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Bloodlines, Black Indians, and the Numerology of Race

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By Tiffany M. DiMaggio

Introduction

This project provides a historical overview of Black-Indian relations in the United States Southeast and traces the evolution of early twentieth century African American scholarship that conceptualizes race mixing. Black Indians are mixed race people of African descent who have current or historical ties to American Indian tribes.[1] Diverse populations of Black Indians exist throughout the Americas, and a number are from the United States Southeast. This is due to the fact that before their removal to Oklahoma, the tribes of this region dealt intimately with African peoples who were brought to the Americas as slaves. Tribes such as the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, Cherokee, and Creek owned Blacks as slaves during the 19th century. These Indian nations had been in contact with Whites for three centuries and as a consequence, adapted their traditional Indigenous forms of social organization—then considered savage by Whites—to resemble that of Europeans.[2] This allowed certain members of the tribe greater access and political maneuverability in their beleaguered dealings with the United States government.

Currently, there is much debate over the enrollment status of Black Indians, namely those who are descendants of former slaves, called freedmen. The controversy concerns blood quantum inventories on historic tribal rolls which are used today to determine who is

[1] For the purposes of this project, I use the hyphenated term "Black-Indian" in reference to social and historical relations between the two groups. I use the unhyphenated term to refer to groups of individuals of mixed African and Native American ancestry. The complexity of this issue will be explored in greater depth later.

[2] The term "Indigenous" can be defined as a diverse range of non-White peoples living throughout the Americas whom, upon contact with Europeans, became mistakenly known as "Indians." I later use the term "Indigenous" to describe African peoples as well because of their similar (if not equivocal in some cases) relationship with Europeans.

and who is not eligible to receive federal benefits as registered members of a tribe. Most freedmen were not listed on the rolls as having a blood quantum, or percent degree of Indian blood. It is difficult or impossible, therefore, for their descendants to document blood lineage. I use the word numerology in the title of this project to describe the numerically obsessed, quasi-scientific practice of determining blood quantum. The fact that there are, today, enrolled members of the Cherokee nation who carry cards claiming 1/2048 Cherokee blood is proof that this logic (or lack thereof) persists.[3]

The freedmen controversy is a complex legal issue that calls into question the nature of historic relationships between the descendants of displaced African slaves and American Indians. Susan Miller's article, "Seminoles and Africans under Seminole Law: Sources and Discourses of Tribal Sovereignty and 'Black Indian' Entitlement," argues that regardless of blood lineage, Blacks were largely not incorporated into the existing Seminole kinship system of clan lineage and their descendants are therefore not entitled to benefits as members of the federally recognized Seminole tribe today.[4] In the past year, both the Cherokee and Seminole nations voted to disenroll the freedmen descendants, who are now organizing to appeal these decisions through federal courts.[5]

This project does not focus on the current state of the freedmen controversy. It instead deals with the historical circumstances that created such a complex and persistent issue: one that centers on the question of race. It also brings to light an often-ignored

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[3] Although I have thus far used "tribe" and "nation" interchangeably, an important political distinction exists between these two terms, the historical context for which is provided in a later section of this work.
[4] Miller, Susan A. "Seminoles and Africans under Seminole Law: Sources and Discourses of Tribal Sovereignty and 'Black Indian' Entitlement." *Wicazo Sa Review* 20.1 (2005) 23-47.
[5] This work does not include an in-depth analysis of the historical circumstances dealing with any tribe other than the Cherokee. For more information on slaveholding among other Indian nations, consult the work of Daniel P. Littlefield in *Africans and Seminoles: From Removal to Emancipation*, *The Chickasaw Freedmen: A People Without A Country*, and *Africans and Creeks: From the Colonial Period to the Civil War.*

chapter of United States history involving the institution of slavery and its legacy among American Indian tribes. In calling this bitter memory to mind, the freedmen issue confronts fundamental questions about how racial identity is defined, by whom, and for what purposes. These are the questions this project aims to address.

This is accomplished by surveying the secondary literature on Black and Indian issues of slavery and race, specifically as it was played out within the Cherokee nation, and by examining a body of scholarly literature from the early twentieth century in history and anthropology that sought to define Blacks and Indians. During the 1920s and 30s, a handful of pioneering African American social scientists (who may or may not have had Indian ancestry) began finding new ways to talk about race and race mixing. I argue that despite working in an era of pervasive White supremacist ideology and intense violence against peoples of color, the methodologies of these scholars challenged the racist philosophies of their times and did their part in initiating a paradigm shift that—thirty years later—would come to fruition in the Civil Rights Movement.

Popular and scholarly versions of history regarding chattel slavery usually exclude the Indian nations whose presence in the American South predates both Europeans and Africans by thousands of years. This conspicuous oversight in historical literature results first from the legacy of slavery and racism in the United States and second from the shortcomings of the Civil Rights Movement. The greatest challenge in writing an overview of these histories is transcending each of two stereotypes that have been superimposed upon non-White peoples. These are: 1) Indians and Africans were blank slates upon which Europeans inscribed the tenets of civilization, and 2) Indians and Africans, as Indigenous people, were (and are) all alike. Both of these powerful misconceptions—equally

entrenched and similarly harmful—invoke images of non-White peoples as primitive and savage. The first asserts that Africans, when brought to the Americas, absorbed the so-called tenants of civilization like innocent children. In the United States during the nineteenth century especially, this was justification for continuing the institution of slavery. From a European perspective, slavery was helpful and beneficial for Africans, because it taught them civilization. This same stereotype was used to justify the taking of American Indian children away from their parents for instruction in government-run boarding schools where Indian children were forced to cut their hair, discontinue use of their native languages, and learn to practice Christianity. The second misconception alleges that all Indigenous peoples are the same: savage, childlike, and incapable of abstract thought.

This project attempts to untangle the racial terminology that has been assigned to Blacks and Indians. These are the terms by which a whole range of diverse peoples from ethnically and geographically distinct regions of Africa and the Americas have become known. In contemporary scholarly discussions about Native Americans, the use of the word "Indian" is occasionally brought into question. African Americans have likewise seen a variety of labels come and go. Every decade or so, a new set of terminology comes into fashion to describe people of color. I do not mean to suggest that these labels are arbitrarily assigned or that the evolution of such terms is unimportant. The nuances of this issue will be considered throughout this project in recognition of the fact that given their historical origins, the terms "Black" and "Indian" continue to be politically charged. This study of identity, however, does not seek to bring a new term into vogue for the discussion of Black Indians. I instead seek to interrogate existing terms in all of their volatility, and to examine the historical circumstances that created them. An assessment of scholarship from

the 1930s is of particular importance because it illuminates an important moment in the history of academic inquiry about people of color. The research of prominent European academics from this era such as Franz Boas and Alfred Kroeber fixated on race, kinship, and the social organization of Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas. Their work is well known. An inspection of the research produced by African American scholars of the same discipline in this time period, such as Caroline Bond Day, Zora Neale Hurston, and Laurence P. Foster, as it pertains to race, race mixing, and Black Indians has yet to be done.

Social science research of this era relied heavily upon methods of measuring human physical proportions. Laurence Foster's 1931 doctoral dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania entitled, "Negro-Indian Relationships in the Southeast" includes an extensive inventory of physical measurements of Black Indian peoples including lip height, nose width, foot length, and more. The work of Caroline Bond Day, a multiracial woman who studied under eugenicist Ernest Hooton at Harvard University in the 1920s, likewise focuses on blood quantum determinations through the use of calibrated instruments. Scholars like Foster and Day were seeking to quantify cultural and hereditary distinctions between the different phenotypes of the human species using the scientific method. Such practices have largely been discredited today; however, during the first half of the twentieth century the study of race as a science—including the fractionization of blood lineage—was considered a legitimate field of inquiry.

Tracing the methods of early Black scholars who dealt with the issue of race mixing encourages a consideration of such questions as: How did racial terminology and its attendant philosophies function in historical context? What purposes did scientific racism and the systematic measuring of Black Indian bodies serve? How did scholars of color

confront the challenges of conducting social science research in environments openly hostile to their concerns? A review of the literature leading up to the 20th century—in particular the 1930's—exposes the cultural and intellectual framework of the era and provides a basis for understanding the troubled terminology associated with the study of Black/Indian relationships.

Who Owns the Past?

I. Historical Methodology

The story of slavery and racial thinking among the Indian nations of the Southeastern United States is complex. In providing a framework for interpreting such complexity, a history of both Cherokees and West Africans individually is in order. It is important to view both Africans and Indians in their original contexts first before talking about their contact and interactions with Europeans or one another. This approach is along the lines of a method employed by Allan Gallay's 2003 work, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* which suggests using an integrative theory to uncover patterns of group and individual interactions. Gallay recommends examining Southern history from an individual and sub-regional perspective within the larger framework of the Atlantic world.[6] Robert Green employs a comparable strategy in his research on Jesuit conversion methods in the Spanish Pacific world.[7]

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[6] Gallay, Allen. *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

[7] Robert Green, "The Society of Jesus in the Philippines, 1590-1600." {Master's thesis, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2006}.

Traditionally minded historical conversations that include Indigenous peoples tend to rely upon conclusions derived from late nineteenth and early twentieth century anthropological studies, the limitations of which will be explored in greater depth throughout this work. Since the Enlightenment, Western scholars have depended upon the scientific method in obtaining "objective" knowledge in each of their disciplines of study. While the scientific method has doubtlessly proven a powerful tool in collecting and organizing information, its limitations are often dictated by social and political factors that influence the setting of the experiment. The scientist, as an "impartial observer," is required to isolate his subject in order to gain a mastery of its "true" properties. In the process of removing the elements of nature from their context, the subject becomes an object, detached from its real world function. The laboratory, though claiming to be a sterile environment, remains a cultural artifact in its own right, along with each of the conclusions reached therein. When applied to Indigenous peoples, scientific conclusions regarding race and inheritability have had serious social and legal implications. This was demonstrated most visibly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in manifestations of White supremacy that found validation in the academic discipline of physical anthropology.

Since the 1960s and 70s, the validity of these conclusions have come into question by scholars concerned with representing the lived experiences of non-White peoples in academia. In discussing Native histories, ideas about the use of an Indigenous theory have begun to be developed by scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Inés Talamantez. In her work, Talamantez emphasizes the importance of recognizing Indigenous definitions of humanness that place the individual within a larger framework of kinship ties that; 1)

include the non-human realm; and 2) are rooted in the specificity of landscape. She argues that traditional Native worldviews include a sense of moral responsibility toward all aspects of daily existence.[8] As evidence for this claim, she cites the fact that the *Nde'* (Apache) language—like most Indigenous languages—lacks a word for "religion" in the formal sense. Lakota scholar Vine Deloria, Jr. expresses this sense of unity that underlies native traditions in *God is Red*:

> Behind the apparent kinship between animals, reptiles, birds, and human beings in the Indian way stands a great conception shared by a great majority of the tribes. Other living things are not regarded as insensitive species. Rather, they are 'people' in the same manner as the various tribes of human beings are people.[9]

Indigenous holism is predicated upon philosophical notions of balance and harmony with the natural world in the interest of health and survival. This important distinction calls for the use of an interdisciplinary method for understanding Indigenous histories. Such a method includes a consideration of land base, kinship, language, political structure, ritual, moral philosophy, and ethics.[10] In talking about historical relationships between displaced Africans and Indigenous Americans in the United States Southeast, this paper uses the aforementioned categories to discuss the differences and perhaps the similarities between Indigenous Africans and Indigenous Americans. Doing so challenges the limitations of the traditional historical approach and brings to light a more detailed and accurate portrait of the living past.

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[8] Ines Talamantez, UCSB Professor of Religious Studies (lecture, Santa Barbara, CA, May 2006).
[9] Vine Deloria, *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 1994), 89.
[10] I use "kinship" here to invoke both the human and non-human realm in terms of sense of relatedness. This is in line with Deloria's definition of the term (see *God is Red*).

As has been highlighted by an increasing number of scholars since the 1970s, Indigenous histories often fail to make substantial contributions to the pages of American history textbooks. In engaging the issue of omission, Talamantez writes, "Historians seem to think that Indians stood mute among the trees, helplessly watching the invasion and occupation of their lands, unable to think or act."[11] Linda T. Smith identifies a fundamental difference between the traditional approach of the historical discipline and the methods Indigenous writers struggle to employ when analyzing the American past. She writes:

> Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying.[12]

To engage in the process Smith describes is to make efforts at reorienting the focus of the historical discipline to include Indigenous peoples not merely as "others" or as objectified specimens for study, but as willful, thinking actors.[13] What is to be gained by this? For Indigenous peoples and their descendents, it is about assuming ownership of a collective past.

II. Orality and The Power of Story

In the oral tradition, storytellers create historical narratives in the same way that women weave baskets. Just as baskets are used to store acorn flour, dried berries, or even

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[11] Ines Talamantez, "Transforming American Conceptions about Native America: Vine Deloria, Jr., Critic and Coyote," in *Native Voices: American Indian Identity and Resistance*, Ed. Grounds, Tinker, and Wilkins. (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2003), 273.
[12] Linda T. Smith. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1999), 28.
[13] See Edward Said's *Orientalism*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

water, carefully woven stories contain traditional values, memories, and identities. For example, the relationship between the weaver of the basket and the plants she uses is an intimate one. Elderly women will often admonish younger generations of weavers to "thank the plants" while gathering them. The respect and often times, reverence, paid to non-human forms of life reflects the belief in kinship between humans, plants, and animals described by Deloria and Talamantez. In this way, the entire process of basket weaving becomes what could be described as a religious act, from the creative spark that initiates the aesthetic design to the gathering of plant materials to the pattern of weaving them together. [14] The final product is then put to use in the household or for ceremonial purposes.

Like a traditionally-woven basket, the process of recounting oral narratives—which sometimes takes days at a time—also has a useful function in Native societies.[15] In speaking broadly about Indigenous cultural traditions, this is the means by which myths containing cultural values and living histories are passed on from one generation to the next. The re-telling of such stories is not undertaken haphazardly. In many cultures, a specific individual was chosen to bear the responsibility of remembering and re-telling ancestral narratives. Like the tradition of basketry, the tradition of orality includes, to varying degrees, a sense of religiosity. For example, Athabaskan people of the American Southwest consider the act of formulating speech highly important. The spoken word is

[14] To introduce the concept of religion in this context requires explanation. Jonathan Z. Smith notes that when applied to non-European cultures, religion is 1) a category imposed by the colonizer, 2) thought of as implicitly universal, 3) constructed in such a way that it appears natural to the other, and 4) anthropological rather than theological. For an analysis of these conclusions, see Smith's article entitled "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*. Ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[15] Cherokee writer Marilou Awiakta introduces a similar analogy in *Selu: Seeking the Corn Mother's Wisdom.* (Golden: Fulcrumb Publishing, 1993).

often associated with the vital act of breathing. Language formation is a three step cycle: In speaking, one first absorbs information from the world beyond the body. This information is then interpreted with the mind and carried back by the breath out into the world. In this way, the act of formulating language is thought of by *Nde'* traditionalists as vital to the continuance of the culture; as simple and essential, in fact, as breathing. The importance of the breath and the power of the voice—calling and responding, giving, taking, and returning—are accented with drums and rattles in the reverential singing and chanting of ceremony. This process represents a living means by which time and action are recorded.[16]

When it comes to writing about history, however, most historians are much more comfortable with texts.[17] They are not without good reason. Given the great upheavals experienced by Indigenous groups in the last five hundred years, traditions of orality have not always remained in tact. Countless songs, languages, rituals, ceremonies, and aesthetic traditions—some thousands of years old in origin—have been all but lost entirely in the process of assimilation. An example of this is seen in policy enacted throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the U.S. government where Native children were forcibly removed from their parents' care and placed in European-style boarding schools. In such institutions, Indian children first had their long hair sheered off and began instruction in the virtues of Christianity and European culture. They were taught to view their own cultures as uncivilized, and faced punitive action for speaking their Native languages. The process of forcefully "civilizing" Indian children continued throughout the

[16] Deloria, Jr. also deals with the distinctness of Indigenous histories in chapter six of *God Is Red*.
[17] Many texts authored by American Indians—including tribal newspapers and records of government correspondence—appear by the mid-eighteenth century and are available for historical analysis. The Sequoyah Research Center, located at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock houses the world's largest collection of Native American print media.

twentieth century. This legally-sanctioned kidnapping was justified by the logic of Richard Henry Pratt, who coined the phrase: "Kill the Indian, save the man."[18]

The residue of this debilitating idea and others like it persists in incalculable ways. Indeed, the simple notion that non-literate peoples are capable of abstract thought has only begun to be seriously challenged within the academy. Most of the work in this regard has been undertaken by Indigenous scholars who themselves experience the threat of cultural extinction regularly. In her discussion of pedagogy, Smith argues that history only becomes empowering for Indigenous peoples when it begins to yield, expose, or promote alternative systems of knowledge. The work of Talamantez indicates that well-established traditions of knowledge have long existed within Indigenous communities. In efforts to recover or perhaps continue the legacy of these cultural traditions, they must be understood and accounted for by present and future generations. This first involves identifying the effects of colonialism on the lands, minds, and bodies of Indigenous peoples and engaging critical discussions about these contested histories. As the struggle to assume ownership of the historical narrative ensues, one fact becomes increasingly clear: History is about power. Smith writes, "It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others."[19] For this reason, history, when written by Indigenous peoples for their own purposes is intrinsically subversive.

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[18] I mention Pratt at this point in the conversation without engaging the nuanced reality of Indian-White relations on the American Frontier. Ironically, Pratt's position of "kill the Indian, save the man" allowed for the continuance of American Indian lives in places where pressure from encroachment meant, in many instances, their outright massacre. For more information on Indian boarding schools, see David Adams' *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875 – 1928.* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1997).

[19] Smith, *Decolonizing*, 34.

If this is true to varying degrees today, consider the climate inhabited in the 1930s by scholars of color such as Laurence Foster, Caroline Bond Day, and Zora Neale Hurston. Taken in context, their efforts in the academy are truly groundbreaking. The purpose of the broad historical overview presented in this work is to provide context for considering early twentieth century works—such as that by Foster, Day, and Hurston—on race relations in the Southeast. I have based this summary on the work of scholars who project Indigenous voices—not uncritically—in their writing, such as Daniel F. Littlefield, Theda Perdue, William McLaughlin, and Circe Sturm. My work begins with an insider's view of Cherokee history. For this, I have used the book *Selu*, by Cherokee writer Marilou Awiakta. Following this section I include a historical overview of West African peoples prior to the development of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. In doing so, I have drawn upon a range of works from James Sweet, John Thornton, David Blassingame, and Colin A. Palmer.

From *Aniyunwia* to a "Domestic Dependent Nation"

The Cherokee people are autochthonous to the Appalachian basin. Their homelands at various times included portions of present day states North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Georgia, Virginia, and West Virginia. The Cherokee consider themselves to be descendant of *Ginitsi Selu*, translated literally as Grandmother Corn, the Cherokee female deity. At that time, the Cherokee people referred to themselves as *Aniyunwia*, translated literally as "the real people."[20] Cherokees speak Tsalagi, an Iroquoian language that differs substantially from the Mvskokean languages of their

[20] Awiakta, *Selu*, 9.

neighbors, the Choctaw, Creek, Seminole, and Chickasaw. Tsalagi is still spoken today in Western North Carolina and Oklahoma. Prior to European contact, Cherokees grew corn, beans, squash, and sunflowers in the fertile river basins throughout their homelands. Hernando de Soto's 16th century expedition into the Cherokee homelands yielded an account that suggests women were powerful actors in Cherokee society. Later observers such as James Lawson also described Cherokee *cacicas* or "queens" who held positions of elite rule and accumulated great wealth.[21]

In her discussion of Cherokee definitions of community, Historian Theda Perdue notes the elasticity of the designation *Aniyunwia*. According to her, boundaries separating who was and who was not Cherokee were sometimes fluid. Of greater concern was the placement of one's family within the primary mode of Cherokee social organization: the clan system. A matrilineal society, clan ordering was defined and perpetuated through women.[22] It is impossible to provide a detailed analysis of the nature of pre-contact Cherokee social structures and belief systems using primary documents. Originally a people of oral tradition, Cherokees did not leave written records about their own lives until Sequoyah (Red Paint clan) developed a syllabary to write the language in the early nineteenth century. In examining anthropological accounts of Cherokee social structure and investigating oral narratives, it becomes possible to catch a glimpse at the underlying moral philosophy of pre-contact Cherokee society. Perdue writes:

> They conceived of their world as a system of categories that opposed and balanced one another. In this belief system, women balanced men just as summer balanced winter, plants balanced animals, and farming balanced hunting. Peace and prosperity depended on the maintenance of boundaries between these opposing categories, and blurring the lines between them threatened disaster.[23]

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[21] Theda Perdue. *Cherokee Women* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 9.
[22] Ibid., 42.
[23] Ibid., 9.

Records indicate that pre-contact Cherokee culture was heavily influenced by the ancient Mississippian cultures that inhabited the Southeast between the ninth and sixteenth centuries. These societies featured centrally-organized chiefdoms based on agricultural economies. The worldview of Mississippian cultures seems to have revolved around ritually constructed mounds that appear to be centers for worship of the sun and the cycles of the land.[24]

Europeans first encountered this world with the arrival of Hernando de Soto in 1539. De Soto's arrival initiated an epidemic of Old World diseases throughout the Southeast, which surely began to offset the balance described in Perdue's assessment of their culture. Two other Spanish expeditions would visit Cherokee homelands long before British settlers began to heavily impact the region, one in 1559 led by Tristán de Luna, and another in 1567 with the explorations of Juan Pardo.

Stimulated by economic competition from French and Spanish colonial ventures, Britain began establishing colonies in the Americas by the late sixteenth century. In summer of 1584, Sir Walter Raleigh attempted to establish a permanent settlement in the homelands of Algonquian people who lived near the North Carolina coast. Not soon after, colonists accused a local Indian of stealing a silver cup from one of their ships. The Indian denied having taken it, but the colonists decided to punish them by burning an Algonquian

[24] See Charles Hudson's work on Mississippian cultures of the U.S. Southeast in *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando de Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 11-30; as well as his fictionalized account of prehistoric Mississippian worldviews, *Conversations With the High Priest of Coosa* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); See also Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 8.

village. This led to a series of counterattacks and raids which eventually forced leaders of the colony to abandon their efforts.[25]

Despite this early failure, the trickle of British settlers had developed into a steady flow by the seventeenth century. These settlers—many of whom were merchants and traders—established themselves first along the Atlantic coast but quickly penetrated the dense woodland forests of the interior, using American timber for the construction of their settlements. Although language and cultural barriers complicated Indian-White interactions, by the late seventeenth century, trade relationships had developed into intricate networks of alliances throughout the Southeast. This time period was marked by bitter warfare between European settlers and the Southeastern tribes. American slavery has its roots in the chaos of this time period.[26] Historian Roger Nichols writes,

> Within just a few years, [English] traders began to seize women and children in villages where the hunters could not pay their debts. Then they held the captives for ransom or sold them as slaves. The Carolina merchants also encouraged intertribal warfare, urging their allies to capture and enslave other people.[27]

The goal of the British colonies was to compete with French and Spanish enterprise and extract wealth from New World resources by developing markets based on the production and cultivation of raw materials. Revenues that were generated were sent back to the British crown. Before bringing Africans to the American Southeast, British colonists initially sought to use Indians as slaves to fulfill their need for labor. The Indian slave

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[25] Roger L. Nichols. *American Indians in U.S. History.* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003). 42-43.

[26] Early European explorers describe an indigenous institution they describe as "slavery" among the Cherokee. Perdue argues that aboriginal Cherokee bondage was thoroughly dissimilar to the European notion of slavery. She writes, "The Cherokees called these unfree people *atsi nahsa'i*...and the role they played in aboriginal society can only be discovered within the context of the subsistence economy, the social and political organization, and the values and beliefs which were so alien to Europeans." *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866* . (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 4.

[27] Nichols, *American Indians,* 58.

trade, through profitable, proved difficult. In 1730, a delegation of seven Cherokees traveled to London to sign a treaty which limited Cherokee trade to the British and excluded the Spanish and French from settling in their territory.[28] As this complex alliance developed, British traders adopted the practice of exploiting existing divisions between Southeastern tribes to incite warfare between them. The captives that resulted from these skirmishes became slaves who were then traded to the British colonists. The Indian slave trade eventually failed for several reasons. First, the Indians they sought to enslave perished quickly from Old World diseases; second, they had an intimate working knowledge of the landscape and often had relations nearby that could facilitate escape; and third, many Indians spoke at least one common language and could communicate effectively. As a result, Indian slaves often evaded the labor demands of their vastly outnumbered English masters. The Spanish were already familiar with the problems of enslaving Indians. In describing the labor supply situation in New Spain and Peru during the late seventeenth century, J.H. Elliot writes:

> As the Indigenous population shrank, however, it was increasingly incapable of meeting the numerous demands imposed upon it. Since it was unthinkable that settlers and their descendents should engage I menial labour, the only remaining option…was to import a coerced labour force from overseas. The richest and most accessible source of supply was black Africa.[29]

Eliot's words articulate the primary European impetus for importing Africans to the New World as forced laborers. By the time the British began bringing Africans to work in U.S., the Spanish and Portuguese had already established themselves in the slave market.

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[28] Perdue, *Slavery*, 20.
[29] J. H. Elliot. Empires of the Atlantic World. *Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 99.

As a result, African slavery developed in New Spain and Brazil at a completely different pace than it did amongst the British colonies of the Southeast.

The slave trade initiated profound changes in the social structures of the Southeastern nations. European settlers purposely provoked conflict between Cherokees and their neighbors. As the tribes fought with one another, their war captives became valuable commodities at the trading post. Cherokee women traditionally held positions of power and authority in the tribal decision-making process, especially regarding the treatment and utility of captives. Settlers, however, dealt only with male warriors as trading partners and women were left out of the transaction. Perdue notes that during the eighteenth century, three to five times more Indian women were enslaved than men.[30] This disparity resulted in upheaval for the matrilineal peoples throughout the Southeast.

By the eighteenth century, Cherokees had begun to centralize their society along the lines of a more European model of governance. As wealthy, slave-holding Whites gained access to Cherokee landholdings, and on occasion married into the tribe, the idea of race took hold alongside the plantation economies they introduced. Perdue argues that the adoption of the practice of plantation slavery by Cherokees represents a form of "social schizophrenia" induced by the traumatic effects of European invasion and exploitation. She does this by applying Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* to the Cherokee context. Memmi's theory is that in response to foreign invasion, the oppressed tries to divorce himself from his own culture and forge a new identity. According to Memmi, this new identity is most often modeled upon that of the oppressor.[31] Perdue makes clear the point that for Cherokees, the fundamental shift away from their traditional

[30] Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 68.
[31] Perdue, *Slavery,* xiii

way of life did not result by choice. She argues that this resulted via direct or indirect force and coercion in the interest of basic survival. Cherokee anthropologist Circe Sturm writes, "this appropriation and internalization of Euroamerican notions of racial identity, in addition to concurrent changes in political organization, helped set the stage for the emergence of Cherokee nationalism in the early nineteenth century."[32]

Historian William McLoughlin emphasizes the importance of nationalism as the only option for Cherokees who wished to remain on their land which was increasingly threatened by White encroachment. Following President Andrew Jackson's signing of the Indian Removal Act in 1830, the U.S. government struggled with state legislators from Georgia to produce a working legal definition for the Cherokees. Soon thereafter, the U.S. Supreme Court under Chief Justice John Marshall defined them as a "domestic dependent nation." McLouglin writes, "The Cherokees put the emphasis on 'nation'; the Bureau of Indian Affairs put the emphasis on 'dependent.' Congress preferred to define Indians as 'wards of the government.'"[33] Cherokee hopes in retaining their homelands did not prevail. On December 29, 1835, a minority, slave-owning faction of the Cherokee nation signed the Treaty of New Echota, relinquishing the Cherokee nation of all of their landholdings east of the Mississippi, and agreeing to their removal westward. This was seen as an act of treason by principal chief, John Ross and the rest of the Cherokee nation. The minority party had no authority to sign the Treaty of New Echota, but it was recognized and protected by Andrew Jackson's administration. In response to outcry in defense of Cherokee

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[32] Sturm, Circe. Blood Politics: *Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 43.
[33] William McLoughlin. *After the Trail of Tears: The Cherokees' Struggle for Sovereignty 1839-1880.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), xi.

homelands, Jackson used race to justify his actions. He said these words before Congress in 1833:

> [The Cherokee] have neither the intelligence, the industry, the moral habits, nor the desire of improvement which are essential to any favorable change in their condition. Established in the midst of another and a superior race, and with out appreciating the causes of their inferiority or seeking to control them, they must necessarily yield to the force of circumstance and ere long disappear.[34]

In 1838, the U.S. Army assembled the remaining men, women, and children of the Cherokee nation at gunpoint in preparation for their 800 mile march to Indian Territory. Nearly one-fourth of the total Cherokee population perished of measles, whooping cough, dysentery, fatigue, and exposure along Trail of Tears.[35]

The period following their arrival in Indian Territory is among the darkest in Cherokee history. Bitterness over the treason that had been committed erupted into civil war. Soon, however, the issue of slavery—one that had long been a source of strain and upheaval within the Cherokee nation—would engage the entire United States in a conflict of epic proportions. Just how the American Civil War affected the Cherokees will be explored in the next section of this work. First, however, we will look to Africa.

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[34] McLoughlin, *After the Trail of Tears*, page 3.
[35] Theda Perdue and Michael Green. *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears.* (New York: Viking Press, 2007), 139.

Stealing Africa

Throughout the sixteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, between ten and twenty million Africans were brought to the Americas by forceful currents of greed and the Atlantic Ocean.[36] Of this number, it is estimated that one of three did not survive the middle passage.[37] African American peoples in the United States can rarely claim lineage to any specific African nation. This knowledge was stripped of their ancestors in the process of enslavement. Albert Raboteau describes the undoing of African family ties across the generations of time as "a tragedy of such scope that it is difficult to imagine, much less comprehend."[38]

There was significant diversity among the African peoples who were brought to the Americas as slaves. Historians of the Black experience have analyzed the details of this in a variety of different ways. Noted scholar John Blassingame asserts that most Africans who were taken into slavery were members of West African polities who practiced farming and agriculture. He writes, "like many Indians, African hunting, pastoral, and fishing peoples were too nomadic or war-like to be captured."[39] Agrarian peoples, according to Blassingame, were a more suitable choice for plantation owners seeking a labor force.[40] It is estimated that the majority of captured and enslaved Africans who embarked upon the Middle Passage belonged to the Ibo, Ewe, Biafada, Bakongo, Wolof, Bambara, Ibibio, Serer, or Arada peoples, speakers of the Congo-Kordofanian language family. These

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[36] Robin Kelly and Earl Lewis. *To Make Our World Anew Volume I: A History of African Americans to 1880.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), viii.
[37] Howard Zinn. *A Peoples History of the United States: 1492-present.* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 29.
[38] Albert J. Raboteau. *Slave Religion.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 4.
[39] John W. Blassingame. *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South, Revised and Enlarged Edition.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 5.
[40] Only 10 percent of slaves taken from Africa were imported to what is today the United States. The vast majority were distributed throughout the colonial empires of Spain and Portugal.

people are native to the ample rainforests near the Atlantic coast and the open stretches of Savanna of the interior. It is important to emphasize the complex and dynamic nature of West and Central African societies. Many, including the kingdoms of Mali and Ghana, featured great wealth and military forces with as many as 200,000 soldiers around 1070 AD.[41]

Despite the complex variety among African peoples, a striking feature of almost all African societies is seen in the pronounced importance of kinship and religious traditions. Africans organized themselves in a range of ways, from small bands to large empires. The religious traditions of West Africa were likewise diverse, and included Islamic, Christian, and Indigenous traditions. For scholars of African history such as Albert Raboteau, Colin A. Palmer, and James H. Sweet, the unifying characteristic underlying the great diversity of African societies is the significance of kinship and community ties. Like the Native peoples of the Americas, Indigenous African social networks were also pervaded by a sense of the religious.

Raboteau asserts that the greatest number of Africans taken into slavery came from peoples who adhered—to some extent—to traditional beliefs. He notes that caution must be applied in grouping the religious traditions of all tribal peoples of West Africa one way, since many centuries and seasons of existence have seen the coming and going of important changes in terms of social structure, religion, and language. In spite of this, there did exist overarching similarities that included a pantheistic understanding of local spirit deities that manifested themselves through plants, animals, and the cycles of the land. African belief in spirit deities was often superseded to varying degrees by a more general

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[41] John Thornton. *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800, Second Edition.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 311.

belief in a Supreme Being, as well as a concern with the wellbeing and appeasement of ancestor spirits.[42] Palmer describes the importance of religiosity and family ties in the construction of African societies. He writes:

> Kinship ties, which united members of an ethnic group, were particularly strong. African societies were also deeply religious; most had a supreme god and other lesser deities. There was hardly any distinction between the religious and the secular, or civil aspects of life. Religious beliefs determined when almost all activities, such as planting seasons, harvest time, or the naming of children, would take place.[43]

James H. Sweet's work on the Portuguese slave trade offers insight into the ways in which African family ties flexed, shattered, and in rare instances, survived the Middle Passage. Although his study focuses primarily on Brazil, Sweet's conclusions bear importance for the African Diaspora throughout the Americas. Sweet emphasizes the importance of family structure and, specifically, traditional rites of passage for African men and women as they came of age and became functioning members of society. Upon being torn from their ancestral traditions, homelands, and family members, Africans experienced debilitating trauma which, upon their arrival in the Americas, facilitated their vulnerability as slaves. Sweet captures the character of this dehumanizing process in his work, *Recreating Africa*, and writes:

> No matter how successful an individual [African slave] was at creating new webs of kinship, these fictive or corporate webs of kinlike relationships could never replace what was lost in the break from the natal kinship unit. To be removed from the kinship network was to alter the life cycle in ways that are unimaginable for most Westerners. The meanings of the markers that define the human life span—birth, childhood, adolescence, marriage, child-rearing, old age, and dying—were all radically transformed. To face these challenges alone, without the collective support and shared understandings of the natal network of kin, was tantamount to social death.[44]

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[42] Raboteau. *Slave Religion,* 9-10.
[43] Colin A. Palmer, "The First Passage: 1502-1619," in *To Make Our World Anew Volume I: A History of African Americans to 1880,* ed. Robin Kelley and Earl Lewis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6.
[44] See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982). This idea is recounted in James Sweet's *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 33.

Due to reasons discussed in the previous section of this work, the process of instigating such forms of "social death" on a mass scale for Native Americans in the colonial Southeast proved an impossible feat for British enterprises.[45] Thus, in recognition of the success of African slavery as administered by the Spanish and Portuguese, the British also turned to Africa in hopes of satisfying their need for labor.

James Thornton takes a different approach to African slavery. First, he emphasizes the importance of what he calls "the regime of wind and current" in describing the development of early Atlantic trade networks, assuming the position that geographical factors acted as a brake on early development of the trans-Atlantic slave trade by European seafarers.[46] While many historians argue for the central importance of kinship and religious life in Africa, Thornton devotes more attention to the civic and military aspects of African societies. He focuses heavily on the historical agency of African slave raiders and warrior societies in the development of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. He writes:

> ...My examination of the military and political relations between Africans and Europeans concludes that Africans controlled the nature of their interactions with Europe. Europeans did not possess the military power to force Africans to participate in any type of trade in which their leaders did not wish to engage. Therefore all African trade with the Atlantic, including the slave trade, had to be voluntary.[47]

Such a conclusion represents an important ideological shift in a field of study that largely ignores the historical agency of African peoples. It is my opinion that while valuable in complicating and enriching discussions of early African warfare and civic life,

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[45] Some would argue importantly that social death for Native Americans has been accomplished at different times and by other means. Here, I certainly do not purport to present one case of great tragedy as less or more terrible than another. My intention in this statement is, instead, to present information in context so as to encourage historical insight into the ways in which the slave trade affected both Africans and Native Americans.

[46] Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 17.

[47] Ibid., 7.

Thornton's thesis portrays Africans as more powerful than they actually were in comparison with the military prowess of Spain, Portugal, Britain, and France.

Following the wars of revolution that set the United States free from British rule, the practice of slavery in the Southeast took on an increased concentration. Although the U.S. Congress outlawed the trans-Atlantic slave trade in 1808, the illegal capture of Africans continued for several decades afterward at a somewhat less intensive pace. To protect the enormous profit margins of their burgeoning plantation economies, Southern slaveholders began systematically breeding Africans and their descendants to control and guarantee future populations of slaves. Early U.S. rhetoric invoking the ideals of freedom, justice, and equality simply made no claim regarding the humanity of Africans. Their legal status was, first and foremost, that of property.

Violence has been used to reinforce the United States system of chattel slavery and racial hierarchy throughout the last three centuries. Scholars of African-American history have dealt with the subject of brutality and violence. It is in this social context that the descendents of African slaves have exercised a marginal capability to re-imagine themselves. The convergence of Whites, Blacks, and Indians upon the American landscape has yielded intricate webs of kinship and familial ties that transcend and defy racial boundaries. In her article, "Uncle Tom Was an Indian: Tracing the Red in Black Slavery," Historian Tiya Miles recounts the personal story of a slave, the child of a Black woman and Indian man named Ellen Cragin who repeatedly witnessed her mother being beaten and forced to breed with another slave for the master. Miles writes:

> While a child, Cragin watched as her pregnant mother was beaten with a technique that was developed to protect the valuable offspring of slave women while brutally punishing the women themselves. The master or overseer would dig a hole for the protection of the woman's extended belly, while leaving her back and hips exposed.[48]

Any useful discussion of African or Native American contemporary identity will not overlook the historical context in which violence such as that sustained by Cragin's mother occurred. Scholars Michael Gomez and Yvonne Chireau each present examples of the ways in which African identities have been remembered and recreated in African-American consciousness in spite of the intense hostility of their surroundings. In *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, Gomez highlights the prominence of West Central African ancestral traditions among Blacks in the Deep South. He sees continuity between African religious beliefs which involve the spirits of ancestors, respect for the land, and the balance of opposites and the ringshout tradition of Southern Blacks.[49] Chireau also connects the ringshout to Indigenous African belief systems and describes the outrage and disgust with which White settlers observed such rituals.[50] Although efforts were made at suppressing slave religion, Black ancestral lifeways continued to survive and manifest themselves. Denial of the influence of African-derived religious traditions upon contemporary U.S. Protestantism, as well as upon Caribbean and Latin American Catholicism, serves to reinforce old notions of non-White peoples as childlike "blank slates" upon which European ideals were graciously inscribed. The continuity of African ancestral traditions—evident in the religious beliefs, folklore, songs, and healing customs

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[48] Brooks, *Confounding the Color Line,* 151.
[49] Michael Gomez. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial Antebellum South.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 148.
[50] Yvonne P. Chireau. Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 13.

still practiced by their descendants—best demonstrates the agency or will of African peoples, despite the brutal circumstances of their enslavement.

Creating Race

I. Racism and Progress: An Intellectual History from 1552 to 1857

Race is a socially constructed idea; it has evolved differently depending on political and geographic context. At the root of this concept lies the notion of blood lineage as it relates to inheritable traits, both physical and esoteric. Prior to the scientific study of genetics, people suspected human traits to be attributable to an abstract concept of "the blood." Basic assumptions about an English "blue-blooded" nobleman or "hot-blooded" Spaniard are entry points for such discussions. As early as 1552, the Spanish empire enacted a decree that required potential New World emigrants to provide proof of their *limpieza de sangre,* or absence of tainted Jewish or Moorish heritage.[51] Although these notions may have existed for generations, it is not until the late seventeenth century that such abstract ideas began to be imagined as scientific truth.

Inspired by a renewed interest in the logic of Greek philosophers during the late seventeenth century, European thinkers began to create methods for conducting scientific inquiry by applying the ideals of the Enlightenment. These early scientists zealously set about cataloging the diversity of plants, animals, and humans according to their physical attributes. The concept that essential inheritable traits underlie and define human characteristics (including the propensity for abstract thought) is called biological

[51] Elliot, *Empires,* 51.

determinism. This theory was put to use alongside the rapid development of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade to validate Eurocentric attitudes toward non-Europeans. This had the intended effect of stratifying and legitimating a social and economic hierarchy that placed Africans at the bottom and Europeans at the top. By the nineteenth century, biological determinist theories had become entrenched as fact, and the perceived physical differences of non-Whites (often exaggerated grotesquely in popular media) were considered reflective of inherent biological inferiority.

Historians trace the beginnings of pseudo-scientific race theories to the early eighteenth century work of Swedish botanist Carl von Linné, who invented the system of taxonomy using binominal nomenclature that is still in use today. Anthropologist C. Loring Brace argues that Linné derived his system of biological classification by reinterpreting the Aristotelian logic embraced by Reformation-era scholars such as Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and others, who debated the function of scientific reasoning and its ability to reveal the mind of God.[52] Linné's 1735 work, *Systema Naturæ,* is an important example of one way that early Enlightenment-era thinkers attempted to organize their growing collection of knowledge about the world around them.

The context in which this data was gathered and organized cannot be ignored. The year of Linné's publication, 1735, was near the peak of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in British Empire.[53] Philosopher Michel Foucault offers insight into the epistemological foundations of science and its function within larger social frameworks. He writes, "Once

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[52] C. Loring Brace. *"Race" is a Four-Letter Word: The Genesis of the Concept* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 25. Interestingly, C. Loring Brace studied with physical anthropologist Ernest Hooton, who also advised Caroline Bond Day's research.

[53] David Eltis. *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 355.

constituted, a science does not take up, with all the interconnexions that are proper to it, everything that formed the discursive practice in which it appeared; nor does it dissipate—in order to condemn it to the prehistory of error, prejudice, or imagination—the knowledge that surrounds it."[54] Science, then, by definition reflects and functions entirely within the subjective context of a particular worldview. Linné would not disagree, clearly defining the role of a scientist in his own self-reference as "God's Registrar."[55]

The work of Foucault requires historians to recognize that there is immense power and potential in the structuring and historical maintenance of systems of knowledge. A profound manifestation of this is evident in Linné's system of classification which assigned two-part Latinized names to each so-called "species" of life. The act of naming is implicit in the act of defining, a primary step in the imposition of colonial power structures. Linné assumed the authoritative role of defining what he considered distinct categories of the human species into four groups: *Homo sapiens europaeus, H. sapiens asiaticus, H. sapiens americanus, and H. sapiens afer.*[56]

The eighteenth century naturalists' obsession with degrees of classification and "biologically correct" nomenclature resulted in constant grappling over the question of man's relationship to apes. Dutch anatomist Pieter Camper (1722-1789) famously introduced the use of carefully measured angles of the human face and head in concluding erroneously that Blacks are more closely related to monkeys than Whites. Prominent scientists of the following generation, such as British doctor Charles White and Princeton philosopher Samuel Stanhope Smith, repeated Camper's interpretation of the

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[54] Michel Foucault. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language.* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972). Page 184.
[55] Brace, 26.
[56] Ibid., 27.

Enlightenment Era concept of a "Great Chain of Being," which imagined Europeans to be the absolute pinnacle culture and civilization.[57]

The nineteenth century was an especially active time for scientists concerned with questions of the inheritability of human physical traits. Constant fear of miscegenation by Whites was the primary driving force behind this academic inquiry. This was especially true for elite plantation-owning families of the South, whose economic viability depended upon the institution of slavery. Racial mixing threatened to blur the line between Black and White, making the designation of who was and who was not a slave increasingly complex.[58] Proponents of anti-miscegenation laws turned to academic theories about biological determinism to bolster their claims in court and protect the institution of slavery. Charles Darwin's *The Origin of the Species,* published in 1843, did not intend to contribute to either side of the debate regarding differences between the so-called human "races." Historian Philip Dray argues that theorists such as British philosopher Herbert Spencer applied Darwin's conclusions regarding the "survival of the fittest" among biological organisms in justifying the sub-standard social condition of Blacks in the United States. Dray writes, "The theory [of Social Darwinism] guided legal decisions, social behavior, and government policy. It encouraged laissez-faire-ism, gave a pseudoscientific stamp of approval to Manifest Destiny, and helped Americans simplify and make sense of the confusing late-nineteenth-century influx of immigrant groups."[59]

Concern over an increasingly complicated American racial landscape in the late nineteenth century helped to spur a proliferation of "scientific" literature that sought to

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[57] Brace, 33-34, 52-53.
[58] Paul Spickard. Mixed Blood: Intermarriage and Ethnic Identity in Twentieth Century America. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 317-324.
[59] Philip Dray. *At The Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America.* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 95.

quantify and define human physical traits. The nineteenth century also saw the birth of anthropology as an academic discipline in the United States. This occurred at Harvard University less than a decade following the enactment of removal policies against Cherokees and other Indigenous nations of the Southeast by the Jackson administration. In discussing the founding of the American school of anthropology, C. Loring Brace quotes historian J.D. Davies in suggesting that a link exists between the development of anthropology as a discipline and the ongoing racial tension that existed between Whites and Indians over land. Regardless of whether or not such a connection can be said to exist, the fact is that anthropology as a discipline emerged within a context of intense political and social strife that was due primarily to conflicting ideas about race. Brace continues, "Beyond the American 'Indian' issue was the burden of conscience imposed by the unavoidable presence of large numbers of people of African origin in a position of enforced servitude."[60]

In 1839, Paleontologist Samuel George Morton published *Crania Americana*, which was based upon the logic of European racial theorists such as Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840). In this work, Morton used evidence from ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs from the recently translated Rosetta Stone to conclude that the Negro and White races had been separate species since at least antiquity.[61] Morton maintained a personal collection of over eight hundred human skulls, taken from "exotic" locations around the world. His analysis of these specimens yielded the conclusion that Blacks and Native Americans were less intelligent than Whites.[62] A student of Morton's at the

[60] Brace, 77.
[61] Ibid., 83.
[62] Dray, 96.

University of Pennsylvania, Josiah Nott, went on to publish research furthering the claim that Blacks are a separate species. According to Dray, "Morton's and Nott's views informed the action of the Supreme Court in the *Dred Scott* case of 1857," a ruling which denied anyone with African Ancestry (slave or free) U.S. citizenship.[63]

The United States' first department of anthropology was established at Harvard in the 1840s by Swiss paleontologist Louis Agassiz. Agassiz, like Morton and Nott, agreed that Blacks were a separate species from Whites. These men, along with their intellectual descendants, had major bearing on theories of biological determinism that influenced the Black codes of Reconstruction and Jim Crow laws implemented after Reconstruction's failure.[64]

Stephen Jay Gould, in *The Mismeasure of Man*, defines biological determinism as a "theory of limits," and identifies two broad, central fallacies associated with its conception. The first, he argues, lies with the tendency to reify or imagine abstract ideas as real entities. Once imagined as real, the laws of science can then be applied to this entity, even if haphazardly. The second fallacy Gould identifies among adherents of biological determinism is in what he calls "ranking." The proclivity for assigning order to abstract ideas, he argues, simply reflects central themes in Western thought, including progress and gradualism. Thus, linear hierarchies are imposed upon reified versions of theoretical, *culturally-embedded* ideas about the inner qualities of human beings. In such fallacies, "scientific truth," regarding the blood's essential qualities assumes a falsely objective stance.[65]

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[63] Dray, 96-97.
[64] Ibid., 97.
[65] Stephen Jay Gould. *The Mismeasure of Man.* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996), 20-24.

The myth of the scientific method's sterile objectivity has been recognized by scholars, and has fueled post-modern philosophical debates regarding the nature of truth and objectivity. An evolutionary biologist in his own right, Gould reminds us that although trends in science certainly mirror and arise from social climates, this is not an automatic denial of objective truth's existence. Indeed, as he asserts, "the earth really does revolve around the sun." It is from this position that Gould goes on to discredit the use of IQ as a means by which to quantify human intelligence. The same two fallacies that characterize questionable IQ science have been applied in varying degrees to all conclusions that rely heavily on theories of biological determinism. By contrast, useful science (physical or social) acknowledges and assumes ownership of cultural context.[66]

II. Racism and Progress: A Cultural History from 1522 to 1893

In discussing the cultural contexts that surrounded early ideas about race, it is important to recall that due to geographic proximity, Africans have had sustained contact with Europeans for centuries longer than the people of the Americas. This relationship between the Moorish peoples of North Africa and Christians in Europe has proven throughout history to be a complicated one. The Moors occupied regions of Southern Europe, including the Iberian Peninsula for centuries until internal rifts drove them out. Long-held beliefs about Africans as the "other," which had been perpetuated in folklore and religious teachings for centuries became codified in pseudoscientific theories of race.

Africans came into contact with Indians in the Southeast—known then as *La Florida*—through the Spanish, who had already begun to use African slaves in the colonies

[66] Gould, *The Mismeasure*, 25-26.

of Latin America. Chronicled accounts of the 1539 Hernando de Soto expedition into the current states of Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, and the Carolinas tell of an encounter with a local Native queen, known as "the Lady of Cofitachiqui." After receiving de Soto and his weary convoy of nearly five hundred men with gifts of blankets, hens, deer hide, and thousands of freshwater pearls, the queen was taken into Spanish captivity.[67] De Soto's singular purpose in exploring the Southeast was to locate riches tantamount to that acquired from Mexica and Inka gold. The pearls offered by the Lady of Cofitachiqui inspired de Soto to press his expedition northward, into the territories of local chiefdoms he hoped would possess even greater stores of wealth. While fording a river along this northbound route, the queen managed to escape Spanish captivity in the company of at least two African slaves who then returned with her to her homeland.

In light of the queen's story, it becomes obvious why European slaveholders began to invest in preventing Blacks and Indians from identifying with one another too closely. This did not stop it from happening. Africans and Indians not only fled together, but also joined in raising insurrection against their common oppressors. The first slave rebellion in the New World was a product of both Black and Indian resistance. In 1522, enslaved African and Indian people on a Hispaniola plantation took up arms and executed their masters in a three day assault.[68] Resistance spread quickly, as did European trepidation. Slaveholders adopted the policy of remaining armed at all times and encouraging hostility between Blacks and Indians. Despite these efforts, throughout the Americas, some Blacks

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[67] Clayton, Knight, and Moore. *The De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando de Soto to North America in 1539-1543.* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995).
[68] Loren Katz, William. *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage.* (New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1997), 34.

and Indians were successful in fleeing into seclusion and setting up their own communities beyond the reach of colonial forces.

The concept of race did not exist in traditional societies, African or American. Indigenous peoples defined themselves spatially, understanding identity to be a function of geographic location, as well as in terms of kinship and language groups. The racial categories of White, Black, and Red as we know them today are politically charged terms that were born out of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. By the nineteenth century, rigid boundaries between the so-called races had developed to keep pace with the burgeoning plantation economy that drove development in the United States Southeast. Despite legal measures to outlaw the slave trade in 1808, agrarian enterprises built momentum, and Euro-American slaveholders continued to experience an escalating demand for laborers. Historian Tiya Miles explains, "As blackness became synonymous with bondage, it seemed like commonsense for planters to define enslaved persons as Black, regardless of their possibly complicated racial backgrounds."[69]

Tribal affiliations were systematically edited out of plantation records. This served a two-fold purpose of retaining even greater numbers of slaves while erasing their Indian identities. Eventually, the rule of hypodescent—or one-drop rule—rendered irrelevant any Native American (or otherwise) ancestry.[70] Put simply, for the purposes of slave owners and land prospectors in the American South, the fewer Indians the better. Historian Lewis R. Gordon comments on the implications of this politically-charged terminology and states,

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[69] Tiya Miles. "Uncle Tom Was an Indian: Tracing the Red in Black Slavery," in *Confounding the Color Line*, ed. James F. Brooks. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 142.
[70] Spickard, *Mixed Blood,* 331.

"Blackness, in the end, functions as a constant, underlying mark of racialization as does no other racial designation."[71]

As has been stated in a previous section of this work, the success of chattel slavery depended upon the devastation of African kinship ties. In the beleaguered process of adapting to the invasion of their homelands, the descendents of Cherokees—along with many other Indigenous groups in the Southeast—also lost traditional ways of defining community. The erosion of Indigenous kinship and community bonds logically proceeded the creation of race as a new way of identifying and categorizing peoples who had witnessed the destruction of their ancestral lifeways. It is within this historical context that Cherokees and other "civilized" tribes of the Southeast came to adopt the practice of chattel slavery.

Historians Theda Perdue and Tiya Miles emphasize that slave ownership among Cherokees was limited to an elite minority of mixed-blood families who were wealthy enough to own plantations. Originally, the Cherokee worldview included a profoundly different approach to the concept of property. Miles explains that for Cherokees, the accumulated property of a deceased individual was buried or destroyed. Persons being held as war captives under the traditional system of Cherokee bondage were usually adopted into the clan of their deceased captors.[72] By contrast, the European custom of passing possessions, including human property, along to heirs after death ensures the continuation of family property holdings. By the early nineteenth century, the Cherokee nation began to enact laws and regulations to protect increasingly Anglicized ideas about

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[71] Lewis R. Gordon. "Race, Biraciality, and Mixed Race," in *Her Majesty's Other Children*. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997) pp. 55-57 and 62-67. Reprinted in *'Mixed Race' Studies: A Reader*. Ed. Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe. (New York: Routledge, 2004) Page 159.
[72] Perdue, *Slavery*, 8.

property ownership.[73] Such regulations had a deteriorating effect upon traditional methods of defining kinship that traced clan membership through the mother's line.[74] Perdue writes, "As the Cherokees accumulated the material evidence of 'civilization,' they realized that traditional tribal methods of safeguarding property no longer sufficed, and they began instituting changes that curtailed individual freedom and consolidated and centralized political power."[75]

Whites who intermarried into the Cherokee nation brought with them their privileged status as property-owners. In 1835, only 17 percent of the total Cherokee population possessed White ancestry. Among those Cherokee families that owned slaves, however, 78 percent reported some degree of European heritage.[76] Census information reveals that in 1835, the ratio of Cherokees to their Black slave population was 12:1 in Georgia, 5:1 in Alabama, and 99:1 in North Carolina.[77] The experience of chattel slavery, then, is central to understanding the complex and often violent relationships between Whites, Blacks, and Indians that have shaped racial consciousness in the United States.

The enslavement of Africans and the removal of Indigenous Americans from their homelands were accomplished simultaneously through the enactment of a particular set of ideologies. In summation, these include; 1) the idea of a global hierarchy or "Great Chain of Being"; 2) the concept of ownership; and 3) the myth of progress. As European nations competed in extracting wealth from their occupied territories around the world, their

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[73] Tiya Miles. *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 71; See also, Robert K. Miller Jr. and Stephen J.. McNamee, "The Inheritance of Wealth in America," published in *Inheritance and Wealth in America*, ed. Robert K. Miller Jr. and Stephen J. McNamee (New York: Plenum Press, 1998), 1-2,11.
[74] Miles, *Ties that Bind,* 71-72; Perdue, *Slavery,* 50-53.
[75] Perdue, *Slavery*, 55.
[76] Ibid., 60.
[77] Ibid., 166; note 2.

presence in Africa and the Americas was justified by a destiny manifest in the inherent cultural and biological superiority of Europeans. A mid-nineteenth century example of this ethnocentricity is seen in the words of British expansionist Cecil Rhodes, namesake of both Oxford's Rhodes scholarship as well as the African country of Rhodesia (now known as Zimbabwe): "Africa is still lying ready for us it is our duty to take it. It is our duty to seize every opportunity of acquiring more territory and we should keep this one idea steadily before our eyes that more territory simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race, more of the best, the most human, most honourable race the world possesses."[78] By the end of the eighteenth century, Rhodes controlled ninety percent of the world's diamond production and much of South Africa's gold mining industry.[79] The great majority of his elite European and American contemporaries shared this vision of White racial and cultural superiority.

The culmination of American Progress and Manifest Destiny was celebrated with global fanfare at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago at the close of the nineteenth century. Held in commemoration of the 400th anniversary of Columbus' "discovery" of the New World, this grandiose event drew nearly 27 million visitors over the six-month period of its duration. The fair occupied a site of over 600 acres and featured a central court inspired by Greek and Roman architecture known officially as "the White City." Staple elements of American consumer culture—including the hamburger, the Ferris wheel, and Quaker Oatmeal—were introduced for the first time at the Chicago World's Fair.

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[78] Perry, 153.
[79] Ibid., 152.

Also on display were ethnological exhibits of "primitive" peoples. The director of Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, Frederick Ward Putnam led the organization of these displays.[80] African Americans were systematically excluded from contributing their own exhibits or ideas to the fair. The late nineteenth century saw not only the exclusion of Blacks from the Euro-American myth of progress, but from justice within the U.S. legal system as well. Historian Robert Rydell writes, "As the racist underpinnings of the utopia projected by the fair became clear, many African Americans concluded that the World's Columbian Exposition, with its radiant White City, had become… the cultural counterpart to the lynchings that claimed 161 African-American lives in 1892 alone."[81]

The ritual torture, dismemberment, and lynching of Black men by enraged mobs of Whites itself took on a carnival atmosphere in the late nineteenth century. Mob violence against Blacks in the South superseded the authority of the U.S. legal system, and was usually carried out in alleged vindication of White female chastity. The character and astonishing frequency with which lynching episodes occurred during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries demonstrates how entrenched fears of racial miscegenation had become in American society. This era, however, was not without its critics.

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[80] Lucy Maddox. *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race & Reform.* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2005), 1-4; For more on ethnology at the Chicago World's Fair, see Rebecca Edwards' *New Spirits: Americans in the Gilded Age: 1865-1905.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 15-157.

[81] Robert W. Rydell. Editor's Introduction to *The Reason Why the Colored American is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition.* Originally published in 1893 by Ida B. Wells, Frederick Douglass, Irvine Garland Penn, and Ferdinand L. Barnett. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999). Pages xi-xiii.

Black Anthropology

In the long-view, the Black intellectual tradition, like any manifestation of racial consciousness, cannot be divorced from the social context that surrounded its creation. Although Black people, like Black philosophical traditions, have at least one branch of their humanistic origins among the diverse kinship-based societies of the African continent, it is the American setting and the experience of chattel slavery that forced the construction of Black racial consciousness. Well before slavery's outlaw in 1863, Black intellectuals in the U.S. realized that the war being waged against them by Southern plantation holders to ensure their perpetual servility was ideologically driven. This war, which has resulted in the physical, psychological, and economic crippling of several generations of Indigenous African and American peoples, has had little to do with debates over scientific categories for human beings. This war and its accompanying manifestations of violence were justified by the fulfillment of a White destiny that assumed superiority over non-White peoples.

Early Black academics were aware of the duality of the intellectual struggle that had been thrust upon them. As early as 1827, Black writers began circulating their ideas in the weekly publication of the first African-American owned and operated newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*. Its editors, Samuel Cornish and John B. Russwurm, declared their intentions on the front page of the first issue of their paper in March of 1827. They wrote, "We wish to plead our own cause. For too long have others spoken for us. Too long has the public been deceived by misrepresentations in things that concern us dearly."[82] W.E.B.

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[82] Cornish and Russwurm. "Righteousness Exalteth a Nation." *Freedom's Journal*, March 16, 1827, Vol. I. No. I, Wisconsin Historical Society, accessed online at: http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/libraryarchives/aanp/freedom/docs/v1n01.pdf

DuBois conceptualized the situation of his people in this often-quoted passage from his 1903 publication, *The Souls of Black Folk*:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.[83]

The force and preeminence of DuBois' life and work changed academia. His delineation of these "two warring ideals," American and Negro, White and Black, inspired coming generations of scholars to define their academic endeavors in terms of this struggle. Cultural anthropologist St. Clair Drake explains that the purpose of this movement, known as "Vindication," was to discredit biological determinism.[84] Although many of DuBois' intellectual descendants offer examples from which to draw conclusions about the history of racial consciousness, I examine only the works of three: Caroline Bond Day, Laurence P. Foster, and Zora Neale Hurston. Each of these social scientists worked in university settings during the early 1930s, and dealt explicitly, though differently, with race as both an abstraction and a lived reality.

The social climate inhabited by the earliest generations of Negro scholars was characterized by terror and mob violence directed toward Blacks throughout the United States, especially in the South. Historian Richard Maxwell Brown estimates that approximately one hundred Blacks per year were lynched in the South from 1868 to

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[83] W.E.B. DuBois. *The Souls of Black Folk.* (Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1953). Pages 16-17.
[84] St. Clair Drake. *Black Folks Here and There: An Essay in History and Anthropology.* (Los Angeles: University of California Center for Afro-American Studies, 1987), 32.

1871.[85] By the 1890s, lynching had developed into dramatic public spectacles where White families, including children, witnessed the slaying of Blacks as a social event.[86]

The "glorious failure" of Reconstruction was largely attributable to late nineteenth century actions of the Ku Klux Klan. Sentiment for this terrorist organization developed among many Southern Whites following the Confederacy's defeat in the Civil War. The Klan habitually used scare tactics to expel Black families from their homes and businesses, thwarting their attempts at gaining an economic foothold. Folklorist Gladys Marie Fry suggests that the Ku Klux Klan's name was derived from *Clocletz*, a small tribe of Indian ghosts who some Blacks believed stalked the Alabama backwater at night. According to Fry, this superstition was likely grounded in historical truth. The name *Cocletz* coincides with a band (or clan) of displaced Catawba people who had been employed by Whites as slave hunters.[87] This detail speaks to the complex way in which slavery and racial violence both united and divided Africans and Indians, as well as to the willingness of Whites to exploit and maintain fear over such divisions for their own benefit first as slave owners; and later, following Emancipation, as guardians of White privilege.

The social and intellectual movements that sought to oppress Blacks were met with continual resistance. In the South, leaders emerged such as Ida B. Wells, who defied post-slavery era legislation and organized tirelessly to eradicate the practice of lynching. Nearly 75 years before Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat in Montgomery, Alabama, Wells

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[85] For an in-depth analysis of statistics on violence against Blacks in the South, see Phillip Dray's *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America.* (New York: Modern Library Paperbacks, 2003).

[86] For photographic evidence of spectacle lynching in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Alice, Als, Lewis, and Litwacks' *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America.* (Twin Palms Publishers, 2004).

[87] See Dray, *At the Hands*, 40; and Gladys-Marie Fry's *Night Riders in Black Folk History.* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975), 119-121.

bit a Tennessee railroad official for attempting to remove her from a segregated train car in 1884 (an incident for which she then sued the railroad company and won). Following this incident, Wells, who had been born into slavery, went on a campaign to expose the extra-legal practice of lynching. She gained notoriety among both Blacks and Whites for the unapologetic statements she made in her publication, *Free Speech.* In the fall of 1891, Wells wrote: "Of one thing we may be assured, so long as we permit ourselves to be trampled upon, so long we will have to endure it. Not until the Negro rises in his might and takes a hand resenting such cold-blooded murders, if he has to burn up whole towns, will a halt be called in wholesale lynching."[88] Wells adopted the practice of carrying a pistol everywhere she went. Her militant stance regarding the use of violence by Blacks for purposes of self-defense inspired a predictable backlash from Whites in Tennessee, whose threats upon her life forced her to flee Memphis for New York. Once there, Wells continued to publish her ideas and created lasting connections with other notable Black thinkers of the time including Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. DuBois.

As a cohort, these thinkers drew a connection between lynching to fear by Whites of miscegenation. Patrick Dray writes, "Wells was one of the first people in America to perceive that the talk of chivalry and beastlike blacks ravishing white girls was largely fallacious, and that such ideas were being used to help maintain a permanent hysteria to legitimize lynching, as it reinforced the notion that the races must be kept separate at all costs."[89]

The hysteria and morbid fascination with miscegenation described by Dray and witnessed firsthand by Wells and her contemporaries had an intellectual counterpart within

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[88] Dray, *At the Hands*, 60.
[89] Ibid., 70.

the nation's universities. Such was the academic climate in which the subsequent generation of Black scholars forged their methods and conclusions in the study of race mixing. Caroline Bond Day, Zora Neale Hurston, and Laurence P. Foster were each among this generation.

Caroline Bond Day

Caroline Bond Day's vision for Negro America existed alongside the compulsory attention to detail she developed in training to become a physical anthropologist. The tension between these two features of her career was never completely reconciled. Born in November of 1889 in Montgomery, Alabama. Day was of multiracial ancestry, and as a student of race-crossings, classified herself as an "approximate mulatto" with the blood quantum 7/16 White, 1/16 Indian, and 8/16 Black.[90] Day received a Bachelor of Science degree from Atlanta University in 1912, where W.E.B. DuBois was a professor of history. Although the extent to which DuBois influenced Day's work is unclear, Ross, Adams, and Williams agree, "There is no doubt Day was at least indirectly influenced by DuBois' call to scientifically study African Americans."[91] Following graduation, Day had hoped to attend Radcliff, an institution that then refused to recognize her degree from Atlanta. She was required to complete another bachelor's degree, which she finished successfully in 1919. At Radcliff, Day began her training in physical anthropology under the direction of

[90] Caroline Bond Day. *A Study of Some Negro-White Families in the United States*, 32. (see bibliography for full citation).
[91] Hubert Ross, Amelia Adams, and Lynne Williams. " Caroline Bond Day: Pioneer Black Physical Anthropologist," in *African American Pioneers in Anthropology*. Ed. Faye Harrison and Ira Harrison. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 40.

Harvard eugenicist Ernest Hooton, who was well known at the time for his espousal of the position that Blacks were biologically closer to primates than members of European races.

In an article published in *The Crisis* (the NAACP journal edited by DuBois from 1910-1934) in March of 1930, Day argues for the significance of racial mixing in scholarly understandings of race. Although she relied upon fallacious scientific methods of determining degrees of race mixture, Day's appreciation for the subjective cultural contexts that inform racial consciousness in the early twentieth century was clear in her review of the works of James Johnston and George Dixon. She wrote, "Upon the question of the intermixture between Negroes and Indians, the significant points of interest to me are the facts, first, that during the Colonial Period the same attitude of mind was exercised toward the Indian as toward the Negro on the part of the white man, and second, that there was an extremely sympathetic attitude existing between Negroes and Indians."[92]

Under the direction of Hooton, Day went about amassing an enormous amount of information on the blood lineages of over 300 families, the majority of whom resided in the Southeastern United States. The individuals in her study numbered 2,537. Several hundred individual photographs were arranged by Day into family trees, each bearing a carefully determined blood quantum using calculations of hair texture, lip height, nose breadth, and skin pigmentation.[93] Included in Day's sample were Charles Wesley, W.E.B. DuBois, and Carter G. Woodson.

Day's study acknowledged the presence of American Indian ancestry in many of her participants' families. She described one family in the following terms:

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[92] Caroline Bond Day. March 1930. "Race-Crossings in the United States." *Crisis* Vol. 37 No. 3: 81-82, 103. On file at the Sequoyah Research Center, Littlefield Papers: Box 1, File 5.
[93] See Plates 45 and 49 of Caroline Bond Day's *A Study of Some Negro-White Families*, 4-6

> Otele married James Brown, 7/16N 2/16I, who is much more negroid in hair and lip form and skin color, but with a long high nose. Their three children are approximately Negro-Indian mulattoes. The boys have straight hair and are not negroid in appearance, but resemble East Indians. The girl is still too young to conjecture about, but bids fair to be yellow with curly or frizzly brown hair.[94]

By today's standards, Day's terminology appears archaic and offensive. Despite this, her work still functioned to subvert existing paradigms of racial classification. She did this in three important ways. The first involves, ironically, her obsessive preoccupation with anthropometric data. Although much of this work was compiled by Hooton and his other students following her death, Day's thesis negated widespread popular myth which assumed that the offspring of White-Black unions ran the risk of being born physically disproportionate or handicapped. The weight of Day's study in terms of sheer numbers was difficult to refute. She effectively used the pseudo-scientific methods that were available to her to argue against proponents of anti-miscegenation laws. Hooton himself was forced to admit, "I cannot see that these data afford any comfort to those who contend that miscegenation between Negroes and Whites produces anthropologically inferior types."[95]

The second important way in which Day's work served to undermine existing notions about race is in her inclusion of sociological information about the families in her study. Theories regarding the purported genetic inferiority of mixed-race individuals were widespread in the early twentieth century, including the fear that racial amalgamation could contribute to the downfall of more "civilized" peoples. Her sociological observations of the Black middle class in terms of marriage, housing, salary, and occupations brought her to the conclusion that "Life as regards cultural development among the group of people

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[94] Day, *Some Negro-White Families*, 39.
[95] Ibid., 106.

represented here is different in no essential particular from that of other average middle-class families in the sections of the country in which they live."[96]

The third way in which Day's work subverted national paradigms about race is seen in her augmentation of scientific analysis with carefully selected photographs. These photographs are important because they were not captured in a lab to isolate her subject from their respective contexts. Instead, Day sought personal correspondence with individual members of each family, and included passages from their letters in the methodology section of her work. The photographs she used to structure her thesis were mailed to her by willing participants, many of whom were her own colleagues and relatives. Despite the austerity with which Day assumed to present her data, the fact is that she was intimately connected to the subject matter of her work.[97] The inclusion of these photographs represented a preoccupation not with the individual, but with the family. This emphasis on kinship is noteworthy in its distinction, and calls to mind earlier discussions regarding the undoing of African familial ties during the eighteenth and nineteenth century process of enslavement. Heidi Ardizzone identifies that the "enormous tension" between the humanity of Day's photographs and the stark captions below them seems, at times, irreconcilable.[98] In juxtaposing these two ways of viewing individuals of mixed race, Day challenges her reader to experience DuBois' "double consciousness" in an academic setting.

Situated in a larger historical context, the efforts of Caroline Bond Day represent a push for the consolidation of a new kinship system, one that allowed for the presence of

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[96] Day, *Some Negro Families*, 119.
[97] Heidi Ardizzone. "Such Fine Families': photography and race in the work of Caroline Bond Day." Visual Studies, 21:2 (2006), 114-119.
[98] Ibid., 123.

Whites and Native Americans. Day was among DuBois' Talented Tenth, the expressed responsibility of which was to uplift Black Americans to respectable positions in society.[99] Although Day's efforts in fulfilling this role faced multiple sobering challenges, she succeeded in helping to shape a distinct narrative on behalf of a people—her own—who lacked a presence in prevailing discourses of social science. It is in this way that her resourceful and painstaking research subverted racist ideologies of the early twentieth century. Caroline Bond Day died of heart complications at the age of fifty-nine in 1948.

Zora Neale Hurston

Zora Neale Hurston, not unlike Day, was anomalous among her peers. Born to working-class parents in Eatonville, Florida in 1891, Hurston's daring originality has led to her celebration as one of the most influential figures of the Harlem Renaissance. Blacks founded Hurston's hometown with the financial assistance of White benefactors. Hurston describes it this way: "Eatonville, is, and was at the time of my birth, a pure Negro town…It was the first attempt at organized self-government on the part of Negroes in America…what you might call hitting a straight lick with a crooked stick."[100] It was in this setting, thoroughly immersed in Southern Black culture, that Hurston began forging her opinions of the world.

Hurston's ethnographic fieldwork, conducted under the auspices of Columbia Anthropologist Franz Boas (whom she referred to affectionately as "Papa Franz") was

[99] Ardizzone. "'Such Fine Families': Photography and Race in the Work of Caroline Bond Day."
[100] Zora Neale Hurston. *Dust Tracks on a Dirt Road.* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1996), 1.

unorthodox even by today's academic standards.[101] In her autobiography, Hurston defined research as "formalized curiosity." She continued, "It is poking and prying with a purpose. It is a seeking that he who wishes may know the cosmic secrets of the world and they that dwell therein."[102] Hurston never succeeded in completing a graduate degree in anthropology, as she had difficulty securing funding to continue her research. In abandoning academia, her curiosity roamed freely along strange and familiar paths throughout the Southeast. With some support from Boas, Hurston built an extensive collection of oral narratives revealing the cultural and religious traditions of people throughout the American Southeast as well as Haiti. Hurston's appreciation for mischief and knack for dealing with others landed her in unpredictable, sometimes dangerous, situations. Of the assortment of people she encountered while conducting research among Southern Blacks in Polk County, Florida, Hurston wrote, "Primitive minds are quick to sunshine and quick to anger. Some little word, look or gesture can move them either to love or to sticking a knife between your ribs. You just have to sense the delicate balance and maintain it."[103]

Hurston mentioned interaction and racial mixture between Blacks and Indians several times in her work. She described her place of birth as, "dark and bloody country since the mid-seventeen hundreds," where Black presence among the "powerful Cherokees," and "conglomerate Seminoles," posed a threat to White control of the

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[101] See Gwendolyn Mikell's "Feminism and Black Culture in the Ethnography of Zora Neale Hurston," in *African American Pioneers*, 55-57.
[102] Hurston, *Dust Tracks*, 143.
[103] Hurston, *Dust Tracks*, 146.

region.[104] Her reference to the Seminole Wars includes a brief description of Black Indian identity:

> Who was an Indian and who was a Negro? The whites contended all who had negro blood. The Indians contended all who spoke their language belonged to the tribe. Since it was an easy matter to teach a slave to speak enough of the language…the question could never be settled. So the wars went on.[105]

In assuming ownership of Florida's historical narrative, Hurston's brief description situated her hometown within a larger context of racial violence and contention. Her words outline the ambiguities of identity construction and kinship organization that separated Whites and Indians over the question of slavery.

Hurston had little patience for racial identity politics. Though admitting to having mixed ancestry, she remarked contemptuously, "I boast that I am the only Negro in the United States whose grandfather on the mother's side was not an Indian chief. Neither did I descend from George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, nor any Governor of a Southern state." This, along with many of Hurston's expressions, represents a distrust of racial platitudes, including those employed by Blacks to glorify their lineages. This provided a break from what she considered overzealous conversations about the splendor of Black cultural consciousness.

In her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, Hurston spoke candidly about her thoughts and opinions on American manifestations of race and identity. Her chapter entitled, "My People! My People!" argues that all racial consciousness, Black, White, Red, or otherwise, is myth. Hurston used humor to mock racial "snobbery" in the North

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[104] Hurston, *Dust Tracks*, 2.
[105] Ibid., 2.

alongside the "backwater" churlishness of country folk in the South. Upon reflection, she concluded,

> I sensed early that the Negro race was not one band of heavenly love. There was stress and strain inside as well as out. Being Black was not enough. It took more than a community of skin color to make your love come down on you... It is up to the individual. If you haven't got it, you can't show it. If you have got it, you can't hide it. That is one of the strongest laws God ever made.[106]

Hurston's commentary on Black racial consciousness echoed Boas' emphasis on the importance of the individual within larger contexts of culture and environment. Boas, known as the "father" of cultural anthropology, challenged biological determinists to define race; a concept that his colleagues in physical anthropology were never successful in convincing him actually existed.[107] Hurston's ethnography indicated her awareness of race as a social construct, an idea that had begun to revolutionize social science methodologies by the 1930s.

Laurence P. Foster

Laurence Foster's research, conducted from 1927 to 1931, has remained an outlier of mainstream anthropological study. His doctoral dissertation from the University of Pennsylvania on race mixing between Blacks and Indians, however, challenged the most basic assumptions about race in early twentieth century American society. Over the span of his lengthy career, Foster proved himself to be an unusually diligent and visionary scholar. Although his work never gained the exposure of Day's or the international

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[106] *Dust Tracks*, 190-191

[107] Franz Boas. *Anthropology and Modern Life.* (New York: Dover Publications, 1962). Originally published in 1928.

notoriety of Hurston's, his contribution to the social sciences, despite its obscurity, remains an important one.

Born and raised in Pensacola, Florida, Foster left home to become an exemplary student at Lincoln University, an all-Black college. Following the completion of two degrees there, he was hired to teach philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania. It was during his tenure as an instructor that Foster enrolled in a doctoral program in Anthropology and completed a dissertation in 1931 entitled, "Negro-Indian Relations in the Southeast." He was the first African American to obtain a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania.[108]

Foster's dissertation directly undermined the dominant racial paradigms of the early twentieth century. This is evident in several ways. The first, like Foster and Day, involved his refusal to adhere to existing methodological boundaries within the anthropological discipline. Foster assumed the role of historian, ethnographer, and sociologist simultaneously. He negotiated and combined approaches from each of these areas of study with exceptional clarity. The first line of his introduction states, "No history of the New World can be recognized as complete without a consideration of Negro-Indian relationships."[109] This was a radical statement in 1931. In making this assertion, Foster implied the inadequacy of all existing social science literature in the U.S. or Latin America that omitted the acknowledgement of race mixing between Blacks and Indians.

Foster was also among the first to explain how institutionalized racism in the United States resulted in the erasure of Indian ethnicities from the historical record. He wrote, "It

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[108] Yolanda Moses. "Laurence Foster: Anthropologist, Scholar, and Social Advocate." Published in *African American Pioneers in Anthropology.* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 85-100.
[109] Laurence P. Foster. "Negro-Indian Relationships in the Southeast." University of Pennsylvania, Ph.D. dissertation, 1931. Page 5.

has been noted by many persons that there are tribes like those of New England and the five civilized tribes of Oklahoma who possess Negro blood. Many Indian tribes deny their Negro blood, so that the figures even recorded by our census bureau give an underestimation of the facts. The fact is, the disappearance of the identity of a very large number of Indian tribes is due to absorption by the Negro."[110] Foster admitted that quality primary sources for his research-area were lacking. He attempted to remedy this situation by integrating conclusions based upon his own fieldwork, which began in 1929 among various Indian nations of Oklahoma.[111] Foster also received a research grant from Columbia University, which enabled him to obtain field notes in Mexico and Guatemala. He connected the lack of anti-miscegenation laws in Latin America to Spanish colonial attitudes about race, which differed from attitudes in the United States that sought to conceal race mixing or at least isolate it into categories of Black and White. His comparative study of three groups of Black Indians in Naciemento, Mexico, Bracketville, Texas, and the Seminole tribe of Oklahoma used anthropometric data to support his argument about the degree to which race mixing between Blacks and Indians occurred, and the effects of anti-miscegenation legislation. In drawing this comparison with Latin America, Foster stated, "Those of us who know the physical anthropology of that large group of persons called Negroes who live in the United States can see that there is a vast difference between what is on the statutes, and what actually exists in the physical makeup of the American Negro. In the final analysis, it may be said that the Anglo-Saxon is a bit more hypocritical than his Mediterranean brother."[112]

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[110] Foster, 18.
[111] Ibid., 5.
[112] Ibid., 11.

Foster also identified the investment Whites maintained in preventing amicable relationships between Blacks and Indians. He wrote, "With determined propaganda, certain Whites in the United States have worked persistently to change the attitude of the Indian in the United States from friendly lines to positive opposition to the Negro."[113]

Foster's defiant stance regarding traditional boundaries within his discipline that sought to limit understandings of Indigenous peoples to anthropometry and archeology was inspired, at least in part, by other intellectuals of his era. His 1931 dissertation cites the work of Caroline Bond Day, Carter G. Woodson, and Beasley. It is not clear who his advisor was at Columbia University, although it is likely that he had at least some contact with Boas' students. Yolanda Moses cites letters of recommendation on Foster's behalf written by Frank G. Speck and A. Irving Hallowell that allude to the types of racism Foster experienced as a student at the University of Pennsylvania. Hallowell, former president of the American Anthropological Association referred to Foster's record as "good…without being brilliant." He continues, "his interests seem more theoretical than concrete, a fact which might make him a good teacher of a general course in anthropology..."[114]

Foster's dissertation was his first and only contribution to anthropology. Following its completion, he was hired as a faculty member at Lincoln University where he taught sociology, edited two journals, and designed ambitious programs for the advanced education of Black graduate students. Despite his marginalization within mainstream academia, Foster remained optimistic about the possibilities of higher education for people of color. He worked tirelessly to establish a broad network of international contacts among intellectuals in Ghana, Nigeria, and the West Indies, and continued his interest in the

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[113] Foster, 75.
[114] See Yolanda Moses' article in *African-American Pioneers*, 88.

experience and cultural traditions of Indigenous peoples. In 1949, Foster told the president of Lincoln University, "It would be well for us to consider ways in which these students can make some contributions to our collection or to have them begin making dictionaries or to record folk tales. It would be a pity for those intelligent men to come here year after year without our helping both them and ourselves in an effort to develop their culture through such well-established media as I have suggested."[115] Foster remained a faculty member at Lincoln University until his death in 1969. At Lincoln, if nowhere else, he is remembered fondly as a legend.

[115] Quoted by Yolanda Moses in *African-American Pioneers*, 98. (Sept. 28,1949, Langston Hughes Library, Lincoln University, Oxford, Pa.).

Conclusion

Race is an imagined way of identifying human difference. Racial consciousness has assumed varying manifestations throughout the Americas, depending upon the needs of those in control. Tracing the social and intellectual manifestations of racism in the United States makes this fact clear: the construction of racial identity in the Southeastern United States evolved alongside chattel slavery and the forced removal of Native Americans from their homelands.

Considering West Africans and Cherokees in their Indigenous contexts also allows us to understand that each group possesses long histories of social organization that bear their own definitions of culture and civilization. Acknowledging this provides relief from two powerful stereotypes that have been imposed upon Indigenous peoples. The first is that Africans and Indians in their original contexts were "primitive," "childlike," and eager to adopt European notions of civility. Clan lineage, not race, was the original means by which Native Southeasterners defined themselves. African societies also traditionally constructed identity based upon kinship. The second stereotype this project seeks to discredit is that all Indigenous peoples are alike and unchanging. Despite sharing common contexts of oppression, Blacks, Indians, and their mixed descendents are diverse people whose worldviews and methods of self-identifying are dynamic.

The work of Black anthropologists in the early twentieth century sought to undermine racist ideas about the biological and cultural inferiority of non-White peoples. Their efforts were inherited by leaders of the mid twentieth century Civil Rights Movement who went about challenging and identifying the manifestations of racial ideology in American legal and social institutions. This process is far from complete.

The work of Laurence Foster and others indicates that more research needs to be conducted in considering how Indigenous ancestral traditions expose and contribute to alternative systems of knowledge. This work requires the thorough revision of social science methodologies along with an increased appreciation for Indigenous languages. It also requires researchers to recognize how systems of knowledge and individual academic discourses have functioned historically to maintain hierarchies of power.

Tiffany M. Hale
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