THEME 9: SOCIETY & SOCIAL CONSCIENCE, b-Social and Humanitarian Movements

Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTME... OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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SEE	INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO	O COMPLETE NATION	IAL REGISTER FORMS	
	TYPE ALL ENTRIES C			
1 NAME				
HISTORIC T. Thomas Fo	ortune House			
AND/OR COMMON				
	louse/Maple Hall			
2 LOCATION	V			
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94 West Berg	len ridce		NOT FOR PUBLICATION CONGRESSIONAL DISTR	CT
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3 CLASSIFIC	CATION			
CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRES	ENT USE
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X_BUILDING(S)	X_PRIVATE	UNOCCUPIED	COMMERCIAL	PARK
STRUCTURE SITE	BOTH PUBLIC ACQUISITION	WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	X PRIVATE RESIDENCE
OBJECT	IN PROCESS	ACCESSIBLEYES: RESTRICTED	ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT	RELIGIOUS
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CONDITION

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The T. Thomas Fortune House's original structure was a two story "L" shaped building with an unfinished attic. The first floor contained a living room, dining room, kitchen and a rear storage room. The second floor housed three bed rooms. In 1917 the two story structure was enlarged to provide two additional bed rooms, a larger kitchen and a larger family dining room. The previous dining room was converted into the living room while the living room became a sitting room. In 1918 a one story bakery was added.

This structure was constructed between 1860 and 1885. It is a perfect example of "Picturesque Eclecticism" the high Victorian age which borrowed and placed details from any and every style on the same building. The building demonstrates eye catching patterns, and picturesque massing. It has its ancestry from the Italinate Villa, possessing decorative detail more prolific and less disciplined. The first floor of the structure contains two marble faced fireplaces. A typical building of this period, it possessed forms of vaguely medieval, vaguely classical, vaguely Baroque, and Rococo derivations heaped together to provide a complexity of moods.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

than 300 editorials.

	ES T. Thomas Fortune (1	_INVENTION		Afro-American History
X .1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	XPOLITICS/GOVERNMENT	XOTHER (SPECIFY)
<u>X</u> 1800-1899	COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPORTATION
1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER
1600-1699	ARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	XSOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	X LITERATURE	SCULPTURE
1400-1499	ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	LAW	SCIENCE
PREHISTORIC	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION
PERIOD	Ar	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CF	TECK AND JUSTIFT BELOW	

T. Thomas Fortune, crusading journalist, fearless, able and most sarcastic of black journalists, waged a relentless fight in the press against corrupt politicans and those who denied the Afro-American his full rights of citizenship. Owner and editor of three newspapers: the New York Globe, the New York Freeman, and the New York Age, T. Thomas Fortune provided a national forum for the Afro-American people of the United States. He was a campaigner and initiator for industrial and academic education; a staunch supporter of equality for women; appointed Special Immigrant Agent of the Treasury Department to study race and trade conditions in the Philippines; and author of over twenty books and articles, and more

The life of T. Thomas Fortune spanned several significant periods in American history. His seventy-two years included the experiences of slavery, Reconstruction, "the Nadir," and the Harlem Renaissance. In varying degrees, these phenomena influenced and determined the direction of Fortune's life and the realization of his identity as an "Afro-American."

BIOGRAPHY

Timothy Thomas Fortune was born a slave in Marianna, Florida on October 3, 1856. His father, Emanuel, had been taught the rudiments of reading and writing as well as the trade of shoemaking and tanning, two factors which gave him an advantage over other freedmen during the post-Civil War years. After the war Emanuel Fortune became active in Reconstruction politics, however in the closing years of Reconstruction Fortune had become one of the Republicans on the list of those to be purged by the Conservative whites. He escaped with his life, losing his home and profitable farm and he and his family were forced to emigrate to Jacksonville, Florida to start life a new. These years left untold scars upon young Timothy's life and the lives of his family, for his mother Sarah Jane died shortly thereafter.

The young Fortune obtained his education in Florida through a variety of avenues both formal and informal. While in Marianna and Jacksonville, he attended Freedmen's Bureau schools and picked up a knowledge of the printer's trade from observation in the office of the Marianna Courier. This printing shop was the first of several in which T. Thomas Fortune worked and learned the trade.

Fortune, T. Thomas. "Afro-Am	nerican Notes."	The New York	Sun, 11 August, 1	895.
"Afro-American W	omen." The N	ew York Sun, 5	July, 1896.	
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At the age of thirteen he began his political apprenticeship in Tallahassee, Florida where he was a page in the State Senate and learned first-hand about political corruption and the exploitation of blacks by whites in politics. Fortune's distrust of political parties and his attitude toward race relations were influenced greatly by his teen years in the State Capital.

Fortune left Florida at the age of nineteen and entered Howard University in 1876. According to his biographer, Emma Lou Thornbrough, the years at Howard University and in Washington, D.C. broadened his horizons and influenced his later writings.

The 1870s were years of testing and searching for future goals in the life of T. Thomas Fortune. He married an old sweetheart, Carrie Smiley, and they lived for a while in Washington where Fortune sought political opportunities. Finally, with the birth of the new decade, Fortune decided to enter the field of journalism as a profession. While in Washington he met the editor of the People's Advocate, John Wesley Cromwell, for whom he worked and was influenced in 1881 to begin The New York Globe, his first newspaper. Thus, at the age of twenty-four, Fortune launched a dynamic career as a journalist, spokesman, and leader that was to last for over twenty years.

Fortune's tenure of nearly uninterrupted editorship lasted from 1881 to 1907. His newspapers included: The New York Globe, The New York Freeman, and The New York Age. Throughout this period as Fortune was developing his capabilities as a black journalist, his newspapers were widely read by both blacks and whites in the North and South.

The aim of the Globe was to provide a national forum for the Afro-American people of the United States. Like other black newspapers, the Globe was barred from membership in the Associated Press. This problem prompted Fortune's former employer, John Cromwell, to call a convention of black editors and publishers in Louisville in order to establish the Colored Press Association, which proved beneficial to Fortune's reaching his apex as a racial spokesman and leader. I

The <u>Globe's</u> editorials attacked the white press for either neglecting or persecuting blacks, and admonished Republicans for abandoning the race. It's pages encouraged blacks to become politically independent in light of Republican party neglect. As a result of his attacks upon Republicans, black party members withdrew their financial support, and by November of 1884, the <u>Globe</u> was out of business.

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During the 1880s and 1890s the issues that preoccupied Fortune were racial uplift and inter-racial relations. During the last few months of his editorship of the Globe, Fortune wrote his book, Black and White, which appeared in 1884. The book dealt with two themes: the condition of the race, and the unification of poor whites and poor blacks. Most of his observations about race relations and his solutions to the problem created by racism in America had been forumulated throughout the ten years prior to the publication of the book. In his work, Fortune commented upon several issues which he had editorialized about in the Globe. He assailed not only the white press, but white historians for distorting the images of blacks, Indians, and women. He indicted the federal government and the Supreme Court for refusing to enforce the rights of blacks. In 1883, Fortune had indicted the Supreme Court for declaring the Civil Rights Act of 1875 invalid. In a Globe editorial he advised blacks to protect themselves if the government refused to do so. His militancy stimulated critical responses from the white southern press and some black papers such as the Cincinnati Afro-American.² Fortune went on to describe the phenomenon of racism which he believed was not only caused but perpetuated by capitalism. He commented, "To tell a man he is free when he has neither money nor the opportunity to make it, is simply to mock him."³ Fortune had maintained throughout the early 1880s that power resided with the group that owned the land. In later years, Booker T. Washington would express a similar ideology, however, Fortune was more radical in his expression. He also appealed to the race to be thrifty and industrious. Fortune assailed the concentration of wealth among capitalists who he claimed exploited all of the poor. Although poor blacks and poor whites in the South had a common enemy, Fortune realized that racism prevented them from uniting against it. Despite his pessimism concerning race relations, he predicted that the future struggle in the South would be between capitalists and laborers, landlords and tenants, rather than between whites and blacks.

One month after closing the Globe Fortune published the New York Freeman which he exclusively owned. The aim of the Freeman was similar to that of the Globe. Fortune announced that it was published soley for blacks, owned and operated by blacks, and free of party politics. However, by 1886, Fortune was forced to enter into a financial agreement with whites because of an alleged lack of support from the black community. Nevertheless, outstanding black journalists such as John E. Bruce of New York, whose pen name was Bruce Grit; Gertrude Mossell of Philadelphia; and the young Ida B. Wells of Memphis, whose pen name was Iola, contributed articles to the Freeman. The paper was not a financial success and in 1887 Fortune discontinued the editorship of it in order to undertake free-lance writing. Jerome B. Peterson edited the paper and Fortune's



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younger brother, Emanuel, became the business manager. The name of the paper was changed to the New York Age and the new editor announced that it would support Republican politics. Perhaps Fortune realized that total alienation of the Republican party could bring financial disaster, especially since he was campaigning for the Democratic presidential hopeful Grover Cleveland.

After the death of his brother, Fortune returned to edit the Age. Grover Cleveland died shortly afterward and so had Fortune's hope for blacks in the Democratic party. By 1889, he renounced the party while still speaking critically of the Republicans. As a result of his changing political loyalty, many blacks distrusted his political acumen; however, his views on race issues remained consistent, militant and impressive. Consequently, many black leaders responded to his call for the National Afro-American League in 1887.

The League worked against the political and civil suppression of the black man's rights in the South; fought inequalities in education and the prison system; and attacked discrimination in public accommodations nationwide. Although Fortune's tone was militant, he urged the use of peaceful methods. Afro-American leadership responded positively in the press and in organizational meetings. On the other hand, the white southern press denounced the idea as a vehicle for perpetuating racial tension. Despite the original enthusiasm, the League failed to make the impact that Fortune hoped for on a national level, although, there were successes on local levels. The lack of support from national leaders such as Frederick Douglass and John Langston was a contributing factor, but inadequate financial support was the major cause of the League's failure.

Despite Fortune's early predictions, by 1900, he felt that public opinion had grown more anti-black than it had been during Reconstruction. Once again, he blamed the South and the Supreme Court. Abandoning his earlier hopes of a black-white alliance Fortune advised blacks to seek solutions among themselves. He looked to the day when labor unions would accept blacks. Although his commentary had mellowed with time, Fortune's basic philosophy about racism and blacks in the economy had not substantially changed. During the 1880s he encouraged blacks to support unionism and not to act as strike breakers. A generation of union activity had convinced him, however, that organized labor was entrenched in racism and would be unable and unwilling to change.

Education was also a topic that stimulated much commentary from Fortune. Throughout the 1880s his views reflected bitterness, as he indicted the white South for shirking its



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responsibility by not wanting to pay for the education of its former slaves. He even called for a federal bureau of education and for appropriations from Congress. On the other hand, he admonished white northern "missionaries" who had come to the South to teach the freedmen feeling that, in the process, they had stripped blacks of their manhood by holding to condesending attitudes. By 1900, however, his bitterness had subsided and he praised the work of the "New England pioneers" who he felt had not only influenced the professional development of black men in the South, but had taught the women of the race as well.

Fortune consistently defended the rights of blacks for equal educational opportunities, and emphasized the need for industrial education in particular. According to Fortune, the masses of blacks needed elementary and industrial training and he predicted that schools for higher education would have to realize the necessity for "education of the head and education of the hand." Fortune was attempting to reconcile the reality of economic proscription of the race within his own philosophy and by 1916, he was strongly encouraging blacks to support the university concept.

Ideologically, T. Thomas Fortune was not a separatist like Bishop H. M. Turner whose back-to-Africa movement received Fortune's criticism during the 1890s. Although Fortune also disagreed with Marcus Garvey's brand of separatism, he admired many of the Universal Negro Improvement Association's (UNIA) ideas about racial pride and self-sufficience.

Fortune did not advocate the early twentieth century views about racial purity and admonished men such as Alexander Crummell and others in the American Negro Academy who discouraged "Negro" men from marrying mulatto women in order to keep the race pure. In Fortune's opinion, Afro-Americans did not need two color lines. He argued that the majority of the race was already racially mixed. His solution to the problem of establishing racial identity was the adoption of the term "Afro-American" because he felt that other terms did not accurately describe the physical make-up of the race. "We are African in origin," he declared, "and American in birth."

Protecting the rights of the women of the race was an area of great concern to Fortune who encouraged black women to fight for their rights. He admired intelligent Afro-American women with leadership abilities such as Ida B. Wells, Victoria Earl Matthews, Margaret Murray Washington, and Gertrude Mossell. Under his leadership women were



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encouraged to participate in the National Afro-American League because they too were denied their civil rights and because he believed black women were usually better educated than their men and therefore were better prepared to work toward racial uplift.

In 1895, Fortune attended the first meeting of the National Federation of Afro-American Women, where he was one of the three male speakers. He described the women in terms of the "New Afro-American Woman," who was ready to work to help herself and the race as a whole. Fortune followed the activities of the National Federation of Afro-American Women and the National League of Colored Women, both of which united to form the National Association of Colored Women in 1896. He hoped that the women of the race would be more successful in maintaining a national organization to promote the welfare of the race than the men had been in the past.

One of Fortune's most outstanding campaigns was his effort to assist Ida B. Wells' crusade against lynching. Wells had written in protest against the lynching of three black men in Memphis in 1892. While she was visiting in New Jersey, her paper, the Memphis Free Speech, was destroyed and her life threatened. Fortune learned of the incident before she did. He met her, warned her of the danger, and offered her the use of the Age to continue her fight. Through his contacts with women such as Victoria Earl Matthews in New York, Ida B. Wells was able to launch her international crusade against lynching in America.

The relationship that developed between T. Thomas Fortune and Booker T. Washington represented a turning point in the lives of both men, one in which Fortune was forced to deal with the contradiction of his life as well as his development as a leader. The men met during the 1890s while Fortune was touring the South. According to Thornbrough, both men believed that they were working toward the same goal—racial uplift, but they chose different means to that end. In the long run, the avenue chosen by Washington, accommodation, was the one most acceptable to the power structure in America. The means advocated, but not always followed by Fortune was resistance, the antithesis of Washington's philosophy. Herein lies the Fortune dilemma. Thornbrough said of Fortune, "Unable to bend as Washington had, he was broken."

Fortune's inability to compromise on the issues of civil rights, yet his inability to avoid becoming financially and politically dependent upon Washington was the key to his mental

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breakdown in 1907. During the 1890s, the two men had complimented one another. Although Fortune played the role of northern agitator, he also defended and interpreted Washington's views to his critics. At times, however, they differed privately for Fortune did not believe in making concessions to whites. Despite their differences, Fortune remained a close confident and ghost writer for Washington who at the same time provided financial support for the Age. 10

A series of events occurred in the lives of the two men which drove Fortune into personal conflict and finally into the depression that led to his breakdown. Heightened race terror in the South led to the revival of the League in 1898, when it was renamed the Afro-American Council. Fortune spoke in militant words, but his fear of alienating his benefactor caused him to use the Council as a means of promoting Washington's leadership. He did this by cooperating in attempts to either silence or discredit opposition to Washington among Council members.

Another dilemma for Fortune was his attitude toward Theodore Roosevelt. Although Fortune privately criticized the President's southern policy, he refrained from criticizing Roosevelt publicly because he hoped for a political appointment through Washington's influence. Finally, in 1904, Fortune was appointed Special Immigrant Agent of the Treasury Department to study race and trade conditions in the Philippines. As he departed for his tour, Washington warned him not to make any politically damaging statements. Despite Fortune's attempts to remain quiet, he could not help but comment upon the racism that was shown toward the Filipinos by whites.

Although Washington continued to subsidize the Age after 1904, he no longer trusted Fortune. The last major difference between the two was over Fortune's public criticism of Roosevelt's handling of the Brownsville, Texas incident wherein the President indicted black soldiers for the race riot that had occurred in the town. Washington was very displeased with Fortune and finally withdrew his financial support of the Age and severed their personal relationship.

Fortune virtually withdrew from public life to the home he purchased in 1901 at 94 West Bergen Place, Red Bank, New Jersey; only to encounter marital problems and the loss of his home in 1915. Shortly after the death of Booker T. Washington in 1915, Fortune became editor of the Colored American Review and the publishers announced proudly that



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he had recovered fully from his breakdown. 13 According to Thornbrough, Fortune never regained his former prestige; however, he worked for several black newspapers from then on. His most important contribution during his last years was to the Negro World, the official organ of the UNIA, which Fortune began to edit in 1923. His last editorial appeared June 9, 1928, along with his obituary notice. 14 Fortune was widely eulogized in the black press. Perhaps one of the most outstanding assessments of his life was made by Kelly Miller who felt that Fortune "represented the best developed journalist that the Negro race had provided in the western world." 15

Fortune lived in the Booker T. Washington era when the "get along" philosophy was popular, and allied with Washington for personal expediency, yet he could not cope when his own philosophy was forced to be compromised. Fortune remained consistent throughout his career in his inability "to adopt a patient, compromising, pragmatic position on questions of human rights and human dignity." 16

T. Thomas Fortune is important to the history of the Afro-American experience because he not only provided a vehicle for social commentary and protest among blacks during "the Nadir" years, but because he left future generations a record of those trying times. He published over twenty books and articles as well as writing more than 300 editorials in his own newspapers, and others such as the New York Sun. Fortune also developed alternative answers to the race questions of his times, some of which are still being raised in the 1970s—women's rights, interracial marriage, quality education, racial pride, and the search for identity.



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- 4. Thornbrough, T. Thomas Fortune, p. 80.
- 5. Fortune, Black and White, pp. 53, 63.
- 6. T. Thomas Fortune, The Kind of Education the Afro-American Most Needs (Tuskegee: Tuskegee Institute Steam Print, reprinted from the Hampton Southern Workman, 1901), pp. 7-8, 11, 12.
- 7. T. Thomas Fortune, "Who are We? Afro-Americans, Colored People or Negroes?" The Voice of the Negro, 3 (March 1906): 196–198.
- 8. T. Thomas Fortune, "The New Afro-American Woman," The New York Sun, 7 August 1895.
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- 10. Ibid., pp. 178, 192, 319, 373.
- 11. Ibid., pp. 234-235, 252; T. Thomas Fortune, "The Filipino: A Social Study in Three Parts," The Voice of the Negro 1 (May 1904): 200-201.
- 12. Thornbrough, <u>T. Thomas Fortune</u>, pp. 285, 310, 314-315, 319.
- 13. Ibid., p. 351; "Publishers' Note," The Colored American Review 1 (June 1916): 230.
- 14. Thornbrough, T. Thomas Fortune, pp. 359, 367.
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- 16. Ibid., pp. 369-370.



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