Chapter Two:

Politics and Prejudice

The Seeds of African American Protest and the Assertion of Their Rights

The political participation of Cecil County’s blacks symbolized the strength of the African American community, but also served as an important tool for petitioning whites for political and social concessions. Throughout much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Democrats dominated the political scene in Cecil County and attempted to disenfranchise black voters as well as overturn the Constitution of 1864. Nevertheless, with blacks’ help, the Republican Party defeated the Democrats in 1895. However, Democrats regained hegemony in Cecil County and initiated statewide legislation to amend the 1864 Constitution calling for the disenfranchisement of blacks. This legislation to amend the Constitution included the Poe, the Straus, and the Digges Amendments.

Despite the fact that for many decades Democrats dominated Cecil County’s politics and Republicans only gained power twice from 1860 to 1910, African Americans living in communities throughout Cecil County formed their own political clubs, organizations, and committees, and held debates concerning their political and social rights. Blacks used churches and schools as forums to discuss politics and other issues that were pertinent to their particular community or to all African Americans living in Cecil

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182 Callcott, 115, 126, 132.
County.\(^{183}\) Some of the most notable meetings among Cecil County's blacks occurred in the 1860s and 1870s and then in the early twentieth century.

Indeed, the laws and issues debated during these years directly affected African Americans, such as the discussion regarding the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 and the attempts of Democrats to disenfranchise blacks in Maryland.\(^{184}\) However, both the Democratic and Republican Party were deeply divided concerning their opinions on what rights Cecil County's African Americans should have. African Americans’ success in forming their own political organizations led white Republicans in Cecil County to cooperate with blacks to defeat legislation formulated by Democrats. Cecil County's blacks were key in strengthening the Republican Party and making it a considerable force in Cecil County. Prior to African Americans’ participation, the Republican Party did not have an influential voice in Cecil County’s politics.\(^{185}\) However, once blacks joined the party, elections between Republicans and Democrats were closer than before at both the local and national levels. Thus, the participation of Cecil County’s African Americans in politics was important in providing them with the means in which they could fight for political and social concessions from 1864 to 1910.

Although many southern states were under federal Reconstruction in the years following the Civil War, the state of Maryland issued a self-reconstruction program, which called for the emancipation of slaves, an end to the old slave codes, and the establishment of schools for African Americans. Unlike in many other Southern states, the Freedmen's Bureau was not influential in the reconstruction of Cecil County after the

\(^{183}\) *Cecil Whig*, 21 August 1868, p. 2.

\(^{184}\) Ibid., 13 May 1870, p. 1.

\(^{185}\) Ibid., 3 March 1873, p. 1.
Civil War.\textsuperscript{186} Perhaps this is the case because whites in the county had more moderate views toward African Americans and had supported the Union. Conversely, the presence of the Freedmen’s Bureau in southern Maryland counties was greater than in Cecil County. This may be attributed to the fact that many Democrats in these counties were former supporters of the Confederacy during the Civil War. An analysis of seven Cecil County newspapers, which included the \textit{Cecil Whig}, the \textit{Cecil Democrat}, the \textit{Cecil County News}, the \textit{Midland Journal}, the \textit{Elkton Appeal}, the \textit{Port Deposit Correspondence}, and the \textit{Cecil Star}, reveals that there was only one article in the \textit{Cecil Whig} discussing an incident where the Freedmen’s Bureau aided in the construction of an African American school in Cecilton during the late 1860s.\textsuperscript{187}

One of the most contentious arguments between Republicans and Democrats was whether to emancipate Maryland’s slaves in 1864. Many other border states did not free their slaves until the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865. In fact, unlike the “solid South,” Cecil County was composed of both members of the Unionist Party and the Democratic Party, who supported the institution of slavery. Unionists may have been more popular in Cecil County than in southern counties in Maryland because the county was more industrialized.\textsuperscript{188} Manufacturers in northern Maryland counties were more prone to side with the politics of free states, such as Pennsylvania, where Republican abolitionists supported the emancipation of the South’s slaves. The two-party system that existed in Cecil County during the 1860s set the stage for the self-reconstruction of Maryland and the statewide victory of Unionists in the 1864 election.\textsuperscript{189}

\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Cecil Democrat}, 4 December 1867, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{187} \textit{Cecil Whig}, 5 August 1868, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 6 February 1864, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{189} \textit{Cecil Democrat}, 12 March 1864, p. 1.
Prior to the Unionists’ rise to power in 1864, the Democratic Party dominated Cecil County and supported the secession of the state of Maryland. In fact, during the 1860 election, the Cecil Democrat noted, “John C. Breckinridge, the Southern Democratic candidate for President, is very popular among 85% of the Democrats in this county. He upholds the institution of slavery. Vote for him on Election Day.”190 However, the political situation changed when Unionists in Cecil County sided with less conservative Democrats. Many Unionists in Cecil County and throughout the state of Maryland won elections in 1864 and as a result, dominated the General Assembly of Maryland and elected Thomas Swann as Governor of Maryland.191

In 1864, Unionists supported a new constitution for Maryland, which abolished slavery, compensated loyal slaveholders, and punished Democrats who had seceded from the Union by banning them from voting and by requiring that they pay a fine.192 This legislation was aimed at reconstructing Cecil County and ensuring that only loyal Democrats who had not joined the Confederate side voted or held political office. In an article from February 6, 1864, the Cecil Whig explained, “At a Unionist primary meeting, they discussed that disloyal Democrats must be punished after the adoption of the 1864 Constitution. A Unionist stated:

Union men of Cecil County who are registered to assemble at this primary meeting, slavery is not a dead issue in this county. It is alive and active at this very hour and will remain a dangerous enemy. Slaveholders who supported the Confederacy argue that they will lose their property and will demand compensation for their slaves... They must not take part in political office and must be punished for abandoning the Union cause.”193

190 Ibid., 3 February 1864, p. 1.
191 “Politics in Maryland,” Cecil Whig, 6 March 1867, p. 3.
192 Cecil Whig, 3 July 1865, p. 2.
Another article from the March 26, 1864 edition of the Cecil Whig, which supported the Constitution of 1864, noted, "Compensation for slaves in our county would be unjust and oppressive especially for the people of Cecil County. From Cecil County statistics, we learned that there are 163 slaveholders and 544 slaves assessed at a value of $8,033.26. The property of non-slaveholders is quite as valuable to him as slave property is to Democrats."¹⁹⁴ The fact that Unionists had strengthened their party in 1864 and had gained a considerable following in support of the Constitution of 1864 signifies that a two-party system indeed existed in Cecil County. Also, despite the fact that Democrats had dominated party politics during most of Cecil County's history, in 1864, Unionists were able to break their pattern of success by temporarily gaining power in the General Assembly of Maryland and by eliminating slavery in the state.

Some of Cecil County's Democrats viewed the Constitution of 1864 as a threat to their power, and they held many conventions and meetings to prevent its adoption. The most frequent claim that Democrats cited for opposing the freeing of slaves was that they feared there would be a larger number of idle vagrants and paupers who would be a strain on Cecil County's economic resources, and as a result, taxes would increase. A February 27, 1864, article in the Cecil Democrat explained:

One great objective of the Convention Movement is to free the Negroes. 90,000 of Maryland's free Negroes will swell the list of vagrants and paupers and crowd our jails, almshouses, and penitentiaries. This situation will add more to our exuberant taxes. With compensation, it would be a triple wrong, but without compensation it would be short of robbery."¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Cecil Whig, 26 March 1864, p. 2.
In fact, some Democrats feared the loss of their “property” so much that they threatened any white Republican who supported emancipation. At a Democratic Convention on February 27, 1864, one Democrat expressed:

Democrats have resolved to retaliate for every outrage committed by abolitionists and for any violent acts committed against the Democratic Party or their property. The Democrats now must carry out an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Go to the polls April 6 and defeat the Constitution of 1864.¹⁹⁶

Another important reason why Democrats opposed the Constitution of 1864 is that they believed that newly freed blacks were childlike people who could not survive on their own and would cause instability in Cecil County. A March 12, 1864 article in the Cecil Democrat, which symbolized slaveholder’s paternalistic attitudes toward slaves, warned:

Negroes must remain subordinate to whites. They are childlike people. The highest development is that he has reached a state of servitude. Under the control and direction of the white man, he is healthy, long-lived, productive, and contributes to society. Set him free, and he becomes dwarfed in physical development, is subject to disease and premature decay, and adds little or nothing to the general stock of wealth. Nature made him inert. He is incapable of mental activity. Hence, he must never be subservient and subjected to the white man’s will. The Efforts to free the Negro will destroy him. In Baltimore, freed slaves live in Miserable conditions. Thirty percent of them are forced to their graves at an early Age. There are 5 to 6 Negroes who live in one room rotting with disease.¹⁹⁷

Among the other reasons why Democrats were opposed to the Constitution of 1864 were that crime would increase, there would be a decrease in land prices, white laborers’ jobs would be threatened since freed slaves would compete for better jobs, blacks might press for equal rights, slaveholders would lose valuable “property” without compensation

¹⁹⁶“Democratic Convention of 1864,” Cecil Whig, 27 February 1864, p. 3.
¹⁹⁷Cecil Democrat, 12 March 1864, p. 1.
from the government, and blacks could possibly receive the franchise in the future.\textsuperscript{198} Although a large number of whites voted for the Constitution of 1864, most articles in Cecil County's newspapers condemned this Constitution, rather than supported it. This suggests that despite Unionists' success in passing the Constitution of 1864 and in punishing disloyal Democrats by fining and banning them from political office, Democrats in Cecil County were still a strong force during these years. Also, working men's arguments that freed slaves could compete with them for jobs shows that whites feared emancipation not only for racist reasons, but also because they viewed blacks as a political, social, and economic threat. The strength of the Democratic Party, reflected in their arguments opposing the Constitution of 1864, was a strong indication that Democrats would redeem power in Cecil County by 1867.

Even though Democrats in Cecil County and in other parts of Maryland fought hard to campaign against the Constitution of 1864 and held many meetings in Elkton and Port Deposit discussing how to defeat it, the Constitution of 1864 was adopted in the state of Maryland.\textsuperscript{199} This Constitution freed Cecil County's 554 remaining slaves and imposed harsh fines on whites who had sided with the Confederacy. In addition, rebel sympathizers were banned from voting or running for office by the Registry Law provision of the Constitution of 1864.\textsuperscript{200} In a speech given in 1865, John Creswell, a Unionist, expressed that the adoption of the Constitution of 1864 in Maryland marked a victory for Unionists as well as blacks. He stated, "Our new Constitution, adopted last

\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., 18 January 1864, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{199} Cecil Whig, 3 May 1864, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 15 June 1864, p. 1.
November 1, decreed freedom, unrestricted and universal throughout the state for former slaves. It was a complete success.  

The number of votes in Cecil County supporting the Constitution of 1864 was 2,350 as opposed to 1,060 votes against it. The fact that the 1864 Constitution passed by an overwhelming majority of 63% in Cecil County may be attributed to Unionists and moderate pro-Unionist Democrats. These “Andrew Johnson types” supported the emancipation of slaves and especially the punishment of the supporters of the Confederacy. The fact that Maryland was a border state and many of its whites fought on the Union side during the Civil War may have led to the emancipation of slaves. Also, Unionists worked hard to garner the vote of the soldiers who were fighting against the Confederacy. Thus, the support of moderate Democrats, Unionists, and soldiers explains why the Constitution of 1864 was so successful. However, in 1867, the Unionist Party lost their dominance in Cecil County’s politics. Over the next several decades, the Democratic Party would be popular in Cecil County and would influence most of its political programs.

By 1867, the tide of Republican influence was turning in favor of the Democratic Party. This may have been the result of Thomas Swann’s split with radical Unionists who supported African American equality and suffrage. Since he was not a radical Republican, he did not favor giving African Americans the vote or additional political or social concessions. In a March 6, 1867, edition of the *Cecil Whig* Swann emphasized:

> I am opposed to universal Negro suffrage and the extreme radicalism of certain men in Congress and in our own state, who have been striving to shape the platform of the Union Party in interests of Negro suffrage. I look upon Negro

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203 Ibid., 25 December 1867, p. 3.
suffrage and the recognition of the power in Congress to control suffrage within the states as the virtual subordination of the white race to the ultimate control and domination of the Negro in the state of Maryland. I consider the issue upon the subject of Negro suffrage as well made in the fall election and the most important that has ever been brought to the attention of the people of Maryland.\textsuperscript{204}

Governor Swann’s willingness to cooperate with Democrats and his opposition to African American equality resulted in the reassertion of Democratic control in Cecil County, the repeal of the Registry Law, and the passage of the 1867 Constitution.\textsuperscript{205} Article 3, Section 53 of the Constitution of 1867 denounced black suffrage, called for the removal of loyalty oaths and an end to the self-reconstruction of Maryland.\textsuperscript{206} According to a December 12, 1867 edition of the \textit{Cecil Democrat}, the Constitution of 1867 was approved by a 3 to 1 margin in Cecil County.\textsuperscript{207} The overwhelming support for the Constitution of 1867 marked a shift in the political structure of Cecil County from a county that was controlled by Unionists to one that was dominated by the Democratic Party. After 1867, Democrats would win almost every election in the state of Maryland. Nevertheless, Republicans in Cecil County fought vigorously for the defeat of the 1867 Constitution. This revealed that despite the redemption of Democrats and the end of the self-reconstruction era, a two-party system still existed in Cecil County. Conversely, in other southern states after the Reconstruction period, there was not a two-party system and Democrats controlled politics.\textsuperscript{208} However, even though the Constitution of 1867 prevented blacks from voting or gaining additional social or political rights, by the late 1860s, blacks were allowed to give testimony as witnesses in court cases. The

\textsuperscript{204} Ibid., 6 March 1867, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., 10 August 1867, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., 5 September 1867, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{208} \textit{Cecil Whig}, 15 January 1868, p. 1.
preservation of some African Americans’ rights could have been important in providing a
sense of hope to blacks that they could persuade Democrats to give them more political
and social concessions in the future.

Although Cecil County’s African Americans could not vote until 1870 when the
Fifteenth Amendment was passed, they still actively participated in Republican
Conventions, were delegates on committees, and organized their own political clubs
during the 1860s. In my analysis of Cecil County’s newspapers published in the
1860s, I discovered that African Americans in Cecil County participated in politics as
early as 1867. There were over 25 articles discussing black political participation during
this year. At this time, blacks made significant political gains, such as serving as
delegates in Republican Conventions. Also, Cecil County’s blacks questioned
Republicans who attempted to keep them in inferior positions within the Republican
Party. Indeed, Maryland differed from other southern states in that the Republican
Party never tried to “lily-white” their party and incorporated blacks. Eric Foner, a
historian, noted that the Republican Party in other southern states often excluded blacks.
He stated, “The most extensive concentration of white Republicans lay in the upcountry
bastions of wartime Unionism, such as East Tennessee and western North Carolina.”

Perhaps the most symbolic element of black political involvement was their
participation in both local and state conventions. One of the most important conventions
where blacks voiced their opinions concerning the Constitution of 1867 was at the
Republican County Convention held in Elkton. At this meeting, notable blacks from

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209 Ibid., 11 May 1867, p. 1.
210 Cecil Whig, 19 April 1867, p. 1.
212 Cecil Whig, 11 May 1867, p. 1.
the seventh district discussed why Cecil County's Republicans should vote for universal manhood suffrage. A May 11, 1867 article in the Cecil Whig describing the Republican Convention indicated:

The Republican County Convention last Wednesday was a memorable one in the political history of Cecil County. Both white and colored delegates assembled in Elkton for the purpose of choosing delegates for the Baltimore State Convention, which marked the first ripple in the tide of universal suffrage. They assembled in the courthouse. James Johnson, colored, was the secretary of the committee, and several delegates were there who conducted themselves with great dignity. The Republican platform of Maryland is universal manhood suffrage. Reverend Abraham Brown, a colored delegate from the seventh district, suggested to the committee that every man without distinction to race or color is called upon to move speedily in the cause of universal suffrage. Let the colored people fight one more battle in the cause of freedom at the peaceful ballot box. A third district primary meeting will organize an executive committee on May 23rd without regard to race or color in the courthouse of Elkton.213

Although blacks were kept in inferior positions in the Republican Party, it is significant that this party accepted blacks in Cecil County. In other southern states, the Republican Party had attempted to “lily-white” their party by excluding African Americans from participating at its convention. The fact that blacks were delegates at Republican conventions reveals that Cecil County had developed along a “middle ground.” This may be attributed to the fact that Cecil County shared industrial interests with northern states, such as Pennsylvania and focused less on the plantation system. Foner describes the changing atmosphere of the North to one of individualism and activism after the Civil War. He notes, “As never before, the war mobilized the energies of northern reformers. Republicans had brought into the war an ideology grounded in the superiority of free labor to slave labor.”214 Although Cecil County never turned to the radicalism of the North, like the North it incorporated blacks into the Republican Party. Also, the fact that

213 Ibid.
214 Ibid.
Republicans had already adopted the platform of universal suffrage indicates that they were supporting the ideas of radical Republicans.

Another convention in which Cecil County's blacks actively participated was the Border State Convention, held in 1867.\textsuperscript{215} This Convention was a testament to African Americans’ efforts in Cecil County to gain the right to vote and to hold higher political office. A May 18, 1867 article in the Cecil Whig explained:

The Border State Convention marks a new era in the political history of Maryland. Whites and colored citizens and the former slave owner and his slaves sat side by side. This illustrates the great changes that the past five years have wrought in removing the prejudices of thousands of citizens. Honorable Judge John Creswell praised the good work of reconstruction at this Border States Convention. William Saunders, a colored delegate, addressed the Convention in a short speech. He said that there are some who suppose that they can wheedle that black man into voting for the principles of the Democratic Party. This is a mistake. The cornerstone of that Party is slavery. I have visited plantations. I have seen the Negro in almost an animal-like condition. I never met a black man who did not believe that Abraham Lincoln was a martyr of our liberties.\textsuperscript{216}

In addition, at the Border States Convention, the Republican Party adopted many resolutions regarding the need for blacks to vote, the rejection of the Constitution of 1867, and a law calling for the equality of African Americans in public places. The Cecil Whig further explained:

Next, the Convention passed several resolutions. Resolved-By law there must be Equality of all American citizens without regard to color. All legal distinction on Account of color must be abolished by the passage of the Sumner-Wilson Suffrage Amendment. Resolved-The Annapolis Constitution [The Constitution of 1867]-This State Central Committee and Republicans must take votes of all colored male Citizens against the 1867 Constitution made in Annapolis.\textsuperscript{217}

The inclusion of African American delegates at the Border States Convention revealed how both black and white Republicans worked together toward common goals. The

\textsuperscript{215} Cecil Whig, 18 May 1867, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{216} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{217} Ibid.
Republican Party’s adoption of a platform of universal suffrage and equality signifies that Maryland’s Republican Party supported the issues of racial Republicanism. At the meeting, white Republicans resolved that they must take the vote of all colored male citizens against the Constitution of 1867. Although Maryland’s blacks could not vote until 1870, this statement most likely means that Republicans were asking blacks for their support and were urging them to organize movements and rallies calling for African American suffrage and equality.

In both articles, Cecil County’s African Americans were not only allowed to attend Republican conventions, but also were active participants. It is very significant that Republicans accepted African Americans to give speeches at white-dominated conventions. In fact, whites’ accommodating attitudes toward blacks at their meetings and their acceptance of colored delegates signify that Republicans in Cecil County often disregarded the “color line” to work with African Americans for common political achievements. For example, both whites and blacks in the Republican Party opposed the Constitution of 1867 and sought to challenge Democratic power in Maryland and in Cecil County. The willingness of whites to incorporate blacks at local and state conventions suggests that Republicans in Cecil County were more accepting of blacks than in other Southern Maryland counties where African Americans had less influence. The ability of black delegates, such as William Saunders, in Cecil County to deliver eloquent speeches at state and local conventions may be attributed to the fact that before the Civil War, Cecil County had a strong free black population, which held church meetings, discussions, and educational sessions to talk about their political and social rights. Such institutions were the training grounds for black leaders to develop their speaking skills.
The same black leaders, like James Boddy, who had been prominent voices in the free African American community before emancipation, became notable speakers at political conventions.\footnote{James Boddy, will dated February 1, 1875, Cecil County Registry of Probate, Port Deposit, MD.} African Americans’ political participation during the 1860s was key in laying the groundwork for their future struggles in attaining their political and social rights.

The fact that black Republicans continued to press for their rights, even when Democrats controlled much of the county in 1867, shows the unwavering perseverance and determination of Cecil County’s African American population during the 1870s. For example, when some white Republicans refused to let a colored man hold a leading position in a local Cecil County convention in 1867, he wrote a letter in protest denouncing whites who controlled the Republican Party. The letter published on February 12, 1867 emphasized:

\begin{quote}
You would not let me hold office in the Convention of 1867. I am a colored man and have wool on my head, but you and your white trash can’t pull the wool over my eyes. Oh yes! You want us to go voting with you, but every time you pick white men for office. I will never be a member of such a Party.\footnote{Cecil Democrat, 12 February 1867, p. 3.}
\end{quote}

Clearly, this letter indicates that blacks wanted to work with whites to enact political and social change and to prevent the Copperhead Party (Democratic Party) from reversing the Constitution of 1864. However, if Cecil County’s whites treated blacks as second-class citizens, they preferred to work independently from them.

Not only did Cecil County’s blacks participate in political discussions and conventions held in 1867, but they also attended Republican conventions in 1869.\footnote{Cecil Whig, 26 June 1869, p. 1.} A June 26, 1869 "Cecil Whig" article revealed, “On the first of June, there was a Republic state convention
in Baltimore composed of colored and white delegates from our county and from other Maryland counties. One of our own colored delegates spoke and was allowed to help Republicans dictate the party platform on equal rights and universal suffrage. This convention is a testament to the success of blacks in Cecil County in increasing political influence during the years after the Civil War. Two years prior to this convention, Republicans allowed blacks to speak at their conventions but never permitted them to influence the Party platform. At this convention, an African American from Cecil County helped formulate the Republican platform. This situation shows the growing political influence blacks gained in Cecil County even a year before they could vote. African Americans' knowledge and ability to understand complex political issues at Republican conventions was paramount before they could obtain the ballot in 1870. Knowledgeable blacks could make better political decisions, which allowed them to more easily earn political office in the subsequent decades.

Although both white and black Republicans served on committees and conventions, Cecil County's African Americans formed their own Colored Political Clubs and Voters' Leagues in 1869. The reason blacks may have formed their own political clubs was because they could have more influence over the organization of political movements and had more opportunities for leadership. An August 21, 1868 edition of the Cecil Whig indicated, "A few intelligent colored men of this County formed Colored Leagues. These provide hope to educated blacks to secure the vote. The Education Department of the Freedman's Bureau provides funding for these clubs. Colored Republican Clubs are also

221 Ibid.
222 Ibid, 21 August 1868, p. 2.
gaining importance in our county." The fact that Cecil County’s African Americans formed their own political organizations symbolizes their self-sufficiency and determination to improve their own communities before asking whites for help. Also, it is significant that the Freedmen’s Bureau gave money for these organizations because it was not a prominent organization in Cecil County. Thus, the 1860s was an era of political continuity in that Democrats dominated politics in 1867 as they had before the Civil War, but it also can be characterized as a period of change since Cecil County’s former slaves were now emancipated, took part in Republican conventions, and petitioned whites for universal manhood suffrage. Indeed, African Americans’ efforts to enact change in the 1860s paved the way for their participation at the ballot box in the 1870s.

Whereas the 1860s marked the first era of African Americans’ political involvement, the 1870s can best be described as a decade in which blacks voted for the first time and increased their participation in Colored Loyal Leagues and in Republican Clubs. In efforts to enact federal Reconstruction in the south, the United States Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 that stipulated, “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude (Section 1). The Congress shall have power to enforce this Article by appropriate legislation (Section 2).” In addition to the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, the United States Congress approved the Civil Rights Bill of 1876, which provided that no person shall be excluded from any public place on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. A penalty of

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223 Ibid.
224 U.S. Constitution, amend. 15, sec. 1, 2.
$100 to $500 was ordered for people who did not comply with these acts.\textsuperscript{225} Most Democrats in Cecil County were opposed to the Fifteenth Amendment and vehemently denounced it in articles published during the 1870s.\textsuperscript{226} An April 30, 1870 \textit{Cecil Whig} article described the attitudes of Democrats in Cecil County concerning the Fifteenth Amendment and their efforts at organizing meetings to discuss this matter. This article reported:

A few mourners for their lost cause held a sad and cheerless meeting in the courthouse Friday evening. The Democrats of this County held a mournful ceremony of organizing the sepulchral party. They nominated seven leading men for office of Town Commissioner and declared that they did not want any colored men to vote, especially for their ticket. The newly organized "White Man's Party" (Democratic Party) was composed of floating, worm-eaten timbers of the old secession Democratic Party, which went to pieces on rock called the Fifteenth Amendment.\textsuperscript{227}

However, the Democratic Party in Cecil County did not crumble as a result of the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment but actually gained strength and dominated every congressional and gubernatorial election in the 1870s.\textsuperscript{228} In fact, a November 11, 1871 edition of the \textit{Baltimore Sun} illustrates that in Cecil County, 2,770 Democrats voted in the congressional election of 1870, while 2,142 Republicans turned out on Election Day.\textsuperscript{229} Also, in subsequent elections at the presidential, congressional, and gubernatorial levels during the 1870s, Democrats composed approximately 54.2% of the vote in presidential elections, 57.3% of the vote in congressional elections, and 56.5% of the vote in gubernatorial elections.\textsuperscript{230}

\textsuperscript{225} "Civil Rights Bill of 1876," \textit{Cecil Whig}, 15 July 1878, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{226} \textit{Cecil Whig}, 30 April 1870, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{228} \textit{Baltimore Sun}, 11 November 1871, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{229} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{230} Ibid., November issues, 1870-1879. p. 1.
These results indicate that unlike Republican-dominated counties in Maryland, such as Calvert and Charles Counties, Democrats had more influence than Republicans in Cecil County during the 1870s. In fact, despite Cecil County’s African Americans’ attempts to persuade Democrats to revise the Constitution of 1867, they were unsuccessful. This was a major setback for blacks since Democrats kept the provisions of the Constitution of 1867, which banned colored lawyers from participating in state courts and reduced the number of blacks serving on juries in Maryland.  

231 Nevertheless, only 628 more Democrats than Republicans showed up at the polls during the election of 1870.  

232 Clearly, these election return results reveal that the Republican Party in the 1870s was still an influential source of competition for Cecil County’s Democrats. Thus, Cecil County differed from the solid South in that it had a two-party system for most of its history.

In other southern states, Democrats always ran unopposed, and the Republican Party was weak and fragmented after the Reconstruction era. Also, Maryland differed from other southern states since blacks were never disenfranchised and kept voting in large numbers in Cecil County despite Democrats’ attempts to threaten them not to vote. Indeed, the existence of the Republican Party can be attributed to the fact that Republicans never tried to “lily-white” their party.

Despite the fact that Cecil County’s Democrats won the congressional election of 1870 and that Democrats dominated the General Assembly in Maryland, the Election of 1870 was a landmark election because it was the first time that Cecil County’s blacks

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231 Constitution of 1867 art. 3, sec. 53.
were permitted to vote.\textsuperscript{233} The passage of the Fifteenth Amendment a few months before had marked a major victory for blacks in their fight for their political rights. The enthusiasm among Cecil County’s African American population concerning their new political freedom was best captured in a May 28, 1870 article in the \textit{Cecil Whig}. The \textit{Cecil Whig} explained:

There was a mass meeting among the colored people at Cecilton last Monday to celebrate the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment. Colored men, women, and children from the first and second election districts poured into Cecilton with banners and music. There were cake vendors and prominent speakers assembled at their meeting. The oldest inhabitants of this county never saw such a gathering.\textsuperscript{234}

Furthermore, a May 19, 1870 article published in the \textit{Cecil Whig} revealed, “A celebration of the Fifteenth Amendment was held among the colored people of Port Deposit. There were eminent speakers present and one of the finest processions was held in this town.”\textsuperscript{235} These celebrations embodied African Americans’ quest in Cecil County to go to the polls in large numbers at presidential, congressional, and gubernatorial elections and to use the ballot as a peaceful weapon for their political and social advancement.

Indeed, Cecil County’s African Americans not only celebrated the Fifteenth Amendment, but also exercised their right to the franchise by turning out in large numbers at the 1870 congressional election.\textsuperscript{236} According to a November 11, 1871 chart in the \textit{Baltimore Sun}, approximately 78% of Cecil County’s registered blacks turned out on Election Day.\textsuperscript{237} Clearly, such a high turnout is a testament to African Americans’ determination to use the ballot to press whites for social and political rights and to

\textsuperscript{233} \textit{Cecil Whig}, 28 May 1870, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{234} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{236} \textit{Baltimore Sun}, 11 November 1871, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{237} Ibid.
strengthen the Republican Party. Prior to blacks’ enrollment in Cecil County’s Republican Party, the Party occupied a minority status in politics. However, after blacks joined the Republican Party in the 1870s, it became a formidable force in Cecil County’s politics. A November 1, 1879 article in the Cecil Democrat reinforced this point by explaining, “Negroes march up to the ballot box in large numbers. The darkies give the Republican Party its strength and without them, it would be a lifeless body.”

The Democratic Party now had to campaign extensively in order to defeat candidates representing the Republican platform. Although the Republican Party was made up of more whites than blacks, African Americans in Cecil County strengthened the Republican Party by voting in large numbers. There is no evidence from the 1870s to the early 1900s of blacks not turning out to vote on Election Day. Despite Democrats success in almost every election from 1870 to 1910, the consistently high percentage of African American turnout signifies that blacks took pride in voting and were politically mobilized.

Throughout much of the 1870s, blacks in Cecil County turned out at congressional and gubernatorial elections in large numbers. Voter turnout records in the Baltimore Sun from the 1872, 1874, 1876, and 1878 congressional elections show that an average of 67% of registered black voters in the county showed up at the ballot box on Election Day. Although this average is slightly less than African Americans’ turnout during the 1870 congressional election, which had been 78%, it still suggests that a large majority of Cecil County’s blacks participated at local elections in the hope of electing a Republican candidate, who was more likely to give them more political and social concessions than a

\[238\] Cecil Democrat, 11 November 1879, p. 2.
\[239\] Baltimore Sun, November 1872, 1874, 1876, 1878, p. 1.
Democrat. In fact, African Americans’ turnout at gubernatorial elections was even
greater during the 1870s than it was in congressional elections. In its Voter Turnout
Section, the Baltimore Sun indicated that during the 1871, 1875, and 1879 gubernatorial
elections an average of 81% of Cecil County’s registered blacks voted.240 The large
majority of blacks who showed up on gubernatorial election days may be attributed to the
fact that blacks considered local interests and issues as important in their attainment of
their social and political rights.

Likewise, Cecil County’s African Americans actively participated in the presidential
elections of 1872 and 1876. Although Democratic candidates received the most votes in
Cecil County, blacks still went to the polls in large numbers to vote for Republican
candidates. In the 1872 presidential election, African Americans favored Ulysses S.
Grant because he upheld the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments in the
Constitution.241 In this election, an average of 73% or about 958 of Cecil County’s
registered blacks cast their ballots.242 There were also about 1,184 white Republicans
who cast their votes. Accordingly, Cecil County’s African Americans favored the
Republican Presidential candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes, during the 1876 presidential
election. Approximately, 83% or about 987 of Cecil County’s blacks voted, which
indicated that the number of African Americans who voted had increased by 10% since
the last election.243 These results signify African Americans’ quest to elect a Republican
president who supported their views. Also, black voters may have turned out at the polls
in larger quantities because there was less violence and bribery at the polls during this

240 Ibid., November 1871, 1875, 1879, p. 2.
241 Cecil Whig, 18 April 1873, p. 1.
242 Baltimore Sun, 11 November 1873, p. 1.
243 Ibid., November 1877, p. 2.
year. For example, there is only one reported case of white violence against a Cecil County black voter in 1876.

One of the most common forms of African American political participation in the 1870s was their involvement in Republican conventions and primary meetings. In an April 27, 1870 article, the Cecil Whig explained:

The Republican Central Committee was well attended by colored men who can now vote under the Fifteenth Amendment and will be able to vote for the first time for a primary candidate. We will select colored men from each election district to meet at the County Convention. The Republican Party must see to it that all colored voters are registered. All kinds of sharp practice will be resorted to by Democrats to prevent as many as possible of the colored men from registering. The first step of the colored people is to take interest in this primary meeting. We ask the men of this county whether they ever saw better-behaved or more orderly citizens than Negroes at the Elkton primary.  

In addition, an August 30, 1873 article in the Cecil Whig reported, “The colored politicians met at the Baltimore State Convention. There were speeches given on how the colored people are politically oppressed.” Indeed, black participation in Republican conventions was important in training blacks to form their own organizations independent from those of white Republicans. During the 1870s, blacks participated in Republican conventions but had inferior positions as opposed to white Republicans who held the top posts in the Party. For example, a September 23, 1871 article in the Cecil Democrat revealed, “White Republicans have given Negroes a subordinate place at Republican conventions. They want all the political offices to themselves but tell the blacks that they support their rights.”

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244 Cecil Whig, 27 April 1870, p. 1.
245 Ibid., 30 August 1873, p. 2.
246 Cecil Democrat, 23 September 1871, p. 1.
As a result of their treatment by white Republicans, some Maryland blacks decided to organize their own conventions during the 1870s in which they elected delegates and discussed key issues that were pertinent to their race. These topics included the need to build more schools and the necessity to increase black office holders.\textsuperscript{247} Most political meetings were held in schools or churches since Cecil County’s African Americans often did not have adequate buildings to meet in.\textsuperscript{248} One of the most well-known Colored Conventions was held in Baltimore, in which many colored delegates from Cecil County attended. A January 15, 1870 edition of the \textit{Cecil Whig} noted, “Colored delegates from our County attended the Colored Republican Convention Tuesday evening. Resolutions were passed endorsing the administration of President Grant, and blacks advocated the union of all colored Republicans throughout Maryland.”\textsuperscript{249} In addition, a \textit{Cecil Democrat} article published on August 30, 1879 explained, “Ex-Congressman Richard Kane, colored [a prominent politician from South Carolina], lectured to a large audience at the Colored Convention held at the Bethel A.M.E. Church. He told the men that the African race must strive to become good citizens and become educated.”\textsuperscript{250} It is significant that a notable black politician gave a speech to Cecil County’s blacks when they were at the height of their political involvement. His speech could have been important in motivating blacks to better themselves, to continue to vote in large numbers, and to press whites for more political and social concessions.

Furthermore, Cecil County’s African Americans efficiently organized Colored Republican Clubs as well as rallies, which were important in bolstering black political

\textsuperscript{247} \textit{Cecil Whig}, 15 January 1870, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{248} \textit{ibid.}, 5 September 1874, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{249} \textit{ibid.}, 15 January 1870, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{250} \textit{Cecil Democrat}, 30 August 1879, p. 3.
morale and persuaded them to support the Republican cause. A September 16, 1876 article in the *Port Deposit Correspondence* reported, “Our colored Republican friends met in the Odd Fellows Hall last Friday night and organized a Colored Republican Club. They elected three officers, a president, and a vice president.”

Also, on October 26, 1872, the *Cecil Whig* explained:

There was a rally Wednesday evening sponsored by the Colored Republican Club of the third district. The rally was held in the Elkton Court House. Mr. J.W. Handy, one of the most intelligent colored orators of Baltimore, was invited to the meeting and was introduced by George Frisby, one of the colored speakers of Elkton. Even a number of Democrats were present at the Courthouse. Mr. Handy’s argument explained that the colored race must be educated and that no colored people should vote for the Democratic ticket.

The determination of Cecil County’s blacks to enact political change was most evident at colored rallies in which they persuaded other blacks to register to vote. In fact, by 1872, many Democrats were spectators at black meetings and rallies and rarely directed violence against black Republicans. It is significant that Democrats in Cecil County allowed blacks to meet in public places without opposition or violence. In other southern states, such as Mississippi, black Republicans were often the targets of violence.

Conversely, there are only a few instances reported in the *Cecil Whig* and the *Cecil Democrat* on violence committed by whites against black Republicans. The fact that black Republicans could meet without opposition signified that Cecil County had indeed developed along a “middle ground.”

However, despite the fact that approximately 98% of the articles in Cecil County’s newspapers indicate that blacks supported the Republican Party, there are a few accounts which reveal that some of Cecil County’s blacks were Democrats. For instance, a

251 *Port Deposit Correspondent*, 16 September 1876, p. 1.
252 *Cecil Whig*, 26 October 1872, p. 1.
September 24, 1870 edition of the Cecil Whig indicated, "A mass meeting of colored Democrats was held last night under the auspices of the Colored Democrats Association. They praised the colored Democrats and orators in Baltimore." 253 Another article published in the October 19, 1872 edition of the Cecil Democrat reported, "Mr. J. Sorrel, a colored orator, made a speech to our colored people saying that they should vote for the Democratic Party. Only a few of our colored voters support him." 254 The fact that some blacks in Cecil County chose to join the Democratic Party may suggest that they believed that if they voted or cooperated with this Party, they could more easily persuade white Democrats to give them their rights.

Although during the 1870s some Democrats attended Colored Republican Meetings and rarely directly violence against colored voters, there are many instances in the Cecil Whig and the Cecil Democrat in which whites bribed colored voters not to show up on Election Day or intimidated them by using threats or violence. 255 A September 23, 1871 edition of the Cecil Democrat argued, "Negroes in this county do not regularly assume political offices. To be educated and to have a fair chance at getting jobs is all they should seek. Even white Republicans are secretly opposed to the Negro taking office. Whites want offices for themselves." 256 In addition, an October 25, 1879 article in the Cecil Whig revealed, "During the 1878 Election, Mr. J. Chandlee, a Democrat, offered a new kersey suit and a pint of whiskey to colored voters who agreed not to vote for the Republican Party." 257 The threats and bribery made against black voters during the 1870s signifies that some Democrats feared universal manhood suffrage, which was upheld by

253 Ibid., 24 September 1870, p. 1.
254 Cecil Democrat, 19 October 1872, p. 2.
255 Ibid., 23 September, p. 2.
256 Ibid.
the Fifteenth Amendment, as a threat to white Democratic hegemony in Cecil County. Similar to other southern states, Democrats in Cecil County tried to disenfranchise blacks even before the twentieth century by using intimidation. These instances do not fit the pattern of non-violence at the polls in Cecil County during the 1870s. The isolated accounts of violence against blacks reported in the Cecil Democrat and the Cecil Whig may be attributed to the fact that some Democrats in 1872 wanted to prevent black Republicans from going to the polls to reelect President Grant, who was an advocate of Reconstruction. Another possible reason for violence against blacks was that after 1868, the Democratic Party no longer focused on their defeat in the Civil War but rather became more Negro phobic and adopted anti-black platforms.

Although Maryland was often characterized as more moderate than some states in the deep South, in Cecil County, the threats that Democrats made against African Americans sometimes materialized into actual violence directed at black voters. Democrats feared that black Republicans would threaten their status quo in the county. An October 25, 1872 edition of the Cecil Whig reported:

> At municipal elections, there was never before such fraud. There was ballot box Stuffing to prevent colored Republicans from voting. Also, a vast number of Colored Republicans were not allowed to vote. Violence was directed at Negroes. In some cases, Democrats were successful in disenfranchising them.²⁵⁸

Another article from a May 7, 1873 edition of the Cecil Democrat noted:

> There was an incident of treachery at the polls. A civil and respected colored voter, who was a taxpayer and was respected for his honesty, had a business at a blacksmith shop. He was rudely questioned by a white. You’re a Nigger preacher, ain’t you? No, replied the colored man in a civil manner. You are a Nigger voter anyway. He then tried to cut the Negro’s neck but was unsuccessful.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹ Cecil Democrat, 7 May 1873, p. 1.
Clearly, the fact that some whites attempted to commit violent acts against black voters suggests that violence and prejudice were sometimes present in the 1870s against blacks who were involved in politics. Democrats may have feared that African Americans' participation in the Republican Party would lead to the election of Republicans. Thus, some Democrats may have directed violence against blacks more for political reasons than for issues concerning race. The fact that even the *Cecil Democrat* denounced the violence directed against the black man points to the general attitudes among Cecil County's citizens that violence was reprehensible against African Americans. Although some Democrats were indeed successful in disenfranchising some blacks through bribery, intimidation, and violence, most of Cecil County's blacks still cast their ballots on Election Day. This is a testament to African Americans' unwavering determination to vote and to participate in politics in Cecil County. Also, federal election officials, stationed at the polls, ensured that any Democrats who bribed, intimidated, or used violence against African American voters in Cecil County paid fines.\(^{260}\) I did not find any article that described violence directed against Cecil County's blacks during elections held in the late 1870s. Perhaps this is the case because at this time, Democrats had a stronger foothold in politics than they did during the early 1870s and did not fear that Republicans would challenge their political power.

The 1880s and the 1890s marked an era in which Democrats dominated Cecil County's politics, and blacks living in the county received little additional social or political concessions at the local level. For example, Cecil County's Democrats had an average of 53% of the vote during the 1880s and an average of 55% in the 1890s, which

\(^{260}\) *Cecil Whig*, 10 July 1878, p. 1.
was only a slight change. In fact, like the 1870s, Democrats discussed at their meetings and conventions how to disenfranchise black voters who voted for the Republican Party. An October 26, 1889 edition of the Cecil Whig reinforced Democrats' views about black suffrage by stating, "In the last issue of the Cecil Democrat, we emphasized that our opposition to blacks is not so much an issue of race but of the ballot they cast." Therefore, Cecil County’s Democrats saw black political participation as a symbol of Republican power. Indeed, the high turnout of Cecil County’s black Republicans at the polls resulted in victories for the Republican Party during the 1895 gubernatorial election and the 1896 presidential election. Even William McKinley, Republican Presidential candidate, won the state of Maryland in 1896, receiving 136,978 votes out of 241,724 total votes. Also, during the 1895 election, Lloyd Loundes was elected as the first Republican Governor since 1864. Without the African American vote, they would never have won the election. However, by the turn of the century, Democrats had once again gained the upper hand in Cecil County’s politics.

However, despite Democratic control of Cecil County’s politics, blacks gained important concessions at the national level during the 1880s. For instance, in 1880, the Federal Government passed a law that made it mandatory for states to accept blacks as jury members. Subsequently, in 1885, African American lawyers could now participate in Maryland’s courts. Both of these laws marked major victories for Cecil County’s blacks because they could now defend themselves in the local court system and appoint lawyers of their own race to defend their rights more fairly. Unlike other southern states,

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262 *Cecil Whig*, 26 October 1889, p. 2.
263 Ibid., 5 November 1897, p. 1.
264 Ibid.
265 Ibid., 12 May 1886, p. 2.
the state of Maryland upheld these laws, and there are some instances of black lawyers either defending themselves or other African Americans in court. For example, an October 8, 1904 article in the Cecil Democrat revealed that William Hart, a colored lawyer, defended himself in court in a Jim Crow case.\textsuperscript{266}

Although Democrats dominated most of Cecil County’s elections from 1880 to 1900, blacks’ participation in Cecil County’s congressional elections actually increased during these years. For example, while the average black voter turnout in the 1872, 1874, 1876, and 1878 congressional elections was approximately 67\%, for those elections held in 1880, 1882, 1884, 1886, and 1888, it was about 77\%.\textsuperscript{257} The 10\% increase among black voters in congressional elections may signify that the increased number of Colored Republican Clubs that existed during the 1880s had been effective in registering new African American voters. While the average election turnout for black voters increased during the 1880s, the approximate number of blacks who showed up at the polls in the 1880s gubernatorial elections actually decreased. The average black turnout in the 1871, 1875, and 1879 gubernatorial elections had been about 81\%, while in the elections of 1883 and 1887, 79\% of Cecil County’s registered black voters appeared at the polls.\textsuperscript{268} This slight decrease may have been attributed to violence and intimidation waged against Cecil County’s blacks at the ballot box. However, since I was unable to find many articles indicating white threats against blacks during these years, the lower voter turnout may be attributed to African Americans’ lack of interest in these elections because many issues did not pertain to their political or social rights. On the average, black turnout for the 1880, 1884, and 1888 presidential elections increased from what it had been in the

\textsuperscript{266} Cecil Democrat, 8 October 1904, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{257} Baltimore Sun, November 1872, 1874, 1876, 1878, 1880, 1882, 1884, 1886, 1888, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid., November 1871, 1875, 1879, 1883, 1887, p. 2.
1872 and 1876 elections.\textsuperscript{269} For instance, the average black turnout for presidential elections in the 1870s was approximately 78\%, while it was about 84\% in the 1880s. The increased black political participation in Cecil County during these decades suggests that blacks hoped they would vote Republicans into office who would persuade Congress to initiate more federal legislation concerning African American rights.

During the 1890s, which also was an era of little political or social gain for Cecil County’s African Americans, the percentage of black turnout at the polls for congressional elections slightly decreased from what it had been in the 1870s. Election returns for the 1890, 1892, 1894, 1896, and 1898 congressional elections reveal that the average percentage of blacks who voted in Cecil County was 76\%, while in the 1880, 1882, 1884, 1886, and 1888 elections, it had been approximately 77\%. However, the fact that there was only a 1\% difference in these percentages still signifies that blacks turned out in large numbers since the 1870 Election.\textsuperscript{270} Also, the election return results indicate that for the gubernatorial elections of 1891 and 1899, an average of 81\% of blacks showed up at the polls compared to the 1883 and 1887 gubernatorial elections in which 79\% of Cecil County’s African Americans participated.\textsuperscript{271}

One of the most important elections in Maryland’s history was the gubernatorial election of 1895 in which for the first time since the 1864 Election, Republicans gained the majority of seats in the General Assembly of Maryland and elected a Republican Governor.\textsuperscript{272} The 1895 gubernatorial results indicate that over 75\% of blacks showed up at this election, suggesting that they were largely responsible for the success of the

\textsuperscript{269} Ibid., November 1880, 1884, 1888, p. 2
\textsuperscript{270} Ibid., November 1882, 1884, 1886, 1888, 1890, 1892, 1894, 1896, 1898, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{271} Ibid., November 1883, 1887, 1891, 1899, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{272} Cecil Whig, 9 December 1895, p. 1.
Republican Party. At the state and local levels, the high percentage of black turnout in 1895 was repeated in the 1896 presidential election in which over 91% or about 1,029 of blacks went to the polls in Cecil County to elect the Republican candidate, William McKinley, as President. As a result of the high turnout of Republicans during this year, William McKinley won most of the votes in Maryland. For example, 136,978 Republicans voted for him, while 104,746 Democrats voted against him in the state of Maryland. Evidently, the election turnout in Cecil County among blacks increased during presidential elections. Also, the large turnout among black voters in the 1890s may be attributed to blacks' efforts at mobilizing new African American voters through political rallies and colored Republican Club meetings.

The 1880s and the 1890s symbolized an era when Cecil County's blacks not only voted in large numbers, but also formed more Republican Clubs and actively participated at Republican Conventions. An August 27, 1887 edition of the Cecil Star stated, "A Republican primary was held last Saturday at Northeast. The colored people at this meeting were respectful and intelligent. They elected colored delegates to the county Convention. At this meeting, the main discussion was about the temperance cause."

In addition, an October 5, 1889 article in the Cecil Whig reported:

Colored delegates from Cecil County participated at the Republican State Convention. At this meeting, white Republicans recognized the progress that the colored people had made in the past few years and favored legislation ensuring that colored teachers were appointed to colored schools and that they would have equal advantages for education.

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274 Cecil Whig, 4 December 1897, p. 1.
275 Ibid.
277 Ibid.
278 Cecil Whig, 5 October 1889, p. 2.
The fact that Republicans and blacks worked together for a common cause symbolizes Republicans' willingness to put aside racial issues to work with blacks in enacting changes, such as improving education or promoting the Temperance Movement. Indeed, by the 1880s, there were not many articles indicating white Republicans' negative attitudes toward blacks. However, it is significant that none of these newspapers mentioned any incidences in which white Republicans had elevated blacks to the most important positions in their conventions.

In both the 1880s and 1890s, blacks increasingly took part in Republican Conventions and colored clubs. For instance, a September 26, 1896 article in the Cecil Democrat noted, "The colored people of our county attended a Republican State Convention recently at Baltimore."\(^{279}\) Not only did Cecil County's blacks increasingly take part in Republican Conventions in the 1880s and 1890s, but also formed many Colored Republican Clubs. A November 5, 1884 article in the Elkton Appeal revealed:

A meeting of the colored Blaine and Logan Republican Club met in the third District courthouse on Friday evening. The meeting was well attended by Both races. George Gordon, who was chair of the club, remarked on the duty Of the colored race. He encouraged members of his race to be energetic, to Practice economy, start businesses, and to use the power of their mental and Moral facilities to raise themselves to a higher grade.\(^{280}\)

Also, an August 6, 1884 article in the Elkton Appeal indicated, "An enterprising citizen of the Elkton Colored Republican Club is going to Philadelphia to speak with the members of the Colored Cleveland Club of the seventh ward about how to improve the Negro race."\(^{281}\)

\(^{279}\) Cecil Democrat, 26 September 1896, p. 1.
\(^{280}\) Elkton Appeal, 5 November 1884, p. 2.
\(^{281}\) Ibid., 6 August 1884, p. 1.
Perhaps the most influential Republican Club was the Harrison and Morton Colored Republican Club, which was formed in 1888. A July 28, 1888 article in the Cecil Whig reported, “A large number of colored Republicans met on Tuesday evening at a Harrison and Morton Colored Republican Club meeting. They assembled in the Colored People’s Hall in Elkton. Henry Chase was elected president.” In addition, an August 11, 1888 edition of Cecil Whig revealed, “The colored Republicans of Cokesbury organized a Colored Republican Harrison and Morton Club. Joseph Neal is the president of this club.” Clearly, the fact that Colored Republican Clubs discussed how to improve African Americans’ economic, social, and political participation shows that by the early 1880s, Cecil County’s African American Republicans wanted to improve all aspects of their community through politics. Also, it is significant that Colored Republican Clubs from Cecil County met with members of Colored Republican Clubs in other states, such as Pennsylvania. This indicates the strength of Cecil County’s black population and their willingness to work with other African Americans in enacting social, political, and economic change during the 1880s. If a coalition of black Republicans from many states had gathered, they would have had a greater voice in politics and could have acted on a national level to press the Federal Government for civil and political rights. However, the mobilization of blacks at the national level did not occur until 1919 when black Republicans formed the Lincoln League of America.

Similar to the 1880s, African Americans’ participation in Republican clubs was high in Cecil County during the 1890s. In fact, the number of articles concerning Colored Republican Clubs increased in the 1890s. For example, while there were approximately

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283 Ibid.
284 Ibid., 11 August 1888, p. 1.
21 articles in Cecil County’s newspapers in the 1880s discussing Colored Republican Clubs, there were more than 45 during the 1890s. Moreover, Cecil County’s African Americans invited prominent black speakers to Republican Club meetings to discuss issues that were pertinent to the colored race. This signifies the strength of Colored Republican organizations during much of the 1890s. An October 6, 1895 edition of the Elkton Appeal indicated, “Lowndes Colored Republican Club, in Northeast, held an enthusiastic meeting last evening. Leading colored Republicans addressed the meeting.” Furthermore, an October 28, 1899 article in the Cecil Whig explained, “Colored Republican speakers were invited to address the Colored Republican Club Meeting. They also invited white Republicans to attend this meeting.” African Americans’ participation at 1895 Colored Republican Club meetings could have been vital in encouraging more blacks to vote for the Republican Party in Cecil County. This may have contributed to the Republican victory in the gubernatorial election of 1895.

Although blacks took part in Republican conventions from the 1860s to the early twentieth century, only during the 1890s did they acquire political offices within the party. However, Cecil County’s blacks never held elective political office from 1870 to 1910. Also, there is no evidence that African Americans in Cecil County were ever appointed to jobs such as policemen or mail carriers. An August 6, 1898 article in the Cecil Democrat reported, “At the Republican Cecil County Primary Election, David Thomas, colored, was appointed to the Customary Committee on Credentials.” The fact that blacks earned even minor political positions within the Republican Party by the 1890s suggests that their status in politics had improved significantly since the 1860s.

285 Elkton Appeal, 6 October 1895, p. 1.
286 Cecil Whig, 28 October 1899, p. 1.
287 Cecil Democrat, 6 August 1898, p. 1.
However, unlike other southern states during the federal Reconstruction era, Maryland's blacks never achieved high political positions in the Republican Party. It would be many decades before Cecil County's blacks would be voted into elective political office.

Despite African Americans' success at organizing their own Republican Clubs in Cecil County, at serving on Republican Convention Committees, and at mobilizing the black vote, both corruption and violence by whites against blacks during the 1890s existed at the polls. A *Cecil Whig* article from October 28, 1893 explained, "There is bribery of the colored voters in the seventh district (Port Deposit). H.R. Tobert, esquire, notes that there is an organized effort to corrupt and debauch colored voters of the seventh election district. Many whites offer the colored people money not to vote. They should rise up together to bitterly oppose these attempts."289

Indeed, the honesty and moral character of Cecil County's blacks was seen in their refusal to accept bribes during the November 11, 1893 election when a colored man would not take money from Democrats who urged him not to vote for the Republican ticket. This article in the *Cecil Whig* revealed:

The colored voters stood true to their principles. There were efforts by Democrats to buy them by large sums of money and to corrupt a black man of this town. A $10 note was offered for a Democratic candidate, but an old colored man, as poor as he was, refused the money. The colored men of Cecil County deserve the highest praise for their refusal to dishonor themselves.290

Despite the widespread corruption at Cecil County's polls, this black, who refused to be corrupted, embodied the determination and respectable behavior of Cecil County's blacks at political events. Also, the persistence of blacks to vote in times of adversity when

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289 Ibid.
290 Ibid., 11 November 1893, p. 2.
Democrats intimidated them at the polls explained why there was such a high turnout of black voters in Cecil County from 1870 to the early twentieth century. Black political participation in Cecil County would be crucial in persuading whites to give them some social and political concessions.

Whereas the 1870s was an era when blacks obtained many political and social rights, conversely, the twentieth century was a period in which Democrats regained power in Cecil County and attempted to reverse African Americans' political rights. Since the Republican victory of 1895, which Cecil County’s Democrats called “The disaster” of 1895, they sought ways to weaken the Republican Party by disenfranchising Maryland’s African Americans.\(^{291}\)

As a result, in the early 1900s, Democrats attempted to disenfranchise Maryland’s blacks by introducing disenfranchisement legislation to amend the constitution, such as the Poe, Straus, and Digges Amendments.\(^{292}\) These Amendments would be effective in reducing the power of the Republican Party and would ensure that they never won another local or state election.\(^{293}\) The support that Cecil County’s Democrats showed for the three proposed Disenfranchisement Amendments signified that like whites in the South, they sought to find “constitutional means” of removing African American voters.\(^{294}\)

The Poe, Straus, and Digges Amendments were proposed in the General Assembly and were passed through both of its houses by a 3/5 approval. This legislation to amend the constitution was then submitted to the voters of Maryland.\(^{295}\)

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\(^{291}\) *Cecil Democrat*, 17 May 1905, p. 2.

\(^{292}\) Callcott, 115, 126, 132.

\(^{293}\) Ibid.

\(^{294}\) *Cecil County News*, 21 June 1905, p. 2.

\(^{295}\) *Cecil Democrat*, 19 December 1904, p. 2.
The fact that the Poe Amendment was approved by the General Assembly somewhat undermines the argument that Maryland developed on a “middle ground” in politics, social issues, and economics. However, it is significant that the people of Cecil County rejected the proposed amendment. This suggests that unlike other southern states, Cecil County supported a more radical Republican platform. Also, the rejection of the amendment by Cecil County’s citizens points to the more moderate views of Democrats in the county and to the fact that the Poe Amendment was too radical. Therefore, the refusal of Democrats to adopt the Poe Amendment set Cecil County apart from other southern states.

One of the most radical disenfranchisement proposals was the Poe Amendment, drafted by John Prentiss Poe, who was the dean of the University of Maryland Law School, in 1904.\textsuperscript{296} This legislation was similar to disenfranchisement amendments in the south because of its harshness. Like disenfranchisement legislation in Mississippi, it included both grandfather and “understanding” clauses. In fact, its “understanding” clause was even harsher than the ones proposed in South Carolina and Georgia.\textsuperscript{297} The “understanding” clause indicated that a person unable to read must still be able to understand the constitution and give an explanation of any section read to him by registration officials. In an article published on March 29, 1905, the Cecil County News indicated that the Poe Amendment was popular among Democrats in the County. This article revealed:

\begin{quote}
The Poe Amendment (Constitutional Franchise Amendment) was passed by a 3/5\textsuperscript{th} vote and now needs to be approved by the Governor so it can be submitted to the people. In order to qualify to vote, 1\textsuperscript{st} – A person must be able to read or understand any section of the Constitution of the state
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{296} Ibid., 9 January 1905, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{297} Cecil Whig, 12 February 1905, p. 3.
submitted by officers of registration. 2nd — A person who could vote in 1869 or prior to this time is entitled to vote under the new law. 3rd — If a person has lineal descent to a person over 21 in 1906, they can vote. The polls would now be effective in disenfranchising illiterate Negroes. We do not have any apologies for the fact of removing the franchise from this race. In the past, it was a mistake to give them the vote. Perhaps it is the greatest mistake ever made in the political history of this County. People in Cecil County will have a choice to vote for this Amendment, which will be the right step in the right direction.\footnote{Cecil County News, 29 March 1905, p. 1.}

Clearly, this article reflects the deep-seated prejudice among whites toward blacks in Cecil County during the early twentieth century. This may be attributed to the fact that Democrats saw blacks as a threat to their power. The success of the Republican Party in 1895 augmented Democrats' fears that Cecil County's Republicans would challenge Democratic popularity and influence in the county. In fact, an October 12, 1903 article in the Cecil Democrat revealed, “The 1902 voting results for Mr. William Jackson, a Republican candidate for Congress, were 2,084 white votes and 1,068 Negro votes. Negroes composed over 45% of the Republican Party.” These statistics indicate that 2/3 of the Republicans were white.\footnote{Cecil Democrat, 12 October 1903, p. 2.} Another Democrat stated in the October 25, 1903 article in the Cecil Democrat, “It is understood by men that unless Negro suffrage is limited, the government of the state will pass into the hands of Republicans. The Negro is a political and social menace.”\footnote{Ibid., 25 October 1903, p. 2.} Also, some Democrats claimed that there was an increased crime rate among Cecil County's black population and that African Americans were a danger to the stability of Cecil County. For example, Democrats noted in the Cecil Democrat and Cecil County News that there was an average of 120 crimes committed by blacks during the 1890s, while there were 372 cases of black crime in the
early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{301} The statistics on the number of crimes committed by blacks is highly questionable since Democrats may have been citing these cases as anti-black propaganda to persuade whites not to support equality or the black vote. A June 21, 1905 article in the \textit{Cecil County News} represented Democrats’ fears about the black crime rate in Cecil County by explaining, “In the South where there is disenfranchisement, the Negro is more industrious and frugal. In Cecil County where the Negro can vote, there is more crime and laziness among the black race.”\textsuperscript{302} Although the Poe Amendment did not directly specify that blacks could not vote, the “understanding” clause would have made it hard for them to vote since Democrats required blacks to give what they said was a “reasonable explanation” of Maryland’s Constitution to white election officials. Also, the grandfather clause did not apply to blacks since their relatives could not vote prior to 1870.\textsuperscript{303} Therefore, these clauses provided an effective means by which whites could easily disenfranchise blacks.

Even though Cecil County’s Democrats were strong advocates of the Poe Amendment, many whites living in the County thought that its provisions were too harsh and violated the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Despite the fact that many of Cecil County’s Republicans opposed the Poe Amendment, most of their reasons for why the Amendment should be rejected did not focus on African Americans’ political rights but rather on their fears that Democrats would control politics in the County.\textsuperscript{304} A November 11, 1905 article in the \textit{Cecil Whig} indicated, “The purpose of the Poe Amendment is to set the Democratic Party in power. They want to eliminate the two-

\textsuperscript{301} \textit{Cecil County News}, 21 June 1905, p. 1. \\
\textsuperscript{302} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{303} \textit{Cecil Whig}, 11 June 1905, p. 3. \\
\textsuperscript{304} Ibid., 11 November 1905, p. 2.
party system. The Poe Amendment is most dangerous because it is un-American, un-
Republican, and un-Democratic.\textsuperscript{305} The unwillingness of most Republicans to denounce
the Poe Amendment on the grounds that it violated African Americans’ rights indicated
that even white Republicans in Cecil County did not support black political equality in
the early twentieth century. Rather, many whites rejected the Amendment because they
believed it would disenfranchise illiterate whites or foreigners whose ancestors had not
voted prior to 1869.\textsuperscript{306} The Cecil Democrat reported on January 13, 1905, “The Poe
Disenfranchisement Amendment was rejected overwhelmingly by the people of our
county largely on grounds that our citizens of foreign origin feared that they would lose
the vote.”\textsuperscript{307}

Not only did some Republicans denounce the Poe Amendment as too harsh, but also
Governor J. Warfield, an ardent Democrat who did not support black equality, refused to
sign the Poe Amendment. He rejected this Amendment because it banned intelligent and
property owning blacks from voting.\textsuperscript{308} A March 19, 1904 article in the Cecil Democrat
described, “We did not anticipate opposition by the Governor when the Poe Amendment
was submitted to him for his signature. He is in favor of restricting the voting privileges
of Negroes, but it is of his opinion that Negroes of property of a certain value and those
who pay taxes should not be declined suffrage. It is unfortunate for Democrats, and it is
difficult for the majority of people in this County to vote for the bill without his
signature.”\textsuperscript{309} It is significant that Governor Warfield refused to sign the bill on grounds
that property-owning blacks would be disenfranchised. His opinion indicated the more

\textsuperscript{305} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{306} Cecil Democrat, 13 January 1905, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{307} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{308} Ibid, 19 March 1904, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{309} Ibid.
moderate views of Cecil County's whites and their willingness to often uphold the rights of blacks who owned property and had successful occupations.

In the early 1900s, Republicans' opposition to the Amendment, blacks' efforts to petition against it, and Governor Warfield's refusal to sign the Poe Amendment undermined its popularity among the people of Cecil County and other Maryland counties. In November of that year, the people of Maryland overwhelmingly defeated the Poe Amendment. On November 6, 1905, the Cecil Whig reported that 1,709 people voted for the Amendment, while 2,162 voted against it. The fact that the Poe Amendment was defeated among Cecil County's whites indicated that both Democrats and Republicans would not adopt radical measures, such as the Poe Disenfranchisement Amendment. The Cecil Democrat emphasized in a November 8, 1905 article, "The Disenfranchisement Amendment in Maryland was defeated at the polls, and local Democratic tickets in this County have suffered severely. One-half of statewide Democratic candidates went down in defeat during the congressional election, but the party still remained strong in Cecil County in the first decade of the twentieth century." Although Democrats did indeed regain most of their power in Cecil County after the 1904 Congressional Election, the fact that the Amendment was defeated in Cecil County may be attributed to the fact that Cecil County's African Americans campaigned against the amendment by holding meetings and organizing Republican clubs. Most importantly, both Democrats and Republicans voted against it because it was too radical and did not differentiate from blacks who owned property.

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310 Cecil Whig, 6 November 1905, p. 2.
311 Cecil Democrat, 8 November 1905, p. 2.
By 1907, the Democratic Party had completely regained its strength and reorganized the party in Cecil County. As in 1904, the race issue still dominated the Democratic agenda of 1907. Isaac Straus, who was the Attorney General of Maryland at this time, proposed a new Disenfranchisement Amendment, which divided voters into six categories of people and stipulated that the Grandfather and Naturalization Clauses would not expire.\footnote{312} An October 9, 1909 article in the Cecil Whig indicated:

The provisions for the proposed Amendment are: Anyone can vote who voted in 1869 or before. If they are a male descendant of a person who voted in 1869 or before, they are permitted to vote. Also, if they are foreign born or have been naturalized between the years 1869 to 1909, they are allowed to vote. There are two classes of Negroes who can vote. These include any person who, in the presence of the officers of registration, shall in their own handwriting, with pen and ink, without any aid, suggestion or memorandum whatsoever and without any question or direction addressed to him by any of the officers of registration make application to register correctly, stating in such application his name, age, date and place of birth, residence and occupation, at the time and for the two years next preceding, the name or names of his employer or employers, and whether he has previously voted, and if so the state, county or city and district or precinct in which he voted last, and also the name in full of the President of the United States, of one of the Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States, of the Governor of Maryland, of one of the Judges of the Court of Appeals of Maryland and of the Mayor of Baltimore City, if the applicant resides in Baltimore City, or of one of the County Commissioners of the county in which the applicant resides. A person, or the husband of a person, who owned and was accessed on the tax books for $500 of real or personal property, and had owned, paid taxes on, and had tax receipts for this property for the preceding two years.\footnote{313}

Although Democrats in Cecil County supported the Straus Amendment, the fact that this bill was less harsh on African American voters than the Poe Amendment indicates that by this time, Cecil County rejected radical amendments, such as the Poe Disenfranchisement Amendment.\footnote{314} Unlike the Poe Amendment, the Straus Amendment did not mention race and still allowed blacks to vote. Even ardent Democrats, such as ex-

\footnote{312 Cecil Whig, 9 October 1909, p. 1.}
\footnote{313 Ibid.}
\footnote{314 Ibid, 18 September 1909, p. 1.}