RICE UNIVERSITY

NORRIS WRIGHT CUNEY

by

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This paper concerns the life of Norris Wright Cuney (1846-1898), a Negro who became contracting stevedore on the Galveston wharves, collector of customs, alderman on the Galveston City Council, and a principal leader of the Republican party in Texas from 1884 to 1896. His leadership of the party in Texas covered a period when the party was declining from its Reconstruction heights and it was largely controlled by Negroes. Cuney, through his leadership and organizational abilities welded the Negroes into a coherent force, making it possible for them to dominate the party after 1884. Although the Republican party was not able to win elections on the state level, the Negroes used it to give a political voice against racial prejudice and violations of civil rights—a stronger voice than they would have had in the Democratic party.

Cuney made his way up in Republican party ranks after the Civil War and during Radical Reconstruction in Texas under Governor Edmund J. Davis. He acquired more power in the party after Davis' death in 1883, when the whites were divided and the Negroes especially willing to follow a man of their own color. Cuney's power in the party reached its apogee when he was collector of customs between 1888 and 1892.

In some ways, Cuney was a precursor of today's Negro leaders. He would not push for legislated social equality, but he did demand equal job opportunities for himself as well as other Negroes, equal educational opportunities, and equal social benefits for Negroes. Cuney's
life is an interesting study because he gained power when most other Negroes in the South had lost theirs. His life might be viewed as a transition between the relative freedom accorded Negroes during Reconstruction and the Jim Crow period of the early twentieth century. The Jim Crow laws of the 1890's in Texas, the increased violence toward Negroes, and the lily-white movement in the Texas Republican party were reflections of a trend throughout the South and the United States as a whole. The Negro was not to see a revival of political power on any significant scale until the Franklin Roosevelt era.
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CHAPTER I

CUNEY'S EARLY LIFE, 1846-1883

The Credentials Committee of the national Republican convention held in St. Louis on June 16-18, 1896, refused to recognize Norris Wright Cuney's delegation from Texas. Cuney's fall as Negro leader of the Republican party in Texas was thereby completed. How Cuney rose to prominence in Republican politics in Texas, how he used the events of Reconstruction and the post-Reconstruction period to catapult himself into important positions is an interesting story of one who helped the Negro advance in the critical years after emancipation.

Than Cuney would reach social and political heights as collector of customs, as leader of the Republican party in Texas, as alderman on the Galveston City Council, and contracting stevedore on the Galveston wharves seemed unlikely at the time of his birth on May 12, 1846. For Norris Wright Cuney was the son of slave Adeline Stuart and planter Philip Minor Cuney.

As the son of a slave mother, Cuney was himself a slave who could not expect to benefit from his paternal descent. At best he could hope for manumission by his father as an honorable gesture to obliterate a dishonorable act and to assuage possible feelings of guilt. Unlike the progeny of most of these unions, however, Cuney had the benefit of an excellent heritage. His mother, Adeline Stuart, was the daughter of Hester Neale Stuart, a domestic slave in the service of the Neale family at Centreville, Virginia. Hester Neale Stuart, born about 1880
in Virginia, was of white, Indian, and Negro blood. She was an unusual
slave in that she could read and write. Adeline Stuart, born about
1825 in Virginia, had Caucasoid features, straight black hair, and an
olive complexion. Her obviously non-Negroid features and literate
background undoubtedly appealed to the elder Cuney.1

Born in 1808, the tall, blond, blue-eyed master of Sunnyside plan-
tation was the sixth and youngest of the sons born to Tabitha Wells
and Richard Edmond Cuney on Bayou Rapides in Rapides Parish, Louisiana.
The Cuneys were Swiss, who, with the Archinard family, had emigrated
to Virginia and later turned to Louisiana in 1803.2

The Cuney family was well situated financially and socially in
Rapides Parish, and Philip Cuney presumably would have had little rea-
son to leave that area had it not been for personal quarrels. A duel
fought on a sandbar in the Mississippi River near Natchez was precipi-
tated by either a disputed election box or business debts. After this
quarrel, Samuel L. Wells challenged Dr. Thomas H. Maddox to a duel.
The parties agreed to meet on September 19, 1827, at the duelling
grounds on the sandbar. Two rounds of shots were exchanged between
Maddox and Wells with no effect. After this, the duel became a free-
for-all between the opposing seconds in which General R. A. Crane (or

1Maud Cuney Hare, Norris Wright Cuney: A Tribune of the Black
People (New York, 1913), 1, 3; C. G. Woodson, "The Cuney Family,"
Norris Wright, Jenny, Laura, and Henry Ernest Cuney reached maturity.

2Hare, Cuney, 2.
Crain) killed General Samuel Cuney, P. M. Cuney's brother.  

The hard feelings lingering after the duel and the death of his first wife in 1834 probably caused Philip M. Cuney to move to Texas early in 1837. Undoubtedly, Cuney, like many others, was also attracted by the cheap lands of East Texas.

Here, amid the fertile valleys and prairies near the Brazos River in Austin (later Waller) County, Philip Minor Cuney situated his plantation, which he named Sunnyside. He located his homestead twelve miles southeast of what later became Hempstead, Texas, on the José Justo Lindo five-league grant bordering Iron Creek. Here, in 1842, he married his second wife, Eliza Ware, who bore him three children. After her death in September, 1849, he married Adeline Spurlock of Rapides Parish.

Although he was one of the fifty-four richest planters in Texas as shown by his 105 slaves and his 2,000 acres of land (valued at 30,000 dollars in 1850 and 60,000 dollars in 1860), Cuney incurred nu-

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4 G. M. G. Stafford, *The Wells Family of Louisiana and Allied Families* (Alexandria, 1942), 151; Houston Telegraph and Texas Register, Sept., 26, 1851; Marriage Records, White, of Austin County (County Clerk's Office, Bellville), C, 38.
merous debts in his agricultural operations. To pay these debts he borrowed from banking houses in New Orleans—from R. and D. G. Mills and from McDowell, Mills and Company. In Galveston he borrowed from William Pitt Ballinger and Thomas M. Jack.

Philip Cuney achieved some prominence in politics in Texas. He was elected from Austin County to the Texas House of Representatives in 1843. In 1845 he was chosen a member of the constitutional convention preparing Texas for statehood. At the convention Cuney was on the Legislative Committee and signed the ordinance that brought Texas into the United States. When Texas became a state, Cuney was elected from Austin and Fort Bend counties to the Texas Senate. As a state senator, Cuney introduced a resolution against John C. Watrous, judge of the United States district court of Texas, alleging he had defrauded Texas "of millions of acres of her public domain, her only hope or resource for the payment of her public debt. . . ." The resolution asked that

5Ruth Allen, Chapters in the History of Organized Labor in Texas (University of Texas Bulletin, No. 4143, Austin, 1941), 170; United States Census Reports, MSS, Schedule 1, Free Inhabitants in the County of Austin, State of Texas, 1850; United States Census Reports, MSS, Schedule 2, Slaves in the County of Austin, State of Texas, 1860 (National Archives). Microfilm copies at Rice University Library, Houston, Texas.

6Deed Records of Austin County (County Clerk's Office, Bellville), F, 333-335; IJ, 308-310; DE, 313-314; G, 59-63.

7Clarksville Northern Standard, Dec., 16, 1843.

8Houston Telegraph and Texas Register, June 11, 1845; Clarksville Northern Standard, June 25, 28, 1845.

9Houston Telegraph and Texas Register, July 16, Sept. 10, 1845.
Watrous resign as judge. Nothing ever came of Cuney's resolution. Cuney later was chosen a delegate to the national Democratic convention at Baltimore in May, 1848.

But Cuney could always seek refuge from politics on his plantation, on which he had developed a profitable cotton and dairy business. One newspaper notice in 1845 indicated that Cuney had sent seven bales of cotton to New Orleans; another, in 1850, that five male Negro slaves picked 3,186 pounds of cotton in eleven hours, equivalent to about two 500-pound bales of ginned cotton.

The grassy prairies that merged with the Brazos were flat save for the wooded areas snarled by tangled underbrush, which created dark green crisscross patterns on the lighter green prairies. The soil, which was black and waxy at Sunnyside, was excellent farming and grazing land. Of his 2,000 acres, Cuney cultivated only 630 acres in 1850 and 530 acres in 1860. If Cuney was interested in growing cotton, he was equally interested in dairy and livestock farming. In the decade between 1850 and 1860 Cuney's milk cattle increased in number from 413 to 700, and his butter production grew from 700 to 5,000 pounds. At the same time, the cotton he raised decreased from 432 to 412 bales.

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10 Ibid., Dec. 24, 1845.
11 Clarksville Northern Standard, March 11, April 15, 1848.
12 Houston Telegraph and Texas Register, Aug. 13, 1845.
13 Frank Edd White, "A History of the Territory that now Constitutes Waller County, Texas, from 1821 to 1884" (Unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Texas, 1936), 85.
of 400 pounds. Large quantities of sweet potatoes and Indian corn were raised, but were used for home consumption.\footnote{United States Census Reports, MSS, Schedule 4, Products of Agriculture in the County of Austin, State of Texas, 1850, 1860 (National Archives). Microfilm copy at Texas State Library, Austin, Texas.}

The homestead was situated about ten miles from the river. Here seven of the eight children born to Adeline and Philip Cuney grew up, working in the house or in the slave quarters. The fact that they were Cuney's children probably saved them from field work.

Adeline Stuart was a slave of unusual energy and industry. Had she been the normal bondservant she would have had little to gain for her additional labors. But Adeline, in fact, was not the average slave, for she was an extremely clever, even shrewd woman. She apparently became Cuney's mistress, probably in 1841, before he married his second wife in 1842. This protracted liaison, begun during her youth, Adeline was artful enough to keep well established through her middle age and through two of Cuney's three marriages. Her influence on him was such that by 1860 he had manumitted her and their seven children and educated their three sons.

From the available evidence, it seems likely that her position as Cuney's mistress gave Adeline added status among the slaves and power within the white household, as she was chief housekeeper at the plantation. In all probability her eight mulatto children, constantly near the house, were a constant reminder to Cuney of his relations with her,
which increased his sense of obligation to them.

Adeline Stuart liked especially to keep her children busy doing chores around the house. Wright, the fourth of her eight children, bore likeness to his mother in his olive complexion, his nervous energy, his shrewdness, and animated spirit. He was an independent child, perhaps the most difficult of her children to manage. He staunchly refused to become what he termed a "handyman around the house," an expression that early reflected his keenness in perceiving the lack of respect given a slave and the elevated position he held among the slaves as Cuney's son.  

Wright enjoyed playing the bass violin. Henry the Fiddler, an old slave on the plantation, had taught him to play the instrument, and he had become rather proficient. When the family went into Bellville to trade or for social occasions, admiring crowds usually gathered and called on Wright to furnish them pleasure with his instrument.

In 1853, probably because of sickness in the lowlands, Philip Cuney moved his household to Houston. He left most of his slaves and an overseer, A. Livingston, at the Brazos plantation. In the same year Cuney manumitted two of his slave sons, Joseph and Nelson, and sent them to Pittsburgh to study at the Wylie Street Public School for Negroes. Norris Wright went to Houston with the rest of the family,  

15Hare, Cuney, 3-4.

16Ibid., 5; United States Census Reports, MSS, Schedule 1, Free Inhabitants in the County of Austin, State of Texas, 1850; United States Census Reports, MSS, Schedule 2, Slaves in the County of Austin, State of Texas, 1860.
where he remained until he was sent to the Wylie Street School in 1859 to study with his brothers.

The school was located in the Wesleyan Church on Wylie Street. George B. Vashon was its principal. Before attending the Wylie Street School, Cuney had never been to school. He had never read books either, but after he began reading, he became captivated by them. To Vashon, Wright was an obedient student and industrious pupil, who generally knew his lessons. The rudiments of education—reading, writing, and arithmetic—were taught at Vashon's school, but no advanced courses in English, mathematics, or history were offered. In 1858 Vashon had as students 89 boys and 61 girls who were housed in a small, cramped space.17

Norris Wright Cuney's fierce, impetuous will was exhibited early in his school career. A gang of boys took pleasure in disobeying Vashon by leaving the room saying, "Good day, Mr. Vashon," whenever he corrected their school lessons or disciplined them. On one occasion, David Coffey, the ringleader of the gang, had the boys attack Vashon by pulling his long whiskers. Wright Cuney, usually a shy and reserved Texas boy, was so enraged by the gang's actions that he attacked them singlehanded, chasing them away much to their surprise.18

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18 Hare, Cuney, 6.
When they were not studying, the Cuney brothers were rowing or fishing or sailing on the Allegheny River. Perhaps the outdoor experience they had gained in the streams and lands around Sunnyside enabled the Cuneys to enjoy the natural surroundings of Pittsburgh. After completing school at the Wylie Street School, the boys were to have attended Oberlin College in Ohio, but the advent of the Civil War and Philip Cuney's debts cut off the necessary supply of money from the South.  

Wright at first continued his education at Vashon's school, but Joseph Cuney, stirred to action by Lincoln's call for volunteers, joined the Sixty-third Division of the Pennsylvania Volunteers. Soon the excitement of the war became too much for Wright, now left without relatives at school, so he withdrew from Vashon's institution in 1863, much against the wishes of his brother Joseph. For two years, until the end of the Civil War, Wright idled around river towns working on steamboats for meager wages. Mainly he worked the old Grey Eagle between New Orleans and Cincinnati, with stops in St. Louis. While he was in New Orleans, Cuney became acquainted with James Lewis and P. B. S. Pinchback, prominent Negroes in Reconstruction Louisiana.  

It is possible that his acquaintance with them aroused his interest in politics.

Galveston, during the time when Cuney began his career, like the

19 Ibid., 7.
20 Ibid., 8.
rest of Texas was caught up in turbulence and fear. For Reconstruction after the Civil War was begun in Texas on June 19, 1865, when General Gordon Granger began the Presidential Reconstruction of Andrew Johnson by establishing a military government, registering all Confederates, annulling all laws of the state government passed since 1861, and freeing all slaves. A. J. Hamilton, a fair-minded lawyer and member of Congress from Texas, who had been opposed to secession, was appointed the first provisional governor by President Johnson.

The moderate policies of Hamilton and of J. W. Throckmorton, elected governor after the constitutional convention of 1866, were replaced by more stringent policies when Radical Reconstruction was instituted. Texas and Louisiana were made the Fifth Military District and placed under General Philip Sheridan's command on March 19, 1867. He appointed E. M. Pease to replace J. W. Throckmorton as governor.

Under the Texas constitution adopted in 1869, Negroes were given suffrage rights and the right to hold office. Confederates who had fought against the federal army, unless pardoned, were disfranchised in the election of 1869.

Edmund J. Davis, the Radical Republican, defeated A. J. Hamilton, a moderate Republican, for governor on November 30, 1869. Even though some Confederates had been disfranchised and Negroes given suffrage

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22 Ibid., 55.

23 Ibid., 149, 169.
rights, Davis was still able to win by only a scant margin of 809 votes—39,901 to 39,092 for Hamilton. This new governor, who took office on January 17, 1870, was no carpetbagger, but rather a Floridian who had moved to Texas in 1848. Davis studied law for a while, then became deputy customs collector at the Rio Grande station from 1850 to 1852. From 1854 to 1861 he was state district judge at Brownsville. At the outbreak of the Civil War Davis was opposed to secession and failed to win election to the secession convention. He fled to Mexico to escape being murdered after the war began and raised a cavalry regiment of Unionist Texans in Mexico for the federal army. By 1865, when he was discharged, Davis was brigadier general for the Department of the Gulf. He quickly became leader of the Radical Republicans at the constitutional convention of 1866. By April 16, 1870, military authority was completely withdrawn from Texas, and Davis was left in control of a civilian government under divided Republican control.

Even at this early date, Texans showed hostility against Negroes by murdering them in Gonzales, Hill, and Walker counties. Violence against former slaves was such that Davis had to impose martial law on these counties. The Union League, begun in 1862, was popular in Texas between 1865 and 1870, and was the chief political agency organizing Negroes in Texas. Perhaps this Negro strength manifested in the League caused white Texans to be afraid of Negroes.

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24 Ibid., 285-287.


26 Ibid., 64, 76, 80; J. P. Newcomb to Virginia Neal Hinze, San Antonio, June 11, 1964.
In the midst of these events of Reconstruction, Cuney arrived in Galveston sometime after 1865 and before July, 1867, when yellow fever made its most dreadful appearance and raged throughout southern Texas until winter came. As a new arrival in Galveston, Cuney's first act of importance was nursing white and Negro victims of the fever in Houston and Brenham, as well as Galveston. Cuney even contracted a light case of yellow fever, but soon recovered. He read law for a while and literature.27

How Cuney got his political start is a moot question. Cuney, enamored with Republican principles of racial equality, soon became friends with the mulatto carpetbagger, George T. Ruby, a very able school teacher from Maine, who was deputy collector of customs until 1872 and editor of the Freedman in Galveston. Ruby, president of the Union League for Texas, was undisputed leader of the Negroes and always used his strength to support Governor Davis. When Ruby left Galveston and went to New Orleans in the early 1870's, Cuney became his heir apparent as leader of the Galveston Negroes. He first gained admission to higher party ranks, however, when he was appointed first assistant to the sergeant-at-arms of the Twelfth Legislature of 1870 for the provisional and the first called sessions.28 Undoubtedly, his friendship with Ruby, who was state senator, helped Cuney acquire this

27 Hare, Cuney, 9.

position. Here, in the Texas House of Representatives, Cuney learned parliamentary rules and the art of political maneuvering. Moreover, he cemented his relationship with Governor Davis. Impressed with Davis' understanding of Negroes and his sincere belief in equality, Cuney attached himself to the Davis wing of the Republican party. His early friendship with Davis well established in Austin, Cuney returned home to Galveston to serve as county agent for Galveston County in 1871.  

Cuney also became active in the Union League at this time. The League, founded in 1862 to preserve the Union, was popular in Reconstruction for organizing the Negroes politically and welding them into a coherent voting force. "The Freeman's Pledge," a part of the League's Creed, upheld the United States Constitution, and freedom, "supremacy of law and the inherent rights of civil and religious freedom." The creed also affirmed an implicit faith and belief in God. Both Ruby and J. P. Newcomb, secretary of state under Davis, were presidents of the League in Texas. In 1867 Cuney was not yet influential in the League and was not nominated for any office in the League election of the year. Later, Cuney and others asked J. P. Newcomb to grant a

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29 Minutes of the County Commissioner's Court (County Clerk's Office, Galveston), Vol. 2 (1870-1876), 63, 162 (Feb. 2, 1871), Jan. 4, 1872).

30 J. P. Newcomb to V. N. Hinze, San Antonio, June 11, 1964. A typescript portion from The Union League, Extracts from the Ritual, Constitution, and By-Laws of the National Council, Union League of America (New York, 1870), in J. P. Newcomb, Jr., Collection (San Antonio, Texas).

31 G. T. Ruby to J. P. Newcomb, Galveston, Aug. 11, 1869, Newcomb Papers (University of Texas Archives).
charter so that a Union League branch could be organized in Galveston County, pointing out that no League Council had been organized there.\textsuperscript{32} By July 18, 1871, Cuney had set up a council and had become president for the Galveston County League.\textsuperscript{33}

During these early years, Cuney's ability impressed Ruby so much that he requested Newcomb to ask Governor Davis to replace two aldermen on the Galveston City Council--Messrs. Braun (T. J. Brown) and Johnson Reed--with N. W. Cuney and F. C. Mosebach. Ruby said these two replacements would enable the city's already Republican government to prepare for the forthcoming city election. Davis did not answer Ruby's question directly, nor did he appoint Cuney and Mosebach to the City Council.\textsuperscript{34}

How Cuney made his money in these early days of low-paid employment is uncertain. From the sparse evidence available, it appears that he might have got his start financially with the "worst set of Gamblers and whiskey men in the County.\textsuperscript{35} This group, which congregated near the customhouse, was popularly known as the "Belle Poole Establishment." And the gamblers who ran it were notorious for cheat-

\textsuperscript{32}N. W. Cuney and others to J. P. Newcomb, Galveston, July 12, 1871, \textit{ibid}.

\textsuperscript{33}N. W. Cuney to J. P. Newcomb, Galveston, July 18, 1871, \textit{ibid}.

\textsuperscript{34}G. T. Ruby to J. P. Newcomb, Galveston, Aug. 18, 1871, \textit{ibid}.

\textsuperscript{35}T. S. Nichols to Benjamin Harrison, Galveston, July 15, 1889, Group 56, Treasury Department (National Archives). Microfilm copy in Rice University Library, Houston, Texas.
ing Negro workers out of their money. Whether Cuney led the ring or not is not known. Some people believed that he was involved with it from the early 1870's until at least the early 1880's. Some credence might be given this belief since he managed on a very small income from 1866 until 1872, when he became inspector of customs. From 1877 until 1881 Cuney once again had no visible means of support, but apparently was able to maintain an independent household of a wife and daughter in 1880, plus a son in 1881.

Cuney wisely directed his efforts toward acquiring federal positions rather than the highly unstable state or county offices. Governor Davis controlled federal patronage for Texas without opposition until 1874, and Cuney, as a Davis supporter, naturally received a customhouse appointment. Cuney was appointed night inspector by Collector Nathan Patton, a Texan and staunch Davis man in the party, on February 3, 1872. On the following September 1, he resigned this job to accept that of revenue inspector at Sabine Pass. What he did as revenue inspector is uncertain, but he probably checked cargoes

36 G. B. Shields to B. H. Bristow, Galveston, May 16, 1876, ibid.

37 The City Directories of Galveston indicate that Cuney had no employment from 1877 to 1882. The Galveston City Directory for 1882-1883 (Galveston, 1882), 175, indicates that he was special inspector of customs. United States Census Reports, MSS, Schedule 1, Inhabitants in the County of Galveston, State of Texas, 1880.

38 Nathan Patton to George S. Boutwell, Galveston, Feb. 3, 1872, approved Feb. 10, 1872, Treasury Department, Group 56.

from Cuba or New Orleans unloading there. He was again appointed inspector of customs on August 1, 1873, at Galveston to replace Robert P. McKibbon, who had died.40

By January, 1874, Davis was replaced as governor by Richard Coke, a Democrat. Davis was hostile to President U. S. Grant, who had refused to send troops in January, 1874, to maintain Davis as governor of Texas by force. No longer governor and on bad terms with Grant, Davis naturally lost control of patronage in the state after 1874. The two Republican senators—A. J. Hamilton and J. W. Flanagan—likewise worked against Davis, recommending for positions people whom he did not approve.41

G. B. Shields, one of these appointments made against Davis' wishes, was collector of customs by 1875. This anti-Davis man probably disliked Cuney because he was a Davis appointee; he certainly hated him for his color and his ambition. But Shields himself was hated by the Texas state Republican organization. At the state convention of the party on January 15, 1876, the Davis faction presented a resolution against T. J. Purnell, United States marshal of ten western districts of Texas, C. B. Sabin, postmaster at Galveston, and Shields, collector at Galveston. The resolution asked the federal government to remove these three from office.42

40 Patton to William A. Richardson, Galveston, July 26, 1873, *ibid*.
42 G. B. Shields to Lot Morrill, Galveston, Aug. 18, 1896, Treasury Department, Group 56.
As it was rumored that Cuney had written the resolution, Shields asked him about it, but Cuney replied that he knew nothing about the matter. He promised to get a copy of the resolution for Shields. Later Cuney refused to provide Shields with the copy, and he further refused to sign a statement denying responsibility for his alleged acts. After Cuney's refusal, Shields told him he could expect to be removed.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}; Cuney to E. J. Davis, Galveston, April 1, 1876, \textit{ibid.}}

Another incident occurred in 1875 that gave Shields the perfect excuse to get rid of Cuney. On February 21 Cuney allowed 800 bags of coffee to be lightered from the Norwegian or Swedish ship, variously called \textit{C. P. W.}, \textit{C. D. P.}, or \textit{C. D. U.}, that had not yet entered port, and accompanied the coffee to shore. The chief inspector, in writing to the secretary of the treasury, said, "how far it might be justified under all the circumstances, is not for me to say."\footnote{D. M. Baker to E. S. Stone, Galveston, Feb. 22, 1875, \textit{ibid.}} Four days later Cuney explained his actions to the secretary, saying he lightered the coffee after the captain of the ship and the superintendent of the lighter told Cuney the ship could not go over the bar unless some of its coffee was lightered. Cuney at first declined to approve, but reconsidered when the superintendent of the lighter asked him to do so. Cuney said he permitted the cargo to go to shore as the coffee bore no duty and also to "facilitate commerce."

After Cuney refused to do Shields's bidding by getting a copy of
the resolution for him, Shields suspended him and wrote the secretary of the treasury on March 16, 1876, asking that he be removed and William E. Evans be appointed to replace him "for reasons of official decorum and common decency."\textsuperscript{45} On April 10, 1876, the Treasury Department directed Shields to restore Cuney to duty. Shields then defended his actions on the grounds that Evans was a qualified statistical clerk who was also capable of serving as inspector. Since two clerks were leaving, Shields thought Evans was more useful than Cuney, who was not qualified to be a clerk. Shields characterized Cuney as full of "duplicitity and impudence."\textsuperscript{46}

Shields persisted in his efforts to have Cuney removed, even though the Executive Committee of the Republican party of Texas asked that Cuney be made chief inspector of customs to fill the vacancy left by J. C. Ogle's resignation.\textsuperscript{47}

On August 26, 1876, the Treasury Department again disapproved Cuney's removal and William E. Evans' appointment as special inspector of customs. Shields repeated the chief inspector's charges about the C. D. W. He tried to inflate the seriousness of Cuney's actions, even though the United States district attorney called them a "proceeding from ignorance and not from intention to do wrong." Shields, upon

\textsuperscript{45} Cuney to E. S. Stone, Galveston, Feb. 26, 1875; Shields to B. H. Bristow, Galveston, March 16, 1876, \textit{ibid}.

\textsuperscript{46} Shields to Bristow, Galveston, April 19, May 16, 1876, \textit{ibid}.

\textsuperscript{47} Executive Committee of the Republican Party of Texas to Shields, Galveston, Oct. 26, 1875, \textit{ibid}.
further questioning, learned that Cuney had never known the rules since Patton had never required him to do so. The collector resented Cuney's "ambition and unscrupulous aspirations" to offices he was not capable of filling and Cuney's political ambitions in the Republican party. Shields said he did not believe in Cuney's veracity and called Cuney a "nigger."  

Cuney naturally realized Shields was trying to get him removed, so he wrote Davis, asking his help. Cuney asked Davis to see if he could put a stop to Shields's attempts at having him removed. Davis, in turn, wrote to J. P. Newcomb, his former secretary of state, who was in Washington, D. C., and asked him to see the secretary of the treasury. Nothing came of Cuney's request to Davis. For Shields, rebuffed but not undaunted in his spite fight against Cuney, continued writing disparaging reports to John Sherman, the new secretary of the treasury, asking for Cuney's removal and replacement by F. I. Webb. Sherman approved both recommendations on July 25, 1877.

Shields finally met success, because President Hayes preferred Democratic suggestions on patronage to those of Davis. Davis himself admitted publicly that the national government was "completely at a distance and apart from us as if we were another people." In regard to appointments he accused the national party of appointing people who  

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48Shields to Morrill, Galveston, Aug. 18, 1876, ibid.
49E. J. Davis to J. P. Newcomb, Austin, March 23, 1877, Newcomb Papers (University of Texas).
suited the wishes of northerners and of aiding the southern Bourbon. By this policy Hayes hoped to entice southern white Democrats and conservatives into the Republican party, thereby changing the party from a minority to a majority one in the South. It was no wonder that Sherman, who agreed with Hayes about restoration of white control of the party, agreed with Shields about Cuney's removal.

After his dismissal, Cuney defended himself in a letter to Sherman, saying he couldn't help the bad relations between him and Shields. Cuney once more asked Davis' help, and Davis wrote to Sherman protesting the removal and characterizing Cuney as one of the best Negro members of the party. Cuney himself wrote Sherman, calling attention to his color and saying no colored man in Texas had been appointed to a position although four-fifths of the party in the state was Negro. C. B. Sabin also wrote, describing Cuney as one "amply competent to fill a position."

50 Galveston Daily News, June 29, 1880.
52 Shields to Sherman, Galveston, July 16, 1877, Treasury Department, Group 56; Galveston Daily News, April 4, 1876; Cuney to Sherman, Galveston, Aug. 30, 1877, Treasury Department, Group 56; E. J. Davis to Col. Bluford Wilson, Austin, n.d., ibid.
53 Cuney to Sherman, Galveston, July 30, 1879; C. B. Sabin to Sherman, Galveston, July 28, 1879, ibid.
Cuney's persistence paid off, for, with a change of presidential administration, he was made chief inspector of customs on May 31, 1881, and special inspector of customs on June 20, 1882. Collector A. G. Malloy said the increased business of the port and two new warehouses on the docks made a special inspector necessary. 54

Cuney's new appointment was short-lived, for his election as alderman on March 4, 1883, disqualified him from holding a federal position in accordance with an executive order issued by President U. S. Grant on January 17, 1873. Although this order disqualified federal officeholders from holding municipal positions, Representative Thomas Ochiltree of Texas had written Cuney on the authority of the assistant secretary of the treasury that the aldermanship would not affect Cuney's federal position. President Chester A. Arthur, however, chose to follow Grant's policy. 55

When Cuney was removed from the customhouse, Collector Malloy apparently had a customhouse employee go out to where Cuney was directing the discharging of a steamship to tell him that he was relieved. Malloy later denied issuing the order and placed responsibility for the removal on the deputy collector. Somewhat piqued by Malloy's failure to inform him personally, Cuney told him that he had not been treated

54 A. G. Malloy to William Windom, Galveston, May 31, 1881, approved June 8, 1881; Malloy to Charles J. Folger, Galveston, June 17, 1882, approved Aug. 8, 1882, ibid.

55 Malloy to Folger, Galveston, March 14, 1883, ibid., telegram. Secretary Folger said that if Cuney accepted and qualified for alderman then he must vacate the special inspector's post.
with official courtesy. Later Cuney did receive a more formal discharge. Cuney's daughter thought that "duplicitv" on the part of customhouse officials caused Cuney's removal.\textsuperscript{56}

Thus in 1883, Cuney left the customhouse in order to become an alderman on the City Council. For the next few years, he also became a contracting stevedore on the Galveston wharves to earn a living because his aldermanic position only paid eight dollars a month.

\textsuperscript{56}Hare, Cuney, 35-36.
Norris Wright Cuney had given up a salary of $125 a month to become an alderman at $8 a month. He therefore needed a business to supplement his income. In seeking a livelihood as a contracting stevedore on the Galveston wharves, Cuney made a permanent place for Negro screwmen, who loaded and unloaded cotton from ships. His experience on the steamboats of the Mississippi and his position as customs inspector had prepared Cuney for his new role.

His leadership of Negro workers in Galveston had been established in 1877. A wildcat strike broke out among Negro workers who claimed they were not paid enough to support their families. One Saturday a strike was rumored, but no mention was made of the workers or industries concerned. On the following Monday, fifty men left their work at the Girardin Building and marched to the narrow-gauge railroad where they told the workers they weren't paid enough. The railroad workers left their work and followed the others. After several such visits, three hundred Negro workers had congregated in a marching group. Some workers demanded $2 a day as washers and others $20 a month as cooks.

Michael Burns, a white rabble rouser, harangued the crowd, threatening the railroad company with damage if the workers were not adequately paid. Cuney, as a leader of the Negroes, spoke after Burns and warned the colored men that they were being made tools of white men with political aspirations and that violence would not help them. He
told his Negro friends that their loud parading through the streets had created bad feelings and warned that seven hundred armed men from Houston could settle things in Galveston. Cuney further advised the men to go home and find work at whatever price they could the next day. Although he was treated contumulously, Cuney did not lose his temper or yield to the crowd's rage. It dispersed peacefully, and some workers even received better wages after the demonstration.¹

Cuney won the respect of the whites for his courage in the face of a mob. In the future, the whites of Galveston would look to Cuney, as leader of the Negroes there, to keep order among his people. During this upheaval of 1877, he may well have been working for white employers who wanted the Negroes to return to work.

The times played into Cuney's hands very well. How he made use of circumstances to gain employment for himself and Negro workers whom he employed is an interesting story. The years between 1880 and 1890 were restless ones for labor in Texas. Wages were low, and competition for jobs was keen among workers. Disputes over wages and hours caused the greatest labor troubles. Longshoremen who had earned $6.50 a day in 1882 were earning only $5.00 a day in 1883.²

¹Galveston Daily News, July 31, Aug. 1, 2, 1877; two unidentified clippings from Small Cuney Scrapbook in Cuney Collection (Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina), pp. 22, 24. A Large Cuney Scrapbook and Letter Press Book III are also in the Cuney Collection and will be cited hereafter as such.

²Allen, Chapters in the History of Organized Labor in Texas, 19-20; Screwmen's Benevolent Association, Minutes (University of Texas Archives), I, 496 (Oct. 11, 1883). I have used the white screwmen's minutes. The Negro screwmen's minutes do not begin until after 1900 and then they are only fragmentary.
The appearance of Negro longshoremen as an organized group began in 1876, when what became the first Negro union in Galveston was formed as a benevolent association. By 1883 two Negro unions were organized—one a longshoremen's union and the other a screwmen's union. The two Negro unions applied for admission into the white Trade Assembly in 1879 and 1884.3 As early as 1869, however, the Assembly had feared Negro labor, for in that year it forbade any member, under penalty of expulsion, to work where any Negroes and sailors were employed as screwmen.4 Circumstances changed as time passed, and finally, in March, 1884, the Trade Assembly voted to allow Negro representation.5

The conditions of the early 1880's were unstable for white longshoremen, and Cuney tried to use this instability to get Negroes employed on the wharves in 1882, but he failed. In 1883 he obtained Negro scab workers from New Orleans and Galveston and procured them work by underbidding white longshoremen on the Morgan wharf. He employed about three hundred men and purchased tools worth $2,500 for their use. His workers were said to have earned between $4 and $6 a day.6

On March 14, 1883, after getting work for his men, Cuney organized

3 Allen, Chapters in the History of Organized Labor in Texas, 137; Screwmen's Benevolent Association, Minutes, I, 345 (Oct. 5, 1879); 512 (Feb. 22, 1884).
4 Ibid., 54 (Aug. 21, 1869).
5 Ibid., 515 (March 14, 1884).
6 Hare, Cuney, 42.
a Screwmen's Benevolent Association, the first Negro screwmen's organization. He submitted a letter to Colonel William Moody, president of the Galveston Cotton Exchange, explaining the reasons for the organization. He stated that the commercial activity of Galveston had been harmed and would continue to be harmed in the forthcoming season by a lack of skilled labor to load ships with cotton. Many Negroes, Cuney said, were suited to longshoremen's work, for they had been conditioned by hard labor. These Negro screwmen had formed a benevolent association just as the white screwmen, who had a monopoly on the wharves, had done. He added he had enough tools and men for the season's demands and that he would increase his tools as the needs of the port demanded. With his tools and men ready, Cuney informed the Exchange that he was prepared to contract for loading cotton on any vessel. He further asked the Exchange to extend him aid for his business and guaranteed complete satisfaction for his work. Moody replied that the Exchange welcomed additional labor on the wharves.  

His effect on the white screwmen was such that in the Screwmen's Association minutes, they mentioned "the colored stevedore," who had got a steamer to load and who sent his gangs on board to load the ship. He must have made quite an impact, for in mentioning him the Association reaffirmed its intentions to work for stevedores who employed association members to the exclusion of Negroes.  

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Screwmen's Benevolent Association, Minutes, I, 496 (Oct. 11, 1883).
After he had got work for Negroes on the Morgan wharf, Cuney made several unsuccessful attempts to get his men work on the Mallory wharf, also known as the New York wharf. The strike of 1885, however, gave him a new opportunity, and an account of that strike must be given before his part in getting work for the Negro screwmen can be understood.

The white screwmen on the New York wharf in Galveston accepted a reduction in wages on May 1, 1885, under an agreement that regular wages would be restored on September 1, 1885, when business improved. The reduction of wages was from 40 cents an hour for day work and 60 cents an hour for night and Sunday work to 40 cents an hour for all work for the four-month period. By October, 1885, when the regular wage scale had not been restored, the white longshoremen demanded 50 cents an hour for all work from the Mallory line. A committee of longshoremen was formed and it approached the Mallory company about changing the wages to 50 cents an hour. The company replied by firing all members of the committee. The longshoremen of the Knights of Labor subsequently struck on Sunday, October 11, 1885, to force the Mallory company to rehire the longshoremen of the wage committee and to force the company to restore the normal wage rates.

Ross and Staunard, the temporary agents in charge of the Mallory line during the absence of Captain J. N. Sawyer, re-hired the longshoremen.

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9 Hare, Cuney, 44.

10 Galveston Daily News, Oct. 17, 1885; Ruth Allen's notes in Collection on Labor Movement in Texas (University of Texas Archives). The account of the strike in 1885 is based upon the Allen collection of notes.
men of the committee and granted the desired rate of 50 cents an hour for all work instead of the former 40- and 60-cent scale of pay. The longshoremen were given to understand that this new rate was temporary, subject to Sawyer's approval, and that Sawyer would likely cancel the agreement on his return. Work then resumed on the Mallory wharf.

When Sawyer returned to Galveston on October 15, however, he denied any knowledge of the former agreement of reducing wages temporarily until September 1, 1885, then restoring the old wage rates. He then revived the old rate of 40 and 60 cents for the entire year. Another longshoremen's committee demanded 50 cents an hour for all work. Sawyer refused to agree, and a deadlock ensued. A steamer, the State of Texas, lay unloaded at the Mallory wharf, and about six to nine nonunion men tried to unload the ship while the regular one hundred screwmen struck for high wages. This was the perfect opportunity for Sawyer to use Cuney's Negro longshoremen, just as Cuney had so often requested, and he did so. 11

Cuney agreed to let his men work for the Mallory line on the condition that they would not be used as "cat's paws to pull the chestnuts from the fire" and that they would be retained in the future on good behavior and have an equal chance of work with white laborers, who had had a monopoly on the New York wharf up to this time. Cuney agreed to 40 cents an hour for day work and 50 cents for night and

11Hare, Cuney, 44; unidentified clipping in Small Cuney Scrapbook, p. 49.
Sunday work, despite a report that he had accepted the old 40 and 60 cents of the white longshoremen. Near the end of October and before November 4, 1885, Cuney's workers began working on the wharves. Between 110 and 120 colored men gathered at nights and in the mornings to discharge the State of Texas under police protection, which proved unnecessary as no violence was done the Negroes.

No sooner had the Negroes begun work for the Mallory line than the white screwmen reconsidered the former 40- and 60-cent wage rate and sent a delegation to propose these terms. Sawyer said he could do nothing for the whites because the Negroes had been promised work and had been working out very well. The Mallory company in New York wired Sawyer "not to disturb the present labor supply." At this point the longshoremen appealed to the Knights of Labor for help in effecting a settlement. P. H. Golden, master workman of District 78 charged Sawyer with locking fifty of his men out of work, while Sawyer contended that the men quit of their own free will.

The Mallory company then withdrew from negotiations with the longshoremen, and by Wednesday, November 3, 1885, the Knights of Labor ordered a general strike in sympathy with the striking Knights of Labor longshoremen who had been put out of work by Negro scab labor. After the executive board of the Knights of Labor called the strike, 1,500

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13Unidentified clipping in Small Cuney Scrapbook, 49.

14Ruth Allen's notes in Labor Movement in Texas Collection.
to 2,000 men left their jobs on the Santa Fe Railroad, the cotton presses, the docks, the harbor shops, and the printing offices. The impact of the strike was such that the Galveston Daily News called it "one of the most general labor upheavals ever known in the history of Galveston." While the Negro workers continued to discharge ships at the Mallory wharf, a conference was held between the Knights of Labor, Captain Sawyer of the Mallory Steamship Company, George Sealy of the Santa Fe Railroad, large owners of Mallory stock, and Cuney, who represented the Negro longshoremen. The participants of the conference decided to take George Sealy's advice to divide the work equally between the whites and Negroes, working every other ship or alternating weeks of work.

A committee of six Negroes, three strikers, and three Knights of Labor was formed after Sealy's suggestion had been taken to all parties. Some reports said the Negroes took no part in the arbitration. This committee conferred and decided to accept Sealy's proposal. The strikers, who were desperate for work by this time, readily agreed to "the fair division of labor and an equal showing for all." The Negroes also accepted this agreement, when Cuney presented it to them. All

15 An article from the Galveston Daily News, Nov. 4, 1885, Ibid.
16 Ibid.
parties agreed that no class of labor should be employed to the exclusion or detriment of other classes, which suited the Negroes very well. White and Negro screwmen consented to work alternate weeks on the basis of two steamers a week, which relieved Sawyer of his promise to employ Negroes exclusively on the Mallory wharf. The Negroes said they would not try to dictate to Sawyer and promised to abide by his decision.

Cuney, who had promised to relieve Sawyer of his bargain, advised the Negroes to agree to this. The Galveston Daily News commended Cuney, as alderman, for his "conservative and wise policy." Sawyer, in actuality, interpreted the terms of the agreement of equal-work opportunity to apply to the hiring of new men. He said he would rehire those who had struck when an opening occurred, but for the present the Negroes stayed on the wharf.

By mid-November the strike to all intents and purposes was broken, and some of the strikers of the Mallory wharf were rehired. Rumors naturally circulated about the strike and what it meant for white workers. One bit of hearsay claimed that the strike had been a plot of Cuney's and the Mallory company to bring cheap labor into Galveston. Another rumor claimed that the Negro workers on the docks were part of Cuney's political scheme to win the mayoralty election in Galv-

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20 Galveston Daily News, Nov. 12, 1885, ibid.

21 Galveston Daily News, Oct. 21, Nov. 5, 12, 1885, ibid.
Most people believed that Cuney sought to substitute colored labor for white labor on the wharves. Cuney himself denied that he deliberately sought to deprive white workers of employment and that he imported labor from Brazoria or the Brazos for strikebreaking in Galveston.

His astute bargaining and businesslike stance had nevertheless got work for Negroes and earned for Cuney the unmitigated wrath of the white laborers of Galveston, who felt he was responsible for putting them out of work. Rumors flew during the first week after his men began unloading the State of Texas that a mob was going to converge on his house and drag him away to be lynched. The early light of dawn following the night set for this purpose revealed that the rumors of mob action against Cuney had been false, for none had appeared.

Cuney was a conscientious contracting stevedore, for he supervised his men personally until he became a collector of customs in July, 1889. He usually worked from early morning until three in the afternoon, but often stayed later if a late ship came in. That Cuney's longshoremen were competent workmen is verified by a letter in 1883 from Thomas England, owner of the Jane, saying that Cuney's men had loaded 35,000 pounds more cotton on his ship than it took on at New Orleans and 75,000 pounds more cotton than Charleston. England

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22 Galveston Daily News, Nov. 4, 1885.
23 Hare, Cuney, 45-46.
24 Ibid., 82-83.
added that he would take pleasure in recommending Cuney and his screw-
men to other shipmaster friends. England praised Cuney for "breaking
down the very serious labor monopoly" which was harmful to shippers
and the port.\textsuperscript{25} Cuney continued his stevedore work until 1894, when
he was listed as a contractor in the Galveston City directory. His
health, which had deteriorated to such a degree that he could no long-
er perform physical labor, probably caused him to change trades.\textsuperscript{26}

Cuney's role as stevedore on the wharves was important in improv¬
ing the lot of Galveston Negro laborers. After 1885 the agreement with
the Mallory wharf stuck; colored men remained on both the Morgan and
Mallory wharves. Cuney's efforts in procuring work for his men added
$75,000 to $100,000 to the yearly incomes of Galveston Negroes and
earned them individually about $500 a year. Cuney's longshoremen later
formed Cotton Screwmen Number 2, which has met as an organized body
ever since the latter nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{27}

\begin{itemize}
\item It is true that Cuney permitted Negroes to be used as scab labor
by white employers to keep white labor in line, but, by the same token,
\end{itemize}

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{25}Ibid., 43. She quoted Thomas England's letter, dated April 21,
1883. England's letter with four other letters are printed in an un-
identified clipping in Small Cuney Scrapbook, p. 34.

\item \textsuperscript{26}Minutes of the Galveston County District Court (District Clerk's
Office, Galveston), Vol. 26, p. 198; Civil Case Papers of the Galveston
District Court (District Clerk's Office, Galveston), file numbers 16883
and 16900 indicate that Cuney filed two suits against George McFadden
Company and National Compress Company for $8,878.35 for breach of con-
tract.

\item \textsuperscript{27}Unidentified clipping in Large Cuney Scrapbook, p. 179; a clip-
ping from \emph{Paul Quinn College Monthly}, Waco, Texas, March 19, 1896,
\textit{ibid.}, p. 259.
\end{enumerate}
the Negro gained in the long run and earned good wages. He controlled his screwmen without robbing them of their living. Thus, Cuney was able to serve his people while serving himself.
CHAPTER III

CUNEY AS ALDERMAN

When Norris Wright Cuney became alderman from the Twelfth Ward on the Galveston City Council, he was the first Negro to serve in that position. He was an interested and conscientious alderman, but not an outstanding one.

Cuney first made his appearance in city politics when he unsuccessfully opposed Robert L. Fulton, a Democrat, in the mayoralty contest of Galveston on March 1, 1875. During this contest he won Fulton's admiration and friendship, a fact which laid the basis for their political alliance in the following year. His successful political career began when he persuaded the Negro Republicans of Galveston to support the dissident Democratic forces of Fulton, running on the People's Ticket in 1876. In city politics as well as state politics, Cuney was a fusionist, for he realized that the Republican party as a minority party could manage to get a few candidates elected only by fusing with independent or splinter Democratic groups.¹

Fulton, the Democratic mayor of Galveston, had a falling out with his party before the local election. After this, Cuney did his best to get local Republicans to support the People's Ticket. To Cuney it was support the independents or Democrats and try to split the party

¹Diary of William Pitt Ballinger (University of Texas Archives), p. 28 (March 1, 1885).
or allow the Democrats to win completely by an eight-hundred majority. Cuney believed that the independent Democrats or People's Ticket would support him for floater representative, A. P. McCormick for state senator, and C. Jordan for sheriff on the Republican ticket if the Republicans would support the independents in other contests.

The city election showed, however, that the Democratic majority had increased 30 per cent since 1873 and that the independent Democrats had not voted Republican at all. That Fulton's party won at all over the regular party was due in large measure to Cuney's support. Fulton himself appeared to have supported the Republicans. According to rumor, Cuney took bribes for his part in the election. 2

Whether Cuney accepted bribes or not is a moot question, but in his fusion process he had created many enemies among Galveston Negroes. In the election for judge in 1875 he was accused of repainting Republican posters with the Democratic candidate's name. Some Negroes went so far as to charge Cuney with actually sabotaging Republicans to elect Democrats in 1877.

Another Negro asserted he held Galveston "niggers in his hand" and dictated who the mayor and aldermen would be. One person said that merchants made use of Cuney to succeed in local political schemes. Whether these charges were true or not, as leader of Negroes in Galveston, Cuney was a powerful person, since Negroes made up 12½ per cent

2Galveston Daily News, Feb. 12, 13, 16, 18, 19, 29, 1876; unidentified clipping from Small Cuney Scrapbook, p. 64.
of the city's population—a percentage large enough to win or lose an election.³

Undoubtedly, Cuney made his way up in city politics by attaching himself to R. L. Fulton's People's Ticket. Fulton, a popular mayor, stayed in office from 1883 to 1893, a fact which helped Cuney greatly in city politics. City affairs, especially finances, were in bad condition. The people who were tired of bad government supported the People's Ticket. Therefore, Cuney had strong support when he was nominated for alderman of the Twelfth Ward in 1883 and again in 1885. He served on the City Council for the four years from 1883 to 1887.

His first campaign in 1883 was an exciting one, for many whites opposed him on the basis of his actions in the strike of 1883 when he brought in Negro screwmen to replace white screwmen on the Morgan wharf. Feeling was violently anti-Cuney, and his opponents circulated denunciatory petitions. One such petition read:

R. L. Fulton, a candidate for Mayor, was a warm supporter of Norris Wright Cuney in a late contest. Not only Fulton but many of the present Board of Aldermen, were backers of Norris Wright Cuney in his attempt to reduce the price of labor of cotton screwmen and longshoremen by importing from New Orleans, Negroes to be used as screwmen and longshore-

³S. L. Hain to William Windom, Houston, April 24, 1889; G. T. Dickenson to Benjamin Harrison, n.p., April 15, 1889; John Friery to William Windom, Galveston, April 27, 1889, Group 56, Treasury Department (National Archives). Microfilm copy available at Rice University Library, Houston, Texas
men. Mr. Cuney did not enter the business with a view of gaining a livelihood; the first vessel he got to cut the price per bale, thus showing that he was in favor of lowering wages. . . .

The circular further inferred that Mayor Fulton had helped Cuney to keep his men on the wharves, thereby depriving white men of their livelihood. The circular added that Cuney was the power behind the throne while Fulton was mayor of Galveston.

The election was held on March 8, 1883. When Cuney failed to obtain a majority on the first canvass of votes, a recount was made, and he was declared elected by a vote of 184 to 160 for C. J. Allen and 32 for H. W. Jaeger. On March 14, 1883, Cuney was sworn in as alderman.

Galveston, during Cuney's time, was the boom town of Texas, a burgeoning city that boasted 40,122 people—making it the largest city in the state. Situated on an island along the coast fifty miles southeast of Houston, Galveston was the natural port of Texas and the Southwest, being close enough to Cuba, Vera Cruz, and New Orleans to carry on a profitable trade with all three ports and New York. It had other less commercial assets. Its beautiful surf, its thirty-five miles of clean, sandy beaches coupled with its sophisticated entertainment and

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4 Hare, Cuney, 48-49.

5 Minutes of the Galveston City Council (City Secretary's Office, Galveston), Vol. 6, pp. 458-472 (March 10, 1883); pp. 476-490 (March 14, 1883).
cuisine attracted an urbane cosmopolitan group to Galveston.  

Four railroads fed agricultural products from the interior into Galveston for export and carried imports northward to New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, and Missouri. Galveston would have been a much greater port had it not been for the bar or narrows that kept the ocean at twelve to thirteen feet around the eastern end of the island where ships discharged their cargoes. In spite of the bar, however, the tonnage of vessels calling at Galveston increased from 31,555 in 1870 to 153,614 in 1883. Four years later the cotton trade was valued at thirty-five million dollars and wholesale trade at twenty million dollars. Real estate was assessed at twenty-one million dollars.  

Galveston was a commercial metropolis in the midst of growth and expansion, of development and change. Therefore, the City Council had to keep the city abreast of change, adjusting social and political affairs to future needs. Financial difficulties, water supply problems, sanitation, and lighting were some of the questions at issue while Cuney was alderman. As a businessman and politician Cuney was interested in the development of streets and wharves, of a waterworks, of education, and the adoption of charter amendments.  

Although Cuney was on many committees--Streets and Alleys, Market, Printing, Harbors and Wharves, Cemetery, Charter Amendment, Claims and

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6 Andrew Morrison (ed.), *The Port of Galveston and the State of Texas* (Galveston, 1890), 15-19.  
7 Id. (ed.), *The Industries of Galveston* (Galveston, 1887), 48-53, 59.
Accounts, and Water Supply—he was concerned primarily with his duties on the Streets and Alleys, Charter Amendments, Claims and Accounts, and Water Supply committees. Much of what Cuney did as alderman represented routine committee work, which had to be done regardless of how he felt about it.

The affairs of the Streets and Alleys Committee took up much of Cuney’s time, and he, along with the rest of the council, generally favored public works. On one occasion, however, he voted against awarding a contract for paving and grading Mechanic Street between 21st and 33rd Streets to J. B. Taylor at $2.25 a superficial yard and 5 cents a yard royalty. Cuney voted against awarding the contract to Taylor because he had submitted two bids in two different names. Cuney said that Taylor had made a bid in his own name as well as another in that of J. W. Byrne and that it was unfair to allow two bids from one man, because competition was choked off. He argued that the bids should be readvertised. His protest was in vain, for the Taylor bid was accepted with only three dissenting votes.

On another occasion the Streets and Alleys Committee, with Cuney’s assent, approved filling in Avenue A between 20th and 21st Streets. Cuney agreed with a majority of council that George A. Hill be given

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\(^8\)Galveston Daily News, June 5, 1883; Minutes of the Galveston City Council, Vol. 6, pp. 515-519 (April 16, 1883); pp. 548-560 (May 21, 1883).

the contract to fill the street at 75 cents a cubic yard.\textsuperscript{10} The Streets and Alleys Committee also approved a citizens' petition asking for planking on Avenue R. The committee further recommended that the city engineer notify the president of the Galveston City Railroad Company to put up a railroad crossing at the intersection of Avenue R and 25th Street under the direction of the city engineer.\textsuperscript{11}

The problem of water supply for Galveston plagued the council for four years. An adequate water system to meet the needs of a growing city was needed, but it took a while for council to do anything worthwhile about it. The first real effort toward an effective system was made on April 2, 1883, when a joint citizens-aldermen committee on water supply reported. The committee recommended that a waterworks be built to furnish water of a standard level of purity and submitted an ordinance "to authorize and procure the construction and maintenance of water works in the city of Galveston."\textsuperscript{12} The ordinance was passed by the council on May 7, 1883, over the mayor's veto.\textsuperscript{13}

It provided that the council would grant right-of-way to any company that wanted to be the waterworks company of Galveston and that

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 508 (April 2, 1883).
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Ibid.}, Vol. 7, pp. 782-785 (June 21, 1886).
\textsuperscript{12} Galveston \textit{Daily News}, April 3, 1883; Minutes of the Galveston City Council, Vol. 6, p. 510 (April 2, 1883). The citizens were James Sorley, J. E. Wallis, W. L. Moody, and R. S. Willis; the aldermen were F. Barry, E. Ketchum, Cuney, C. C. Allen, and Louis Falkenthal.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 533-547 (May 7, 1883).
would follow the plan set down by council. The ordinance stipulated that the water be obtained from Highland Bayou on the mainland and that it be pure and plentiful and safe for drinking and cooking purposes. The works' pumping equipment was to deliver a minimum of eight million gallons of water every twenty-four hours, and it was to increase to capacity to meet future needs of the city.\textsuperscript{14} On August 6, 1883, the council decided to take bids from Morgan Jones Associates for building and operating the waterworks.\textsuperscript{15}

The question of water supply was raised again when the Great Fire of November 13, 1885, destroyed forty blocks of downtown Galveston and $1,400,000 in property. The blaze began in the Vulcan Iron Works on the Strand near 16th Street and was shipped up into an uncontrolable inferno by a brisk north wind. When the fire ended, all the property between the Strand and Avenue O, ranging from two to four blocks in width, was lost. The inadequate system of water mains permitted the blaze to get out of control.\textsuperscript{16}

The mayor called a special meeting of council on the day of the fire, declaring that he was "ready to cooperate with your honorable body" in any way necessary to help Galveston recover from the disaster. Cuney voted with the majority in approving emergency appropriations

\textsuperscript{14}Galveston Daily News, April 10, 1883.
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., Aug. 7, 1883.
\textsuperscript{16}Samuel B. Graham, Galveston Community Book: A Historical and Biographical Record of Galveston and Galveston County (Galveston, 1945), 82.
which allowed the city engineer and the Committee on Streets and Alleys to repair culverts and crossings destroyed by the fire. 17

With the Great Fire in mind, Albert Weis on April 19, 1886, presented a resolution to add amendments to the city charter. Cuney was one of the three alderman appointed to the committee preparing the amendments. One of the amendments proposed called for an effective waterworks. 18 On Cuney's motion the report was adopted by a 9-to-1 vote. 19

His interest in the waterworks benefited him when the mayor appointed him a commissioner on the waterworks for a two-year term from 1887 to 1889, after the legislature approved the amendment. The commissioners appointed all officers, agents, subordinates, and other employees and collected all revenue for the waterworks, while the City Council was given power to set water rates. The city financed the waterworks by issuing forty-year bonds at 5 per cent interest. 20

As a member of the Claims and Accounts Committee, Cuney was right in the middle of a fraud concerning supplies charged to the city. In


18 Ibid., pp. 732-734 (April 22, 1886). Albert Weis and Charles Fowler were the other aldermen. A. J. Walker, James Sorley, and N. B. Sligh were the citizens.

19 Ibid., Vol. 8, pp. 168-171 (May 2, 1887).

20 Ibid., p. 208 (July 5, 1887). The charter amendments passed the legislature at this time. Charter of the City of Galveston with Amendments Thereto and the Revised Ordinances as Ordained and Published by the City Council of Galveston (Galveston, 1888), Article VI, pp. 115-116.
July, 1884, the mayor censured the Streets and Alleys Committee for charging that he had interfered with its hiring practices. The mayor said he would interfere only if the yearly budget were in danger of being exhausted in four or five months, and he emphasized the deficit in the treasury.21

The city's financial stringency was no doubt made worse by the dispute over shell purchased to cover the Strand between 16th and 17th Streets. The Committee on Claims and Accounts returned bills of Captain Matt Coffey for $2,010.04 and Captain F. W. Henricks for $64.37 for shell delivered to the city. As reasons for not accepting the shell bills, the committee said the rates charged were excessive, the shell had been bought without proper authorization, and the proper city authorities had not received and distributed the shell. The committee further recommended that $100 be appropriated to remeasure the shell which had been spread on the street. The appropriation was made, and a committee of three citizens and three aldermen was appointed to remeasure the shell and to consider Coffey's and Henrick's claims.22

Cuney spoke at length for the Committee on Claims and Accounts, saying that the chairman of the Streets and Alleys Committee had purchased shell without proper authority and that the chairman had paid too much for the shell when he paid 12½ cents instead of the city's

usual rate of 10 cents. He also criticized the Streets and Alleys Committee for not seeing that the city received the exact amount of shell that it purchased. The wharf company, Cuney explained, had received wharfage on only 1,405 barrels of shell, but the city had been charged for 3,510 barrels. Cuney added that someone had been robbed—the city obviously—and the incident was an example of the corruption in Galveston's city government.23

On October 20, 1884, the special committee reported that they found 1,182½ barrels of shell missing from the streets. The contractors, when queried by the committee, said they had no formal contract with the city, but that Frank D. Mitchell, chairman of the Streets and Alleys Committee, informed the shell companies orally when the city needed shell and that a man named Hoban then presented the tickets bearing the stencils of the city engineer and overseer of streets, which were necessary for acquiring the shell. The price and quantity were left unstated. Hoban picked up the shell and dumped it on the streets. The other two committee members—John Grothgar and John Wegner—did not disallow the unorthodox procedure involved, but instead approved the purchase.

The committee's investigation further revealed that Mitchell had forced the overseer of streets to employ Hoban in his department so that Hoban could control the shell purchase. The overseer of streets did not know who had bought the shell or recorded the purchase; he

had merely given Hoban the tickets and closed his eyes to whatever else happened. The committee charged the overseer and the city engineer with fear of political pressure and Mitchell with "loose duty" because he had bought shell without proper authorization from the city engineer and overseer of streets. As nothing definite could be proved and as the council was unwilling to clean its own dirty linen, the case was turned over to the grand jury for scrutiny. Apparently, the grand jury found nothing, for Mitchell remained on the City Council.  

As a result of the shell claims dispute, Cuney moved that the mayor appoint a committee of three citizens and three aldermen to prepare amendments to the city charter for the "economical and faithful administration of municipal government," to be submitted for approval to the next legislature in January. The council adopted the motion.  

The most controversial amendment called for reorganization of the aldermanic system in Galveston. The Charter Amendment Committee wanted the entire city to elect aldermen on a general ticket, rather than the existing system whereby each ward elected its own alderman. Cuney was against this amendment, believing it disfranchised minority groups. He proposed, in a minority report, that six aldermen be elected from the city at large and that six aldermen be elected from the twelve

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wards grouped in pairs. Although Cuney's proposal was not accepted by the council or the legislature, his amendment shows that he had the courage and imagination to propose a new solution when he did not agree with a majority of the committee.\textsuperscript{26}

As a Negro alderman, Cuney was concerned about the George Ball school donation to the city. The donation was a controversial piece of legislation over a school which the two Negro members of the council—Cuney and J. H. Washington—wanted to be open to both whites and Negroes. On June 5, 1883, Mayor Fulton read Ball's letter of June 4, 1883, in which he offered to donate $50,000 for a school building and furnishings for the permanent use of the Galveston public schools if the city would furnish the grounds. The council, in addition to accepting the proposal and providing a block of land, adopted a resolution allowing Ball to direct construction of the buildings.\textsuperscript{27}

On the night previous to the acceptance of the offer, Cuney had moved at a School Board meeting to allow Negro children to attend the Ball school. The motion passed. The City Council met the following day and moved to reconsider Cuney's motion of the previous night. Colonel W. B. Denson, president of the School Board, addressed the council saying that, since Ball had died, his heirs would add $10,000 to the original donation if the school was kept for white children only. Denson explained that Ball meant to build a school for whites

\textsuperscript{26} Galveston \textit{Daily News}, Oct. 18, Dec. 2, 1884.

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}, June 5, 1883.
only, and the heirs wished to follow his wish. Colonel Denson added that when the School Board voted to allow Negroes to attend the Ball School, they had violated the intent of their benefactor. Denson added that if the council let the school become integrated, the council would, in effect, be rejecting Ball's offer. He hastily added that in the future the School Board would not forget the educational advancement of the Negroes.

J. H. Washington, a Negro alderman, said he would not vote to reconsider Cuney's motion because he felt Ball's last philanthropic act should be free from prejudice. Cuney also would not vote to reconsider and announced in a spirited manner that he was a public servant in the service of a government that knew no racial distinction and that he had amended the resolution with this thought in mind. Cuney emphasized that he did not approve of integrated schools as he realized that slavery precluded social equality of the races. Since equal education was part of the American system, however, Cuney said he felt compelled to advocate educational advantages for Negroes. Cuney's motion was reconsidered and defeated by a vote of 9 to 2, but Cuney himself went on record as against the majority's racial prejudice.28

This incident is interesting in that it shows Cuney was willing, when a moral issue was involved in council matters, to speak up without fear of recriminations from whites for his stand. The Republican party of Galveston was so upset by the Ball School controversy that

28 Ibid., Oct. 8, 1884.
the County Executive Committee favored voting against candidates for
government who had opposed letting Negroes into Ball School. Not all
Republicans approved this proposal, however, and Cuney was said to be
intent on forcing it on the county organization.29

The controversy was closed in November, 1884, when Frank M. Ball
announced that the school and its contents were ready for use by the
city's white children and the council officially accepted the build-
ing as a gift to the city.30

The "aldermanic wrangle" involved Cuney at about the same time
as the Ball donation controversy. Cuney, with D. Fahey and A. J. Mus-
grove, was a member of the Hospital and Health Committee. The "wrangle"
or argument occurred when Musgrove and Fahey connived to keep Cuney
from having a voice in the selection of an overseer of drays for the
Health Department. The morning after the mayor announced his com-
mittees, Musgrove met Fahey on Mechanic Street. Fahey said, "'You and
I are together on this committee; now let's ignore this 'nigger' and
run it ourselves.'"31

After he had asked Musgrove to side with him against Cuney, Fahey
also requested that Musgrove replace the overseer of drays, C. J. Allen,
with Barney Loughery. Musgrove replied that he saw no reason for the
change. When the committee met for a final decision on the overseer

29 Ibid., Oct. 24, 1884.
30 Ibid., Nov. 18, 1884.
of drays question, Cuney, whom Fahey had previously connived against, sided with the latter in requesting that Loughery replace Allen as overseer of drays. Cuney and Fahey, being the majority, had Loughery appointed to Allen's place. But Musgrove went against the majority and told Allen to keep his place. He also asked the mayor to call a special meeting of the City Council to define the powers and duties of committee chairmen. A special meeting was called for March 20, 1884, but no action was taken because a quorum of nine members was not present.\textsuperscript{32}

Two days later Cuney published an article in the Galveston \textit{Daily News}, making political hay for himself. He defined the issue as whether the chairman of a committee "shall be allowed to use his will and pleasure in contracting obligations, and generally to run the committee and the business in its hands to suit his gracious will and pleasure, or whether the majority of the committee shall direct . . . public business. . . ." Cuney stated that he was only doing his duty in demanding a voice in the committee's decision and, if this caused the argument, he was not to blame.\textsuperscript{33}

Cuney's second election on April 6, 1885, proved to be as exciting and as closely contested as his first. The first canvass of votes showed that he had lost. The council, sitting as a committee of the whole, reported on April 29, 1885, however, that Cuney had defeated

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\textsuperscript{32}Galveston \textit{Daily News}, March 21, 22, 1884.

\textsuperscript{33}Hare, \textit{Cuney}, 50-53.
\end{flushright}
C. J. Allen by a vote of 2,318 to 2,183. The committee by a 9-to-2 vote then declared Cuney elected alderman from the Twelfth Ward for the second time.  

Toward the end of his second term—January to June 18, 1887—Cuney became involved in a fight with the gas company, and this fight resulted in his defeat for re-election on June 6, 1887. Lighting had become necessary as a deterrent to crime in Galveston, and the question of how to light the city most effectively occupied the council for some months. Cuney moved to light the city by means of arc lighting, but his motion lost by a vote of 6 to 4. On two occasions Cuney voted not to award the lighting contract to the gas company. The council, however, voted to adopt the gas company's bid to light the city at $2 per lamp per month and $2.25 per 1,000 cubic feet of gas for all city buildings. At the following meeting, on May 16, 1887, the mayor vetoed the contract of the gas company, saying that the company charged too much. The council voted to reconsider the motion, but finally decided to allow the gas company to light the city. Cuney cast one of the two dissenting votes against the decision.

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34 Ibid., 65; Minutes of the Galveston City Council, Vol. 7, pp. 405-407 (April 29, 1885). Also see Dallas Herald, April 16, 23, 30, May 17, 1885.

35 Minutes of the Galveston City Council, Vol. 8, p. 162 (April 18, 1887); p. 166 (April 21, 1887).

36 Ibid., p. 175 (May 5, 1887).

37 Ibid., p. 177 (May 16, 1887); Galveston Daily News, May 17, 1887.
In the councilmanic election held on June 6, 1887, the gas company figured prominently against Fulton and, hence, against Cuney, who supported Fulton. The campaign was an especially dirty one, and the Galveston Daily News predicted that "Cuney will be knifed as alderman on the city council." There were four major candidates for mayor: R. L. Fulton and William K. McAlpine, both running on the Citizens' Ticket; A. J. Malloy, a Republican; and J. H. Hawley, a Democrat. Rumor had it that the numerous candidates who entered the race against Fulton were placed there as a deliberate tactic of the gas company against him. McAlpine, who was also president of the Board of School Trustees, declared himself a candidate against Fulton late in the race, becoming the vehicle of those who wanted to defeat the mayor. Cuney naturally supported Fulton for mayor over Malloy, a fact which made Republicans angry with him. R. L. Fulton won the mayoral contest, although Cuney was not re-elected alderman.

The Galveston Daily News blamed "race prejudice" for Cuney's defeat, saying that in the last election people were more willing to vote for a Negro on the Citizens' Ticket just to make sure the ticket won, but this time they were less willing to vote for a Negro, regardless of his party. C. J. Allen was declared elected from the Twelfth Ward on June 11, 1887, and Cuney attended his last council meeting on June 3, 1887.

38 Ibid., June 5, 1887.
39 Ibid., June 3, 6, 1887; unidentified clipping from Small Cuney Scrapbook, p. 58.
40 Galveston Daily News, June 8, 1887.
June 18.⁴¹

Cuney's record was that of a good, competent alderman, but he was not noticeably better or worse than the other aldermen. His color was his most outstanding feature, for he showed the whites that he could be as competent as an alderman as they could. These four years on City Council also enabled Cuney to make numerous business and political contacts that helped him later to become collector of customs in Galveston.

⁴¹Minutes of the Galveston City Council, Vol. 8, p. 196 (June 11, 1887); pp. 198-201 (June 18, 1887).
CHAPTER IV

CUNEY'S POLITICAL RISE

Cuney arrived in Galveston sometime between the end of the Civil War and July, 1867, a time when turbulence, unrest, and change mingled with the fragrance of jasmine and oleander and the pungence of salt air. Reconstruction after the Civil War had begun; former slaves were freedmen. The political and social structure of Texas was in transition and, with it, the fate of the Negro.

In Texas Reconstruction was begun by General Gordon Granger under the Presidential Reconstruction of Andrew Johnson, who appointed A. J. Hamilton as the first provisional governor. The moderate policies of Hamilton and later of Governor J. W. Throckmorton, after the constitutional convention and election of 1866, were replaced by more stringent policies when Radical Reconstruction was implemented. Texas and Louisiana were constituted the Fifth Military District under General Philip Sheridan's command on March 19, 1867. He designated E. M. Pease to replace J. W. Throckmorton as governor.

Under the new Texas constitution ratified in 1869, Negroes were given suffrage rights and the right to hold office. Edmund J. Davis, leader of the Radical Republicans, was elected governor under the new constitution on November 30, 1869.

Davis, as governor from 1870 to 1874, effected Radical Reconstruction in Texas by imposing equal political and suffrage rights for Negroes on the whites. It was necessary that Negroes acquire political
equality to insure the future of the Republican party in Texas. On the other hand, the Republican party was necessary in order for the Negro to keep his political rights. For this reason, Negroes were the focal point of party organization and the formulation of party policies. The constitution of 1869 promulgated equal rights for Negroes, and Davis carried out its provisions, but most white Texans wanted the former slaves relegated to inferior positions. Generally, Texans would have agreed with O. M. Roberts, a conservative Democrat and future Democratic governor of Texas, when he wrote a friend, "We never would submit to negro equality."  

From a Negro who would be leader of his people, the times demanded shrewdness coupled with a smooth, personable manner. One maxim Cuney observed faithfully was: "He who studies other men learns much; but he who studies himself may not learn a great deal." Indeed few men knew as much about human nature and the art of its manipulation than Wright Cuney. He commanded, he cajoled, but he generally bent others to his will. He used the Negro and, as often, the white man to achieve his ends. 

With Davis' defeat in the gubernatorial election of 1873, the Republican party and its machine had lost most of their power in state

1Nunn, Texas Under the Carpetbaggers, pp. 3-42, passim; Ramsdell, Reconstruction in Texas, pp. 199-287, passim.  

2O. M. Roberts to James H. Burroughs, n.p., June 20, 1868, O. M. Roberts Papers, 1867-1875, Vol. IV, Part 2, typescript (University of Texas Archives).  

3Unidentified clipping from Small Cuney Scrapbook, p. 16.
politics. The Democratic party regained its foothold in 1874 and since then has completely controlled Texas state politics. The formerly disfranchised Confederates and moderate Republicans, along with the Democrats, elected Richard Coke governor of the state by a wide margin—85,549 to 42,663 votes for Davis. Even before the election, the Democratic strength in the Thirteenth Legislature, from 1872 to 1874, was such that the Militia Law, the State Police Act, and the enabling law, the registration and election laws and the school law passed by the Twelfth Legislature were repealed.4 In spite of Democratic domination, the Republicans, however, continued to elect a few members to the Texas legislature. But the Negro after 1873 had lost power to elect a governor or to elect many of his race to the legislature. By the Fifteenth Legislature of 1876 to 1878, only four Negroes—three representatives and one senator—were elected. In the Sixteenth Legislature, from 1878 to 1880, the Negroes increased to eight members—one senator and seven representatives. The Nineteenth Legislature, from 1884 to 1886, had three Negro representatives, and the Twentieth Legislature, from 1886 to 1888, was completely white. If the Negro lost power in state politics, he gained strength within the Republican party, especially after 1883.5

Negro domination of the Republican party gave Cuney added oppor-

4Nunn, Texas Under the Carpetbaggers, pp. 118-119.

tunities. Uneducated for a life of freedom, ignorant and fearful of white society, these former slaves willingly followed Cuney's commanding leadership. His height of nearly six feet, his articulateness, and his charm brought both Negroes and whites under his influence.

In these early days, Cuney was a veritable "man on the make," a joiner, an organization man, shrewd enough to make useful political contacts. He was a climber of sorts, an energetic hustler selling himself and his capabilities to others. Above all, he had the "hail-fellow-well-met" qualities necessary for success in politics. An incessant smoker, an inveterately heavy drinker, Cuney fitted well into the fast-moving atmosphere of crowded, noisy convention halls and the horse-trading society of the politician. Friends and acquaintances always gathered where Wright was, stopping to shake hands, to exchange greetings, to talk and joke. With his "moping gait" and slightly stooped shoulders, Cuney was a striking figure. Neatly but simply dressed in his dark Prince Edward suit, he appeared quite the suave politician.6

As indicated earlier, Cuney made his way up in the Republican party ranks through his friendship with Ruby and Davis. During this early period he was first assistant to the sergeant-at-arms for the Twelfth Legislature, county agent for Galveston County, president of

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6 Interview with Richard Jackson, Galveston, Feb. 18, 1964; interview with Sheldon Banks, Jr., Galveston, Feb. 7, 1964; interview with I. J. Kempner, Galveston, Feb. 2, 1964; B. G. Shields to Lot M. Morrill, Galveston, Aug. 18, 1876, Group 56, Treasury Department; Hare, Cuney, 12-14.
the Galveston County Union League, and customs inspector. Cuney probably got his start through his dubious association with the "Belle Poole Establishment," a group of gamblers in Galveston. Although he attracted no official notice at the state Republican convention of 1872, Cuney was chairman of a Negro Men's Convention at Brenham in 1873, when he showed his administrative ability and was on the Credentials Committee and a secretary of the Republican state convention held at Hempstead in May, 1875.

Cuney's first appearance of any importance was at the Republican state convention held at Houston on January 13-14, 1876. The officeholders controlled the convention, which meant that Cuney as an officeholder and Davis man was in a privileged position. When J. G. Tracy was elected permanent chairman, Cuney was one of three delegates appointed to escort Tracy to the chair.

Cuney's choice as a delegate from the Fifth District to the Republican national convention held in Cincinnati on June 14, 1876, pleased the Davis faction. But the election of A. B. Norton of Dallas as a delegate angered the Davisites since they preferred Captain Boyles from Galveston. The Davisites also asked the federal government to replace

7Dallas Norton's Union Intelligencer, June 12, 1873; Galveston Tri-Weekly News, July 7, 1873; Galveston Weekly News, June 23, 1873.
8Dallas Norton's Union Intelligencer, May 29, 1875.
10Ibid., Jan. 16, 1876.
C. B. Sabin, postmaster at Galveston, Thomas J. Purnell, a United States marshal, and G. B. Shields, collector at Galveston. This attempted coup on the part of the Davisites was unsuccessful. Cuney was said to have been in on the scheme.  

As a minority party in Texas no longer able to elect their own ticket independently, the Republicans faced the problem of how to remain a significant political force on the state level. The ticket question dominated the Republican party in Texas in the latter nineteenth century. Two paths were open to them: They could place a straight ticket in the field and try to draw the votes of dissident Democrats and third-party groups to the Republican ticket, or the Republicans could refrain from nominating a ticket and fuse with independent parties or dissident Democratic elements. As the third-party movement had come to the fore by 1880, fusion was made easier for the Republicans.

The ticket question appeared first in 1876, becoming the focal point for all intraparty squabbles of the later nineteenth century. What the squabbles were about and who led the various and opposing factions is not clear. Webster Flanagan opposed Davis until 1880. The grounds of his opposition are not clear. From 1880 until Davis' death on February 6, 1883, the state party was united. After 1883 the factions and their leaders are blurred until 1889, when Cuney became collector of customs at Galveston and the lily-white movement

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11 Ibid., Jan. 17, 1876.
began. The fights concerned the in and the out groups of the party--between those who had got the "loaves and fishes" and those who had not received patronage from the national party. The ticket issue was used as a vehicle of the outs to down the ins and gain control of the state organization. After 1888, those who had not received patronage from the national party or from Cuney, who was collector at Galveston from 1889 to 1893, formed the lily-white faction of the party using the ticket and color issues as reasons to oust Cuney.

At any rate, a straight ticket was placed in the field in 1876, which meant that the Davis faction had prevailed over the antiticket and anti-Davis or Flanagan wing of the party. Davis wanted a ticket because he believed it would draw all dissenting Democratic elements to it, thereby gaining a majority and winning the election. Cuney was a fusionist Republican--one who believed that Republicans as a minority party could win state elections only by fusing with other independent groups. But in 1876 he wisely followed Davis' lead and declared himself against both George Washington Jones and J. C. Giddings, the two Greenback candidates.\footnote{Ibid., Nov. 7, 1876.}

By 1878 Davis had come to agree with Cuney. This time, however, the anti-Davis faction controlled the convention and put a ticket in the field against Davis' wishes. A. B. Norton of Dallas was nominated for governor and Richard Allen, a Negro from Harris County, for lieutenant governor.\footnote{Ibid., Oct. 9, 1878.} Davis lost a great deal of his power in 1878 as he
had lost control of the State Executive Committee and his influence in Washington after 1874. Even though a Republican ticket had been selected, many Republicans fused with the Greenbackers in 1878; about half the Negro Republicans were included in this group. 14

The Greenback party in Texas, like the Populist party later, was part of the temporary third-party movement in the United States expressing agrarian and labor discontent with a business-dominated government. In Texas the Greenbackers held conventions in 1878, 1880, 1882, and 1884, and then disappeared completely from the political scene.

At their first convention at Waco on August 7-8, 1878, the Greenbackers claimed 482 clubs of which 70 were colored. Both Democrats and Republicans broke party ranks to attend the convention and support W. H. Hamman of Robertson for governor and J. S. Rains of Kaufman County for lieutenant governor. The platform urged working classes to unite against business and that greenbacks be made full legal tender. 15 The Greenback-Labor party again held a convention in Austin on June 23-24, 1880, and nominated W. H. Hamman for governor and George W. Givens for lieutenant governor, both of whom the Republicans agreed to support. 16 The Greenback party was again significant in the 1882 and 1884 state elections.


16 Ibid., 198-201.
By 1880 Davis had regained control of the party, but he had trou-
ble in getting delegates of his choice elected to the national conve-
nion. At the Republican state convention of March 24-25, 1880, held
at Austin the major questions were the elections of delegates to the
national convention and whether a ticket should be nominated.17 Davis
won on the ticket issue, for no Republican ticket was nominated and
the Republicans supported Hamman, the Greenbacker, for governor. The
question of delegates centered on whether delegates favoring the fol-
lowing candidates should have been sent to the national convention:
James G. Blaine, supported by Davis; John Sherman, favored by E. M.
Pease; or U. S. Grant, backed by Thomas Ochiltree, Webster Flanagan,
the Negroes, and most of the state party.18 Davis wanted the delega-
tion instructed to vote as a unit, but would have left the choice of a
candidate up to the members of the delegation.19

Most of the Texas delegation to the national convention, however,
favored Grant and went uninstructed to the convention, which satisfied
Davis. Cuney, elected as a delegate from the Fifth District, followed
Davis' lead against Grant and declared for Blaine.20 He would not have
supported Sherman, since Sherman had approved his removal from the
customhouse and had agreed with Hayes on white restoration in the Re-

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18 Ibid., March 23, 24, 25, 26, 1880.
19 Ibid., March 23, 1880.
20 Austin Daily Statesman, March 24, 25, 26, 27, 1880.
publican party in the South. Cuney's decision to support Blaine in 1880 was curious since he had previously favored Grant and declared himself against Blaine in 1876. Since he was out of a job in 1880, he could have hoped for patronage benefits from Blaine. Whatever his reasons were, he aroused suspicion among Galveston Negroes. One old Negro, who remembered Cuney's refusal to support Blaine in 1876, accused him of opportunism.  

At the Republican national convention held in Chicago on June 2, 1880, Cuney and Richard Allen, a self-educated former slave and a member of the Twelfth Legislature, were about the only Texas Negroes who stayed with Davis and Blaine. The five votes Blaine received from the Texas delegation were due in large measure to Cuney's efforts. The Texas delegation might have been divided on the choice of a presidential nominee, but it united on Davis as the vice-presidential nominee. Cuney appears to have been the instigator of this project, for he had written J. P. Newcomb earlier, asking him to urge Davis to become a candidate for the position.  

Negro dominance and, with it, Cuney's strength, began to show two years later at the Republican state convention held at Waco on August 23-24, 1882. Exactly half of the 410 delegates were Negroes, and Cuney was unanimously elected temporary chairman. In his address to the

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21 T. S. Nichols to Benjamin Harrison, Galveston, July 15, 1889, Group 56, Treasury Department.

22 Hare, Cuney, 34; Cuney to Newcomb, Galveston, April 15, 1880, Newcomb Papers.

23 Winkler, Platforms, 212, 214.
convention, Cuney assailed the Democrats as enemies of free public schools, the free ballot, and free juries. He said the Republican purpose was to rid Texas of Bourbonism. Cuney was referring to the growing anti-Negro sentiment in Texas among the white Democrats.²⁴

Davis won on the ticket question and platform, but lost on chairmanship of the State Executive Committee, when his candidate W. H. Holland lost to C. C. Brinkley. In accordance with Cuney's and Davis' wishes no state ticket was nominated, but a committee with Cuney as chairman was elected to wait on the Independent candidates to see if fusion was possible. The committee recommended supporting George Washington Jones, a Greenbacker, for governor, and the Davis faction agreed to this.

Previously on June 28, 1882, before the Greenback convention at Fort Worth on June 29-30, 1882, Davis as chairman of the Republican State Executive Committee, issued a call for all Independents to join Republicans against the Democrats. At their convention at Corsicana on August 31, 1882, the Greenback party decided to support Independent candidates.²⁵

By 1882, impressed with the Adjuster successes under William Mahone in 1879 and 1881 in Virginia, President Chester A. Arthur urged Republicans to unite with dissident Democratic elements in an effort

²⁵Winkler, Platforms, 208-211; Galveston Daily News, June 29, 1882.
to split white votes and win elections in the South. Hoping to repeat Mahone's success and dissatisfied with economic conditions after 1873, George Washington Jones, a Democratic congressman from Bastrop, broke ranks with the regular party and ran for governor on the Greenback ticket. His platform urged free ballot boxes and schools, free speech and press, emulation of northern business in the South, enforcement of federal laws in the South, and encouragement of northern immigration and investment in the South. President Arthur urged Texas Republicans to support Jones in hopes of defeating the Democratic ticket. The Republicans supported Jones, but he did not win. In 1882 Cuney ran as an independent candidate for the legislature from Galveston, but failed of election.

The Republican state convention held at Fort Worth on April 29-May 1, 1884, was a boisterous, noisy affair, marked by contests between blacks and whites, the ins and outs, Arthur and Blaine men, and between Cuney and A. G. Malloy of Galveston. This convention, being the mixed-up affair that it was, is difficult to understand except in reference to Cuney. He was an out, having been dismissed from his position in the customhouse in 1883. He was also leader of the contested delegation from Galveston. Malloy, a Davis man and collector of customs,


was unable to control the Republican county convention and had held his own rump convention, sending a contesting delegation to Fort Worth. Cuney, in attempting to have his delegation seated, was at an apparent disadvantage as a Negro seeking the support of a convention controlled by whites.

Cuney led the outs and was reported to be "moving heaven and earth" to get them seated. Although the whites assured the Negroes the color line would not be drawn, Negroes like Richard Allen of Houston and Burrill Johnson of Fort Worth remained unconvinced and threatened to bolt if Negroes were not accorded a fair share of delegates to the Republican national convention.28 This Negro discontent caused C. C. Binkley to open the convention by placating and complimenting Negroes and by asking them not to bolt. And the Negroes did not leave the convention.

On the first day the convention was controlled by the officeholders of the Arthur faction even though they were in the minority. J. C. DeGress, postmaster at Austin, was elected temporary chairman by 249½ to 209½ votes over Webster Flanagan, the out candidate. Despite the control by the officeholders, there were cries for Cuney. He wasn't in the hall, so the convention adjourned for the first day on Richard Allen's advice.29 Late the first night the Credentials Committee

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28Dallas Daily Herald, April 30, 1884; Galveston Daily News, April 29, 1884; Dallas Daily Herald, April 29, 1884.

29Galveston Daily News, April 30, 1884; Fort Worth Gazette, April 30, 1884.
recognized the Malloy delegation from Galveston.

The second day saw most of the action as the Cuney delegation was seated over Malloy's. Calls for Cuney echoed in the hall as he strode down the left aisle escorted by two Negro delegates. His speech was a mild criticism of the leaders.

I have heard it rumored upon the streets of Fort Worth that the Committee, representing the Republicans of Texas from the different Congressional districts, were about to perpetrate a political outrage by their report that has no precedent in the history of this State. . . . when the Committee on Credentials shall have reported their deliberations to this Convention, we will ask you to calmly and dispassionately consider that report, and I believe that you will do justice. . . .

He ended his speech by commending President Arthur for a conservative and safe administration.

The Credentials Committee reported next, and Flanagan moved to accept the minority report. Each side was given fifteen minutes to speak. Cuney spoke for the minority report, while Samuel J. Alston, a Negro from Galveston, spoke against it. Cuney said

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30 Ibid., May 1, 1884; Dallas Daily Herald, May 1, 1884; Official Report of the Proceedings of the Republican State Convention Proceedings of 1884 Held at Fort Worth, Texas, April 29 and 30, May 1, 1884 (Austin, 1884), 30, 31.
I have been known in the politics of Texas for fourteen years, and never have I been called upon to appeal to the prejudices of my race to sustain me. I do not rely upon such tactics as that to accomplish political purposes. I judge men in politics as I do in their private relations. Of a man who is candidate for public office, I desire to know first, is he honest? is he capable? That is the creed of the Republican party. . . . Now, fellow-citizens, I leave this matter with you. I appeal to your sense of justice to look well at the power behind the throne that pulls the strings by which this Convention is to be moved. The Republicans of Texas have no boss, and by the eternal gods they never will.

Cuney ended his speech somewhat contradictorily by saying that the Republicans of Texas would be bossed "only by men of brains and character." He asked his fellow delegates to follow the "dictates of fairness" in voting on the issue. The minority report was adopted by a vote of 247 to 203 as Negro delegates yelled themselves hoarse. 31

If the antiadministrative men had won the battle on the seating of delegations, the administrative men won a partial victory in the selection of district delegates to the national convention, for Arthur men held about eight votes and Blaine men about fifteen. The rank and

31 Ibid., 42-43.
file favored Blaine and perhaps would have preferred an instructed delegation to Chicago, but again the Arthur men won when an uninstructed delegation was sent. The administration men also won on the permanent organization of the convention as J. G. Tracy, an Arthur man, was elected chairman. 32

Negroes figured prominently in the Fort Worth convention. Two Negroes—Cuney and Richard Allen—were elected delegates-at-large so that the Negro faction was placated. Of all the votes, Cuney received the highest number, 316. 33 And the Negroes had rallied around Cuney when they found out that the Credentials Committee had ruled against him. He quickly organized his men into a coherent group with strength equal to their numbers. Cuney also had the out whites and some lethargic Arthur people voting with him on this matter. Hence, Cuney, in his defeat of Malloy, was the only leader at the convention who had won a clear victory. Since Davis' death in February 7, 1883, the party had had no leader, and the Fort Worth convention proved who would lead the party. On the other hand, the Galveston Daily News contradictorily observed, "The day has not arrived when a Negro can be leader of even the decrepit Republican party of Texas." 34

In the future, however, the Negroes of the party could count on a Negro leader to organize them. They would no longer be forced to

32 Galveston Daily News, May 2, 3, 1884; Fort Worth Gazette, May 2, 1884.
33 Galveston Daily News, May 2, 1884.
34 Ibid., May 3, 1884.
kowtow to white dispensers of patronage for jobs. In the days to come, the whites would be forced to curry Cuney's favor to gain Negro support if they wanted to control or even have a say in the party and conventions. This fact was to be the chief source of dissension in the Texas Republican party for the next twelve years.

At the Republican convention held in Chicago on June 3, 1884, Cuney was made a vice-president of the convention. That Blaine received fifteen votes from the Texas delegation was due to Cuney's influence. He handled the Blaine people tactfully, not promising more than he could deliver, and held his delegates firmly. Malloy, who supported Arthur, was said to have captured Dick Nelson, a Negro from Galveston and editor of the Weekly Spectator, from the Blaine side.

Blaine's nomination at the national convention was a victory for Cuney; after the convention, Malloy was a "dead cock in the pit" as a political leader. Cuney was appointed to the committee which informed Blaine of his nomination in Maine. Had Blaine been elected, Cuney would have been boss of the party in Texas and would probably have been appointed collector of customs at Galveston. Even though Blaine lost, Cuney's pluck and his steadfast support of Blaine won him friends in high places.


36 Unidentified clipping in Small Cuney Scrapbook, p. 2.

37 Galveston Daily News, June 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 1884.
Events of the summer proved that Cuney indeed had gained influence, if not control, in the party. The Republican State Executive Committee voted against placing a ticket in the field, just as Cuney wanted. There was talk of supporting Jones, the Greenback candidate, and various county delegations—El Paso, Gregg, and Tarrant—came out for him.  

At the state convention held at Houston on September 2, 1884, Cuney's strength showed. A Negro, John DeBruhl of Galveston, was elected temporary chairman, and A. J. Rosenthal of Fayette County was elected permanent chairman by acclamation; both men being Cuney choices. Negroes dominated by a 5-to-2 majority at this convention, and so when Cuney said he wanted Republicans to endorse Wash Jones for governor rather than nominate a Republican ticket, his words carried weight. He told the delegates: "We must look to something practical. Honorable George W. Jones has shown to us that he is the embodied representative of good government. . . ." Cuney believed John Ireland, the Democratic candidate, was unqualified and thought that if Jones was endorsed, he might be elected with support from Greenbackers and Independents. His views prevailed when the Platform Committee ruled that a state ticket would be injudicious and asked Republicans to support Independent candidates to defeat Democrats. This recommendation was adopted amid cheers by a vote of 308 to 80.  

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38 Ibid., July 29, 1884.

39 Ibid., Sept. 3, 4, 1884; Dallas Daily Herald, Sept. 3, 1884.
The Greenback party met for the last time on August 26, 1884, at Waco, but no ticket was nominated. Their last platform urged paper money, government ownership of telegraph lines, postal system, and roads, a graduated income tax, and equal taxation of all property. Although the party did not officially nominate Jones for governor in 1884, he declared himself a nominee by September 12, 1884, on the Greenback ticket, again breaking with the Democratic party. Republican organizations in El Paso, Gregg, and Tarrant counties supported Jones.⁴⁰

Even though Blaine lost the presidential election of 1884, his nomination had made Cuney the top Texas Republican over such men as Thomas Ochiltree, Nathan Patton, and C. C. Binkley. The fact that Cleveland was President from 1885 until 1889 meant that no patronage would be given to Republicans. During these four nationally leaderless years, Cuney worked to consolidate his leadership of the party in Texas.⁴¹

At the state convention of 1886, the fight between Cuney, as leader of Negroes, and the whites was definitely out in the open. Cuney's control of the party still could be seen at the convention of August 25-26, 1886, held at Waco, for C. M. Ferguson, a Negro from Fort Bend County, was elected temporary chairman. A. White, a Negro from Grimes County, was elected temporary secretary. The whites won the principal

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⁴⁰ Winkler, Platforms, 223-229; Galveston Daily News, Sept. 12, 1884; Fort Worth Gazette, Aug. 31, Sept. 20, 1884.

⁴¹ Unidentified clipping in Small Cuney Scrapbook, p. 2.
offices of the permanent organization, but all assistant secretaries were Negroes. Cuney's friend, A. J. Rosenthal, was elected permanent chairman by a vote of 208 to 141. Two Negroes served on the Platform and Resolutions Committee—Cuney and W. H. Blount. Another Negro was on the Credentials Committee. The first ticket in years was placed in the field; A. M. Cochran of Dallas was nominated for governor and Lodowick McDaniel for lieutenant governor. Probably the collapse of the Greenback-Granger movement caused the Republicans to nominate a straight ticket.

Cuney did, however, win on the most important issues of the convention—the offices of national committeeman and chairman of the State Executive Committee. The fight for national committeeman was between O. T. Lyons and Cuney, who won the contest because of Negro support. The chairmanship of the State Executive Committee went to J. B. Rector, who was a judge and Cuney's friend.42

Cuney still maintained control of the Galveston County delegation sent to Fort Worth convention on April 24-25, 1888. He did, however, have trouble from Malloy again. Malloy tried to seize control of the county convention, but Cuney would not recognize him. Cuney spoke aggressively and invectively, calling the opposition thieves and pickpockets who were too ignorant to represent anybody. After he had lashed the opposition into silence, he proceeded to praise himself by

saying public good was his only ambition. Cuney won the contest, and his delegates were sent to the Fort Worth convention. Malloy sent a contesting delegation, but Cuney won easily as all but ten or twelve people there were Negroes.

Although the Republican state convention was practically controlled by Negroes, A. M. Cochran, a white doctor from Dallas, was elected chairman by acclamation. However, J. C. Morton of Fort Worth and W. A. Peete, a Negro from Smith County, were elected temporary secretaries. The permanent chairman was Webster Flanagan; J. C. Martin was elected permanent secretary. The convention was nevertheless favorable to Cuney's interests. The Credentials Committee seated his delegation over Malloy's. He was appointed to the Platform and Resolutions Committee, and he was also sent as a delegate-at-large to the national convention at Chicago on June 19, 1888.43

Some pressure was applied to persuade Cuney to support Sherman at the national convention, but he supported Blaine and then switched to Benjamin Harrison when Blaine's withdrawal had become final. Green B. Raum, in his efforts to persuade Cuney to support Sherman, assured him that Sherman had not been supporting H. G. Malloy's faction of the party against Cuney in Galveston.44


After returning to Texas, he attended the state convention at Fort Worth on September 20, 1888, held to nominate a state ticket. The convention was clearly a triumph for Cuney in that his candidate for chairman, J. T. Brady, whom he described as having no social or intellectual superiors in Texas, was elected. J. E. Wiley of Dallas was made secretary. The session was especially noisy since the ticket question dominated the discussion. The no-ticket faction vociferously supported Cuney, who was on the Platform and Resolutions Committee, which decided against a ticket. The committee was not dominated by Negroes, but it reflected Cuney's influence by failing to nominate a ticket.

Newcomb, however, accused Cuney of drawing the color line on the ticket issue, saying once it was drawn the color line would be drawn forever. The Negroes likewise talked of harmony, but also of recognizing Cuney as leader of the party in Texas. Republican organizations in Cameron, Milam, and Crockett counties showed dissatisfaction with the no-ticket stance by supporting Democratic candidates; a fact that showed how much the Republican party had decayed in Texas. 45

Benjamin Harrison won election as President in 1888 and the fact that Cuney had supported him helped his chances for a federal appointment. Cuney was also favored by Harrison's policy of rewarding a few Negro leaders as a means of recognizing the whole race. Harrison also gave preference to younger Negroes who had grown up since the

Civil War. The deluge of letters Cuney received in regard to patronage after the election indicated that most Texas Republicans knew Cuney would be the strong man in the Texas party, for most asked favors regarding patronage. His replies were sympathetic, but astutely evasive. Shortly after the election, Cuney tried to make arrangements with J. C. DeGress as to their future political plans and their mutual co-operation. A. M. Cochran, curiously enough, warned Cuney that Malloy might make trouble for him in regard to the collectorship, as Malloy wanted the post also. Lock McDaniel, who told Cuney he wanted the Galveston collectorship, offered Cuney the choice of subordinate positions, if Cuney would withdraw from the contest and allow him to become collector. Cuney rebuffed this proposal. Although he wrote one favor-seeker that he "deferred endorsements" until later and that he expected most Democrats to be fired, he was willing to endorse Powell Clayton for a post in Harrison's cabinet as a distinguished Republican and soldier.

Cuney had to wait a long time for his own appointment, even though he was friendly with James G. Blaine, William B. Allison, Stephen B. DeSantis, "Benjamin Harrison and the Republican Party in the South, 1889-1893," Indiana Magazine of History, LI (Dec., 1955), 295; id., Republicans Face the Southern Question, 182-227, passim.


48 Cuney to A. M. Cochran, Galveston, Nov. 23, 1888, ibid., pp. 32-33.

49 Cuney to Lock McDaniels (McDaniel), Galveston, Nov. 28, 1888, ibid., p. 34.

50 Cuney to Benjamin Harrison, Galveston, Jan. 12, 1889, ibid., p. 6.
Elkins, and James S. Clarkson. But he proceeded slowly and confidently toward his goal. Cuney made at least two trips to Washington, one in February and another in June, 1889, in pursuit of the office. During his trips to Washington, Cuney tried to get positions for J. C. DeGress and J. P. Newcomb, but was unsuccessful. 51

How Cuney finally received his appointment was very interesting. Cuney had very high recommendations from Republicans all over the state attesting to his loyalty to the party, his competence as a businessman, his friendship with the Democrats and business people in Galveston, and his gentlemanly qualities. 52

Cuney believed his appointment would come at the end of May, but the Treasury Department delayed his assignment, although members of the National Committee had seen the President, who seemed in favor of Cuney's selection. May lapsed into July, so Cuney visited Clarkson, Harrison's dispenser of patronage and a warm friend of Cuney, and explained to him

51 Galveston Daily News, July 11, 21, 1889.
52 The following notes are from Group 56: S. B. Elkins to Harrison, New York City, May 27, 1889; William M. Smith to Harrison, Olive, Jan. 22, 1889; A. L. Mosley to Harrison, Columbus, Jan. 19, 1889; Thomas M. Bayne to William Windom, Washington, D. C., March 22, 1889, Treasury Department (National Archives); the following notes are from Cuney's Letter Press Book, III: R. R. Rentfro to Harrison, Austin, Feb. 10, 1889, pp. 88-89; James Shermack to Harrison, La Grange, March 5, 1889, p. 90; J. N. Sawyer to Harrison, n.p., Feb. 13, 1889, pp. 91-93; unidentified person to Secretary of the Treasury, Feb. 12, 1889, pp. 94-95; R. L. Fulton to Harrison, Galveston, Jan. 5, 1889, pp. 53-55; A. P. McCormick to Secretary of the Treasury, Dallas, 1889, p. 65; James H. Bell to Harrison, Austin, Jan. 17, 1889, p. 66; G. W. Jones to W. H. Colkins and W. D. Kelly, Bastrop, Jan. 23, 1889, p. 69; John M. Claireborne to unidentified person, Austin, Jan. 15, 1889, p. 72; W. F. Menmer to Cuney, San Antonio, Jan. 16, 1889, pp. 74-75; David Redfield to Harrison, Cisco, Feb. 3, 1889, Cuney Papers, p. 79.
that he could not wait any longer. Cuney asked Clarkson to see the President and get a final answer from him. Clarkson breakfasted with Cuney the next morning, after which they went to the White House. Upon arriving they were told that Secretary William Windom was with the President who was signing appointments for the Treasury Department. Clarkson made a special request to see President Harrison and was allowed to see him. Harrison had just finished signing the appointment to the Galveston collectorship. The President showed Clarkson the form and said, "'That is right, is it not and as was finally decided upon, isn't it?'"

"'No, Mr. President, that is not the right name. In conferences some of us had with you, with some people from Texas with us, you decided to appoint Mr. Wright Cuney to this place,' replied Clarkson."

After a brief conversation, Clarkson persuaded Harrison to appoint Cuney collector at Galveston. The President returned and scratched out the name he had written and wrote "N. Wright Cuney." He thanked Clarkson for calling his attention to the matter of Cuney's appointment.53 On July 20, 1889, Cuney's nomination went to the Senate and was approved on the same day. Of the two senators from Texas, John H. Reagan voted to confirm Cuney, while Richard Coke abstained from voting. Clarkson later remarked that he believed Cuney had an insight into the future when he came to see him on July 17 about his appointment.54

53 Hare, Cuney, 119-126.
Cuney's appointment was greeted with, "Let the good work proceed. Turn the Southern Democratic rascals out." The collectorship at Galveston was "the most important post ever given to a colored man in the South" in grade and salary.\(^5\) For Texas Republicans, it meant that the old white Republicans and dispensers of patronage like Thomas P. Ochiltree, J. P. Newcomb, J. C. DeGress, Nathan Patton, and Malloy were finished in the party, but Cuney wisely kept DeGress on as his friend and ally.

As collector, Cuney retained his sympathetic nature and generous spirit and showed his willingness to help those in need. His assignment of Mrs. Taylor, a widow, to the postmastership at Brenham is one example of his charity. Cuney had previously recommended Mark Taylor for the post, but replaced it with a recommendation for Mrs. Taylor, saying that she needed the appointment and was competent to fill the office.\(^6\) In another instance, Cuney kept Sam Houston's daughter, Mrs. Morrow, from being removed from her place as postmistress at Austin because of her Democratic leanings. J. C. DeGress had sought Mrs. Morrow's removal, but Cuney, as dispenser of patronage, firmly overrode him, not only refusing to do as DeGress wanted but also writing a letter to Clarkson making sure that she would be kept on in Austin.\(^7\)

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\(^7\) Dallas *Morning News*, from Small Cuney Scrapbook, pp. 126, 128.
Later, charges were prepared against DeGress, who had finally become postmaster at Austin, with the intention of removing him from office. Cuney wrote John Wanamaker, the postmaster general, extolling DeGress's good qualities and his political abilities, saying DeGress should be allowed to hear and answer charges made against him. Cuney suggested that the charges should be well founded before dismissal be effected.  

Cuney, however, was equally good at not recommending people whom he thought unworthy. Newcomb, secretary of state during the Davis administration and a future lily-white, wanted the postmastership at San Antonio. He had had someone pass word to Cuney, asking for a recommendation. Cuney replied that he could not recommend Newcomb as he had already promised his recommendation to Samuel H. Johnson. Ten days later, hearing a rumor of Newcomb's appointment, Cuney wrote Clarkson and said he hoped that the rumor wasn't true. Cuney said E. H. Terrell had personally requested Samuel Johnson's appointment from Harrison. He further extolled Johnson as a lawyer of high standing and the choice of Texas Republicans. Cuney asserted that Newcomb's appointment would be a mistake, saying, "He is all things to all men and true to none." Cuney was successful, for Newcomb was not appointed.

Cuney was a competent collector of customs. Galveston businessmen

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were pleased, and so were Texas Republicans. Trouble appeared once when F. W. Minor alleged "serious irregularities" in the customhouse at Galveston, but the accusations against Cuney were not sustained. The inspector for the Treasury Department said Cuney's appointments were "good ones in every sense of the word" and that they were his own personal choice. Cuney's appointments were almost equally divided between whites and Negroes. His chief assistant was white, Dr. G. M. Patton, son of Nathan Patton. Cuney's brother Joseph and Samuel McCoy were the only other Negroes employed.

Thus, Cuney reached his political apogee as collector of customs. His influence between 1888 and 1892 reached its greatest heights. But during these years also, Cuney set in motion the forces that caused his downfall. These forces produced the lily-white movement, which reached its peak during the 1890's.

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60 William N. Williams, Special Agent, to George C. Tichenor, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, Feb. 7, 1890, Group 56, Treasury Department.

61 Cuney to G. M. Patton, Galveston, Nov. 13, 1888, Letter Press Book III, p. 7, Cuney collection. Cuney was removed as collector on June 29, 1893.
CHAPTER V

CUNEY AND THE LILY-WHITES

The lily-white movement within the Republican party in Texas was a fluid movement, a movement of ever changing leaders and few members precipitated by Cuney's leadership of the party in Texas and his appointment to the collectorship at Galveston. Lily-whitism manifested the sentiment and philosophy inherent in the white southern mind; obsessive fear of Negroes, of their imagined "uppitiness" and dominance had been deeply ingrained in southerners by the slave tradition. Reflecting perhaps feelings of guilt arising from the use of others as chattels and beasts of burden, white Texans—Democrats and Republicans—normally felt uncomfortable about Negroes.

Republicans split over Negroes and their place in the party at the constitutional convention of 1868-1869. The Radicals led by Edmund J. Davis were challenged by a Republican subgroup, the conservatives, under A. J. Hamilton. Hamilton and his group of twelve men from the East Texas Black Belt were for forgiving the Rebels and keeping the Negro relegated to an inferior position. Early in Reconstruction there were fears of the rise of the Negro. Flake's Bulletin in Galveston said, "The danger is that the Negroes will vote as a race, and thus disturb the peace of the country. . . . they must not form a black man's party . . . that . . . would bring about a struggle between the two races." 1

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So in Cuney's time, this dichotomy of thought in regard to the Negro's place in society persisted in the Republican party. The Republican Negroes themselves became conscious of the voting power they possessed by 1873. At the Colored Convention at Brenham in that year the Negroes asserted they held the power to determine the outcome of the forthcoming election if they wished. They did not say whether they held the balance between the Davis and Flanagan factions of the party or between the Republicans and Democrats, but they had come to realize the Negro vote was important.\(^2\)

At the Republican state convention at Hempstead in 1875, Ben Williams, a Negro delegate, accused white Republicans of "bumping" Negroes out of the party.\(^3\) But the Negroes were drawing their own color line. In 1878 they began splintering away from the Republican party and fusing with the Greenbackers instead of supporting the regular Republican ticket. In 1882 and 1884 the Negroes supported George Washington Jones for governor on the Greenback ticket and persuaded the Texas Republican party to support him also. An added sign of Negro independence was the report circulated at the Republican spring convention on March 24, 1880, that some Negroes had filed a charter for an exodus or emigration association with headquarters at Dallas. Here again, the Negroes were thinking of drawing the color line and setting out on their own.\(^4\)

\(^2\)Galveston *Weekly News*, Jan. 23, 1873.

\(^3\)Dallas *Norton's Union Intelligencer*, June 12, 1873.

\(^4\)Galveston *Daily News*, March 24, 1880.
The first real breach over the color line occurred after the Republican state convention of April 29-May 1, 1884, at Fort Worth, that selected delegates to the Republican national convention. Cuney had been the only leader to win a victory, the whites being divided on the Grant-Blaine issue and the matter of offices. The strength of the "colored brother" was shown here, when Cuney could hold his Negroes solidly against the whites on the color issue. The whites were chagrined, to say the least, and extremely dissatisfied with the events of the convention. On the other side, the Negroes feared the whites. Fifty of them had met before the convention assembled and agreed to bolt the party if they were not given a fair number of delegates to the national convention. The same group met afterward and accused the whites of trying to keep Negroes away from Chicago by inducing the railroad companies to raise their rates. The Negroes did not bolt since they were given the number of delegates they requested. Nevertheless, the Fort Worth convention had drawn the color line quite literally, for the whites sat together and the Negroes had to hunt out the "nigger corner."*5

Following the spring convention, the Republican Club of Tarrant County, under the leadership of E. W. Morton, urged white Republicans to form a separate party, accusing Negroes of holding the whites in bondage and of being unreliable voters.6 Their complaints seemed justi-

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5 Fort Worth Gazette, May 19, 1884; Dallas Daily Herald, Sept. 4, 1884.
fied when the Negroes chose Houston as the site of the autumn convention, and this became the choice for the entire party. A parade was held there with 700 Negroes and only 75 whites. This autumn convention then decided as the Negroes wished against putting a ticket in the field, which caused the "straight-out" Republicans to meet at Dallas on September 23-24, 1884. W. Y. Leader, who organized the straight-outs at Dallas, accused the regular Republicans of being for Wash Jones, the Greenbacker, so that there would be no worry of deciding patronage rights if Blaine should win. Another straight-out Republican, N. W. Norton, declared himself for Democrat John Ireland rather than Jones for governor. At the Dallas meeting, where A. M. Cochran was temporary chairman and Loch McDaniel chairman, A. B. Norton was nominated for governor.

The straight-outs accused the regulars like Cuney, Newcomb, and DeGress of seeking offices rather than the perpetuation of the Republican party on a state level. J. P. Newcomb, Sr., said he was against drawing the color line, but said the Republican party should be run by white men. Newcomb believed the Negroes, not the whites, had drawn the color line.

If the whites were strongly anti-Negro, the Negroes were equally

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7 Fort Worth Gazette, May 19, 1884.
8 Dallas Daily Herald, Sept. 3-4, 23-24, 1884; Galveston Daily News, Sept. 3-4, 24-25, 1884.
antiwhite, for the straight-out bolt was paralleled by a mass meeting of Negroes in San Antonio, who demanded that Negroes cut loose from the Republican party in city and county elections and support Democratic candidates.  

Although the Republican state convention of August 25-26, 1886, was termed a "nigger affair" by some, the convention was a harmonious one since it nominated a ticket with A. M. Cochran as candidate for governor. Cuney, however, dominated the meeting, as a Negro was elected temporary chairman and his choice was made permanent chairman. For the time, at least, the bolters of 1884 had been drawn back into the party.

The rivalry between whites and Negroes was resumed at the state convention at Fort Worth on April 24-25, 1888. Following the views of Cuney, no ticket was put forth. A. M. Cochran, a straight-out Republican four years before, observed at Fort Worth that conventions were gradually getting lighter in complexion, that the number of white delegates had doubled in four years. He hoped that these signs meant the party was gradually becoming a white man's party in Texas. Cuney nevertheless had received 368 of the total 980 votes cast for delegates to the national convention, a fact which indicated that the party was far from white as yet. All but three counties cast some of their votes for Cuney.

12 Ibid., April 25-26, 1888.
As an indication that Negroes dominated and that whites were angered by the domination, a Republican League was formed at Dallas on April 25, 1888. Clubs were organized all over the state as part of a national organization. Although the national League did not stand primarily on segregation, it did not forbid the formation of segregated clubs. In Texas white clubs were formed; Negroes were allowed to form their own groups. The national Leagues were organized "to advocate, promote and maintain the principles of Republicanism as enunciated by the Republican Party . . . to guard and defend the purity of the ballot box; to promote the cause of good government . . . ." In later years, 1892 and 1894, the Texas League met as an adjunct of the reform or lily-white Republican organization, but it accomplished nothing important. When Cuney heard of this splinter group, he said,

I am a Republican and I see no reason why there should be a desire on the part of any one to proscribe the colored man from participating in the councils of the party. If it comes to this, the result will be two Republican parties--one white and the other black. The colored man is a Republican of necessity, and you can't make anything else of him. I think that no friend of the party will desire a division of this character.  

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13 Clipping from Fort Worth Gazette, April 25, 1888, in Newcomb's Collection; J. P. Newcomb, Jr., to Virginia Neal Hinze, Bristol, Oct. 2, 1964.
If the spring convention at Fort Worth had been harmonious, the aftermath certainly was not. The regular convention was held in the autumn at the same city on September 20, 1888. DeGress, as chairman of the State Executive Committee, wanted a straight-out ticket, but was overruled by Cuney who wanted no ticket that year. 14 Cuney was called the "boss brain, and mouth" of the party because of his influence with the Negroes. The ticket faction of the party accused the no-ticket faction of introducing fraudulent votes or proxies to gain control of the convention. DeGress appeared to be supported by delegates from the north, west, and southwest of Texas. J. P. Newcomb in his Campaign News said the intelligent whites wanted a ticket and felt the failure to present one for the state would result in the loss of the national ticket. 15

If the state convention in September prepared the way for the breach, the election of 1888 brought matters to a climax. As Newcomb indicated in his Campaign News, Cuney, as leader of the Negroes, could easily control the party, and most Republicans believed that he would be appointed collector of customs. At any rate, they were convinced Cuney's power would be greatly enhanced, as evidenced by the fact that DeGress and Cochran worked closely with him after the election, although they had had differences with him previously. The unthinking


15 Clipping from San Antonio Campaign News, Sept. 22, 1888, ibid.
whites, fearful of Cuney's power and jealous of his possible role in the distribution of future patronage, therefore broke ranks to organize a white man's party in Houston on November 30, 1888. This was the beginning of what Cuney called the "lily-white" movement in Texas.

These lily-whites were convinced that Cuney's appointment as collector and his leadership of the party had forced thousands of white Republicans from the party. These new politicians, men like H. F. MacGregor and Dr. Max Urwitz of Houston, were political unknowns, young men who had grown up since the Civil War and who were free from the older Republican philosophy of equality between the races. The new men in the party believed the Republican party could be made respectable and dominant in Texas by driving out the Negroes and officeholders, thereby enticing white Democrats and potential Republicans into the party. Negro social equality and dominance in the party was anathema to them.

This faction, variously known as the lily-whites and the reform Republicans, was a splinter group without direction or organization, except for racial prejudice and a belief in white supremacy. Most of the lily-whites were willing to allow the Negro in the party so long as he kept his place. A few lily-whites would have pushed the Negro

16 Clipping from San Antonio Campaign News, Sept. 29, 1888, ibid.
into the Democratic party, but most wanted Negroes in the party who would follow white leaders.

The group sent out a circular letter calling for Republican Associations of Texas to be organized without the harmful element of Negroes included in them. The Association was the only one formed and had no connection with the Republican League. The lily-white organization wanted to put the party on the same strong basis as it had in the North by "intelligent direction of its affairs." The letter said: "The proposed division on the race line is therefore intended as a step toward the consummation of the end desired by giving each race political representation upon an equitable basis, and without disturbing the lines of social equality as they now exist." The articles of the organization proposed two associations for Texas—one for Negroes and another for whites. The object of separating the party along racial lines was to protect the interests of the Republican party by putting both elements of the party in union with each other. The separation of the party into two parts would entice dissident Democratic elements to join who previously had stayed aloof because of their race prejudice.

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20 Plan of Organization of the Republican Associations of Texas, Articles I and II, in Newcomb's Collection.
The lily-whites may have stressed the separate organization of the party in their literature, but they actually intended that white men should lead the party and have all the benefits from the patronage of the national organization. The Negro, who was officially welcomed into the Negro Association of the party, was expected to remain in the background and to stay away from the higher echelons of party councils.\footnote{A clipping from the San Antonio \textit{Campaign News}, Jan. 12, 1889, \textit{ibid}.}

The white man was to lead, and he would graciously permit the Negro to follow at a distance. J. P. Newcomb, in much the same vein, said, "There is but one way open to Republican success and that is that the white Republicans come forward and take charge of party management." He ended his statement by asserting "if the Republicans ever expect to lead in the South, the white man must carry the party banner.\footnote{Galveston \textit{Daily News}, Oct. 23, 1889; unidentified clipping in Small Cuney Scrapbook, p. 71.}"

Despite what the lily-whites said about restoring the party to white control for the good of the party, many of them became lily-white because they were the out faction of the party. Newcomb is a good example of this. He had been Governor E. J. Davis' secretary of state from 1870 to 1874 and a member of the Radical wing of the party until 1883. Newcomb had been awarded the postmastership at San Antonio briefly by President Arthur, but felt that he was entitled to more patronage. He therefore resumed his position as editor of the San Antonio \textit{Express}. By 1884, however, Newcomb disagreed with Cuney's
views of the Negro's place in the Republican party and resented his leadership, but was against a lily-white policy until 1890. He had been trying to get himself the postmastership at San Antonio in 1888. Cuney put in a good word for Newcomb while he was in Washington in 1889, but later withdrew his support. By 1890, when he failed to obtain patronage, Newcomb joined the lily-whites.²³

Another significant incident occurred in Fort Bend County preceding the election of 1888, reflecting the growing hostility of the whites against Negroes. Fort Bend, a predominantly Negro county, was controlled by Negro Republicans. But the Democratic organization was having a factional fight between the ins or "Jaybirds" and the outs or "Woodpeckers." Two Jaybird leaders, R. L. Shamblin and Henry Frost, were mysteriously attacked. The death of one and the wounding of the other precipitated mob action against Negroes, during which time C. M. Ferguson, a wealthy Negro and district clerk, and Dr. Davis, a physician, were driven out of the county. Shortly after the riot, the "Official Organ of the Jaybird Democratic Association of Fort Bend County" commended Fort Bend Democrats for freeing themselves of Negro rule. The "White Man's Union" spoke out against Negroes holding public offices. Attempts were made to disfranchise the Negroes of Fort Bend County. Although C. M. Ferguson was paid damages by a federal court,

²³J. P. Newcomb, Jr., to Virginia Neal Hinze, San Antonio, Feb. 13, 1964. J. P. Newcomb, Jr., believes Newcomb's actions were the result of conviction. He wrote on August 13, 1964, from Bristol, "My father was prominent as an objector and fighter for the cause he thought was right. He could have been rich but chose to stick to the losing side in his newspaper and politics."
he and the Negroes of Fort Bend County never regained their former power. 24

Concomitant with the white anti-Negro rumblings in Fort Bend County, there was a Negro plan to colonize three hundred families near Vera Cruz, Mexico. Henry Ferguson, C. M. Ferguson’s brother, was the instigator of this plan. He said, "Texas is no place for a colored man," because of the racial tension. Although this scheme came to naught, it shows again the growing mistrust of the whites by Negroes. 25

Meanwhile the lily-white faction of the regular Republican party attended the state convention held on September 3-5, 1890, at San Antonio with the idea of taking control of it and the state organization. The black majority at the convention showed the lily-whites that they could not dominate and that "the colored man has come." Cuney, as collector of customs, with his two white cohorts--J. C. DeGress, postmaster at Austin and S. H. Johnson, postmaster at San Antonio--reigned supreme. The lily-whites were forced to take whatever Cuney wanted to offer them, which was nothing, or split off into their own party. J. P. Newcomb was there, passing out his White Republican, which was opposed to free trade, the force bill, the railroad commission, and the Negro. 26

24 Norris Wright Cuney to David Abner, Jr., Galveston, Dec. 13, 1889; Cuney to George C. Tichenor, Galveston, Sept. 28, 1899, Letter Press Book, III, pp. 152-153, 98-99; New York Age, March 22, 1890; Hare, Cuney, 84-87; Clarence Wharton, History of Fort Bend County (San Antonio, 1939), 186-203.


26 Galveston Daily News, Sept. 4, 1890; Austin Daily Statesman, Sept. 24, 1890; Houston Daily Post, Sept. 4, 5, 6, 1890; New York Age, Oct. 4, 1890
R. B. Hawley, a Republican from Galveston and Cuney's candidate for temporary chairman, defeated S. J. Wright of Lamar, the lily-white nominee in the first contest. Cuney's seconding speech for Hawley was extremely well received by the convention, as was that of A. M. Cochran. Chairman DeGress ruled that J. H. MacGregor of Harris County, as a member of a contesting delegation, could not second Wright's nomination or take any part in the temporary organization. With Hawley's election as temporary chairman, the lily-whites were knocked out, since their contesting delegations from Harris, Bexar, and Dallas counties were not seated.

Failing to be recognized, Dr. Max Urwitz, a lily-white physician leading the white delegation from Harris County, walked out of Cuney's party. He said he would not see the blacks ride roughshod over whites and accused Cuney of being unpatriotic and of running the party in Texas for the benefit of the federal officeholders. Urwitz was called the first lily-white. However, Sam J. Wright, a former lily-white who lost the temporary chairmanship, was elected permanent chairman with Cuney's approval. Cuney spoke for harmony and apparently supported Wright to placate the lily-whites, but this was not enough for them.27 J. P. Newcomb asserted in the White Republican that Cuney's days as boss of the party were numbered and that Negroes had turned against Cuney because they held him responsible for the lily-white split.

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27Galveston Daily News, Sept. 22, 1890; clipping from San Antonio White Republican, Sept. 2, 17, 24, 1890; clipping from Houston Daily Post, April 20, 1890, in Newcomb's Collection; Austin Daily Statesman, Sept. 24, 1890.
At their meeting on September 6, 1890, at Houston, which represented thirty-five counties, the lily-whites attacked Cuney personally, asserting that he used the Negro to secure his own ends and to dominate the party. The lily-whites intended to publicize the evil of Negro domination. They also argued that the Negro dominated the party but did not vote Republican at elections. In their view, the Negroes and officeholders kept the party dead at the state level. Dr. Urwitz was instructed to draw up a circular and send it over the state for signatures. After the election the lily-whites said they would definitely form a white man's party. Former Collector Malloy, Cuney's perennial adversary, now came out against the lily-whites, saying the Republican ticket was the best in years and that Republicans should support it instead of splitting up.  

An informal meeting of the lily-whites was held on December 12, 1890, at Houston. G. C. Felton called the meeting to order and S. B. Strong was elected secretary. H. F. MacGregor addressed the meeting and advocated supremacy of whites over Negroes, socially and politically. J. W. Temley was elected president of the lily-white organization, and O. T. Lyons and E. H. Ropes were designated secretaries. A committee of three prepared a charter, which was accepted. The lily-whites met again in a two-day convention on April 20-21, 1891, at

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28 San Antonio White Republican, Sept. 17, 24, 1890, in Newcomb's Collection; see also clipping from White Republican, Sept. 2, 1890, *ibid.;* Galveston Daily News, Sept. 22, 1890.

Houston, "to rescue the Republican party from its present degraded and helpless condition," in order to place the party on an equal footing with the Democratic party, but nothing else was accomplished.30

Matters with the lily-whites in the Republican party came to a crisis in the election and campaign of 1892, a three-cornered affair in which the Populist, Democrats, and Republicans all ran candidates. To make matters worse the Democrats had split into the regular and gold Democrats, and the Republicans were split into the regular and lily-white factions.

The Alliance movement had come to a crest in 1892 with the official formation of the Populist party in St. Louis in February of that year.31 In Texas the Populist party, like the Greenback party, resulted from economic distress and was part of a third-party movement against a business-dominated government. By 1891 the Populist movement in Texas relied heavily on Negro support and generally got it as Negroes became disillusioned with Republicans.32 In Texas the Populists' first convention was held on August 17-18, 1891, at Dallas. Their platform advocated silver and paper money, a graduated income tax, and national control of public transportation and communication. The Populists held

30Galveston Weekly News, April 21, 1891. Henry Cline was chairman. Others present were J. P. Newcomb, Sr., H. F. MacGregor, A. J. Houston, G. W. Gillespie, and A. B. Norton.

31C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge, 1951), 239-246, passim; DeSantis, Republicans Face the Southern Question, 227-228, passim.

32Ibid., 256.
state conventions in 1891, 1892, 1894, and 1896, and then faded completely from the political scene. In 1892, they nominated Thomas L. Nugent, a former judge and a lawyer of high character and professional standing.33

The regular Democrats nominated James Stephen Hogg, a progressive Democrat, for governor, and the gold Democrats nominated George Clark, a former judge and outstanding railroad attorney, at the rump Turner Hall meeting in Houston.

In these circumstances the state Republican convention met on March 8-10, 1892, in Austin to select delegates to the national convention at Minneapolis beginning on June 16, 1896. Only a third of the delegates was white. Negro control was demonstrated by the defeat of Webster Flanagan, the lily-white candidate, by J. B. Rector, a Cuney man, for temporary chairmanship. D. C. Kolp was temporary secretary. All contesting lily-white and anti-Cuney delegations were defeated. Cuney's delegation from Galveston was seated over Sam Alston's contesting group. C. M. Ferguson, a Negro who led a contesting delegation from Fort Bend County, was not seated. He accused Cuney of seating "Jaybird Democrats" instead of his men. Cuney spoke against seating the contesting delegations, saying, "There are enough honest men in the committee to do what is right, and to the gentleman who presides here in this committee I say we have no masters in this country, and

so far as Wright Cuney is concerned no slaves."\textsuperscript{34}

Many felt Negro domination of the party would push white Republicans into the Democratic party. Rumor had it that Cuney would send two or three lily-whites to the national convention as a compromise. As it turned out, four of the eight delegates-at-large to the national convention were Negroes. The lily-white agitation continued, but the campaign of 1892 and Cuney's part in it must be considered before returning to the lily-whites.\textsuperscript{35}

At the Republican national convention in June, 1892, at Minneapolis, the lily-whites were not recognized and therefore their delegates were not seated. They seemed to support Blaine for President as a means of acquiring recognition at the national convention. The regular Texas delegation was pro-Harrison and was seated by the Credentials Committee.\textsuperscript{36} After the national convention, Cuney spoke against the lily-whites for being based on racial prejudice and observed that the national platform was broad enough for all Republicans to stand on. He also chided Negroes of Paris, Texas, who had nominated a full Negro ticket in retaliation for lily-white prejudice.\textsuperscript{37}

The lily-whites certainly were not quiet during the regular Repub-

\textsuperscript{34}Austin \textit{Evening News}, March 8, 9, 10, 12, 1892; Galveston \textit{Daily News}, March 9, 10, 11, 1892; Galveston \textit{Weekly News}, March 10, 1892.

\textsuperscript{35}Galveston \textit{Daily News}, July 17, 1892.

\textsuperscript{36}A clipping from St. Louis \textit{Republic}, June 9, 1892, in Newcomb's Collection.

\textsuperscript{37}Galveston \textit{Daily News}, July 17, 1892.
lician spring convention and national convention. Following their rebuff at the regular state convention in 1892, the lily-whites met at Dallas on April 12-13, 1892. The meeting was called to order by J. P. Newcomb, Sam J. Wright was elected chairman, and A. W. Brady and Rube Wiley chosen as secretaries. Newcomb read a series of resolutions denouncing those in control of the party for seeking personal gain and federal offices and not advancing Republican principles. Cuney was accused of allowing the state organization to crumble after each state election. The Federal Elections Bill sponsored by President Harrison in 1890 was also denounced. There was, in addition, a crude speech by Judge Henry Cline, chairman of the Resolutions Committee. He said at one place, "Do you call such people Republicans? They are political bastards. A gentleman cannot attend their meetings and go home and sleep with his wife." He further arraigned "the colored man" who sat as collector of customs and who had announced that if certain people did not like the way he ran the party they could vote as Democrats. Cline said lily-white principles would rid the party of Negro domination and draw Democrats away from their party.\footnote{Ibid., April 14, 1892.}

The convention nominated Andrew Jackson Houston for governor and J. P. Newcomb for lieutenant governor, and created the semblance of a state organization. H. F. MacGregor was recommended as chairman of a State Executive Committee with authority to select a secretary. The Executive Committee was to be composed of one member from each congres-
sional district, with vacancies to be filled by the chairman until the
district conventions could act to fill them. The convention also se-
lected eight delegates-at-large and two delegates from each congres-
sional district to attend the national Republican convention. The con-
vention proposed that a Republican organization be organized in each
county to support the ticket.

That night after the convention adjourned, a state Republican
League meeting was held. This meeting seemed to be one of a series
held in the spring of 1892. The League was an adjunct of the lily-
white faction of the party, and, like the rest of the lily-white group,
accomplished nothing. At this particular meeting on April 13, 1892,
nothing happened except D. A. Robinson was elected president in the
place of A. J. Houston, who resigned. The San Antonio Light, edited
by J. P. Newcomb, became an organ of the League.39

Previous to this meeting, the Republican League had met twice be-
fore: once in Austin on March 10, 1892, when J. P. Newcomb was elected
president and S. L. Hain of Houston, secretary; and again in Dallas on
April 9, 1892, when A. J. Houston and C. L. Edwards spoke. Houston
favored sending a delegation to the national convention, and Edwards
was against it, saying that the lily-whites should build up their
strength in Texas first. The anti-Negro theme remained and the idea
of the Republican party as a white man's party was repeated.40

39 Ibid.; Dallas Daily Times Herald, April 13, 1892.

40 Galveston Daily News, March 10, April 10, 1892.
On April 26, 1892, after the state lily-white convention, a white or Republican League meeting was held at Dallas. A membership of 301 was boasted. There it was claimed that if the White League was properly organized, Republicans from Amarillo to Fort Worth would join it. The Negro was blamed for the decadence of the Republican party. J. C. Bigger did not blame the Negroes as such for the party's condition, but claimed they were used by white Republicans for selfish purposes. On the other hand, he criticized Cuney in "exceedingly vigorous English." Money was as acute a problem to the white Republicans as the Negro was. The League decided to send lists around to donors who could pay or pledge 50 cents, $1, $2, or $5 in monthly dues. On August 17, 1892, the State Executive Committee of the white Republicans met, but nothing was done. G. W. Gillespie was chairman, and L. P. Goodell was secretary.

On September 15, 1892, the headquarters of the "Central Republican Executive Committee," with Dr. Max Urwitz as secretary, issued a proclamation condemning "the audacity, arrogance, corruption and treachery" of the Negro leaders and their followers. He accused the Negro of ruling the primaries and conventions and then selling their votes to the highest bidder at election time. He claimed Negro domination drove the "best" people from the party. He called on the white Republicans to overthrow Negro dominance and to assume leadership of the party.

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41 Ibid., April 27, 1892.
42 Dallas Daily Times Herald, Aug. 17, 1892.
Urwitz advised Negroes to be politically concerned, but to pay most attention to their families and jobs and not to try to control the white Republicans. He claimed the white Republicans were not attempting to take suffrage rights from Negroes, but rather were trying to help the Negro vote intelligently.

A lily-white manifesto was issued on October 18, 1892, declaring that the state Republican party had become one of officeholders. Cuney was accused of duplicity, and the manifesto asked "What good has this man ever done the Republican party in Texas or even to the members of his own race?" The lily-whites considered the officeholders demagogues who used Negroes for their own ends.  

W. Y. Leader, a lily-white, said this new "Reform Republicanism" was spreading all over the South and would not be confined alone to Texas. His anti-Negro statement said in part:

The negro is an incubus, a millstone on the neck of the Republican party. We must drop him. Give him his legal rights, but let him remain in the background where he belongs. The white men rule this country and the white Republicans are going to rule the Republican party. D--n the nigger. . . .  

And "damn the nigger" it was. A growing number of white Republicans resented the Negro's domination in the party and above all resented

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44 Dallas Daily Times Herald, April 15, 1892.
any patronage they might acquire. The regular Republicans' refusal to nominate straight tickets was the ostensible reason for the lily-white movement, but the leaders and members of the Reform Republicans were the "out" group. J. P. Newcomb, Sam J. Wright, Max Urwitz, A. B. Norton, A. J. Houston, and H. F. MacGregor had not received patronage or recognition from the national party and were resentful toward those who had. This insurgent group wanted to control the party in Texas and receive patronage. When the Negro appeared to threaten the security and status of white Republicans, he became as despicable to them as he was to the traditionally anti-Negro Democrats. The Republican party was ceasing to be the party of Negro refuge. 45

The state gubernatorial campaign of 1892 occurred during the summer and autumn, just when the Populists were at the peak of their strength and when the lily-white agitation had crested within the Republican party. The Democrats had also split into two factions over the gold question. This campaign was the most exciting one of Cuney's life and probably the one in which he exerted the most influence and control. He was faced with a decision; Cuney could support the Populists, the gold Democrats or the regular Democrats, or he could run a straight Republican ticket. The Populists, in complete disagreement with Cuney and Republican principles, did not approach Cuney about fusion. The gold Democrats, however, were willing to fuse with Cuney, if he would agree.

45Galveston Daily News, April 10, 27, 1892.
Cuney generally kept his own counsel, not telling anyone whom he would support. On August 25, 1892, he wrote a friend:

As you saw, things have meterially changed of late and certainly have assumed an interesting shape, so much so that it requires our wisest judgment to arrive at what is best to do. I have not as yet made up my mind what that is but have preferred to wait the meeting of the convention and there consult the friends from . . . the state who might be in better positions to judge the situation than I.  

Less than a week later, he wrote to another political friend that any rumor that he was for Clark or anybody else was "without foundation."

However, he added:

I have given the matter much consideration and the conclusion I have reached is; that, in view of the peculiar situation in Texas there is but one of two things to do; either nominate a ticket or approve of the candidacy of Mr. Clarke. I have talked to some of our best men and they have reached the same conclusion. As to disintegration, I do not see how this course would bring it about any sooner than it would to support Mr. Nugent who represents socialism and dissolution. We certainly differ widely in our opinions of Mr. Clarke and

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what he represents. It is for the best interests of Texas to beat Mr. Hogg. Mr. Clarke has allied himself with the best brain and character in the state representing that push and energy which will enable the state to escape further "dry rot." I have letters from northern friends--republicans--close to the administration, commending to my favorable consideration the article in the Globe Democrat of the 24th inst. urging the republicans to vote for Mr. Clarke. . . .

Cuney finally decided to support Clark in the campaign of 1892. The main reason for this choice seems to have been the money issue and the question of Governor Hogg's support for socialistic schemes for Texas like the railroad commission. Cuney commented that the present administration in Texas had made eastern industrialists timid about investing in the state, making him unwilling to support Hogg. He also could not bring himself to support Nugent, the Populist, whose views on the coinage of silver were similar to Hogg's. But Cuney's pro-Clark stand was contrary to his support of Greenbackers in previous years. For this reason, some felt that he had been paid off to support Clark.

Cuney headed a solid delegation at the state convention in Fort

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47 Cuney to R. M. Moore, Galveston, Aug. 30, 1892, ibid., 242-243. See also Galveston Weekly News, Oct. 6, 13, 1892.

Worth on September 13-14, 1892. There he announced his support of Clark in the forthcoming election and roundly denounced Hogg's administration.

This is our golden opportunity. The time will come when we will have 175,000 majority . . . two years hence I predict that we shall be able to elect the governor. . . . The man is a fraud, a demagogue who tells you that you can take 68 cents of silver and make a dollar of it. As well take a leaf off a tree and stamp it a dollar. 49

Cuney's handiwork was also seen in a platform that declared against Hogg, accusing him of chasing industry and immigration from the state and denouncing him for socialistic ideas like the railroad commission. Cuney believed that Clark would help the business interests of the state and that he was a man of principles whom the Republican party could support. To those who called him a "boss," Cuney replied that he was only a member of the party, but, as a member, he reserved the right to exercise judgment within the organization. 50

Hogg sent his emissaries around to the Republican state convention to try to persuade Negroes to vote for him. There were charges of attempted bribery. Webster Flanagan had been approached, and Cuney kept

49 Ibid., Sept. 1, 15, 1892.
50 Ibid., Sept. 15, Oct. 5, 1892; clipping from Houston Daily Post, Oct. 5, in Newcomb's Collection.
silent and laughed when asked if Hogg people had tried to bribe him. To make Hogg's image particularly pro-Negro, his supporters displayed posters containing Hogg's proclamation offering rewards for apprehension of lynchers in Cass, Lamar, and Rusk counties.\textsuperscript{51}

The Cuney-Clark Republicans campaigned diligently for their candidate. They organized Clark clubs among Negroes, made use of Negro leaders like Cuney, and tried to discredit the pro-Negro image Hogg had built up for himself.\textsuperscript{52} They distributed widely in East Texas a statement Hogg had made in the 1890 campaign for governor: "I'll be damned. It looks like the map of hell spread out before me when I look at these black devils."\textsuperscript{53}

Cuney, who had been sick at Hot Springs, Arkansas, returned October 4, 1892, in order to carry out a month-long campaign for Clark. Wearing his normal campaign costume of a flannel suit and shirt, with a sombrero on his head, he campaigned the length and breadth of Texas. He delivered his best speech at Seguin. After Clark had finished


\textsuperscript{52}The story of the Clark campaign is taken from the following letters: N. B. Moore to unidentified person, Fort Worth, Sept. 28, 1892; B. B. Paddock to unidentified person, Fort Worth, Oct. 20, 1892; A. L. Matlock to George Pendleton, Fort Worth, Sept. 27, 1892; A. L. Matlock to unidentified person, Fort Worth, Nov. 4, 1892; B. B. Paddock to W. W. Hare, Fort Worth, Sept. 5, 1892, Dienst Papers (University of Texas Archives); L. M. Strain to A. W. Terrell, n.p., April 21, 1892, Letters Received, Vol. 15, p. 297, Hogg Papers, typescript (University of Texas Archives).

\textsuperscript{53}W. S. Baker to Hogg, Waco, Sept. 23, 1892, \textit{ibid.}, Vol. 20, p. 301.
speaking, Cuney spoke in a cool deliberate manner without playing to racial prejudice. Some Negro supporters of Hogg interrupted him, but, unable to hold up under his witty retorts, they soon became his most attentive listeners. He criticized Hogg's antibusiness policy and castigated the separate-coach law passed in 1890 and laws prohibiting Negroes from sitting on boards of examiners. Cuney also indicated that in South Texas Hogg had prejudiced the Negroes against Clark, while in North Texas he had prejudiced the whites against Clark also. Cuney denied vehemently that he had been paid to support Clark. The energetic campaign led many Republicans to expect a victory for Clark by a margin of 20,000 to 40,000 votes.

If Clark and Cuney were energetic campaigners, Hogg and his men were also in the middle of the fight. Hogg, the incumbent, was at an added disadvantage because the Populists were making inroads on the Negro vote, which he had counted on. With barbecues, picnics, dinners, and special recognition, the Populists tried to flatter Negroes into voting for them. In addition, J. B. Rayner of Calvert, a mulatto, and his Negro assistants served the Populists in the dual roles of speaker and organizers. Rayner was the outstanding orator for the group and worked "incessantly" to organize Negroes for the party. Born in North Carolina in 1850, he, like Cuney, was the son of a slave mother and a

54 Galveston Daily News, Nov. 6, 1892.

55 A. L. Matlock to unidentified person, Fort Worth, Nov. 4, 1892, Dienst Papers.
white planter father and had had the advantage of a college education. He espoused the Republican party, but soon gave it up in the early 1890's. He had worked variously as a teacher, sheriff, magistrate, and preacher, constantly urging his people to improve themselves. Rayner turned from the Republican to the Populist party for this end.  

Hogg, thus attacked from both sides, had to capture Negro votes. To this end, the Hogg people used Negro campaigners, organized Negro Hogg clubs, portrayed Hogg as a friend of the Negro, and discredited Clark. Letters to Hogg indicated that Democrats were making inroads on Negro areas like Henderson, Rusk, Lamar, Grayson, Red River, Hunt, Titus, Marion, Harrison, and Anderson counties, as well as West Texas. And the Democrats were more successful than either the Populists or Republicans in capturing the Negro vote because the whites would not allow Populist and Republican Negro campaigners in certain areas and because the Negro vote was purchasable. Democrats stumped East Texas for Hogg. Many Negroes, envious and dissatisfied with Cuney's leadership, changed from Clark to Hogg. In many instances, the Democrats were reportedly successful in purchasing Negro votes for Hogg.  

56 Roscoe Martin, The People's Party in Texas: A Study in Third Party Politics (University of Texas Bulletin, No. 3308, Austin, 1933), 95, 126-127.  

in general, Negroes were dissatisfied with Clark as the Republican choice. One letter read "Warwick the 'Copulist' has just finished his speech (?) He has created very little Enthusiasm (sic) even among his color. . . ." The writer wanted Hogg to campaign in the area to win over doubtful Negroes. Another letter reported that Negroes of Belton called a meeting to endorse Clark and ended up as Democrats. Other Negroes were angry at what they called the sell-out at Fort Worth, and many definitely did not want Clark for governor.

The Hogg people feared Populist inroads on the vote of Negroes and white laborers. For this reason they campaigned heavily in the Black Belt; in the process they converted or bought many Republican Negroes over to the Democratic side. Of the seventy-one counties of the Black Belt, thirty-nine voted for Hogg, twenty-one for Clark, and eleven for Nugent. The Clark people had failed to hold the line against Democratic inroads among the Negroes. Even if the Nugent people had


voted for Clark, Hogg would have had a majority in the Black Belt.60

Results of the election on November 8, 1892, showed that the Clark vote tended to be stronger in white Democratic counties. The people of Starr County, with only ten Negroes, cast all but 3 of 1,705 votes for Clark. Harrison County, with 8,528 whites and 18,193 Negroes, cast 3,988 votes for Hogg and 805 votes for Clark. In Comal County, with a majority of whites, Clark won by a 900 to 90 vote. In Matagorda County, with a majority of Negroes, Hogg beat Clark by a 491 to 167 vote.61

The election showed that Cuney had erred in backing Clark. Clark and Nugent had polled 55 per cent of the votes, but Hogg had won with a plurality. Politics are a matter of choice, and Cuney chose fusion with Clark rather than Nugent. If he had planned on taking all the Negro vote with him into the Clark camp, he was badly mistaken. Both the Democrats and the Populists made inroads into the Negro Republican vote. Cuney would have been better advised to try to unite the entire Negro vote for Nugent rather than Clark if he hoped to defeat the Democrats. Hogg had been successful in showing Negroes that "Cuney, Clark, and the Coons" were not for them. Cuney's power among his own people was on the wane.

60 Martin, People's Party in Texas, Map III, 92-93-94; Robert C. Cotner, James Stephen Hogg, A Biography (Austin, 1959), 274-320, passim; F. E. Piner to Hogg, Denton, Sept. 2, 1892, Vol. 20, p. 3, Hogg Papers; Galveston Daily News, Nov. 13, 1892. Clark believed that the Negro vote had elected Hogg and that the Democrats had purchased these Negro votes.

61 Galveston Daily News, Nov. 26, 1892.
His ebbing influence was evidenced two years later at the state convention at Dallas on August 28-29, 1894. Like other powerful politicians, he had gained enemies. An opposition group of out, antiadministration Negroes, who were fully as jealous and resentful of Cuney as the whites, organized to oppose him. These resentful Negroes were captured by the white minority of the party and used to divide the solid Negro support Cuney had formerly enjoyed.

As was common in Republican state conventions, this one split on the issue of nominating a ticket. The straight-ticket people were in the majority, and it was believed that there would be a fight over the chairmanship of the State Executive Committee. Cuney, however, declared himself to be for a straight-out ticket "head and toe."

Two sets of delegates claiming to represent the Galveston organization appeared. Cuney, in something of a predicament, held a caucus and had J. P. Elliott, J. H. McCormick, and H. L. Minor appoint seven floor managers to control the Cuney side on the second day of the convention. On that day, Cuney won the first contest, when his contested delegation was seated in the permanent organization, and when John T. Grant, his choice for chairman of the State Executive Committee, defeated C. M. Ferguson, a Negro who had been an antiadministration man when Cuney was collector and who was used by the whites to oppose Cuney's candidate. Despite Grant's victory, the dissatisfied Negroes and whites continued to back Ferguson. Cuney was also successful in defeating J. B. Moore for permanent chairmanship of the convention. The convention then nominated W. K. Makemson for governor and R. B.
Rentfro for lieutenant governor.  

Grant, who was indebted to Cuney for his political debut, was an ambitious, energetic businessman, with many interests in sheep raising, grain lands, and a hotel business in Sherman. Originally from New York, he wanted to build the Republican party into a real rival of the Democratic party in Texas. Obviously, his ideas on the party differed from Cuney's, but this ambitious New Yorker, as chairman of the State Executive Committee, was in a powerful position to give effect to his own ideas and actions especially with regard to the campaign of 1896.  

In his efforts to make the Republican party powerful in Texas, Grant proposed winning the North Texas Democrats back to the Republican fold by having the party back protection in hides, wool, and cattle and by urging the development of iron manufacturing to help business. He also urged a vigorous campaign to get stay-at-home Republicans out to vote. Rather recklessly, he predicted that Makemson would get 150,000 votes. Needless to say, the Makemson-Rentfro ticket did not win, but Grant by his forceful imaginative ways had won a strong foothold in the organization, and he did not hesitate to use it in challenging Cuney's hegemony in the party.  

The lily-whites continued their agitation against Cuney in 1894, and, by this time, Cuney willingly admitted that the movement consti-

\[\text{62 Ibid., Aug. 29-30, 1894.}\]
\[\text{63 Ibid., Sept. 24, 1894.}\]
\[\text{64 Ibid.}\]
tuted a personal attack on him. The Republican League clubs met on June 12-14, 1894, at San Antonio, with both regular and lily-white Republicans represented. Cuney attended with his mixed delegation from Galveston, but was not seated, because the League refused to seat mixed delegations. The League represented a new group of Republicans, who were not willing to give the Negro social equality and who felt Negroes had driven whites from the party. 65

H. F. MacGregor's census plan appeared at this time, and Cuney was naturally opposed to it. MacGregor's plan held that the Negro should be given representation in proportion to his numerical strength. The lily-white census plan provided for two delegates at large—one white and one black—from each county with a Republican organization, and also one additional delegate for each 250 or a fraction of votes over 100 cast for Harrison in 1892, to be divided between whites and Negroes in proportion to the white and colored population of the county. Separate primaries were provided for Negroes and whites to elect to united conventions the proportion of delegates accorded to their respective groups. 66 Outstanding people at the League meeting were MacGregor, J. P. Newcomb, Webster Flanagan, Charles Ferguson, W. M. MacDonald, A. J. Rosenthal, and D. A. Robinson.

L. P. Goodell, elected chairman of the lily-white Republican State Executive Committee, controlled the group's convention of August 6-7,

65 Ibid., June 12, 13, 14, 1894.
66 Ibid., Oct. 19, 1892.
1894, at Dallas. S. L. Hain was elected treasurer of the State Executive Committee. Dr. A. M. Cochran was elected permanent chairman of the state convention, and a ticket of J. B. Schmitz for governor and M. W. Mann for lieutenant governor was placed in the field. The lily-whites claimed an increase of their vote of 3 per cent and a decrease of 30 per cent in the black-and-tan vote. Goodell, like the rest of the lily-whites, was emphatic in denouncing Cuney for chasing whites out of the party. He added that Negro dominance in the party was no longer necessary because the Negroes had switched to the Democratic party.  

The 1894 lily-white convention proposed that a section of the United States be set aside for Negroes, who were United States citizens, to settle. They could have up to 160 acres of land without fees to pay except a land tax. The U. S. government would keep the mineral lands and erect public buildings for government use. The President would appoint a territorial governor, but the people of the territory could elect subordinate officers. After a period as a territory, the Negro nation could be set free. This plan, of course, came to naught.  

After 1894 the lily-whites, having no real organization and no permanent fund of money, declined in strength and influence. Goodell claimed, however, that lily-white sentiment was gaining in Texas, but

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67 Ibid., Aug. 7, 1894; San Antonio Express, Aug. 7, 1894.  
68 Galveston Daily News, Aug. 8, 1894; San Antonio Express, Aug. 8, 1894.
this was untrue. 69

1896 was a crucial year for both William McKinley and Norris Wright Cuney. For McKinley the year brought victory; for Cuney defeat. The impending conventions loomed large on the horizon, for Cuney had to control both the spring and fall Republican state conventions and the delegation to the national convention in order to maintain control of the party. He knew this, Mark Hanna was aware of it, and above all, John T. Grant, the ambitious chairman of the Republican State Executive Committee, knew it. The fight was for victory or political death.

Mark Hanna, the street railway magnate from Cleveland, Ohio, began McKinley's campaign long before 1896. At the 1892 Republican national convention, Hanna observed that southern delegations were pivotal for nominating presidential candidates. 70 He therefore sought out Cuney for help in 1895. His problem was even more urgent because the eastern bosses began to resist McKinley's nomination. On January 7, 1895, Thomas C. Platt, Matthew Quay, Joseph H. Manley, Chauncey I. Filley, and James S. Clarkson, a friend of Cuney's, met in New York to prevent McKinley's nomination. Hanna, therefore, worked harder in the South to curb opposition to McKinley in case the East should fall into other hands. 71 Cuney fought valiantly and cunningly to counter Hanna's

69 Houston Daily Post, April 20, 1896, in Newcomb's Collection; unidentified clipping from Large Cuney Scrapbook, p. 83.


71 Herbert Croly, Marcus Alonzo Hanna: His Life and Work (New York, 1919), 180, 177-179.
strategy, but in the end lost to the latter's superior political skill.

As Cuney started his campaign for the nomination of William B. Allison of Iowa early in 1895, Hanna began his campaign for McKinley by sending overtures to Cuney from his campaign house in Thomasville, Georgia.\(^{72}\) In March, 1895, Joseph P. Smith, Hanna's follower, wrote Cuney asking him to come to Newport to meet with Hanna and McKinley to renew acquaintances begun in 1888 and 1892. On March 16, 1896, Hanna wired Cuney from Thomasville asking him to meet General William Osborne at the Pickwick Club Hotel in New Orleans on March 19 for a political conference. Cuney answered Hanna that his family was ill in San Antonio and therefore he could not leave home. He did ask Hanna, however, to visit him in Galveston.

Hanna replied that his remembrances of him in 1884 and 1888 made him want Cuney to campaign for McKinley in 1896. Hanna did not meet Cuney personally at this time, but he sent Joseph C. Smith, Governor McKinley's secretary, and Jim Hill, Negro Republican leader of Mississippi, to Galveston to see him. They breakfasted with Cuney, but they left Galveston disappointed at their failure to persuade him to join McKinley's campaign. Hanna wrote once again to Cuney pledging to back him in state politics if Cuney would campaign for McKinley.\(^{73}\) The plea was unsuccessful, and Hanna turned to John T. Grant.

The county conventions held before the Republican state convention

\(^{72}\) Margaret Leech, *In the Days of McKinley* (New York, 1959), 62-63.

\(^{73}\) Hare, *Cuney*, 178-181.
in the spring revealed a division among Cuney's followers, while McKinley's forces, under Grant's businesslike direction, held firm and succeeded in capturing a majority of county conventions for their favorite. S. C. McCoy, Cuney's former secretary, led a contesting Allison delegation to the Washington County convention in order to capture it for the Allison-Cuney faction of the party. McCoy failed to subvert the McKinleyites' control of the county convention, and Cuney, who was present, was severely criticized for trying to override a county convention.  

At the Seventh Congressional District convention, the Republicans split between Negroes and whites. Those Negroes for Thomas B. Reed bolted the convention, leaving the white Reed and McKinley forces and Cuney leaders of the Allison forces alone. The county convention in Galveston was a victory for Cuney's Allison forces. Cuney controlled the First Congressional District convention by combining with the McKinley men to oust the Reed forces. But Tarrant, Lee, Bastrop, and Washington counties were for McKinley. At the Austin county convention, Cuney tried to rally Negroes for Allison, but the convention remained divided, with no faction winning. Money and wine were used to influence delegates and, since Cuney had no money, Grant and the McKinleyites swayed the Negroes. Cuney criticized those whom he accused of corrupting Negro votes and berated the Reed forces for dragging the Republican party down in Texas.  

74 Clippings from Houston Daily Post, Feb. 28, 29, March 5, 1896, in Large Cuney Scrapbook, pp. 159, 161, 164.  
75 Clipping from Houston Daily Post, Feb. 29, March 5, 1896, ibid.; clipping from San Antonio Light, March 8, 1896, in Newcomb's Collection.
The county conventions forecast a split in the state organization, and rumors foretold ominous combinations against Cuney at the state convention. Grant, ambitious for power and discontented with playing second fiddle, chose the 1896 state convention as the occasion to seize control of the party from Cuney.

When the convention met at Austin, March 24-26, 1896, Cuney appeared unperturbed at rumors as he watched proceedings through the eyes of his lieutenants. At that time, he believed that Allison would get fourteen votes, Reed ten, and McKinley six from the Texas delegates and that Allison's support would increase. There were reports that the Reed and McKinley men would fuse and place a Reed man in as temporary chairman. 76 Grant, in a letter to Cuney, asked him to withdraw as a candidate for the position. The latter threw down "his gauntlet at Grant's feet" and declared himself a candidate, telling Grant "to get in the middle of the road and let it be a fight to the finish." Cuney also told Grant to go to hell. Grant supported Webster Flanagan, a McKinleyite, for the position. 77

The audience for the ensuing struggle was large: five or six thousand people were in the pavilion, and Democrats like Governor Hogg and Charles Culberson showed up to persuade Republicans to nominate a ticket. Herion Henrick, a friend of McKinley's, whom newspapers report-

76 Clipping from San Antonio Express, March 20, 1896, p. 159, in Large Cuney Scrapbook; unidentified clippings, ibid., pp. 165, 176.

77 Ibid.
ed to have had thirty million dollars to spend on his campaign, came also. Cuney worked unceasingly for two days before the convention, wheeling his men into line for the first day's proceedings. The discipline of his organization paid off, as the State Executive Committee recommended him for temporary chairman, and he beat A. J. Rosenthal by a 573-to-205 vote. The temporary organization was made permanent. The Reed and Allison forces joined against the McKinley men to achieve this. The bargain apparently provided that Cuney would put Reed men in as chairmen of the committees in return for their support for him as temporary chairman. The bargain between the groups was effected by W. M. MacDonald, a Negro rival of Cuney and a Reed supporter.78

The cheers that greeted Cuney's victory showed that he was the favorite of the Negro Republicans. It also proved that the Negro element was much stronger than the white in the party. Cuney accepted in a powerful speech asking for harmony in the party. He said it was the proudest event of his life.

I am gratified at the turn things have taken in favor of Mr. Allison. . . . my friends have done me a great honor.

. . . They thought to kill me politically and some of them have met the very same fate they had in store for me. . . .

I am tired of this fighting and discord, and shall work for

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78 Austin Evening News, March 25, 1896; unidentified clipping, from Large Cuney Scrapbook, p. 176; clipping from San Antonio Express, March 28, 1896, ibid., p. 171.
what I believe to be the best interests of the Republican party.  

The Reed men made chairmen of committees were R. B. Hawley for the Committee on Resolutions, W. M. MacDonald for the Credentials Committee, and J. P. Elliott for the Committee on Permanent Organization. Try as he might to push the convention for Allison, Cuney still had to reckon with a McKinley-dominated hall. Even after he was selected chairman, 2,000 delegates cheered for McKinley. Most of the speeches were given by Negroes, and most spoke for McKinley. The McKinley delegates held two caucuses in the high-pillared lobby of the Driskill Hotel to consider whether W. M. MacDonald as chairman of the Credentials Committee would unseat McKinley delegates.

The report of the Credentials Committee on the second day unseated all contesting—or lily-white or anti-Cuney—delegations including the one from Grayson County led by Grant. To placate Grant, the committee reconsidered and seated one-half of his delegates. Most of the McKinley delegates went home after the Credentials Committee’s report. Cuney especially angered them when he ruled against reading the pro-McKinley minority report on the ground that it had been written after the convention had adjourned and therefore was not valid. The McKinley men

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claimed they had been defeated by a voice vote and not by an actual majority. But they lacked a forceful leader who could unite them, and this gave Cuney an advantage. He maintained that accredited McKinley delegations constituted "little more than one-third of the whole number."\textsuperscript{81}

The biggest explosion occurred when E. Henry Terrell of San Antonio handed Eugene Marshall a list of delegates-at-large and alternates to the national convention. Cuney quickly recognized Marshall who read the list of names on the back of the envelope. The delegates-at-large were Cuney, W. K. Makemson, E. H. Terrell, and H. C. Ferguson, and the alternates were C. D. Keyes, F. W. Gross, B. F. Caine, and W. F. Smith. Cuney quickly pushed through a motion for approval and declared the slate elected.

An angry throng of one hundred surged toward and squeezed around Cuney as the McKinleyites tried forcefully to take over the convention. White and black mingled freely. Some of the crowd tried to remove Cuney bodily, while others tried to put Webster Flanagan into Cuney's seat. Cuney, though wearied by three sleepless nights and the strain of the convention matters, held his composure throughout the commotion. Screams pierced the air. Some beat Cuney with their fists; others beat Flanagan. One Negro held a gun on another Negro who had been beating Cuney with his cane.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{81} Clipping from San Antonio \textit{Express}, March 28, 1896, \textit{ibid.}, p. 171.

\textsuperscript{82} Unidentified clipping, \textit{ibid.}, p. 178; San Antonio \textit{Express}, March 27, 1896, \textit{ibid.}, p. 177; Galveston \textit{Daily News}, March 27, 1896.
Just as the mob was gaining control of the convention, seven policemen arrived, and, charging to the center of the mob, they rescued Cuney and dragged Flanagan away from the podium. Cuney jumped on one of the three remaining tables swinging his gavel over his head. Once again the McKinleyites tried to down Cuney, but the police forced them back. When the jeers stopped, Cuney said: "I love my friends and I do not hate my enemies, I care not what men may say of Wright Cuney so long as Wright Cuney's conscience doesn't accuse." Delegate Love interrupted Cuney by proclaiming his love for Cuney, and Cuney returned love to him. But Love continued to insist on a roll call vote on the platform. Cuney then ruled Love out of order. Cuney then made a short speech recalling his victory over Grant and adjourned the convention.

Cuney had won the first round and was pleased with himself. "I was not expecting anything else, for I was right and had the people with me. I went in to win and will always be grateful to my friends for standing by me as they did." A crowd gathered outside the convention hall greeted Cuney, and he was caught up on the shoulders of friends and carried away. By this time he showed signs of nervous exhaustion. His daughter forced him to rest.83

No sooner had Cuney left the hall than 250 to 300 McKinley followers held their own rump convention. Amid cheers, Grant mounted a table

83 Ibid.; Hare, Cuney, 189; unidentified clippings in Large Cuney Scrapbook, pp. 173, 175.
and declared the adjourned convention null, void, and out of order. Grant said the convention he was about to open was the regular state convention of the Republican party. This McKinley convention did its business in three hours, in contrast to the regular convention that had taken three days. A delegation led by Grant was sent to the national convention with its own credentials. 84

Both Cuney and Grant led delegations to the national convention at St. Louis on June 16-18, 1896. Hanna, who controlled the Credentials Committee and every southern delegation, knew only too well that Cuney would not campaign for William McKinley. William P. Hepburn of Iowa, a member of the committee, offered a resolution to look at the papers of all contesting delegations before reaching a decision, but this was defeated. The majority report of the committee to recognize Grant's McKinley delegation was accepted by the convention by a vote of 551 1/2 to 359 1/2. 85

That Grant did not represent the regular Republicans and yet was recognized by the party aggravated Cuney and made him feel unfairly treated. To make matters worse, an old man, General Charles Grosvenor, berated Cuney unmercifully before the national committee when the matter of seating the Cuney delegation came before it. 86

Cuney explained his feelings at this kind of treatment before the

84 Austin Evening News, March 27, 1896; Winkler, Platforms, 359.
85 Bain, Convention Decisions, 152, 159; Hare, Cuney, 195.
86 Casdorph, Texas Delegations to National Republican Conventions, 123-124.
Credentials Committee: "Turn me out, and you not only place the brand of dishonor upon the Republican party or the nation, you not only do the act of petty revengeful tyrants, but you put upon ingratitude, that lowest vice of inhuman hearts, a premium." Cuney went on to explain:

That ex-inmate of a lunatic asylum is my creature. I warmed him into life. He betrayed and stung me. Look at him as he sits there with a face as white as the liver you cannot see and a heart as black as the coat that conceals it.... I stood by him when he had not a friend. I gave him a chance to come to the front and held him up against the protests of my friend. And all the time he has been plotting to undermine me.

In his final plea for seating the regular Texas delegation Cuney asserted that he was a much better person than Grant and that he had been in the party longer. He prophesied disaster for the party if his delegation was not seated. 87

Cuney returned home furious and chagrined at the treatment he had received. He returned, however, not to "sulk in his tent" but to campaign for McKinley and Hobart. At least, Cuney had the satisfaction of knowing that he could not be swerved from an opinion he felt was right. 88

87 Hare, Cuney, 195-198.

88 Ibid., 202-203; clipping from San Antonio Express, June 16, 1892, in Large Cuney Scrapbook, p. 182.
During the summer of 1896, Cuney made a vain attempt to regain control of the party. He and W. M. MacDonald, Negro leader of Forney, tried to organize a McKinley club to help Cuney at the state convention at Fort Worth, September 9-10, 1896. In the convention, they attempted unsuccessfully to get E. H. R. Green elected chairman of the Republican State Executive Committee to counter Grant's power.\(^9\) Ostensibly, Cuney and Grant buried their differences to work for McKinley, but Cuney still supported Green against Grant and would not withdraw from the race for temporary chairman at Fort Worth. He rebuffed the peace efforts of A. W. Huston and Charlie Hedges, two McKinley peacemakers, showing his hurt feelings.\(^9\) Before the convention Huston and Hedges told the Republicans to keep hands off Cuney on specific instructions from Hanna, who was fearful that Cuney, with MacDonald, as leader of the Negro vote, might control the state convention against McKinley's interests.\(^9\)

When the convention opened on September 9, Cuney addressed it with a speech of harmony asking all Republicans to unite for the ticket. He felt it was the duty of Republicans to preserve the integrity and credit of the United States. Meanwhile, the white Republicans were busy trying to draw Negro support away from Cuney. Talk had it that Charles Fergu-


\(^9\)Clipping from Galveston News, Sept. 6, 1896, ibid., p. 187.

\(^9\)Unidentified clipping, ibid., p. 185; Dallas Daily Times Herald, Sept. 7, 1896.
son and a white man would run against Cuney to split up the Negro vote into three sections. 92

The Fort Worth convention was an "Austin affair" all over again. The party was not big enough to hold both Grant and Cuney, and they fought for control. They spoke of "love and harmony" and figuratively "whetted" long knives on their shoe soles. This convention was important for it was the first time that the Republican party held a balance of power in Texas since Davis had led it. Therefore, a unified party was necessary to fuse with the Populists. 93

Most observers felt that if Cuney had had enough money he could have had the temporary chairmanship. But he was poor as "Job's turkey." He weakened himself when he wouldn't compromise and run either Ogden or J. B. Hawley for the position. He also hurt his standing when he refused help from Huston and Hedges. The Galveston Daily News, however, still believed that Cuney was a potent factor in Texas politics. 94

When Grant opened nominations for temporary chairman, Ferguson was nominated, and then D. Clifford nominated Cuney. A roll call vote was taken for temporary chairman as pandemonium reigned supreme. Two delegates tried to withdraw Cuney's name and nominate Ferguson by acclamation. Cuney's enemies would not do this because they wanted him defeated completely. Ferguson won by $373\frac{1}{2}$ to $250\frac{1}{2}$ votes. He and Grant were

92 Ibid., Sept. 7, 10, 1896; unidentified clipping in Large Cuney Scrapbook, p. 212.


94 Ibid., Sept. 6, 10, 1896.
carried aloft as the delegates sang "We'll hang Wright Cuney on a sour apple tree."

Cuney could have avoided the bitterness of his defeat if he had listened to compromise. But he refused, saying things had gone too far to turn back, he would either sink or swim. When defeat came, Cuney took it with a sad smile and said he had got used to defeat after St. Louis.95

Grant was clearly running the party himself, and he sought to soothe Cuney's wounds. He wrote him a conciliatory letter, and Cuney promised to campaign for McKinley. Grant was effective in conciliation in other ways also. He drew the lily-white faction back into the regular party to assist in the election and he said, "From now on there will be a united party in Texas."96 On the other side, the Negroes were anxious that the whites "tote fair" and give the Negro equal patronage. The committees of the two factions gathered at Fort Worth on September 9, 1896, after the lily-white convention. The lily-whites agreed to withdraw their ticket—Henry B. Cain of Harris County for

95 Ibid., Sept. 10, 1896; unidentified clippings in Large Cuney Scrapbook, pp. 192-193, 213.

96 Galveston Daily News, Sept. 11, 19, 1896; Hare, Cuney, 203, 210. The lily-whites met on April 20, 1896, in Houston. Nothing important was accomplished. The lily-whites prided themselves on the fine people present and that ladies could sit in the convention hall without being insulted. R. P. Goodell was elected chairman and S. L. Hain treasurer of the State Executive Committee. D. A. Robinson was elected president and W. H. Atwell secretary of the Republican League. Galveston Daily News, April 21, 1896; Houston Daily Post, April 20, 1896; Fort Worth Gazette, April 25, 1896, in Newcomb's Collection.
governor and Robert Hanschke of Bexar County for lieutenant governor—and their platform to support the regular Republican party. In addition, Grant, along with Cuney, also engineered fusion with the Populists on a state level, meaning that the Republicans would not nominate a ticket and would support the Populist Jerome Kearby for governor. A committee with plenary powers was appointed by the state convention, and Cuney along with two-thirds of his friends was on the committee. Fusion with sound-money principles was the result.

The Negroes did not seem unhappy that Cuney was no longer leader of the Republican party. In fact, they had little reason to be, for Charles Ferguson was elected chairman of the autumn convention, Cuney was on the Platform Committee and W. E. Easton, a Cuney man, was elected secretary of the State Executive Committee. Although Cuney campaigned diligently for McKinley and Hobart, wheeling Populists and Negroes into line as much as possible, it is needless to add that the Republican-Populist ticket did not win in Texas.

Cuney was debilitated from the strain of the election campaign. He had suffered from pulmonary tuberculosis for ten years, and the strain of political life caused a crisis. In December, 1896, he visit-
ed his daughter Maud, who was teaching at the School for Deaf, Dumb, and Blind in Austin. Lloyd, his son, was a student at Tillotson College in Austin. After his visit to Austin he returned to San Antonio, where he had been staying with friends.100

Patronage was a big question as it always is after a successful election. John T. Grant suffered from mental illness and was never effective as national committeeman from Texas, nor did he ever use his state position with any effectiveness, even though he held office from 1896 until 1900. There was talk, however, that he would control Texas patronage. Cuney never regained any of his power in dispensing or receiving patronage after his defeat at the national and state conventions. The dispensing of federal patronage was passed on to R. G. Hawley, the Republican representative from Galveston.101

Grant still hated both Cuney and E. H. R. Green and, therefore, in a businesslike and ambitious way began to collect evidence to show the national party why Green and Cuney should be cut out of distribution of federal patronage. Meanwhile, Green and Cuney joined forces as a means of downing Grant and getting patronage and likewise tried to gain control of the state Republican organization.102

100Hare, Cuney, 214-215; San Antonio Express, Dec. 28, 1896, in Large Cuney Scrapbook, p. 195.
Grant didn't seem to be worried about Cuney's effort. He simply said, "Let us take care of Cuney et als when we come to them." And if Cuney had any hopes of being appointed collector of customs at Galveston, they vanished when William Lee was chosen. Clearly to all except the lily-white, Cuney was a cipher in Texas politics. They were concerned with Cuney's future plans and especially his effect on Negro Republicans.

The Negroes' place in the party still obsessed lily-whites as late as 1897, for H. F. MacGregor wrote Newcomb in August that the course of the lily-whites would depend on whether Cuney lived or died. MacGregor remarked that he thought Cuney was going to die, "but he doesn't seem to hurry about it." The Negro would still be a part of Texas politics he said if Cuney didn't die, but with Cuney's death, the Negro as a controlling factor in the party would be gone.

As MacGregor wrote this letter Cuney was dying in San Antonio, but he made his adversaries wait a while before the final act.

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103 John Grant's answer to T. J. Darling's letter, written on the back of Darling's letter to Grant, Dec. 14, 1897, Dienst Papers.

104 Galveston Daily News, Jan. 6, 1898.

105 H. F. MacGregor to J. P. Newcomb, Houston, Aug. 29, 1897, Newcomb Papers.
CHAPTER VI

NORRIS WRIGHT CUNEY: AN INTERPRETATION

His magnificent health gone, his spirit broken by his wife's death in 1895, his tuberculosis reactivated by cigar smoking and lack of rest, Cuney retired to San Antonio after the campaign of 1896. Maud had wanted her father to retire earlier, but he refused until a relapse following an attack of influenza forced him to do so. He was, however, still well enough early in 1897 to go to a patronage meeting in Houston, to attend a New Year's Eve ball in Fort Worth, and to visit his son and daughter in Austin.

Alone, except for an old faithful nurse and friends in San Antonio, Maud Cuney fought unceasingly and desperately with death for the life of her father. Occasionally, he was able to take drives in the cool mornings and evenings or to stroll in his garden and to walk the streets of San Antonio. Each day he read newspapers and corresponded with friends.

The end came quickly on March 4, 1898. His mother, his brother Joseph, and his son Lloyd arrived from Galveston on the day of his death. Cuney, who was in full control of his mental powers until the end, had his aged mother led from the room just before his death. With his head cradled in Maud's arm, he whispered, "My work is ended." He kissed his daughter farewell and died.  

1 Clipping from San Antonio Express, Dec. 28, 1896, in Large Cuney Scrapbook, p. 195; Hare, Cuney, 216-219; Galveston Daily News, March 4, 1898.
A special train carried the body to Galveston, where the funeral in the Masonic Building was held on March 6, 1898. Over two thousand people attended the funeral and a hundred participated in the procession, which included a Dixieland band. Burial followed in the Lakeview Cemetery.

Man is often trapped by circumstances, hemmed in by his own limitations, and frustrated by his failures. But there is still room for him to move, to show his mettle, to exert his moral consciousness. How great an effort man makes to move and make his influence felt establishes his worth. Judged by these standards, Norris Wright Cuney was a great man. The value of his life lay not in his winning or losing the decision, but in his ardent reaction to events, his challenging of unfair circumstances.

Cuney accepted the challenge of the circumstances and remained behind to fight, saying, "I am of the South, it is my home. The home of my wife and babies ... it is the home of my race. There lie our interest. I can elevate my people alone in the South. I am willing to dwell in their midst."

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2 Cuney's remains were buried on Section B, Block 7, Lot 1, of Lakeview Cemetery on March 6, 1898. Mrs. Cuney's remains had been removed from a single grave to the same lot on the preceding day. Lot Book of Lakeview Cemetery (Cemetery office, Galveston); interview with Richard Jackson, Galveston, Feb. 18, 1964.

3 Clipping from San Antonio Advance, Aug. 7, 1897, in Large Cuney Scrapbook, p. 196.
Although he chose to remain behind to improve Negroes in Texas, Cuney was a product of his times, catapulted into positions of advantage by the Civil War, the principles of the Republican party, and Radical Reconstruction. Cuney was not able to change his times simply because he was part of a minority group, which meant that he and the Negroes would receive only as many civil rights as the majority was willing to give. In the nineteenth century, the white majority was unsympathetic, even hostile toward Negro rights. The most Cuney could do was to gnaw at the white man's guilty conscience with his protestations in hopes of receiving equal benefits and in keeping potential Negro rights before the public.

If anything, Cuney used the times for his benefit as well as Negroes' benefit. He got Negroes jobs on the Galveston wharves in 1883 and 1885 by using the times to his advantage. Cuney also seized leadership of the Republican party in Texas at the opportune time when whites were divided and the Negroes in the majority. Cuney's opportunism benefited himself, but it also benefited Texas Negroes, for he gave their wishes a strong voice.

Cuney remained with his people and elevated them by instruction and example. Education was one of the ways Cuney felt his race could be improved. That Prairie View State Normal and Industrial Institute for Negroes was established by the legislature in 1878 was due in large measure to his efforts. Cuney's interest in the school was avid, and he exerted himself to get scholarships for students.\(^4\) He also agitated

\(^4\)Hare, \textit{Cuney}, 32.
for a Deaf, Dumb, and Blind Institute for Negroes, chiding the whites for providing penitentiaries and insane asylums as the only tax-supported services for Negroes.\(^5\)

On matters of race, Cuney was adamant. The Negro was equal in all respects to whites. He stood squarely against bigotry: "I abhor and detest . . . the question of . . . injustice . . . of color, religion, of nationality, and it has been the labor of my public life for twenty years to eliminate these elements from our public policy."\(^6\)

In 1890 he protested against the proposed separate-coach law, saying if any great public demand existed for separate coaches the railroads would have instituted them on their own responsibility. Cuney argued that hundreds of Negroes and whites who transacted business on trains would be denied this right under the bill. He said the New South used this bill to reverse fate and to check the growth of a "broader and better humanity." The Twenty-second Legislature enacted the separate-coach law, the first Jim Crow law for Texas, in 1891. Cuney realized the futility of his protest saying, "Protestation may be useless where folly hold the reins but I protest against this outrageous injustice."\(^7\)

Prejudice came up again when Maud Cuney, his daughter, entered the New England Conservatory as a student with the same privileges as

\(^5\)Ibid., 37.
\(^6\)Ibid., 138.
\(^7\)Ibid., 129-130.
the other students. Maud was asked to leave when southern girls complained of her staying at the dormitory. Cuney wrote the school protesting the prejudice shown against his daughter. The Conservatory allowed Maud to stay. Cuney wrote his daughter that he would have sued "if they dared force you out of the building."^8

If Cuney was unyielding in his fight against prejudice, he was also obdurate in his demands on Negroes. He demanded that his people accept full responsibility for the performance of their duties as citizens and workers in an integrated society. He said the Negro was

... equally responsible for the good or evil which may flow from the performance of his public duties, and in my opinion it is the duty of all right-thinking men continually to impress this upon his mind, thereby making the citizenship of our common country throughly homogeneous in all of its public relations. Whatever concerns the Negro for weal or woe must necessarily concern all.\(^9\)

What Cuney thought about the education of Negroes is somewhat ambiguous. He believed in both industrial and intellectual training for Negroes, with emphasis on mechanical instruction. On one occasion, he inferred the Negroes should become self-sufficient farmers, who also raised crops for market. Cuney also stressed solvency to Negroes.

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^8 Ibid., 131-134; New York Age, Nov. 15, 1890.

^9 Hare, Cuney, 138-139.
In emphasizing mechanical training Cuney did not denigrate professional or intellectual pursuits; he merely felt Negroes neglected the hand for the brain simply because they felt it demeaning to use their hands. He spoke instead of developing "natural ability" by training both hand and brain. Cuney said a literate blacksmith or farmer was better than a frustrated mechanic who had turned professional because it was the thing to do. Liberal arts should be an avocation for self-elevation, but a practical trade should be acquired for an independent living.

Cuney also warned his people not to pursue liberal arts fields just to imitate the white man. He believed that literature was the last and highest expression of a people's development. And the Negro in America had given no evidence of reaching the level of literate achievement equal to the white race. Therefore Cuney stressed industrial education, thrift, energy, ambition, as well as professional training for Negro progress. 10

In the realm of Negro education Cuney seemed to be midway between W. E. B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington. Unlike Washington, who sought to ingratiate himself with the whites by stressing education to prepare the Negro for a predistined role as a workingman, and more like DuBois, Cuney willingly stressed formal education for Negroes and at the same time criticized their shortcomings. However, in emphasizing industrial or mechanical training over professional education and

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in not insisting on integrated schools or absolute social equality, Cuney was similar to Washington.

Respect for Cuney among Galveston whites was such that he was the only Negro who could go into Henry Toujeau's cafe or the Surf House, an aristocratic resort hotel. In these places he was greeted with the respect and friendliness accorded most white men. The words, "I'm Wright Cuney," were enough to gain Cuney entrance where other Negroes would have been thrown out. He was accepted not because he looked white or because he appeared Mexican, but rather because he was intelligent and courageous enough to fight for what he believed.\(^{11}\) That Cuney was granted this much equality is a credit to the whites of Galveston. People generally respect a fighter no matter what his color, and Galvestonians were no different in this respect than people elsewhere.

Cuney's direct influence in Texas was more significant than his influence on the United States as a whole. His fall in the party and his death ended an era of Negro significance in Texas Republican politics. A strong leader, who could command respect from whites and Negroes and wheel ignorant Negroes into line, was needed to keep Negroes politically strong in Texas. By 1892 James S. Hogg had shown that Democrats were most expert at capturing Negro votes. Therefore, a man like Cuney was essential to keep what little strength the divided and docile Negroes had in the Republican party. When he was gone,

\(^{11}\)Clipping from Galveston Tribune, May 17, 1898, ibid., p. 258.
there was no one to take his place. C. M. Ferguson was a wealthy Negro of ability, but he preferred to play secretary to E. H. R. Green and build up a personal fortune. Charles MacDonald was an able leader, but he was drawn to the Populist cause. Indeed, Cuney was necessary to the Negro cause in Texas, if only because other Negroes refused to be bothered with public matters, preferring their own aggrandizement to the improvement of their race. While he was not extremely important on a national level, Cuney did come in contact with national white leaders, giving them a chance to see what a conscientious, intelligent Negro leader could do.

Cuney's unwavering principles even won him the admiration of nationally known politicians. A party was given by Vice President Garret Hobart after the election to bring James S. Clarkson and Mark Hanna together and to weld the party more tightly. During the course of the party a letter was delivered to Hanna from a Negro politician of Florida, an event which reminded Hanna of Cuney's stubborn refusal to go along with the crowd. Hanna, thereupon, turned to Hobart saying he had gained all "'Southern Niggers, except Clarkson's, and especially that Cuney and his followers in Texas. Nothing could change or affect him, neither in immediate performance or in future promises. Nothing could change him from Clarkson or Allison.'"

Clarkson, taking umbrage at Hanna's disparaging remark about Cuney and his inference that Negroes were venal, replied with this statement:

Senator Hanna, when you are talking of Wright Cuney you are talking of a man of honor of life-long record, of a man who
is as honorable as any man in this room, and a man whom
several of us here have known intimately for many years,
and prize as a personal friend. Whatever he did with you
in that campaign, or refused to do, was from his own high
sense of honor, and he is worthy of that fact being recog-
nized by you and every other gentleman.\footnote{12}

Such was the reputation Norris Wright Cuney had made for himself--
as one who never backed down, as a valiant fighter to the finish.\footnote{13}
Cuney had protested, but to no avail; he had led the Republican party
only to be ousted in 1896 and to be left with no money and fewer
friends in return for his trouble. His position, therefore, in Texas
history and in Negro thought has significance as a protester, as one
who fought against the tide to keep democracy alive in a one-party
state where racial prejudice was the norm. He moved an inch only to
be pushed back by a white majority. He, at least, made the effort;
he burdened himself to smooth the way for future Negroes and whites.
Men like Cuney are rare.

\footnote{12}{Hare, \textit{Cuney}, 212-213.}

\footnote{13}{Interview with Sheldon Banks, Jr., Galveston, Feb. 7, 1964.}
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