

“Expansion is too Clean a Name for it.”¹

Black Perspectives on
American Imperial Expansion, 1898-1902

By

Rachel Schneider

Bachelor of Arts, University of British Columbia, 2017

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Departments of History

© Rachel Schneider, 2023

University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

1. John Mitchell Jr, ed., “Terrible Scenes There.,” *The Richmond Planet*, (Richmond, VA), October 14, 1899, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84025841/1899-10-14/ed-1/seq-4/>. ; This quote originated from a letter written by an anonymous Black soldier fighting in the Philippines-American War.

“Expansion is too Clean a Name for it.”²

Black Perspectives on
American Imperial Expansion, 1898-1902

By

Rachel Schneider

Bachelor of Arts, University of British Columbia, 2017

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Jason Colby, Supervisor
Department of History

Dr. Elizabeth Vibert, Co-Supervisor
Department of History

2. John Mitchell Jr, ed., “Terrible Scenes There.,” *The Richmond Planet*, (Richmond, VA), October 14, 1899, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84025841/1899-10-14/ed-1/seq-4/>. ; This quote originated from a letter written by an anonymous Black soldier fighting in the Philippines-American War.

Abstract

This thesis examines Black American perspectives on American imperial expansion during the Spanish-Cuban-American and Philippines-American Wars. Framed through a racial and gendered analysis, I use extensive archival material, newspaper coverage, and secondary analysis to frame and explore how this marginalized population reposed to the American acquisition of Guam, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Hawai'i between 1898-1902. As Cuba broke into open anti-colonial rebellion in the late nineteenth century, Black American newspapers focused on the struggles of Cuba's enslaved and oppressed peoples. Once the Spanish-Cuban-American war began, Black newspapers sought to establish the courage, patriotism, and strength of the nation's Black soldiers through patriotic and cheerful news coverage. Some Black newspapers argued that military service would fortify Black civil rights; others proclaimed that the nation had far greater troubles at home, rendering the US incapable of handling the challenges posed by imperial expansion. Letters written by Black soldiers shaped these narratives of bravery while describing how white American soldiers subjugated the coloured peoples of the lands the US occupied. Black soldiers humanized the colonized populations on the islands they occupied, reframing American expansion against the power of white oppression.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures	v
Introduction	1
A Note on Language	11
Chapter One: Cuba	14
Chapter Two: The Philippines	53
Chapter Three: Guam, Puerto Rico, and Hawai'i	72
Conclusion	103
Epilogue	105
Bibliography	107

List of Figures

Figure 1 – <i>New York Journal</i> . 1898.....	18
Figure 2 – Political Cartoon. 1898.....	25
Figure 3 – Illustrations of Military Vessels and Commodore George Dewey. 1898.....	54
Figure 4 – Illustrations of Queen Lili’oukalani. 1898.....	80
Figure 5 – Photograph of “Maria.” 1901	81
Figure 6 – Illustration of Helen Wilder, 1899.....	83
Figure 7 – Illustration of Helen Wilder, 1899.....	86
Figure 8 – Illustration of Valencia Monica, 1898.....	86
Figure 8 – Illustration of Margaret Chanler, 1899.....	100