Virtual Lecture Transcript:

Hands unto Ethiopia: The First African Americans to Visit Nubia
By Jeremy Pope
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Yasmin El Shazly:
Hello everyone and good afternoon or good evening depending on where you are joining us from. I am Dr. Yasmin El Shazly, the Deputy Director for Research and Programs at ARCE and I want to welcome you to the third of a four-part series called Africa Interconnected: Ancient Egypt and Nubia. This virtual lecture series will delve into the history and interconnections of ancient Egypt and Nubia; the study of which has been largely marginalized by Western scholarship. This series will address the biases behind this lack of attention and examine how Egyptology, Nubiology and other disciplines have intersected. Today's lecture with Dr. Jeremy Pope is titled, “Hands unto Ethiopia: The First African Americans to Visit Nubia.”

Before we introduce Dr. Pope, for those of you who are new to ARCE, we are a private non-profit organization whose mission is to support research on all aspects of Egyptian history and culture, foster a broader knowledge about Egypt among the general public and support American-Egyptian cultural ties. As a non-profit, we rely on ARCE members to support our work. So, I want to first give a special welcome to our ARCE members joining us today. If you are not already a member and are interested in joining, I invite you to visit our website arce.org to join online and learn more. We provide a suite of benefits to our members including our private member only lecture series. Our next members’ only lecture is on March 7th at 1pm Eastern Time with Dr. Mohammed Ismail of Würzburg University who will be presenting on “Changing Old Paradigms: New Evidence from the Pyramid Complex of Sahure at Abusir.” Our next public lecture is on March 20th, and is the final lecture of the Africa interconnected lecture series at 1pm Eastern Time with Dr. Stuart Tyson Smith of the University of California, Santa Barbara, titled “Backwater Puritans: Racism, Egyptological Stereotypes and the Intersection of Local and International at Kushite Tombs.” As a final reminder to our members joining us today, you also receive a reduced rate to our Annual Meeting as part of our member benefits, which this year again will be virtual. It will take place from April 22nd to 25th and registration is now open. We hope to see you all there for a great couple of days for papers on all aspects of time periods of Egypt’s cultural heritage.

So, I’m now going to introduce you to our speaker. Dr Jeremy Pope is Associate Professor in the Department of History at the College of William & Mary, where he is
Jeremy Pope:
Thank you. It’s a pleasure to be here. So, let’s get started. In November of 1902, in the – oh, I’m unable to move my slide, why? I’ll have to do it this way. In the pages of this magazine, Pauline Hopkins published the first instalment of a serial science fiction novel. Entitled, “Of One Blood”, the novel followed the adventures of an African American doctor who travels with an archaeological expedition to the site of the ancient city of Meroe, where he discovers a lost civilization still thriving underground. The African American traveler is hailed by the inhabitants of Meroe as the rightful heir to the throne of their kingdom, and his ascension then becomes the harbinger of pan African liberation and mutual uplift of both Africans and African Americans. In Hopkins telling, the ancient city of Meroe is described as the capital of the Kingdom of Ethiopia. But Hopkins’ Ethiopia is not the modern country of that name located on the Horn of Africa. It is instead biblical Ethiopia, the land located immediately to the south of Egypt in the Nubian region of modern Sudan. Hopkins’ decision to portray Ethiopia as a homeland for African Americans, would have resonated with our readers in 1902. For the previous two centuries, people of African descent in the Americas had invoked this country from the Bible as exemplar of African history and signifier of a global racial identity. The prophecy in Psalm 68:31 that Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God had long been a shared slogan of political, religious, and literary movements on both sides of the Atlantic. Historians today referred to this phenomenon as Ethiopianism, and Pauline Hopkins invoked it directly in her novel. For an American audience in 1902, the arrival of an African American in Nubia would be an event of profound symbolism, and potentially world changing consequences. The catalyst for a global and diasporic Ethiopia, stretching forth her hand on to God. Yet Hopkins’ novel was, of course, a work of fiction.

In fact, to this day, no published study has ever analyzed nor even documented the experiences of the first African Americans who actually travelled to Nubia. This silence is all the more remarkable because such analysis has been performed for the first Europeans, white Americans and Canadian Iroquois visitors to Nubia. So, who were the first African Americans to visit Nubia? Well, I first began to research this question in 2011, beginning at the National Archives. I reasoned that if I consulted all forms of surviving documentation for international travel by American citizens, then this approach would cast the widest net possible without boundaries set by my own preconceptions.
Unfortunately, this proved to be an impractical approach. Because prior to World War I, those documents were not yet catalogued or indexed in a way that would allow me to select for both American racial classification and foreign destination. The helpful staff of the National Archives suggested that I look at passports and consular registrations scanned by ancestry.com. But a search of the records at ancestry.com must generally begin with a name. And this was precisely the information that I lacked. From this point on it became clear that I would have to first hypothesize the circumstances that might have brought an African American to Nubia. Well, my initial hypotheses were clearly flawed. My familiarity with the earliest Western visitors to Nubia had conditioned me to expect a published travelogue, or newspaper article to result from the first African American traveler to that country. While a search of famous African American World travelers from the 19th century revealed many accounts have travelled to the African continent, and often have travelled to Egypt, none of these individuals recorded any trip to Nubia farther south on the Nile.

In hindsight, it’s not difficult to see why this should be the case. The Turco-Egyptian and Anglo-Egyptian invasions of Sudan during the 19th century, had made travel to that country exceptionally difficult for the private citizen. Difficulties that were further compounded by the conditions of American slavery and then of America’s Jim Crow system of racial hierarchy. Even the veterans of the American Civil War, who joined the armies of Isma’il Pasha in Sudan did not record a single African American among their ranks. So, I turned instead to the experiences of a much earlier stage in my academic career.

Long before I became a Nubiologist, I studied modern African history, and a doctoral program at Johns Hopkins. And I’ve continued to teach courses on that subject, alongside my usual work on the ancient world. One of the books that I signed for those courses turned up an unexpected lead. In 2010, historian Andrew Zimmerman published a transnational history of German and American collaboration in Togo at the beginning of the 20th century. That German project in West Africa soon inspired others elsewhere on the continent. As Zimmerman explains, in 1902, British experts attributed much of the German success and growing cotton in Africa to their work with American experts. And thus also approached Booker T. Washington to recruit Tuskegee students for British Africa.

The BCGA sent an official to Tuskegee Institute to study cotton growing in the American South. And the association hired Tuskegee students to run a cotton school in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. That, of course, is promising. If they were Tuskegee students, it is most probable that they were African American. And if they went to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, there is at least the possibility that the part of Sudan they visited was the Nubian region. The decision to approach Booker T. Washington with this proposal, is not difficult to understand, as he was an advocate of precisely the kind of agricultural labor that the project would involve. In 1904, Washington famously
published a book entitled, “Working with the hands,” the first chapter of which promoted the moral values of handwork.

So, the Zimmerman reference indicates that Booker T. Washington sent his students to Sudan to both perform and supervise manual labor. It’s a surprising reversal of Psalm 68. No longer Ethiopia stretching forth her hands on to God, but instead hands being sent on to Ethiopia to perform and supervise manual labor there. So, let’s turn then to the private correspondence of Booker T. Washington to discover the details of this project at its inception. In Booker T. Washington’s papers, the first mention of Sudan comes in a letter from this man here on the left, white American investor named Leigh S J Hunt. In the winter of 1903, Hunt wrote to Booker T. Washington, the letter that you see excerpted here, from Sudan, from a steamship on the White Nile.

Now I have scanned the original text of their correspondence to display each document in its original form here in my talk, but some of these letters are quite blurry. So, I will read most of these documents verbatim in my lecture for the sake of clarity. Hunt wrote as follows: “My dear Dr. Washington, I sent you a copy of my letter to Lord Cromer, in care of our Embassy in London, but conclude that you did not receive it, as I have had no word to the contrary.” This already is an interesting start, because of course, Lord Cromer was the lead British colonial official in Egypt and Sudan at the time. Hunt then, goes on to say, “Once your people discover what grand opportunities this country offers home seekers; I shall need no assistance to influence them to come to the Sudan.” Notice that Hunt’s proposal involves African Americans not only to travel to Sudan and perform work there, but also to seek homes there. Hunt seems to have in mind some kind of emigration project. But this letter to Booker T. Washington doesn’t specify what that project actually was, what it entailed. To answer that question, we must track the other documents referenced in this letter. Specifically, Hunt made reference here in this letter to an earlier letter that he had sent to Lord Cromer, and then copied to Booker T. Washington.

That letter is nowhere to be found in Booker T. Washington’s papers, so we must consult the private papers of Leigh Hunt himself. And here it is; A letter sent from the American, Hunt to the British governor Lord Cromer, just a few months earlier. In the letter, Hunt pleads to Cromer that Sudan would become in time, a refuge for African Americans. As he says, quite as available as America has been for the Irish, Germans and others. He goes on to claim that once it is proven that they can settle and prosper in Sudan, then they will have what they do not now possess, a country to which they can safely migrate.

So, contrary to the summary given in Zimmerman’s book, it was not actually the British who first proposed this agricultural scheme to Booker T. Washington. It was a white American investor Leigh Hunt, who first proposed it to the British and then to Booker T. Washington. Hunt even goes so far as to say that this resettlement scheme in Sudan will solve what he called the ‘Negro problem’ in the United States. Whatever Hunt’s motivations are here, he was careful to pitch this as an act of philanthropy,
claiming that the project will force the south to realise that African Americans are not wholly dependent, and thus Hunt says the South will then be more reasonable in the consideration and treatment of this question.

In other words, if Hunt can show that African Americans are free to go and live elsewhere, to live abroad, then the American South might be forced to improve its treatment of African Americans if it is going to have any hopes of keeping them in the southern states as an available workforce. This conversation was of course transpiring roughly a decade before the onset of the Great Migration, in which millions of African Americans would leave the south and prove precisely this point. Not to go to Sudan, but instead to go to the Northern United States.

Hunt goes on to specify in his letter to Cromer that what he had in mind here was an industrialization of Sudanese agriculture. He was going to import mechanized pumps into the region that would then spread the Nile waters farther afield from the riverbanks, thereby making more land amenable for the cultivation of cotton. And as some of the world's most experienced laborers on Western cotton plantations, African Americans were going to be brought in, supervise the labor and teach the locals how it was done.

News of Hunt's proposal evidently travelled fast. Hunt’s friend, James S Clarkson soon discussed the project over dinner with President Theodore Roosevelt and his wife Edith. According to Clarkson's subsequent report to Hunt, the First Lady enthused about Hunt’s plan to settle African Americans in Sudan. Clarkson wrote, “She proceeded to tell of your intention to try and build an American state in the Sudan and to lead a business enterprise of such great magnitude, trying to uplift a degraded portion of the human race.” He continued, “The proposition then too, to take enough people from one community, who are already friends and neighbors and kinsmen, say, 300 to 400 so that they can carry their neighborhood with them. And thus, guard against the homesickness inevitable to people who are scattered in small numbers among strange people, is very reassuring to them, and strengthens their first impressions very much.” So, the way the First Lady understood this plan was that entire neighborhoods of African Americans 300 to 400 people were going to be transplanted to Sudan to permanently reside there in a new home, but among their current neighbors.

Booker T. Washington’s first response to this plan came later that winter. In the beginning of 1904 replying to Hunt, Washington wrote, ‘As I think I have said to you, I am not in favor of wholesale colonization of my people in Africa or anywhere else. But the opportunities which you suggest that Sudan offers are opportunities, which it seems to me, large numbers of our people should take advantage of.” So, Booker T. Washington will have no part of any large-scale resettlement plan for African Americans moving back to Africa. But he does agree that Africa is a place where profit can be made for his students. So, he ultimately approves of Hunt’s plan to send Tuskegee students to Sudan.
Some of Hunt’s white colleagues were more skeptical, and their resistance elicited some fascinating attempts by Hunt to justify this project. One of the principal critics was the British General John Ward. Here is what Ward had to say about his discussions with Hunt, when they were both visiting Egypt in 1904. Ward wrote, “I doubted the wisdom of his project to bring colored men from America, whose ancestors were West African blacks.” Hunt then retorted that he would bring men descended from East African blacks claiming that, in his words, “Up to 1835, the great supply of imported Negroes on the southern states came from Alexandria, and were slaves harried from the Sudan.” Hunt further claimed that a regular trade existed between the Mediterranean and Virginia and ports, and fast sailing vessels made the passage safely and brought thousands of Eastern blacks to the southern states. Ward reports, “I was much astonished, but he assured me he had found the whole details of the traffic out from official documents. These are the people,” Hunt said, “whose descendants I would bring to the Sudan if I am permitted.” So, Ward was cautioning that African Americans as the descendants of West Africans, might not do so well, if transplanted to Sudan, what he calls East Africa. To which Hunt replies by insisting that African Americans are, in fact, descended from East Africa, from Sudan, no less, so they should acclimate easily. Now, as this is a public lecture, I should caution the audience here that Hunt’s claims do not match the history of the Atlantic slave trade, as historians now know it. Quite rigorous calculations of the trans-Atlantic traffic and human beings have attributed the vast majority of those enslaved to West and Central African origins, not East African. But that just makes Hunt’s claims all the more remarkable. I don’t know if he himself actually believed this, but he expected his critics to believe this argument. To believe that African Americans were directly descended from the Nubians of Sudan. And that, in itself, is an interesting comment on American views of Nubia at the time.

Hunt’s claims to know the specific African regional origins of the African Americans that he was going to send are all the more bizarre, given that the specific men to be sent had not actually been chosen yet, but they were chosen soon after. At the end of 1904, Booker T. Washington finally wrote to Hunt’s friend, James Clarkson, to inform him that three Tuskegee students were going to be sent to Sudan for the project. Their names were Cain Triplett, Poindexter Smith, and John Powell. Poindexter Smith was the eldest, at 30 years old. But Triplett and Powell were 21 and 25, respectively. After enlisting them for the trip, Booker T. Washington then wrote a letter to the Tuskegee students themselves. Now the surviving copy here is in rather bad condition. So, I’ve read typed the contents for display here. Washington wrote to his students as follows, “One point I wish to impress upon you is this, a great many person’s going to a warm climate go to ruin from a moral standpoint. I hope you will all keep this in mind and remember that if you yield to the temptation and lower yourself and your moral character, you will do yourself, the school and the race, the greatest injustice, but I feel sure you’re going to stand up and be men.” Some remarkably Victorian sort of warning that Booker T. Washington is issuing here to his Tuskegee students. But it is important
to keep in mind that in 1904, Booker T. Washington had not yet manifested a deeper interest in Africa or its history. In fact, at the beginning of his book entitled, “The future of the American Negro,” Washington had written, “In this volume, I shall not attempt to give the origin and history of the Negro race either in Africa or in America. My attempt is to deal only with the conditions that now exist and bear relation to the Negro in America, and that are likely to exist in the future.” Remember, this phrase of his, ‘The origin and history of the Negro race.’ Those specific words will actually become quite important at the end of the hour today.

After receiving this warning from their principal, the three Tuskegee students then applied for passports which you see here. According to a letter written to Booker T. Washington soon after, by James Clarkson, the men then sailed from New York for Egypt on the SS Saint Paul. Exactly this ship that you see in this photograph here. They would said first to Paris, then to Marseille and then to Cairo, after which they would go up the Nile into Sudan. But in this point in the correspondence, we still haven't learned exactly where in Sudan they were headed.

This detail was first revealed in a letter sent from Hunt to Washington, about a month and a half later. The letter is addressed from Zeidab and reports that, “Your boys arrived in good health and good cheer, and have taken hold in a manner which augurs well for their future.” The Tuskegee students’ new residence, Zeidab, is located right here, in the very heart of Sudanese Nubia. From this instance, it looks almost as if Zeidab and Meroe because they appear so close to one another. Closer satellite photo shows that Zeidab was just downstream from Meroe. So, anyone stationed at Zeidab could easily have viewed the famous monuments at the ancient Nubian capital. So, just three years after Pauline Hopkins wrote of a fictional African American traveler, journeying to the ancient Nubian capital of Meroe, three Tuskegee students did just that. Becoming so far as I’ve been able to determine, the first African Americans ever to travel to Nubia.

But they were not there as archaeologists or even as tourists. They were there as employees of an international business project. So, they immediately had work to do. Here you see an even closer view of the Zeidab region. A large agricultural basin to the west of the Nile River, with a level of land that’s low enough to catch a considerable amount of Nile silt during the flood. After the young man from Tuskegee arrived here, Hunt’s letters are full of enthusiasm. He writes that he is, “Hopeful that my experiment in blazing the way to this land of promise is going to prove beneficial.” And he adds one final detail that will become crucial at the end of my lecture. He says, “The boys here have recommended Ocie R Burns of St. Joseph, Missouri, whom I should like to have come to Sudan as well.” So, the three Tuskegee students in Zeidab, Sudan, recommended that another Tuskegee student be sent to join them there. Ocie R Burns. Ocie Burns was just 19 years old, at the time. Washington was quick to comply. Little more than a month later, he agreed that, “Ocie R Burns, one of the young men mentioned in your letter some days ago, and J. B Twitty are the two young men selected for you. And both of them plan to sail from New York as soon as General Clarkson sends
their transportation.” Sure enough, just two months later, Burns and Twitty did just that. Leaving the US for Zeidab in the heart of Sudanese Nubia. For the next year, Booker T. Washington’s papers have no record of how or even what these five Tuskegee students were doing in Nubia. I initially puzzled over this long gap of silence. But then it occurred to me that Booker T. Washington was a rather towering figure at Tuskegee. Not necessarily the first person in whom some young Tuskegee students would confide. To discover what was happening in Sudan during the second half of 1905 and the first half of 1906. We must consult other documents. George Washington Carver, for instance, was a professor at Tuskegee at this time, and he was known for being very approachable. Among the piles of letters and Carver’s surviving correspondence, there is a single letter addressed from Zeidab, Sudan, dated to July of 1905, seven months after the first Tuskegee students had arrived there. It’s addressed to Carver from Cain Triplett, one of those five Tuskegee students. In this letter, Triplett alludes to his ambition to break free from the British colonial project and start his own business there in Sudan. Explaining the logistics of the work there, he writes to Carver, “There’s no doubt about it. One could very soon be independent at this rate.” And further down the page Triplett complains that the Englishman who are supervising them have made slow progress because of their poor managing. To entice Carver’s interest a bit, Triplett then explains that he would gladly give Carver a share of this Sudanese farm. Specifically, a plot of sorghum from which Carver could receive profits back in Tuskegee. Triplett then explains, “I have thought to begin a colored syndicate. I’ve worked out a plan by which we could be perfectly independent in the course of three years. But I must ask you not to publish my intention.” So, Triplett has an ambitious and secret plan. Secret from Hunt secret from the British colonial officers. And even it appears secret from Booker T. Washington, who was never informed of Triplett’s intentions. Triplett told, only Carver. But Triplett explains to Carver, “To begin with, we must have capital.” So he asks Carver to forward $1,000 at a reasonable interest, assuring him that, “I can pay the same back in two years.” I don’t yet know if Carver ever sent the money, because that one letter was the last mention of Sudan at all, in Carver’s surviving papers.

In the year that followed 1906 the five Tuskegee students were not the only Americans residing in Sudan. They weren’t even the only Americans residing so close to Meroe. In November of that year, Meroe became the site of an American research expedition from the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute, led by the American Egyptologist James Henry Breasted. For two weeks, Breasted and his team resided in Meroe, just a day trip away from the Tuskegee project at Zeidab. Breasted surviving letters from that time do not mention any day trips made by the one American team to visit the other. It will be easy to conclude from the silence, that the two American projects on this short stretch of the Nile, were wholly unaware of one another. However, when Breasted returned to the United States, something inspired him to write directly to Booker T. Washington himself. For the purpose of bringing to Washington’s attention, what Breasted calls to Washington, “The early history of your race.” Breasted in closed
with his letter, a copy of one of his articles on ancient Nubia, claiming to Washington that, “Nowhere else in the world is the early history of a dark race preserved.” So, we see here again, an American of the early 20th century, assuming a racial consanguinity between African Americans and the ancient Nubians. Now at no point in this letter, did Breasted allude to any encounter that he may have had with Booker T Washington’s own students in Nubia. But perhaps even more remarkable is the fact that when Booker T Washington responded to Breasted’s letter. Washington too, made no mention of the fact that his own students were stationed in Nubia during Breasted’s time in that country. In his later correspondence, however, Breasted would make a revealing comment. Writing to his wife Francis, the Egyptologist praised Booker T. Washington's ideas of training for such a people. And suggested, “A series of Tuskegee’s up and down the Nile.” It would therefore seem that Breasted was aware at some point of the Tuskegee project located just down the Nile from his own expedition in Meroe. And it became for him an exemplar for how he imagined the incorporation of what he called a dark race into his projected march of technological progress. As students of Egyptology will already know, Breasted projected that same vision of a racialized labor hierarchy into his writings on ancient Nubia. And that vision was echoed in Breasted’s popular history textbook for high schools during the second quarter of the 20th century.

If Breasted did encounter The Tuskegee project in Sudan during 1906, then he may have even known more about the current status of that project than Washington himself did during that same year. Because Booker T. Washington did not receive any updates from his Tuskegee students in Sudan, for the entirety of that year. In July of 1906, Booker T. Washington wrote identical letters to all five of his students, stating, “It has been a long time since I have had a letter from you. And I'm wondering how you're getting along with your work. The experiment in which you are engaged is of such far reaching importance to us here, that we are anxious to keep as close touch with it as possible. To this end, I shall be very glad, if from time to time, you will write me.” For the next seven months, no response was forthcoming from the students.

However, I was able to find one piece of evidence that speaks directly to that interval of silence. In 2012, I was able to track down a descendent of Leigh Hunt. And to my great surprise, I discovered that he had deliberately retraced his grandfather's international travels. During a trip to Sudan in 1982, this descendant of Leigh Hunt met an elderly Sudanese man who had actually been a young boy at Zeidab in 1906. Hunt's descendent kindly provided me with an audio tape of that unpublished interview that had been sitting in his attic in Connecticut for more than 30 years. The interview runs about 90 minutes long, and there are several different voices on the tape speaking in Sudanese Arabic, including an interpreter. It's chock full of details about the Tuskegee project. But the one that struck me most was this. This elderly Sudanese man remembered that most of the Tuskegee students had left Zeidab suddenly, without warning. As he remembered it, the locals woke up one morning to find the American camp deserted. The accuracy of a young boy his perception of events, and his memory of
those events nearly 80 years later, is of course open to question. But it does suggest that there might have been something unexpected about the Americans departure. Something at least shocking to a young Sudanese boy at the time.

The withdrawal of the Tuskegee students from Sudan was also apparently shocking to Booker T. Washington himself. In February of 1907, seven months after Washington had requested an update from his students, the university’s student newspaper, the Tuskegee student, received this cryptic note from J. B Twitty addressed from Zeidab, Egyptian Sudan. It read, “Upon receipt of this letter, please forward the Tuskegee student to the following address and not to my present address any longer.” Signed, J. B Twitty, Lenexa, Kansas. Someone at the student newspaper, evidently forwarded this on to Booker T. Washington for his files, and he was not too happy. You can see his notes in the margins. First at the top left, “Find out why left there.” And then more angrily down in the bottom left were Washington’s note states, “No explanation accompanying,” with two exclamation points. Naturally, Washington wrote back to Twitty, almost immediately, he said, “I take from your letter requesting change of your address for the student mailing list that you have left Africa temporarily or permanently. And I’m anxious to know why. Will you kindly let me hear from you on the subject?” The mystery of what was going on in Sudan is not immediately resolved even by the surviving documents.

The next document in the surviving records shows that Cain Washington Triplett, one of the first students to go had travelled to Cairo to renew his passport. But this time, none of the other students are listed as witnesses on his passport application. Finally, in late March of 1907, Booker T. Washington received what he had long been waiting for, a detailed report of the student’s activities in Sudan. But it did not come from J. B Twitty. The author was instead John Powell, one of the other five students. And the letter makes no mention at all of the fact that Triplett had gone to Cairo, nor that Twitty would leave Sudan and return to Kansas. Instead, the letter is full of proud accomplishments detailing the fields they had ploughed, the wages they had earned, the machinery they had built and fixed, and the school that they had established to teach English to the locals in Zeidab. Powell concludes the letter by stating that all of the other boys have been in very good health with an exception of a little fever, nothing serious or unusual. Each of them, Misters C. W. Triplett, J. B Twitty, Ocic R Burns and Poindexter Smith have done a good service for themselves, the syndicate especially, and for the school. In other words, everything is fine here principle, no worries.

Little more than a month later, Twitty sent his letter to Booker T. Washington. And it told a very different story. Notice, first of all that it is addressed from Lenexa, Kansas, not from Sudan. And if Twitty is already back from Sudan in mid-April, he has to have departed from Sudan before Powell wrote his cheery letter in late March. In his letter to Washington, Twitty writes, “Dear principal, in reply to your letter on the 27th of March, I have to say that Mr. Hunt promised to write you, explaining the reason of our leaving the Sudan. There are two reasons why we returned to America. The principal
one was that the African fever had nearly undermined our constitutions, making it imperative that we should leave immediately. The doctor told us that we ran very grave risks if we remained there any longer. I have had two very serious attacks since leaving. The second reason was that Mr. Hunt was retiring from the supervision of the company, and that he feared to leave us out there in the hands of strangers. That is trying to farm with everything so extremely expensive. Then too, as the pumping plant was to be closed down indefinitely for repairs, we could not have made anything out of our farm. Mr. P. P Smith and J. P Powell were retained to carry on their respective trades. I too, was asked to stay and hold the position of assistant engineer. I do not believe that my health or the health of either Mr. C. W Triplett or O. R Burns, who accompanied me would long withstand the ravages of the fever. So, you see that it would be very unreasonable for us to return to the Sudan.” Signed yours, J. B Twitty.

So, what exactly happened here? Why the conflicting reports from Powell and Twitty? It looks like Triplett, Twitty and Burns were sick and went to Cairo, presumably for treatment at the beginning of 1907. Powell doesn’t mention this in his letter to Booker T. Washington, so he could have been covering up those details to put a good face on things for his principal. But it’s also possible that when Twitty Triplett and Burns left Sudan for Cairo, they didn’t yet know that they were going to leave Africa altogether at that point. Notice that Twitty says he suffered two very serious attacks of the disease since leaving. And notice also that Triplett bothered to renew his passport while he was in Cairo. So perhaps he was toying with the idea of staying in Africa.

Either way, by mid-April Twitty announces that all three had left Africa past tense. And Twitty, at least is back in Kansas when he was writing this letter. It’s also clear that by mid-April of 1907, Booker T. Washington knew that Powell’s recent letter did not tell the whole story. The students had accomplished a lot in Sudan. But Twitty’s subsequent letter had also revealed that several of those Tuskegee’s students in Africa were quite sick from some sort of fever. Consequently, only Powell and Smith remained while the other three had returned home to the states.

Nevertheless, two months later, Booker T. Washington allowed Powell’s optimistic letter to be published in the Tuskegee newspaper, The Southern Letter. It’s addressed from Zeidab, Sudan, Egypt. And it reports all of their accomplishments just as Powell had described them. But Powell’s passing reference to fever among the students has been deleted. That has been edited out of the letter that now appears in the university newspaper. The final document that I found within Booker T. Washington’s papers was more disturbing. It’s a telegram sent by Washington at the end of that summer, to Betty Alston. The sister of Poindexter Smith, one of the two students who had remained in Sudan.

The telegram informs his sister received cable gram last night from Zeidab, Egypt, as follows. “Regret inform you Poindexter Smith died today, after one week's continued fever. Please inform relatives. You have our sincere sympathy. I am writing Booker T. Washington.” In order to discern precisely what had happened to these
Tuskegee students in Sudan, we have to consult other documents. This report issued by a British colonial official appears to be quite relevant. It reads, “This report deals with work accomplished since February 14th, 1909. On which date I arrived at Halfa on my way back from leave, then I proceeded to Zeidab to spend a week in investigating the causes of an outbreak of malaria among the natives on and in the neighborhood of the estate belonging to the Sudan plantation syndicate.” But this report was published in 1909, two years after the Tuskegee students had left. So, it cannot immediately be assumed that this outbreak of malaria among the locals in 1909 was the same fever suffered by the Americans two years earlier. Just how widespread at Zeidab was the fever that sent those Americans home. To find out, we must consult some of the project’s correspondence as archived today by the Barlow Rand Corporation in Johannesburg, South Africa. When I travelled there in 2014, I found letters exchanged between Hunt and his business partners in March of 1906. In one letter, a defeated Hunt sarcastically quips, “As a promoter of fever, the project has certainly been a great success.”

Hunt made that remark in March of 1906, three years before a British medical team came to say Zeidab to investigate the outbreak. A full year before Powell sent his optimistic letter to Booker T. Washington. And even eight months before James Henry Breasted and camped just upstream from this Tuskegee on the Nile. In fact, the Tuskegee students had only been in Zeidab for just over one year, when Hunt reached this defeatist conclusion about the project. The trouble must have begun quite early in the process.

So, the first African Americans to visit Nubia were then immediately visited themselves by an outbreak of malaria in the region. It’s hardly the kind of glorious homecoming that Pauline Hopkins had in mind in her 1902 science fiction novel. And this seems remarkably unfortunate. After all, the outbreak wasn’t nationwide. Instead, it occurred precisely in the neighborhood of Leigh Hunt’s agricultural project. I am tempted to connect this outcome with one of the details mentioned in Twitty’s more candid letter. You’ll recall that Twitty mentioned in the necessity of repairs to the pumps. If pumps were broken, then they could’ve created standing water, perfect breeding grounds for insects and thus, for malaria.

Hunter and his American team had come to Nubia with the intention of teaching the locals how to pursue their agriculture more effectively using industrialized Western methods. The result? An outbreak of malaria. Now, to the extent that this agricultural project is remembered in the secondary literature, it has been only in depersonalized and often abbreviated reports of the ultimate outcome with scant reference to the personal correspondence of the people involved. So, for example, an article published in the ecologist summarizes the whole situation as follows, “Hunt immediately started the experimental farm at Zeidab, North of the Gezira, importing American Negroes already experienced in cotton plantation work. Unfortunately, the Negros failed to adjust to the new conditions imposed upon them, and by 1907, all had died.”
According to this author, that’s the end of the story. But we can’t be satisfied with that. We can’t honestly believe that they all had died as stated in the secondary literature, because we just saw in the private correspondence that at least three of them returned home to the States, Twitty, Triplett and Burns and possibly Powell as well. Only Poindexter Smith can be shown to have died. And we must also be suspicious of the historical narrative that results from this. If these were the first African Americans ever to visit Nubia, then we haven’t yet discovered what these travelers thought about their visit. And the fact that they were in Nubia and what then happened to them and the rest of their lives.

Archival research will not answer those questions. When we’re concerned with telling the story of people who were not public figures, then we cannot reasonably expect to find the evidence in the Booker T. Washington papers or in the papers of such public figures as Leigh Hunt, Lord Cromer, James Clarkson, George Washington Carver, James Henry Breasted, the British colonial government and the Barlow Rand Corporation. We must look elsewhere. So, this is the point at which I decided to consult ancestry.com. After all, we now have the names of the individuals involved, so we might be able to find record of their descendants.

For most of the Tuskegee students, my search turned up no living descendants. But the case of Ocie Burns was different. Appendant to Burns’ records in the database, was this family tree hosted by an anonymous user. The descendants of Ocie Burns would then be along these branches of that tree. Now, of course, living individuals are anonymized on ancestry.com. So, the names of individuals in these two most recent generations at the bottom of the chart are not listed. They’re not named on this chart. Even so, it seems most logical that the individual who posted this chart in the database would be the one who traced their branch the farthest, especially as they have also shown themselves at the convergence of two family lines. The Burns’ lineage on the right-hand side of this chart and what is marked here on the left as the Steptoe lineage. So, the poster of this document should be this individual right here. In fact, if we go on to the next, we go as her father is listed as a member of the Steptoe line, we can logically assume that her maiden name would have been Steptoe as well. Now, fortunately, the individual who posted this family tree also employed a very helpful username J Steptoe Millett. A quick internet search immediately turned up one Jan Steptoe-Millet, as well as her email address. So I reached out to her to share the information that I had learned about her grandfather, Ocie Burns, and his time in Sudanese Nubia. Mrs. Steptoe-Millet kindly replied and referred me then to her older brother, suggesting that he knew the most of their grandfather. Her brother’s name shocked me because I recognized it, Robert Burns Steptoe of Yale University. Author of a seminal book entitled, “From Behind the Veil: A study of Afro-American narrative.” When I then reached out to Dr. Steptoe, he shared with me a photograph taken during that trip showing Ocie Burns on camel back in front of the Sphinx at Giza. In fact, Dr. Steptoe explained to me that his grandfather’s years in Africa had always been characterized as years in Egypt.
hindsight, it's not difficult to see why his travel should have been remembered in that way.

You will recall that of the letters from the Tuskegee team, most of them were addressed from Zeidab, Sudan, Egypt. As a colonized province of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Nubia had been rendered, almost invisible. Almost. The last piece of evidence that Dr. Steptoe shared with me was the ultimate reward for all of this research. That's a handwritten by Ocie Burns himself, titled, “The origin and history of the Negro race.” You will recall from earlier in this lecture that Booker T. Washington had prefaced his own book by saying that he would not attempt to give the origin and history of the Negro race. It appears that his student, Ocie Burns, took up precisely that challenge after he had returned from his trip to Nubia. And Nubia is featured prominently in the essay. In fact, this essay appears to have been a script for a speech contest held by the black employees of the Chicago Post Office when Ocie Burns worked there in the decades after his return from Nubia. As the famed novelist Richard Wright would later explain a job at the Chicago Post Office, was often the best available for black college graduates in America during the Jim Crow era. So, these college grads created outlets for their intellectual production, like contests in writing and oratory. Now, at this point, my research on this subject is far from over. For one thing, I’ve promised the Steptoe family that I will publish a carefully annotated edition of this essay penned by Ocie Burns. I must also produce a full transcript of the audio taped interview conducted with the elderly Sudanese man in 1982.

In addition, recent years have brought further unexpected leads. A colleague in Khartoum has alerted me to the fact that there is a woman in Sudan who is descended from the British colonial administrators of that Zeidab project, and she wishes to connect with her kin in the United Kingdom. Most recently, I discovered by remarkable coincidence, that one of my own undergraduate students at William and Mary happens to be descended from a brother of one of the other five students on that Tuskegee team more than a century ago. So, I may well find further evidence of their trip through conversations with that family. But it seems to me unlikely that any future revelation will surpass any importance this essay by Ocie Burns.

Burns was not an archaeologist, and he published no travelogue about his trip to Nubia, but this essay alone is a reminder that professional scholarship is by no means the only form in which people have reflected upon the importance of ancient Nubia. So, thank you all for listening. And thanks especially to all of the many groups and institutions listed on the slide of this system, my research on this subject over the past decade. So now we'll go to questions and I think Yasmin will moderate. I think you're muted, still.

Yasmin El Shazly:
Thank you so much, Dr. Pope for a fascinating lecture. As Dr. Pope mentioned, he is happy to answer questions from the audience. Please make sure you type your questions
in the Q&A box not in the chat. Thank you. The first question we have is from Theresa who's asking how far is it from Zeidab to Meroe?

**Jeremy Pope:**
Let's see. The exact number of miles, I don't have memorised but I basically figured out that it's like a day trip. Honestly if you were to walk this distance it would take you the entire day. But you know, I would assume people would use a different means of transport. In a car, you could easily make the trip. So this is close enough that I find it quite likely that students who were staying at Zeidab for over a year would eventually make their way over to Meroe. But since they never wrote any travel logs and cameras weren't readily available in 1904 through 1907, there's no photograph of their time there. There's only the one photograph of Ocie Burns. And that's a photograph in front of the Sphinx in Egypt.

**Yasmin El Shazly:**
There's a question from Judith. Is that essay posted anywhere for public reading?

**Jeremy Pope:**
Not yet. I need to actually annotate it. When the family shared it with me, I told them, “Okay, I will put this into a form that sort of helps readers to appreciate all the references that are made.” There are many historical references that are made in it. And it's not footnoted because of course, it was written to be a script for a speech. So, I really need to give a thorough annotation of it when I publish it, but I'm working on it. It's just taking me a while.

**Yasmin El Shazly:**
Question from Dr. Peter der Manuelian. Was there a date for that Giza photo? Wondering about George Reisner's presence there then.

**Jeremy Pope:**
I don't think there's an exact date for that I had assumed that it would have been on their way up the Nile before going to Sudan. Because by the time they come back to Cairo, they were sick. So not exactly the moment to be posing on a camel. Which means I could probably estimate it, that would place it, basically I think it would place it in January of 1905. It would be interesting to know if they ran into other Americans in Cairo. But to me running into other Americans in Cairo would not be nearly as rare as running into other Americans near Meroe.
Yasmin El Shazly:
Question from Terry, fascinating lecture. Thank you, exciting research you have conducted. Have you found that the Sudanese were ever consulted about whether they wish to be colonized? Did Booker T. Washington ever thought of consulting them?

Jeremy Pope:
Essentially no, they don't appear to have been consulted on whether or not they consented to this. But I also don't have a lot of documentation coming from that side yet. I kind of feel like that's a dimension of this project that still needs to be fleshed out. My impression, though, is that, Booker T. Washington does not seem to have consulted them directly. In fact, it’s interesting when you read Booker T. Washington's correspondence about this project. He speaks consistently about the benefits for his students. He almost never mentions the benefits or effects upon the Sudanese. And I don't think that that's a fluke, because that also mirrors the way in which he wrote about the Tuskegee project in Togo, in West Africa. There's not a lot of rhetoric about what this will do for the Sudanese in his letters. There is in Hunt's letters on travel there and directly interacted with people. But for Booker T. Washington, it was something that he approved of from afar. And it seems that he regarded it largely as an opportunity for his students.

Yasmin El Shazly:
A question from Chester Higgins. Impressive scholarship, as the Tuskegee alumnus, this is one more example of Booker T's and George Washington Carver's meaning. When will all Ocie Burn's paper be available for distribution?

Jeremy Pope:
Difficult to project. As soon as I can possibly get it annotated. I've tried not to rush it because I feel like I need to give it it's just due. I mean, I really need to show readers everything that's being referenced in it. I don't want to just sort of publish a transcript of it, because there's a lot of references that a person might miss. There are quotations in there, but there was no reason to actually put them in quotation marks because it was a script for a speech. I'll work on it Chester, I'll try to get it out as soon as I possibly can. But I also don't want to rush it. It's already taken me a while as is. It's a very intellectually complex document. And that’s part of what's slowing me down. That’s my excuse. The document’s great and that’s why it's taking me a long time.

Yasmin El Shazly:
Okay, question from John W. I Lee. Thank you so much for his fascinating lecture. Amazing detective work. Have you found any evidence for the criteria used to select the Tuskegee students? Specific skills or experience, for example?
Jeremy Pope:
No, I really haven't. I'd like to know. It's certainly not in the Booker T. Washington papers. And remember in Carver's papers, there's one letter referencing this whole project. I'm not quite sure. I mean, if John has a suggestion for where I might look to find that particular set of details, I definitely welcome it. I've looked in Booker T. Washington's papers and Carver's papers. And that might not be the right place to look for that because it might very well have been someone lower in the hierarchy at Tuskegee, who suggested them. Then the only question is whether or not they ever wrote down their rationale for choosing those students. I find that interesting, though, that the students never actually asked for J. B. Twitty to come. But then Booker T. Washington, appends J. B. Twitty, when he sends Ocic Burns along he sends J. B. Twitty with him. And then from that point on, when he writes to the students, he writes first to J. B. Twitty. So I got the sense that maybe he wanted to have a man on the ground, and he felt like J. B. Twitty was this guy. But I have no letter stating his own rationale for why he chose them. I wish I did.

Yasmin El Shazly:
A question from Marilyn. Did you find that the Tuskegee students built on their work or findings from Ethiopia and Egypt upon returned to the US? Or was it regarded as a trip they took long ago in their youth?

Jeremy Pope:
I think the essay is pretty much the only clear sign I have of any of those five building on that work. Keep in mind, one of the five died while they were there. The thing is, it's still possible that I might find the descendants for the others. I simply haven't found them through ancestry.com documentation. I mean, remember, I mentioned that one of my students turns out to be descended from a brother of one of those five individuals. So I'm sort of hoping that I will find further documentation of how they reflected on this. But, by the time I found or contacted the Steptoe family and discovered that they had this essay, I had almost given up on finding actual written documentation of their thoughts of what they had seen. And so when that came, it was just the happiest surprise. I don't think I should expect it, because these were not individuals who were asked to go publish things. Later in their life, but most of them moved up North, most of them moved to Chicago, quite frankly. And, as far as I can tell, most of them did not have living descendants. So if they wrote something, it's going to be very hard to track it down. But that's actually what I was after. At the very beginning, I honestly thought that I would find a famous traveler, a famous African American traveler and their travel log. And then I realized my expectations were really quite skewed. That in the early 20th century, I shouldn't be expecting that every individual who went abroad to Sudan was somebody who would be invited to publish something in a newspaper, or a book. So, I
think it was largely luck that that took me to the essay. The essay is the closest thing I have, and I’m quite happy with it. It's turned out to be a fantastic yield for this.

Yasmin El Shazly:
Okay, a question from an anonymous attendee. Can you share whether any parts of the essay touches on personally observed racial or cultural connections from his time in Africa?

Jeremy Pope:
the beginning and end of the essay – I remember the beginning and I think also the end of the essay reflect philosophically on how ancient African history and also mediaeval African history, how they speak to questions of race in the US. So, he doesn't speak about like his own experience in Sudan and perceptions of the race concept while there. But the essay is pitched on page one is basically an attempt to speak to the race question in the US using African history. It's very similar in many ways to things that Dubois was writing around the same time, that W. B Dubois was writing and there are quotations to Dubois in the essay. So, it's sort of addressing the problem of the colour line using ancient African history to do it.

Yasmin El Shazly:
Okay, a question from Robbie. Fantastic lecture, Dr. Pope. I wonder if you might talk a little more about the recorded interview with the Sudanese man from 1982 and the circumstances around its recording.

Jeremy Pope:
Yes. So this was another amazing coincidence to me that the grandson of Leigh Hunt, decided that he wanted to research his grandfather's travels. And admittedly, if you were a descendant of Leigh Hunt, I could see why you would want to figure out everything that he had done. Because he was sort of a world traveller. He was involved in Korea. He was involved in Las Vegas and Seattle. He's one of the early figures and all of the histories of these different places. But this grandson actually travelled to all of these different places and just tried to interview people and retrace his grandfather's steps. And he had written something about it. He wrote a book called High Stakes, that's about Leigh Hunt, it's more of a biography of Leigh Hunt. I think it might have been a master's thesis, I'm not quite sure for what purpose he wrote the book. But it's a published book that he wrote about Leigh Hunt. But the audio tape is not really mentioned in the book. So, far as I know, it's not mentioned at all in the book. So, when I found the author of that book, who was a grandson of Leigh Hunt, I was actually very shocked to discover that there was an audio tape. I thought that, if there was a piece of evidence that was that great, that I would have found it in the endnotes in that book. But basically, I think part of the difficulty was that the interviewer, in that case, Leigh Hunt’s grandson, did
not himself speak Arabic. And so he was using an interpreter. And it sounds to me like there were about four people in the room. And they're all talking at different times. It's a real like a puzzle to figure out who's saying what, and when. There's one person in the room who's attempting to interpret for the American. Sometimes the interpretations seem – they're very glossy interpretations of what has just been said. But a lot of what the interviewer was interested in was sort of the details of the project. Like the technical details, where was the pump? Where was the station, you know, things that can't be seen in 1982, but would have been there in 1906. So he asked a lot about that, and then somewhat unexpectedly, the elderly man revealed that, “Oh, yeah, when they left, it was just overnight, they were all gone. That we got up in the next day, all the Americans were gone.” And I can't quite piece together-. I mean, obviously, that has to be something of a simplification of what happened. Because we know that three left, and then later one died, and presumably, the remaining one American left at that point, but those were staggered. So there's no way they all left at one time, it seems to me that he was commenting on the bulk of the team, leaving at one time. Because I don't think it would be that shocking for two individuals to depart after the rest of the team had already left, a few months earlier. That seems to be what has happened there. But, it's another piece of evidence that I'm still sort of working through because there's a lot in that interview, and just figuring out who is saying what is already very complicated. So yeah, it's another one of these unprocessed pieces of primary source evidence. But I thought it was quite remarkable that that the man who was a descendant of Leigh Hunt, recorded an audio tape of this, kept it for 30 years. And then when I contacted him, he FedExed it to me. It's remarkably generous. He was like, “Sure, I'll FedEx it to you, you'll have it tomorrow.” And then I had it the next day.

**Yasmin El Shazly:**
Great. And we have a question from Janice Yellen. Did you look at their transcripts to see if they studied anything that would suit them to the strip?

**Jeremy Pope:**
I haven't looked at their transcripts because I haven't been able to find them. But I have actually spoken to family members about this. I wanted to know, if they study any ancient history, or may be classics, did they have that sort of background. And from what I remember from the Stepto family, I don't think they remembered whether or not Ocic himself had any sort of classical education. But I could be misremembering the tales here, but I seem to recall them mentioning that his wife did. And the question then is, at what point in the story does he meet his wife, I'd have to go back and piece it all together. But this was largely what I wanted to know, like, what sort of intellectual background are they bringing to this? Are they going to Nubia with expectations of what they're going to see? I know what Ocic Burns thought about it afterwards, based on what he's written in the essay, or at least I know a snippet of that, right. I can see some of his
commentary on it. But their preconceptions I haven't actually gotten to yet right. Even so, in the early 20th century, Nubia is referenced quite frequently under the name Ethiopia, in a lot of African American literature of various genres. So, it seems to me quite likely that they would know where they were going in some sense. Especially if you end up just downstream from Meroe, it's sort of hard to imagine that at some point before the trip, you wouldn't have a realization of where you were headed. But it was interesting to me that afterward, it was largely remembered as a trip to Egypt. But it just sort of become subsumed, Nubia and Egypt as a whole, right.

Yasmin El Shazly:
There is a question from Sarah Derbew. This is fascinating and critically important work. Will you publish a full book based on this research? If so, Tuskegee on the Nile, a phrase you mentioned would be a great title.

Jeremy Pope:
Yeah, that would be a good title for this. That was a clever little one that Breasted seems to have come up with. I started out with the intentions of – so I should back up, I am writing a large book that I just call Nubia Americana that is just about American invocations of and perceptions of Nubia going all the way back to about 1500. Because there's a lot. That's a pretty massive project. And honestly, I've been working on that since 2007. So, I've been working on that even longer than I was working on the Taharqo book that I published in 2014. I initially imagined this project is just a component of that. Then when I started to continually find that every thread that I polled kept pulling out more and more information that it was interesting and detailed, then I realized, okay, well, I might actually have to make this into an article of its own. And that was my original intention. And then with the latest developments, when a colleague cartoon told me that there's a woman in Sudan, who's actually descended from the British colonial officers who were there, and she's searching for her kin in the UK. And then when I discovered that one of my students is actually descended from a brother of one of these travelers, then I realized, okay, now this looks like it probably will have to be a separate book. I'm not sure that I really could do it justice in an article. But I've sort of had to adjust to that over time. It was supposed to be part of a book, then it became, okay, it's going to be an article, then it became, this is too large of an article. So I'm just now sort of making peace with the fact that I might have to write a book on this before I write the book that I was actually working on that led me to this. So yeah, you're probably right. And Tuskegee on the Nile, I don't know if I could come up with a better title than that. But I didn't want that in the title for the talk, because it gives away the when the first African Americans went and sort of who they were. I wanted to leave it mysterious, at least for the first five minutes.
Yasmin El Shazly:
Well, we're all waiting for the two books.

Jeremy Pope:
Yeah, two books.

Yasmin El Shazly:
Okay, a question from Terry. If I can ask a second question, how would you connect this attempt at colonizing Africa with African Americans to the earlier American colonization effort from the 1810s?

Jeremy Pope:
Well, the one of the 1810s has a lot of – well, that certainly has a lot of what they call Ethiopianist rhetoric behind it. There is an invocation of Psalm 68 directly in the early 19th century project. And consequently, it’s pitched as sort of a Christianizing mission in the 19th century. This one is very different in many ways, but some of the same assumptions are there. The assumption that African Americans can be the vanguard in leading Africans into some kind of westernized modernity. That's still there. The element that’s missing is any explicit invocation of Christianity. I haven’t found anybody talking about that in this particular project. But it is still essentially an echo of that of that mind-set that produced emigrations projects in the early 19th century. It’s still this idea that okay, African Americans have been placed in this special position by being in America and now they can Shepherd Africa into some new westernized modernity. That’s an assumption that was very enduring. And a lot has been written about that, to be honest. And this project definitely fits within that narrative, because a lot of the – at least, the issue for me is that I don’t know whether or not that narrative existed in the minds of the actual Tuskegee students who went. When Ocie Burns writes about this letter. First of all, it’s not a travelogue, so he doesn’t even specifically mention his own trip. But there's none of that sense of like the civilizing mission, none of that rhetoric in his essay. It’s very different from that. That rhetoric and that mind-set seems to come from the administrative personnel. The people who were in charge of sending students there. Booker T. Washington, Leigh Hunt, James Clarkson, the First Lady, the wife of Teddy Roosevelt. They’re the ones who invoke that very 19th century mind-set that African Americans can like lead Africa into the future. That is often referred to as Ethiopianism. But to me, Ethiopianism is a broader thing that – to me, that’s only like one dimension of Ethiopianism that sort of civilizing mission idea. Can we take one more?
Yasmin El Shazly:
Sure. Okay, a question from Alison McCal. Do you have a sense of how if at all the students’ experiences in Sudan affected Booker T. Washington subsequent perspectives and writings on race and identity?

Jeremy Pope:
I don't have a sense that they did. I don't see a direct link. But there is something of a transformation in Booker T. Washington. It's not a dramatic one. But Booker T. Washington, over the course of the next decade, maybe a decade and a half, does become considerably more aware of Africa and its history and it's reflected in his writings. And he speaks to later in his writings, like in the 1910s. I think in the 1910s, he speaks to this issue of how Africa's history had been misrepresented to him when he was in school. So, you get the sense that when he was in grade school, he started off being told, essentially demeaning myths about Africans. He has some very colorful ways of putting it, but I can't remember his exact words, I wouldn't want to try to quote him here. But he writes at length on this issue that when he was in school, Africa was presented to him as a place to be ashamed of. And then, by the time you get to the 1910s, he's writing about it in a very different way. He's essentially writing about it as a subject on which he had previously been misinformed. But I've never found a comment in any of his correspondence or his published work, that links any of that change in his opinion, to this trip by his students. I don't get the sense that he like directly consulted them. I'm not even sure if he ever saw them face to face after this trip. It seems to me like they sort of scattered to the winds, as far as I could tell. So, he does seem to have had a transformation, but I don't think this trip was what did it. It's remarkable to me that he doesn't even mention his students presence in Sudan, when he's corresponding with James Henry Breasted. He writes back to James Henry Breasted and Breasted was sort of trying to reach out and give him his presentation of what Nubia was. And Booker T. Washington seems very accepting of it and interested in it. But he actually says in those letters that he never really previously expressed an interest in it. So, before sending these students, it doesn't seem like he really – he was certainly no Ethiopianist. He doesn't seem to have been steeped in the importance of Nubia or Egypt, Booker T. Washington.

Yasmin El Shazly:
Well, thank you so much, Dr. Pope, for sharing your fascinating research with us. It's indeed great detective work and [indistinct].

Jeremy Pope:
Thanks, I'll keep working.
Yasmin El Shazly:
I want to thank you all for joining us today. If you are interested in ARCE’s efforts to research and conserve Egypt’s past, I urge you to visit arce.org and make a contribution today. We rely on your support to make our work possible. Thank you again, and I look forward to having you all join us at our next public lecture on March 7th. Good night.