

Thomas W. Cardozo: Fallible Black Reconstruction Leader

By EULINE W. BROCK

“IGNORANT BARBARIANS”; “APT PUPILS IN THE PRACTICE OF CORRUPTION”; “dregs of the constituencies.” With these and similar characterizations of black political leaders of the Reconstruction era, respected historians at the turn of the century sanctioned stereotypes developed earlier by southern whites in order to eliminate black influence from political life in the former Confederate states. Challenges to this traditional view by John Roy Lynch, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, Alrutheus Ambush Taylor, and Horace Mann Bond in the early decades of this century had little immediate impact on either professional or popular interpretations of Reconstruction. Indeed, Claude Gernade Bowers’s journalistic *The Tragic Era*, published in 1929, provided a widely accepted label for the seemingly ineradicable conviction that black officials were “incompetents and corruptionists.”¹

In the last three decades, however, massive revisionism in Reconstruction historiography has drastically altered these stereotypes.

¹ John W. Burgess, *Reconstruction and the Constitution, 1866-1876* (New York, 1902), 252 (first quotation); James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850 to Final Restoration of Home Rule at the South in 1877* (7 vols., New York and London, 1907-1910), VI, 305 (second quotation), VII, 92-93 (third quotation); Lynch, *The Facts of Reconstruction* (New York, 1913) and *Some Historical Errors of James Ford Rhodes* (Boston and New York, 1922); Du Bois, “Reconstruction and Its Benefits,” *American Historical Review*, XV (July 1910), 781-99, and *Black Reconstruction . . . in America, 1860-1880* (New York, 1935); Taylor, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia* (Washington, 1926), *The Negro in South Carolina During the Reconstruction* (Washington, 1924), *The Negro in Tennessee, 1865-1880* (Washington, 1941); Bond, “Social and Economic Forces in Alabama Reconstruction,” *Journal of Negro History*, XXIII (July 1938), 290-348, and *Negro Education in Alabama: A Study in Cotton and Steel* (Washington, 1939); Bowers, *The Tragic Era: The Revolution After Lincoln* (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), 449 (fourth quotation).

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Reappraisals emphasizing the complexity of the era have described the behavior of black leaders more sympathetically. Several monographs on the Negro in the reconstruction of individual states have begun to define more clearly the political role of blacks.² The careers of prominent black politicians have been described in journal articles,³ and, more recently, book-length studies have appeared on Josiah Thomas Walls of Florida, Robert Smalls and Robert Brown Elliott of South Carolina, Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback of Louisiana, and James Thomas Rapier of Alabama. In rescuing their subjects from the obscurity and defamation to which the traditional view of Reconstruction consigned them, revisionist authors have tended, perhaps understandably, to inflate their protagonists' roles and to describe them in heroic terms. Depicted as the antithesis of the traditional stereotype, these black leaders are seen as unselfishly, single-mindedly dedicated to improving the lot of freedmen.⁴

Thomas Holt's challenging *Black over White*, published in 1977, departs sharply from recent revisionist themes. Holt's subjects are not unequivocal heroes; in fact, his story has no heroes. His analysis of black leaders' behavior and relationships suggests that Reconstruction in South Carolina collapsed at least partly because Republican leaders failed to keep their party united, a failure exacerbated by cleavages between antebellum free Negroes, or "browns," and former slaves, or "blacks."⁵

Vernon L. Wharton, *The Negro in Mississippi, 1865-1890* (Chapel Hill, 1947); Joel Williamson, *After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, 1861-1877* (Chapel Hill, 1965); Joe M. Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877* (Tallahassee, 1965); Peter R. Kolchin, *First Freedom: The Responses of Alabama's Blacks to Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Westport, Conn., 1972).

² A scholarly article on an important black official which appeared earlier in the century is Robert H. Woody, "Jonathan Jasper Wright, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of South Carolina, 1870-77," *Journal of Negro History*, XVIII (April 1933), 114-31. More recent notable examples are Edward F. Sweat, "Francis L. Cardoza [sic]—Profile of Integrity in Reconstruction Politics," *ibid.*, XLVI (October 1961), 217-32; Joe M. Richardson, "Jonathan C. Gibbs: Florida's Only Negro Cabinet Minister," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLII (April 1965), 363-68; William C. Harris, "James Lynch: Black Leader in Southern Reconstruction," *Historian*, XXXIV (November 1971), 40-61.

³ Peter D. Klingman, *Josiah Walls: Florida's Black Congressman of Reconstruction* (Gainesville, 1976); Okon E. Uya, *From Slavery To Public Service: Robert Smalls, 1839-1915* (New York, London, and Toronto, 1971); Peggy Lamson, *The Glorious Failure: Black Congressman Robert Brown Elliott and the Reconstruction in South Carolina* (New York, 1973); James Haskins, *Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback* (New York, 1973); Loren Schweninger, *James T. Rapier and Reconstruction* (Chicago and London, 1978). Edwin S. Redkey has edited the works of Henry M. Turner and is preparing a book-length study of the Georgia leader. Edwin S. Redkey, comp. and ed., *Respect Black: The Writings and Speeches of Henry McNeal Turner* (New York, 1971).

⁴ Holt, *Black over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina During Reconstruction* (Urbana, Chicago, and London, 1977). Others studying an entire group of black political leaders in an individual state are David C. Rankin, "The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans During Reconstruction," *Journal of Southern History*, XL (August 1974), 417-40; and Charles Vincent, *Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge, 1976).

The implication that blacks themselves might have contributed substantially to the failure of Reconstruction, although not as the ignorant, pliable dupes depicted by traditionalists, suggests a new direction for investigating black politicians' role in Reconstruction governments. As revisionism becomes more balanced, historians no longer need concentrate solely on undeniable heroes of black Reconstruction but can begin to consider black leaders who were not always noble and admirable. They, too, helped to create the era, for better or for worse. Their careers form part of the complex mosaic of southern Reconstruction politics. Just as historians finally rejected the traditional monolithic stereotype of the ignorant, penniless tool of sinister, scheming whites, so too students of the era must acknowledge that not all black leaders were "intelligent, sensitive, dedicated, and astute."⁶

Although historians have frequently extolled Francis Louis Cardozo, prominent leader in the reconstruction of South Carolina, as a symbol of integrity, they have generally ignored his brother Thomas Whitmarsh Cardozo, Mississippi's superintendent of education, except to mention him occasionally as an example of Reconstruction venality and corruption.⁷ Yet Thomas's less-than-exemplary career is also significant because it reveals some of the weaknesses in the Reconstruction attempt to create simultaneously in the South a responsible, autonomous black leadership and a lasting Republican party. Because Mississippi Republicans, black and white, failed to develop an indigenous cadre of capable black leaders, Thomas Cardozo was able to achieve high public office through political machinations that showed little concern either for the masses of freedmen or for the future of the Republican party in Mississippi. Yearning for wealth and status, Cardozo capitalized on party weaknesses and eventually brought disgrace to himself and opprobrium to his party.

When Mississippi Republicans nominated Thomas W. Cardozo for state superintendent of education in 1873, the state's leading conservative newspaper identified him as "part of the drift-wood that floated into the State after the war. We know nothing of his antecedents." Most whites concluded that his "chief qualification was the color of his skin," and even a black political colleague, John R. Lynch, later recalled that Cardozo "was not well known . . . his nomination was largely a concession . . ." to his strongly Republican county. Historian Vernon Lane Wharton noted that after Cardozo's political career was destroyed along with

⁶ Schwenger, *James T. Rapier*, xix.

⁷ Bowers, *Tragic Era*, 414; E. Merton Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877* ([Baton Rouge], 1947), 322-23; Wharton, *Negro in Mississippi*, 164; James W. Garner, *Reconstruction in Mississippi* (New York and London, 1901), 293.

Mississippi's Republican regime Cardozo "returned to the obscurity from which he came."⁸

But Thomas Cardozo had not come from obscurity. His background and Reconstruction experiences were similar to those of many of the blacks who exerted significant political leadership during that era. Like the majority of key black politicians, Cardozo was freeborn of mixed racial heritage, well educated, and relatively affluent. Like most of the others, he had lived, traveled, and studied in the North. In short, except for his race he had little in common with the typical freedman of Mississippi or any other state.⁹

Cardozo was born in Charleston on December 19, 1838, the third son of Lydia Williams, a free woman of mixed ancestry, and Isaac Nunez Cardozo, member of a well-known Jewish family who worked in the Charleston Customhouse.¹⁰ As a part of Charleston's free-Negro elite, Cardozo lived in an anomalous world, one both privileged and oppressed. Separated by a social and cultural chasm from slaves and from the generally darker free-Negro masses, Cardozo never lost his awareness of his light skin and the other attributes that set him apart from the freedmen who elevated him to public office.¹¹ He consistently identified the racial admixture of

⁸ Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, September 4, 1873 (first quotation); Garner, *Reconstruction in Mississippi*, 293 (second quotation); Lynch, *Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch*, edited by John H. Franklin (Chicago, 1970), 117 (third quotation); Wharton, *Negro in Mississippi*, 164 (fourth quotation).

⁹ A study of forty-nine major black leaders from the ten Reconstruction states reveals that one-third had been born in the North and another one-third had lived there before the war. Three-fourths of those whose color can be determined were described as mulattoes. None were illiterate, and most were well educated. Only thirteen had ever been enslaved, and those had either gained their freedom before the war or had held privileged positions within the confines of slavery. Almost all were professionals, businessmen, or artisans. Several of the group at some time in their careers edited newspapers, as did T. W. Cardozo. Euline W. Brock, "Black Political Leadership During Reconstruction" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, North Texas State University, 1974), iv-v.

¹⁰ Historians have consistently identified Isaac Cardozo's brother, the well-known economist and newspaper publisher Jacob N. Cardozo, as Francis L. Cardozo's father, but Francis's descendants believe Isaac to be their ancestor. Genealogical charts and other family information in the Francis L. Cardozo Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.) all show Isaac as the father of Henry (senator in South Carolina's Reconstruction legislature), Francis, and Thomas. Biographical information in the Jackson *Mississippi Pilot* [n.d.], reprinted in Washington *New National Era and Citizen*, September 18, 1873, no doubt provided by Thomas Cardozo, lists 1855 as the date of his father's death. Isaac Cardozo died in 1855, but Jacob lived until 1873. Thomas Cardozo's death record lists Isaac N. Cardozo as his father. Vol. 329, p. 160, No. 88115, Registry of Vital Records and Statistics, State Department of Public Health, Newton, Massachusetts. For discussions of the Cardozo parentage see Bertram Korn to W. Warwick Cardozo, December 11, 1960, Cardozo Papers; Barnett A. Elzas, *The Jews of South Carolina . . .* (Philadelphia, 1905), 179, 204; Bertram W. Korn, *Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789-1865* (Elkins Park, Pa., 1961), 51-53.

¹¹ For a description of the ambiguities of the milieu in which Cardozo was reared and of the adjustments in caste and class relationships necessitated by emancipation see Marina Wikra-

Mississippi officials by such designations as “octoroon,” “quad-roon,” or “light brown” and referred to “a tincture of African blood” in his own veins. He reported that he and his family were refused first-class boat accommodations, “albeit,” he wrote, “we are as white as any of the passengers” Cardozo expressed a bitterness echoed by black leaders across the South when he declared sarcastically that “there is no class of persons in this country who have demonstrated their love of social equality as . . . white citizens of the South have. I see a practical demonstration of it for two or three generations whenever I look in the glass.”¹²

Cardozo also displayed the postbellum ambivalence of the free-Negro elite, who wanted to aid the freedmen and cultivate race solidarity but nevertheless retained a sense of superiority and a distaste for the lower classes. While organizing Charleston freedmen’s schools for the American Missionary Association in 1865 Cardozo asked association officials to send a missionary especially for the teachers and their friends because the black AMA missionary “preaches for the class with whom I cannot worship for [its] want of intelligence.” Yet a few weeks later Cardozo became the Sabbath school superintendent of that very church. While protesting that his “whole soul, heart, and mind [were] set upon the elevation of [his] oppressed brethren,” he could refer to poor freedmen in demeaning dialect. At the same time, he spoke sympathetically of a northern white teacher who had become dissatisfied when a “dark colored person” began to share their common meals. Later, in Baltimore, Cardozo joined a white church because “no distinction whatever [was] shown on account of color.” Cardozo repeatedly expressed the desire that all racial distinctions be erased and exhorted that “colored people of the nation cease to look upon themselves as peculiarly set apart from other elements of our citizens”¹³

manayake, *A World in Shadow: The Free Black in Antebellum South Carolina* (Columbia, S.C., 1973), 81–92; Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1974), 250–83, 381–95; E. Horace Fitchett, “The Traditions of the Free Negro in Charleston, South Carolina,” *Journal of Negro History*, XXV (April 1940), 139–52; Holt, *Black over White*, 43–71. Cardozo identified as former schoolmates four American Missionary Association teachers, all of them members of Charleston’s antebellum free Negro elite. Thomas W. Cardozo to the Rev. M. E. Strieby, June 16, 1865, American Missionary Association Archives (Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, La.; microfilm copy used); hereinafter cited as AMA Archives.

¹² “Civis” [T. W. Cardozo], “Letter from Mississippi,” *Washington New National Era and Citizen*, June 19 (first and third quotations); *ibid.*, February 8 (fifth quotation), May 29 (last quotation), November 21 (fourth quotation), 1872; July 3, 1873 (second quotation). Vicksburg cargetbagger-turned-conservative Charles E. Furlong referred to Cardozo as “an individual who claims to be part negro.” Furlong, *Origin of the Outrages at Vicksburg . . .* (Vicksburg, 1874), 6.

¹³ Cardozo to the Rev. S. Hunt, June 23, 1865 (first quotation); announcement of the new Sabbath school enclosed in a letter from E. J. Adams to the Rev. George Whipple, June 27,

The assumptions, prejudices, and privileges of the free-Negro elite shaped Cardozo's youth in Charleston, where he attended private school. But his father's death in 1855 abruptly altered the family's condition, and Thomas was apprenticed to a manufacturer of rice-threshing machines. The Cardozos were bereft of their white protector and benefactor at the very time that beleaguered southern whites were constricting free persons of color by increasingly oppressive legislation.¹⁴ In 1857 Thomas and his mother left Charleston, and Thomas settled in New York to continue his education. Soon after the war started Cardozo began teaching in New York and married Laura J. Williams, a fellow-teacher and an accomplished musician from a mulatto family of Brooklyn.¹⁵

After teaching in Flushing, New York, for a time Cardozo moved to Charleston in early April 1865 to supervise the American Missionary Association's educational efforts in that city.¹⁶ In the chaotic weeks following the Confederate surrender he secured building space, collected books, distributed used clothing to destitute freedmen, and ran the house provided by the AMA for its northern teachers. He supervised teachers already working for various agencies and hired new teachers to work for the AMA.¹⁷ Cardozo's job was complicated by organizational disputes among the Freedmen's Bureau, the AMA, and other aid societies and by conflicts over whether the schools should be evangelizing agencies or strictly secular institutions.¹⁸

1865; Cardozo to the Rev. M. E. Strieby, June 16, 1865 (second quotation); Cardozo to the Rev. W. E. Whiting, June 22, 1865 (third quotation); Cardozo to Whipple, August 25, 1866 (fourth quotation), all in AMA Archives; "Civis" to *Washington New National Era*, December 21, 1871 (last quotation); January 18, February 8, 1872.

¹⁴ Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 343-80.

¹⁵ *Washington New National Era and Citizen*, September 18, 1873; *Vicksburg Daily Vicksburger*, August 25, 1874; *Washington New National Era and Citizen*, July 3, 1873. Laura Cardozo performed at a series of freedmen's benefit programs in Charleston in late 1865. Handbill sent to AMA headquarters by E. J. Adams, AMA Archives. Thomas and Laura had two sons, one born in 1863 and the other in 1865. Family records, Cardozo Papers.

¹⁶ Thomas W. Cardozo to AMA officials in New York, August 17, 1865; Francis L. Cardozo to the Rev. George Whipple and the Rev. M. E. Strieby, December 2, 1865; Amelia A. Shrewsbury to Thomas W. Cardozo, June 22, 1865; Thomas W. Cardozo to the Rev. W. E. Whiting, April 11, 1865, AMA Archives.

¹⁷ Cardozo to the Rev. W. E. Whiting, April 11, 1865; Cardozo to the Rev. George Whipple, May 17, 1865; Cardozo to the Rev. M. E. Strieby, April 29, June 16, 1865; Cardozo to Whiting, May 10, June 22, July 13, 1865; statement by Cardozo about furniture purchases, dated April 29, 1865; Cardozo to Whiting, May 15, July 1, 1865; Cardozo to the Rev. S. Hunt, July 1, 1865; E. J. Adams to Whiting, August 11, 1865; Cardozo to Whiting, May 10, 1865; Cardozo to Strieby, June 16, 1865, *ibid.*

¹⁸ Cardozo to the Rev. M. E. Strieby, April 29, 1865; W. F. Allen to Cardozo, May 30, 1865; Cardozo to Strieby, June 16, 1865; the Rev. M. French to Strieby, April 24, 1865; Cardozo to Strieby, April 29, 1865, *ibid.* See also Luther P. Jackson, "The Educational Efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau and the Freedmen's Aid Societies in South Carolina, 1862-1872," *Journal of Negro History*, VIII (January 1923), 1-40.

Despite such complications and a chronic shortage of money, Cardozo and the other AMA teachers were optimistic about their progress, especially after they obtained use of a large normal school building which had been abandoned during the war. Cardozo's success was not entirely untarnished, however. Soon after his arrival, he began to display the penchant for irritating and disagreeing with his colleagues, both black and white, that would plague him throughout his career.¹⁹ But even greater problems soon ended Cardozo's service with the AMA. In mid-August his brother Francis arrived in Charleston with the news that AMA officials had learned of Thomas's love affair in New York City with his "smartest female scholar." The officials had been dissatisfied with Cardozo's accounting of his expenditures and evidently suspected him of channeling funds to the young woman in question. Rejecting his protestations and pleas for forgiveness of his moral lapse, the association dismissed him, and his brother Francis took over his position at Charleston with a much larger salary.²⁰

Thomas Cardozo and his family did not leave Charleston immediately. For a time he operated a grocery store, but this venture ended when fire destroyed the building. Hoping to find employment with some other church-related agency, Cardozo wrote AMA officials to ask if he should mention the "cause of . . . [his] disconnection with . . . [the AMA] unless required to do so."²¹ AMA officials were unmoved by Thomas's appeal for discretion, however, and the Cardozos moved to Baltimore, where both taught briefly at the Negro Industrial School. When the New England Freedmen's Aid Society withdrew support from a number of Baltimore schools in 1866, Thomas again appealed to the AMA, but again that society refused further association with him.²² The family

¹⁹ W. T. Richardson to the Rev. George Whipple, June 17, 24, 1865; Cardozo to the Rev. S. Hunt, June 23, July 1, 1865; Cardozo to the Rev. W. E. Whiting, July 1, 1865; E. J. Adams to Whiting, August 11, 23, 1865, AMA Archives.

²⁰ Thomas W. Cardozo to W. E. Whiting, September 14, 1865; Thomas W. Cardozo to "My Dear Friends in the Rooms" [AMA headquarters in New York], August 17, 1865 (quotation); Francis L. Cardozo to the Rev. Messrs. Whiple and Strieby, August 18, 1865; Thomas W. Cardozo to Whiting, September 1, 1865, *ibid.* While Thomas and Laura jointly received \$56 per month, Francis was engaged at an initial salary of \$75 per month. Francis L. Cardozo to Whiting, October 10, 1865, *ibid.*

²¹ A black Charleston newspaper called its readers' attention to "the fine stock of Groceries and Crockery at T. W. Cardozo's store" and urged "the colored portion of the community . . . [to] patronize those of their own class in preference to others." Charleston *South Carolina Leader*, November 25, 1865. Cardozo mentioned the fire in his letter to Whipple, December 27, 1865 (quotation), AMA Archives.

²² *Freedmen's Record*, II (April 1866), 78; II (May 1866), 101; II (June 1866), 122. The Cardozos were not included in the "List of Teachers Now in Service," *ibid.*, II (November 1866), 202, nor in any succeeding issues. Cardozo wrote AMA officials from Baltimore August 25 and September 28, 1865, AMA Archives.

then moved to Syracuse, New York, where Cardozo gained the support of former abolitionist Samuel Joseph May in raising funds to resume his educational work, this time in North Carolina.²³ Certainly, Cardozo was also considering the political opportunities opened to competent and knowledgeable blacks in the South by the Reconstruction Acts. He had already written lengthy communications to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* on the role of blacks in the changing political scene.²⁴

In the early spring of 1869 the Cardozos moved to Elizabeth City, North Carolina, where the New York branch of the American Freedmen's Union Commission had supported freedmen's schools since 1865.²⁵ Thomas and Laura taught there until midsummer, when the New York Freedmen's Union Commission ended its program, and they returned to the North to seek other support for their work.²⁶ Cardozo took with him a letter of commendation written by North Carolina's Republican senator John Pool and endorsed by Republican governor William Woods Holden and other state officials.²⁷ After gaining support from the North Shore branch of the New York Freedmen's Union Commission to organize a normal school in Elizabeth City, he secured a one-thousand-dollar appropriation from the Freedmen's Bureau to construct a suitable building.²⁸ The Cardozos opened the new normal school for the fall 1870 term with 123 students.²⁹

²³ Upon May's death in 1871 Cardozo wrote a eulogy recalling their association in Syracuse. Washington *New National Era*, August 3, 1871. In appealing for funds to help Cardozo continue the freedmen's school at Elizabeth City, North Carolina, the New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 17, 1869, stated, "Contributions . . . may be addressed to T. W. Cardozo, care Rev. Samuel J. May, Syracuse, N. Y."

²⁴ New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, August 29, 1868; January 16, 1869.

²⁵ "Report of Rev. J. W. Hood [agent of the North Carolina Board of Education] reporting on freedmen's schools," April 22, 1869, *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*, Document No. 6, *Executive and Legislative Documents of North Carolina, 1869-1870* (Raleigh, 1870), 21; State Superintendent's Monthly School Reports, November 30, 1866; May 31, 1867, Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of North Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Record Group 105 (National Archives, Washington, D. C.; hereinafter cited as N. C. Education Records, BRFAL.)

²⁶ Cardozo to H. C. Vogell, June 14, 1869, N. C. Education Records, BRFAL. The Freedmen's Bureau transmitted to Cardozo vouchers of \$10 per month for building rental through the summer of 1869; "Letters sent, 1869"; Vogell to J. W. Alvord, July 12, 1869, "Register of letters received," *ibid.* For the discontinuation of the A.F.U.C.'s work see New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 17, 1869; letter from Cardozo to the Elizabeth City *North Carolinian*, August 12, 1869; Cardozo to Vogell, September 4, 1869, "Unregistered letters," N. C. Education Records, BRFAL; J. W. Hood to S. S. Ashley, November 2, 1869, *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1869-1870*, p. 27.

²⁷ New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 17, 1869.

²⁸ Elizabeth City *North Carolinian*, August 12, September 16, 1869; Cardozo to H. C. Vogell, September 14, 1869; J[osephine] S[haw] Lowell to Vogell, September 21, 1869; Vogell to Cardozo, September 24, 1869; Cardozo to Vogell, September 30, 1869, N. C. Education Records, BRFAL.

²⁹ Elizabeth City *North Carolinian*, October 14, December 2, 1869; October 27, December 22, 1870; Cardozo to H. C. Vogell, September 30, October 12, November 9, 1869; J. S.

Cardozo's interests in Elizabeth City were not limited to education. Like many other black teachers in the Reconstruction South, he found that organizing schools developed leadership abilities and provided public contacts which led naturally into political activity. But when Cardozo attempted to enter North Carolina politics he quickly discovered that white Republicans were pleased to have Cardozo use his position to influence newly enfranchised blacks to support the party but opposed his seeking office for himself. The carpetbag editor of the Elizabeth City *North Carolinian* praised Cardozo's accomplishments in education³⁰ but blamed Republican losses in 1870 on Cardozo's nomination as sheriff of Pasquotank County. Cardozo's erstwhile friend editorialized: "The course of selfish and ambitious aspirants . . . tends to keep white men from joining our party, aye to drive many now with us away. . . . Mark! we do not say that the colored man has *no right* to share in the offices, but what will it avail him if by *insisting* on the right he gives both the offices and the Government over into the hands of his enemies?"³¹ Not surprisingly, Cardozo himself attributed the Republican losses in North Carolina to "the opposition of professed Republicans to seeing colored men fill prominent positions . . ." ³²

No doubt Cardozo's bleak prospects for a political career in North Carolina helped to inspire his move to Vicksburg, Mississippi, early in January 1871, just a few months after the new normal school had opened. He later explained that his wife was anxious to move to Vicksburg, "where her relatives resided," and that he himself saw "that Mississippi presented a wide and only partially cultivated field for the exercise of his vocation . . ." ³³ Cardozo and his wife began teaching on their arrival in Vicksburg in January 1871, but Mississippi also held out the promise of public office. Cardozo would certainly have been aware that Mississippi had a large black voting majority and that there was practically none of the educated

Lowell to Vogell, December 3, 1869; Vogell to Cardozo, November 25, 1869; March 4, 1870; Vogell to Lowell, December 1, 1869; Lowell to Vogell, December 28, 1869; Vogell to Cardozo, March 4, April 4, 1870; Cardozo to Vogell, May 24, 1870, N. C. Education Records, BRFal. According to officials of Elizabeth City State University, which was founded March 3, 1891, as the State Colored Normal School, there was no relationship between that institution and Cardozo's earlier normal school. Leonard Ballou, university archivist, to the author, September 8, 1977. There is no evidence to suggest that Cardozo was influential in establishing the state common-school system, as he later claimed. Jackson *Mississippi Pilot* [n.d.] cited in Washington *New National Era and Citizen*, September 18, 1873.

³⁰ Elizabeth City *North Carolinian*, July 1, 8, August 12, September 16, December 2, 1869.

³¹ *Ibid.*, May 19, August 11 (quotation), 1870.

³² *New York National Standard*, November 5, 1870.

³³ Elizabeth City *North Carolinian*, January 12, 1871; Jackson *Mississippi Pilot* [n.d.], reprinted in Washington *New National Era and Citizen*, September 18, 1873 (quotation). Cardozo's name appears on the Warren County, Mississippi, Personal Tax Rolls, 1871, p. 34 (Warren County Courthouse, Vicksburg, Miss.); he paid taxes on a pistol valued at \$10 and a watch valued at \$75.

free-Negro class which provided much of the black political leadership in other states.³⁴

Cardozo had hardly settled in Vicksburg before he attracted public attention by suing the city for damages resulting from his falling and breaking his arm. To avoid the expense of challenging Cardozo's claim, city officials settled the case out of court.³⁵

By the time Cardozo had completed the six-months residence required for holding public office he had become an active part of the maelstrom that was the Republican party in Warren County and in the state. Having a large majority among registered voters, the party indulged in internal struggles for office and for control of party machinery—struggles that increasingly involved racial divisions. A Republican newspaper in Vicksburg reported black charges that white Republicans in Warren County and throughout the state “were monopolizing the offices, and that their only use for the colored man was to make use of his votes to ride into place and power.”³⁶ Although they were determined to gain a larger share of Republican nominations, Warren County blacks did not unite behind a slate of candidates but succumbed to squabbling among themselves. A meeting to select county delegates to the state Republican convention degenerated into a shouting and shoving match among black factions and ended with dissatisfied blacks organizing a rump convention. The same disorder and intraracial factionalism also marred the state convention held in Jackson on August 30, 1871.³⁷ Cardozo, in the first of many reports to the *Washington New National Era* under the pseudonym “Civis,” ignored disagreements at the state convention and insisted that “the Republican party in Mississippi is in better condition to-day than in any other Southern State.”³⁸

Perhaps so, but Cardozo's own county Republican organization was deteriorating into a free-for-all scramble for nominations for

³⁴ Laura was listed as the principal of one of Vicksburg's black schools in 1872. *Washington New National Era*, April 4, 1872. The 1860 census showed only 775 free Negroes living in Mississippi. Wharton, *Negro in Mississippi*, 12.

³⁵ *Vicksburg Herald*, July 22, 1871; *Vicksburg Times and Republican*, July 19, 1871. Cardozo had broken his arm and filed suit in February 1871. Cardozo to the editor, *Vicksburg Daily Times*, July 22, 1871.

³⁶ *Vicksburg Times and Republican*, September 12, 1871. Cardozo spoke at a Republican meeting at Freetown July 16, 1871. *Ibid.*, July 18, September 14, 1871.

³⁷ Contending factions at the state convention were led by Negroes Samuel J. Ireland and Hannibal C. Carter, both of whom would be prominent in the party for the remainder of the Reconstruction period. Political rivalry and personal hostility developed early between Carter and Cardozo. *Vicksburg Herald*, August 13, 19, September 2, 1871.

³⁸ *Washington New National Era*, September 14, 1871. In a reply to “Civis,” prominent Mississippi scalawag Robert W. Flounoy exposed Cardozo's naïve perceptions of Mississippi politics and demolished Cardozo's defense of Senator J. L. Alcorn. *Ibid.*, October 12, 1871.

the 1871 elections. White carpetbagger Charles E. Furlong, struggling to retain control of the Vicksburg party machinery, garnered support for the sheriff's post by promising to promote Cardozo and other potential black candidates for various offices. When the Warren County nominating convention met in late September 1871 Furlong's deals paid off: delegates nominated Furlong for sheriff and Cardozo for his chosen office, clerk of circuit court.³⁹

But there was "confusion and dissatisfaction" among those attending the convention "and murmurings that the whole thing was 'packed' and controlled by that powerful lever—money." As rumors of a rival Republican ticket circulated, disgruntled elements attacked white carpetbaggers such as Furlong for opposing the candidacy of "colored men coming from other states." Vicksburg's Republican newspaper repeatedly warned that dividing the Republican vote in the city would give the election to the Democrats and urged support of the regular ticket, with the exception of Furlong. A Republican meeting passed a resolution labeling the dissidents as disappointed aspirants for office and promising that Republicans would correct "whatever evils may exist within the Republican party." Just before the election, conservatives hoping to capitalize on the factionalism threatening Warren County Republicans organized a "citizens" meeting to nominate a supposedly bipartisan slate.⁴⁰

In this contentious atmosphere, Cardozo correctly predicted a smaller Republican majority in the legislature but a larger proportion of Negro legislators. "Indeed," he vowed, "the colored element in all the public offices will be much larger than heretofore. . . . We are not working against our white friends, but the colored voters feeling that they are largely in the majority, put forward their own men as fast as they are qualified and able to reflect credit upon the race. . . ." Betraying a persistent interest in the monetary rewards of office, he noted that in nearby counties colored men had been nominated for sheriff, "the best-paying office in the State."⁴¹ Despite the lack of party unity, the large black vote gave Republicans a majority in Warren County, and Thomas Cardozo began his four-year term as circuit court clerk on January 1, 1872.⁴²

³⁹ Vicksburg *Times and Republican*, September 20, 21, 28, 1871.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, September 28 (first and second quotations), October 14, 15, 17 (third and fourth quotations), November 1, 1871.

⁴¹ Washington *New National Era*, October 26, 1871.

⁴² *Ibid.* Cardozo later reported that I. D. Shadd, also a newcomer, had lost the nomination as clerk to Cardozo and then received the nomination to the legislature. Shadd was later speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives. *Ibid.*, March 13, 1873. See also *ibid.*, November 23 (election returns), December 21, 1871; January 18, 1872; Jackson *Weekly*

Cardozo's reports to the *New National Era* show his keen awareness that blacks were occupying well-paying offices. As he entered his new job, he was also busy establishing himself in state party councils. Elected delegate to the Republican state convention, Cardozo again witnessed the divisions wracking the party. Carpetbagger Albert T. Morgan's opponents attempted to divide black ranks by nominating a black, Hannibal C. Carter, as temporary chairman, but most of the black delegates supported Morgan. Cardozo related that he himself had voted for Morgan because he was able and also because whites vilified Morgan for marrying a Negro woman.⁴³

The presidential campaign of 1872 gave Cardozo further opportunities for establishing ties to the Republican leadership. He accompanied Governor Ridgely Ceylon Powers in canvassing the river counties on behalf of Grant and debated Lieutenant Governor Joseph Bennett, who had forsaken the regular Republicans to support Horace Greeley. The campaign also gave Cardozo an opportunity to cultivate alliances with other aspiring black politicians. He made speeches on behalf of congressional candidate John R. Lynch, canvassed with Republican elector Samuel J. Ireland, and built up his friendship with future United States Senator Blanche Kelso Bruce, then sheriff of Bolivar County.⁴⁴ When the legislative session opened Cardozo made frequent trips to Jackson, where he observed the legislature and wrote sketches of its Republican members for the *New National Era*. By the end of the session he was so much a part of the political scene that he was invited to the governor's mansion along with legislators "to partake of a farewell repast."⁴⁵ He frequently reported to the *Era* that his forays into state politics allowed him to enjoy the "sparkling champagne, and . . . pure Habanas" which seemed to him symbols of affluence and public prominence.⁴⁶

Cardozo's political commentaries reflect deep concern for civil rights, especially equal access to public accommodations. In Janu-

Clarion, December 17, 1874; and *Vicksburg Times and Republican*, December 27, 1871. In 1875 District Attorney Luke Lea would recall, "Mr. Cardozo was at one time a right popular man. He was not here more than six months before he had been . . . [elected] to office, and he had a good deal of influence with the colored people here." *House Reports*, 43 Cong., 2 Sess., No. 265: *Vicksburgh Investigation* (Serial 1659, Washington, 1875), 306; cited hereinafter as *Vicksburgh Investigation*.

⁴³ *Washington New National Era*, October 26, 1871; January 18, May 16, 1872.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, June 6, August 8, 29, September 26, October 17, November 21, December 5, 1872. Cardozo seemed especially proud of his close friendship with Bruce. *Ibid.*, June 12, 1873; May 7, 1874. When another black political associate, Secretary of State James Lynch, died in December 1872, Cardozo joined Governor R. C. Powers and other state officials as pallbearer. *Ibid.*, February 13, 1873.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, February 13, 20, 27, March 27, April 3, 10, 17, May 1 (quotation), 1873.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, October 17, 1872 (quotation); May 1, July 3, 1873.

ary 1872 he helped organize a mass meeting which petitioned Congress to pass Senator Charles Sumner's civil rights bill. Later that year he wrote the civil rights resolution adopted unanimously by the state Republican convention. Mississippi blacks elected Cardozo delegate to the 1873 National Equal Rights Convention held in Washington, where he was commended as one of the "most zealous and efficient workers in the convention." Cardozo also urged the passage of a more comprehensive state public-accommodations law.⁴⁷ The stronger state law was passed, but Cardozo protested bitterly against tactics devised to circumvent it.⁴⁸ He was almost as irritated with prominent blacks who, instead of demanding their rights on public carriers, compliantly occupied the "dirty and loud-smelling . . . [areas] set apart for colored persons."⁴⁹

Cardozo's primary interest, though, continued to be his own political career. Less than two years after arriving in Mississippi, still writing under a pseudonym, he warned outsiders not to come to the state solely for the purpose of running for office because Mississippi already had its "full quota" of politicians. Ignoring his own brief tenure in the state, Cardozo pontificated, "the leading politicians in the State have done hard work to attain their present standard; the people know them, have trusted them, and for others at this late day to come down and expect anything in a political field would be sheer folly." A knowing Mississippian chided: ". . . there are none in the State who stand so much in fear of these adventuring carpet-baggers as 'Civis.' But work on, 'Civis,' you will, in the course of time, (when the people see fit,) get a right fat office. . . . But do not be so selfish . . . have a fair fight for these fat offices." Cardozo himself was suspect as a political adventurer. He wrote of Peter Crosby, then a candidate for sheriff of Warren County, "The only objection I have to friend Crosby is, he dislikes men of other States to aspire to positions in this State. Perhaps, however, this is only the case when the men get in his way."⁵⁰

Others disagreed with Crosby, it seems. In June 1873 Cardozo reported that friends had the idea he himself "ought to be promoted." Certainly, Cardozo had that idea; he was busy traveling to eastern and northern counties, ingratiating himself with Republican

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, January 18, February 8, April 4, June 6, 13, November 21, 1872; November 20, December 18 (quotation), 1873.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, February 20, 1873; Vicksburg *Daily Times and Republican*, May 3, 1873; Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, May 8, 1873; Washington *New National Era and Citizen*, May 29, 1873.

⁴⁹ Washington *New National Era*, January 18, April 4, 1872; February 20, 1873 (quotation).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, December 26, 1872 (first and second quotations); January 16 (third quotation), August 21 (fourth quotation), 1873. Cardozo was obviously not without enemies. In May 1873 the *Era* refused to publish a malicious personal attack on "Civis." *Ibid.*, May 8, 1873.

leaders, both black and white.⁵¹ His chances were enhanced by the blacks' insistence that three of the state's seven statewide offices, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, and superintendent of education, go to members of the race that formed the bulk of the Republican party.⁵² Furthermore, convention delegates from Cardozo's home county, Warren, were in a position to demand that one of those three positions go to a resident of their heavily Republican county.⁵³

When the Republican state convention met in late August Senator Adelbert Ames was easily nominated for governor, but a number of contenders fought for each of the remaining offices, fulfilling Cardozo's prophecy of "stormy times" for the convention. Alexander K. Davis gained the nomination for lieutenant governor, influencing one of his black opponents, Hannibal C. Carter, to announce as an independent candidate for governor. Cardozo was one of seven blacks nominated for secretary of state. After the first ballot Cardozo withdrew in favor of James Hill. Cardozo then defeated two black and three white candidates, among them the incumbent, for nomination as superintendent of education, a post he called "one of the most important if not the most important in the State." One of the disappointed black aspirants, J. D. Webster, ran for superintendent of education on the rival Republican ticket headed by James Lusk Alcorn.⁵⁴ While black delegates cheered their "victory . . . over the carpet-bagger," white Republicans were reluctant to concede all three positions to blacks, and in the weeks following the convention there were repeated rumors that Ames and other white party leaders were trying to replace Cardozo

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, June 19 (quotation), July 3, 1873. On July 27, 1873, Cardozo wrote to the *Era*, "For the past three weeks I have been kept so busy in our political affairs that I have not had time to pen you a line." *Ibid.*, August 21, 1873.

⁵² *Ibid.*, May 29, August 21, October 23, 1873; William C. Harris, *The Day of the Carpet-bagger: Republican Reconstruction in Mississippi* (Baton Rouge and London, 1979), 466; Lynch, *Reminiscences*, 115; Garner, *Reconstruction in Mississippi*, 293; Wharton, *Negro in Mississippi*, 175-76. On January 17, 1900, Adelbert Ames wrote to historian James W. Garner, "The demands of the colored delegates for state offices seemed to be irresistible." James W. Garner Papers (Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Miss.).

⁵³ John R. Lynch later called Cardozo's nomination "largely a concession to that strong Republican county [Warren]." Lynch, *Reminiscences*, 117. The Holly Springs *Tribune*, July 24, 1875, reminded its readers that "Cardozo was put upon the State ticket to appease the wrath of the Warren County delegation." Reprinted in the Jackson *Daily Mississippi Pilot*, July 28, 1875. See also Garner, *Reconstruction in Mississippi*, 293; and Wharton, *Negro in Mississippi*, 175-76.

⁵⁴ Washington *New National Era and Citizen*, August 21 (first quotation), September 11 (second quotation), November 20, 1873; Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, September 4, 1873. The conservative *Clarion* commented, "Though nothing is known of Cardozo, there is relief in the thought that the State will be rid of Pease." *Ibid.*

with Henry Roberts Pease, the white carpetbag incumbent.⁵⁵

The black vote was essential to Ames's election, so he could not afford to force Cardozo from the ticket, and Cardozo was most unlikely to give up his nomination. After a bitter campaign between the Ames ticket and the Alcorn ticket the regular Republicans under Ames won a sweeping victory statewide. Cardozo and the other two black candidates received decidedly larger majorities than did their white running mates, even though Cardozo and James Hill had black opponents.⁵⁶

Cardozo assumed his new position, with its annual salary of \$2,500, in January 1874.⁵⁷ At the end of that year his annual report showed a thorough knowledge of Mississippi's education system and offered sound proposals for making the schools more effective while reducing expenditures. Cardozo recommended that county superintendents be replaced by a smaller number of more efficient district superintendents, that a uniform series of textbooks be adopted for the entire state, and that a compulsory-education law be passed.⁵⁸ Apparently, Cardozo's racial sensitivity did not hamper his work. Although the Mississippi constitution did not expressly require racially separate schools, no attempt had been made to establish integrated schools, and Cardozo did nothing to interfere with this practice.⁵⁹ His race was apparently no embarrassment when he visited white schools; he reported that he was courteously received.⁶⁰

Despite some positive accomplishments, Cardozo could not concentrate on the duties of his new office, nor did most Mississippians care whether he was discharging those duties creditably. During the 1873 campaign disturbing rumors about Cardozo's past had circulated briefly. According to the Jackson *Clarion* a delegate to the 1873 Republican state convention had openly accused Cardozo of being a former inmate of Sing-Sing prison. A black minister campaigning for the Alcorn ticket was reported to have said that Car-

⁵⁵ Adelbert Ames to Blanche Butler Ames, September 5, 1873, Blanche Butler Ames, comp., *Chronicles from the Nineteenth Century: Family Letters of Blanche Butler and Adelbert Ames* . . . (2 vols., Clinton, Mass., 1957), I, 550; Washington *New National Era and Citizen*, October 23, 1873; February 19, 1874; Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, September 4 (quotation), October 16, 1873.

⁵⁶ Jackson *Weekly Mississippi Pilot*, January 29, 1874; Washington *New National Era and Citizen*, November 20, 1873; January 15, 1874; February 19, 1874.

⁵⁷ Jackson *Weekly Mississippi Pilot*, September 18, 1875.

⁵⁸ *Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Public Education for the Scholastic Year 1874* (Jackson, 1875), *passim*.

⁵⁹ Edward King, *The Great South* (Hartford, 1875), 316; Wharton, *Negro in Mississippi*, 244; Garner, *Reconstruction in Mississippi*, 363.

⁶⁰ Washington *New National Era*, July 2, 1874.

dozo was a "pardoned convict from the South Carolina . . . penitentiary," while others represented him as "an ex-convict from a N. Y. prison-house" and "a fugitive from justice."⁶¹ With the development of Mississippi's "white-line" program in mid-1874 these charges were revived and amplified, so much so that in July 1874 a teacher in a black school publicly appealed to Cardozo to clear his record: ". . . enemies of the schools taunt us with statements which we cannot disprove. I now call on Hon. T. W. Cardoza to contradict those statements for the benefit of the Progressive party who placed him in the honorable position he now fills, and for his own benefit."⁶² The *Vicksburger*, a new white-line newspaper, traced the rumors, obtained a certified copy of federal court records in Brooklyn, and published the charges that had been brought against Cardozo there in 1867. According to those records Cardozo had been indicted on four counts of having fraudulently obtained mail containing small sums of money addressed to someone else. The conservative Vicksburg *Herald* alleged that Cardozo's brother Francis had gone from Charleston to New York and "by some means" had induced the district attorney to drop the charges. A motion of *nolle prosequi* had been entered in December 1872.⁶³ Cardozo attempted to defend himself in the columns of the Vicksburg *Plain Dealer*, a small weekly that he edited. He explained that he had made an honest mistake, not knowing the technicalities of correctly signing for a registered letter addressed to another, and that "several of the most distinguished white citizens of Brooklyn," who knew his father-in-law and had heard of him, intervened with authorities on his behalf.⁶⁴ The sympathetic Holly Springs *South* responded that Cardozo's story, "if true," established his innocence but asked for a complete investigation.⁶⁵

But discussion of the New York indictments was quickly eclipsed by more immediate and more damaging charges. In the Vicksburg

⁶¹ Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, September 4, October 9 (first and second quotations), 16 (third quotation), 1873.

⁶² Robert C. MacGregor, "Teacher of Colored Youth," to the editor, Washington *New National Era*, July 16, 1874. MacGregor also challenged "Civis" to reveal himself as T. W. Cardozo. After this challenge no more reports from "Civis" appeared in the *Era*. For the white line see Harris, *Day of the Carpetbagger*, 635-39.

⁶³ Vicksburg *Vicksburger* [n.d.], reprinted in Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, August 13, 1874; Vicksburg *Herald* [n.d.], reprinted in Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, August 20, 1874 (quotation). A heavily damaged copy of the indictment records is in the Cardozo impeachment documents, Records of the Legislature, Record Group 47 (Mississippi Department of Archives and History). The U. S. District Court clerk's affidavit certifying these to be true copies of the official records, signed September 17, 1873, was published in the *Vicksburger* and the *Clarion* but apparently has disappeared. The Vicksburg *Times*, August 19, 1874, a nominally Republican paper, which later attacked Cardozo unremittingly, pointed out the *Vicksburger's* omission of the resolution of the case.

⁶⁴ Vicksburg *Plain Dealer* [n.d.], reprinted in Vicksburg *Vicksburger*, August 25, 1874.

⁶⁵ Holly Springs *South* [n.d.], reprinted in Vicksburg *Times*, August 30, 1874.

city elections of early August 1874 a successful white-line campaign swept a conservative slate into office. With city government under control, white conservative leaders turned their attention to the "condition of the finances of . . . Warren County."⁶⁶ The discovery that A. W. Dorsey, Cardozo's former deputy and successor as circuit court clerk of Warren County, had issued fraudulent witness certificates led to similar charges against Cardozo.⁶⁷

These charges did not result from spontaneous protests of aggrieved citizens but were carefully orchestrated to create publicity favorable to the conservative campaign. Cardozo's accusers were chosen as symbols—bona fide Republicans, one black and one white. Cardozo was arrested after an affidavit by Hannibal C. Carter swore that Cardozo had made false entries in Warren County records on May 4, 1873. Carter, earlier called a "carpetbag mulatto" by the conservative *Vicksburg Herald*, was a political enemy of Cardozo's who, upon failing to gain a Republican nomination for state office in 1873, had announced as an independent candidate for governor.⁶⁸ The second affiant, Erasmus D. Richardson, was a carpetbag ne'er-do-well who, after years of conflict with the Republican machine, had gone over to the conservatives in the city elections of August 1874 and had been rewarded with an appointment as special city policeman. Ironically, the *Herald* in 1871 had pronounced Richardson "debased and unprincipled . . . a man who cannot be believed under oath."⁶⁹ Neither affidavit revealed how the affiant acquired his evidence, nor was there any indication of why such incriminating information had been withheld until late August 1874.

In the examining trial circuit court officials testified that Cardozo had listed unauthorized witnesses in court records in 1872, and the deputy state auditor testified that Cardozo had received money on

⁶⁶ *Vicksburg Investigation*, xx.

⁶⁷ Cardozo to the editor, *Jackson Weekly Clarion*, August 20, 1874. At this point, Cardozo sued the *St. Louis Dispatch* for libel, claiming \$50,000 damages for reporting that he had been arrested for forging warrants on the school fund. The *Dispatch* had referred to him as "a negro who has been placed in authority over the enslaved citizens of Mississippi." *Vicksburg Daily Herald*, August 21, 1874; *Vicksburg Daily Times*, August 21, 1874. Dorsey resigned as circuit clerk as soon as charges were brought. Dorsey to Governor Adelbert Ames, August 18, 1874, Adelbert Ames Papers, Records of the Governor, Record Group 27 (Mississippi Department of Archives and History).

⁶⁸ *Vicksburg Herald*, September 30, 1871; *Vicksburg Times*, August 24, 1874; *Vicksburg Daily Vicksburger*, August 25, 1874; *Jackson Weekly Clarion*, August 27, 1874. For Carter's feud with Cardozo see *Washington New National Era and Citizen*, November 20, December 11, 1873. Carter was appointed *ad interim* secretary of state upon the death of James Lynch in December 1872 but resigned this position to take a seat in the legislature. He was later appointed deputy collector of internal revenue.

⁶⁹ *Vicksburg Herald*, July 29, 1871. For Richardson's background see his testimony in *Vicksburg Investigation*, 77-79.

the falsified witness certificates.⁷⁰ Before this hearing concluded Cardozo faced new charges. Several persons filed affidavits that Cardozo while circuit clerk had embezzled funds paid to redeem lands held by the state for nonpayment of taxes, while the white-line *Vicksburger* appealed to all who had redeemed lands through Cardozo to bring in their receipts or deeds. When Cardozo appeared before the examining magistrate on September 7 he posted bond to answer all the charges before the grand jury at the next session of circuit court. Among the seven bondsmen pledging a total of \$22,500 were U. S. Senator Blanche K. Bruce, Secretary of State James Hill, the state treasurer, the Jackson postmaster, and the superintendent of the state penitentiary.⁷¹

Having vehemently denied reports that his friends were petitioning the governor for a pardon,⁷² Cardozo appeared before the grand jury in November 1874. This jury, composed of ten blacks and seven whites, indicted "nearly all the prominent officials in the county." Seven of the indictments were against Cardozo: two for forging witness certificates and five for embezzling a total of two thousand dollars from land-redemption funds. The grand jury also charged that incriminating records were stolen after the indictments had been returned.⁷³

Cardozo's trial finally began May 6, 1875, with Cardozo pleading not guilty. Despite damaging testimony by Dorsey, Cardozo's former deputy and friend, the jury of nine blacks and three whites failed to reach a verdict. The Jackson *Clarion* published the names of the seven jurors voting for acquittal so that they might be "known and marked."⁷⁴ Before Cardozo could be tried again he had the case transferred to Hinds County because of "the excited state of public opinion" in Vicksburg.⁷⁵ By the time the case came

⁷⁰ Vicksburg *Times*, August 26, 27, 1874; Vicksburg *Herald*, August 27, 28, 1874.

⁷¹ Vicksburg *Herald*, August 30, September 5, 8, 9, 10, 1874; Vicksburg *Vicksburger*, August 27, September 9, 1874; Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, September 3, 10, 1874.

⁷² Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, November 19, 26, 1874; Vicksburg *Vicksburger*, November 24, 1874.

⁷³ Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, December 3 (quotation), 17, 1874; January 14, 1875.

⁷⁴ Entries for May 6, 7, 8, 1875, Warren County Circuit Court Minute Book, March 24, 1873–July 10, 1875, pp. 584–88, 590, 604 (Warren County Courthouse); Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, May 12, 1875 (quotation). The minority report of the joint special committee of the Mississippi legislature investigating the "Vicksburg Troubles" of 1874 included the following: "The evidence against T. W. Cardozo . . . is conclusive as to fraud, forgery, and embezzlement. He appeared before the Committee in his own behalf, and had there been no other testimony, his own would have convicted him." Jackson *Weekly Mississippi Pilot*, March 6, 1875. After hearing extensive testimony on the charges against Cardozo the Republican majority of the congressional committee investigating the "Vicksburg Troubles" concluded that "the evidence . . . fully justifies the indictments found." *Vicksburgh Investigation*, xiii.

⁷⁵ Cardozo's bail was reduced from \$22,000 to \$11,000. Jackson *Weekly Mississippi Pilot*, May 15, 1875 (quotation); Vicksburg *Herald*, May 21, 1875; entries for December 11, 1875, Warren County Circuit Court Minute Book, November 1, 1875–November 23, 1877, p. 106.

up for retrial in Jackson in July 1876 Cardozo had resigned his office and left Mississippi.⁷⁶

The attacks of Vicksburg conservatives on Republican officials were not limited to court procedures or newspaper reports but turned increasingly to direct action and physical violence. The unresolved indictments of Cardozo in late 1874 and the subsequent disappearance of evidence were among the grievances inspiring a so-called "tax payers' convention" on December 2, 1874, that demanded the resignation of three county officials. Two whites and a large number of blacks were killed in the ensuing "Vicksburg troubles." Enraged by the mistrial and change of venue in the Cardozo case, Vicksburg whites were determined that Cardozo should not return to influence the city's black voters. When he and Secretary of State James Hill came to Vicksburg to speak at a 1875 Fourth of July celebration organized by blacks Cardozo had an altercation at the depot with a leading Democrat whom Cardozo had abused in his newspaper. Later that day whites stormed the meeting at the courthouse and set off a series of sporadic street attacks in which several blacks were killed or injured. Cardozo, the main target of the mob, took refuge in the cupola of the courthouse; city officials later helped to spirit Cardozo and Hill out of the city.⁷⁷

Cardozo defended himself against newspaper attacks and legal charges primarily through the pages of his own newspaper, the *Plain Dealer*. But the *Plain Dealer* itself brought more criticism and abuse upon Cardozo. Under the Republican-sponsored district printing law the *Plain Dealer* was authorized to do all the public printing for the courts in its district. Cardozo's critics charged that one side of the *Plain Dealer* was published in Jackson and the other in the North and that it had no subscribers. A. W. Dorsey, successor to Cardozo as circuit court clerk, was business manager of the paper, but Cardozo fired him in August 1874, accusing him of forging Cardozo's name on fraudulent witness certificates. Dorsey retaliated, publicly charging that Cardozo wrote all of the *Plain Dealer*'s many articles praising the "Hon. T. W. Cardozo."⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, July 19, 1876. In reporting the conviction of Francis Cardozo in South Carolina the *Clarion* commented, "It would have been as easy to convict T. W. Cardozo of this State, who was guilty of the same crimes as his brother." *Ibid.*, November 14, 1877.

⁷⁷ Furlong, *Outrages at Vicksburg, passim*; Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, December 10, 1874; *Origin and Progress of the Vicksburg Troubles*. . . (Vicksburg, 1874), *passim*; Peter Crosby, sheriff of Warren County, to Governor Adelbert Ames, July 5, 1875, Ames Papers; Jackson *Weekly Mississippi Pilot*, July 10, 1875; *Senate Reports*, 44 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 527: *Mississippi in 1875* (2 vols., Serials 1669-70, Washington, 1876; cited hereinafter as *Mississippi in 1875*), I, 1308, 1311-12, 1316-18, 1353, 1364-66, 1394, 1400, 1417-18; Harris, *Day of the Carpetbagger*, 645-49.

⁷⁸ Furlong, *Outrages at Vicksburg*, 6 (quotation); Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, October 29,

Cardozo's indictments naturally dismayed Mississippi Republicans. Governor Ames privately wrote that he was "mortified and chagrined" at Cardozo's arrest, seeing it as "an illustration of the character of the material we have to work with . . ." When testifying before a congressional committee a few months later Ames tried to dissociate himself from Cardozo as much as possible, insisting that Cardozo was "not one of those men that I looked to chiefly for information."⁷⁹ The initial reactions of Republican newspaper editors ranged from defense to condemnation, but as the charges accumulated more and more Republicans deserted Cardozo.⁸⁰ At a Republican caucus in early January 1875 two white legislators suggested impeachment, but black members objected. Under pressure, black House Speaker I. D. Shadd that month appointed three blacks and two white conservatives to a special investigating committee, which recommended that no charges be brought.⁸¹ But in late July 1875 the Jackson Republican Club resolved that "without attempting to decide whether Cardozo is guilty, as charged, we nevertheless repudiate him. . . . if Cardozo is innocent . . . it is his misfortune, and not the fault of the Republican party . . ."⁸²

Cardozo's final downfall did not come at the hands of fellow Republicans, however, but through the efforts of conservatives determined to redeem Mississippi from Republican control by whatever means might be necessary. As early as December 1874 the conservative press began to accuse Cardozo of improper and illegal acts as superintendent of education, and in 1875 the mounting charges against Cardozo helped to buttress the militant "white-line" campaign.⁸³ Using increasingly explicit racial appeals, conservatives

1874; Vicksburg *Vicksburger*, December 20, 1874; Vicksburg *Times*, August 25, 31, 1874. The *Times* referred to the *Plain Dealer* as the "Plain Stealer." *Ibid.*, September 15, 1874. The minority (Democratic) report on the "Vicksburg Troubles" referred to the *Plain Dealer* as a "semi-official journal . . . a newspaper of very limited circulation, which receives most of its subsidy as the official gazette of the courts." *Vicksburgh Investigation*, xxiv. Cardozo did use the pages of the *Plain Dealer* to lecture black legislators who had decided in secret caucus to oppose biennial sessions. "A Plain Talk with the Colored Members of the Legislature," Vicksburg *Plain Dealer* [n.d.], reprinted in Jackson *Weekly Mississippi Pilot*, February 27, 1875. Publication of the *Plain Dealer* was suspended late in 1875. *Ibid.*, November 29, 1875.

⁷⁹ Ames to Blanche Butler Ames, August 25, 1874, Ames, comp. *Chronicles*, II, 14 (first quotation); *Vicksburg Investigation*, 543 (second quotation).

⁸⁰ Jackson *Weekly Mississippi Pilot* [n.d.], quoted in Vicksburg *Times*, August 31, 1874; Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, July 28, 1875; Grenada *Republican* [n.d.], quoted, *ibid.*, September 29, 1875. Cardozo's name is conspicuously missing from an election appeal, "An Address from Colored Voters to Colored Voters," signed by prominent black politicians. Jackson *Weekly Mississippi Pilot*, October 2, 1875.

⁸¹ Vicksburg *Times*, January 19, 1875; Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, January 28, 1875; Vicksburg *Herald*, February 5, 1875.

⁸² Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, July 28, 1875.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, December 17, 24, 1874; January 21, February 4, 1875; Vicksburg *Times*, January 16, 28, 1875; Vicksburg *Herald*, January 29, February 5, 1875. Cardozo responded to some of the charges in the Jackson *Weekly Mississippi Pilot*, February 13, 1875.

blamed economic reverses in the state on Republican corruption and mismanagement. When the successful "Mississippi plan" of 1875 brought a conservative majority to the legislature, one of that legislature's first acts was to establish a committee to investigate Cardozo's official conduct. After hearing testimony from bank officials, county school superintendents, the current and former state auditors, and the business manager of Tougaloo University the committee recommended twelve articles of impeachment, which were approved by a House vote of 101 to 4.⁸⁴

On May 11, 1876, the Mississippi Senate heard the charges against Cardozo. Some restated the indictments brought in Warren County in 1874: that Cardozo, while circuit court clerk, had withheld land-redemption money from the state and demanded payment for forged and fraudulent witness certificates. Others charged that as treasurer of the Tougaloo University Board of Trustees Cardozo had embezzled and converted to his own use funds appropriated for that institution. Four articles charged that Cardozo accepted bribes and defrauded the state in purchasing school record books. He was also accused of falsifying the number of educable children in Warren County and proposing to the county superintendent that they divert for their mutual benefit the extra funds thus gained.

Of the charges of malfeasance as superintendent of education, the most incriminating involved his handling of Tougaloo funds. A series of letters from Tougaloo officials to American Missionary Association headquarters substantiates impeachment testimony that Cardozo diverted state funds for his own use and even attempted to extract a 5 percent commission for his services as treasurer of the Tougaloo board.⁸⁵ When Cardozo resigned he re-

⁸⁴ Complete testimony taken by the impeachment committee was published in the *Jackson Weekly Clarion*, May 24, 1876. The Democratic *Clarion* had replaced the Republican *Pilot* as the official state printer. For the House vote on impeachment see *Clarion*, February 23, 1876; see also L. W. Magruder to J. B. Yellowly, chairman of the House committee investigating Cardozo, March 4, 1876, Cardozo impeachment documents; Magruder to Kinlock Falconer, private secretary to Governor John M. Stone, April 28, 1876, J. M. Stone Papers, Records of the Governor, Record Group 27 (Mississippi Department of Archives and History); *Journal of the Senate of the State of Mississippi, 1876* (Jackson, 1876), 291, 297-98, 403-16. In addition to the official charges of malfeasance as superintendent of education, the *Vicksburg Herald*, February 5, 1875, accused Cardozo of giving his wife a clerkship with the State Board of Education at "a large salary," forcing out another black teacher so that his brother-in-law could have a desirable teaching post in Hinds County (Jackson), and "squandering" school funds in traveling north every summer. The *Vicksburg Times*, January 28, 1875, questioned the use of the common-school fund to send Cardozo to meetings of "educational associations in other states." Cardozo, Senator Blanche K. Bruce, and Secretary of State James Hill had attended the 1874 meeting of the American Educational Association. *Detroit Tribune*, August 6, 1874, cited by *Jackson Weekly Clarion*, August 13, 1874.

⁸⁵ Serving as treasurer of the board was a normal part of Cardozo's duties as superintendent of education. For Cardozo's handling of Tougaloo funds see letters from the Tougaloo staff to AMA officials dated September 24, December 14, 28, 1874; January 4, February 4, 21, March 1, July 7, 19, 1875, AMA Archives.

portedly left Mississippi with more than two thousand dollars of the 1875 appropriation for Tougaloo. The university's trustees instituted suit against the sureties on Cardozo's Warren County bond to recover the amount of defalcation.⁸⁶

Despite the damning evidence against him, Cardozo responded that the articles were not legally sufficient to bring impeachment charges and that he furthermore was innocent of all charges. But before the Senate began to hear the evidence Cardozo asked for permission to resign and have the charges against him dismissed. By a vote of 21 to 8 the Senate discontinued the impeachment proceedings. Cardozo submitted his resignation on March 22, 1876.⁸⁷

His public career ruined, disgraced and in danger in Mississippi, still subject to trial for the earlier charges brought in Vicksburg, Cardozo left the state. When his trial was called in July he failed to appear, thus forfeiting his bonds.⁸⁸ Cardozo moved to Newton, Massachusetts, where he reportedly worked for the postal service until his death in 1881 at the age of forty-two.⁸⁹

Thomas Cardozo was, of course, only one of the Republican officeholders forced out of office in the spring of 1876. Governor Adelbert Ames also resigned under threat of impeachment, and Lieutenant Governor Alexander K. Davis was impeached and removed from office. Perhaps Governor Ames's wife was right when she wrote, ". . . there is to be a clean sweep and all Republicans must leave."⁹⁰ Perhaps Cardozo would have been eliminated whatever the merits of his case; yet all but seven of the delegates to a state Republican convention in late March 1876 voted against adding Cardozo's name to a resolution asserting that Governor Ames was "not guilty of high crimes and misdemeanors" but was charged

⁸⁶ S. C. Osborn to the Rev. M. E. Strieby, April 1, 17, May 3, 11, 1876, *ibid.*; testimony of Josiah A. P. Campbell, president of Tougaloo University Board of Trustees, June 21, 1876, to special committee investigating Mississippi elections of 1875, *Mississippi in 1875*, I, 946-47. According to Osborn, who was resigning as business manager of Tougaloo, he (Osborn) had been commissioned by Governor John M. Stone "to find and arrest Mr. Cardozo and use his utmost endeavors to obtain from him or his friends the amount" owed to the institution. Osborn to Strieby, June 12, 1876, AMA Archives.

⁸⁷ *Impeachment Trial of Thomas W. Cardozo, State Superintendent of Education* (Jackson, 1876), *passim*; T. W. Cardozo to the People of the State of Mississippi, March 22, 1876, Ames Papers; Jackson *Daily Clarion*, March 22, 29, 1876.

⁸⁸ Jackson *Weekly Clarion*, July 19, 1876.

⁸⁹ Oral interview with Donald F. Cardozo, Thomas W. Cardozo's grandson, of Washington, D. C., October 15, 1978. Massachusetts records show that Cardozo died in Newton April 13, 1881, of "alhimenia." No occupation is listed. Copy of Record of Death No. 88115, Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Cardozo's name does not appear in any Postal Service records in the National Archives, but staff members suggest that he could have worked for a postal contractor.

⁹⁰ Blanche Butler Ames to Sarah Hildreth Butler, March 14, 1876, Ames, comp. *Chronicles*, II, 345.

“wholly for partisan and political purposes.”⁹¹ Cardozo was obviously discredited in the eyes of the party, which for some time had considered him a heavy liability.

Certainly, the Republican party in Mississippi had been extremely vulnerable to the militant conservative attack in 1875. A fundamental racial bias fueled the successful campaigns of the “white-liners,” but conservative leaders were also able to capitalize on genuine weaknesses in the Republican regime. Because Mississippians were suffering economically, they found particularly unendurable what they perceived as Republican extravagance and corruption. The party further weakened its own position by falling prey to disunity and factionalism. Because of intraparty and even intraracial rivalries Republican organizations resorted to deals and trade-outs when the times demanded statesmanship. Black Republican leaders, wielding the power of black voting majorities, damaged the party by demanding specific offices regardless of whether suitable black candidates were available.

In short, many of the party’s weaknesses were personified by Thomas W. Cardozo, who could have been the ideal candidate. That he was not represents a tragic failure, not just for Cardozo, but for black political leadership and for the party that provided the only real channel for that leadership. Cardozo was talented, sophisticated, well educated, and articulate, qualities desperately needed as blacks struggled for a place in the political life of the South and the nation. But Cardozo’s faults ultimately eclipsed even these virtues. Proud and arrogant, Cardozo lacked the skills of compromising and temporizing that allowed his brother Francis to work effectively with white politicians. Cardozo also lacked James Lynch’s legendary charismatic appeal for the black masses. Not content with his unquestionable successes as a teacher and school principal, Cardozo longed for power, but even more for status and prestige. His overweening ambition, coupled with an abrasive personal style, led him into trouble wherever he went. He initially attracted people by his intelligence and ability, but he soon antagonized blacks as well as whites by his exaggerated sense of superiority, a sense no doubt ingrained by his upbringing among Charleston’s free-Negro elite.

Cardozo’s inability to transcend his background offers a partial clue to some of the weaknesses in black political leadership during Reconstruction. Too often exceptional black leaders failed to forge a sense of identity with the freed masses, failed to represent the true interests of their major constituents. Because Mississippi Republicans did not develop sufficient indigenous leadership from among the state’s freedmen, they frequently had to rely on “imported”

⁹¹ Jackson *Weekly Mississippi Pilot*, April 1, 1876.

talent like Cardozo to fill important offices. It is conceivable that Cardozo and some similarly privileged leaders possibly might have abetted this condition because they had a vested interest in keeping the pool of qualified aspirants small.

A more personal aspect of the Cardozo tragedy is his apparent lack of a moral sense, his willingness to become involved in questionable and even dishonest schemes. Ever a manipulator and an operator, Cardozo apparently hoped to make a quick fortune by temporarily using public funds entrusted to him. When challenged, he attempted to repay some of the money due, first to the state treasury and later to Tougaloo University, but these attempts do not alter the basic dishonesty of his misappropriations. True, the Warren County case against him had curiously ambiguous overtones, with its carefully selected witnesses and its questionable timing. No doubt the rapidly intensifying "white-line" program was the major force behind the prosecutions. Despite these nagging problems, however, the accumulated evidence against Cardozo is too overwhelming and too convincing to explain away. The tragedy is that he ultimately was more concerned with promoting his own fortunes than with elevating his "oppressed brethren." In the unique conditions of the Reconstruction period Cardozo's failure was not merely a personal one; it was also a failure for the freedmen he professed to serve and for the party which promised them a meaningful political role in the postbellum South.