, characters are inseparable with characterizations. Characterization is the author's way of describing and developing the characters in the story (Kosasih, 2003:256). Characterizations is a method of the writer creates each character, so that the story is not the name of creating a character, but the role and function of the role itself.

b. Setting

Setting is one of intrinsic element of the literature related to place, time and circumstances that give rise to events in a story. Abram (in Nurgiyantoro 2000:216) stated that the setting in a literary work shows attention to the general place and historical period of the events that took place.

c. Plot

Plot is a series of events that are logically and chronologically arranged, interrelated, and which are caused or experienced by the characters in a story in a literary work. Plot is a series of stories that are formed by the stages of events that weave a story that is presented by the actors in a story (Aminuddin, 2002: 83). Plot is a story that contains a sequence of events, but each event is only connected causally, one event is caused or causes another event to occur.

d. Theme

Stanton and Kenny (in Nurgiyantoro, 2000: 67) stated that theme is the meaning contained in a story. Authors in writing literature usually tell stories but should say something to their readers. A good literary work must be meaningful. According to Aminuddin (2002: 91) theme is an idea that underlies a story so that it also acts as a starting point for the author in describing the work of fiction he creates. The meaning of a novel story is not clearly stated by the author but is integrated with the elements of the novel that the reader must interpret

2.2.2. Extrinsic Elements

According to Nurgiyanto (200:24), extrinsic elements are elements that are outside literary works, but indirectly affect the building or organism system of

literary works. These extrinsic elements include the subjectivity of individual authors who have attitudes, beliefs, and a view of life which will all influence the literary works he writes.

2.3 Social Criticism

Social criticism is an effort made by someone to provide an assessment of social problems or realities that occur in society. The social reality that is criticized is a social reality that is considered deviant in a society within a certain period of time. This assessment can be expressed by observing, stating mistakes, giving consideration, and satire to determine the true value of a society through understanding, interpreting, from the facts that can be justified.

According to Damono (1979:25) social criticism in literature is no longer only about the relationship between the poor and the rich, poverty and luxury. Social criticism includes all kinds of social problems that exist in society, human relations with the environment, social groups, authorities and existing institutions.

Social criticism is a literary interpretation in social aspects of society. Through literature, social criticism which has an indirect effect on society can be conveyed openly (Wilson, 1921: 21). That is, people have the freedom to judge or criticize, agree or not, against social criticism conveyed in literary works. The decision to accept or reject social criticism is based on the interpretation of each individual in society, after which the community will react to social criticism conveyed by literary works. That is what is meant by social criticism in literature which has an indirect effect.

2.3.1 Family Disorganization

Family is the smallest part of society which consists of members who have their respective roles. Family is an organization that has several functions. If there are functions that not carried out properly between family members, there will be family disorganization.

According to Soekanto (1990:44), family disorganization is the division of the family as a unit, because its members fail to fulfill their obligations according to their social roles. Family disorganization can occur in small communities, namely the family, when social conflicts occur on the basis of different views or economic factors.

2.3.2 Struggle of Classes

Social class is a concept that determines human social position in terms of property ownership which cannot be separated from the economic concept. Class divisions have been attributed to productive relations, market access, a status hierarchy, or culture. Often it seems that they are hard to tell apart from other forms of division: racial, gendered, regional, ethnic, religious, and so forth. According to Marx in Suseno (2001:113), in every society there are classes that rule and are controlled. Marx spoke of the upper and lower classes. According to Marx in Martha's (2011:20), class struggle is the continual conflict between the capitalist and working classes for economic and political power. It implies that class conflict arises because of the inequality that exists in a society, such as class differentiation, and it gives the negative effects on the survival of the population,

particularly the lower class, and provides the dominant class with opportunities to do whatever they want to oppress or exploit the lower class.

2.3.3 Racism

Racism, racial discrimination, prejudice and various attitudes of intolerance still thrive in parts of the world. According to Samovar (2010:211) racism is created due to cultural, economic, psychological and historical factors. Actions of racism by degrading certain groups by denying their identity, thereby destroying a culture in a society in an area by creating political, social, and economic group divisions within a country. It means that racism can be interpreted as attacks on attitudes, tendencies, statements and actions that favor or are hostile to community groups, especially because of racial identity.

2.3.4. Progressive Era

The period of US history from 1900-1920 is usually referred to as the Progressive Era, an era of social and political reforms aimed at making progress towards a better society. Reformers of Progressive Era trying to harness the power of the federal government to eliminate unethical and unfair business practices, reduce corruption and counter the negative social effects of industrialization. During the Progressive Era, protection for workers and consumers who were, and women finally got the right to vote. During the Progressive Era (1900–1920), the country grappled with the problems caused by industrialization and urbanization. Progressivism, an urban, middle-class reform movement, supported the government taking a greater role in addressing such issues as the control of big business and the welfare of the public. Many of its accomplishments were based

on efforts of earlier reform movements. Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft (Republicans) and Woodrow Wilson (Democrat) all claimed the Progressive mantle. The need for reform was highlighted by a group of journalists and writers known as the muckrakers, who made Americans aware of the serious failings in society and built public support for change.

During the Progressive Era, there are two important objectives of Progressivism were giving the public the opportunity to participate more directly in the political process and limiting the power of big city bosses. Progressives hoped to accomplish these goals through a variety of political reforms. Meanwhile, making the national government more responsive to the people was expressed through the Seventeenth Amendment (1913) which provided for the direct election of senators rather than their selection by the state legislatures. State legislatures were also increasingly concerned about the welfare of their citizens. In 1902, Maryland became the first state to offer workmen's compensation, payments to workers or their families for disability or death suffered on the job. Some protection was offered to federal employees under the 1916 Workmen's Compensation Act.

The National Child Labor Committee coordinated a movement to address the exploitation of children. One of the most effective weapons in its campaign were photographs taken by Lewis Hine that showed boys and girls as young as eight years of age working with dangerous equipment in coal mines and factories. By 1910, many states had enacted legislation establishing the minimum legal age when children could work (between 12 and 16) and the maximum length of a

workday or week. It is not clear, however, what had more of an impact on child labor — these laws or the state compulsory school attendance requirements that were becoming more widespread at the same time.

Progressives also wanted to limit how long women could work, arguing that long hours in a factory were detrimental to a woman's well being. The Supreme Court agreed in *Muller v. Oregon* (1908) and upheld a state law that limited women laundry workers to working no more than ten hours a day. The case was significant because the Court accepted the Brandeis Brief a wealth of sociological, economic, and medical evidence submitted by attorney Louis Brandeis demonstrating that the health of the women was impaired by long factory hours. Sometimes, however, change came only as a result of tragedy. On March 25, 1911, almost 150 people, mostly Italian and Jewish immigrant women, died in the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire. In response, the New York State legislature established a 54-hour workweek for women, prohibited children under 14 from working, and imposed new building regulations and factory safety rules. Although the cause of equal opportunity in the workplace was pushed back by the Progressive's argument that women were weaker than men, women finally did get the right to vote.

“A state woman-suffrage referendum lost in 1896, but the leaders bounced back to form alliances with labor leaders and male progressives, built on a shared commitment to “good government” and opposition to municipal corruption. But while joining forces with male reformers, the woman-suffrage strategists insisted on the unique role of “organized womanhood” in building a better society. Success came in 1911 when California voters approved woman suffrage.” (Boyer, P. S. 2006:668)

A number of western states had already granted suffrage (enfranchisement, or voting privileges) called on the remaining states to do the same. While the National American Woman Suffrage Association relied on patient organizing, militant groups adopted more direct tactics. The Congressional Union, for example, was committed to gaining the vote through the passage of a constitutional amendment rather than securing it piecemeal state by state, and the National Woman's Party used picket lines, marches, and hunger strikes to build momentum for their cause. Women's participation in World War I, through service in the military and work in defense plants and the Red Cross, heightened the momentum. The Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which gave women the right to vote, passed the Senate in June 1919 and was ratified by the states in August 1920, more than 70 years after the first women's rights meeting in Seneca Falls, New York.

From 1891 to 1900, 4 million immigrants entered the United States, from 1901 to 1910 that number increased to 8.8 million. In 1910, three-fourths of New York City's population was either immigrants or first generation Americans. Unlike earlier immigrants, the immigrant populations of the progressive era came primarily from non-English speaking European countries. Large numbers came from Italy, Russia and Poland and often had a difficult time adjusting to American life. Many faced extreme poverty and discrimination. Most settled in urban centers where jobs were available and ended up taking work that other Americans would not. They became a cheap source of labor for the country's wealthy robber barons and played a key role in the labor movement. Settlement houses founded

by a new generation of educated women became important education and community centers for many poor urban immigrants.

Progressivism arose at a time of transition in African-American life, and also of intense racism in white America. These realities are crucial to a full understanding of the movement. By 1910, over 20 percent of the black population lived in cities, mostly in the South, but many in the North as well. Black men in the cities took jobs in factories, docks, and railroads or became carpenters, plasterers, or bricklayers. Many black women became domestic servants, seamstresses, or workers in laundries and tobacco factories. By 1910, 54 percent of America's black women held jobs.

“Across the South, legally enforced racism peaked in the early twentieth century. Local “Jim Crow” laws segregated streetcars, schools, parks, and even cemeteries. The facilities for blacks, including the schools, were invariably inferior. Many southern cities imposed residential segregation by law until the Supreme Court restricted it in 1917. Most labor unions excluded black workers. Disfranchised and trapped in a cycle of poverty, poor education, and discrimination, southern blacks faced bleak prospects.” (Boyer, P. S. 2006:665)

Fleeing such conditions, two hundred thousand blacks migrated north between 1890 and 1910. They found conditions only slightly better than in the South. In northern cities, too, racism worsened after 1890 as hard times and immigration heightened social tensions. Blacks lived in run-down “colored districts,” attended dilapidated schools, and worked at the lowest-paying jobs.

“Smoldering racism sometimes exploded in violence. Antiblack rioters in Atlanta in 1906 murdered twenty-five blacks and burned many black homes. From 1900 to 1920 an average of about seventy-five lynchings occurred yearly. Some lynch mobs used trumped-up charges to justify the murder of blacks whose assertive behavior or economic aspirations angered whites. Some lynchings involved incredible sadism, with large

crowds on hand, victims' bodies mutilated, and graphic photo postcards sold later. Authorities rarely intervened. At a 1916 lynching in Texas, the mayor warned the mob to protect the hanging tree, since it was on city property." (Boyer, P. S. 2006:665-666)

The condition of that era was not without its victories, Booker T. Washington, became a prominent and influential African-American leader and founded the Tuskegee Institute, which became Tuskegee University, in 1881 to educate blacks. The Niagara Movement led by W.E.B. DuBois and William Monroe Trotter resulted in the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909. This new organization called for sustained activism, including legal challenges, to achieve political equality for blacks and full integration into American life. Attracting the urban black middle class, the NAACP by 1914 had six thousand members in fifty branches.