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# "One of the fine figures of American journalism"

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# "One of the fine figures of American journalism": A Closer Look at Josephus Daniels of the Raleigh *News and Observer*

by W. Joseph Campbell

*This article examines the prominent yet little-studied role of Josephus Daniels—owner and editor of the* Raleigh News and Observer, *who has been called "one of the fine figures of American journalism"—in the white supremacy political campaigns in North Carolina 100 years ago. Daniels' newspaper also applauded the destruction in 1898 of the leading African American newspaper in North Carolina, justifying the anti-press violence in the name of white supremacy. Daniels' advocacy of white supremacy and black disfranchisement has been consistently overlooked or little-examined by journalism historians who have typically regarded Daniels as a progressive Southern journalist who opposed railroad and tobacco trusts. This study, in scrutinizing Daniels' militancy in favor of what he called "the elimination of the Negro from politics," argues for a fuller, more critical assessment of a journalist who styled himself an "editor in politics."*

> The greatest folly and crime in our national history was the establishment of [N]egro suffrage immediately after the [Civil] War. Not a single good thing has come of it, but only evil.
>
> —*Editorial in Raleigh* News and Observer, *28 January 1900*[1]

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One hundred years ago North Carolina was locked in successive "white supremacy" political campaigns. They were virulent, often-violent movements that shattered a progressive, if brittle, coalition of Republicans and Populists; restored Democrats to what became decades of unchallenged political rule; and denied suffrage to nearly all black residents, relegating them to political obscurity in North Carolina for more than 50 years.[2]

A powerful leader of the state's white supremacy campaigns in 1898 and 1900 was Josephus Daniels, owner and editor of the Raleigh *News and Observer*, then North Carolina's largest-circulating newspaper.[3] Daniels and his newspaper championed the white supremacy cause in frequent news reports, vigorously worded editorials, provocative letters, and vicious front page cartoons that called attention to what the newspaper declared were the horrors of "[N]egro rule." Daniels' *News and Observer* also justified in the name of white supremacy the destruction of the leading African American newspaper in North Carolina in a post-election race riot in 1898. Daniels also kept a watchful eye for challenges to white supremacy, seeking in one celebrated case the resignation of a university professor who criticized the racial intolerance of Democratic party leaders and their newspapers.

Despite Daniels' prominence in the white supremacy campaigns in North Carolina, his race-baiting rhetoric has scarcely been recognized by journalism historians or in works of American journalism history. Rather, Daniels' reputation in journalism history is that of a *progressive* Southern reformer, a tireless crusader against railroad and tobacco trusts, a "solid champion of decency,"[4] and "one of the fine figures of American journalism."[5]

This study seeks to direct the attention of journalism historians to Daniels' militant white supremacy advocacy and argues for a fuller, more critical assessment by historians of a Southern journalist who was closely aligned with the Democratic party and, as such, styled himself an "editor in politics."[6] This study, which focuses on Daniels' *News and Observer* during the white supremacy campaigns of 1898 and 1900, also offers revealing insight about how partisan politics infused Southern newspapers at the turn of the century, a topic which has attracted only limited scholarly attention.[7] The US press near the turn of the century still tended to be overtly politicized and Daniels' *News and Observer* is a telling reminder of how partisanship, not fair play or tolerance of conflicting opinions, often shaped the journalism of the times.

The study, moreover, demonstrates the importance of treating with caution the characterizations of great virtue of figures in American journalism and argues for the importance of searching far afield, beyond

journalism history, for insights and interpretations about prominent journalists of the past. There is, after all, a small but growing body of literature—including several studies of the politics and society in North Carolina and the South at the end of the 19th century, when efforts to disfranchise blacks became widespread—that points to Daniels' central role in the white supremacy campaigns.

**Daniels Active in Partisan Politics**

Daniels, in his autobiography, neither conceals nor apologizes for his newspaper's race-baiting rhetoric. "The *News and Observer* was relied upon to carry the Democratic message and to be the militant voice of White Supremacy," he wrote, "and it did not fail in what was expected, sometimes going to extremes in its partisanship."[8] Like many Southern editors of his time, Daniels took an active role in partisan politics.[9] He was a national Democratic committeeman and achieved a measure of national prominence in 1913 when President-elect Woodrow Wilson appointed him Navy secretary.[10] Later he was ambassador to Mexico during the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had been an Assistant Secretary during Daniels' years at the Navy Department.[11]

Josephus Daniels was born in 1862 and grew up in Wilson, in the heart of North Carolina's Second Congressional District which, after the Civil War, was dominated by black voters. Journalism, politics and race all converged for him at an early age, as suggested by his recollection of attending congressional nominating conventions in Wilson as a boy:

> The majority of the delegates were [N]egroes, with a mere handful of white delegates. As soon as the door of the courthouse was opened, the [N]egroes crowded in so that there was no room for white participants. A few seats were reserved for reporters, and I squeezed into one of these even as a boy before I became a regular reporter, for I sent news items to the Raleigh and Wilmington papers. Think of 500 perspiring [N]egroes packed into a courthouse, wrangling and fighting, on a red-hot day! It was stifling and the odors were rank.[12]

Daniels became editor of a local newspaper, the *Wilson Advance*, in 1880 and later edited the *State Chronicle*, a daily newspaper in Raleigh. He sold the money-losing newspaper in 1892 and started the *North Carolinian*, a weekly that was financially supported by the Democratic party. The newspaper's readership and advertising dropped after the 1892 elections, and the following year Daniels moved to Washington, DC, and

became chief clerk in the US Department of the Interior. In 1894, Daniels' benefactor, Julian S. Carr, arranged for a third party to acquire the Raleigh *News and Observer* on Daniels' behalf,[13] and Daniels took up the editorship later that year. In doing so, Daniels was expected "to breathe new life" into a demoralized state Democratic party,[14] which in 1894 had lost power to a Republican - Populist coalition that was supported by black voters.[15]

As editor of the *News and Observer*, Daniels was soon to take a central role in championing the white supremacy movement in North Carolina politics—a role that journalism historians have overlooked or sidestepped. They have instead focused on Daniels' reputation for attacking railroad and tobacco trusts[16] and for advocating public support for education.[17] While they have tended not to assign great national importance to Daniels, journalism historians have praised him for building the *News and Observer* "into one of the South's leading newspapers."[18] Frank Luther Mott—who called Daniels "one of the fine figures of American journalism"[19]—extolled the *News and Observer* as "a fearless opponent of textile and tobacco interests of the region in certain monopolistic and anti-labor activities."[20]

Sidney Kobre, who described the *News and Observer* as "one of the outstanding liberal Democratic newspapers in the South,"[21] noted that Daniels had "backed a white supremacy movement." Kobre, however, failed to explore the matter. Instead, he wrote that Daniels "advocated . . . equal educational opportunities for Negroes in a period when they were neglected. Pro-labor in policy, he urged better wages and shorter hours and urged the abolition of child labor."[22]

## "Like other decent white Southerners"

Daniels' biographer, Joseph L. Morrison, could hardly overlook Daniels' white supremacy advocacy and his vehement rhetoric of the late 19th century. But Morrison argued that Daniels and his race-baiting should not be judged by norms of the second half of the 20th century. Morrison, an altogether admiring biographer, wrote:

> It is difficult for today's reader to examine the White Supremacy Campaign files of the *News and Observer*, replete with racist talk and cruel cartoons, and avoid judging Editor Daniels by today's rules rather than in terms of the values that he then held most dear. Like other decent white Southerners, Daniels concluded that unless the [N]egro were removed from politics—for he was deemed a surpassing temptation to

corrupt white politicians—there could be no communal peace or progress.[23]

Such views—akin to blaming blacks for the corrupt election practices of white politicians, and reminiscent of the belief that slavery had been beneficial to blacks[24]—were certainly not uncommon in the South in the late 19th century. "The majority of Southerners," C. Vann Woodward has noted, "were taught to regard disfranchisement as reform."[25]

But not all "decent white Southerners" endorsed the tactics that Daniels championed. He had contemporaneous critics who placed their careers at risk by raising their objections. Notable among them was John Spencer Bassett, a history professor at Trinity College (now Duke University) in Durham, North Carolina.

In 1903, Bassett became the target of withering newspaper criticism—led by Daniels and the *News and Observer*—for his essay criticizing the state's white supremacy movement as dangerously expedient. "This political agitation is awaking a demon in the South," Bassett warned in the essay, predicting ever "fiercer" conflict between the races.[26] "The duty of brave and wise men," Bassett declared, "is to seek to infuse the spirit of conciliation into these white leaders of white men."[27] The *News and Observer* excoriated Bassett as "a freak," unfit "to write of anything that concerns the political or racial questions from the standpoint of the Southern man."[28]

## The White Supremacy Campaign of 1898

The white supremacy political campaign of 1898 was the vehicle of the Democratic Party in North Carolina to wrest control from the coalition of Republicans and Populists which in 1894 had won nearly two-thirds of the seats in North Carolina's General Assembly. The interracial coalition, a shaky and ultimately unstable alliance which Democrats called the "fusion," enacted among other reforms an electoral law regarded as "perhaps the fairest and most democratic in the post-Reconstruction South."[29] The measure allowed illiterates to vote by using colored ballot papers bearing party insignia, and limited the power of registrars to challenge and disqualify would-be voters.[30] Such measures enhanced black participation in North Carolina politics. An estimated 87 percent of eligible black voters cast ballots in 1896, compared to 64 percent in 1892.[31] Eleven black legislators were elected to the North Carolina General Assembly of 1897, the most since the 1880s,[32] as the "fusionist" coalition won every statewide election in 1896.[33]

Meanwhile, the administration of President William McKinley was appointing blacks to federal patronage positions in North Carolina, notably postmasterships—acknowledgment of the importance of black support in securing McKinley's nomination.[34] Such appointments, historian Joel Williamson has noted, were particularly distressing to whites, as they meant "their womenfolk were forced to do business with black postmasters and clerks, often enough with their political cronies hanging about inside the post office . . . Physical contact through the mutual handling of mails and monies was bad enough, but even more awful was the prospect that black men in office would make all black men assume themselves more powerful and be led to approach white women sexually."[35] In the counties of eastern North Carolina in particular, Williamson noted, "blacks were rising and whites were horrified."[36]

Democrats responded to the prospect of what they termed "Negro rule" by mounting in 1898 the first of what they called white supremacy campaigns. The efforts were unreservedly intended—as Daniels' *News and Observer* declared—"to restore permanent White Supremacy" to North Carolina.[37]

The 1898 campaign was a violent affair. As one historian has written, paramilitary units calling themselves Red Shirts and Rough Riders "broke up fusionist political rallies, disrupted black church meetings, whipped outspoken blacks, and drove black voters from the polls . . . . The cry of '[N]egro rule' led by Josephus Daniels' Raleigh *News and Observer* overwhelmed any public discussion of the economic issues involved in the campaign."[38] Daniels was little restrained in calling attention to the specter of "Negro rule." His newspaper "led in a campaign of prejudice, bitterness, vilification, misrepresentation, and exaggeration to influence the emotions of the whites against the Negro."[39]

One especially chilling portrayal was an editorial cartoon spread across four columns of the *News and Observer* in late September 1898. The drawing, by Daniels' editorial cartoonist, Norman E. Jennett, depicted "[N]egro rule" in the form of a huge, bat-winged figure trailing a lizardlike tail. Looming against a dark, sterile landscape, the creature clawed menacingly at the hapless shapes of white men and women. The caption was "The Vampire That Hovers Over North Carolina."[40]

The prospect of "[N]egro rule" was, however, quite far-fetched—more a campaign scare tactic than even a remote political possibility. Blacks by no means dominated or controlled the state's political life; they after all had never occupied more than 20 percent of the seats in the state General Assembly.[41] Still, Democrats "publicized evidence of '[N]egro rule' anywhere a Republican organization existed" in North Carolina.[42]

On election day 1898, Daniels asserted in an editorial in the *News and Observer*: "Do your duty today. Stand by Anglo-Saxon civilization. It is the hope of the State, of the nation and of the world."[43] Referring to the Democrats, the editorial stated: "The White Man's Party has shown that its opponents are responsible for [N]egro domination in a large section of the State; that as a consequence life is insecure, womanhood is endangered, property is unprotected and the law is almost a nullity as a punitive for and a restraint upon crime."[44]

The Democrats swept to power in North Carolina in the 1898 elections,[45] winning two-thirds of the seats in the General Assembly. Daniels proceeded to organize the most elaborate of the many victory celebrations in the state. As he later wrote:

> Following the white supremacy victory, there were celebrations all over the state, but the big State celebration was staged in Raleigh. A meeting was held there to arrange for the celebration, at which I presided; and at that meeting the motion was made to thank the *News and Observer* for its leadership in the fight. I said that this ought to include all Democratic papers, but the meeting unanimously overruled the chair and the motion was unanimously adopted.[46]

Despite fears that such a gathering would be an invitation to trouble,[47] the white supremacy celebration in Raleigh went off without violence. Daniels wrote later of the victory *fête*: "Shouting Democrats came from all parts of the State, a few of them wearing red shirts,[48] and they were welcomed at the *News and Observer* office. Its building was illuminated and decorated with brooms, emblematic of the sweeping victory . . . I presided at the meeting and speeches were made by distinguished men."[49]

## Mob Violence in Wilmington

Fears of post-election violence were not at all farfetched in North Carolina in the fall of 1898. Mob violence had swept the state's largest city, the southeastern port of Wilmington, in the immediate aftermath of the 1898 election. At least 11 black men, and perhaps many more,[50] were killed as a white mob in effect "declared war on black residents"[51] in what has been called "an American *coup d'etat.*"[52]

Black and white Republicans had controlled local government in Wilmington, and tensions in the city had been stoked by the fevered 1898 election campaign,[53] by "rumors of blacks arming themselves," and

by a provocative editorial in the city's African American newspaper. The editorial impugned the moral character of white women and asserted that some of them used the charge of rape to conceal "clandestine interracial sexual liaisons when they were detected."[54]

The editorial was published in August 1898 in the Wilmington *Record*, a daily newspaper founded, owned, and edited by Alexander Manly, the son of Charles Manly, a former Whig governor of North Carolina, and one of his former slaves.[55] The editorial was a response to a much-publicized appeal to whites by Georgia's Rebecca Latimer Felton in 1897 "to lynch a thousand black men" if necessary to protect white women.[56] White supremacists, including Daniels and the *News and Observer*, seized on the editorial—portions of which were widely reprinted in North Carolina newspapers[57]—as "a sensational example of how fusion rule promoted black impudence." Suffice it to say, one scholar has written, "white Democrats fully exploited Manly's editorial as well as myriad allegations of black insolence, crime, and sexual misconduct in order to mobilize racist sentiment in North Carolina, especially in the days preceding the election."[59]

The reporting in the *News and Observer* no doubt helped exacerbate tensions in Wilmington. The newspaper called attention to what Daniels later said was "the result of [N]egro control in . . . Wilmington. It described the unbridled lawlessness and rule of incompetent officials and the failure of an ignorant and worthless police force to protect the people. It gave incidents of housebreaking and robbery in broad daylight and other happenings under [N]egro domination."[60] Such reporting, Daniels maintained, "finally sealed the doom" of "fusion" politics in North Carolina.[61] (His biographer, Morrison, asserted that the "fevered journalism" that characterized the *News and Observer*'s reporting "did its unworthy part in paving the way for that stepchild of sensationalism, the Wilmington race riot."[62])

The *News and Observer* reported the violence on its front page on November 11, 1898, beneath a headline exceptionally large for the then-typographically staid newspaper. The headline read in part: "A Day of Blood at Wilmington: [N]egroes Precipitate Conflict by Firing on the Whites—Manly, the Defamer of White Womanhood, Escapes." Intentionally or not, the *News and Observer*'s report from Wilmington did make clear the provocative role of the white mob:

> Yesterday, a large mass meeting of business men was held and it was demanded of the [N]egroes to have the plant and editor of the *Daily Record*, the [N]egro paper which recently printed

> the vile slander of the white women of the State, removed from the town by 7 o'clock this morning. The demand was not acceded to by the [N]egroes, and at 8:30 o'clock 600 armed white citizens went to the office and proceeded to destroy the printing material. While that was in progress, in some unaccountable way, the building took fire and was burned to the ground . . . . Incensed at this, a number of [N]egroes assembled . . . in another part of the city, and a clash between whites and blacks ensued.[63]

By day's end, the Democrats had seized control of Wilmington's municipal government, forcing the Republican-dominated board of aldermen and mayor to resign their elected positions "virtually at gunpoint."[64] Manly eluded the mob and made his way north. Other black leaders in Wilmington were arrested and taken under armed guard to northbound trains and banished from the city. "The citizens cheered as they saw them going," the *News and Observer* reported, "for they considered their departure conducive to peace in the future . . . This is but the beginning of a general movement to rid the town of the turbulent [N]egroes' leaders."[65]

The violence in Wilmington was condemned in many newspapers in the North, prompting the *News and Observer* to assail the "villifers" [sic] of the South. "As was to be expected, the clash between the races at Wilmington . . . has brought from a certain section of the Northern press a flood of abuse of the South," the newspaper asserted in an editorial. "That blood should have been shed at Wilmington none regrets more than the white people of that town. That such a deplorable climax was not of their seeking is evidenced by their precedent patience" under governance by black and white Republican officeholders.[66]

## "To garner the fruits of white supremacy"

Daniels' focus in the aftermath of the 1898 election shifted quickly from the violence at Wilmington to the state's General Assembly, which the Democrats now controlled. "The big duty of the Legislature of 1899," he later wrote, "was to garner the fruits of the white supremacy victory."[67] The Democrats moved promptly to reverse the Republican - Populist electoral reforms. The centerpiece of the Democrats' efforts was a restrictive suffrage amendment to the state constitution. The proposed amendment called for a poll tax and a literacy test for all voters. Illiterate whites would be enabled to vote given the provisions of a grandfather clause,

which permitted descendants of any citizen who had voted before 1867 to register to vote by December 1, 1908.[68]

The suffrage amendment was debated in North Carolina against a backdrop of similar movements across the South[69]—movements that Daniels followed closely and covered for the *News and Observer*. For example, he traveled to Montgomery, Alabama, in May 1900 to report about a conference convened by leading Southerners to examine race issues in the region. Daniels wrote in a dispatch published under his byline in the *News and Observer*, "The question of paramount importance in Alabama among white people is the same question that troubles every Southern State—how to be delivered from the body of death to which we were joined by the imposition of unlimited [N]egro suffrage."[70]

He subsequently traveled to New Orleans to investigate Louisiana's adoption in 1898 of a constitutional measure that curtailed black suffrage. "In this city," Daniels wrote, "the adoption of the constitutional amendment, similar to the one pending in North Carolina, resulted in reducing the [N]egro vote from 14,177 to 1,493 . . . This fully answers the question as to whether the amendment, if adopted in North Carolina, would eliminate the [N]egro from politics."[71] Daniels also reported from New Orleans: "As far as this city is concerned, everybody concedes that the amendment has done everything that was expected. There has been no friction, no jars, no trouble, and it is acquiesced in by men of all parties, except of course the few Radical politicians who wish to keep the Negro as a disturbing element in politics."[72]

## Support for Disfranchisement

The North Carolina disfranchisement measure—which, Daniels said, "was a clear-cut issue between those who wanted to remove the great bulk of ignorant [N]egroes from the exercise of suffrage and those who wanted to continue them"[73]—led to another virulent campaign in 1900, which the *News and Observer* covered closely. Its front page regularly featured appeals to support the disfranchisement amendment and not infrequent reports about the threat of race-related violence.[74] It regularly reported on the fears of white women who described themselves "terrified by prowling [N]egroes."[75] One letter-writer to the *News and Observer* described herself as a daughter of a Confederate solider and implored: "Whatever may be your political views, whether you are a Democrat, or a Republican, or a Populist, you are a white man . . . Not one of you but scorns the taint of African blood. Not one of you but would die for the women of your homes."[76]

Appearing in a column adjoining the woman's letter was a crude poem that carried the headline, "Sambo on the Amendment." Its opening stanzas were:

What's de use of kicking
Agenst de white man's rule?
Let all dem kick dat want to,
Dis nigger ain't no fool—
No suh!

De white man pays de taxes,
So let him run de mill.
He's been a doing of it
And he's gwine to do it still—
Dat he is![77]

In the closing days of the 1900 campaign, the *News and Observer* renewed its attack on Alexander Manly and his ill-fated newspaper in Wilmington by republishing on its front page the text of the editorial that had proven so incendiary in 1898. "Let every white voter before he deposits his ballot remember the infamous language of the [N]egro Manly," the *News and Observer* said in reintroducing the editorial. "No man can live in North Carolina and print such slanders against the good people of North Carolina, and the good people of Wilmington drove the [N]egro out of their borders and destroyed his presses."[78]

Daniels urged white voters to "leave no stone unturned" in turning out the vote for the disfranchisement amendment, which he characterized as "the only method by which the menace of [N]egro rule can be permanently removed. It is to be hoped that not only hundreds but thousands of men of other parties will unite with the Democrats in the great struggle to free the white voters from the peril and evil of a large Negro vote that is always cast against those things that make for good government and better conditions."[79] On voting day, August 2, 1900, Daniels published an editorial titled "Finally, Brethren," which asserted that ratifying the disfranchisement amendment "will not only be best for the white man but will be best for the thrifty [N]egro. It will do much to break down the harsh race antagonisms and will enable the white man and the [N]egro to live on terms of friendship, each in his own separate sphere."[80]

The disfranchisement amendment was approved in the referendum by about 55,000 votes, or a margin of nearly 3-to-2.[81] Daniels cheered the outcome as signaling the restoration of a "united" Democratic party and that, he said, represented "the realization of a long cherished dream."[82]

The consequences of the referendum were soon evident. Nearly all blacks, and many poor whites, lost the vote.[83] As the *News and Observer* reported, the registration of black voters fell to 6,200 in 1902;[84] in the election six years before, as many as 120,000 blacks had voted.[85] Indeed, as Jeffrey Crow has written, "men of unquestioned Democratic pedigree once more held the reins of government and would continue to do so for many decades to come . . . Dissenting voices had been decisively silenced and opposition to the solid South had been overwhelmingly crushed."[86]

Daniels' *News and Observer* kept a wary eye on the periodic if feeble challenges to black disfranchisement and reminded readers of what it called the enduring lessons of the crusade against "[N]egro rule."[87] It also published periodic notices on its front page, reminding white men of the importance of paying their poll tax on time. Otherwise, the reminders said, "YOU cannot vote."[88]

Daniels bridled editorially at such developments as President Theodore Roosevelt's invitation to Booker T. Washington to dine at the White House in October 1901. About that occasion, the *News and Observer* declared: "The only hope of peace and amity between the races is in strict separation in all social life and the man who seeks to break it down is the worst living enemy of the South and its civilization. He commits the unpardonable crime."[89]

That chilling phrase—"the unpardonable crime"—was invoked[90] in the campaign in 1903 against Bassett, the Trinity College history professor whose essay in the *South Atlantic Quarterly*[91] warned that measures such as disfranchisement and racial segregation were aggravating racial antipathy in the South. Bassett's essay also stated that Booker T. Washington "is a great and good man, a Christian statesman, and take him all in all the greatest man, save General Lee, born in the South in a hundred years; but he is not a typical Negro."[92]

Daniels and the *News and Observer* led the denunciation of Bassett, disparaging him as "a freak" and ridiculing his characterization of Washington as "wanton and absurd [N]egro deification."[93] The furor intensified[94] and Bassett offered his resignation. The Trinity trustees, meeting in special session, voted 18-7 to reject the resignation,[95] saying, "Any form of coercion of thought and private judgment is contrary to one of the constitutional aims of Trinity College, which is 'to cherish a sincere spirit of tolerance.'"[96]

Bassett, whose later work included a seminal biography of Andrew Jackson, left Trinity in summer 1906 to accept a similar position at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. He seemed astonished that his essay had provoked such controversy, writing several years later: "I do not think I was responsible for the fury of 1903 . . . If the article had received

the treatment usually accorded such articles [*in South Atlantic Quarterly*], there would have been no excitement."[97]

For Daniels, the Bassett essay posed an unambiguous challenge to black disfranchisement. "The people who had won this victory at such a great price felt that Dr. Bassett's article would have the effect of reopening the race question," he later wrote, "and all of us were more intemperate . . . than we would have been at any other time."[98]

## Legacy Contradicts Reality

Every day, at the top of its editorial page, the *News and Observer* publishes the following excerpt from the will of Josephus Daniels:

> I advise and enjoin those who direct the paper in the tomorrows never to advocate any cause for personal profit or preferment. I would wish it always to be "the tocsin" and to devote itself to the policies of equality and justice to the underprivileged. If the paper should at any time be the voice of self-interest or become the spokesman of privilege or selfishness it would be untrue to its history.

The admonition, while grandiloquent, is utterly at odds with Daniels' race-baiting militancy in the white supremacy cause in 1898 and 1900; it ignores that the newspaper was the harsh voice of the self-interested Democratic party in North Carolina in "eliminating" the state's black citizens from political life by stripping them of the vote. The admonition in Daniels' will is contradicted by his newspaper's record at the turn of the century.

Daniels' central roles in the political campaigns of 1898 and 1900 are important elements of his record that have been largely ignored by journalism historians. His white supremacy advocacy also has been excused by his biographer, Morrison, who maintained that Daniels and his rhetoric must not be judged by contemporary standards. In so arguing, however, Morrison overlooks Daniels' contemporaneous critics, such as Bassett, who warned that racial intolerance of the white supremacy movement risked "awaking a demon in the South."[99]

Morrison also attempts—inaccurately—to portray Daniels as having regretted his racial militancy. He quotes Daniels' autobiography as saying the *News and Observer* had been "too cruel" in its advocacy .[100] But the autobiography contains no unequivocal statement of regret for Daniels' prominence or vehemence in the white supremacy campaigns. Rather, as this study has shown, the autobiography includes many favorable recollec-

tions about that harsh period, the consequences of which endured long after Daniels' death in 1948. Following the white supremacy campaigns, political participation of African men and women was an "undebated issue in North Carolina politics" until the 1950s and 1960s.[101] The events of the late 1890s effectively "froze political thought" in the state "and kept it from evolving for decades."[102]

It is hard to know just why Daniels' turn-of-the-century race-baiting rhetoric—and his condemnation of the leading black newspaper in the state—escaped the notice of most journalism historians. Perhaps it was because Daniels was not a transcendent national figure in American journalism. Perhaps it was because of his subsequent association with progressive political figures such as Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt.[103] Perhaps "progressive" is an entirely misleading label. As one historian of North Carolina's white supremacy campaigns has written, "a 'progressive' was a white supremacist who favored black disfranchisement and even minimal public support for black schools; a conservative was a white supremacist who favored black disfranchisement but did not believe public funds should support black schools."[104]

As this study makes clear, journalism historians should broaden their assessments of Daniels to acknowledge, and consider the implications of, his role in crusading against black suffrage. Revisiting the white supremacy crusades of Josephus Daniels also serves to underscore the importance of injecting balance into the consideration of journalists who gain prominence regionally and nationally. Historians are certainly well-advised to proceed cautiously in anointing such prominent journalists as "fine figures" or as champions of decency.

## Endnotes

[1]"Negro Suffrage a Crime and Folly When Established A Sin and Disgrace if Longer Endured," *News and Observer* (28 January 1900): 12.

[2]See Paul Luebke, *Tar Heel Politics: Myths and Realities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1990), 7.

[3]The *News and Observer*'s average daily circulation in 1898 was 4,800. The newspaper was published Tuesday-Sunday. See N. W. Ayer & Son, *American Newspaper Annual* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer & Son, 1899), 616. Notes in Josephus Daniels' papers at the Library of Congress indicate that the *News and Observer*'s daily circulation climbed to 5,700 in 1900 and to 7,054 in 1902. The circulation was 1,800 in 1894 when Daniels took control of the newspaper. See untitled note, container 683, Josephus Daniels Papers, Library of Congress. The Daniels collections at the Library of Congress and at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, although extensive, contain little about Daniels' editorship of the *News and Observer* during the period examined in this article. Many of the newspaper's records and much of Daniels' correspondence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were destroyed by fire in 1913. See Joseph L. Morrison, *Josephus Daniels: The Small-d*

*Democrat* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1966), viii.

[4]Michael Emery and Edwin Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretative History of the Mass Media*, 8th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996), 225.

[5]Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism, A History, 1690-1960*, 3d. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 576.

[6]The second volume of Daniels' autobiography is titled *Editor in Politics*.

[7]Perhaps the most ambitious treatment of the Southern press during the 19th century includes little discussion about the region's journalism of the 1890s. See Carl R. Osthaus, *Partisans of the Southern Press: Editorial Spokesmen of the 19th Century* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1994).

[8]Josephus Daniels, *Editor in Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 295.

[9]Another was Clark Howell, who became editor of the Atlanta Constitution in 1897. See Wallace B. Eberhard, "Clark Howell and The Atlanta Constitution," *Journalism Quarterly* 60 (Spring 1983): 118-122.

[10]Morrison, *Josephus Daniels*, 47-48.

[11]Morrison, *Josephus Daniels*, 48-49, 168-170.

[12]Josephus Daniels, *Tar Heel Editor* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974), 175-176.

[13]Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 86-89.

[14]Morrison, *Josephus Daniels*, 25.

[15]Luebke, *Tar Heel Politics*, 4.

[16]There was a keen partisan dimension to Daniels' opposition to trusts. On the eve of the elections in 1902, for example, he declared in an editorial that "the trusts are pouring money into certain counties in the State in the hope of buying the election for the Republican ticket. . . . The people of North Carolina did not go through the fire [of the white supremacy campaigns of 1898 and 1900] to rid the State of the Negro vote to foist a worse evil — the evil of permitting the trusts to rule it by debauching the voters with money. That would be like jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. It would be far better to have to be governed by an ignorant race, whose rule could soon be thrown off, than to be ruled by the trusts, which always use power to secure their further enrichment at the expense of the people." See "Trust Money Trying To Buy The Election," *News and Observer* (1 November 1902): 4.

[17]Emery and Emery, *The Press and America*, 225.

[18]Emery and Emery, *The Press and America*, 225.

[19]Mott, *American Journalism*, 576.

[20]Mott, *American Journalism*, 576.

[21]Sidney Kobre, *Modern American Journalism* (Tallahassee: Florida State University, 1959), 172.

[22]Kobre, *Modern American Journalism*, 172-173.

[23]Morrison, *Josephus Daniels*, 35.

[24]As Leon F. Litwack noted in his study of black Southerners at the end of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th century: "The notion that disfranchisement and segregation benefited both races, that placing restraints on blacks actually protected them, resembled the antebellum argument that enslavement had been the best possible condition for black people, that it had conferred incalculable benefits on a race incapable of caring for itself." Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 245.

[25]C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 1877-1913 (Louisiana State University, 1951), 348. Woodward also nored: "Disgraceful scenes of ballot-box stealing, bribery, and intimidation were much rarer after disfranchisement. One effective means of stopping the srealing of ballors is ro stop the people from casting them. Elections are also likely to be more decorous when the elecrorate of the opposition parties has been disfranchised or decimated and the election becomes a formality in a one-party system."

[26]John Spencer Bassett, "Stirring Up the Fires of Race Anripathy," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 2, 4 (October 1903): 304.

[27]Bassett, "Stirring Up the Fires," 302, 305.

[28]"Stirring Up the Fires of Race Antipathy," *News and Observer* (1 November 1903): 16.

[29]Jeffrey J. Crow, "Cracking the Solid South: Populism and the Fusionist Interlude," in Lindley S. Butler and Alan D. Watson, eds., *The North Carolina Experience: An Interpretative and Documentary History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984): 338.

[30]Crow, "Cracking the Solid South," 338.

[31]Crow, "Cracking the Solid South," 338.

[32]Crow, "Cracking the Solid South," 338.

[33]H. Leon Prather, "We Have Taken a City: A Centennial Essay," in David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson, eds. *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 13.

[34]Joel Williamson, *A Rage for Order: Black/White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University, 1986), 128. The *News and Observer* railed against McKinley's appointments, calling him "the Negroes[sic] candidate" and deploring that "many of the best places in the Federal service in the South are now held for the first time by Negroes." See "What McKinley Has Done for the Southern States," *News and Observer* (5 August 1900): 1.

[35]Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 128-129.

[36]Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 130.

[37]"Room for All," *News and Observer* (1 May 1900): 4. Rather than the prospect of "Negro rule" in North Carolina, one labor historian has perceptively noted that it was "too much democracy, through the fusion of Republicans and Populists, [that] set off the white supremacy campaign" of 1898. See Michael Honey, "Class, Race, and Power in the New South: Racial Violence and the Delusions of White Supremacy," in Cecelski and Tyson, *Democracy Betrayed*, 170.

[38]Crow, "Cracking the Solid South," 338. He further noted, 340: "Economic issues" such as increased taxes on railroads and assistance to farmers and small businessmen "were in fact at the core of the 1898 election in North Carolina, but the campaign was not fought openly on those terms."

[39]Helen G. Edmonds, *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina, 1894-1901.* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1951), 141.

[40]"The Vampire that Hovers over North Carolina," *News and Observer* (27 September 1898): 1. Daniels said in his autobiography that "the feature in the *News and Observer* that was most popular" at the time "were the cartoons drawn by Norman E. Jennett." See Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 147.

[41]See Honey, "Class, Race, and Power," 170. See also Janette Thomas Greenwood, *Bittersweet Legacy: The Black and White "Better Classes"in Charlotte, 1850-1910* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 187. Greenwood wrote, 190-191, that "the cries of black domination and white supremacy" did not resonate in Charlotte as they did in the eastern part of North Carolina. Nonetheless, "charges of black rule rang true to the Young Democrats who had rise to leadership of the local Democratic party by the late 1890s. . . . [The] Young Democrats viewed white supremacy as their birthright, an inheritance bequeathed to them by their fathers."

[42]John Haley, "Race, Rhetoric, and Revolution" in Cecelski and Tyson, *Democracy Betrayed*, 218.

[43]"Do Your Duty Today," *News and Observer* (8 November 1898): 4.

[44]"Do Your Duty Today," *News and Observer*, 4.

[45]Daniels wrote in his autobiography that the state "approached election day with nervousness and anxiety. . . . At some places in the black districts, guns were fired and the white supremacy people surrounded the polls in great numbers. They were directed to be there early and late. In the places where the Negro vote was large, the impression prevailed among Negroes that it was not safe for them to make any show of resistance. Many of them did not go to the polls to vote." See Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 307.

[46]Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 310.

[47]Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 310. He wrote, "Some of the older people deprecated the holding of a big celebration, fearing that it might result in trouble, but the *News and Observer* took the ground that the celebration ought to be held and that it meant no harm to the Negroes; that the Democrats were their friends and not enemies; and that the speeches made and the whole celebration would serve to bring about a kindly feeling between the races."

[48]Daniels later said of the practice, "In certain parts of the North Carolina the advocates of White Supremacy wear a red shirt as the insignia of freedom from Negro domination in politics." See "Can't Intimidate Red Shirts," *News and Observer* (19 July 1900), 4. Red Shirts often organized themselves

into paramilitary units that disrupted opposition political rallies and terrorized would-be black voters during the white supremacy campaigns. See Crow, "Cracking the Solid South," 340.

[49]Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 310.

[50]Estimates of the death toll in the Wilmington riot range widely, from 11 (which Daniels offered) to 14, 20, and "100s." See Prather, "We Have Taken a City," 35.

[51]Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 313.

[52]See Dolores Janiewski, "'Waged with Such Fury': Wilmington as an American Coup d'Etat," paper presented to annual conference of the American Historical Association, Washington, DC, 8 January 1999. Daniels in his autobiography called the riot "an armed revolution of white men of Wilmington" who sought "to teach what they believed was a needed lesson, that no such defamer as Manly should live in the city and no such paper should be published." He also noted that his newspaper had asserted: "'If any reader is inclined to condemn the people of Wilmington for resolving to expel Manly from the city, let him reread the libel upon the white women of the state that appeared in the Daily Record.'" Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 307-308.

[53]Williamson wrote, "Given the extravagance of the white supremacy campaign, it is remarkable that the Wilmington riot occurred two days after the election rather than during the turbulent weeks that preceded the balloting." Williamson, *A Rage for Order*, 132.

[54]Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 313. The editorial read in part: "You [whites] set yourselves down as a lot of carping hypocrites; in fact, you cry aloud for the virtue of your women while you seek to destroy the morality of ours. Don't ever think that your women will remain pure while you are debauching ours. You sow the seed — the harvest will come in due time." Wilmington *Record* (18 August 1898), cited in Crow, "Cracking the Solid South," 349.

[55]Prather, "We Have Taken a City," 23-24. Prather added, 24: "For anyone not acquainted with him, Manly could have passed for a white man."

[56]Quoted in LeeAnn Whites, "Love, Hate, Rape, Lynching: Rebecca Latimer Felton and the Gender Politics of Racial Violence," in *Democracy Betrayed*, 149.

[57]One scholar has speculated the editorial "might have escaped state-wide attention had not the *News and Observer* publicized it." Edmonds, *The Negro and Fusion Politics*, 147

[58]Crow, "Cracking the Solid South," 341.

[59]Richard Yarborough, "Violence, Manhood, and Black Heroism: The Wilmington Riot and Two Turn-of-the-Century African American Novels," in Cecelski and Tyson, *Democracy Betrayed*, 229.

[60]Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 285.

[61]Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 285.

[62]Morrison, *Josephus Daniels*, 34.

[63]"A Day of Blood at Wilmington: Negroes Precipitate Conflict by Firing on the Whites — Manly, the Defamer of White Womanhood, Escapes — Building of His Slanderous Paper Gutted and Burned," *News and Observer* (11 November 1898): 1.

[64]Crow, "Cracking the Solid South," 341.

[65]"Democratic Regime Strangling Anarchy: Wilmington's New Government Bringing Law and Order Out of the Chaotic Conditions Brought About by Negro Domination," *News and Observer* (12 November 1898): 1. The report also cited the near-lynching of a white deputy sheriff, a Republican, who was at the railway station, attempting to leave Wilmington, when "a rope was thrown over his head and several strong men were in the act of swinging him to an overhanging beam when influential citizens interfered, and with difficulty prevented the lynching."

[66]"Villifers [sic] of the South," *News and Observer* (13 November 1898): 4.

[67]Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 324.

[68]Crow, "Cracking the Solid South," 341.

[69]Disfranchisement measures were approved or enacted in Mississippi in 1890, South Carolina in 1895, Louisiana in 1898, North Carolina in 1900, Alabama in 1901, Virginia in 1901-1902, and Georgia in 1908. See Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 321. Woodward also notes that disfranchisement movements were complex and often masked struggles for political power among whites: "The real question was which whites should be supreme." Woodward, 327-328.

[70]Josephus Daniels, "The Race Problem of the South," *News and Observer* (8 May 1900): 1.

[71]Josephus Daniels, "It Has Eliminated the Negro: But the Amendment in Louisiana Guarantees to Every White Man the Right to Vote," *News and Observer* (10 May 1900): 1.

[72]Daniels, "It Has Eliminated the Negro," 4.

[73]Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 326.

[74]See, for example, "Negroes Buying Guns and Cartridges," *News and Observer* (15 July 1900): 1. The *News and Observer* prominently reported the New Orleans race riot in July 1900. See "Rioting Continues in New Orleans," *News and Observer* (27 July 1900): 1, and "Negro Desperado Dies Fighting," *News and Observer* (28 July 1900): 2.

[75]"Shot into the House," *News and Observer* (5 May 1900): 1. Daniels in his autobiography acknowledged that the *News and Observer* gave special attention to reports of crimes by blacks. "Whenever there was any gross crime on the part of Negroes," he later wrote, "the *News and Observer* printed it in a lurid way, sometimes too lurid, in keeping with the spirit of the times." See Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 253.

[76]"A Woman's Earnest Appeal," *News and Observer* (22 July 1900): 1.

[77]"Sambo on the Amendment," *News and Observer* (22 July 1900): 1.

[78]"What the Negro Manly Said," *News and Observer* (29 July 1900): 1.

[79]"Leave No Stone Unturned," *News and Observer* (29 July 1900): 4.

[80]"Finally, Brethren," *News and Observer* (2 August 1900): 4.

[81]Cited in J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 193.

[82]"A United Democracy," *News and Observer* (5 August 1900): 4.

[83]Luebke, *Tar Heel Politics*, 6.

[84]"A Majority of 65,876," *News and Observer* (4 November 1902): 1. The newspaper estimated that the Democrats' statewide advantage in registered voters exceeded 65,000.

[85]"Registration by Whites is Heavy," *News and Observer* (26 October 1902): 1.

[86]Crow, "Cracking the Solid South," 342. He noted: "With the effective removal of poor whites and blacks from the political process, the planter-industrialist elite assumed the garb of reformers and set about modernizing the state with increased government services in such areas as public health, education, and road building. Freed of the incubus of lower-class and Negro support, the so-called Progressive movement in North Carolina and throughout the South accelerated, but it was a movement that tended to enhance the interests of the business community principally and to reinforce the existing social, economic, and political order."

[87]See, for example, "Why Not Make It One Hundred Thousand Majority," *News and Observer* (2 November 1902): 4. The editorial, published on the eve of state elections in 1902, stated in part: "The Republican method of campaign was pitched upon this idea: The Democrats, having over our protest, disfranchised the Negro, they ought to be defeated for bringing political peace, and the enemies of the [disfranchisement] Amendment and White Supremacy should be given power."

[88]"That Poll Tax," *News and Observer* (25 April 1902): 1.

[89]"'Will Soon Blow Over,'" *News and Observer* (23 October 1901): 4.

[90]"Bassett Committed the Unpardonable Sin," *News and Observer* (3 December 1903): 4. The editorial read: "Once let the ideas in the Bassett article become widespread, and then the civilization of the South is destroyed. He has committed the only unpardonable sin."

[91]Bassett was the journal's founding editor. In the inaugural issue, Bassett wrote: "The editor . . . desires to make the journal a medium of encouraging every honest literary effort. He recognizes that to do this there must be liberty to think. He will not close the review to opinions with which he may personally differ. . . . He will consider the Quarterly fortunate if it succeeds in presenting the problems of to-day on all of their sides." "Editor's Announcement," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 1,1 (January 1902): 3.

[92]Bassett, "Stirring Up the Fires," 299.

[93]"Stirring Up the Fires," *News and Observer*, 16.

[94]See for example, "Kindle a Flame of Indignation: The People Feel That Professor Bassett's Utterances on the Negro are an Outage," *News and Observer* (3 November 1903): 1.

[95]After the trustees voted, several Trinity students hanged Daniels in effigy — a protest the *News*

*and Observer* reported on its front page. See "Hang the Editor there in Effigy," *News and Observer* (3 December 1903): 1.

[96]"Eighteen-Seven Thus They Voted," *News and Observer* (3 December 1903): 4. The trustees' statement also read: "We are particularly unwilling to lend ourselves to any tendency to destroy or limit academic liberty."

[97]John Spencer Bassett, untitled letter to the editor [*Charlotte Observer*?], (11 June 1909); Bassett papers, Library of Congress, general correspondence, container 19.

[98]Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 435.

[99]Bassett, "Stirring Up the Fires," 304. Bassett's essay was remarkably prescient. He wrote, 305: "Some day the Negro will [be] a great industrial factor in the community; some day he will be united under strong leaders of his own. In that time his struggle will not be so unequal as now. In that time, let us hope, he will have brave and Christian leaders."

[100]Morrison, *Josephus Daniels*, 35.

[101]Luebke, *Tar Heel Politics*, 7.

[102]Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina 1850-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 265.

[103]For a study of Daniels as a Progressive Era figure, see Larry G. Gerber, *The Limits of Liberalism: Josephus Daniels, Henry Stimson, Bernard Baruch, Donald Richberg, Felix Frankfurter and the Development of Modern American Political Economy* (New York: New York University Press, 1983). For an appraisal of Daniels' association with Roosevelt, see Carroll Kilpatrick, ed., *Roosevelt and Daniels: A Friendship in Politics* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1952).

[104]Haley, "Race, Rhetoric, and Revolution," 216-217.