

## **APPENDIX G**

**“EVER THREATENED... EVER IN NEED:”  
ALEXANDER MANLY’S CONFRONTATION WITH  
THE DEMOCRATIC CAMPAIGN IN 1898 NORTH CAROLINA**

“Ever Threatened... Ever in Need:” Alexander Manly’s Confrontation with the Democratic Campaign in 1898 North Carolina

by  
J. Vincent Lowery

In his response to Georgian Rebecca Latimer Felton’s speech on the vulnerability of poor white farm women, Alexander Manly, the African American editor of the *Wilmington Daily Record*, challenged white conceptions of race and gender, inadvertently lending support to the white supremacy campaign led by Democrats in North Carolina in 1898. He exposed the tenuous nature of white male authority and inspired the destruction of his newspaper office on November 10, 1898. In order to understand this act of terrorism and the violence that ensued, it is helpful to understand the psychology of the southern white male and the campaign that capitalized on his anger and fears.

In the late nineteenth century, southerners, much like other Americans, experienced the growing pains that accompanied industrialization and urbanization. Young men and women left rural homes in pursuit of opportunities for employment and amusement in the region’s growing urban areas. Within public settings such as the factory and the dance hall, they interacted regularly. White society faced the prospect that women, deemed by some as passionless and placed upon a pedestal, in actuality possessed the same desires as men. Beyond the influence of their families, these women might choose sexual partners, including African American men, according to their own desires. In order to control these young women and their desires, southern white society developed the myth of the “black beast rapist.” According to historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, the image of a hypersexual black male “plant[ed] fear in women’s minds and dependency in their hearts. It thrust them in the role of personal property or sexual objects, ever threatened by black men’s lust, ever in need of white men’s protection.”<sup>1</sup>

One must realize that the rape myth inspired the sincere belief among whites that black men were intent upon raping white women. The generations of black and white southerners coming of age in the New South lacked the knowledge of one another that slavery had provided for their parents, and whites found reason to distrust the “New Negro.” Theories that described the degeneracy of the African American born into freedom circulated throughout the country, and the virility of the black male became a popular topic among southern orators and writers. As a result of the changing nature of southern society, many whites believed that their way of life was in jeopardy. Whites believed that civilization passed from one generation to the next through blood, and the rhetoric of white supremacy implanted the seed of civilization in white

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the changes underway in the South after Reconstruction, see Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1996), pg. 72, 94-96; Diane Miller Sommerville, *Rape and Race in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pg. 245, 254; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “‘The Mind That Burns in Each Body’: Women, Rape, and Racial Violence” in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983): pg. 339. For further readings on the southern rape complex, see Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Lisa Lundquist Dorr, *White Women, Rape, and the Power of Race in Virginia 1900-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

women. Sexual intercourse between a white woman and a man possessing one drop of black blood contaminated white blood, a process referred to as “amalgamation” and “mongrelization.” Fears spread of the threat posed by the mulatto class to the racial foundations of the southern order. Mulattoes blurred the color line dividing whites and blacks, permitting some mulattoes to “pass” as whites. White men argued that a white woman would never willfully engage in intercourse with an African-American man. Therefore, the threat lay in either the mulatto or the black beast rapist; given the difficulty of identifying mulattoes, white men concentrated on the black beast rapist.<sup>2</sup> Southern newspapers circulated accounts of black-on-white rape, particularly those cases that ended in the lynching of the black suspect by a white mob. As reports spread, whites, convinced of the black man’s guilt, searched for evidence of black lust for white women within their own communities.<sup>3</sup>

Poor white women were believed to be most vulnerable to the black rapist. At the August 1897 meeting of the Georgia State Agricultural Society, Rebecca Latimer Felton criticized white men for their failure to preserve the color line and protect poor white farm women from black “beasts.” Felton offered two means by which to protect poor white women. First, she advocated the development of a common school system to educate the poorer classes. She believed that education offered the tool necessary to avoid sexual encounters with black “beasts” and preserve white civilization. Second, Felton declared, “if it needs lynching to protect woman’s dearest possession from the ravening human beasts – then I say lynch a thousand times if necessary.”<sup>4</sup> Felton’s address attracted the attention of newspaper editors throughout the country, but their coverage focused on her support of lynching.

The emphasis that Felton and the southern white press placed upon the relationship between rape and lynching concealed the fact that many African-American lynching victims were not accused of rape. Such rhetoric legitimized the violent punishment of any transgression against white mastery. African-American men drew the wrath of white mobs, in part, for economic and political gains, particularly when those gains placed black men in positions of authority over white women. As historian Stephen Kantrowitz has noted, “since control over a household and its dependents formed the basis of white men’s claim to independence and citizenship, dominance could not be neatly separated into spheres of ‘government’ and ‘household.’”<sup>5</sup> White men became apprehensive of the success of black men, interpreting any gains as steps toward black mastery over white dependents and sexual mastery over white

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<sup>2</sup> Williamson, *The Crucible of Race*, pg. 119-124; Joel Williamson, *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States* (New York: The Free Press, 1980), pg. 99, 103; Sommerville, *Rape and Race*, pg. 216. Andrea Meryl Kirshenbaum notes the gendered concept of civilization in the political cartoons featured in the *Raleigh News and Observer*. In “‘The Vampire that Hovers Over North Carolina’: Gender, White Supremacy, and the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898,” *Southern Cultures* 4 (1998): pg. 17. In 1902, Thomas Dixon expressed these fears in absolute and dire terms in his best-selling novel, *The Leopard’s Spots: A Romance of the White Man’s Burden, 1865-1900*. Dixon repeatedly declared, “[T]he future American must be either an Anglo Saxon or a Mulatto” (pg. 333).

<sup>3</sup> Edward Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pg. 240-241, 243.

<sup>4</sup> Macon *Telegraph*, August 18, 1897; See also LeeAnn Whites, “Love, Hate, Rape, Lynching: Rebecca Latimer Felton and the Gender Politics of Racial Violence,” in *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy*, ed. by David Cecelski and Timothy Tyson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998): pg. 143-162.

<sup>5</sup> Sommerville, *Rape and Race*, pg. 201-202; Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pg. 105; LeeAnn Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), pg. 7.

women. Poor white women understood these fears. They cried rape to avoid punishment for consensual relationships with African American men. These cries supported the myth of the black beast rapist and encouraged Felton's violent method of preserving white womanhood.

Democratic politicians in North Carolina capitalized on the image of the black beast rapist during the election of 1898 in their attempt to depose the reigning Fusion government and remove African American men from politics. Party leaders told white voters that the state's Fusion government had unleashed black men upon their wives and daughters. The appointment of blacks to public offices such as postmaster, police officer, and magistrate by the Fusion government placed "virginal" white women in contact with black men who possessed considerable power over them. Democratic leaders and newspapers sexualized everyday contact between white women and black men.<sup>6</sup> The party's newspapers reported "outrages" throughout the state, emphasizing white women's innocence and black men's hostility in cases ranging from sidewalk scuffles to rape. In order to prove their manhood by protecting the women and young girls in their care, white men whose well-being would have given them reason to support the Populist Party were told to vote for the Democratic ticket. As the state's largest city and an important economic center, Wilmington became a particular focus of the campaign. Regular meetings of the Democratic Party and White Government Unions provided a forum in which party leaders disseminated news from throughout the South and lectured poor whites on the threats posed by black men.<sup>7</sup>

The *Wilmington Messenger* reprinted Felton's speech (neglecting to print the year in which she delivered it) in order to aid this gendered and sexualized Democratic campaign. Alexander Manly responded by questioning her claims in his reform-oriented newspaper, the *Daily Record*.<sup>8</sup> Manly challenged the popular notion among southern judges and legislators that interracial sex was rape. He suggested that black men attracted the attention and desires of white women. He warned that white men should "guard their women more closely... You leave your goods out of doors and then complain because they are taken away." Manly agreed with Felton that white men should provide better educations for their wives and daughters, but he also extended this privilege to poor black women, suggesting that poor women of both races displayed the same questionable virtues.<sup>9</sup> Doubting the ability of education to prevent sexual encounters between proper white women and African Americans, Manly asserted that many black men "were sufficiently attractive for white girls of culture and refinement to fall in love with them."<sup>10</sup> By questioning the veracity of white women's cries of rape, Manly simultaneously challenged a critical component of the Democrats' campaign and taunted whites' fears of the unregulated sexuality of young white women.

Manly advised Felton that, in order to preserve the color line, she "must begin at the fountainhead."<sup>11</sup> When he referred to sexual encounters between white men and black women, Manly decried one of the legacies of slavery that apologists of the peculiar institution and

<sup>6</sup> Williamson, *The Crucible of Race*, pg. 192; Kirshenbaum, "'Vampire,'" pg. 14.

<sup>7</sup> See Wilmington Race Riot Commission Report, chapter 3, for a discussion of Democratic campaign tactics.

<sup>8</sup> Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, pg. 105.

<sup>9</sup> Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, pg. 105.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in *Wilmington Morning Star*, August 24, 1898.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in *Wilmington Morning Star*, August 24, 1898.

proponents of the Lost Cause could not easily conceal. Manly himself represented proof of this legacy; his bloodline could be traced to former governor Charles Manly.<sup>12</sup> The editor attempted simultaneously to expose white men's indiscretions and calm white tensions about miscegenation. He instructed Felton to "[t]ell your men that is no worse for a black man to be intimate with a white woman, than for a white man to be intimate with a colored woman." Manly concluded the editorial with a direct challenge to white men who crossed the color line: "Don't think ever that your women will remain pure while you are debauching ours. You sow the seed – the harvest will come in due time."<sup>13</sup> Manly's suggestion that white and black men shared equal access to the women of both races challenged white male dominance, but his treatment of the subject forced white men either to acknowledge their indiscretions or ignore this legacy of slavery.

The Democratic machine pursued the latter option, choosing to focus attention on the parts of Manly's editorial that, in white minds, questioned the virtue of white women. According to party rhetoric, one of the potential rapists (by virtue of the one drop rule, Manly was black) had disparaged the character of white womanhood in an act that might be considered "literary rape" and proved claims of black desire for white women.<sup>14</sup> State party leader Furnifold Simmons predicted that Manly's editorial ensured the defeat of Fusion incumbents across the state. To accomplish this end, Democratic editor Josephus Daniels reprinted 300,000 copies of Manly's editorial and distributed them across the state.<sup>15</sup> Wilmington's white newspapers supported the Democratic campaign by reprinting Manly's editorial in the months leading up the election. Editors capitalized the more salacious portions to capture readers' attention and inserted their own commentary, often directing their analysis at poor white readers. The suggestion that poor black women were the moral equals of poor white women, in which Manly identified class rather than race as the determining factor in one's virtue, angered whites and served the Democratic Party's efforts to attract poor white men from the Populist Party.<sup>16</sup> In response to Manly's reference to "clandestine meetings" between black men and white women, one newspaper suggested that Manly "had been holding 'clandestine meetings' with poor white women, wives of white men."<sup>17</sup> With this assertion, Democrats warned poor whites that, by endangering their wives and daughters and challenging their manhood, Manly represented a greater threat than railroad tycoons and the gold standard. The newspapers reported each instance of black crime and documented support for Manly within the African-American community, convincing readers that their city and state were under siege by black brutes and their Fusion allies. In the midst of growing tensions, the *Morning Star* cautioned "self-control... one of the highest attributes of courageous manhood": "The time may come in the near future when the white men of Wilmington will be called on to defend themselves and their homes."<sup>18</sup>

During a speaking tour through North Carolina, "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman, U.S. Senator from South Carolina, proposed immediate action. As governor of South Carolina in the early

<sup>12</sup> It is believed that Alexander Manly was either the son or grandson of Governor Manly.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in *Wilmington Morning Star*, August 24, 1898.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew Wilson, *Whiteness and the Novels of Charles Chesnut* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), pg. 105.

<sup>15</sup> Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, pg. 80; Williamson, *The Crucible of Race*, pg. 197.

<sup>16</sup> Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, pg. 105.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, pg. 107.

<sup>18</sup> *Wilmington Morning Star*, August 24, 1898.

1890s, Tillman had declared that he “would lead a mob to lynch the negro who ravishes a white woman.”<sup>19</sup> He expected the same response to Manly’s literary rape of the character of white women. At a rally in Fayetteville on October 20, 1898, Tillman questioned, “Why didn’t you kill that damn nigger editor who wrote that?” Tillman declared that white South Carolinians would not have permitted such an offense to go unpunished. Responding to Tillman’s pleas, a band of Red Shirts appeared shortly after his speech, marking the birth of the organization in North Carolina.<sup>20</sup>

The Wilmington press sometimes identified the Red Shirts as the “Rough Riders.” One article described the Fifth Ward Rough Riders’ participation in a Democratic parade, “led by ‘Col. Teddy Roosevelt’ incognito Squire G.W. Bornemann.” The invocation of the name of the popular military unit and its commanding officer implied that this group of Wilmingtonians represented the same virtues of patriotism and manhood espoused in Cuba. Democratic campaign rallies undoubtedly featured local men who volunteered for service in the Spanish-American War in hopes of fulfilling the Confederate legacy of manly service. These men did not engage in the hostilities and therefore failed to prove their manhood. Tillman and his North Carolina counterparts challenged white North Carolinians to fulfill this legacy.<sup>21</sup>

When a white mob led by Alfred Moore Waddell burned the offices of the *Record* after Manly had fled the city, white Wilmingtonians achieved a degree of satisfaction. Stirred to action by Democratic rhetoric, white voters had restored white rule to Wilmington and destroyed a leading black voice in the city. Furthermore, Democrats successfully reinforced the “sexual power structure.” White men asserted their mastery by denying the African American male’s political independence and destroying the voice that publicized equal access to white and black women.<sup>22</sup>

Manly inspired this act of violence, but blame cannot be so neatly placed upon his shoulders for the violence that ensued.<sup>23</sup> Manly’s editorial enraged whites of all classes, but the

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Williamson, *The Crucible of Race*, pg. 133.

<sup>20</sup> The Red Shirts facilitated the redemption of South Carolina in 1876. See Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman*, chapter 2.

<sup>21</sup> The *Messenger* reminded readers of the legacy of redemption left by their fathers: “Is the character of the good women of our state not as dear to us today as to our fathers? and do we not know that our fathers trampled under their feet the party that could bring such monstrous offenders as above?” *Wilmington Messenger*, August 24, 1898; Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, pg. 84; “Big Red Shirt Rally,” *Wilmington Dispatch*, November 3, 1898. Records fail to clearly distinguish between the “Red Shirts” and the “Rough Riders.” Newspaper accounts sometimes referred to the groups as separate organizations. For a discussion of the relationship between gender roles and the Spanish-American War, see Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). One might argue that the Democrats’ rhetoric appealed to northern men, discouraging outside interference with the coup.

<sup>22</sup> Kirshenbaum, “‘Vampire,’” pg. 28.

<sup>23</sup> Examples from black and white communities disagree with this assertion. An anonymous African American woman sent a letter to President McKinley, requesting assistance after the riot. She asked “why should a whole city full of negroes suffer for Manly when he was hundred[s] of miles away?” Quoted in Kirshenbaum, “‘Vampire,’” pg. 26. Late in life, H.E.C. “Red Buck” Bryant recalled that “[t]he outbreak there (Wilmington) was not caused by any political incident but a scurrilous item in the negro newspaper.” From clipping, n.d., Bryant Collection, State Archives, North Carolina. Agreeing with this sentiment, historian Joel Williamson writes, “In retrospect, it is incomprehensible that anyone as intelligent as Alex Manly could have lived in the midst of the Radical rage and been surprised by the consequences of his words. One is appalled by his lack of awareness, by the cavalier, almost careless manner in which he published his essay.” In Williamson, *The Crucible of Race*, pg. 198.

Democratic machine fanned the flames of white anger and fear. Orators spoke of racial amalgamation, economic and political “Negro domination,” and Republican corruption, subjects that undoubtedly angered poor whites, as did newspaper reports of black-on-white rape and black insolence throughout the South. Democratic leaders successfully identified the African American male as a threat to white civilization and the cause of social illnesses. In an essay published in *Collier’s Weekly*, Waddell suggested that the destruction of the offices of the *Record* was the original goal of the white mob. Yet, before the riot, the Wilmington press printed a speech in which he declared that he would rid Wilmington of Manly and “Negro rule” “even if we have to choke the Cape Fear river with (black) carcasses.”<sup>24</sup> Waddell’s declaration reflects the extralegal methods of preservation that the Democratic Party and city leadership incited among voters anxious to prove their manhood.

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<sup>24</sup> Alfred Moore Waddell, “The Story of the Wilmington, N.C., Race Riot,” *Collier’s Weekly*, November 26, 1898, pg. 4; *Wilmington Morning Star*, October 25, 1898. Waddell acknowledged this declaration in the essay published by *Collier’s Weekly*. It is important to note that, in addition to two essays on the Wilmington Race Riot, this issue of *Collier’s* included several articles on the various imperial endeavors, further cementing a relationship between white male supremacy at home and abroad.