

# Hubert Harrison

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Late last year, Columbia University Press published Jeffrey B. Perry's *Hubert Harrison: The Voice of Harlem Radicalism, 1883-1918*, the first of a promised two-volume study of a great, forgotten figure from the early Socialist Party. Given the unabashed racism so common within the movement, Harrison ended up leaving it to build a black nationalist group that antedated Marcus Garvey's efforts. (Indeed, though Harrison later wrote for and edited the Garveyite press, the flow of influence actually ran the other way: Garvey was, in effect, the charismatic figure who built an organization around Harrison's conception of "the New Negro.") As Perry puts it, Harrison was the most race-conscious of the class radicals and the most class-conscious of the race radicals. But after he died in 1927, he disappeared almost completely from the historical record. Having read Perry's edition of Harrison's selected writings from a few years ago, I was eager to see the biography and wasted no time in writing about it for The Barnes and Noble Review as well as doing a long profile of the author (a retired postal worker) for Inside Higher Ed And since Harrison appears to have been the first black book critic to make a profession of it, I published a short essay on that side of his work last month at the website of Columbia Journalism Review. Over the weekend, Perry spoke (with PowerPoint slides) to a packed room at the Socialism 2009 conference in Chicago, where he held the audience rapt for more than an hour. He has been touring with this talk and I think he said he's given it 70 times now at libraries and schools, and to unions and community groups, among others. The book, published seven months ago, is now in its third printing. For a good introduction to Harrison, see Perry's article now available at the *Socialism and Democracy* website.