Document Based Question

Analyze the ways that the Columbian Exposition of 1893 represented both the progress and challenges facing late 19th Century America.

In your response address TWO of the following:

Domestic Economic, Social and Political Developments
International Relations
The Rights of Minorities, Women and Immigrants

Use the documents and knowledge of the time period to develop your answer.

World’s First Ferris Wheel, Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893
Harrison Street Police Station is one of the nerve centers of criminal Chicago. The novelist who had at command the life story of those who, in a single week, enter this prim brick building surrounded by iron palings, would never need to draw on his imagination for incident, character, plot, romance, crime—every ingredient he could desire is there ready to hand, in the terrible realism of life. For the station is the central cesspool whither drain the poisonous drippings of the city which has become the cloaca maxima of the world. Chicago is one of the most conglomerate of all cosmopolitan cities, and Harrison Street Police Station receives the scum of the criminals of Chicago. It is also the great receiving house where the police and the bailsmen and the justices temporarily pen the unfortunate women who are raided from time to time "for revenue only," of which they yield a goodly sum to the pockets of the administrators of "justice."

Excerpt from "If Christ Came to Chicago," William Stead, 1894.
At it Again; PUCK Magazine, 1893.

Uncle Sam to N.Y. Sensation Press: "Calm down, Sonny - you couldn't kill the World's Fair and you can't scare me."
“My subject is Haiti, the Black Republic; the only self-made Black Republic in the world. I am to speak to you of her character, her history, her importance and her struggle from slavery to freedom and to statehood. I am to speak to you of her progress in the line of civilization; of her relation with the United States. …. Despite all of her history, despite all the machinations of her enemies at home, in spite of all temptations from abroad, despite all her many destructive revolutions, Haiti still remains a free and independent state. No power on this broad earth has yet induced or seduced her to seek a foreign protector, or has compelled her to bow her proud neck to a foreign government. We talk of assuming protectorate over Haiti. We had better not attempt it. The success of such an enterprise is repelled by her whole history. She would rather abandon her ports and harbors, retire to her mountain fastnesses, or burn her towns and shed her warm, red, tropical blood over their ashes than to submit to the degradation of any foreign yoke, however friendly. …. Whether civilized or savage, whatever the future may have in store for her, Haiti is the black man's country, now forever.”

Frederick Douglass, Ex-US Minister to Haiti; Address at World’s Fair; Chicago, 1893

“Our civilization is still in a middle stage—scarcely beast, in that it is no longer wholly guided by instinct; scarcely human, in that it is not yet wholly guided by reason. On the tiger no responsibility rests. We see him aligned by nature with the forces of life—he is born into their keeping and without thought he is protected. We see man far removed out of the lairs of the jungles, his innate instincts dulled by too near an approach to free will, his free will scarcely sufficiently developed to replace his instincts and afford him perfect guidance. He is becoming too wise to hearken always to instincts and desires; he is still too weak to always prevail against them.”

Theodore Dreiser, Sister Carrie, Chapter 8; 1900.

In behalf of my people, the American Indians, I hereby declare to you, the pale-faced race that has usurped our lands and homes, that we have no spirit to celebrate with you the great Columbian Fair now being held in this Chicago city, the wonder of the world. No; sooner would we hold the high joy day over the graves of our departed than to celebrate our own funeral, the discovery of America. And while you who are strangers, and you who live here, bring the offering of the handiwork of your own
lands and your hearts in admiration rejoice over the beauty and grandeur of this young republic and you say. —Behold the wonders wrought by our children in this foreign land, I do not forget that this success has been at the sacrifice of our homes and a once happy race.

Chief Simon Pokagon, Then Red Man’s Rebuke / The Red Man’s Greeting; Chicago, 1893.

CHICAGO. Oct. 29, 3:10 a.m. ~[Bulletin]--Carter H. Harrison, mayor of Chicago, was assassinated about 8:30 o'clock last evening. The terrible deed was committed by Eugene Patrick Prendergast, a carrier of newspapers……. “I did it.” In explanation of his act he said Mayor Harrison had promised to make him corporation counsel, and his failure to keep the promise had led to the murder. Prendergast is evidently a lunatic who never studied law.”

St. Paul Daily Globe, October 29, 1893.

The Manufactures Building is thirty and one-half acres; while with its galleries it provides more than forty-four acres of floor space. The total cost of the building was $1,700,000. The great roof is the feature of the structure, which makes the strongest impression upon every beholder. The roof and the trusses that support it are the largest ever built. The span is three hundred and eighty feet, and the height to the ridge of the roof from the floor is two hundred and two feet. These numbers and the statement that the building covers more than thirty acres give but an indefinite idea of its capacity. It is estimated that five thousand people could live without crowding within the walls of this monster in one thousand cottages, each 25x50 feet, which could be built upon the floor. The floor alone consumed more than 3,000,000 feet of lumber and five carloads of nails. There are eleven acres of skylights and forty carloads of glass in the roof.

Description of the Manufactures building.
From “The World’s Columbian Exposition” 1893.
Night photograph of the Court of Honor
Chicago Columbian Exposition, 1893
Postcard of US Naval Battleship [replica] exhibited at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. A replica was required due to the Rush-Bagot Treaty of 1818 which prohibited US or British battleships in the Great Lakes.

In consideration of the color proof character of the Exposition Management it was the refinement of irony to set aside August 25th to be observed as "Colored People's Day." In this wonderful hive of National industry, representing an outlay of thirty million dollars, and numbering its employes by the thousands, only two colored persons could be found whose occupations were of a higher grade than that of janitor, laborer and porter, and these two only clerkships. Only as a menial is the Colored American to be seen – the Nation's deliberate and cowardly tribute to the Southern demand "to keep the Negro in his place." And yet in spite of this fact, the Colored Americans were expected to observe a designated day as their day – to rejoice and be exceeding glad. A few accepted the invitation, the majority did not. Those who were present, by the faultless character of their service showed the splendid talent which prejudice had led the Exposition to ignore; those who remained away evinced a spirit of manly independence which could but command respect. They saw no reason for rejoicing when they knew that America could find no representative place for a colored man, in all its work, and that it remained for the Republic of Hayti to give the only acceptable representation enjoyed by us in the Fair. That republic chose Frederick Douglass to represent it as Commissioner through which courtesy the Colored American received from a foreign power the place denied to him at home.

From: The Reason the Colored American is not in the World’s Columbian Exposition; Ida Wells, Frederick Douglass, 1893.
In the belief that forces set in motion can never be recalled, shackles unbound can never be replaced, and that what may apply to one aggregate of women may apply to all—allowance made for laws, customs and beliefs, inherited or acquired, which may hasten or retard—we, the women of the United States, with the grip of the universe on heart and hand, pause, in this the hour of triumph, and question with a thrill of pain, "What of the Future?" Years of effort have found culmination in a proper and befitting display. Never in the history of nations has there been such revelation of woman's capability and deeds as in this gala year. But commencement is almost over. Work has passed examination. Carefully prepared speeches have been delivered. The world has seen, heard, and applauded. With the end comes a beginning.

"We, the Women." by Miss Cara Reese.

So far as women are concerned, if the test of their advancement be the degree of influence they exercise upon their age and the part they play in culture and progress, we may seriously ask ourselves in what respect we have raised the standard of womanly usefulness? And whether we are not in danger of losing sight of the homely virtues of wifehood and motherhood in our strife for public equality with men? If our best and brightest are to be devoted to competition with men in the learned professions, may we not question where the home-makers are to come from to whom we must look for the motherhood of the next generation which shall create our rulers? Without doubt it is sweet and proper to serve one's country in public; but what will result if only dull-witted ones are left to maintain the elevation of the home? In what shall we have excelled the women whose memories we have traced among the relics of their lost civilizations? Shall we, with all the gains of the ages about us, do no more than they have done before us? And if, from the sacred precincts of the home, we can not hope to achieve greater blessings than they gained for their kind, upon what point of vantage shall we plant the lever with which we women hope to move the world?

As Director of Works for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, [Daniel] Burnham not only envisioned a “beautiful city” …[but] believed that an ideal city could be both beautiful and commercially efficient. His ideas had enormous influence on towns and cities across America and even abroad. He was an early advocate for parks and open space who understood their importance in fostering a deep sense of community in a democracy. Although his urban plans are criticized for their monumentality and absence of social concerns such as better housing, they have an identifiable coherence.”

Excerpt from Make No Little Plans: Daniel Burnham and the American City; PBS, 2010
The Kingdom of Hawaii pavilion in the International Section of the Columbian Exhibition, Chicago, 1893.
The Women’s Building; Columbian Exposition Chicago, 1893
Moving Sidewalk; Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893.