Governor Warfield who had opposed the Poe Amendment, supported the Straus Disenfranchisement Amendment. In 1909, he stated, "I will support the adoption of the Suffrage Amendment to protect the rights of all white citizens. There will be a test for Negroes and foreigners who desire to vote. It is free of bias and prejudice."\textsuperscript{315} Instead of only focusing on race, the Straus Amendment now differentiated between literate and illiterate African Americans. In 1909, the Amendment was submitted to the people of Maryland for approval, but like the Poe Amendment, it was defeated.\textsuperscript{316} The fact that there was only a 1% margin between those who voted for the Amendment and those who voted against it was less than it had been in 1904 suggests that more whites approved it because they claimed that it called for a "fair" constitutional test than the Poe Amendment. For example, the vote against the Amendment was 2,198, while 2,173 people approved the Amendment in Cecil County.\textsuperscript{317} It is significant that more people showed up to vote for the Straus Amendment. This may indicate that more people in Cecil County considered the Amendment as less harsh than the Poe Amendment of 1904. Many Democrats who considered the Poe Amendment as too radical and had stayed home in the previous election showed up at the polls to vote for the Straus Amendment. However, the Amendment still was aimed at disenfranchising blacks because it required that they take a difficult test before they were permitted to vote.

In 1910, Democrats in Maryland attempted to pass one last Disenfranchisement Amendment, called the Digges Amendment.\textsuperscript{318} The two Democrats who were

\textsuperscript{315} Cecil Democrat, 19 August 1910, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{316} Cecil Whig, 28 December 1909, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{317} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{318} "The Digges Amendment," Cecil County News, 30 March 1910, p. 3.
responsible in framing the bill were William Frere and Walter Digges.\textsuperscript{319} Like the Poe Amendment, the Digges Amendment was more radical than the Straus Amendment. It called for all people voting who had $500 of property and paid taxes to register two years before an election. Also, Democrats tried to pass registration bills. These were radical provisions attached to the Digges Amendment, which noted that starting in 1910 only whites were permitted to register to vote for an election. This measure was the desperate attempt by Democrats to disenfranchise black voters. In a March 30, 1910 article, the \textit{Cecil County News} explained, “The Democratic legislature this past week submitted to the people an amendment to disqualify the Negro as a voter. They said the Fifteenth Amendment was never accepted by Democrats as a whole. The Digges Amendment provides only white men to register to vote.”\textsuperscript{320} A 1911 edition of the \textit{Cecil Democrat} noted that since the Digges Amendment included radical provisions, Governor Austin Crothers, who originally supported the registration part of the Amendment, thought it best to veto it. The rest of the provisions of the Digges Amendment were overwhelmingly defeated in 1911 by the people of Maryland.\textsuperscript{321} The defeat of the Digges Amendment indicated that people in Cecil County and in other parts of Maryland would not favor radical amendments which disenfranchised blacks. These attitudes, held by many people in Maryland, set apart their state from white people in other southern states who supported Disenfranchisement Amendments. The rejection of the Poe, Straus, and Diggs Amendments marked major victories for Cecil County’s African Americans, who had actively participated in politics since the 1870s. It is significant that blacks were not disenfranchised in Maryland and held onto what political and social rights they had

\textsuperscript{319} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{320} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{321} \textit{Cecil Democrat}, 31 December 1911, p. 3.
gained. Also, Cecil County's blacks consistently turned out in large numbers to vote from 1870 to 1910. When the Kerwin Law was passed in the early 1900s, blacks still did not stay home from the polls. Unlike other southern states, blacks retained their rights, which revealed the moderate attitudes of Cecil County's whites.

When Cecil County's Democrats were promoting the passage of the Disenfranchisement Amendments, African Americans did not stay away from the polls but instead voted in great numbers. For instance, the average turnout for Cecil County's African Americans who voted during the 1900, 1902, 1904, 1906, and 1908 congressional elections was approximately 70% as opposed to 76% of blacks voting during the 1890, 1892, 1894, 1896, and 1898 congressional elections. Although there was only a slight decrease from the 1890s in African Americans' participation in the congressional elections, by the first decade of the 1900s, there was still a high percentage of blacks voting in Cecil County. This may be attributed to the fact that Cecil County's blacks were determined to defeat Disenfranchisement Amendments, which would be a major setback in African American political rights. Conversely, black turnout at gubernatorial elections decreased by approximately 14% from the 1890s to the early twentieth century. Although Cecil County's blacks' participation in presidential elections had decreased about 10% in the early twentieth century from their average turnout of 81% in the 1890s, the high number of blacks who appeared at the polls on Election Day indicates blacks' quest in Cecil County to elect Republicans to office and to defeat racist legislation.

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323 Ibid., November 1903, 1907, p. 1.
324 Ibid., November 1900, 1904, 1908, p. 1.
Not only did Cecil County’s blacks enthusiastically cast their ballots during the early twentieth century, but also they continued to participate at Republican Conventions, organized Republican Clubs, and had meetings to discuss the need to increase black turnout on Election Day.\textsuperscript{325} Similar to previous decades, Cecil County’s African Americans either worked with white Republicans on committees or set up their own clubs and conventions. A September 19, 1901 article in the \textit{Cecil County News} revealed, “At the last Republican Convention, Negroes and whites met together to discuss the dangers of the Democratic Party in this County.”\textsuperscript{326} Also, a November 28, 1903 edition of the \textit{Cecil Whig} explained, “A Republican meeting was held in Elkton on Friday evening. The section of the hall was packed by a solid phalanx of Negroes and whites, who talked about the slander of the Democratic Party and Democrats’ goal of white supremacy.”\textsuperscript{327} The willingness of some of Cecil County’s whites and blacks to work together shows that they were able to put aside racial differences in the early twentieth century to achieve a common goal, such as preventing the passage of Disenfranchisement Amendments. Blacks’ participation in Republican Conventions was vital in training them to head their own organizations in the early twentieth century.

Colored Republican Clubs continued during the first decade of the 1900s. An October 25, 1901 article in the \textit{Cecil Whig} revealed, “A Negro Republican meeting was held at Cedar Hill. A colored speaker, Clayton Smith, addressed the meeting and explained that they must all vote for the Republican ticket because Republicans know that the black man holds the balance of power in the Republican Party and cannot survive without him.”\textsuperscript{328}

\textsuperscript{325} \textit{Cecil County News}, 19 September 1901, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{326} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{327} \textit{Cecil Whig}, 28 November 1903, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{328} Ibid., 25 October 1901, p. 3.
In addition, an October 31, 1904 article in the *Cecil Whig* reported, "The Stevenson Williams Colored Republican Club in the seventh district met last week where high-esteemed candidates hoped for future success and called for programs to defeat the Negro Amendment, which will prevent them from voting. The president of this meeting is Mr. Jacob Miller." Both black conventions and Colored Republican Clubs represented blacks' strength and determination to fight for their own political rights, such as by organizing movements to defeat the Disenfranchisement Amendment of 1904 (Poe Amendment). Also, Cecil County's African Americans may have viewed their collective efforts to organize club meetings as necessary for them to gain their political and social rights.

Perhaps one of the most notable accomplishments of Cecil County’s African American population was blacks’ attainment of better political positions in the early twentieth century. However, blacks still were not chosen for elective office. Prior to this time, blacks had only served as delegates on committees. A March 24, 1904 article in the *Cecil County News* reported, "Negroes were appointed this week to the Republican Board of Cecil County." Furthermore, an October 20, 1909 article in the *Cecil County News* explained, "The Republican Committee demands that members of the Negro Republican Party be in all districts of this county on Election Day. These Negroes were appointed as managers of the polls." It is significant that blacks in Cecil County seemed to be able to gain better political jobs at the same time when Democrats were pushing for the disenfranchisement of African Americans. A June 17, 1910 article in the

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329 "Colored Republican Club," *Cecil Whig*, 31 October 1904, p. 3.
332 Ibid., 20 October 1909, p. 2.
Cecil County News indicated that before the early twentieth century, blacks had not served as managers at the polls and had only achieved minor positions within the Republican Party. This shows that despite the prejudice of whites toward Cecil County’s blacks, Republicans saw blacks’ participation in basic political offices as vital to the survival of their Party. As a result, they promoted blacks to political positions, such as managers of registration areas. These jobs were only minor political positions but were important in training Cecil County’s African Americans to better organize political meetings and protest movements in the future, which would be key in their future attainment of their civil and political rights.

Prejudice and Violence

Although Cecil County differed from other counties in Southern states because it had developed along a “middle ground” from 1864 to 1910 and a strong free black community had emerged prior to the Civil War, like whites in many Southern states, some of Cecil County’s whites displayed anti-black attitudes toward African Americans. They excluded blacks from public accommodations and formed organizations, such as the Ku Klux Klan, who made violent threats against white Republicans as well as African Americans who challenged the status quo in Cecil County. Once Cecil County’s slaves were emancipated in 1864, white Democrats feared that African Americans would compete with white laborers for well-paying jobs and would strive for both social and political equality with whites. These concerns of some of Cecil County’s Democrats were most evident in articles published in the Cecil County News and the Cecil

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334 Cecil Whig, 10 June 1868, p. 1.
335 Ibid.
Democrat, where Democrats argued that blacks were inferior to whites and, therefore, needed to be controlled.

Not only did whites voice their anti-black attitudes in Cecil County’s newspapers from the 1860s to the early twentieth century, but they also practiced de facto segregation against blacks by excluding them from public places, such as white schools, churches, and concerts. There are many accounts recorded in the Cecil Whig and the Cecil Democrat, which explained that African Americans had to sit in separate areas at lectures and concerts during the 1860s. From the 1860s to the 1890s, Cecil County’s whites continued to separate blacks from public institutions through de facto segregation. In fact, newspaper accounts written from the 1860s through the early twentieth century consistently voice prejudice against African Americans living in Cecil County. This may be attributed to the fact that some whites considered the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 as a threat to the socio-political order and the dominance of white power since African Americans could better agitate for their social and political rights through the ballot. Also, in the 1890s and early 1900s, larger numbers of African Americans were delegates in Republican conventions and took minor political offices within Cecil County’s Republican Party.336

In fact, by the early 1900s, Democrats’ concerns about black equality in Cecil County were so great that they advocated for de jure segregation through the passage of the Kerwin Act in 1904.337 This law not only stipulated that Maryland’s African Americans must sit in designated Jim Crow cars on trains, but also required that they sit in separate

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accommodations on steam boats.338 However, some of Cecil County’s blacks resisted the Kerwin Act by questioning the law in court or by refusing to move to the Jim Crow car. Blacks’ unwillingness to accept Jim Crow legislation in Cecil County signifies their unwavering determination to overcome the prejudice against them and to achieve social and political equality with whites. The fact that there are few reported lynching cases in Cecil County signifies that it had developed along a “middle ground.”

Some of the most significant indicators of whites’ “Negro phobic” views toward African Americans living in the County were the numerous articles in the Cecil Democrat and the Cecil County News, which reflected their views on the inferiority of Cecil County’s blacks. While the most anti-black articles were published around the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, a significant number of anti-black articles in the Cecil Democrat were published in 1864, 1867, and 1869.339 After the emancipation of Maryland’s slaves in 1864, there were many articles expressing Democrats’ fears that blacks would commit more crime, would refuse to work, and would gain equality with whites on all levels unless they were separated from them. A June 17, 1865 article, Negro Phobia, in the Cecil Democrat reported, “An insect prevails in our region and owes its luster to its flight. Action is the watchword of agitation. Republicans struggle for African Americans elevation. Next, blacks will be given the vote.”340 Clearly, this article reveals Democrats’ fears that as a result of emancipation, blacks will question their inferior status, and Republicans might give them additional political and social concessions. In addition, another June 17, 1865 article in the Cecil Democrat embodied Democrats’ attitudes during the early 1860s that African Americans in Cecil County were

338 Ibid.
339 Cecil Democrat, 5 May 1864, 28 June 1867, 13 February 1869, p. 2, 1, 1.
intellectually and morally inferior to whites. The article stated, “The African may be our brother according to the Republican Party who helped free him, but I don’t believe it myself. The African is not our sister, brother, or father. He is like an animal who lacks intellect and is inclined to commit crime if he is not controlled by the superior race. Soon, idle Negroes will crowd our almshouses and jails.”

The fact that both of these articles were published a year after the emancipation of Cecil County’s African Americans suggests that some Democrats were concerned that newly-freed African Americans would challenge their political and social clout by participating in politics and in other community-based organizations. Democrats used anti-black articles as political propaganda to reinforce what they claimed was the inferiority of blacks and to discourage Republicans from giving additional political or social rights to African Americans. Often Democrats fabricated articles on black crime and used them for political purposes. Some of the most anti-black articles were written at times when whites thought that blacks were a threat to their political, social, or economic success. Indeed, prior to the emancipation of Maryland’s slaves, there are fewer articles demonstrating whites’ prejudice toward blacks. For example, in 1863, there are approximately 20 articles against blacks, while in 1864, there are over 150 articles expressing Democrats’ fears of African Americans’ dominance in society. Many Negro phobic articles, written from 1864 to 1865, can be attributed to the fact that newly emancipated blacks were active in Cecil County in striving to better themselves. Thus, prejudice exhibited by whites in Cecil County was more an issue of social, economic, and political power rather than race.

341 Ibid.
Similar to the white supremacist articles published in 1864 and 1865, those in the 1867 edition of the *Cecil Democrat* emphasized whites’ fears concerning the threat of African American equality with whites.\(^{342}\) There are even some articles written in the *Cecil Whig* by Republicans expressing that the emancipation of Cecil County’s blacks does not indicate that there will be perfect equality between the races. A January 26, 1867 article in the *Cecil Whig* revealed the prejudice of some white Republicans by stating, “Emancipation does not mean perfect equality between the races. It would be absurd that Negro equality meant that Negroes would sit at the white man’s table, stand in his parlor, and be made the suitor of the white man’s daughter. There is no connection between his social rights and his political rights.”\(^{343}\) The fact that even Republicans argued that African Americans should not be socially equal with whites shows that like Democrats in Cecil County, they considered themselves as superior to the African American race. Although Republicans wanted blacks to vote and gain basic rights, such as freedom from slavery, many Republicans still did not want blacks to achieve major political office or associate with whites on a regular basis.

Furthermore, articles written by Democrats warned against black equality but were more radical than those composed by white Republicans.\(^{344}\) An April 11, 1867 article in the *Cecil Democrat* explained, “If Democrats do not vote for the Constitution of 1867, there is a threat that Negroes will be placed on an equal footing with whites in all matters. Negroes have a lower mental capacity than whites and are subhuman like creatures. They must be controlled by the superior class, or there will be chaos in the state of

\(^{342}\) *Cecil Democrat*, 25 April 1867, p. 1.

\(^{343}\) *Cecil Whig*, 26 January 1867, p. 1.

\(^{344}\) *Cecil Democrat*, 11 April 1867, p. 2.
Maryland. It is significant that both articles admonishing whites against African American dominance appear in the *Cecil Whig* and *Cecil Democrat* prior to the decision about whether to accept or reject the Constitution of 1867, in which some Democrats called for a return to slavery and strict laws restricting the rights of African Americans living within the County. White Republicans may have stressed the need for blacks to have basic rights but that they should not be equal in order to convince moderate and conservative Republicans to vote against the Constitution of 1867. On the other hand, Democrats used racist articles to scare other Democrats into voting for the proposed Constitution.

By the end of the 1860s, the *Cecil Democrat* continued to publish many articles exhibiting prejudice against Cecil County’s black population. However, they now included articles that purposely distorted facts to make it appear that Cecil County’s African American population was immoral and prone to violent behavior. A July 24, 1869 edition of the *Cecil Whig* reported that it received a letter stating that the *Cecil Democrat* accused blacks who went on an excursion as rowdy, but according to the author of the letter, they were well behaved and orderly. The July 21, 1869 letter revealed:

> I very seldom look at the *Cecil Democrat*, but curiosity led me to look over it last Saturday. I read an article on a Negro excursion. The *Cecil Democrat* claimed that Negroes at this event were rowdy and that a white man was badly beaten by a Negro. The newspaper pretended to give an account of the excursion of the colored people on board a steamer from Sassafras Neck to Baltimore. When the facts were gathered from my friend, who was a witness to the event, they proved that this account in the *Cecil Democrat* is a willful misinterpretation of the truth and is unjust slander upon this oppressed people. The Democrats often misinterpret facts. They said the boat left at a wharf in

345 Ibid.
346 *Cecil Whig*, 24 July 1869, p. 3.
347 Ibid.
Fredericktown. Not a fact. They said that the Negroes were violent. Not a fact. The witness to this event says the excursionists debarking from the boat were conducting themselves in an orderly manner until several white men arrived with clubs and beat them. The Cecil Democrat blames these Negroes for beating the white man. This article is slander.348

The willingness of white Democrats to write untruthful articles about the violent and disorderly behavior of Cecil County’s blacks indicates that like Democrats in other southern states, Cecil County’s Democrats used articles for political purposes to persuade people not to give blacks any concessions. The article about the black excursion was published only a year before the Fifteenth Amendment was passed. Democrats may have embellished the account of the colored excursion in order to discredit blacks’ conduct in Cecil County so they could better justify why blacks should not be given the vote.

During the 1870s, many anti-black articles were also published in the Cecil Democrat. However, there are many more articles emphasizing the inferiority of blacks than in the 1860s. This may be attributed to the fact that Democrats were opponents of the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment. Democrats pointed to both historical events and science in their attempts to prove that blacks were inferior to whites. For example, a December 23, 1871 article in the Cecil Democrat noted, “Negroes in Rome caused uproar through the streets of Rome. They even issued a decree that the Negro was an enemy of the country and was a master of depravity. The colored of this County, like the Negroes of Rome, are uncivilized.”349 Also, a May 3, 1873 article published in the Cecil Democrat reported, “According to scientific facts, it is well-known that Negroes can never be self-supporting, and their minds are like animal minds.”350 Perhaps the article that most embodied whites’ fears about blacks’ social and political rights in the 1870s is titled The Almshouse Ring.

348 Ibid.
350 Ibid., 3 May 1873, p. 1.
This May 30, 1874 article in the Cecil Democrat stated, “Fifteen years ago we were further away from the devilish wrongs we now so patiently endure. The Civil Rights Bill is intended to hurry us to the last level. The earth will open her mouth and swallow up our people who threw away their richest liberties ever enjoyed for the blackest fanaticism that ever disgraced and enlightened people.”

Not only did Democrats publish anti-black articles emphasizing African Americans’ inferior intellect, but also pointed to what they described as their uncivilized behavior. In order to discredit blacks’ intellect and behavior, Cecil County’s newspapers focused on the supposed superstition and fear of ghosts among the African American population.

An April 15, 1876 Cecil Democrat article explained:

Superstition prevails among the Negroes of this County. At the Scott Brothers’ Bone Meal [a factory], a Negro named Nicholas received wounds and got lockjaw. He eventually died. For two Sundays, there has been an extremely low mournful noise. This can be credited to the valve on a pipe blowing easily back and fourth, but the Negroes of this County would not listen to that explanation. It was Nicholas’ ghost and nothing else. They claimed that the bone meal was infested with goblins and the supernatural. Negroes of our County would not go into the bone meal, even if they were paid. Negroes can easily rob our hen roost, but when they are offered a job with good pay, $20 for four nights to go into the bone meal, they say, “I don’t want clothes, I don’t want food, I don’t want money. I’d like to have dat money, but I don’t like to work, and there are ghosts in dat bone meal. My rent is even due, but that is not a sin. I can’t go.” This shows the laziness and superstition of Negroes in our County.

By pointing to blacks’ superstition and irrational behavior, whites attempted to justify why they should not be given their political, social, or economic rights.

Some Democrats published articles on African Americans’ lawlessness and what they claimed was blacks’ strong propensity to act immorally. An August 26, 1876 article in the Cecil Democrat argued:

351 “The Almshouse Ring,” Cecil Democrat, 30 May 1874, p. 3.
353 Ibid.
On cars going from Chester Heights to Port Deposit, there were a variety of Negroes riding in them. Most Negroes on this trainload of darkies were rowdy and childlike. The criminal tendencies of the Negroes in our County prove why they should not be given equal rights. We believe in the equality of law and justice but not in equal political privileges. Charles Sumner will try to get through Congress the Equality Bill to level the Negro up and the white man down [sic]. It is complete equality, which is degrading our County and poisoning the morals of our people. Order is the first law. In the races of people, there is no equality. The African, with his war club and countless wives, is not an equal of a German. Equality is a grim falsehood.354

Most likely, white Democrats fabricated this article for use as political propaganda in convincing white Republicans and moderate Democrats not to accept black voters. It was published at the time of a presidential election and was designed to prove to whites that blacks were prone to violent behavior and should not be given additional social and political rights. This article may have convinced other Democrats to join together to guarantee that their party would not lose influence in the politics of Cecil County. Also, such articles might have been read by conservative Republicans, who could be instrumental in persuading moderate Republicans not to vote for civil or political rights for African Americans in Maryland. It is significant that Democrats cited incorrect evidence in the article. They state that Charles Sumner supports the Equality Bill. However, at the time the article was published, Charles Sumner was already dead. Thus, the fact that Democrats cite inaccurate evidence further points to the fact that this article was not truthful and only used for political purposes.

In the 1880s, the number of anti-black articles sharply decreased. For example, while there are about 210 articles in the 1870s editions of the Cecil Democrat against blacks, there are only 54 negative accounts in it in the 1880s. The decrease in articles may be due to the fact that apparently some Democrats did not consider Republicans or African

354 Cecil Democrat, 26 August 1876, p. 1.
Americans as a major threat to their power during this decade. This may be the case because Democrats had obtained hegemony in Cecil County, and national Reconstruction had ended in 1877. At this time, Democrats were content with their status quo and felt that they had a solid lead in all elections. In contrast to the 1870s when African Americans were given the vote, in the 1880s, Cecil County’s African Americans were not given major political concessions. However, most of the anti-black articles published in Cecil County’s newspapers during the 1880s seem to focus more on African Americans’ idleness than on their equal rights. A June 26, 1880 article in the *Cecil Democrat* stated, “There are many Negroes in the County’s almshouses because they refuse to work. A colored man known as Henry wanders Bow and High Streets, collecting rags and scraps of food. If African Americans in this County would work for a living, they would not encounter such problems.” Also, a January 29, 1881 article in the *Cecil Democrat* reported, “Not a colored man in town could be induced to work on a farm in this County for money this week. A second district farmer tried to induce them by offering considerable pay, but he was unable to convince them. This does not speak well of our colored people.”

There were even fewer anti-black articles in the *Cecil Democrat* during the 1890s. For example, there are only 42 articles during this decade attacking blacks as inferior. Although Republicans gained power in 1895 and Democrats lost their influence at the local and state levels, Democrats may not have published as many anti-black articles because they may have felt that they would not attract the votes of moderate Democrats. In fact, some moderate Democrats supported the black vote and limited social and

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political concessions for African Americans in Cecil County. Fabricated articles on
blacks could possibly cause moderate Democrats to split with the Democratic Party.
Since the Democratic Party was weaker in the 1890s and needed the support of all
Democrats, conservative Democrats may not have wanted to risk the fragmentation of
their party by offending moderate Democrats.

Most anti-black articles continued to focus on the poverty and laziness of Cecil
County's blacks. A February 8, 1890 article in the Cecil Democrat indicated, "The
colored people of our County will not work for a living. Many Negroes live in our
Almshouses and insane asylums. Last Saturday the trustees of the poor and insane took
in Harriet Veal, colored, and Henry Bordley, colored."\textsuperscript{358} Accordingly, a February 13,
1897 article in the Cecil Democrat emphasized the idleness of Cecil County's blacks by
stating:

Before the Revolutionary War, there was no legislation supporting the maintenance
Of the poor. In 1787, laws were passed to support the poor. The Almshouse in
This town accepted many freed slaves who had lived in poverty, and they also
Took in orphaned children. Today the 2 story insane asylum for the mentally
Ill is separated from the Almshouse, and there is a graveyard for paupers in the
Potters' Field. Most of the inmates of the insane asylum and Almshouses today
Are unruly and vagrant Negroes. Emancipation has swelled our population.

The author of this article further pointed to the idleness of Cecil County's African
Americans by including a list of Almshouse inmates, mostly composed of African
Americans. Clearly, such fabricated articles were written by whites who wanted to make
it appear that Cecil County's African Americans were lazy and lived in poverty. In
reality, most of Cecil County's African Americans did not live in Almshouses.

According to the 1880 and 1890 censuses, only about 10% of Cecil County's blacks lived

\textsuperscript{358} Cecil Democrat, 8 February 1890, p. 3.
there. By the 1880s and 1890s, many of Cecil County’s African Americans owned a small house or a farm and were a potential threat to white power. Thus, anti-black articles served as a tool in pressing for and legitimizing white power.

During the early twentieth century, the number of articles denouncing Cecil County’s African Americans increased significantly. For instance, while there were only approximately 95 articles in both the 1880s and 1890s edition of the Cecil Democrat, from 1900 to 1910, there were over 210 articles documenting whites’ prejudice toward Cecil County’s blacks. The increased number of anti-black articles may have been used as political rhetoric by Democrats to justify the Kerwin Act, which segregated African Americans from white train cars and steamship seats. Also, such articles were written to persuade whites to vote for disenfranchisement legislation to amend the Constitution. An April 14, 1903 article in the Cecil Democrat emphasized, “The Uncle Tom’s Cabin Troupe Parade was one of the most degrading and disgusting exhibitions ever witnessed here. Colored and white sympathizers paraded in costume along with a brass band. They protested the injustice in the South and in this County.” Also, in the Midland Journal, a March 1, 1901 article reported, “The book The Negro as a Beast, which claims to cite Bible evidence explaining that the Negro is inferior to the white race, has sold over 36,000 copies in Cecil County and has been the latest sensation here.” Both these articles attempt to justify why Cecil County’s blacks were segregated in the early twentieth century. Whites made it appear that blacks were subhuman and uncivilized. It is very unlikely that the book The Negro as a Beast sold 36,000 copies in Cecil County.

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360 Cecil Whig, 19 August 1905, p. 3.
361 Cecil Democrat, 14 April 1903, p. 2.
Democrats may have reported such a large number of books sold to make it appear that the large majority of Cecil County's populated supported anti-black views.

Not only did whites reflect their Negro phobic attitudes in the *Cecil County News*, *Cecil Democrat*, *Midland Journal*, and occasionally the *Cecil Whig*, but also held minstrel shows, which parodied black intellect and behavior. These shows first appeared during the late 1870s in Cecil County. Like the increased number of anti-black attitudes in the 1870s editions of Cecil County's newspapers, minstrel shows may have been popular at this time due to the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment and the civil rights given to blacks by white Republicans. These shows provided entertainment to Cecil County's whites and acted as outlets for them to vent their fears and frustrations concerning the threat of black power. Through minstrel shows, whites could admonish other whites why African Americans should not be given the vote or other political and social concessions. By degrading blacks in these shows, whites felt better justified to condone segregating them in public places as well as forming anti-black organizations, such as the Ku Klux Klan. A February 8, 1879 article in the *Port Deposit Correspondence* announced, "The minstrel entertainment, held last evening by the Puprez and Benedict, held a black face entertainment parodying the unruly behavior of blacks in this County. The show attracted a large audience, and they seemed to enjoy the whole affair. It was the finest kind of entertainment given in the Hall."

In addition, a minstrel show, held in July of 1873, insulted African Americans' intellect in Cecil

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365 Ibid.
County by claiming that blacks believe that they are made out of clay.\textsuperscript{366} The \textit{Cecil Democrat} described the show by indicating:

A minstrel show of the best quality was held last Saturday. It was a major success. A black face skit was held on the subject of Negroes’ low intellect. A darkie gave the following reason why the colored race is superior to the white race. All men are made of clay and like pipes are more valuable when highly colored.\textsuperscript{367}

Like other forms of anti-black propaganda, minstrel shows decreased in popularity during the 1880s and 1890s.\textsuperscript{368} The lower number of minstrel shows might be attributed to the fact that during the 1880s, Democratic power was more secure, and few additional political or civil rights were awarded to African Americans. For instance, while there are 45 accounts of minstrel shows held in Cecil County during the 1870s, from 1880 to 1890, there are only 28 articles in Cecil County’s newspapers describing minstrel entertainment with blackface skits. One of the most prominent minstrel companies of the 1890s in Cecil County was The Johnson’s Minstrel Company, who performed regularly in Ford’s Opera House.\textsuperscript{369} A May 28, 1892 article in the \textit{Port Deposit Correspondence} explained, “Bills are out for Johnson’s Minstrel Company who will appear at Ford’s Opera House on the 31\textsuperscript{st}. . . . There will be an impersonation of the Negroes living in this town.”\textsuperscript{370} By the 1880s and 1890s, minstrel shows were becoming a routine part of white culture in Cecil County. Like minstrel shows performed in the 1870s, those held in the 1880s and 1890s, exaggerate African Americans’ behavior in Cecil County and did not accurately represent the character of black communities in the County. Often blackface skits were aimed at hardworking blacks whom Democrats feared would advance both socially and

\textsuperscript{366} \textit{Cecil Democrat}, 15 July 1873, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{367} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{368} \textit{Cecil Whig}, 29 May 1895, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{369} \textit{Port Deposit Correspondence}, 28 May 1892, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{370} Ibid.
economically and rarely parodied the behavior of unsuccessful African Americans.

Although some minstrel shows may have only been used for entertainment purposes, some Democrats may have organized minstrel shows for political purposes to convince whites not to give blacks social and political rights.

Interestingly, during the 1880s, whites performing in blackface skits actually extolled blacks who knew their "proper place" in society and refused to question the status quo.

A September 12, 1891 edition of the Cecil Whig reported:

Johnson's Minstrel Company held a minstrel show with a blackface entertainment last Saturday night. At this event, a eulogy was delivered in honor of Hezekiah Caldwell, a highly respected colored man. There was no prejudice by whites towards this man. He never favored the colored vote and never cast a ballot himself. He favored the colonization of Liberia. He will be missed by whites and Negroes alike.\textsuperscript{371}

It is significant that whites used minstrel shows as forums to discuss "the ideal" African American citizen in Cecil County. By emphasizing that "respectable blacks" did not wish to vote and never strove for equal rights, whites provided a message to blacks who watched the minstrel shows that they must not challenge white dominance in political and social issues. Only if they followed this advice, would whites respect them.

During the early twentieth century, minstrel shows rebounded in popularity in Cecil County. The increased number of minstrel shows may be credited to Democrats' push for the Jim Crow Law. Minstrel shows served as useful propaganda for white Democrats who wanted to convince Republicans that blacks should be segregated in public places and should not vote. One of the most notable minstrel companies at this time was Hi Henry's Big City Minstrels. A November 22, 1902 edition of the Cecil Democrat revealed, "Hi Henry's Big City Minstrels will perform on Monday, November 24. Last

\textsuperscript{371} Cecil Whig, 12 September 1891, p. 2.
Saturday they also performed in Elkton and held a large parade at noon. The blackface skit was excellent and accurately represented the behavior of Negroes in this County. Tickets for the upcoming show will be sold at Well’s Drug Store and will be 10 cents for children and 25 cents to 35 cents for adults, depending on the seating.”

Not only did professional companies perform minstrel shows in Cecil County, but also they had become so popular in the early twentieth century that local societies organized such events. For instance, the Elkton Boys Club presented a minstrel show in the Elkton Opera House. The Cecil Whig on October 25, 1904 explained, “The show that the Elkton Boys Club presented was the best ever held in this County. There was a large audience who appreciated the meritorious jig dancing of boys who performed the blackface skit. They sang songs, such as Down Where the Cotton Grows and Polly Wolly.” Also, a Cecil County News article published on July 18, 1905 indicated, “Lady minstrels who are members of the Young Ladies Society in Elkton gave a genuine burnt cork minstrel show at the Elkton Opera House on Wednesday evening. The entertainment was very successful, and the money raised from the show will be used to benefit the Union Hospital in Cecil County.” Similar to professional minstrel shows, those sponsored by local societies also inaccurately portrayed the behavior of most of Cecil County’s blacks. Also, like professional companies, local minstrel performances served as vehicles of political and social propaganda, which warned whites about the dangers of black dominance in society. It is also significant that minstrel shows considerably increased with the passage of the Kerwin Act and the attempts of Democrats to disenfranchise

372 “High Henry’s Big City Minstrels to Perform on Monday,” Cecil Democrat, 22 November 1902, p. 2.
blacks. In the early twentieth century, Democrats feared that, with blacks’ support, the Republican Party would gain a firm foothold in Cecil County’s politics and social affairs.

Also, the fact that a Republican paper reported a minstrel show indicates that minstrel shows had become popular in Cecil County. Both Democrats and Republicans considered blackface skits mocking African Americans as an accepted part of society. Republicans most likely reported articles on minstrel shows as forms of entertainment rather than used them as propaganda. However, Democrats sometimes used articles on minstrel shows as propaganda. Coverage of these events in the Cecil Democrat and the Cecil County News appeared to increase or decrease depending on the importance of political issues during a particular decade. Like the North, mob violence rarely accompanied minstrel shows in Cecil County. The fact that violence against blacks was unheard of during these shows signifies the more moderate attitudes of Cecil County’s blacks.

Compared to whites in other southern states, who segregated blacks from public places, whites throughout Maryland exhibited their anti-black views by practicing de facto and de jure segregation of blacks throughout this period and after. An April 6, 1867 article in the Cecil Democrat included a letter written by a moderate Democrat who disapproved of the de facto segregation of blacks in public places and noted the problem of racism among his fellow Democrats. He explained:

Mr. Editor, I hoped that the spirit of caste was at an end in Maryland and that colored people were no longer excluded from churches, schools, hotels, cars, and coaches but were favored in matters of his white brethren. Frederick Douglass was invited to lecture in the Northern part of town. I found that colored people were occupied in a gallery and were separated from whites who sat in the main seating area. I regret very much to see a resolution offered by Mr. Torbut, a Republican, who is from Cecil County for blacks to be separated from whites in public areas. He ought to know that without
the colored people, his Party is nothing. I would say to the colored people of Cecil County not to give their votes to any party who keeps the spirit of caste.  

This letter is significant because it indicates that not only some Republicans supported de facto segregation of Cecil County’s blacks, but also that a few Republicans even campaigned for a law declaring that blacks should not sit in the same areas as whites at concerts or on trains. However, the fact that a white Democrat denounced segregation shows that not all of Cecil County’s Democrats were ardent supporters of segregation and some even favored political and social concessions for blacks.

Nevertheless, during the 1860s, de facto segregation of blacks was commonplace in Cecil County. This may be attributed to the fact that after the emancipation of blacks, some of Cecil County’s whites feared that African Americans would challenge their power. As a result, some whites may have believed that in order to keep African Americans socially and politically inferior to whites, they would have to keep them separate from whites in public places. Thus, by segregating blacks, whites may have thought that they would learn to accept their “proper place” in society and not question whites’ dominance in both the political and social spheres.

In addition to segregating blacks from white schools, churches, organizations, and theaters, Cecil County’s whites refused to allow blacks to participate in grave decoration ceremonies held in the honor of Civil War soldiers who had died in battle. A June 5, 1869 article in the Cecil Whig reported:

The decoration of soldiers’ graves, sponsored by the Post of the Grand Army of the Republic occurred in Port Deposit last Monday. Each grave was decorated with a flag and a wreath. These are brave men who put down the rebellion of Confederate states and set the nation free. The colored soldiers were not invited to take part in the ceremony on Decoration Day, even though their graves

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375 Cecil Democrat, 6 April 1867, p. 1.
376 Cecil Whig, 5 June 1869, p. 2.
were nearby, and they died so our nation might be free.\footnote{377}

The refusal of whites to include African Americans in their ceremonies commemorating Civil War soldiers suggests that de facto segregation occurred frequently in Cecil County and that some whites were so racist that they would not even acknowledge black participation in the Civil War. As a result, blacks held their own ceremonies to honor their deceased relatives.

By the 1870s, de facto segregation of Cecil County’s African Americans had increased significantly. There was a yearly increase of about 3 articles on segregation in the Cecil Whig, Cecil Democrat, and Cecil County News from 1860 to 1870. A March 6, 1875 article in the Cecil Democrat reported:

A concert was given by the Hays Quartette of Philadelphia. There was a small Expedition of civil rights that occurred. A colored girl entered the Hall and walked forward to take a seat. Several whites were escorted to the same seating area by ushers. The colored ladies had to move. They were not disturbed but quietly gave up their seats to these whites. These colored people possess very good sense. They will not make themselves obnoxious to their brethren by trying to force themselves where they are not wanted, such as our hotels, barbershops, and theaters. The white population of Port Deposit has always extended to the colored race all respect due to them, and it is helpful that the colored race continues to show its good conduct to our white citizens.\footnote{378}

Clearly, this incident of segregation suggests that deep-seated prejudice existed in Cecil County and that blacks were expected to give up their seats to whites without complaining. The two black women may not have protested when whites demanded that they move from their seats because they did not want to conduct themselves in a disorderly manner. Even though blacks could vote in the 1870s, they had not yet gained additional political and social concessions. They might have believed that by complying

\footnote{377}{Ibid.}

\footnote{378}{Cecil Democrat, 6 March 1875, p. 2.}
with whites’ demands, they would earn a more respectable status among whites, which might lead to even more rights in the future. Only in the early twentieth century, once Cecil County’s African American communities had become strong, did many blacks feel that they could protest segregation through peaceful means, such as issuing legal suits in court.

Although most cases published in the 1870s editions of the Cecil Whig and Cecil Democrat indicate that blacks willingly surrendered their seats to whites at theaters and concerts, one case in the Cecil Democrat suggested that a few of Cecil County’s African Americans protested de facto segregation in Cecil County.

For instance, a June 2, 1877 article in the Cecil Democrat explained:

Two colored women, who had the laudable occupation of dressmaking, went to different churches in Cecil County last Sunday. When they were entering the vestibule of a Methodist Church, they were halted by an usher who said that he was informed that seats were prepared for them in the gallery but that the main area of the church was reserved for whites. They declined the seats and left the church. Later that evening, the two colored women returned with a colored schoolteacher and James McClenahan [a lawyer] and without permission, occupied the most prominent seats. 379

The fact that some African Americans in Cecil County were willing to stand up for their rights through militant protests shows that they would not accept their second place status in society and believed that if they peacefully resisted injustice that whites committed against them, they would convince them to end de facto segregation. Indeed, the self-reconstruction era in Cecil County and in the decades following it were important in laying the groundwork for black leadership and militant protest during the civil rights era in Cecil County during the 1950s and 1960s. Thus, the reconstruction era in Cecil County can be characterized as the first civil rights period in which some blacks

379 Ibid., 2 June 1877, p. 1.
questioned their inferior status and used their participation in both politics and the courts to resist segregation and violence committed by whites against them. It is significant that the two black women in the article were able to return to the church with the white lawyer's full support. This article suggests that even though segregation occurred in Cecil County, Maryland, African Americans were able to win small victories concerning their civil rights during the 1870s.

In the 1880s and 1890s, de facto segregation was prevalent in Cecil County but may have been more accepted. However, since there were fewer articles concerning the exclusion of blacks from schools, churches, and theaters than in the 1870s. Also, the decrease in cases of segregation may be because blacks living in the county gained few additional rights during these two decades. For example, there are only 24 accounts of segregation over a period of twenty years published in the Cecil Democrat and the Cecil Whig. A January 2, 1886 article in the Cecil Democrat reported:

A few mulatto students from Lincoln University in Chester County, Pennsylvania, went to Rising Sun on Tuesday evening to see and hear Frederick Douglass. They were denied lodging by a hotel keeper on account of their color and would have had to stay outdoors if it wasn't for Richard Henry Robinson, [a white preacher], who furnished comfortable quarters for them. They were in bad humor the next day and threatened to complain about their treatment at the hotel.380

Similar to the article from 1877, where two African American women protested when they were excluded from certain seats at a Methodist Church, this account also indicates that some blacks resisted segregation by persuading whites to support them.381 The fact that a white preacher offered African Americans lodging in his house shows whites' more moderate attitudes toward segregation in Cecil County.

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380 Cecil Democrat, 2 January 1886, p. 2.  
381 Ibid.
Despite the fact that some blacks convinced prominent white people in Cecil County
to support them in protesting de facto segregation during the 1890s, there are accounts
published in the Cecil Democrat and the Cecil Whig, which reveal that more often
municipal authorities in Cecil County favored segregation. A September 1, 1898 article
in the Cecil Democrat indicated:

Another Uncle Tom’s Cabin Company was rejected in the town of Northeast.
Palmer’s Company of Colored Performers played before audiences many times
and wanted to next go to Northeast. Sheriff H. Johnson, of Northeast who
wanted to put a stop to their success, prohibited them from traveling to Cecil
County. He devised a false claim, which indicated that one of the members in
the troupe owed $18 and had to first pay these dues before he could travel to
Chesapeake City to perform.\textsuperscript{382}

In addition, a November 1, 1894 article in the Cecil Whig reported, “Commissioners in
Cecil County have ordered a bailiff to restrict the movement of blacks at night by ringing
a bell every night at nine o’clock as a signal for the colored people to return to their
homes. If they are out, they will be subject to arrest. This will reduce the number of
drunk, idle, and vicious Negroes in our County.”\textsuperscript{383} The fact that some of Cecil
County’s authorities supported de facto segregation from 1880 to 1890 and passed laws
restricting blacks’ movements at night explains why de facto segregation was tolerated
for so many decades in Cecil County. Their attitudes paved the way for de jure
segregation in Cecil County during the early twentieth century.

Eventually, the state of Maryland passed laws that made the segregation of blacks
legal. In 1904, the Maryland State Legislature passed a series of Jim Crow laws.\textsuperscript{384} The
best known was the Kerwin Act. Section 109 of the Kerwin Act stipulated:

An act to require all railroad companies and corporations and all persons running

\textsuperscript{382} Ibid., 1 September, 1898, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{383} Cecil Whig, 1 November 1894, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{384} Cecil Democrat, 19 March 1904, p. 1.
or operating cars or coaches by steam or by any railroad line or tract in the state of Maryland for transportation of passengers must provide separate cars or coaches for white passengers and colored passengers without any difference or discrimination in quality or convenience of accommodation in such cars or coaches.\(^{385}\)

In addition, Section 110 of the Kerwin Act, which applied to steamboats, required:

Separate accommodations of white and colored passengers in sitting, sleeping, and eating apartments of all steamboats, plying in waters within the jurisdiction of the state of Maryland without any difference in distinction and quality or convenience.\(^{386}\)

Despite the fact that the Kerwin Act called for separate accommodations, like other Jim Crow Laws, this statute emphasized that the accommodations for African Americans must be equal to those of whites.\(^{387}\) However, in reality, the Jim Crow cars that were provided for black passengers on Cecil County’s steamships and trains were far from equal because they lacked proper ventilation and adequate seating. Even the predominately Negro phobic Cecil Democrat recognized in a March 19, 1904 article:

On Thursday, Governor Warfield signed two Jim Crow bills relating to steamboats and railroads in the state. They do not relate to electrical cars or the employees of railroads, such as colored nurses, officers, passengers on Pullman or cabooses, or people riding on express trains. On July 1, the Governor signed a steamboat bill calling for separate apartments for colored passengers but indicated that there would not be any distinction in quality or convenience of accommodations. The colored cars in Cecil County are not equal to white cars. They are small and inferior in quality.\(^{388}\)

It is significant that laws in Maryland now upheld segregation because prior to the early twentieth century, judges in Baltimore and Cecil County had denounced de facto segregation. Indeed, a November 18, 1871 article in the Cecil Whig announced:

Judge Bond answered the colored car question of people riding streetcars in Baltimore. He tore down the signboards designating Jim Crow cars. This

\(^{385}\) Kerwin Act, Maryland Title of Laws, No. 1302, sec. 109 (1904).

\(^{386}\) Ibid., sec. 110.

\(^{387}\) Ibid.

\(^{388}\) Cecil Democrat, 19 March 1904, p. 2.
was initiated by a suit of a colored man brought against the streetcar company. The judge decided that segregation was contrary to the letter of the law. Sign boards were pulled down, and all cars became free. Recently in Cecil County, the courts agreed with Judge Bond’s decision and urged that segregation end in this County.\textsuperscript{389}

The fact that in the 1870s Cecil County’s judges rejected de facto segregation as contrary to the law shows the more moderate attitudes of Cecil County’s officials.

Even though Cecil County’s Democrats were more moderate overall than in other southern states, many whites supported the de jure segregation of Cecil County’s African Americans from public accommodations as necessary to preserve stability in Cecil County. In a March 5, 1904 article in the \textit{Cecil Democrat} a white man argued, “No doubt, the Jim Crow Laws just passed would have hardly been taken seriously a few years ago. Today even Republicans are secretly supporting the passage of such bills.”\textsuperscript{390} Also, a Democrat emphasized that the Kerwin Act in Cecil County should extend to express trains and trolley cars. A September 3, 1904 article published in the \textit{Cecil Democrat} explained:

The Jim Crow Car Law should be amended. There is disagreement when a Southbound train reaches Iron Hill in Cecil County. This is the first station where Negroes are required to change their seats. The Law exempts all express trains but leaves it up to the railroad officials to determine what is an express train. The Law should be amended to clearly define what is a through express train. There should be separate waiting rooms because Negroes invade our seats and try to get the best seats. Also, this Law should extend to trolley cars and all public stages. Negroes must be required to occupy separate Jim Crow coaches not only within the state but state to state.\textsuperscript{391}

Both of these statements in the \textit{Cecil Democrat} are important in indicating the anti-black attitudes of some of Cecil County’s Democrats, who sought to extend the Kerwin Act to

\textsuperscript{389} \textit{Cecil Whig}, 18 November 1871, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{390} \textit{Cecil Democrat}, 5 March 1904, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{391} \textit{Ibid.}, 3 September 1904, p. 2.
express trains as well as local trains traveling within the confines of the state. White Democrats' attitudes may be attributed to their fears that the Republican Party, which was becoming stronger in the early twentieth century, would become the dominant power with the support of blacks.

Also, the crime rate among both African Americans and whites rose significantly during this decade. Consequently, some whites believed it was necessary to segregate blacks in Jim Crow cars. White fears are embodied in a *Cecil County News* article published on October 18, 1905. This article stated, "The bill requiring that railroad and steamboat companies provide separate cars for the races makes travel safer for white men and women. The conditions of the cars are the same for whites and blacks. This Law will protect white girls and women from Negroes traveling on public roads. They no longer will have to fear that they will be attacked by vicious Negroes."³⁹²

Not only were some white Democrats ardent supporters of the Jim Crow law, but also a few white Republicans upheld the law as constitutional and argued that as long as African Americans' accommodations on trains and steamships were equal in quality and comfort, the law was justified. A December 31, 1904 article in the *Cecil Whig* included an article that was written by a white Republican who put himself in the situation of an African American in Cecil County. This article indicated:

"Jim Crow cars were created in all fairness to the colored people of this County. It is wrong for certain people to appear together. If whites did not allow a Negro to ride on a car, I would let them enjoy their prejudice as long as the railroad treated me equally and I had a right to special cars."³⁹³

This article is significant because it reveals that although Republicans in Cecil County had more moderate attitudes toward African Americans and most Republicans desired the

black vote, in reality, they were not advocates of the complete equality of African Americans during the early twentieth century. The account written by the Republican was more apologetic than those found in the *Cecil Democrat*, in that it argues that the purpose of Jim Crow legislation is to protect Cecil County’s African Americans from prejudice.

Even when Republicans wrote articles denouncing Jim Crow laws, they did not, for the most part, reject them on grounds that they were unfair to blacks living in the county but rather that they were a great expense to railroad and steamship companies. In the *Cecil Whig*, a June 6, 1909 article indicated:

> It is hoped that the Maryland State Legislature will direct their attention to the Jim Crow Law. It is a useless expense to the railroad and has been an eyesore to the traveling public. The law only applies within Maryland and only a few numbers of Negroes in train cars are destined to points in this state. Most of them are traveling to Philadelphia, Wilmington, and other places in Delaware. At most times, the white cars are overcrowded, and Jim Crow cars are empty. On the Cumberland Valley Road, the Law is ignored on grounds that it is a state road running between Pennsylvania and Maryland. Railroads must act in a spirit of fairness, like a business corporation. The Jim Crow Law is a useless piece of legislation. The sooner we get rid of it, the better.\(^{394}\)

Nowhere in this article does it mention that the Kerwin Act should be repealed because it is unfair to African Americans in Cecil County. The fact that there are not many articles denouncing the Kerwin Act as violating the rights of Cecil County’s blacks suggests that both Republicans and Democrats were either indifferent or opposed to blacks associating with whites in public places.

Although many white Republicans and Democrats did not question the injustice of the Kerwin Act, many African Americans in Cecil County protested its validity and demanded that they be treated equally. A July 16, 1904 article in the *Cecil Democrat*

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\(^{394}\) Ibid., 6 June 1909, p. 1.
reported, "Negroes in this County are not accepting the Jim Crow Law very well. There are a number of arrests that were recently made of Negroes who protested this Law." Not only did some African Americans refuse to occupy Jim Crow seats on trains and steamships, but they also resisted inequality by arguing that the law was unjust in court.

The most well-known cases of African Americans' quest to use the court in Cecil County as a tool to stand up for their rights was in the court cases, The State of Maryland v. Griffin, and The State of Maryland v. Hart. An article that was published in an October 8, 1904 edition of the Cecil Democrat sustained the Jim Crow Law. This article explained:

The Circuit Court supported the Jim Crow Law on Saturday in the cases, The State of Maryland v. Griffin and The State of Maryland v. Hart. They were charged with refusing to obey its provisions . . . William Hart, colored [a lawyer from Washington] and James Griffin, colored, . . . had stated that the Jim Crow Law was invalid because it interfered with interstate commerce and violated the Fourteenth Amendment. The court said . . . it is the best interest for public welfare that colored and white be separated in public accommodations . . . Conductor James Gallagher testified that Griffin would not go to the colored car, refusing at Iron Hill and Elkton, and he was arrested . . . William Hart, a colored lawyer, refused to enter the car at Iron Hill and was arrested at Elkton Station . . . He was traveling from Boston to Washington, D. C. as an interstate passenger and felt that he ought not to change train cars at Elkton . . . Hart defended himself since he was a lawyer. The court declined to hear from him that the train was an express train. Next, Hart attacked the Penalty Clause of the law. He explained that it was uncertain in that it gave the court discretion on the amount of the fine but not on the length of the imprisonment . . . Judge Pierce fined Hart $5 and Griffin $25 . . . William Hart is appealing to the Supreme Court . . .

A July 9, 1904 case published in the Cecil Whig embodied African Americans' refusal to put up with their inferior social status under the Jim Crow Law. In this case, a black

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396 Ibid., 8 October 1904, p. 1.
397 Ibid.
chose to walk to his destination rather than to move to a Jim Crow car. The *Cecil Whig* indicated:

A Cecil County Negro resisted the new Jim Crow Law on Friday. He had a ticket from Philadelphia to Baltimore. When the train reached Iron Hill, Conductor John Garry notified him that he had to go on the Jim Crow car. He refused, and the conductor read the law to him. He still refused to vacate his seat. At Northeast, he would not give up his seat and was put off the train. He then walked to his destination.\(^{398}\)

The fact that a few blacks would not quietly accept their inferior status and abide to whites' demands by sitting in the Jim Crow section shows that Cecil County’s African Americans were determined to fight peacefully for their social and political rights. Rather than be humiliated by moving to a segregated car, James Griffin preferred to go to jail. By opting to be arrested, he made an important statement to other blacks in the county that they had to stand up for their rights in order to enact social and political change in Cecil County. Also, the court case *The State of Maryland v. Hart* symbolizes African Americans efforts in Cecil County to peacefully challenge the Kerwin Act.

William Hart, a Washington, D. C lawyer, embodied the determination of blacks to speak out against injustice. Instead of committing violent crimes against whites in Cecil County in retaliation for the segregation law, Hart researched the Interstate Commerce Clause of the United States Constitution and tried to argue that the law was unconstitutional. Such non-violent means of protesting segregation may have been vital in convincing some whites that African Americans in Cecil County presented themselves as orderly when asking for their rights. Indeed, African Americans' resistance to the Jim Crow Law was the first step in their quest for their rights. Their skills of peaceful protest would surface again in the civil rights era of the 1950s and the 1960s when African

\(^{398}\) *Cecil Whig*, 9 July 1904, p. 1.
Americans convinced Cecil County’s whites to build a high school for them and allow them to occupy more important political offices.

Although William Hart was fined $5 for violating the Kerwin Act and Judge Pierce upheld the Law as valid in the 1905 case of *The State of Maryland v. Hart*, the judge still stipulated, “The Law providing separate coaches for white and colored passengers is only applicable to traffic within the confines of the state, and provisions of the Act cannot be enforced in regard to persons from another state entering Maryland or Maryland residents journeying to another state.” If the Interstate Commerce Provision had been enforced, there would have been blacks from out of state riding on white cars. Some Democrats denounced this provision as undermining the Kerwin Act. In response to the judge’s decision, a Democrat, who supported the segregation of blacks on express and local trains, emphasized in a March 29, 1905 article in the *Cecil County News*:

The decision of the Court of Appeals in the case *The State of Maryland v. Hart* will, to a great extent, nullify the present Jim Crow Law, its good effects of which are already becoming apparent. My fear is that passengers will be confused. Local traffic will also be deprived of this beneficial Act of legislation. The Law will become a dead letter. This is extremely regrettable as the separate coach regulations cause no hardship to the colored race and protected white passengers. This new decision marks a step backwards in the history of Maryland.

Even though Cecil County had developed along a middle ground in its “self-reconstruction era” and had supported the Union side during the Civil War, some whites formed anti-black organizations, made threats against successful African Americans, and committed acts of violence against any blacks in Cecil County who questioned their “proper place” in society from 1864 to the early twentieth century. However, unlike Southern states such as Mississippi and Georgia, frequent lynching and other public
violence of Cecil County’s African Americans was almost unknown. Nevertheless, after the emancipation of Maryland’s slaves in 1864, anti-black organizations, such as the Ku Klux Klan, gained a firm foothold in Cecil County and were responsible for making threats against white sympathizers as well as blacks who strove for social and political equality with whites.\textsuperscript{401} Not only did Klan members influence Cecil County’s politics, but they also wrote newspaper articles warning whites about the dangers of blacks controlling the social, political, and economic elements of the County.\textsuperscript{402} Sometimes the most radical members of the Klan wrote articles inciting whites to commit violent acts against Cecil County’s African Americans. One of the most disturbing and racist of these was a poem published on October 21, 1865 in the Cecil Democrat. The poem urged whites to injure African Americans in the County. The poem, which was titled The Psalm of Death, stated:

\begin{quote}
Niggers young, niggers old, niggers warm, niggers cold, niggers large, niggers small, niggers short, niggers tall. Curse the niggers everyone. Niggers low, niggers high, niggers wet, niggers dry, niggers heavy, niggers light, niggers dull, niggers bright. Summer, winter, spring. Curse the nigger one and all. curse the nigger. Curse him well. Curse his color, hair, and smell. Curse his eyes, his nose, his feet, his head, his grinning teeth. Curse his sighs, his tears, his groans. Curse his brain, his muscles, his blood and bones. Curse him cold upon his bier and send him to some Nigger Heaven. Whom men should kick and women scorn.\textsuperscript{403}
\end{quote}

This poem was also read at the Democratic Party Convention, which met at Elkton in 1865.\textsuperscript{404} The fact that Democrats read this violent and hateful poem at their convention and that the Cecil Democrat allowed it to be published points to the prejudice and violent attitudes held by some of Cecil County’s whites. However, this kind of vicious tirade did

\textsuperscript{401} Cecil Democrat, 21 October 1865, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{402} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{403} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{404} Ibid.
not appear as frequently as in other states further south. For example, in the 1860s editions of the *Cecil Democrat*, there were only 2 articles urging whites to commit violence against Cecil County's African Americans. Most of these articles were published in the mid-1860s and may have been written because of the tension which emancipation of Maryland's slaves had created among whites. Many whites feared that newly freed African Americans would take the jobs of white laborers and cause crime and instability in the County.

Articles in both the *Cecil Democrat* and the *Cecil Whig* reveal that the Ku Klux Klan was most active in 1868. This may be attributed to the fact that in this year, the question of whether blacks should vote was being discussed in Cecil County. By participating in the Klan, whites who opposed African Americans' social equality and political participation found an outlet where they could vent their frustrations and to discuss how to prevent blacks from achieving equality with whites. An April 25, 1868 article published in the *Cecil Whig* described the Ku Klux Klan and the threats that it sent out to both Republicans and blacks. Also, the article reveals that Republicans sometimes even participated in the Klan because they wanted to prevent blacks from achieving their social and political rights. The article stated:

The Ku Klux Klan in this County is composed both of those who fought on the Union side and on the side of the Confederacy. The Klan sends out notices to offensive people. The Klan sent out signs to Negroes with death heads and cross bones. They parade our streets at the solemn hour of midnight. The Klan symbolizes the chief power of the Democratic Party. Recently the Negroes in our County has been threatened by the Klan, and Benjamin Wade, a Republican received an anonymous letter that stated, "You are marked and watched by the KKK. Your fate and the colored people you support are sealed with a bullet.

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406 Ibid.
See if we lie. Be warned this time.”

Sometimes the Ku Klux Klan in Cecil County met outside of Republican meetings composed of both whites and blacks to intimidate them. The *Cecil Whig* article reported on September 19, 1868 that:

Last week there was a meeting of the Organization of the Cecil County Republicans in Port Deposit. The Klan in this County discussed that the Port Deposit division of Republicans was having a meeting, and the word spread like wildfire among Democrats who were members of the Klan. Inside the Republicans were having a saber ceremony. The saber dropped to the ground, and members of the Klan were frightened. They thought they saw shadows of guns in the windows, and they ran away.

Unlike other Southern states where Klan members were responsible for lynching many African Americans, the Cecil County Klan mainly made threats. Most often, these threats never materialized into violent acts, though there were occasional attacks. An August 17, 1867 article in the *Cecil Whig* described one instance of Klan violence against blacks at a camp meeting. This article indicated:

A riot occurred at a colored camp. They were holding a camp meeting at Ramsey’s Woods in Port Deposit last Sunday. A gang of Copperheads (Democrats), who are a part of the branch of the KKK called the Centerville Knights, beat C.H. Alexander, colored. They then attacked other colored people and broke up the Camp.

Also, a June 18, 1864 article in the *Cecil Democrat* mentioned, “An anti-black organization composed of former Confederate soldiers retaliated against a colored Christian camp meeting at Wilson’s Landing. They beat several blacks and badly injured a colored woman.” These instances of violence committed by the Klan and other related anti-African American organizations clearly suggest that violence against blacks

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407 Ibid.
408 Ibid., 19 September 1868, p. 2.
409 Ibid., 17 August 1867, p. 2.
was sometimes directed at successful members of the African American community and towards moral improvement societies organized by them. Articles in the Cecil Whig and Cecil Democrat rarely indicate that the KKK committed crimes against blacks who did not question the status quo. In fact, in all the editions of the Cecil Whig, the Cecil Democrat, and the Cecil County News, I did not find any occurrences in which whites retaliated against blacks who did not challenge their inferior social and political status in Cecil County.

Other racist whites, who were not members of the Klan, also committed crimes against blacks. The Cecil Whig on October 14, 1865 reported:

A colored man, Patrick Neal, was found near the headwaters of the Sassafras River Warwick, Cecil County. He was a victim of a white man who had been a soldier in the army of the Rebellion. Neal was a respected member of our County. He had fought on the Union side and owned two boxes of gold jewelry, $400 in gold pieces, and $400 in United States Treasury Notes. His relatives are demanding that his murderer be brought to justice.\footnote{Cecil Whig, 14 October 1865, p. 1.}

In addition, the Cecil Whig in an August 24, 1867 edition noted:

Last Saturday evening the colored men of Elkton held a meeting at the courthouse to discuss their participation in the Civil War and how they should press for rights in the future. White Republicans assisted them. The room was quiet until Copperhead rowdies made threats against the colored people holding the meeting. Still, the colored men would not disband the meeting. These Negroes present at the meeting are far superior to the best white Copperheads who attempted to break up the meeting.\footnote{Ibid, 24 August 1867, p. 1.}

Another article published in the July 3, 1869 edition of the Cecil Whig stated, “Colored people from a neighborhood in Northeast have issued a petition asking the County Commissioners for a suitable reward for the person who apprehends the white murderer of the colored man, Joseph Thomas.”\footnote{Ibid, 3 July 1869, p. 2.}
All three of these articles indicate that whites usually directed violence during the 1860s towards blacks who had property, held meetings to discuss their rights, or had fought bravely in the Civil War. They may have believed that blacks who owned property and wealth could better organize efforts to petition for their rights. Also, at Republican meetings, held to discuss the need for blacks to achieve equality with whites, African Americans could possibly influence white Republicans to support them in gaining power in the County. However, all three cases also demonstrate the efforts of Cecil County’s blacks to speak out against violence and to bring criminals to justice. Despite the threats African Americans received, they continued to hold meetings.

Perhaps the court case that best embodied the violence directed at blacks by whites in the 1860s was the Potter Trial. A July 3, 1869 article in the Cecil Whig included an account of this court case:

There was a fatal shooting affair on a Sassafras Neck farm Friday afternoon. J. Potter had a colored man, William Flamer, in his employ who left the field to work for a Mr. Francis Cruikshank. Mr. Potter went to Cruikshank’s field and ordered Flamer to return to work for him. When Potter refused, four colored witnesses heard Potter shoot Flamer. Potter delivered himself up for arrest, but he was not committed to jail on grounds that he was angry with Flamer for leaving to work in another field.\textsuperscript{414}

This case is significant because it points to the violence some whites directed against blacks who challenged their former masters by choosing their own employers. Some whites who had previously owned slaves in Cecil County would not tolerate blacks who questioned their authority. Despite Potter’s demand for Flamer to leave Cruikshank’s field, Flamer had chosen to work for Mr. Cruikshank because he received better pay. Mr. Potter could not accept the fact that William Flamer now had a right to select his employer, and he may have wanted to preserve the old slave system, where African

\textsuperscript{414} Ibid.
Americans could not question whites. In retaliation for Flamer leaving his field to work for someone else, Potter murdered him. The fact that Flamer’s murderer was released shows the partial treatment whites received in many court cases in Cecil County. A black murderer would have most likely been committed to jail for the murder of a white man in Cecil County, but a white man who killed an African American man received a lesser punishment and was even released.

Many Republicans in Cecil County spoke out against the release of Potter and attributed the biased court system to the influence of Democrats. For instance, an October 9, 1869 article in the Cecil Whig explained:

At the Potter trial, which is an outrage of justice, Democrats selected a handpicked jury. It seems as if Cecil County has returned to the old slave code. The black man has no rights. While a Democrat controls the actions of our courts, every fair-minded man is utterly disgraced with the whole proceeding. A man succeeded in shooting a Negro and after his release, paraded the streets. This shows the conflict that rages between the rebel Democrats and a colored man.415

Clearly, the Potter trial suggests that even though not as much violence or injustice existed in Cecil County as in other Southern states, Cecil County’s blacks were still viewed as unequal in courts that were dominated by Democrats in the 1860s.

Participation in the Klan as well as violent acts directed at blacks increased in Cecil County in 1870.416 In fact, Cecil County’s newspapers indicate that the threats made by the Klan and other vigilant organizations increased towards blacks circa 1870. A March 26, 1870 article in the Cecil Whig revealed:

The Klan has made incendiary threats to burn colored churches in Cecil County’s towns. The reasons for such threats are that blacks hold meetings in their churches to prepare for their new responsibilities since the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment. These meetings are strictly legitimate and peaceful. Political meetings are held at their churches because the colored people have

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415 Ibid., 9 October 1869, p. 3.
416 Ibid., 26 March 1870, p. 2.
no other place to meet. It is not the business of the white man to hurt these
colored people in any way, much less to threaten to burn their church. The
very threat is infamous and cowardly by threatening to burn schoolhouses
and churches. We are disgraced by the violent conduct of the Knights of
Midnight (KKK). We hope that the Klux Klux Klan will never succeed in
carrying out their threats. Respectful men of the Democratic Party are
alarmed by it. They should try to prevent this. The colored people in our
County are polite and civil. They pride themselves in respectable behavior.\footnote{417}

Also, the \textit{Cecil Whig} reported on January 29, 1870 that a new Vigilance Committee had
been created to punish black criminals without a trial. The article indicated:

A Vigilance Committee in Cecil County had a meeting in the first district
(Cecilton). They discussed the need to take some action with regard to the
lawless conduct of certain Negroes in the district because of two recent
trials in which colored men who had committed crimes were released scot-
free.\footnote{418}

The \textit{Cecil Whig} also revealed that this same vigilance committee had dragged a colored
man from his bed and almost hung him without any evidence. If it were not for the
actions of Cecil County’s authorities, he would have been hung.\footnote{419} A similar case
published in the August 10, 1872 edition of the \textit{Cecil Democrat} noted, “An anti-Negro
organization attempted to lynch two blacks. Both Negroes escaped.”\footnote{420}

The increased Klan activity in the 1870s may be attributed to the fact that this decade
was the training ground for the assertion of African Americans’ political and social
rights. During the 1870s, the nation’s blacks gained the right to vote, and many African
Americans in Cecil County actually participated in Republican conventions and
committees. They used both churches and schools as meeting grounds to discuss how to
enact change in society. Out of these meetings, arose prominent black leaders who would
not quietly accept white power and their inferior status in society. Thus, by threatening

\footnote{417} Ibid.
\footnote{418} Ibid., 29 January 1870, p. 2.
\footnote{419} Ibid.
\footnote{420} \textit{Cecil Democrat}, 10 August 1872, p. 2.