FROM DANIEL BOONE TO THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES: TALES OF A
“FALLEN” RACE, 1873-1968

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Abstract

Since the earliest days of European settlement, the Appalachian Mountains emerged in lore as the manly frontier setting where such figures as Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, Kit Carson, Andrew Jackson, and others carved out the wilderness and forged a nation. Theodore Roosevelt went so far as to proclaim that these men and their progeny comprised a “Kentucky race” and a “backwoods race” that at once embodied the allegedly supreme biology of the Anglo-Saxon coupled with the cultural exigencies that accompanied frontier life, notably the masculine and violent subjugation of Native lands and people. The formation of this uniquely pure American identity then evolved from an Anglo-Saxon racial identity that encompassed the valor and violence of frontier masculinity.

But just as the Southern Mountains or according to some, the first Western Frontier, was celebrated for its racially desirable descendants it also emerged in the cultural imaginary as an impoverished breeding ground of “hillbillies” and “white trash.” Today, the word “Appalachia” conjures the competing and irreconcilable images of manly, frontier independence on the one hand, and unrivaled levels of poverty and deprivation on the other. This dissertation thus poses one rather deceptively simple question: what happens when the nation’s supposedly strongest and most biologically advanced race fail to live up to a set of cultural expectations?

Chapter 1 explores the cultural and racial identity that developed in Appalachia while Chapter 2 argues that the world’s first sterilizations laws – passed in Indiana in 1907 – responded to the pervasive fear of poor white Kentuckians who had migrated to the state.
In chapter 3, I examine Virginia’s infamous Racial Integrity Act in the 1920s and 1930s as a means to secure the purity of the state’s Appalachian people. Chapter 4 reconsiders 1960s liberalism as still another movement rooted in white uplift. Finally, the dissertation’s final chapter and conclusion details the transition from white uplift to Black incarceration. The study thus displays several attempts at salvaging Daniel Boone out of the biological detritus and devolution of an impoverished and allegedly morally troubled population of hillbillies. When it becomes clear that these attempts are no longer viable, a new strategy emerges that brings to bear the force of the state as a regime of carceral control.
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INTRODUCTION

Ghosts of Daniel Boone: Anglo-Racial Failure and the Progressive Tradition

The vast movement by which this continent was conquered and peopled cannot be rightly understood if considered solely by itself. It was the crowning and greatest achievement of a series of mighty movements, and it must be taken in connection with them. Its true significance will be lost unless we grasp, however roughly, the past race-history of the nations who took part herein.¹

– Theodore Roosevelt, 1889

During the winter of 1887, Theodore Roosevelt returned to his opulent Manhattan home fresh from a two-year sojourn in the Badlands where he spent the days hunting big game, living off of the land, and engaging in “manly outdoor sports.” In the rugged North American wilderness, the blue-blooded New York aristocrat believed he had effectively channeled the pioneer spirit of Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett. So formative was the experience that the twenty-nine year old immediately convened a group of his closest and most respected colleagues to draft a constitution and initiate a new men’s organization. It provided a means to formalize and recreate the manly journey from which the future President had just returned. Days later, Roosevelt and his friends established the Boone and Crockett Club, named in honor of the “tutelary deities of American hunting lore.”²

Over the next five years, the Boone and Crockett Club developed into an elite social gathering as much as a sporting and outdoors club, bringing together a collective of over one hundred Ivy League East Coast power brokers. Politicians, lawyers, and philanthropists such as Henry Cabot Lodge, Henry Stimson, and George Bird Grinnell joined Roosevelt’s

new association. Within months, other members included the noted explorer of sub-Saharan Africa, Carl Akeley, and the so-called father of photography, George Eastman. They all fraternized in elegant New York City ballrooms and on occasion, in isolated woodlands. They donned attire that one night consisted of the latest Fifth Avenue fashion and the next, buckskins specially tanned for an evening under the stars. They hunted only male, mature, and thriving populations of big game and worked to preserve and refurbish the nation’s formerly pristine forests, now bearing the scars of urbanization, industrialization, and environmental destruction. They desired nothing short of restoring the land and animal population – though notably not the indigenous population – to what Boone and Crockett would have encountered upon first crossing the Allegheny Mountains. The very hands that received degrees from Yale and Harvard at once clutched Bowie knives and Colt revolvers.3

It was only a matter of time until a young lawyer from Yale interested in both environmental conservation and New York’s high society, joined the Boone and Crockett Club. Madison Grant was a rising star in the nation’s burgeoning conservation movement, making a name for himself as a champion of increasingly endangered species such as moose and caribou, Rocky Mountain goats, and the bison of the Great Plains. Like his fellow members in the Boone and Crockett Club, Grant proclaimed himself a descendant of the continent’s original white European settlers, some of whom arrived as Dutch Royalty and others as British Colonial Administrators. He believed that these same descendents later became Revolutionary Patriots and perhaps even served alongside Daniel Boone himself. He and others who shared this prized bloodline, Grant claimed, were as endangered as the

3 Jonathan Peter Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2008), 4-6.
Great American Bison, then languishing on the western plains. It was they whose “race-history” required preservation and restoration.⁴

In fact, as Roosevelt and Grant shared this distressing observation from their vantage point in Manhattan, it appeared as though manly frontiersmen and revolutionary warriors in the mold of Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett now stalked a chaotic nation only as mythical specters lurking in the shadows of a stark and new reality, one that even hunting expeditions and forays into the woods failed to alter. They saw in those who now poured over North America’s shores, an impoverished and unskilled, shrunken and frail, low and inferior horde. Rather than taming the wilderness, these new immigrants instead hovered at the foreboding gates of the industrialists’ factories, reluctantly offering their toil in return for low wages, only to take respite in the seething, stinking tenements mere blocks from Roosevelt and Grants’ stately doorsteps.⁵

Indeed, the Boone and Crockett Club was thus more than an innocuous collection of wealthy, Ivy League men who enjoyed dressing up and the thrill of the hunt. It was the manifest expression among Roosevelt, Grant, Henry Cabot Lodge and the rest that their Anglo-Saxon manliness was under assault and required any and all restorative efforts. They believed that they were under siege and increasingly outnumbered by deficient workers and deficient men and that this flood of new immigrants understood little of what it meant to be free citizens of a representative republic. If ever there was an antithesis to the knife-wielding, wilderness-taming, virile Daniel Boone it was the inferior Slavic laborers who crowded the refuse-lined streets of the Lower East Side.

⁴ Ibid.
This was the context for Madison Grant’s most famous study, *The Passing of the Great Race*. The 1916 blockbuster was a rather late arrival, demanding room on shelves already crowded with books that portended the death of Anglo-Saxon civilization. Grant and his colleagues all conveyed the dire outcome that inevitably ensued when the supposedly superior Teutonic, Nordic, and Anglo-Saxon races came into contact with the “lesser” people from the far reaches of Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa.\(^6\) The genetic and biological submergence of strong Nordic blood to the inferior represented nothing short of a wholesale devolution of humanity. The instant success of *The Passing of the Great Race* made Grant the foremost public authority on issues of race, immigration, biology, and public policy. His recommendations and advice were actively sought after among politicians and lawyers crafting immigration restriction laws and other racially exclusive legislation.\(^7\)

Not surprisingly, the Supreme Court of the United States summoned Grant and his closest colleagues, leading eugenicists Harry Laughlin and Henry Goddard to provide expert testimony on one of the century’s most urgent cases. The outcome led the court to establish a legal means to ensure the nation’s “racial hygiene” and to create even stronger mechanisms to establish a proper racial citizenship.\(^8\) Coerced sterilization and quarantining took precedent, bolstering the previously passed laws that tightly restricted immigration. The Court listened intently and receptively to arguments that presented

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\(^7\) See Spiro, 143-167.

\(^8\) Alfred Ploetz, a German biologist turned Nazi described *Rassenhygiene* as early as 1895 though it was Thurman Rice in the Unites States who popularized the phrase in his work *Racial Hygiene: A Practical Discussion of Eugenics and Race Culture* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1929).
“racial pollution and deterioration” as the leading threat to civil society and democratic citizenship. They ruled that the state held a compelling interest in preventing “racial degeneracy” and that nothing short of seizing a woman’s body and coercively disabling her reproduction would suffice.\(^9\) *Buck vs. Bell* in 1927 affirmed Virginia’s – and by extension, all states’ – right to forcefully sterilize those deemed unfit. Forty years after the founding of the Boone and Crockett Club, the case coalesced around the very same racial anxieties as well as many of the same names. Grant provided expert testimony and intellectual guidance to the court and Theodore Roosevelt’s disciple William Howard Taft presided as the Chief Justice. Oliver Wendall Holmes, the justice who famously justified the need to sterilize Buck, stating that, “three generations of imbeciles are enough,” was a Boston Brahmin whose mentor and benefactor was none other than the late Boone and Crockett Club alum, Henry Cabot Lodge.\(^10\) Significantly, the defendant in the case was not among the immigrant throngs who so worried Roosevelt, Grant and Lodge. Rather, the defendant was a native-born white woman from an impoverished Appalachian hollow overlooking Charlottesville, Virginia – precisely where Daniel Boone had surveyed over a century earlier. Carrie Buck was in fact a rape victim, impregnated by a relative of her foster parents.\(^11\)

However, Grant, Laughlin and their fellow witnesses questioned whether rape had even occurred. Instead, they claimed that Buck’s pregnancy and her defective child were the inevitable results of her economic impoverishment, insidious sexual impropriety, moral

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\(^10\) Dalton, 166.

\(^11\) Lombardo, 5-17.
depravity, and most ominously, her racial failure. Notably, the plaintiffs argued the need to “purge” Buck from the Anglo-Saxon race and prohibit her from ever again bearing children. Sterilization was thus the only way to achieve what Laughlin described as “race betterment” in a nation increasingly polluted by the forces of racial deterioration, degeneracy and feeblemindedness.12 In this context, Buck was the Anglo-Saxon’s worst nightmare. The cities teemed with the so-called inferior races of the world and now, it appeared that a breakdown in the superior Anglo “stock” occurred as well.

There was something particularly threatening about a failure and breakdown of this sort. After all, an expansive imperial project was constructed on the earnest belief and violent imposition of Anglo-Saxon superiority and domination. Britain had of course, developed an enterprise of expansion based upon racial nationalism that extended back over a century. And the United States was but one nation born of the British Empire and white settler colonialism more generally.13 Like Australia and South Africa for example, the United States emerged through imperial conquests of indigenous people and lands – a process predicated upon racism and displacement. As Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds have recently claimed, an “assertion of whiteness” established Anglo-Saxon dominance as the foundation of imperial design in much of the world.14

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12 Harry Laughlin testifying before the Virginia Court of Appeals, Staunton, VA, September Term, 1925, 29. Annabel Morris Buchanan Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wilson Library Special Collections, Folder 43, Series 9. Hereafter, AMB.
These “white men’s countries” legitimized their power and justified their brutality through the logic and ideology of Anglo-racial supremacy masquerading as the vanguard of civilization. But even as this white supremacy proved to be tractable and portable through time and space, it also revealed itself as intrinsically unstable and always contested. Thus, this dissertation demonstrates and explores the inherent instability that accompanied this assertion of whiteness by asking a deceptively simple set of questions. What happens when this assertion seemed to have fallen apart? What if Anglo-racial superiority were exposed as fraudulent? How has the nation dealt with the failures of an allegedly superior race? What happened when Daniel Boone gave way to Carrie Buck?

Answering these questions reveal how Anglo-racial failure threatened, destabilized, and exposed the vulnerability and fraudulent logic of white supremacy. Moreover, an exploration of Anglo-racial failure repositions white racism as an ideology based not only upon an assumption and propagation of superiority but also – and perhaps as crucially – as a response to the submerged anxieties of inferiority and inadequacy. In the process, the dissertation reframes the guiding impulse behind over seventy years of liberal reform and state intervention into the lives of some of the nation’s poorest citizens. It demonstrates the ongoing and variegated attempts at salvaging Daniel Boone out of the supposed biological detritus of Carrie Buck. Thus the allegations of moral depravity and behavioral deficiency that almost always accompany white poverty express the fear and expose the dreaded outcome of Anglo-racial collapse. And in fact, restoring and rehabilitating this “fallen” race took national precedent. This forces us to recast state-led reform movements as inextricably bound up with cultural and scientific notions of white uplift and demands a reconsideration of liberal reform as a troubled expression of racial nationalism.
Here, the “nation” must be understood as what Benedict Anderson famously described as an, “imagined community.”\(^{15}\) Rather than a mere adherence to rigid political borders, I deploy Anderson’s thesis as a means to conceptualize and theorize another nation of sorts – one that’s identity hinged not upon political sovereignty but instead upon hierarchal racial sovereignty. This nation included within its cultural and political imaginary those who willfully constructed, propagated, and defended manly Anglo dominance, expansion, and supremacy. This dissertation presents how such a fraternity functioned within the United States while gesturing towards the ways in which these same ideas circulated among a broader community or nation of white male Anglos throughout the world. All violently and systematically ordered and arranged whole societies based upon a notion of racial control. Put differently, what emerged in the United States was in fact a part of a larger struggle carried out among white men to establish, maintain, and enforce not only a national color line but in fact, a global color line.\(^{16}\)

The study is at once a national story with a regional emphasis though the ideas under discussion reverberated globally. I present the case of the United States and the national drive to purify and restore a race that many believed had fallen from greatness – a race that failed to live up to its expectations. This drive began in earnest during the so-called Progressive Era around the turn-of-the-century and continued through the 1960s. It was not continuous but the urge to restore and redeem the “Anglo-Saxon race” was never far from the imagination of national leaders, scientists, journalists, novelists, and even


\(^{16}\) For an excellent discussion of the convoluted ways in which scientists and other academics constructed a racial hierarchy in this era see Nell Irvin Painter’s \textit{A History of White People} (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 190-301.
some musicians. All seemed haunted by the specter of Daniel Boone, that quintessential masculine, frontier hero whose descendants had declined by every discernable measure.

The historian Henry Shapiro claimed that beyond a region, the vast mountainous territory of the southern United States was an idea, a cultural expression, embodied by the likes of Boone and Crockett.¹⁷ In these mountains, observers located an isolated primitiveness that persisted since the earliest days of white settlement. It was a region distinct in its racial and cultural “heritage.” But Shapiro’s classic study on Appalachia missed some crucial connections. For one, the region piqued the interest of more than missionaries, writers, and journalists. Teddy Roosevelt famously argued that the region was peopled by the vaunted “Kentucky race” – directly descended from the likes of Boone. They were at once bred from the rugged and manly culture of the frontier but had also already possessed the superior genetics of the Anglo-Saxon.¹⁸ The first chapter positions the Southern mountains in a much broader context – one that considers the region’s discursive construction as a bastion of racial purity and cultural tradition in the face of intensive immigration and global expansion which threatened to rend the racial character of the nation from within its borders and beyond.¹⁹ Relocating the region’s significance in an imperial context brings to bear the full weight of expectations that observers bestowed

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upon Appalachia as a space of racial exceptionalism, biological supremacy, and advanced human evolution.

This regional story also fits into a global circulation of ideas and knowledge that helped legitimate a racial order and global color line. But the idea of racial purity in the Southern Mountains and the reality proved quite different indeed. Many of the very same observers who located a pure and supreme Anglo-American race in the mountains also discovered some of the deepest poverty and reported some of the most morally abhorrent behavior amidst this “strong stock.”20 Resolving the paradox of a so-called superior race that fell into poverty, cultural declension and moral depravity became a driving priority for politicians, writers, and scientists, among others and in fact, remained so for decades to follow.

Chapters two and three present case studies that display the creative and troubling ways in which this paradox was uneasily resolved. The first case study explains why the state of Indiana passed the world’s first sterilization law in 1907.21 Nearly twenty-five years before Hitler’s Reichstag passed the infamous Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring, legislators in Indianapolis passed a law that Hitler explicitly replicated years later. The involuntary procedure supposedly targeted, “confirmed criminals, idiots, imbeciles and rapists” and more generally, “paupers.” But upon closer inspection, the Committee on Mental Defectives (CMD) – the bureaucracy in charge of identifying, diagnosing and correcting “mental feeblemindedness” – nearly unanimously directed its

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20 The term “stock” was used interchangeably with “race” and most all of the time had a connotation to biology. It’s use came into prevalence by the late 19th century and would be continually used throughout the twentieth. See Painter’s “English Traits,” *History of White People*, 165-184.

21 Indiana State Law, Chapter 215, Approved March 9, 1907, pg. 377-378.
attention toward rural and impoverished, native-born whites.\textsuperscript{22} The committee believed the state could eliminate poverty by forcefully disabling reproduction among some “paupers” while institutionalizing others. The majority of the impoverished whites under threat of sterilization or institutionalization arrived in Southern Indiana from Kentucky, a state whose people Theodore Roosevelt declared were the “purest of American stock,” superior in blood, breed and custom.\textsuperscript{23} The chapter develops this story through an exploration of the career of Oscar McCulloch, whose foundational family studies spurred the eugenics movement.

The second case study returns to the familiar setting of the Southern hills and hollows of Virginia, home to Carrie Buck. Here, state legislators passed the first and most stringent anti-“miscegenation” laws. Buck’s sterilization and the ensuing Supreme Court case resulted in a national debate over whether the state – in the name of “race betterment” – could seize a woman’s body.\textsuperscript{24} The procedure provided one way to stabilize a racial hierarchy threatened by the presence of white poverty, racial failure and the widespread fear of moral deviancy. Rather perversely, legislators passed sterilization and the Racial Integrity laws as a means to redeem and restore the so-called purity of the Anglo-Saxon race. In a cruel irony, ameliorating poverty thus became a project of racial redemption and restoration whereby leading reformers believed that the way to save the Anglo-Saxon was to prune its so-called fallen members, those who had become a “disgrace to the race.”\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} See Laughlin’s testimony.
\textsuperscript{25} The phrase became pervasive among leading reformers in the mountains. See the \textit{American Missionary} in American Missionary Association (AMA) reports 1846-1934
Virginia was also exemplary in just how far it went to demonstrate the cultural
achievements of its prized race. Acclaimed Virginia musical composer John Powell was the
guiding force and personality behind the state’s pioneering Racial Integrity Laws. Had it not
been for Powell’s efforts, the laws may well not have been passed or articulated with the
same urgency. Understanding Powell’s public policy motives requires an exploration of his
musical career. Explaining how a musical prodigy and one of the nation’s most prolific and
promising composers became the leading figure in the state’s crusade to maintain “racial
integrity” provides the prism through which the chapter explores the case of Virginia.26

The ubiquitous threat of Anglo-racial failure and the accompanying efforts to
address it took a brief hiatus during World War II and its immediate aftermath but by the
late-1950s and 1960s, it resurfaced yet again. The study’s penultimate chapter reconsiders
the policies of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson in light of these earlier efforts.
Despite many crucial differences among some progressive thinkers, eugenicists and 1960s
liberals, all launched their policies and undertook their political projects under the
pretense that there was something particularly unacceptable and even morally troubling
about the persistence of white poverty. In fact, Kennedy’s very election mobilized and
relied upon poor, white voters in West Virginia and the South more generally as a crucial
voting bloc. In office, Kennedy’s domestic centerpiece to his so-called New Frontier was
known as the Area Redevelopment Act (ARA). The ARA specifically targeted poor white

26 David Whisnant’s All That is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region
(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983). Specifically, Chapter Three, “This
Folk Work and the Holy Folk: White Top Folk Festival: 1931-1939,” served as inspiration to
reexamine Powell’s life and work.
Southerners – people Kennedy described on the campaign trail as “staunch and worthy” of government assistance.²⁷

After Kennedy’s assassination, his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, initiated a War on Poverty – partly as a means to solidify the legacy of Kennedy’s vision. In winning public support for the expansive new government initiative, Johnson focused heavily on the impoverished white, male, Southern mountaineer as the object of targeted government assistance and economic adjustment. Neither Kennedy nor Johnson pushed for anything approaching the sterilization efforts that defined earlier campaigns to address poverty through biological and genetic tampering. Nonetheless, both deployed white poverty in the Southern hills as a means to propel their respective domestic polices and garner the necessary public support to carry them out.

At the same time, the image of the poor Southern white “hillbilly” emerged first as a national fascination and then as a full-fledged cultural phenomenon. No one illustrated this national fascination better than a lucky family from the Ozarks known as the Clampetts. The protagonists of the era’s most highly rated television program, the Beverly Hillbillies, presented a mass audience with unflattering, one-dimensional stereotypes of rural Southern whites: they were culturally backwards, hopelessly, if comically behind the times, and uniformly ignorant of the trends that defined mid-century American modernity. But behind these stereotypes lay the supremely confident, if rigid Christian moralism conveyed by Granny Clampett. Jed Clampett, for his bumbling antics, displayed a deep paternal instinct and inherent good-natured attitude that rendered his less than looming intellect benign. Jed further displayed that faith, patriarchy, Christianity, and honest labor were

more desirable than the elitist bourgeois intellectualism and ostentatious greed that awaited him in his new Southern California neighborhood. Though Jed Clampett’s fortuitous oil strike obviated the need for federal aid, I argue that it was the lesser-known Clampetts who never made it to Beverly Hills that many 1960s liberals sought to assist.\textsuperscript{28}

Taking the era’s most popular cultural expressions seriously and historicizing intellectual reform movements over the previous decades then sheds a new light onto the political considerations of the War on Poverty and 1960s liberalism more generally. Moreover, this reconceptualizes and reframes the origins of the War on Poverty within the longue durée of white uplift and racial engineering. Such an exercise places some of the best intentions of the 1960s in a rather uncomfortable historical context and contravenes an accepted interpretation of the so-called “liberal hour.” While John F. Kennedy displayed radically different methods than eugenicists such as Madison Grant, both sought to address and reconcile their perception of white racial failure by launching efforts aimed at white racial restoration.\textsuperscript{29}

Many historians have claimed that the War on Poverty redressed the racial disparities of the Progressive and New Deal era, yet they have failed to consider the ways in which the crucial incipience of 1960s liberalism mobilized, reproduced, and even relied upon an eerily similar discourse of white uplift.\textsuperscript{30} Most notably, Francis Fox Piven and


Richard Cloward’s landmark study, *Regulating the Poor* long ago established the now accepted thesis that the War on Poverty was a concession to the Civil Rights movement – a government initiative to quell Black unrest and solidify urban, African Americans as a consistent voting bloc for the Democratic Party. Eventually, to be sure, the War on Poverty certainly brought about greater racial inclusion, democratic participation, and party loyalty to the Democrats among a high percentage of Black and Latina voters. And, as Robert Bauman, Christina Greene, Gareth Davies, and others have all ably demonstrated, the War on Poverty’s “maximum feasible participation,” ensured that poor people of color received an unprecedented amount of autonomy and funding to implement and direct the so-called Community Action Programs (CAPs).

Nonetheless, this legislation could not have occurred had it not been for a renewed interest in uplifting and restoring the “pure Anglo Saxon” from a continual – if sometimes forgotten - state of economic depression and moral perversion. Once the War on Poverty appeared to lose its focus as a corrective to white impoverishment, it quickly lost public support. In fact, “maximum feasible participation” rapidly became a clarion call for right-wing reactionaries to claim that the local control and Black and Latino self-activity fostered by the CAPs represented a dangerous, subversive, and unanticipated outcome to a poorly conceived government program. Most damningly, they claimed it was funded and subsidized by the unsuspecting (white) taxpayer.

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Chapter five presents the pivotal turning point when the War on Poverty lost public support and the national perception of impoverishment changed. Critics increasingly focused on the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO)—the state’s bureaucratic arm of the War on Poverty—as a Trojan horse that allegedly did little beyond assist undeserving African Americans. The first major wave of urban rebellions in 1964 and 1965 solidified this connection and almost overnight, a white, middle-class electorate, once sympathetic to many of Kennedy’s and Johnson’s domestic initiatives grew explicitly antagonistic. More fundamentally, poverty became strictly racialized and thus, off topic and unacceptable to address politically. Up until the fateful years of the middle 1960s, politicians, writers, and journalists addressed and publicized poverty reform as an issue that served and benefitted white people who had—for a variety of reasons—fallen upon hard times or failed to achieve the wealth and power that their race was to confer upon them. But after this rupture, poverty permanently signified people of color. The implications were catastrophic. Not since the 1960s has either major party engaged poverty amelioration as a topic worthy of political debate much less serious public policy.33

At the federal level we have seen a continual dismantling of the limited social safety net that national leadership had cobbled together over the first half of the twentieth

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century. In its place, we have witnessed the emergence in political discourse and popular culture of a vague and expansive body known mostly by the moniker of “the middle class.” Thus, the pervasive mobilization of a rhetoric reliant upon middle-class advancement has supplanted the notion of white uplift. We have reimagined poverty as an inscription exclusive to non-white bodies and to be dealt with accordingly. This has resulted in the criminalization of poverty that Michele Alexander has recently described as the “new Jim Crow.”

So while this dissertation chronicles the ways in which the state has attempted to control, redeem, and restore failed and impoverished white bodies, all in the service of maintaining the logic of racial supremacy, it concludes by proposing a shift in state resources towards the carceral control of Black bodies. After several generations of white racial uplift have failed to yield the desired result, this new and ominous paradigm has emerged in its place. Now, rather than witnessing an activist state intervene to manufacture white racial superiority vis-à-vis white uplift and Anglo-racial redemption, we see the state rend and disassemble Black masculinity through systemic mass incarceration and the unprecedented expansion of the criminal justice system. That one epoch has segued seamlessly into next seems to reveal the interrelatedness of the two. Distressingly then, while arguments remain over the intentions of state policy, the results are clear: securing white supremacy in United States remains not only intact but actively pursued.

A Genealogy of White Failure and Racial Restoration: On Method, Theory, and Historiography

This dissertation, while moving swiftly through several decades, nevertheless lays claim to a single idea – albeit one that received various articulations. I position the study as a genealogy of white Anglo-racial failure and the ensuing attempts to correct it. These attempts proceeded through the channels of public policy and popular culture. Theoretically, the work rests upon a Foucaultian assumption that historical contingency propels systems of thought and contemporary “epistemes.” Genealogical analysis provides a tool to analyze the inherently unstable and constantly mutable relationship among power, knowledge and the body. This necessitates conceiving of history as epochs of thought and action that loop, echo, and reverberate, expand and contract, retreat and advance, and eventually rupture only to initiate the process anew. However, these epochs typically unfold over generations rather than years or even decades. Only by tracing the cultural and political expressions of an idea over a seemingly long period can one adequately make a series of unlikely and illuminating connections that would otherwise go un-reconciled.

Thus, my analysis hinges upon two central components. First, language is the primary expressive and discursive tool by which power and knowledge are conveyed and ideology constructed. Only through linguistic analysis may one convene an understanding of how a society creates, shares, and propagates knowledge and meaning. Second, I emphasize the ways in which the body is the physical vessel through which this meaning, power, and knowledge are always inscribed. Here, the corporeality of the body provides

language a referent by which human experience is at once articulated, but also and perhaps more importantly, lived. Simplified, while the study is most certainly concerned with the historicity of words, it is most preoccupied with how these discursive arrangements are deployed upon living, breathing actors.

Mikhail Bakhtin’s idea of dialogism provides the theoretical apparatus that connects language and meaning to a genealogical understanding of racial failure in the United States. According to Bakhtin, language and meaning are socially constructed, shared, and consistently mediated over time. Bakhtin scholar Michael Holquist has noted that, “dialogism...takes for granted that nothing can be perceived except against the perception of something else: dialogism’s master assumption is that there is no figure without a ground.” Put differently, human knowledge is constantly negotiated and renegotiated through a series of circulating discourses that are at once always recycled, reinterpreted, and revoiced as “dialogue” from our at-hand linguistic environment. Homi Bhaba asserts a similar phenomenon as he theorized post-colonial subjectivity, arguing that “to exist is to be called into being in relation to an otherness” – revealing the necessity of a dialogic understanding of the self and experience. In other words, social meaning and knowledge are both a consequence of context and relationality. Moreover, meaning and knowledge must also be interpreted not only through a lens of dominant ideologies and institutions, but even more centrally, as constitutive forces of these dominant ideologies and institutions. More recently, linguistic anthropologists Alessandro Duranti and Charles

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36 For the most elaborate expression of this concept see Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), originally published in 1975 though Bakhtin wrote the essays as early as the late teens and 1920s.
38 Homi Bhaba, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994). 44.
Goodwin sum up the point by reminding us that meaning emerges from the interplay of language and power and that both “must be conceptualized as embedded within a matrix of human interaction.”

Additionally, the study is indebted to yet another Foucaultian concept: biopower and its manifestation, biopolitics. Foucault developed this theory to explain, “the numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations.” For a study that identifies and examines the state as the primary regulatory and disciplinary institution – one that sterilized its own citizens for such crimes as poverty and genetic failure – Foucault’s words hold particular relevancy. This important theory provides a necessary inroad to discuss the role of the state as an actor, always engineering new ways to control and discipline its population. If language constructed the meaning by which actors understood their world and legitimated their power, biopolitics forces us to consider the ways in which select people – vested with the institutional authority of the state – inscribed this “knowledge” upon subjugated bodies as a means of discipline, order, control, and of course, punishment.

The theoretical framework holds together an otherwise expansive study. Collectively, these theories bind and unify such disparate people as Madison Grant and Lyndon Johnson and such disparate cultural expressions as a Depression-era Folk Festival and the Beverly Hillbillies. For their obvious differences they are nevertheless all centrifugal

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41 For an extending discussion on biopolitics and the ways in which the state has regulated and disciplined bodies see Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977 (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).
vessels through which ideology and power were constructed, transmitted, and deployed upon citizens of the body politic. If this study stakes a claim to any genre of historical scholarship at the request of this writer, let it be political and intellectual history. It professes to explain no more or less than how and why political leaders – with the crucial assistance of a wide range of intellectuals, artists, and others – crafted public policies that dramatically and sometimes, traumatically, affected bodies plagued by impoverishment and economic inequality. Its object is political history, though it relies upon methodologies more common among cultural historians. It also brings together a cast of characters that runs a gamut from the explicitly political – such looming figures as Theodore Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson – to the professedly apolitical and even fictional; characters appearing in an Appalachian novel or Jed Clampett for example. But in each instance, one will find political implications accompanying the actions of all.

As a work that spans several generations and touches upon topics ranging from frontier masculinity to the American South to sterilization to race and public policy, this study is in conversation with a broad cross-section of historiography. Primarily, it offers a corrective to our understanding of white-led liberal reform movements from the late 19th through much of the twentieth century. We must reframe our understanding of United States liberalism as a tradition rooted in a symbiotic relationship between the anxiety bred over Anglo-racial failure and the accompanying desire for white uplift and racial restoration. Accordingly, the dissertation first reconsiders the eugenics movement as sine-qua-non to Progressive Era liberalism. For too long, historians have failed to link the intellectual kinship between the two. Several recent studies that claim to exhaust the
period’s intellectual, political, and social history fail to make these connections.\textsuperscript{42} Such Progressive impulses as technocratic efficiency, scientific rationality and environmental conservationism were precisely the tenets that eugenicists exploited in the service of so-called “race betterment.” Jonathan Spiro has recently put forth this argument as it related to Madison Grant.\textsuperscript{43} Grant first found purpose in a national effort to save the American Bison of the High Plains and then worked tirelessly as a principal founder of the world famous Bronx Zoo. He next endeavored to protect the Redwoods of Northern California. Such a résumé expressed little more than a consummate Progressive reformer.

It should come as no surprise that Grant then dedicated the latter part of his career to “saving” the endangered “Anglo-Saxon race.” Grant and his colleagues thus simply mobilized Progressive Era ideology and leveraged the state to enact public policy that reflected their racist beliefs. Sterilization for example, was the deployment of modern science in the service of stabilizing a racial hierarchy that was troubled through the forces of economic impoverishment, alleged moral depravity, immigration, and imperial expansion. Just as an emergent class of bourgeois professionals saved the American Bison through environmental and biological manipulation, they too exerted these same methods in the decidedly higher stakes game of rehabilitating and restoring the fallen Anglo Saxon.


\textsuperscript{43} See Spiro, \textit{Defending the Master Race}. 
Historians must then include in any account the Progressive Era, the ideas of men such as Madison Grant, Harry Laughlin, Charles Davenport, and Arthur Estabrook.

At the same time, historians of the eugenics movement have been equally negligent in connecting an otherwise crucial body of scholarship to a broader social, political and cultural context. To note one exemplary and classic study, Daniel J. Kevles’s *In the Name of Eugenics* – while remaining the authority on the topic, twenty five years after its publication – makes no connection to Anglo-racial anxiety as the propulsive ideological thrust to both the eugenics movement and by extension, the Progressives. To Kevles, eugenicists certainly held racist beliefs and furthermore, created a racial orthodoxy under the cover of science. However, at no point does the influential study contextualize the ways in which poor whites – those of an allegedly “superior racial stock” – ignited an anxious intellectual elite and paved the way not only for sterilization but also a host of other political strategies and cultural asseveration that revealed the destabilizing impact of white poverty.

Since Kevles’s book, numerous studies have followed suit. In each instance, the scholars artfully develop a rich intellectual history of eugenics in the United States that centralizes several key figures (Laughlin, Davenport, Grant, Goddard, among many others) at the expense of offering a deeper analysis of the cultural and political environment that gave rise to these personalities in the first place. In fact, the existing eugenics scholarship

is almost invariably confined to the history of science, medicine, and technology and typically, remains national in scope. While no one disputes the obvious connections to these vital fields of study, we must also consider the eugenics movement as something beyond a troublesome expression of modern science and medicine and position it as a constitutive element in the cultural and political milieu of the so-called Progressive Era in the United States. And even more expansively, we must locate eugenics as an expression \textit{par excellence} of Western modernity. Reframing the movement in these terms forces us to come to grip with one of the ways in which science and medicine have been and continue to be tools of social control as well as clear manifestations of biopower.

To this end, the dissertation is also informed by several recent studies that have examined the confluence of race, sexuality and United States imperialism. Historians such as Laura Briggs, Phillipa Levine, Mary Renda, and others have all demonstrated how a scientific discourse of Anglo-superiority fed and expressed a culture of United States imperialism and Western domination. These works expertly illustrate how gender, race, and sexuality were interstitial focal points in the state’s justification to violently control “foreign bodies” and expropriate distant lands. Doubtlessly, the ideologies that defined science and medicine circulated with and constituted the very same ideologies that underwrote Anglo-American expansion. This expansion thus in part hinged upon the sexual control and exploitation of racialized and colonized people abroad and required the

\footnotesize{(New York: Routledge Press, 2003) and Alexandra Minna Stern’s \textit{Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) are both exemplary in their attention to race, science, progressivism, and the eugenics movement.}
exaltation of “pure” Anglo-Saxonism at home.\textsuperscript{46} So while the focus here is not explicitly on United States imperialism, the study nevertheless illuminates the emergence and instability of a racial orthodoxy that legitimized empire and white rule around the world. That an entire project of white-settler colonialism rested upon this racial orthodoxy reveals precisely how high the stakes were to maintain it. That it still so thoroughly and consistently broke down explains the variegated and disparate efforts to restore “fallen” whiteness.

Not surprisingly then, the presumed discovery of racial purity in the Southern Mountains occurred at the precise moment when South Africa and Australia ossified their societies upon the same racist logic that prevailed in the United States. A deeply troubling and overlooked comparison remains to be made among these nations. Progressive Era racial thinking must then be dislodged from a simple set of national considerations to instead reflect the transnational circulation and the exchange of ideas that established what W.E.B DuBois famously declared as the global color line.\textsuperscript{47} The ways in which these nations constructed and maintained their respective color lines at once reminds us that the history of racism and displacement is a shared experience that respects neither time nor


space. And perhaps a deep look into the psyche of one of these nations may provoke new questions about the others.  

Beyond the dialogue that my dissertation opens between historians of imperialism, eugenics and the Progressive Era, readers will also note the engagement that this study makes with a growing body of self-proclaimed, “white trash studies.” Broadly, the historiography focuses on poor whites, mostly in the South. Nicole Hahn Rafter’s collection was instrumental to the development of this historiography and remains the only edition to bring together over forty years of eugenic family studies into a single volume. Rafter explicitly links the eugenics movement to a pervasive anxiety that developed around the troubling specter of widespread white poverty and Anglo-racial failure – a crucial observation that is typically neglected among most scholars of American eugenics. Since her edited collection, several works have begun to explore the vexing problem of white poverty and Anglo-racial failure. Annalee Newitz and Matt Wray combined efforts with their edited collection of essays, *White Trash: Race and Class in America*. They argue that the troublesome phrase’s explanatory power emerges from the cognitive dissonance that it seemingly conjures: “White trash becomes a term which names what seems unnamable: a race (white) which is used to code “wealth” is coupled with an insult (trash) which means,  

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in this instance, economic waste.” They continue that race “therefore is used to ‘explain’ class, but class stands out as the principal term here, precisely because whiteness is so rarely connected to poverty in the U.S. imaginary.”\(^{50}\) The essayists collectively argue that “whiteness” – even as it so often inscribes power – must nevertheless be more rigorously problematized to take into account the variegated ways in which gender, class, and sexuality may complicate whiteness as a de facto designator of power and privilege.

Newitz and Wray thus established a debate within the field of whiteness studies. They and others claimed that earlier works failed to account for how debasement and impoverishment could derail a racial identity presumably constructed on wealth, power, and privilege.\(^{51}\) John Hartigan furthered the case with *Odd Tribes: Toward a Cultural Analysis of White People*. Hartigan’s interdisciplinary study utilizes ethnological as well as historical methods to call into question the oft-made claims of whiteness studies. He asserts, “that white trash is also a reminder of prevailing academic discussions of whiteness and blackness, a pairing that assumes these terms are sufficient for explaining race, leaving the degraded status of poor whites to fall from view.”\(^{52}\) Here, the persistent presence of “white trash,” according to Hartigan, forces us to think through the utility of whiteness as a useful analytical tool. Moreover, he finds that whiteness – as a racial identity


articulated through the deployment of dominance and violence and constituted through the
historic accumulation of power and privilege – has always faced challenges (even if
inadvertently) from within its own ranks.

More recently, Matt Wray’s *Not Quite White* examines how poor Southern whites
came to be known as “white trash.”53 His study begins in the Southern colonies and ends
with the hookworm crusade of the early-twentieth century. Throughout, Wray
demonstrates how poor whites and their stigmatization as “white trash” refined and
strengthened the white middle-class’s fragile claims to supremacy. By locating a social and
cultural boundary that “white trash” could never cross, Wray believes that they were
effectively severed from the privileges that have come to define whiteness. With such
considerations in mind, Wray proposes that, “we should reconceptualize whiteness as a
flexible set of social and symbolic boundaries that give shape, meaning, and power to the
social category white.”54 Wray’s work along with the others, all make the case that white
impoverishment undercuts the theoretical power of whiteness studies’ contributions. If
simply “possessing” white skin alone entails one to an array of social, cultural, and
economic advantages and opportunities then would it not follow that *all* white people have
secured an indisputable level of privilege – especially those of the prized “Anglo-Saxon
stock?” They point out that many white people have failed to mobilize or seize the very
opportunities and advantages that are presumably so foundational to their racial identity.
In short and quite contrary to Cheryl Harris’s noteworthy argument historicizing whiteness
as a legal, propertied and privileged subjectivity in and of itself, these writers have daringly

University Press, 2006).
54 Ibid., 6.
challenged us to consider whiteness without property. But as they do, unfortunately these works fail to recognize the great lengths in which a white supremacist state has consistently and proactively taken steps to stabilize the very racial hierarchy from which its leadership has always derived and perpetuated its power.

This dissertation sits rather uneasily with these studies. It takes as its topic, race and inequality but begins with a separate set of assumptions and not surprisingly arrives at a different conclusion. When poor people of color and whites alike have opposed the state or its corporate benefactors through either peaceful or violent means, one is not hard pressed to identify a violent and repressive response. Here, beyond a few notable exceptions, opposition to the state was met with violent and deadly force and thus easily dispelled. But it has been far more difficult to respond to persistent and long-term ideological threats. This dissertation then considers perhaps the most pressing threat to the very orthodoxy and logic by which the state has historically disbursed its social, cultural, economic, and political opportunities and rewards. By this metric, the persistence of Anglo-racial failure has been among the most destabilizing forces to a social order constructed and maintained by the ideology and rigorous enforcement of white racial superiority. Indeed, white failure as expressed through poverty as well as widespread allegations of moral decline and behavioral deficiency, exposed the whole enterprise as fraudulent at its source. If poor Anglo-Saxon whites had so badly failed to embody and display the essential and supposedly inherent racial attributes that justified and perpetuated white power and privilege in the first place – attributes including superior genes, intelligence, propriety, morality, industriousness, cleanliness, and sobriety to name only a few – then would it not

follow that the very foundation of a society built upon such lofty ideals would reveal itself null and void?

Above all else then, this is a history of failure – a history of several attempts at rehabilitating and restoring those failed members of an allegedly superior race, all in the service of legitimizing a society and culture rooted in racism, displacement, violence, and oppression. It presents failure as a useful line of inquiry and an unlikely means to understand what is among the most effective, if inadvertent and even ironically tragic subversions to white supremacy. This dissertation captures the public policy, political maneuverings, and popular culture that were collectively born of an anxiety. This anxiety expressed itself in the attempts to stabilize the immanently unstable and impose control and discipline on those who threatened the very logic of an intrinsically illogical and unequal society. Or perhaps more simply, it presents tales of a fallen race.
CHAPTER ONE

A Paradox of Purity: The Problem with Failure in the Southern Mountains and Beyond, 1873-1901

Actual societies, and with them their systems of control, have been so shattered, mutilated and deformed by war, famine, depopulation, immigration, race degeneration, and class conflict, that no laws can be framed for them that shall hold true.\(^{56}\)

- Edward A. Ross, 1901

Such was the pervasive fear that so transparently informed Edward Ross’s landmark 1901 study on race, class, power, and society, *Social Control: A Survey of the Foundations of Order*. The Stanford sociologist wrote his manifesto nearly 3,000 miles away from New York, though Ross nevertheless shared Roosevelt’s ominous prediction that the impending destruction of Anglo-Saxon civilization was imminent, destroyed from within by those too inferior to handle its civic responsibilities – the poor, the Black, and the inexorable masses of Eastern Europeans who swiftly bypassed their native continent and an ocean, only to dock on the shores of North America. As Ross wrote, millions of people whom he considered genetically questionable arrived in the United States – diluting, then deteriorating, and finally extinguishing the biological composition of the Anglo-Saxon race. It occurred first, just as Roosevelt and Grant prognosticated, in New York and the east coast, followed by the west coast, then throughout all corners of the nation, and eventually, the globe. Wherever enlightened Anglo-Saxons roamed they faced the increasing specter of racial contamination and degeneracy.\(^{57}\)


\(^{57}\) Matthew Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), Matthew Jacobson,
According to the US Census, Ross’s demographic observations of his home city of New York were quite accurate. At the turn of the century, the twelfth census reported that 37 percent of New York residents were foreign born. More striking still, 76.9 percent of the respondents claimed foreign parentage. The clear majority of the city’s population was directly descended from Ireland, Russia, Italy, or the Baltic. Only 5.4 percent filed their papers as English. To Ross, these newcomers came from the regions of the world populated by inferior races. He was one among a cohort of turn-of-the-century intellectuals including several members of the Boone and Crockett Club who crafted a similar line of scholarship, reacting to the nation’s shifting demographics. The common theme was a deepening anxiety that the United States was rapidly losing its so-called Anglo-Saxon or more explicitly, its racial character.

Ross and his colleagues believed that the stakes of this loss were nothing short of catastrophic. They argued that the Anglo-Saxon was not only the superior citizen but furthermore, the superior race – uniquely equipped with the biological and cultural attributes to construct, participate in and administer the world’s liberal democratic republics. The English-speaking, Anglo-Saxon had – by the late-19th century – violently colonized and settled the North American continent, the Australian continent, the southern tip of the African continent among other reaches of the planet. But in all locales, the predicament was the same.

Responding to these tensions in the United States, many writers bestowed upon a specific region, the mythical status of a racial utopia – a place that remained free from the

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pollutants of the city in the North or plantations of the Deep South, a place where the Anglo-Saxon race remained just as it had been for hundreds of years. This place was the Southern Mountains – a region we now define as Appalachia. Beginning in 1873, journalists, academics, travel writers, and politicians constructed a narrative of racial purity and cultural exceptionalism in the Southern Mountains. To them, the region represented a mythic reserve of “Anglo-Saxon stock” that provided a safeguard and counterbalance to the pernicious effects of immigration and so-called “miscegenation” within the nation as well as the dangerous racial contamination that occurred from exposure to and contact with the inferior races of the nation’s colonized lands. This chapter displays the ways in which the Appalachian South came to be perceived as a racially and culturally pure region. It then concludes with a deeply troubling reality that many of these same people – those privileged for their allegedly prized racial stock – had nevertheless failed to garner the cultural, economic, and political achievements that supposedly defined the Anglo-Saxon race.

To their dismay, figures such as Edward Ross, Madison Grant, Theodore Roosevelt, Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, John Fox, and others, all of whom espoused the racial virtues of the region’s people were relentlessly countered by first-hand accounts that rural Anglo-Saxons – the living descendants of the manly-racial archetype, Daniel Boone – in the Southern mountains were among the most poor, sexually depraved and culturally debased population living anywhere. The paradox that emerged presented an unsettling predicament to the era’s leading racial theorists: what to make of this curiously “pure

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59 Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind* and Allen Batteau, *The Invention of Appalachia* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990). These two works still represent the best cultural analysis of Appalachia in regards to its relationship within the white, middle-class imagination and what was precisely the lure with rural, white poverty.
Anglo-Saxon” who had devolved into such unrivaled levels of economic impoverishment and cultural declension?

Answering this question provided the impetus for state intervention in the years to follow as well as helped to constitute a political movement we know as Progressivism. Moreover, it opened up a treacherous fault line that exposed the vulnerability of white-settler societies built on Anglo-dominance. And distressingly, those who should have been the most pristine biological and genetic representatives of the Anglo-Saxon race had instead become a supreme liability. This chapter maps the development of a troubling paradox whereby a presumed biologically superior population had nevertheless declined by nearly every social, economic, and cultural measure. The second and third chapters argue that some of Progressivism’s central tenets along with the era’s accompanying public policy, aimed to redress this paradox and restore the failed race. The very assumptions and underpinnings of white-Anglo dominance hung in the balance.

**Immigration, Panic, and the Emergence of a Myth**

1873 marked a year of financial meltdown, large-scale immigration and the stirrings of widespread class conflict.\(^{60}\) Jay Cooke, financier turned public enemy number one, became

the poster child for industrial capitalism run amok. The nation convulsed with perpetual warfare against the continent’s indigenous peoples in the West while impoverished tenements seized the burgeoning urban landscape in the East. New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh all lay in the ruin of industrial uprisings and class conflict. If ever the nation was ripe for a healthy dose of nostalgia, 1873 was the year. Not surprisingly, William Wallace Harney discovered in the shadows of economic panic and millions of immigrants, a “strange land and peculiar people” in the Southern Mountains. It was a respite from the tensions and conflicts of industrial modernity, harkening back to what he felt was an easier and not coincidentally, more racially homogenous time. The piece appeared in the popular middle-class periodical, Lippincott’s and ignited a national fascination with the forgotten population of rural white people living in the Appalachian Mountains. According to Harney, the white Southern mountaineers were undisturbed by the forces of modernization and societal disunity. They lived peacefully and simply, free from mechanization and industrial upheaval and most importantly, “undiluted” by the mixing of and exposure to the foreign European races.

As Henry Shapiro has convincingly argued, over the next forty years novelists, journalists, politicians, and academics would indelibly imprint the region that extended from the North Georgia hills clear into the Adirondacks as Appalachia. They launched a literary genre that came to be known as the “local-color movement” and unwittingly left out African Americans and women. Allen Trachtenberg, The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997).

62 See Shapiro and Batteau.
63 This is indeed Shapiro’s central argument to the now classic work.
constructed a dichotomy that would have profound political and cultural implications.\(^6^4\) The mountain population was portrayed as isolated and curious in behavior and custom - though most crucially, this isolation left them racially and culturally uncontaminated from the thronging ilk flooding the nation’s great cities. But as observers would soon discover, they were also desperately impoverished and often, according to bourgeois onlookers, culturally backwards and sexually deviant.\(^6^5\) Tucked away deep among the mountains of the eastern seaboard, white mountaineers were said to be the direct descendants of the nation’s pioneers – men such as Daniel Boone and David Crockett. They were stubborn, fiercely independent, and intensely suspicious of outsiders. They possessed an unrefined virility and had deployed their manly vigor to conquer both the great American wilderness and the people who had originally occupied it. Yet, they were also accustomed to some of the lowest levels of material comfort and economic deprivation and their brusque behavior offended even the most hardened middle-class traveler.

Social reformers increasingly looked upon the region as a laboratory from which they could mobilize the population’s perceived biological advantage to lift them from poverty. William Goodell Frost, one of the era’s preeminent cultural observers articulated the clearest argument on behalf of the poor mountaineers. Frost argued that they were “our contemporary ancestors,” stuck in the eighteenth century, a preservation of a racially and


culturally endangered population. Frost sought funding from wealthy New Englanders to invest in Berea College, the small Kentucky liberal arts college where he had assumed leadership. Frost expertly played upon the racial anxieties of his would-be investors – all of whom were wealthy elites residing in New York, Boston, or Philadelphia. But unlike those cities, “Appalachian America has received no foreign immigration, it now contains the largest proportion of Sons and Daughters of the Revolution than any other part of our country.” He believed that the “Appalachian American” was underserved by the nation’s industrial infrastructure – confined primarily to urban areas – and thus faced economically depressed conditions and little opportunity for advancement. As a result, Frost believed that Kentuckians lagged behind in the urbanity, sophistication, and sophistry of their East Coast brethren.

However, the East Coast Anglo-Saxon’s cultural and economic achievements were increasingly endangered through their persistent contact with “inferior” people. Frost continued that:

The ancestry of the mountain folk is for the most part creditable...it is almost wholly Revolutionary and British. In Kentucky a majority of the families may be traced back to rural England, both by distinct English traits and by the common English names like Chrisman, Baker, Allen, and Hazelwood...The impression has been made that some of the early settlers in the Southern colonies were ‘convicts’, but it must be remembered that many of them were only convicted of having belonged to Cromwell’s army, or of persisting in religious meetings conducted by ‘dissenters...but whatever their origin, the ‘leading families’ of the mountains are clearly sharers in the gracious influences which formed the English and Scottish people.

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67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
Frost thus advanced his argument to fund higher education in Kentucky by deploying several racial appeals. He argued that the "ancestry" of those who attended the school were the direct descendants of men and women who participated in the Revolutionary War. Referring to the so-called convict element of Kentucky's population, Frost conceded that some local families undeniably had ancestors who fought for the British Army during the Revolutionary War. But over a century had lapsed since one could fairly accuse them of treason, according to Frost. And despite their forefathers' opposition to independence, they remained English and thus superior to the immigrants and the African American who now so prevalently threatened the racial and cultural composition of the Anglo-Saxon nation. Their crimes were in the past but what remained in the present and could persist into the future (if Berea secured the necessary funds) was a unique and utterly necessary task and opportunity: to educate a desirable race of people in isolation, away from the corrupting forces of the industrializing American city.

Frost's reasoning gained currency through an emerging literary movement as well as a scientific one. Fiction writers and non-fiction researchers combined their efforts to construct a phantasmal notion of regional racial purity and mystical frontier masculinity. Frost was simply one among many who mobilized this rhetoric to gather support for his cause. Joining a disparate crowd that included novelists such as John Fox Jr. as well as social scientists Theodore Roosevelt, Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, and Edward Ross. Collectively, these figures established a cultural and racial orthodoxy that blurred reality and creative fiction. Here, the literary and scientific informed and bolstered each other, legitimating white-Anglo supremacy that at once propelled racially exclusive policies.
within the nation as well as justifying racially motivated domination and colonization beyond the nation.

No literary figure was more responsible than novelist John Fox Jr. for fictitiously constructing Appalachia as a biological preserve of unadulterated whiteness. In a world increasingly imperiled by the dangerous racial encounters that inevitably accompanied the processes of expansion and immigration, the region acted as biological reserve. Among the most celebrated novelists and journalists of the 1890s, Fox carved out a career by luridly portraying the “peculiar people” of the Southern hills in ways strikingly reminiscent of Frost. Fox’s female protagonist in his 1899 novel, *A Mountain Europa* was a typical rendering of delicately pure, white femininity.\(^{69}\) Such characters apparently resonated among Fox’s readers despite otherwise banal plotlines. Nearly all of his novels featured a tortured romance between a beautiful woman from the isolated, mountainous countryside and a wealthy suitor from the city. Such literary conventions reveal how Fox constructed his characters and developed race, class, and gender as pivotal narrative devices. The mysterious and nameless woman in *Mountain Europa* for example appeared as the object of desire to Easter Hicks, the cosmopolitan traveler who found himself in the Tennessee hills on business, only to be smitten by Fox’s exoticized female mountaineer. Hicks found the woman to have possessed an:

unusual grace about her...Her features were regular, the nose straight and delicate, the mouth resolute, the brow broad, and the eyes intensely blue...Her figure was erect, and her manner, despite its roughness, savored something high-born. Where could she have got that bearing? She belonged to a race whose descent, he had heard was unmixed English; whose lips lingered words and forms of speech that Shakespeare had heard and used.\(^{70}\)

\(^{70}\) Ibid, 11-12.
Fox appealed to his audience the very same way as Frost – by presenting a cast of characters who conveyed a nostalgic if fictional sense of racial purity and white feminine beauty. In a nation increasingly populated by non-English (non-white) immigrants, the Southern Mountains contained a “race” that remained “unmixed English.” Though Fox’s enigmatic mountain woman was uneducated her Shakespearean phrasing rendered an innate lyrical quality to her speech, only possible through isolation from the corrupting influences of urbanization and modernity. As the reader continued, it became apparent that Hicks desired in the woman, the virginal and rustic qualities evidently not available in the scandalous and promiscuous landscape of the industrial city. Yet, _A Mountain Europa_ was only a prelude to his most well known work, _Trail of the Lonesome Pine_ (1908). The _New York Times_ bestselling novel expertly wove together the drama of mountain seclusion, violence, racial purity, virginal femininity, and romantic love into a narrative that contributed to and built upon the nascent stereotypes of Appalachian lawlessness and mountain feuding.\footnote{John Fox Jr., _The Trail of the Lonesome Pine_ (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1908). For an earlier piece on the Southern Hills, see _The Kentuckians_ (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1898). For an excellent work on Appalachian stereotypes, see Dwight B. Billings, Gurney Norman and Katherine Ledford, eds., _Back Talk from Appalachia: Confronting Stereotypes_ (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1999).}

Aside from a remarkably fecund career as a novelist, Fox also worked as a journalist for _Harper’s Weekly_, where he gained notoriety for his coverage of Theodore Roosevelt’s famed Rough Rider infantry during the Spanish-American War. As a correspondent reporting on the United States empire, Fox seldom missed an opportunity to valorize the racist and sexist mission of imperial uplift. Fox and his fellow reporters elevated the role that the British and the United States played in establishing a global color line predicated...
upon Anglo-Saxon mastery over foreign lands and the exploitation of foreign people. In one notable dispatch, he claimed that the invasions of Cuba, Hawaii, and the Philippines were justified because, “it remains true that there is no land in which Englishmen have founded colonies that it is not better in every way for their coming.”\(^72\) He then further asserted that only the United States and Britain – each sharing a common racial heritage – could administer and steward the world’s valuable resources: “the roots of the two nations go deep into a rich and historic past. It is from the old Teutonic soil that we draw the innate instincts of self-government and our strong sense of individual liberty.”\(^73\) In language similar to his fiction, Fox argued that Western Enlightenment concepts such as liberal republicanism and individualism were in fact a set of innate racial attributes, inherent first to the Teutonic race and then its immediate predecessor, the Anglo-Saxons in the United States and Britain.\(^74\)

This provided the necessary moral cover and ethical justification to seize territory and refashion whole cultures and societies in the ideological image of English-speaking people. This so-called “instinct” to expand emerged through a shared racial genealogy. The “Teutonic soil” was thus the fertile grounds from which enlightened civilization could sprout and flourish. Against Fox’s coverage of the imperial conquest in Cuba, his novels gain even more cultural currency. The racial signifiers deployed in Fox’s journalism and his novels were deeply embedded in the era’s imperial adventures, all of which were framed in

\(^73\) Ibid., 507.
\(^74\) For a useful discussion on the Teutonic connections to the Anglo-Saxon, see Painter, The History of White People, 135 and 316-317. As more evidence of the reckless racial science, some maintained that the Teutonic was Germanic, Nordic and Alpine while others saw the lineage move toward the Anglos, Saxons and Celts.
part as “civilizing missions” or attempts by Anglo-Saxon whites to uplift the world’s allegedly less advanced, non-white people.75

Fox’s novels read alongside his journalism for Harper’s reveal what literary critic Amy Kaplan artfully describes as the “underlying dream of imperial expansion.” Imperialism, according to Kaplan was the unyielding “nightmare of its own success, a nightmare in which movement outward into the world threatens to incorporate the foreign and dismantle the domestic sphere of the nation.”76 The appeal of Fox’s novels and the broader literary movement of which he was situated thus relied upon the ability to create a nostalgia-laden fantasyland where a sexualized form of racial purity proved the only effective anodyne to the anxiety and chaos intrinsic to each imperial encounter. What enabled Fox to travel to Cuba and risk almost certain racial contamination of the darker, less civilized people of the island was his earnest belief that back in his native Kentucky, there predominated women who possessed a “pure strain” of “unmixed” English. It was in the reproduction of the latter whereby the state could retain its racial integrity.

In other words, it was the exceptional biological and genetic nature of these bodies that could replenish the nation and quite literally, reproduce unmixed whiteness or act as a genetic preferment to the inevitable biological devaluation that occurred as a result of colonial contact. The female protagonists in Mountain Europa and Trail of the Lonesome

Pine provided the reproductive vessels through which crucial racial nourishment could pass. Preserving the purity “unmixed English” mountaineer heroines was perhaps the only means to continually perpetuate the undiluted Teutonic/Nordic/Anglo-Saxon’s instinctual drive to expand and dominate. Urgently then, Fox’s isolated enclave in the Southern Mountains was perhaps the last remaining reservoir that may one day have been needed to replenish an increasingly contaminated population who – while collectively satiating their innate and violent instincts on islands afar – had nevertheless compromised the very genetic composition that led to such racial supremacy in the first place.77

While Fox’s contributions to Harper’s were limited to covering the nation’s invasion of Cuba, the weekly periodical published several other analysts who shared his zeal for the people of the Appalachian Mountains. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, the journal ran dozens of short stories and travel literature about the region. By the mid-1890s, Julian Ralph, one of Harper’s most prolific writers and cultural critics, began a travel journal that detailed several unique places in the nation. Ralph’s first entry, “Where Time has Slumbered” was one of many articles where he advanced arguments of racial superiority masquerading as travel journalism. He argued that the Southern Hills preserved both a bygone way of life as well as a nearly bygone race of people. Ralph’s slice of Americana possessed rustic living arrangements and hardy inhabitants. He wrote for his urbane, East Coast audience, comparing two places they had likely never been: West Virginia and the

territory of New Mexico. According to Ralph, West Virginia was the more appealing and curious place. He explained that:

The mountain districts of West Virginia are as strange in their primitive population as in their tossed and tumbled surface...the greater part of the State is made up of mountains, and it is there that we see how unique are her people and their ways. New Mexico, with its glare of sands and its half-Mexican population, is more foreign, but it is not so picturesque nor nearly so peculiar as this abiding place of a genuine and pure American population, whose civilization has stood for more than a century.78

Ralph, like the others, projected onto the people of the Southern mountains an unmistakably mythical racial and cultural nostalgia. By deploying such adjectives as “genuine” and “pure,” the descriptions fit neatly into the growing perception that race was a fixed concept rooted in science and objective differences in blood, behavior, and culture. Moreover, Ralph and Fox both depicted feminine beauty by strictly adhering to a set of cultural aesthetics with which their white middle-class audience most certainly identified. Both transferred their readers from the demographically shifting, economically troubled Northern city to a bucolic mountain hollow inhabited by pure Americans who displayed a roughly hewn yet unrivaled beauty and femininity. Ralph achieved this effect by exploring New Mexico and West Virginia, describing the relative topographic foreignness of both. On the one hand, New Mexico was “not so picturesque” - with its sandy brown, desert flora, inhabited by people whose complexion matched the “barren” land on which they walked. On the other hand, West Virginia’s “toss and tumbled” interior secured its “genuine and pure,” American population. The West Virginian, despite having lived a rugged, simple, and poor life, was a quaint throwback to a racially pure era free from the stresses of industrialization, mechanization, immigration, and biological contamination.

This romantic portrayal of West Virginia implicitly drew into relief the mountain’s rugged, chaotic, and naturally beautiful terrain with the industrialized landscape of Ralph’s reference point of Manhattan. The latter was a landscape permanently altered by people and mutated into a routinized grid, reflecting the discipline and order imposed upon its millions of working-class inhabitants. The explicit contrast to both New York and the not so picturesque and foreign nature of New Mexico’s land and people stood in stark relief to the topographical and demographic observations that Ralph made about West Virginia. Only there, could one find an isolated pocket of racial homogeneity – a virginal population, physically protected by the impenetrable landscape. The dual processes of immigration to the nation and expansion beyond created the context from which Ralph – conveying themes of nostalgia, biological and cultural purity, and pre-industrial frivolity – reached a mass audience. Ralph’s West Virginian lived a simple yet content life, free from big city perversions. Underlying these assumptions was the belief that in rural West Virginia, the nation could still find a population of white people who were not exposed to “miscegenation” and class antagonism. Moreover, it restored a sense that the Jeffersonian dream of an Anglo-agrarian republic was not completely laid to rest at the gates of the industrial factory or at the processing depot of Ellis Island.\(^79\)

Still to many, the fantasy of the racial utopia described by Frost, Fox, and Ralph seemed vindicated by the specific patterns of immigration into Appalachia. Of West Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky, only the latter had a “foreign”

population exceeding 3 percent according to the 1890 census.\textsuperscript{80} North Carolina received the lowest total immigration of any state in the nation at .27 percent between 1880 and 1900 and likely even lower totals in the western portion of the state. In 1910, 85.3 percent of West Virginians claimed that they were “native white.” “Foreign born” and “native white with foreign or mixed parentage” combined for only 10.4 percent of the state’s population while African Americans constituted 5.3 percent.\textsuperscript{81} That these figures obscured the racial and ethnic diversity found within industrializing sections of the hills – specifically the coal mining counties of West Virginia where native born whites worked in equal numbers alongside African American migrants as well as Italian and Hungarian immigrants made little difference to the creative fiction propagated by Fox, Frost, Ralph, and others.\textsuperscript{82}

\textbf{From Literature to Science}

But as prolific or creative as were Fox and Ralph, their counterparts in the sciences devised the most imaginative fiction of all. In the emerging disciplines of sociology, history, biology, and anthropology leading thinkers advanced theories of race and behavior that would eventuate in the Progressive Movement. Edward Ross’s \textit{Social Control} (1901) distilled over a decade of scholarship on alleged racial difference across disciplines, offering the clearest

\textsuperscript{82} Joe William Trotter, Jr., \textit{Coal, Class, and Color: Blacks in Southern West Virginia, 1915-1932} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990) and David Alan Corbin, \textit{Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners: 1880-1922} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), Kenneth Fones-Wolf and Ronald Lewis, ed., \textit{Transnational West Virginia: Ethnic Communities and Economic Change} (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2003). These scholars have long noted that despite an overall low level of immigration to states such as West Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina there were in fact pockets that rivaled the immigration figures of any major city.
articulation of one influential theory: the Teutonic Thesis. According to Ross, the modern
day “Anglo-Saxon race” was the evolutionary descendant of aggressive and assertive
Teutonic and Nordic men. Through thousands of years of brutal and manly warfare, the
Teutonics and Nordics then spread from Scandinavia through Northern and Western
Europe in wave after wave of conquest and territorial expansion. The Teutonic peoples’
subarctic climate, contributed to a “hardy” nature that forced them to brave the elements
and live a life of rigid austerity and discipline.\textsuperscript{83} Ross summed it up accordingly:

In Scandinavia a prolonged struggle in the North Temperate Zone, with a harsh, though not
a depressing, natural environment, endows the Teuton with unusual energy and initiative.
Then centuries of wanderings in which the strong set forth and the weak and timid stay
behind, brings the Teuton to the west of Europe, to the British Isles, and to, America, with a
courage and enterprise, and self assertion rare in the history of man. The Teuton becomes
the Anglo-Saxon, and therewith less apt for the gregarious life. Moreover, the constant
fighting brought about by his migrations accentuates warlike traits in the Teuton and
breeds in him violence and aggression, the propensities of predatory man.\textsuperscript{84}

This thesis served as scientific evidence for the literary musings of Frost, Fox, and
Ralph. While the latter portrayed the Southern Mountains as mythical enclave of racial
purity, Ross and his cohort legitimized this myth with scientific precision. Ross argued that
the “Anglo-Saxon race,” formed through manly warfare and selective breeding – “the strong
set forth and the weak and timid stay behind.” Instantly, the reader identifies the gendered
conception of Ross’s theory of racial evolution, one that required masculine competition,
conflict, and violence as an evolutionary means of advancement. By the time that the
Teutonic man arrived in North America, “he” had become predatory and supremely
assertive. Put differently, he had achieved the highest levels of rigorous masculinity,

\textsuperscript{83} Ross, 16.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid, 16.
mastering the art of war and expansion while concurrently bolstering his genetic composition through successive waves of superior breeding.\textsuperscript{85}

Ross further asserted that violence and aggression eventually and inevitably led to “conquest and state-building,” followed by “a protracted regime of force, status, and exploitation, which strengthens self-seeking and clannishness, undermines the primitive instinct of friendly association, and leaves an emulative, individualistic stamp upon nearly all the institutions of the Teuton.”\textsuperscript{86} Here, Ross located the origins of free enterprise and private property in the biological development of the Anglo-Saxon as it evolved from the Teutonic. Ross’s Anglo-Saxon/Nordic/Teutonic thus moved beyond such communitarian ideals that typified the lesser races. After all, according to the sociologist communal living was tantamount to primitivism and human devolution. He continued that the “individualistic stamp” of the Teutonic man ushered in a higher order of human civilization. Any social organization that failed to value individualism, masculine aggression, and acquisitive competition relied upon the primitive instincts of collectivism and remained stalled in a lower human developmental phase.

Yet despite Ross’s general endorsement of white supremacy via the ascendancy and supremacy of the Teutonic, he nevertheless extended a cautionary note. The very achievements that emerged from the racial attributes of the Teutonic race could at the very same time, threaten further advancement. Paradoxically, while Ross believed his race had reached an evolutionary peak; it nevertheless could devolve through the very forces that led to its ascent. The competitive nature of the Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon people could

\textsuperscript{85} Painter does an exemplary job of explaining this narrative as well. See Painter, \textit{A History of White People}, 72-190.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid. Ross, displaying his progressive credentials, tempered the statement with the belief that mass holdings of private property was in fact, a hindrance to the public good.
result in “clannishness” and eventuate in a form of individualism run amok, thus destabilizing order and civil society.

This was where Ross exposed himself as an early Progressive reformer. He believed that the white Anglo-Saxon – freshly evolved from the truculent Teutonic – must suppress some of the inherent competiveness that for centuries typified its racial development. Given the unrelentingly changing demographics occurring on the continent, the Anglo-Saxon had to now engage in behavioral uplift among the races not as advanced. Failing to do so would drive the immigrant masses to rebel, ultimately leading the nation to the brink of race and class war. The racist reasoning went as follows: white Anglo-Saxons could achieve and flourish in competitive societies such as the United States in ways the other, inferior races could not. Yet these other races had already flooded the nation and supplied a workforce for the growing industrial base. It was now the responsibility of the civilized Anglo-Saxon to control his competitive and individualist impulses and teach the lesser races to behave in the image of the Teutonic people.87

Paradoxically and perhaps hypocritically, Ross had it both ways. Even as he theorized the biological and innate differences among the world’s races, he nevertheless believed that with the proper education the so-called inferior races could still learn how to “act” Anglo-Saxon and effectively acculturate themselves to the innate habits of the superior race. He determined that the Italian and Slavic races possessed a servility and meekness that made them easy targets of influence. This was evident in their physical characteristics – “broad skulled, brunets” as well as their mental characteristics.88 For example, they were “less individualistic and more gregarious and dependent...They are

87 This was a stream of thinking that would unite seemingly disparate Progressive thinkers.
88 Ross, 440.
more amendable to early impressions. They are patient and tenacious and they bow to authorities and feel the prestige of the past." Adhering to standard scientific formulae, Ross located in the broad skull and dark hair the telltale signs of low cerebral functioning, approaching idiocy. But curiously if auspiciously for Ross, the very traits that he categorized as innately idiotic could be advantageously exploited. He further surmised that their dependent and amenable character made the Polish, Italian, Baltic, and Slavic Catholics easy targets for control, regulation, and hopefully, reeducation.

Nothing illustrated this more according to Ross, than their facile faith in the Catholic Church. Ross was not surprised that the "Slavic races" followed a religion that in his view fostered servility and weak moral bearing. He believed that Catholics were, "habit loving, they are easily controlled in their ideas of right by means of early education." But sooner or later Ross argued, the Catholic realized that he or she had for so long worshipped at the alter of a false doctrine. At that point, the betrayed Catholic turned away entirely from his religious roots and supplanted the ideological void with nihilistic political radicalism. Accordingly, the servile races that practiced Catholicism eventually recognized the folly of the Church and in its place, "developed anarchism, a phenomenon almost unknown in northern countries." The Progressive mission of Ross and so many other self-identified Anglo Protestants was then one of preemption and mental colonization. Ross was certain that the less advanced races would sooner or later abandon their religion. At which point, reformers had to intervene and preempt the inevitable conversion to political radicalism.

After all, their colleagues in politics and the military were actively colonizing foreign lands.

89 Ibid.
90 Ibid, 244.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
imposing with great violence the nation’s will upon people abroad. It made perfect sense then for leading social scientists to extend this preoccupation by colonizing the minds of those from foreign lands already in the United States, reconfiguring servile Catholics to conform to proper Protestant ethics. While race was most certainly predetermined Ross evidently insisted that religion and culture were not. If the Slavic and Italian races were biologically servile the idea was then to make them servile to the proper set of cultural beliefs.\footnote{Ross was not isolated in this pursuit. The argument extends to the entire cohort of his so-called Progressive colleagues.}

Ross’s formulations and theories could be easily dismissed had they existed at the fringe of the academy. Such was not the case. Rather, as a leading sociologist moving from the nation’s most esteemed universities he was a primary contributor to and creator of an ideological and intellectual movement that espoused a racialized and gendered conception of power, expansion, advancement, and bodily control – a movement situated squarely in the scholarly mainstream. By the time he was thirty five Ross held Professorships at Cornell and Stanford, eventually settling on Columbia. From 1914 to 15, the immediate years before Grant published \textit{The Passing of the Great Race}, Ross ascended to the Presidency of the American Sociological Association (ASA), the discipline’s flagship professional organization. Indeed, he became the \textit{de facto} voice of American sociology.\footnote{See the ASA website for a brief biography of each of the organization’s Presidents. Ross’s may be found at: http://www2.asanet.org/governance/Ross.html.}

Moreover, Ross’s ideas filtered beyond the academy and exerted a profound influence on the era’s political debate. In fact, Ross’s audience included none other than the figure who defined his age and dominated the political landscape for decades to follow. Just as Theodore Roosevelt organized the Boone and Crockett Club, he forged an identity as
a social scientist and intellectual disciple of Ross. Ross’s most obvious influence on the precocious intellectual could be found in Roosevelt’s race-based history of the North American continent. Here we find among his first expressions of admiration for Daniel Boone and the allegedly prized and isolated race that persisted on the nation’s frontier and in the Southern Mountains. Roosevelt’s expansive narrative at once justified imperialism, informed public policy and constructed an understanding of the nation’s history based upon its founding as a white-settler colony of Great Britain. The 1889 magnum opus, *The Winning of the West* solidified Roosevelt’s position as a premier racial thinker and public intellectual. It also provided a roadmap for the imperial policies that later defined his Presidency’s foreign policy. The three-volume work meticulously if spuriously traced how a small colony of Anglo-Saxons triumphed to become among the world’s great powers.  

Not surprisingly, Roosevelt’s analysis hinged primarily on the English settlers’ race and manliness. He traced the violent settlement of the continent – paying specific attention to climatic expansion into the North American interior and across the western frontier. The Appalachian were at once Southern but in this instance, also of the West. Here, Roosevelt located the emergence of the Kentuckian as the prototypical frontier hero and racial archetype. To Roosevelt, the proto-Kentuckian emerged in the 1770s through the

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victorious struggle against the twin threat of the British Army and the Native Americans. He asserted that this rigorous and violent process created a new breed of men. By simultaneously suppressing Native Americans who roamed the untamed wilderness to the west as well as the Red Shirt provocateurs to the east the Kentuckians proved to be “stout hearted men...fruitful as they were hardy.”96 The Kentuckian heeded the violent call and spread out through the west and over the Appalachians all the while multiplying their strong and virile breed. Roosevelt explained that the, “American stock who were pioneers of our people in their march westward, the vanguard of the army of fighting settlers, who, with axe and rifle won their way from the Alleghenies to the Rio Grande and the Pacific.”97

The process of western expansion and selective racial breeding thus began as white settlers refused to acknowledge the so-called Proclamation Line established by the British Crown following the Seven Years War in 1763. In the wake of that war, the British prohibited white settlement west of Blue Ridge Mountains. Failing to respect this border threatened the trade relations that British authorities and colonial elites had long worked to secure with several indigenous populations.98 Nonetheless, the settlers ignored the new borders and boldly pushed forward into Indian Territory. It was in this lawless expanse that gave rise to Roosevelt’s “American stock” – the supreme frontier hero and the apogee of human development.99

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96 Roosevelt, 109.
97 Ibid, 119.
99 Dyer implicitly notes the use of the phrase in nearly all of Roosevelt’s publications, from law to foreign policy. He also would use the phrase “old stock” interchangeably. See Dyer, 148.
However, Roosevelt’s racial hypothesis relied upon several cultural assumptions that could in effect subvert or at least adjust biology. He like others believed that the cultural influence of Protestantism bolstered the Anglo-Saxon’s already strong racial genealogy, descended from the Teutonic and Nordic people. The Kentuckian evolved from the Anglo-Saxon travelers who came to the shores of North America to escape religious persecution. Accordingly they were both the "Protestants of the Protestants" – the reformers of a culture already built on reform but also the genetic inheritors of genes already strong.\footnote{100} Roosevelt’s “American stock” – found at its most pure in Kentucky along the frontier – had thus secured both biological advantages vis-à-vis their Teutonic blood as well as a cultural ones through the adoption of Protestantism. As other writers such as Ross had asserted, the Teutonic people were characterized by their use of manly force and a principled belief in rugged individualism. The Kentuckian then was the quintessential antithesis to the newly arrived “Slav,” he who so troublingly displayed such attributes as servility, communalism, and dependency, or in other words, all that was culturally manifest in Catholicism.

Roosevelt offered the British colonization of Ireland as an example of Anglo cultural and biological supremacy as well as a harbinger of events to come. Like their British-Anglo predecessors the American stock, “detested and despised the Catholics.”\footnote{101} Before settling an entire continent, Roosevelt reminded his readers that this race of men conquered their Catholic antagonists just to the west of England, extending Anglo dominance across the British Isles. Once in North America, Roosevelt claimed that this very population further mastered the art of conquest, domination and independence through the Revolutionary

\footnote{100} Roosevelt, 119.  
\footnote{101} Ibid.
War as well as perpetual conflict on the Western Frontier directed against indigenous people. The American stock – most explicitly the Kentuckian – that Roosevelt discerned was then a biological and cultural amalgamation that reflected the genetic make-up of the Teutonic people as well the self-righteousness and moral certitude of the most devout Protestants. These attributes were further intensified in the rugged environment and “strenuous life” of the frontier.\(^{102}\) This very specific and peculiar confluence of social, cultural and biological arrangements was thus the basis for such racial and manly ubermensch as Andrew Jackson, Samuel Houston, Davy Crockett, Kit Carson, and James Robertson.\(^{103}\)

According to Roosevelt, none of these men represented the premier racial archetype more than the exemplary figure of Daniel Boone. Roosevelt’s reconstruction of the frontier legend furnished a biological and cultural map that offered precise directions to a destination of racial supremacy and nationalism. Tracing Boone’s footsteps thus detailed explicitly how the “American race” forged itself out of masculine frontier aggression, pacifying both man and nature with swift efficiency. Roosevelt’s depiction of “Boone and the Settlement of Kentucky” portrayed a heroic Revolutionary War veteran who possessed ideal levels of masculinity and racial acumen. During the conflict, Boone valiantly fought back the English, a population who shared his Anglo blood. To the west, he expanded white settlement beyond the Cumberland Gap with the brutal campaigns directed against the Shawnee population in modern day West Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio. Here Roosevelt countered, Boone and the other “the Kentucky hunters were promptly taught that in this


\(^{103}\) Ibid.
no-man’s-land, teeming with game and lacking even solitary human habitation, every Indian must be regarded as foe.”

Boone’s travels thus led him into a great North American wilderness that was void of human habitation though curiously still populated by Indians. Roosevelt thus classified the latter as a separate species, serving no purpose beyond threatening “human” advancement.

At once, Boone secured United States independence from the Crown while simultaneously clearing the Western Frontier of Native Americans. The ambitious project ensured that white settlers would occupy the land and foster their newfound freedom – a freedom rooted in masculine violence and racial domination. Within decades, Boone’s actions became mythologized in the nation’s lore and its intellectual establishment. But most central, Roosevelt and others constructed the mythic Boone and his fellow “backwoodsmen” in the Southern Mountains as an increasingly isolated pocket of fierce, strong, pure and most of all, improved Anglo-Saxons. By the middle of the nineteenth century, white Southern mountaineers became the descendants of Boone and the living purveyors of a bygone, frontier lifestyle. Only through this perfect storm of isolated, selective racial breeding and social conditioning could a figure such as Boone successfully “win the west.”

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104 Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West: Volume I, From the Alleghenies to the Mississippi, 1769-1776*, 142-144.

105 Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West: An Account of the Exploration and Settlement of Our Country from the Alleghenies to the Pacific, Book II* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1889), 34-66. This section entitled, “Boon and the Settlement of Kentucky” deals explicitly with Daniel Boone’s exploits during the Revolutionary Period and, I would argue, the role of manliness in the construction of a myth. Roosevelt drops the “e” from the more accepted spelling of Boone’s last name.

106 Ibid., Roosevelt links famed pioneers and their contributions in war throughout the work. See his discussion on “the Backwoodsman,” 117-156 for example.
Around the same time that Theodore Roosevelt was drafting *The Winning of the West* and Ross was diligently researching at Stanford, a Harvard geologist and paleontologist named Nathaniel Southgate Shaler released the definitive statement on Roosevelt’s favored Kentuckian. In fact, Thomas G. Dyer has noted that Shaler’s *Kentucky: A Pioneer Commonwealth* partly furnished Roosevelt with the evidence to later claim that there actually existed a “Kentucky race or Backwoods race” – a genetic permutation of his favored “American stock.” Shaler, formerly known for his scholarly work on ants, departed from his entomological pursuits to argue that frontier conditions in the colonial American South bred a separate and indeed more desirable race than their New England or British counterparts. In contrast to the pious New Englander, the Kentuckian was the descendant of the indentured servants who eventually gained their freedom and settled the Virginia and Carolina backcountry. They continued west across the mountains in the pursuit of property. According to Shaler, this single-minded desire was the Kentuckian’s distinguishing attribute. They had an “absorbing passion not for religious discussions; but for the possession of land...This appetite for land seems never to have been a part of New England desires but in Virginia and Kentucky it was the ruling passion.” Shaler’s emphasis on property as something to be forcefully acquired and appropriated foreshadowed Ross’s conclusions. Both Shaler and Ross argued that the manly accumulation of property was then an intrinsic and positive attribute that further illustrated human evolution and furnished evidence for the superiority of the Southern “backwoodsman.”

107 Dyer, 29.
Shaler, a Union Veteran of the Civil War further argued that the white male Kentuckian was the true victim of the Antebellum social order. He accurately described the ways in which a population of poor whites languished beyond the piedmont far from the plantation elites who selfishly maintained near total power over the South. He asserted that in the half-century preceding the Civil War white men on the frontier were locked out of an economy based on plantation slavery. Confined to the rocky and unproductive soil in the western hills, the Kentucky mountaineer was unable to compete with the agriculturally productive regions of the coastal plains and alluvial delta. According to Shaler, the persistence of slavery corrupted the poor whites’ value of labor while the infertile soil sealed the population’s fate to languish in resentful self-pity, degradation, and poverty.

But luckily according to Shaler, the Civil War changed everything. Like Ross and Roosevelt, Shaler praised the warlike and aggressive nature of the men of the Southern Mountains. War provided the necessary opportunity to constructively engage and bolster their masculinity – not unlike the imperial projects that the United States initiated precisely as Shaler wrote. Also like his colleagues, Shaler believed that the Kentuckian was the “offspring of the Revolution.” Unlike the Northeast and much of the coastal South where Shaler grew concerned that his fellow countrymen lost the urge to fight, on the frontier and in the Southern Mountains such a will “lived on, fed by tradition and by a nearly continuous combat down to the time of rebellion...They were a strength to Virginia in the revolution,

109 Ibid., 45
110 On this point, Shaler was certainly not alone, even among contemporary historians. See, Jeff Forest Race Relations at the Margins: Slave and Poor Whites in the Antebellum Countryside (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), J. William Harris, Plain Folk and Gentry in a Slave Society: White Liberty and Black Slavery in Augusta’s Hinterlands (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998). For another cultural studies angle see, John Hartigan Jr., Odd Tribes.
111 Shaler, 34.
and their children gave character to the army of Jackson in the Civil War.”

Shaler thus argued that the Kentuckians earned their place atop the racial hierarchy through an assertion of masculine aggression, wholly manifest in time of war.

Tellingly, Shaler, Ross, and Roosevelt wrote in, or more accurately created the context of what Gail Bederman has called a “crisis in manliness.” This was an alarming development that emerged during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. During these years, the nation’s middle class became increasingly afflicted with a new if fabricated disease – Neurasthenia. Bederman explains that the illness resulted from, “the mental labors of advanced civilization which drained (men) of their nervous energy necessary to build a strong, masculine body.” The illness was most acute among educated white Anglo-Saxon men, many of whom had ascended into the middle class, worked as midlevel bureaucrats, and lived in the burgeoning suburbs of industrial cities. Far removed from the western frontier or the imperial battlefields of Cuba or the Philippines these men shunned Theodore Roosevelt’s conception of the strenuous life and effectively emasculated themselves in pursuit of the bourgeois life. Most were of course from what Roosevelt would have otherwise considered sturdy “American stock” but had increasingly grown effete through a lack of manly, physical engagement.

The disease reflected the predicament and contradiction of Anglo-American achievement. On the one hand, masses of educated, middle-class white Anglo-Saxon men lived in unrivaled material comfort. They worked in finance, trade, business, or management. On the other hand, none of these occupations required men to rigorously

112 Shaler, 18.
113 Gail Bederman, Manliness and Civilization, especially Chapter Three, 77-121.
114 Ibid., 130.
harness their manliness in the ways of a rugged frontiersman or a colonial conqueror. Alas, the Kentuckian and the other “peculiar people” in the “strange land” of Appalachia revealed their value to a society in crisis at the turn of the century. In the perceived isolation of the deep mountain hollows a reserve of racially and culturally pure people maintained a manly resolve to settle the wilderness and subsist among conditions reminiscent of the great American frontier. They stubbornly resisted the broader cultural advancements that led an increasingly bureaucratized and professionalized middle-class to wallow impotently in their offices and suburban homes.115

The manly Southern mountaineers did not succumb to the insidious effects of Neurasthenia. In fact, they along with the veterans of imperial wars were among the select population who had maintained suitable levels of masculine aggression and undiluted genetic strength. After all, soldiers in the Atlantic and Pacific were engaged in the same enterprise as the Daniel Boones of yesteryear: violent expansion, land appropriation, and resource extraction. Imperialism was thus one way by which masculine warfare and aggressive expansion could replicate the culture of the frontier. Like aggression and violence in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and the Carolinas, conflicts in the Philippines, Hawaii, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and elsewhere provided the nation’s white youth an opportunity to reconstruct the very conditions that gave rise to Boone, Carson, Jackson, and Crockett. Just as the frontier nurtured the arrangements from which Roosevelt declared his “American stock” to materialize, perhaps even more fit and virile races could be bred through another round of expansion – this time abroad. Indeed, if the Teutonic and Nordic

115 It certainly was not lost upon observers such as Roosevelt, Shaler and Ross that the racial composition of the ‘Kentuckian’ and the victims of Neurasthenia were identical in some cases.
races gave rise to the Anglo-Saxon race and it then evolved into an American, Kentucky, or Backwoods race perhaps there was no reason to believe that further selective breeding could not usher in yet another phase of human evolution. Collectively, these races constituted what Roosevelt most expansively referred to as the “English-speaking race” and with such vigor and talent they fruitfully spread from the British Isles to North America as well as Australia and South Africa. And the in the process they constructed the global color line along an imagined border that adhered to a racial nationalism that extended about the planet.

Albert Beveridge, the famously outspoken Progressive Senator from Indiana demanded that the United States play its part in creating this global color line. It would of course have immediate and salutary effects upon those residing in his district as well. According to him, imperial expansion would not only rejuvenate the blood of increasingly feminized, Anglo-Saxon middle-class men but also reconstitute the biology of the so-called new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. Beveridge was among the most active and eloquent proponents of a racially justified colonial policy. His persuasive rhetoric mobilized the very same linguistic signifiers that his Progressive colleagues in the sciences and literature used to proclaim the superiority of the Anglo-American race. Beveridge claimed that, “our race is, distinctly, the exploring, the colonizing, the administering force of the world. We are this, not from necessity, but from irresistible impulse, from instinct, from

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racial and unwritten laws inherited from our forefathers.” He elaborated that these forefathers were, “Our pioneers who reclaimed Kentucky and the Mississippi Wilderness; they crossed the Rockies and seized Oregon.” While it is not clear how Beveridge's pioneers *reclaimed* something that they never possessed in the first place his statement nonetheless echoed those of Roosevelt to Ross, Harney to Ralph. For all, the development of frontier masculinity provided the evidence that racial and, in fact human advancement proceeded through the channels of violence, expansion, and conquest. It had reached its continental limits and now required global encroachment.

Throughout a relatively short twelve year, two-term Senate career, Beveridge advocated on behalf of the Roosevelt administration’s policies. As a good Progressive, this meant seeing no contradiction between establishing child labor laws domestically while conquering lands abroad to brutally extract labor and resources among non-white people, children or otherwise. In 1902, he campaigned through California to convince his Congressional colleagues on the need to militarily seize the Pacific slope to ensure access points to Chinese markets and natural resources. Beveridge mightily claimed that the American people:

are the descendents of men who proved their belief in the expanding powers of our race by crossing the deserts and scaling mountains to reach this land of promise. You are the children of the fearless ones in whose minds burnt the fire of prophecy and in whose breasts beat the heart of faith in their race and in themselves.

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118 Ibid.
119 Beveridge was among the legislative cohort who fashioned the National Child Labor Committee in 1904.
120 Beveridge, 199.
His desire to conquer the Pacific revealed a belief that anything less was a betrayal to the health and fitness of his race. After all, it was the strong frontiersmen who dutifully cleared the land for permanent white settlement. Only by continuing this “tradition” of expansion could the Anglo-American further the achievement and fulfill his racial destiny.

In the face of counterarguments, Beveridge naturalized imperialism as an inherent trait of white Anglo-Saxon men, bred into their racial composition and a necessary expression of their nationalism. Beveridge’s brethren, “could not help it... Wherever our race has gone, it has governed; wherever it has governed, law, order, justice and the rights of man have been established and defended.”121 The Senator thus thwarted his anti-imperialist critics by propounding an unshaken belief in the indisputable positives that accompanied expansion. Most notably, his justifications for imperial expansion provide additional context for the discursive construction of a mythic frontier region that contained the pure racial and cultural reserve of “unmixed English” people. In the realm of culture, science, and politics the same signifiers worked in conjunction to create a fictional narrative and ideology of United States supremacy based partly upon the nation’s racial fitness. This ideology justified imperialism as the logical extension of a racial nationalism that required appropriation, violence and aggression to adequately express itself – they simply “could not help” but dominate non-white, inferior peoples. Moreover, colonization and empire became the possible solution to the perceived emasculation of white middle-class, Anglo-Saxon men. The Southern mountaineer’s biological supremacy provided the resolution to an equation that first combined Indian killing with westward and global expansion followed by an addition of manly posturing.

121 Ibid., 114.
By century’s end, the Southern Mountaineers were increasingly represented as a secluded racial preserve of frontier masculinity. Here, along with the veterans of the United States Army and Navy one found an archetype of racial purity and manliness that stood in contradistinction to both the effeminate Anglo-Saxon bourgeoisie as well as the inferior races proliferating among the nation’s great cities. White male Appalachians were thus a living inoculation to an illness born of the unpredicted and unintended side effects of middle-class Anglo material achievement and known hazards of urban racial pollution. Thus, through the context of mass immigration and financial panic, the Southern mountaineer provided racial respite from a demographically changing nation. Social scientists as well as the national literati all agreed that the Southern Mountains – formerly, the Western Frontier – possessed a specific set of spatial, cultural, social, and economic arrangements that bred a superior race of people, a race increasingly endangered by the forces of industrialization and emergence of the twentieth century American city.

But upon actual examination, there was a glaring contradiction with the region’s cultural construction as a prized preserve of pure, rugged, and manly Anglo-Saxonism, allegedly furnishing the most desirable “American Stock.” Such a status presumably should have propelled the vaunted mountaineers to a lifestyle befitting their superior race. One expected to observe that those who had so far advanced biologically easily secured the markings of cultural and economic advancement. To the contrary, observers noted levels of poverty so severe and behavior so objectionable that the racialized and gendered
presumptions that Roosevelt and others had crafted seemed spurious at best and damningly fraudulent at worst.\textsuperscript{122}

From the beginning, with but few notable exceptions most scholars, journalists, and politicians failed to detail the contemporary conditions in which the mountain white population actually lived. The lifestyles of the people whom Roosevelt, Ross, Frost, Fox, and the others so glowingly wrote about revealed a stark contrast between their myths and a far more cruel reality. Roosevelt’s famous Kentuckian turned out to be far from an ideal conception of U.S. American manliness and biological supremacy. The Christian missionaries who had developed a long-standing presence in the region first detailed the socio-economic devastation that now typified Daniel Boone’s former haunt. Missionaries initially arrived assuming that they would find in the Southern Mountains an opportunity to proselytize among those who already shared many of their Protestant beliefs. Instead, their mission quickly turned to uplift – no different than that which embarked upon in various regions around the world. Washington Gladden was among a broader coalition of Christian Soldiers that formed the American Missionary Association (AMA) – an organization founded in the 1840s with the admirable aim of abolishing slavery and the rather patronizing goal of educating African Americans.\textsuperscript{123}

Though shortly after the Civil War, the American Missionary Association expanded their vision and reach by also establishing missions in sub-Saharan Africa, Mexico, and China. Closer to home, the AMA organized new missions on Indian Reservations in the

\textsuperscript{122} The American Missionary Association and some journalists noted as much while the ‘scientific’ thinkers of the era did not.

\textsuperscript{123} See the American Missionary Association Archives, Amistad Research Center, Introduction to the A.M.A. \textit{The American Missionary} is available in microfilm at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
Southwest and among poor whites and freed Blacks in the South. Gladden, among the AMA’s most meticulous record keepers arrived in Kentucky in 1883 – just as Shaler prepared to release his book on the state and its people. But beyond the synchronous timing between Gladden’s arrival and Shaler’s book, the similarities ended. Shaler’s Kentuckian was a fierce and virile frontiersman who vitalized the nation with his heroism against the Crown’s forces. At the same time, he also tamed the great North American wilderness by slaying or forcefully relocating its indigenous people. Shaler’s Kentuckian was a man of valor whose blood was an elixir to the growing intrusion of foreign others into the nation. It was also the effective anodyne to racial contamination that occurred as the Anglo-Saxons expanded across the globe.¹²⁴

Gladden’s Kentuckian was someone quite different. He entered the U.S. South first to get a sense of literacy rates and voting habits among whites in the mountains and then Blacks in the Coastal plains and Delta. He found that in Eastern Kentucky the illiteracy rate among white voters was “very nearly 23 percent, where the percent of increase among the illiterate negro voters is not quite fourteen.”¹²⁵ Gladden continued his analysis: “The number of illiterate white voters increased during the ten years, 24 per cent – almost as fast as the population, while the illiterate Negro voters increased during the same period less than five per cent.”¹²⁶ In fact Gladden added that, “the whites are gaining a little in this battle with the powers of darkness; but it is very little; they are scarcely doing more than holding their own; but the Negroes are gaining splendidly; it is to them that the large

¹²⁶ Ibid, emphasis added.
increase in the percentage of intelligent voters is mainly due.” His pronouncements prematurely disrupted the very logic of an emergent scientific establishment guided by such voices as Roosevelt, Shaler, and Ross. Each proclaimed that a racially superior population predominated in the Southern Mountains. Yet, Gladden discovered that the very population of prized mountaineers failed to keep intellectual pace with an African American population not even a generation removed from chattel slavery. It was the latter whose literacy and civic engagement advanced so rapidly and convincingly while the rugged mountaineer shamefully deteriorated.

To Gladden’s credit, he did not buy into the racist discourse that surrounded him. Moreover, he and his colleagues seemed veritably interested in advancing the social and economic conditions of the poor, regardless of race (though if in the process they accepted Christ as their Savior, all the better). He realized just how impoverished, uneducated, and economically disadvantaged were both the South’s whites and African Americans. If white mountaineers possessed superior genes they most certainly did not possess a high degree of literacy, adequate housing, education, or economic opportunities. And to make matters even worse despite their Anglo-Protestant history, they failed to live up to even the most rudimentary measures of piety. Their lives seemingly devolved into a Hobbesian primitivism, most aptly summed up as nasty, brutish, and short.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Ibid.
¹²⁸ Thomas Hobbes famously uttered the phrase in reference to those who had succumbed to democratic mob rule and failed to adhere to his enlightened principles of hierarchy and control. See Ian Shapiro, ed. Hobbes, The Leviathan or the Matter of Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).
George W. Phillips, another AMA missionary reported, “an alarming drift toward barbarism” among the women and men of Eastern Kentucky.\(^\text{129}\) When read along side an account of the region by Roosevelt or Shaler, Philips’ assertion is stunning. In contrast to Roosevelt’s celebrated racial breed, Phillips observed that the racial population akin to the vaunted Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett displayed a barbarous lifestyle and debased culture. At the time, barbarism was a term most always reserved for colonized people overseas or the newly arriving immigrants whose habits so offended white Anglo-Saxon middle-class onlookers. But Phillips instead applied it to Roosevelt’s valorized “American stock.” He further contended that the, “white population in those parts are as destitute of the elements of education as are their colored neighbors.” He continued with a most damning conclusion that, “they lack the desire for improvement which the coloreds and their lately acquired freedom has kindled in those once enslaved.”\(^\text{130}\) The Kentuckian who awaited Phillips was thus illiterate, poor, socially, and politically inept and could simply not care less about their condition. To Phillips, these white mountaineers had by evidence of their squalor and poverty, devolved socially, economically, and culturally to such troubling levels that their prospects were now less than a generation of African Americans reared in slavery.

An anonymous missionary believed that these developments warranted urgent attention. The missionary noted that while the AMA was generally rooted in the abolition movement and Black uplift, they needed to expand: “some hesitate about extending the work of this Association beyond the blacks, but they (the white mountaineers), have little


\(^\text{130}\) Ibid.
hope, for this section of the map of our country is black through illiteracy.” Like Phillips, this missionary equated the allegedly sturdy, pure, and superior white Anglo-American with Black ex-slaves. The missionary was quite cognizant of Appalachia’s heralded racial and cultural history, quipping that, “more than half of the adult white population are native born, of the same stock and lineage that furnished from the more favored sections the Clays and Breckenridges, that gave to this country Abraham Lincoln—more than half of this white population cannot read or write.” The missionary’s use of the term “stock” was in fact a racial signifier that mobilized an argument appealing to the mountaineer’s supposed biological predisposition for uplift. Fittingly, for a missionary invested in spreading literacy and civic awareness, he took as his example not the manly frontier heroes of Boone or Crockett but instead political figures skilled in oratory, rhetoric, and debate. Yet, the sentiment was the same: the region’s people had a proven historical record of racial advancement and supremacy – one that the AMA could not allow to dissipate.

Other missionaries were even more explicit and outspoken in the their belief that the race of Southern whites rendered their impoverishment unacceptable and their restoration and uplift a necessity. W.E. Barton, arriving in the Southern hills in 1898, was shocked by his findings. Barton, after bearing witness to a population of debased whites in the Blue Ridge, demanded that the AMA move away from its initial mission of Black uplift. Responding to calls that it remain focused on African Americans in the South, Native Americans in the West or even Non-Christian people abroad, Barton aggressively argued that “a man may be our brother though he black or red or yellow. He is none the less our

132 Ibid.
brother because he is our own race or nationality.”133 The statement signaled a radical departure from the AMA’s founding and its first forty years of activity. Barton believed the time had come to change course.

To illustrate the point, he asserted that the association must abandon its imperial pursuits and focus instead on fallen Anglo-Saxons. According to Barton, the violent acquisition of land and exploitation of people abroad was misguided. Barton witnessed the dire circumstances pervading the Southern Mountains and concluded that “our own race” required the immediate assistance and critical resources that were being needlessly deployed overseas. Candidly, Barton contended that:

An isolated people, living in a great inland empire composed of eastern Kentucky, east Tennessee, West Virginia and corners of adjacent states, and with a population of nearly 3,000,000 destitute of navigable streams, and until recently of railroads, these people who are of the purest British blood which this continent affords have lived for a century almost unknown to the outer world...They marry early and have large families of sturdy American children. They are worth more to us than any ten million Cubans or Filipinos, and are in every way worth annexing to our sympathy and affection.134

Barton thus opposed imperialism as long as millions people of the “purest British blood” lived in destitution within his home nation. If some of his AMA colleagues stood principally against the prevailing racist attitudes that dominated science and literature, Barton adopted them with alacrity. He believed that these “sturdy American children” who were fortunate enough to have been born in the “inland empire,” thus avoided the racial contamination of the city within and the empire beyond. As a result, they represented a far more worthy cause than “saving” the darker people of the world. If the AMA stood to proselytize, Barton found among the Southern whites a reservoir of racially superior if

134 Ibid.
economically impoverished and culturally debased soldiers for his Christian Army. Significantly, this reservoir of recruits whom with their specific type of pure blood, held more value than ten million Cubans or Filipinos.

The arguments of Barton and the anonymous missionary apparently persuaded the AMA to reconsider their mission of Black uplift and global Christian engagement. In fact, their funding records revealed a striking shift in financial priorities. By 1894, the AMA’s contribution to the “Mountain South” was second only to the entire African Continent with $24,323 going directly to the region.\textsuperscript{135} Some members of the AMA even classified the area and its inhabitants as a separate racial group. Another missionary and physician, referred to only as Dr. Richards believed that, “the Southern mountaineer, the Indian, the African, the Chinese, together with the Anglo-Saxon, all are to have their part in the great work” of spreading the light of Christ.\textsuperscript{136} Notably, Richard’s taxonomy separated the Southern Mountaineer from the Anglo-Saxon. According to Fox, Ralph, Roosevelt, and Shaler, the Mountain South possessed what was supposed to be the archetypical and indeed biologically improved Anglo-Saxon. However, Richards believed that the Southern Mountaineer was a different race altogether, quite distinct from the advanced and devout Anglo-Saxon – not surprisingly the race to which he professed his own membership. That fellow missionary W.E. Barton classified the very same population as the “purest British blood,” an implicit endorsement of Anglo-Saxonism if ever there was one thus made little difference to Richards.

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\textsuperscript{135} The Independent; Religious Intelligence, \textit{The American Missionary Association}, November 1, 1894, Volume 26.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
The Paradox of Purity and the Search for a Resolution

Unknowingly then, Richards initiated one of the earliest efforts to vanquish from the “English-speaking” or Anglo-Saxon race those who so troublingly failed to obtain its mark of supremacy. He would be far from the last. Most immediately, Richards, Barton, Phillips, and other missionaries who spent even minimal time in the Southern Hills called into question the conclusions of Fox, Roosevelt, Ross, and Shaler – all of whom emphasized the racially and culturally desirable traits of the pure-blooded, virile frontiersman. How could one group of theorists locate white racial supremacy amidst what another group of observers purported to be little more than squalor, destitution, and deviancy? Both viewpoints could not be accurate or exist simultaneously with any credibility.

And more distressingly, the AMA’s observations threatened the very assumptions of those social scientists and novelists who grew so enamored with the region. The stakes could not have been higher: an ideology had wholly developed around the notion of Anglo-Saxon superiority. The frontier masculinity embodied by the likes of Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett was the archetype of racial supremacy and national manhood – that which would ensure the biological health of the nation as it received and came into contact with millions of allegedly inferior people from abroad. However, pervasive poverty alongside what many considered to be abhorrent behavioral and cultural habits seemed most unbecoming from a population allegedly situated at the pinnacle of human evolution.

Of course, missionaries were not the only ones to note the deeply entrenched poverty and uncouth cultural practices of upcountry, mountain dwelling whites. For at least two centuries self-identified Anglo-Saxon coastal elites worried about the rabble of
“poor white trash” – alternately referred to as “lubbers” or “crackers.”137 They had for decades threatened the prosperity and stability of the low-country economy with the ubiquitous specter of class conflict always and ominously present in the Southern atmosphere as if it were an uncomfortable accompaniment to the region’s notoriously thick humidity.

Over a decade before the AMA and Julian Ralph reached the treacherous mountain hollows, Rebecca Harding Davis wrote a lurid description of West Virginia’s peculiarity. Having grown up in the far southwestern corner of Pennsylvania in the coal-mining town of Washington, she was quite familiar the region and its culture. After living in Wheeling, West Virginia, for a brief period, Harding Davis then traveled extensively throughout Appalachia. She began a career in journalism writing for several local newspapers and periodicals in the region and eventually moved to New York to write for the Atlantic Monthly and Lippincott’s. Following the Civil War and throughout the 1870s, Harding Davis wrote several pieces that explored the culture of eastern Kentucky and the newly formed state of West Virginia.138

In one noteworthy article published in 1875 for Lippincott’s, Rebecca Harding Davis described her travels through some of the most remote parts of the Cumberland Mountains. What struck Davis most about the people whom she encountered was not their “pure English blood” but rather, their:

Incredibly dirty clothes... they were not encumbered with dishes, knives, forks, beds, or any other impediment of civilization: they slept in hollow logs or in a hole filled with straw

137 See Matt Wray’s Not Quite White, “Lubbers, Crackers and Poor White Trash” for an extended discussion on the historical circumstances of the terms and poor whites in the upland South, pages, 21-47 and also, Grady McWhiney, Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988).

138 See Harding Davis’s autobiography, Bits of Gossip (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904).
under loose boards of the floor. But they were contented and good-natured: they took life, leaky roof, opossum and all, as a huge joke, and were honest gentlefolk despite their dirty and bedless condition.139

Here however, Davis’s remarks must be further contextualized. Portraying the primitive arrangements of the Southern mountaineer as she did struck a pensive chord amidst an unprecedented economic collapse that occurred just over a year before. And while she pointed out the wretched condition of the rural poor in West Virginia, she did so with a yearning nostalgia towards what she perceived as a bygone era, free from widespread industrial wreckage and the pervasive working-class strife of the cities. Her piece was strikingly similar in tone to William Wallace Harney’s notable piece.

Davis continued that, “Money, apparently throughout this region is one of the unknown luxuries of civilization; and it is startling (if anything could be startling up yonder) to find how easily and comfortably life resolves itself to its primitive conditions without it.”140 As Manhattan investment banks and railroad companies collapsed just blocks from her newly adopted home Harding Davis found in the Southern hills a population that despite their poverty nevertheless lived content and trouble-free. She affirmed to anxious readers that even in the midst of Depression, the nation could look to the mountaineer’s rustic austerity for lessons on how “easily life resolves itself” when disentangled from the cultural expectations of bourgeois advancement. Her folksy wisdom concluded that poor Southern whites lived simply yet happily – a fact that her middle-class readership, reared on the material comforts of the industrial age, best consider as their own economic circumstances teetered on the brink.

140 Ibid.
Davis's journalism alongside the missionaries’ observations starkly contrasted with the appraisals of leading racial theorists. The former thus uncovered nothing short of widespread white racial failure that the latter would need to explain, understand, and account for. It was this realization that helped spawn a social movement that increasingly mobilized the state as a primary actor in ensuring the “racial health” of the nation. It was not simply a United States phenomenon either. After all, the British Parliament expressed the desire to maintain “race homogeneity” in Victoria on the Australian continent. There too, reports of Anglo failure surfaced amidst the threat of racial mixing and decline through growing contact with Chinese miners and the continent's Aborigines. Meanwhile, the conflict that raged throughout the first six months of 1879 in the Zulu Kingdom on the southern tip of Africa produced yet another archetypal Anglo soldier. The British violently expropriated the Natal province from the indigenous Zulu’s and in the process constructed their very own Daniel Boone frontiersman on the African continent in form of a military hero named John Rouse Merriott Chard. British Colonial rulers thus mindfully passed several laws that proved the precursor to Apartheid on the basis of preserving the Anglo-Saxon race and its manifest supremacy, expressed most clearly in Chard’s manly stand at Rorke’s Drift. This “settler masculinity” that pervaded colonial Natal ran analogous to the United States discourse on the Kentuckian.

Back stateside the anxiety over the “fallen” race reached a fever pitch in what seemed among the most unlikely of places. Far from the bustling ports and immigration depots of the nation’s great coastal cities and even beyond the rugged hills of the

141 Lake and Reynolds, 41-45.
Appalachian South, a little known Reverend named Oscar McCulloch arrived in the burgeoning city of Indianapolis, Indiana. Here, he brought with him the emblematic methods of Christian charity that typified the way in which the nation’s impoverished and indigent had received much needed aid for generations. However, what McCulloch “discovered” in the nation’s heartland proved so distressing as to overwhelm his capacities and render obsolete the mission of private benevolence.

In its place emerged a new academic discipline that located the causes of poverty and cultural maladjustment in the very bodies of the impoverished.143 The following chapter argues that the eugenics movement arose as an attempt to resolve the paradox of a population that was supposed to be biologically and genetically superior though in reality, appeared debased and deviant. What began as a troubling set of observations made by several Christian missionaries and a few journalists rapidly developed into a national predicament. Furthermore, if unbeknownst to them all at the time, McCulloch and his colleagues initiated a political movement we have come to understand as Progressivism. The seeds of this movement flowered from the belief that poverty work and racial uplift were part of the same social and cultural project – a project that explicitly asserted that white poverty, with its unsettling racial implications, was unacceptable.

Alongside the missionaries, this new crop of eugenicists proclaimed that cultural devolution could bring about biological devolution among even the “most fit” of races. They also came to believe that the state was the sole entity capable of addressing such a

143 See also, Richard Louis Dugdale, “The Jukes”: A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease and Heredity also; Further Studies of Criminals (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1877) and Oscar McCulloch, The Tribe of Ishmael: A Study of Social Degradation. These two works remained on the margins of science at their date of publication yet they were the forerunners to the emerging field of eugenics. Dugdale’s subjects lived in rural upstate New York and McColloch’s in Indianapolis, Indiana.
monumental breakdown in racial health. This assumption undoubtedly provided the groundwork from which future policy makers began to craft arguments over how best to address white poverty. In a cruel irony, eugenicists believed that they must seize the bodies of some poor white people. After all, their behavior and faulty genetics threatened the viability of the Anglo-Saxon and only through eradicating those whose behavior and culture had declined so severely could the race be saved. It was through this perverse logic of biological and behavioral tampering that the state fashioned measures of surveillance and control as a means of public policy and poverty amelioration. In these formative years we discern how an ongoing theme of welfare policy developed and, most surprisingly it occurred first in the heart of the Midwest. Just as many “fallen” Kentucky frontiersmen migrated over the Ohio River to Indiana we discern an alarming new trend. To that tale we now turn.144

144 This process began almost instantly as missionaries lobbied congress to support measures that constructed some level of a safety net for the poorest citizens.
CHAPTER TWO

From Charity to Science: The Strange Career of Oscar McCulloch and the Indiana Birth of the United States Eugenics Movement, 1877-1914

Eugenical sterilization purports to prevent the reproduction by certain definitely and legally described cacogenic persons. It claims that by so doing the race will be purged of some of its degenerate and defective stock. It is effective in so far as it is an insurance against reproduction by the individuals operated upon.145

-Harry Laughlin, 1922

In 1936 Harry Laughlin, a soft-spoken Midwesterner from Oscaoloosa, Iowa arrived a celebrity at Germany's oldest and most prestigious institution of higher learning, the University of Heidelberg. He came to accept an honorary degree in the “science of racial cleansing.”146 Laughlin’s crowning intellectual achievement, Eugenical Sterilization in the United States (1922) furnished the Nazi-controlled Reichstag with the very template for their infamous Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring, enacted just three years before his visit. By the time the young Iowan was the toast of Hitler’s Germany, the Third Reich had already sterilized nearly a quarter million people.

But the intellectual crosscurrents traversing the United States and Germany extended even further back. Adolf Hitler was perhaps the most famous admired of men such as Laughlin and Madison Grant, even proclaiming Grant’s The Passing of the Great Race as “my bible.”147 Furthermore, compulsory sterilization was a topic of debate and the

145 Harry Laughlin, Eugenical Sterilization in the United States (Chicago: Psychopathic Laboratory of the Municipal Court of Chicago, 1922), 454.
146 Edwin Black, War against the Weak: Eugenics and America’s Campaign to Create a Master Class (New York: Four Walls Publishing) and Stefen Kuhl, The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism and German National Socialism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 49-50. Spiro too alludes to this incident, see page 373 in Defending the Master Race.
147 See Spiro and Carlson.
subject of legislation in the Indiana State Capitol twenty-five years before the Reichstag made it official Nazi policy. In fact, by 1933, thirty states in the U.S. had already adopted sterilization laws, and the Supreme Court upheld the practice in its 1927 *Buck vs. Bell* decision.\(^{148}\)

While the racial ideology – known as eugenics – was fully realized with the world’s most calculated, systematized, brutal, and indeed effective genocide in Nazi Germany, its incarnation in the United States was also based upon an earnest effort of racial restoration and purification.\(^{149}\) For certain, United States eugenicists never initiated an outright holocaust though they did demand and receive state protection to tamper with one’s reproductive capacities, selectively and permanently quarantine those deemed “racially degenerate,” and tightly restrict immigration. The first two of these measures targeted native-born U.S. citizens while the latter targeted the “inferior races” who arrived by the millions from such disparate, far off lands as China, Italy, Poland, Croatia, Russia, and elsewhere.

But curiously and paradoxically, it was a native-born, “Anglo-Saxon” population who posed the most peculiar and acute threat to the very cohort of intellectuals and policy makers desperately working to restore and rehabilitate the native-born, Anglo-Saxon character of the nation. Just as Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed the supremacy of the “American race” – bred from the “pure” Anglo-Saxon branch of the Teutonic people who arrived as colonists, fought the Revolutionary War, and then tamed the Kentucky wilderness – an Indiana Reverend made a chilling “discovery.”\(^{150}\) In 1878, the Reverend

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\(^{148}\) Edwin Black, 122-123.

\(^{149}\) Galton and also Stefen Kuhl, 3-27 especially.

Oscar McCulloch located an extended family of impoverished and culturally debased whites, languishing in the decrepit squalor of Indianapolis’s most crime-infested and vice-ridden neighborhood. He named them the “Tribe of Ishmael.” Distressingly, McCulloch’s “tribe” possessed a family history that perfectly aligned with Roosevelt’s conception of racial and biological supremacy. Descendants of Ishmaels included Revolutionary War veterans and Kentucky frontiersmen, seemingly not a “strain” of undesirable blood among them.\(^{151}\)

McCulloch’s *Tribe of Ishmael*, like the American Missionary Association’s shocking findings in the Southern Mountains, revealed a paradox with frightening implications to the narrative of Anglo-racial and biological superiority. This chapter thus presents two interrelated arguments. The world’s first sterilization laws, passed in Indiana in 1907 as well as the birth of the United States eugenics movement must be understood as a concerted effort by the state to control and ultimately eliminate “pauperism” – as exemplified by McCulloch’s tribe – among a population that it was never meant to afflict. Perversely then, the restoration and purification of the “superior” race required that some of its fallen members needed to be purged. Second and in the process, there emerged the bureaucratic institutions, scientific rationalism, and the technologies of control that increasingly mobilized the state as the primary actor in addressing social and economic iniquities. These attributes comprised the very tenets of the so-called Progressive Era. These formative years witnessed the rise of a professional middle class – employed by the state – to intervene when poverty or pauperism contravened and threatened accepted racial hierarchies. This chapter recasts one of the nation’s first comprehensive efforts to

address poverty as an effort that constituted a quest to redeem and uplift the sexual propriety and racial composition of the allegedly fallen members of the “Teutonic race.”

The chapter first examines the strange career of Oscar McCulloch and then expands to explain the strange case of Indiana. McCulloch’s life took him from one corner of the Midwest to the next, eventually landing in Indianapolis where he became a leading public figure and spokesman for the city’s poor. McCulloch is significant for two reasons. First and ironically, he helped dig a grave for the very model of private charity organizing – carried out through the church and private benevolent societies – that he himself exemplified. McCulloch’s troubling discovery of a poor white “tribe” necessitated state involvement in a problem that was allegedly too intractable and high stakes to be left to well-meaning private citizens. Unknowingly then, McCulloch’s Tribe of Ishmael along with Richard Dugdale’s ethnography on The Jukes were thus the earliest family studies in what became the eugenics movement. These expressions of amateur research and fieldwork not only launched the American eugenics movement, but also propelled a new era of science, medicine, and surveillance.152 Within years of McCulloch’s death, a bureaucratized and professional class assumed the role of regulating, monitoring, and controlling the very population with whom the reverend had so diligently worked to uplift throughout his career. The machinations of these bureaucrats and institutions comprise the second part of the chapter. The specific and atypical migration patterns alongside the inimitable personalities of McCulloch and others furnished Indiana with the fertile soil from which the nation’s first eugenics laws grew. Through the lens of a well intentioned if patronizing

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In the seemingly unlikely setting of the Hoosier State, one finds a troubling attempt to resolve the paradox of purity and restore the fallen race.

**The Strange Career of Oscar McCulloch**

Born in Ohio in 1843, amidst the Great Awakening, Oscar McCulloch was reared into a family of intense Protestant devotion. He seized the opportunities of his middle-class upbringing, traveling throughout the Midwest, finishing primary school, launching a career as a successful salesman, and eventually, completing the theological training that later propelled his ministry. The latter came somewhat late despite McCulloch’s own “awakening” as a teenager. Yet, perhaps it was necessary for the young McCulloch to first gain the skills of a successful traveling salesman, skills he so naturally parlayed into his career as one of Indianapolis’s leading public figures and religious leaders. By the time of his death in 1891 – and in no small part due to his life’s work – Indianapolis and Indiana more generally became a focal point in a nationwide movement to solve the growing problem of genetically “defective” and “feeble-minded” families alongside the “pauperism” that it inevitably accompanied.\(^{153}\)

Though most curiously, McCulloch markedly shifted his own attitudes on the nation's impoverished. His 1890 address before the National Conference on Charities and Corrections explicitly contradicted his most famous work, *The Tribe of Ishmael: A Study in Social Degradation*. By the time of his death, McCulloch no longer believed that “pauperism” was an embodied and hereditary condition. After witnessing the labor uprisings of the late 1870s and 1880s, McCulloch grew increasingly convinced that structural inequality – endemic to industrial capitalism – was the primary culprit for human deprivation. However, it was the published study rather than his latter pronouncements that at once defined his legacy, and more importantly, influenced public policy for decades to follow. Men such as Harry Laughlin, Harry Sharp, Arthur H. Estabrook, Charles Davenport, and Madison Grant all seized upon McCulloch’s most famous publication to build their case. Tragically, however, they ignored McCulloch’s final speeches and writings, and fomented an intellectual movement that diagnosed poverty as an embodied pathology rather than a systemic condition inherent to the structure of the nation’s economy. This understanding of poverty and inequality then found expression not only in the Indiana State Capitol, but the nation’s capital as well. And later, it was an intellectual export that wrought havoc across the world.

McCulloch began his professional life in the years immediately following the Civil War, during a period of rapid economic growth fueled by the momentous railroad expansion. He traveled the Midwest as an itinerant salesman accumulating modest wealth for he and wife-to-be, Alice. Nevertheless, a career in sales apparently left McCulloch unsatisfied and yearning to do his lord’s work, a calling to which he had always felt drawn.

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Abandoning his sales career, McCulloch enrolled in the Chicago Theological Seminary, completing his training in 1870. Soon after, the twenty-seven year old reverend relocated to Sheboygan, Wisconsin – a town resting on the shores Lake Michigan, founded not even a generation prior by German immigrants. There, he established his ministry and revealed his private thoughts to a diary. Upon settling down as a successful preacher with a young family, he exclaimed, “Oh Sheboygan! My heart is here.”\(^{155}\) He made his mark on the community, growing the congregation, starting a Philharmonic, a public reading room, and a bible study group for boys of German and Irish immigrants who he believed had all too easy access to alcohol.\(^{156}\) McCulloch had laid down his roots and made himself at home, though trouble brewed.

McCulloch preached a liberal biblical interpretation, merging traditional readings of scripture with the era’s latest scientific discoveries such as evolution. This placed him at odds with Sheboygan’s conservative religious community. In one notable instance, McCulloch invited the evolutionary biologist William Dickey Gunning to deliver several lectures on various aspects of Darwinian thought. McCulloch then explored how the New Testament allegedly presaged similar themes. By the mid-1870s, McCulloch perceived that his congregation was increasingly “divided,” and that as many as “fifty percent” had turned against him and his controversial interpretations.\(^{157}\) Moreover, McCulloch reported recurring illnesses such as hay fever, migraines, asthma, and hemophilia. His bizarre remedies for such afflictions included repeatedly burning the tip of his nose with a match, 

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\(^{155}\) Oscar McCulloch Diary, May 22, 1877 in the Box 2 Folder 1, Oscar McCulloch Papers, Indiana State Library (hereafter, OMP).


\(^{157}\) Oscar McCulloch Diary, January 9, 1877, OMP Box 2 Folder 1.
smoking cubeb, and administering himself low-grade electrical shocks.\textsuperscript{158} Not surprisingly, McCulloch’s divisive sermons coupled with his many physical ailments left him unreliable to perform required Church duties, and provided his discontented congregation additional reasons to send the fledgling minister packing.

By the end of 1876, his ministry became so precarious that he entered into talks with churches in Milwaukee and Indianapolis. McCulloch accepted then reneged on the position in Indiana after he thought that his Sheboygan church might reconsider. They did not and McCulloch begrudgingly accepted the position at Plymouth Church in Indianapolis. His diary revealed a man who clearly preferred to stay in Wisconsin. According to the Reverend, “the call to Ind., the increased salary, the prospect of the position have no fascination for me. I had rather be here (in Sheboygan) on a thousand dollars a year than anywhere else on five.”\textsuperscript{159} In July 1877, McCulloch ceased journal entries for just over a week, and then by mid-month wrote that the move was successful. He and his family were now Hoosiers.

McCulloch’s Indiana arrival occurred four years into the nation’s worst depression to date. His previous experience as a salesman during the railroad boom and his ministerial years in the comparatively secluded and self-sufficient lakefront Wisconsin community left the middle-class McCulloch unexposed to deprivation and poverty. What awaited him in Indianapolis then was personally unprecedented and deeply troubling. The city had ballooned from 48,000 in 1870 to nearly 80,000 by the decade’s end, a pace behind only

\textsuperscript{158} See Weeks, 21 and McCulloch Diary entries, on August 1, 1877 and July 4, 1891 for additional examples, see OMP, Box 2 Folders 1-3.

\textsuperscript{159} Oscar McCulloch Diary, July 3, 1877 OMP Box 2 Folder 1.
Chicago and San Francisco. McCulloch observed that Indianapolis’s infrastructure woefully failed to keep up with the city’s explosive growth. Downtown streets remained unpaved with nary a nighttime light, the city offered no garbage collection nor a sewage system while parks and streets seemed overrun with animals – some domesticated and some not. Nicknamed the Railroad City, Indianapolis’s growth proceeded from the expansion of the railways, providing a key junction between east-west and north-south lines. That the city’s hinterlands possessed some of the world’s most fertile farmland certainly assisted its ascent.

But even such a fortuitous location and stunning population increase did not shield Indianapolis from the same depression that wracked the rest of the nation. As a railroad hub reliant upon a singly industry, the city was particularly vulnerable to the depression as well as the effect of the Great Strike of 1877. That year, railway workers from Martinsburg, West Virginia to St. Louis protested wage cuts and deteriorating work conditions. Collectively, tens of thousands of workers participated in the largest labor uprising in the nation’s history. Workers in Indianapolis were among the worst off since the railroad industry had a near stranglehold on the local economy. Like other cities and junctions, many rail operators fired their adult male workers in favor of the cheaper labor that children and women provided. After the crash in 1873, each consecutive year brought lower wages, bottoming out at a paltry $391 yearly take-home pay for industrial workers, a

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figure barely surpassing a dollar-a-day. Making matters worse, these earnings were at times issued as company scrip. Such promissory notes became useless if the rail operator folded, an outcome that emerged a plenty as depression dug deeper into the decade. Still, even as chronically low wages pervaded the workforce another 23 percent of the city’s population – most typically, able-bodied men – were unemployed altogether.

These deplorable conditions came to a head in June 1877, just a month before McCulloch arrived and the Great Railroad Strike broke out. Hundreds of unemployed men and women marched to the city’s iconic downtown circle demanding work and food. As the discontented congregated and threatened violence, Indianapolis Mayor John Caven went from bakery to bakery purchasing and distributing bread in what became known as the “Blood or Bread Revolt.” The temporarily allayed crowd diffused, but only on the condition that the mayor would leverage the local railway operator to provide the men work. Caven agreed, and quickly convinced the Belt Line Railroad and the union stockyards – both of which were commissioned by the city though run privately – to hire on several hundred workers.

In a bizarre twist, when the strike broke out not even a month later, Caven transferred, deputized, and continued to employ many of the revolt’s participants as security guards to protect the lines and stockyards from any strikers. The plan was effective. Indianapolis railroad operators never received the punishing property damage that their capitalist colleagues received in other cities. Though while it was undoubtedly a shrewd maneuver, it was also a temporary one. Within months, as the strike concluded and

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163 Weeks, 59-60.
164 Ibid.
unemployment and low wages persisted, Caven’s city remained in the same precarious position as at the time of June uprising.\textsuperscript{165}

Beyond Indianapolis’s undiversified economy, reliant almost solely upon the railroads and their related industries, McCulloch’s adopted city was peculiar for yet another reason. While the burgeoning metropolises of Chicago, New York, and San Francisco attributed their explosive growth to overseas immigration – primarily southeastern Europe and China – Indianapolis was an epicenter of native-born white migration from the Southern United States. McCulloch was among the 83 percent of the thirty thousand new Indianapolis residents who came to the city classified as a native-born U.S. citizen.\textsuperscript{166} The percentage was quite high upon considering that only 60 percent of Chicagoans and New Yorkers were native born while only 55 percent were native-born San Franciscans. Over the next twenty years, this trend intensified as Chicago and New York, but also Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland all reached a “foreign-born” or “foreign-born parentage” population of between 60 and 80 percent.\textsuperscript{167}

Indianapolis grew at a similar rate as these cities, but in stark contrast it was a Midwest Mecca for a multitude of upland Southerners, enticing Kentuckians, Tennesseans, West Virginians, and North Carolinians at a far greater pace than Poles, Italians, Croatians, or Serbians. Notably, nearly a quarter of the city’s population migrated from the states of the upper South: Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Maryland, and West Virginia.


Kentucky alone furnished over 14 percent of the city’s migrants through the final decades of the century and continually supplied the most out-of-state migrants through 1940.\textsuperscript{168} These migration patterns were even more striking beyond Indianapolis’s city limits. 91 percent of all newcomers to Indiana’s southern counties trekked from just across the Ohio River in Kentucky.\textsuperscript{169} Harkening back to the Antebellum era and the tense relationship that existed between Kentucky, formerly a slave state, and Indiana, a free state, one famous saying declared that, “Kentucky has taken Indiana without firing a single shot.”\textsuperscript{170} The census also shows Indianapolis’s Black population approaching 9 percent by 1900, nearly all arriving from Kentucky or North Carolina. Preceding the Great Migration, the city was among nation’s largest urban Black centers.\textsuperscript{171}

Such was the context that greeted McCulloch’s 1877 Indianapolis arrival. Sheboygan was a stable and newly settled Wisconsin town bustling with a German immigrant population who mostly arrived as skilled artisans with some assets and capital. It was just a daylong train ride from Indianapolis though culturally the two were a world apart. Indianapolis was a nascent metropolis experiencing intense growing pains. Its singular reliance upon the railroads left the city’s population especially vulnerable in a national depression spurred on by that same industry. Moreover, McCulloch witnessed deprivation not among newly arrived immigrants from the impoverished regions of eastern and southern Europe or the grinding plantation poverty that typified the Jim Crow South, but rather among people who allegedly shared what he believed was the same Anglo-Saxon racial heritage. This of course was a heritage that much of the scientific

\textsuperscript{168} Bodenhamer and Barrows, 1376.
\textsuperscript{169} Deutsch, 21.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid and Bodenhamer and Barrows, 233.
literature had begun to proclaim as genetically and biologically advanced. McCulloch’s inquisitive mind demanded answers.

McCulloch recorded in his diary various encounters with the city’s poor. The first known reference to the now infamous “Ishmaelites” occurred in a January 1878 entry where he claimed to have stumbled upon an extended family or “wandering tribe” in one of the Indianapolis’s notoriously poor neighborhoods populated almost exclusively by Southern white migrants.¹⁷² They were “largely illegitimate and subject to fits...not monogamous, they intermarriage.”¹⁷³ Perhaps most tellingly, he compared them in appearance and racial composition to another family. The “Ishmaelites seemed to be similar to that of the Jukes,” wrote McCulloch, referring to Richard Dugdale’s 1877 family study, “The Jukes”: A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease and Heredity. Dugdale’s work on a rural upstate New York community is typically regarded as the earliest United States family study, over a decade before the discipline of eugenics gained widespread currency. It focused on “six persons who belonged to a long lineage, reaching back to the early colonists and had intermingled so slightly with the emigrant population of the old world that they may be called a strictly American family.”¹⁷⁴ Like “the Jukes,” McCulloch later wrote of the Ishmaelites: “the original family stem, of which we have scant records as far back as 1790, is then in Kentucky, having come from Maryland, through Pennsylvania.”¹⁷⁵ The extended thirty families who McCulloch affiliated with “Ben Ishmael,” “came mostly from Kentucky, Tennessee, and North

¹⁷² Oscar McCulloch Diary, January 20, 1878, OMP Box 2 Folder 3.
¹⁷³ Ibid.
¹⁷⁵ McCulloch, 2.
Carolina.” 176 We now know that it was unlikely that they were related at all, but instead merely migrated from the same general region of the Upland South. 177

Both McCulloch’s and Dugdale’s observations came out at the precise moment that Theodore Roosevelt and his colleagues first theorized a race-based science that merged with the family studies, and soon became known as eugenics. Roosevelt’s Winning of the West spelled out the specific ways in which the Kentuckian was a prized race, forged out of the Anglo-Americans’ “errand into the wilderness.” The manly Kentuckian was thus a genetically “prized” breed that racially evolved from the vaunted Teutonic race. Just as McCulloch launched his investigation into the Ishmaels, Roosevelt argued the “English-speaking” people emerged from the “kings of Teutonic blood.” 178 They were a naturally mobile race, swiftly conquering the territory and people who they encountered throughout their meanderings. They swept over the British Isles and crossbred with the Anglo-Saxons, yet another superior race according to other leading theorists such as Edward Ross and Madison Grant. 179 In each instance, the Teuton’s blood, race, and manliness improved as he crossed each new frontier, from Scandinavia to the Anglo world then across the ocean, and eventually over the Allegheny mountains into present day Kentucky.

But what McCulloch found in Indianapolis’s slums – as well as what the American Missionary Association found in the Kentucky and West Virginia hollows – deeply disrupted this narrative. McCulloch delivered his first public lecture outside of Plymouth Church in February 1878. His talk placed “the development of the present Englishman and American from the Anglos and the Saxons,” into conversation with, “the development of plants, fruits

176 Ibid., 4.
177 Hall, 109-115.
178 Roosevelt, Winning of the West, 13.
179 Madison Grant, The Passing of the Great Race, see Part II, The European Races in History.
and animals from their original species.”\textsuperscript{180} In each instance, different species of plants, animals, and indeed humans improved through natural selection. But even natural selection could be contravened through parasitic interlopers. This early lecture revealed McCulloch’s obsession with conflating animal behavior with human behavior and his preoccupation with evolutionary science as a means to understand human deprivation.

In one notable speech, the Reverend issued such specious reasoning to explain the squalid lifestyle of the Ishmaels. McCulloch explained how a strange and “minute organism” shaped like a kidney bean fastened itself to the “living tissue of the crab.”\textsuperscript{181} He described a naturally occurring parasite that derived sustenance through its host. McCulloch then extended the parasite metaphor as a way to understand the seemingly rampant presence of “pauperism” in depression-era Indianapolis. Like the parasite that lost “its organs for self-help” and now relied upon its host, the pauper too was left a personified parasite, or a “shapeless mass with only the stomach and reproductive organs left.”\textsuperscript{182} The pauper’s host, however, was not a crustacean, but instead the allegedly productive members of society who supported the pauper through undeserved relief.

Oscar McCulloch, through much of his career separated “pauperism” and “the worthy poor” into discrete categories, both of which commanded the attention of his civic and religious outreach. He took leadership over the Benevolent Society of Indianapolis (IBS), an outfit that ran in the city intermittently since 1835. However, McCulloch found the IBS to be an ineffective and inefficient means to disburse with aid to those who he believed had truly deserved relief. It lacked the scientific management and proper oversight that distinguished

\textsuperscript{180} Oscar McCulloch Diary, March 24, 1878 in OMP, Box 2 Folder 2.
\textsuperscript{181} McCulloch, \textit{The Tribe of Ishmael}, 1.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid.
modern aid societies. Not surprisingly then, under his tutelage he reorganized the IBS into the Indianapolis chapter of Charity Organization Society (COS). This COS – like the dozens of others throughout the states and Britain – mobilized a “scientific method” to their benevolence. McCulloch proposed a board of directors to oversee aid to the poor and eliminate the “indiscriminate giving” that he believed typified the IBS.183

The COS quickly became the vehicle for McCulloch’s Christian benevolence. He organized in a way that he felt offered guidance and aid to the “worthy poor,” but not the “chronically” poor or “paupers.” On the one hand, he claimed that “the worthy poor” are “temporarily poor, the sick, or the disabled...They are widows who are struggling to keep together and bring up a family, as only a mother who can struggle alone.”184 He also included people with disabilities on the shortlist of the “worthy poor.” This category deserved the public’s sympathy and relief, and according to McCulloch they had fallen upon hard times and demonstrated no evidence that they would willingly “leach” upon the good faith and hard work of their fellow citizens.

On the other hand, he viewed “pauperism” as an economic as well as a cultural, racial, and biological classification. In fact, McCulloch was quite explicit: “the pauper is one whose Saxon or Teutonic self-help has given way to a parasitic life.”185 Indianapolis unfortunately, “has been cursed with a mass of chronic paupers [who] have fastened themselves like leaches upon the benevolent public.”186 Given the city’s peculiar migration patterns coupled with the grinding poverty that McCulloch encountered for the first time, it was perhaps no surprise that he conceived of Indianapolis’s social problems through a lens of racial

183 See Patricia Deans entry in Bodenhamer and Barrows, 402-403.
184 Ibid
185 Ibid.
186 Ibid.
declension and hereditary defection. The reorganization of the Indianapolis Benevolent Society into the Charity Organization Society, and his life’s work more generally thus was, “to relieve the worthy poor without breaking down the sturdy, self-dependence which is characteristic of the Teutonic races.” That McCulloch perceived poverty as threatening and “breaking down the Teutonic races” at once affirmed his belief in the otherwise biological supremacy of the so-called Teutonic race, but also exposed it as mutable, pliable, and susceptible to decline and failure. If that were the case, the era’s racial hierarchies could at once collapse just as quickly as he and others constructed them. Indianapolis was the wretched proof of such a proposition.

The Ambiguous Transformation of an Indiana Reverend

Whether these explosive racial implications pushed McCulloch to rethink his relationship with and conception of the city’s poor is unclear. His response, however, was quite clear. Throughout his career in Indianapolis, McCulloch increasingly viewed the labor movement alongside the church as the institutions capable of overcoming poverty. This approach was markedly different to the biologically determinist understanding that typified much of his work. But even as McCulloch developed a more nuanced understanding of poverty, he never wholly abandoned heredity as an explanation. In fact, McCulloch’s address that most clearly articulated his thesis that “defective” genetics led to and explained one’s cultural, racial, behavioral, and economic downfall came at a point when he had gained stature as Indianapolis’s foremost labor advocate.

187 Ibid.
In an 1888 sermon, he developed a composite image of the city’s poor. He argued that Indianapolis’s notorious Tribe of Ishmael must be understood as a family whose racial composition had so badly declined over the generations that they now threatened to spread their pauper genes throughout entire neighborhoods. In the process, slums would proliferate and individual initiative would all but cease. Virtually all of the Ishmaels were Southern white migrants and alternatively referred to as Anglos, Saxons, or Teutonics, those who were supposed to have grown stronger, more pious, and intelligent through the natural selection of evolution. These pronouncements became the basis for his groundbreaking study *The Tribe of Ishmael: A Study in Social Degradation* later that year. But surprisingly, the speech’s timing and the release of his trailblazing study belied nearly all of the Reverend’s other written correspondence, sermons, and community work throughout the 1880s.\(^{188}\)

The strange career of Oscar McCulloch thus concluded in tragic irony and ambiguity. The author of *The Tribe of Ishmael* – an influential text that paved the way for the eugenics movement – seemed to have died believing that poverty emerged *not* from biological deficiency, but rather from iniquities inherent to the emerging industrial order. As early as an 1878 sermon, McCulloch appeared to have lifted directly from the Chicago Reverend, Charles Caverno. Caverno was most known for a socialist interpretation of the Bible and his later publications through the radical Unitarian press, Charles H. Kerr Publishing. According to McCulloch’s diary and notes he delivered one such address in February 1878. Just as he lectured on the fortuitous evolution of the “Anglos” and the “Saxons” one week, he later declared that:

\(^{188}\) See Ruswick, 20-35 for an excellent summation of the “Conversion of Rev. McCulloch.”
The most barbarous doctrine of the regnant political economy is that labor is a commodity in the market just like any other commodity...The man who works, lives and feels; he has his hopes, his ambitions, his loves...There will be unrest and storm and disaster till civilization is organized to meet living exigency; till it tries to do its best for man rather than money.\textsuperscript{189}

This sermon sounded more conversant with Karl Marx’s \textit{Capital} than it did with Francis Galton’s work on hereditary devolution and other contemporary notions of social Darwinism. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, class conflict emerged as an endemic feature to the nation’s industrial development, and meanwhile McCulloch’s tone became even more stridently conscious of poverty’s socio-economic underpinnings.

While he never abandoned his work with the Charity Organization Society, McCulloch grew evermore involved with the local and national labor movement. He wrote regular columns for the Indianapolis \textit{Labor Enquirer} and \textit{the Labor Signal}. In fact, the papers ran many of his sermons in print just days after he had delivered them. \textit{The Labor Signal} ran one sermon where McCulloch issued a “defense of labor and the endorsement of trade unions.”\textsuperscript{190} McCulloch reportedly claimed that, “my sympathies are with those who live so close to the line of bare existence...The cardinal doctrine of Christianity, self-sacrifice, finds its finest expression among the trade unions.”\textsuperscript{191} In another address, McCulloch informed capitalists that providing a “fair wage and work day” revealed “the acceptance of a Christian life to treat men fairly – to do justice and love mercy.”\textsuperscript{192} These proclamations came the year after the Federation of Trades and Labor Unions called upon lawmakers and business people alike to implement the eight-hour workday. Throughout 1885 and 1886, McCulloch was Indianapolis’s leading proponent of a family wage and eight-hour workday. His

\textsuperscript{189} Quoted from Ruswick 27.
\textsuperscript{190} From Oscar McCulloch’s diary and scrapbook, February 3, 1878 in OMP, Box 2 Folder 2.
\textsuperscript{191} McCulloch Diary, July 20, 1885 in OMP, Box 4 Folder 1.
\textsuperscript{192} McCulloch Diary, October 31, 1885 in OMP, Box 4 Folder 1.
gendered conception of Christian virtue fetishized a stable male-headed nuclear family. Yet achieving this stability, according to McCulloch was only possible if the breadwinning man could devote the necessary time to adequately fulfill his patriarchal duties.

These beliefs were passionately displayed on Sunday, December 20, 1885 at his congregation’s annual Christmas service. McCulloch vituperatively entitled his holiday sermon, “The cold, passionless, and automatic life of the world’s richest man, Cornelius Vanderbilt.” The reverend belittled the manliness and allegedly impoverished virtue of the infamous railroad baron, decried his cowardice for taking up a life in finance rather than manly labor, and declared Vanderbilt nothing more than a “gambler...who had no love of humanity.”

His failure as a father, husband and indeed as a man stemmed from what McCulloch believed was a selfish and emasculated pursuit of wealth rather than a selfless devotion to family and “honest” labor. This divisive and militant tone typified McCulloch’s speeches throughout these years, and markedly diverged from his earlier intellectualized preoccupation with the “scientific” explanations for social and economic problems.

Five months later, workers across the nation went on strike after national and local leaders refused to implement the eight-hour workday. McCulloch again lent his influential voice to the movement. He later reflected that most Indianapolis preachers disdained his engagement with the May Day actions, and even received one admonition that, “a union meeting should be held in a hall and not in a church.” Meanwhile, the city’s largest newspapers, The Indianapolis Journal and the Indianapolis Sentinel were both vehemently anti-labor as well. In the days following the Haymarket rally in Chicago, both papers quickly

193 McCulloch Diary, December 20, 1885 in OMP, Box 4 Folder 1.
194 Ibid.
195 Ibid.
196 McCulloch Diary, February 12, 1888 in OMP, Box 4 Folder 1.
declared that the eight men connected with the bombing that spurred an uprising and allegedly led to the deaths of four Chicago police officers deserved swift justice on the gallows.\textsuperscript{197} Immediately following the incident McCulloch – evidently fearful of reprisals – kept his thoughts private and refrained from public pronouncements. Nonetheless, he confided in his diary that the men “had suffered much,” and he then pondered their “upbringing and family life.”\textsuperscript{198}

By the time that the accused conspirators went to trial, McCulloch felt confident enough to publicly oppose what he classified as a faulty verdict. In an editorial published by the \textit{Indianapolis Journal}, McCulloch at once patronizingly wavered that, “these men, they know not what they do,” but then proceeded to passionately add:

They are in the midst of human sorrows and sufferings. They see hundreds of men out of work. They hear the cry of many thousand children who work in the mills, factories and foundries of Chicago. They see young girls who work without wages sufficient for life. They see women working for thirty cents a day. They see machinery displace men who go about vainly asking for work. They see all this and then denounce.\textsuperscript{199}

He then implored that his city and country offer forgiveness, and address the inequalities of the “regnant political economy” that bred such radicalism and desperation. Instantly, however, the paper attacked McCulloch’s piece as “unmitigated hogwash” and decried his willingness to defend the “imported scoundrels, naturally at war with civilized society; men who never done an honest day’s work in their lives, but who are parasites and leeches by nature and preference.”\textsuperscript{200} The irony was thick. As articulately as McCulloch defended the Haymarket martyrs – albeit to no avail – he too deployed the same parasite metaphor to

\textsuperscript{197} See Ruswick, 25-30.
\textsuperscript{198} McCulloch Diary, date unknown in OMP, Box 4 Folder 1.
\textsuperscript{199} Quoted in Ruswick and McCulloch Diary, 1887.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid.
describe the desperation that he found in his own city among the “unworthy paupers.” That McCulloch at times so clearly understood the structural forces ensuring class conflict and deprivation yet so willingly dismissed these same forces at other times revealed an ambiguity in his character that demands more attention and perhaps little sympathy.

McCulloch thus defended the Haymarket martyrs and the labor movement more broadly. However, his analysis of poverty was rather conflicted and always ambiguous. In his later years, he continued to maintain – if sometimes awkwardly and tenuously – that poverty indicated one’s racial, hereditary, and cultural decline. At the same time, he increasingly maintained that one’s impoverishment also have demonstrated the uneven and iniquitous nature of corporate capitalism. Though in regards to the latter, he was never interested in radical politics. Even at his most progressive, McCulloch upheld patriarchal prescriptions of poverty relief, and always viewed his charity work as a middle-class Christian obligation to service. And as we have seen, McCulloch’s most famous speech completely omitted his newfound advocacy on behalf of the working poor. That it privileged heredity rather than environment all but erased his late-career work as a reform-minded promoter of organized labor.201 Moreover, his erstwhile belief in the redemptive and rehabilitative power of manual labor and its accompanying fraternal organizations put him squarely in line with progressive reformers who viewed hard work as a means of personal, psychological, manly, and furthermore, racial uplift. The pronouncements delivered during his final years amidst suffering from an aggressively acting Hodgkin’s disease illustrated the point.

201 Ruswick, 25-30.
By 1891, *The Tribe of Ishmael* received widespread accolades as a landmark piece of ethnographic research and scientific intervention. However, the same could not be said of McCulloch’s final major public speech, delivered just weeks before succumbing to his illness. McCulloch appeared before the very same body that he addressed in 1888, only this time he did so as President of the National Conference on Charity and Corrections. A sickly McCulloch convened the conference at his home church. The reverend, in stark contrast to his earlier addresses, lectured not on parasites, weakened Teutonic people, or genetic defectives. Instead he proclaimed that, “I see no terrible army of pauperism, but a sorrowful crowd of men, women and children.”

From this speech, he declared his intent to forever vanquish the term “pauper” from the vocabulary of his discipline. Strikingly, as Brent Ruswick has noted, his dismissal of pauperism as both an adjective and a noun revealed the intent to reclassify all of those he previously deemed “chronically” poor and undeserving of aid into the worthy category.

This reclassification did not signal a departure from the paternal surveillance and voyeurism in which McCulloch willfully engaged and encouraged throughout his career. Nor did he move beyond a critique of the wage labor system not predicated upon Judeo-Christian moralism, patriarchal dominance, or the valorization and fetishization of the normative nuclear family unit. Most notably, McCulloch’s earlier definition of pauperism as a racial category gave way to a new understanding that Christian benevolence in the company of labor activism could serve the new purpose of “Teutonic” redemption and restoration. On his deathbed, McCulloch redefined white native-born poverty as emblematic

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202 McCulloch speech before National Conference on Charities and Corrections, in McCulloch Diary, Date not listed – approximately winter, 1888 in OMP, Box 4 Folder 1.

203 Ruswick, 19-35.
not simply of “Teutonic pauperism” – hopelessly persisting through heredity – but instead as an unnatural condition remedied through consortiums of manly Christian labor organizations that counterbalanced the godless and effete titans of industry such as Vanderbilt, Rockefeller, and their ilk.204

The passionate address that McCulloch delivered in those final days of his abbreviated life nevertheless fell upon indifferent ears. Just years after McCulloch’s passing, it was another Indiana man who achieved far greater national prominence. Eugene V. Debs gained credibility in left-wing circles that McCulloch never approached nor deserved. Debs ardently spoke on behalf of labor and poor people, becoming the nation’s most famous and charismatic socialist. As head of the American Railway Union (ARU), Debs assumed a leadership role in the 1894 Pullman Strike, one that left him vulnerable to reprisals and landed him in jail. Yet, the incident propelled Indiana’s upstart unionist onto the national stage, eventually becoming the nation’s most successful Socialist presidential candidate, garnering over 6 percent of the 1912 election’s popular vote. Undoubtedly, Eugene V. Debs surpassed McCulloch in name recognition and political stature quite rapidly. But while the former may forever be remembered as the public face of early twentieth-century labor radicalism, the latter left a far deeper and troubling legacy on the nation’s domestic policy.205

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204 For the strengths of Weeks biography of McCulloch, it remains curiously sanitized of any mention of his racial politics and the eventual uses of The Tribe of Ishmael by eugenics.

The Strange Case of Indiana and Birth of the United States Eugenics Movement

McCulloch’s congregation along with many citizens of his adopted city dutifully attended the reverend's funeral, a somber though expected affair. He founded Indianapolis’s chapter of the Charity Organization Society, initiated countless children’s programs, and perhaps most notably he became one of the Midwest’s most ardent defenders of the labor movement and the ability of white able-bodied men to join a union. Like his colleague from New York, Richard Dugdale, McCulloch dedicated his life to writing, understanding, and ameliorating poverty. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, they were the two authorities who most thoroughly elaborated and researched its causes and effects. Likewise, each developed over their careers an increasingly sympathetic, if patronizing and condescending, view of poor people. McCulloch’s Indianapolis seethed with poor whites from the Upland South while Dugdale’s upstate New Yorkers were “convict stock,” though Anglo-Saxon to be sure.206

In addition, both Dugdale and McCulloch wrote on and researched the very population of people who race theorists believed were biologically superior. McCulloch too, though in more subtle ways, joined the echoing chorus of those who upheld the biological supremacy of the Teutonic and Anglo races. Throughout his career, his writings and sermons suggested that this race carried with it an inherent advantage and an inclination toward advancement. However, upon noting the prevalence of the fallen Teutonic – pervasive in Indianapolis – McCulloch called upon men to band together in labor organizations, practice Godly asceticism, and work diligently and dutifully as a means to

206 See Dugdale, 3.
secure racial and manly redemption. These traits and habits he believed fostered the “self help” that would eventually rehabilitate the fallen members of the prized race. Yet those who acquainted themselves with his study on the Tribe of Ishmael came to a different conclusion, and led the nation down a far more sinister path.

In the ten years following McCulloch’s death, Indiana’s correctional facilities nearly doubled in size, holding over 10,000 by 1900. The state prison and hospital, built during the Civil War to house captured and wounded Confederate soldiers shifted its purpose and now held the increasingly swollen ranks of not only incarcerated Hoosiers, but also the “insane,” “feeble-minded,” and “imbeciles.” All arrived disproportionately from Kentucky and the Upland South more generally. Some had committed violent crimes, while others were locked up for “vagrancy,” and nearly all bore an uncanny resemblance to McCulloch’s fallen Teutonic paupers. Moreover, the state drastically moved away from aid provisions throughout the decade and into the twentieth century. In 1896, Indiana provided aid – defined as clothing, food and shelter to 82,235 individuals. The majority of these recipients were not formally institutionalized in any of the state’s correctional facilities. By 1907, that figure was slashed to 37,724. The number of people receiving aid oscillated over the following years though never again approached the initial figures of the 1890s. Meanwhile the state’s population continued to rise at record pace as well. At the same time, expenditures on corrections rose precipitously. In 1897 the cost of “total maintenance” on

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208 Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Corrections, Twelfth Annual Exhibit of State Charitable and Correctional Institutions, (1900), 14.
the facilities was $93,555.40, and by 1900 the figure increased nearly fourfold to $360,162.16.\footnote{210}

Indiana State Health Commissioner, John N. Hurty and his physician colleague, Harry Sharp criticized the costs and proposed another solution. Rather than continuing to foot the bill to correct the uncorrectable, Indiana needed to remedy the problem at its source. By sterilizing those who clogged the correctional facilities, problems such as insanity, feeblemindedness, and even “compulsive masturbation” would allegedly cease beyond the present generation of “mental defectives.”\footnote{211} In 1912, Hurty recalled that Harry Sharp performed over seven hundred sterilizations dating back to 1899, eight years before it was even a legal procedure.\footnote{212} The rogue action according to Hurty, was painless and “done in six minutes without general anesthesia.”\footnote{213} Controlling and coercively tampering with ones’ reproductive capacities also circumvented an unwieldy legal bureaucracy: “the costly, ponderous courts only restrain crime, not in the least curing it.”\footnote{214} Hurty continued that, “we cannot rationally hope at present that extensive breeding from the best will improve human stock to any appreciable degree.”\footnote{215} Thus, Hurty bridged the economic and scientific arguments on behalf of compulsory sterilization. It was the cheapest, most effective solution to a growing and intractable problem.

\footnote{210} Ibid.
\footnote{211} Both Hurty and Sharp believed the procedure was a virtual cure all for the seemingly disparate – if fictive problems. See Practical Eugenics in Indiana, J.N. Hurty Reprint from the Ohio State Medical Journal, February 1912. Indiana State Archives, Dr. John N. Hurty Papers, Box 3 Folder 1.
\footnote{212} Ibid.
\footnote{213} Ibid.
\footnote{214} Ibid.
\footnote{215} Ibid.
Moreover, both Hurty and Sharp helped to develop the theory that “bad stock” required destruction lest the otherwise “good stock” be contaminated. This theory, known as “negative eugenics” or “cacogenics” posited that racial supremacy hinged upon wiping out or purging the allegedly weak members of the race, effectively pruning the unsavory or defective elements. This contrasted with positive eugenics or the belief that the strongest and most fit members of the Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon race needed to procreate at higher rate than the “unfit.” Though men such as Hurty and Sharp certainly upheld the value of both positive and negative eugenics as a means to solve the “pauper problem” and save the race. They decidedly moved away from McCulloch’s model of private charity and looked upon the state as the primary agent from which professionals such as themselves would control poverty vis-à-vis control of the body.

Hurty concluded with an explicit decree that, “we must sterilize all lily livered loons who would prate of an individual right to perpetrate defectiveness and spread horrible diseases which bring pain, sorrow, agony, torture, and anguish to the tender and innocent, and which destroy the race.” Hurty did not need an adjective to specify of which race he was referring. Given the Indian context, the racial declension that Hurty most feared was that of McCulloch’s Teutonic paupers. Their defectiveness positioned them as outcasts of what otherwise was presumably an effective race, that which in fact Hurty belonged. Most significantly, Hurty cast his declaration in moral tones that asserted that the depraved and

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216 For a more detailed explanation of the various strains of eugenic though see Kevles, 84-104.
217 Ibid.
corrupted “feeble-minded” individual posed a physical, psychological, and perhaps even a sexual threat to the “tender and innocent.”\textsuperscript{218}

Thus, Hurty and Sharp believed that the purveyors of racial destruction and deterioration were not the masses of impoverished foreign immigrants or Blacks in the Deep South, but even more ominously the most dangerous “defectives” belonged to the very race to which they themselves professed membership. This of course rendered the threat all the more severe as the enemy was cloaked in the ally’s clothes. As Nathaniel Deutsch has succinctly observed: “the danger posed by people like the Ishmaels lay in the very fact that they possessed the same names, physical appearances and, frequently, some of the same ancestors as the genetically superior members of their communities, including it should be noted, the eugenicists, themselves.”\textsuperscript{219} Not surprisingly, the state most shaped by poor white migration from the South responded most aggressively to the unique threat that it presented, both to the Hoosier State’s treasury, but more saliently to what the noted Indiana professor of medicine Thurman Rice described as the state’s “racial hygiene.”\textsuperscript{220}

**Toward Sterilization and Professionalization**

Observers certainly tried to call into question the race of poor white people in these same years. McCulloch’s own writings represented one such unsuccessful effort. McCulloch’s orientalism for example revealed an attempt to expel his subjects from the fraternity of

\textsuperscript{218} Practical Eugenics in Indiana, J.N. Hurty Reprint from the Ohio State Medical Journal, February 1912 in the Hurty Papers, Box 3 Folder 1.

\textsuperscript{219} Deutsch, 9.

otherwise strong-blooded, Northern European “stock.” Naming the conglomerate of poor whites in Indianapolis the “tribe of Ishmael” represented a deliberate rhetorical move that associated the family with the nomadic band of non-whites. “Ishmael” of course alluded to the famous Biblical story of Abraham. According to both the New Testament and McCulloch, Ishmael was the first son of Abraham who was famously cast aside in favor of the second-born son, Isaac. Ishmael was thus the expelled family detritus, left to wonder the vast Eurasian and North African deserts. The Islamic faith and the Koran articulated that these wonderings gave rise to Arabic culture and language. At once then, Ishmael symbolized discarded humanity as well as the allegedly directionless meanderings of a “tribal” and non-West, non-white people. But McCulloch as well as Hurty and Sharp all knew well that Indiana’s most troubled “tribe” constituted not a roving band of Arab degenerates and criminals, but rather a population of impoverished people who shared their self-identified Anglo-Saxon race.\footnote{For an excellent analysis of McCulloch’s attempts to racilize the “Ishmaels,” see Deutsch, 51-57.}

If Indiana’s poor could not be rendered a racial “other” then the methods of dealing with their growing presence i.e. anti-miscegenation and immigration laws were of little use. It was within this climate of fear and anxiety that Indiana Governor James Frank Hanley – at Hurty’s urgent lobbying – legalized the procedure that Sharp had been illegally carrying out for over a decade. In the spring of 1907, the Indiana legislature passed a sterilization law with sweepingly broad implications. It targeted “confirmed criminals, idiots, rapists, and
imbeciles.”\textsuperscript{222} The preamble posited that, “heredity plays a most important part in the transmission of crime, idiocy and imbecility.”\textsuperscript{223} Accordingly:

If, in the judgment of this committee of experts and the board of managers, procreation is inadvisable and there is no probability of improvement of the mental condition of the inmate, it shall be lawful for the surgeons to perform such operations for the prevention of procreation as shall be decided safest and most effective.\textsuperscript{224}

Indiana thus established the world’s first sanctioned means to coercively prohibit one’s reproduction based upon a so-called expert’s opinion that some citizens were genetically unfit. Most of all, it was evident that the law targeted the state’s poorest people. Most of who were white Upland Southerners from Kentucky. Women were among the first targeted. After all, children born to unmarried women were easily identifiable and thus easier to accuse of failing to uphold and demonstrate the biological supremacy and cultural advancement of the Anglo-Teutonic race. Poverty, rather than indicating structural inequality became a pathological and embodied condition, remedied only through embodied means.\textsuperscript{225}

Sharp, one of the state’s leading proponents of compulsory sterilization also believed in the value of coercively inducing the male “defectives” into a system of wage labor. This would preserve and rehabilitate the allegedly inherent hard-working nature of the Teutonic. He surely knew what census takers had long dictated. An unruly population of white Southern farmers who had migrated increasingly shaped the state and its labor force. For generations, rural Upland Southerners successfully subsisted on small family farms, arriving in Indiana unaccustomed to the rhythms of factory life and the time discipline of industrial

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{222} Indiana State Law, Chapter 215, Approved March 9, 1907, pg. 377-378.
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{224} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{225} See Minna Stern, “We Cannot make a Silk Purse out of a Sow’s Ear,” especially 3-22.
\end{footnotesize}
capitalism. Sharp, writing in 1898 and one year before his first operations, believed that the Indiana state reformatories needed to abolish tobacco and alcohol use, improve the “sanitary conditions of the defectives,” and most importantly, “introduce the wage-earning system.”226 Sharp thoughtfully devised a plan whereby each man – and it was a gendered system predicated upon manual labor, supposedly best suited for men – in corrections worked through three “grades.” The inmate first found himself in the “middle grade.” Here he earned fifty-five cents a day working at various tasks dictated by the warden. According to Sharp:

He would pay forty-five cents for keep and clothing; he is charged ten cents each time he visits the physician; if he destroys any of his clothing, or anything in the cell, as combs, a looking glass, or anything of that kind, they are replaced and charged to him.227

A failure to comply with these stipulations landed the man in debt. Once his debt surpassed $5, he fell to the lowest grade, a position that carried with it a longer sentence. On the other hand, if the man earned his keep, bought new clothes, and demonstrated a commitment to bourgeois conceptions of hygiene and wage labor, he received parole within six months. At which point, he would enter the workforce a docile and productive laborer.228

Sharp’s plan revealed some critical if contradictory impulses that governed himself and his colleagues. He believed that if only “mental defectives” adopted the machinations of industrial capitalism – namely wage labor – they might reenter and become productive members of civil society. This argument assumed that altering one’s environment could alter one’s nature, a position at odds with the very logic that justified sterilization in the first

226 Harry Sharp in the Indiana Bulletin for the Board of State Corrections, Thirty-third Quarter, June 1898, 102.
227 Ibid.
228 Ibid.
place. Moreover, Sharp, a trained physician allegedly concerned with matters of the body, also forayed into the seemingly unrelated issue of political economy. But of course, the two were related. Poverty and unemployment were inextricably bound up within all diagnoses of “feeble-mindedness” and “pauperism.” The latter caused the former. Only when the state developed its own technologies of control over the body – in the form of sterilization, but also and far more frequently, institutionalization – could the idle and fallen members of the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic races be corrected. If in the process, the lazy, white, and poor were forced into the pool of industrial labor then all the better.229

Such an expansive vision of state control and order necessitated a professional bureaucracy to carry out the recommendations of such men as Harry Sharp and John Hurty. Meanwhile, the broad dictates of the 1907 legislation called upon physicians and social workers to actually go into the field and investigate who might apply for correction. In fact, the law explicitly called for the creation of a “committee of experts and a board of managers” to enforce its provisions.230 This represented yet another step in an epochal shift towards the ways in which Indiana, and the United States more generally, dealt with emerging social and economic inequality.

Heretofore, McCulloch’s conception of private charity and benevolence was the typical model throughout the nation. Private organizations such as Churches and benevolent societies alongside the time honored “poorhouse” were the primary outlets from which poor, widowed, and disabled people received aid. Additionally, unions and working-class organizations had long pulled together their collective resources and provided minimal

229 This was partly the observation of Richard Cloward and Francis Fox Piven, Regulating the Poor: the Functions of Public Welfare (New York: Vintage Books,), 2nd edition, 1993.
230 Indiana State Law, Chapter 215, 1907.
levels of benefits for dying and disabled members as well as their families. With the rather inconsistent exception of war veterans, the state offered minimal to no security for its most vulnerable citizens. Thus, the last decade of the of nineteenth century through the first decades of the twentieth saw a sea change in the state’s response to and strategy towards poverty and disability. It became the purview of the state to diagnose and treat the social and psychological ills of its citizens. And not surprisingly, poverty, and disability often emerged symbiotically.\textsuperscript{231} When this relationship aligned with the contemporary anxieties of racial science, the outcome proved combustible. Indeed, the responses and strategies that emerged to combat poverty and disability in Indiana must be understood alongside the racial theorizing of an educated, professionalized, bureaucratized, and above all, anxious, self-identified Anglo-Saxon elite.\textsuperscript{232}

In fact, after the law’s passage, the Indiana Board of State Charities and Corrections dispersed medical professionals to locate, diagnose and correct “feeble-mindedness” as well as myriad other afflictions. In 1915, the Board jostled legislators to fund and commission the even more specialized, Committee on Mental Defectives (CMD). This elite group of educated, professional social workers and medical practitioners conducted fieldwork throughout Indiana and then reported back to the governor with proscriptions on how best to manage the state’s social problems. Throughout its duration, the committee published numerous


reports with several notable findings and recommendations. One aspiring intellectual and fieldworker, Arthur Estabrook obtained Oscar McCulloch’s notes on the Ishmaels. Estabrook wanted to revisit McCulloch’s “tribe of Ishmael” to determine if they had persisted as paupers, vagrants and the feeble-minded. If they did, claimed Estabrook, proof existed that the families were genetically defective from the onset and that environmental factors explained nothing.\(^\text{233}\)

Estabrook quickly established connections with the CMD and the Board of State Charities.\(^\text{234}\) Helen Reeves, a board member frequently corresponded with Estabrook and revealed her conception of the state’s problems. She wrote that Kentucky was the primary breeding ground for “idiocy” – there “are 2200 pauper idiots who are my special charge.”\(^\text{235}\) As the fieldworker designated to uncover the “defectives” flooding over the Ohio River from the Blue Grass state, Reeves concluded that, “everything degenerate in Indiana apparently hailed from my adopted state of Kentucky.”\(^\text{236}\) Here, she informed Estabrook of yet another symptom that reemerged throughout the studies. “Mental defectiveness” was apparently a regional as well as a genetic affliction and most tellingly, it was a disorder that portended sexual deviancy and racial declension. Notably, it did not always suggest disability. Reaves and Estabrook reported with far greater frequency, a “pauper problem” defined simply through one’s economic status rather than through any discernable physical disability.

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\(^{233}\) See Deutsch, 116-124 for a nice explanation of Estabrook’s activities in Indianapolis.  
\(^{234}\) Estabrook went through Wright’s notes and made hundreds of visits and conducted hours of research in what would have been his most exhaustive study. However, for reasons unclear, the findings were never formally published and the inchoate notes are held with his papers in State University of New York in Albany.  
\(^{235}\) Correspondence of Helen T. Reeves, Reeves to Estabrook, April 16, 1921 in the Records of the Board of State Charities (Hereafter BSC): The State Institution for Feeble-Minded Mental Defectives, Photograph Collection, Box 4.  
\(^{236}\) Ibid.
However, they continually conflated intellectual and learning disabilities with their conception of pauperism. Even here, intellectual disability was a raced and gendered construction, deployed conveniently and selectively at the behest of newly anointed bureaucrats.

In another meticulously detailed report to the governor, the CMD surveyed several Indiana counties and townships. In each region, the committee found “idiots, imbeciles, and morons” accompanied by the triple-threat of vice, vagrancy and pauperism. In one county – designated only as “G” county – the committee reported a “high rate of red eye sores, the result of venereal disease,” likely syphilis.\textsuperscript{237} The secluded county’s degeneracy emerged from regional isolation as well as moral and behavioral depravity. The county had no “progressive attitudes,” or a “community that demanded more of its citizens.” This combination allegedly provided the county’s impoverished the opportunity to engage in “degenerate behavior” without fear of judgment.\textsuperscript{238} Predictably, “degenerate mountain folks from North Carolina have come into the county,” and brought with them the lax morality and laziness that typified the state’s “growing pauper problem.”\textsuperscript{239} It was this virulent combination of sexual depravity, moral turpitude, and outright idleness among Indiana’s rural, poor white population that caused researchers the most anxiety.

The committee’s report further elaborated the threats posed by white Southerners who had “invaded” the Hoosier state. Traveling south, “in certain hilly, back of the poor

\textsuperscript{237} Mental Defectives in Indiana: Second Report of the Indiana Committee on Mental Defectives, A Survey of Eight Counties, To the Governor, First Edition, Indianapolis, IN, December, 27, 1918 (Indianapolis: W.M.B Burford, Contracting for State Printing and Binding, 1919), 24-25.
\textsuperscript{238} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{239} Ibid.
lanes that lead into big woods were found many families entirely defective." The committee alarmingly noted the highest concentration of “degenerates” in “County C” – later identified as Switzerland County, abutting the Ohio River in the far southeast corner of the state. Significantly, this was the region where over 90 percent of newcomers arrived from the Upland South, Kentucky specifically. The report declared that, “in proportion to the population, the percentage of mental defectives from ‘C’ County now under care in state institutions is higher than any other county in the state.” Arthur Estabrook and Hazel Hansford were struck by the “low grade mentality” pervading the “Lookout Ridge Population” and the “Kentucky Hill-Folk in Indiana.” According to Estabrook, the county’s most notorious families: the Beatty-Calverts, the Shannon Clan, the Simpsons, and several others had clogged the state’s correctional facilities, costing Indiana over $4 million annually.

The CMD offered an explanation for the inordinately high rate of “feeble-mindedness and mental defectiveness” in Switzerland County. Apparently, the conditions were ripe for degeneracy. To begin with, alcohol use was rampant and the soil was poor and particularly unsuited for small-scale agriculture. Yet more significantly:

The defective members of the population seem to be recruited from the degenerate members of fine old families. “C” county inhabitants are...from the present and steady influx of undesirable immigration from neighboring states. Further investigation might easily show these families of kindred strains. On account of unusual isolation of the county, these strains will certainly continue to multiply in the same or greater ratio of the past.

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240 Ibid., 7.
241 Deutsch, 17.
242 Mental Defectives in Indiana: Second Report, 8.
243 Quoted in Minna Stern, 20. See also Hansford, "A Social Study of Mental Defectives," 23; Estabrook, "The Work of the Indiana Committee"; "Kentucky Hill-Folk in Indiana," in the County Surveys in the Records for the Committee on Mental Defectives in the BSC Box 1.
244 Mental Defectives in Indiana: Second Report, 16.
"C" county – with its exorbitant rate of degeneracy – was a wicked confluence of perfidy that revealed the ways in which the racial hierarchy was subverted. That they “degenerated” from “fine families” clearly indicated that the original “racial stock” was in contrast to defective, effective and furthermore, desirable and superior. Here, the term defective must be understood as both a racial as well as cognitive classification. They squandered their promising bloodlines over generations of moral declension and laziness, and like a defection, degeneracy itself implied a decline from what was supposed to be the strongest and most biologically evolved race. When a defection of the mind occurred then a defection from the race inevitably followed, or perhaps it was the other way around though the symptoms were the same in any case.

Most notably, the CMD report primarily blamed their “defectiveness” on sexual deviancy, evidently an inevitable outcome given the population’s social and economic isolation. Only a transgression so severe provided an explanation for the fallen members of the race. In “G” County it was the outbreak of swollen, red eyes resulting from sexually transmitted infections while in Switzerland County it was the most unacceptable perversion of all: incest. The isolated and hilly geography combined with the rural and agrarian ways of the recently migrated families supposedly created the cultural environment conducive to inbreeding. The committee’s suggestion and specious evidence of such intolerable behavior instantly vanquished the descendants of even the “fine old families” into a category of ill repute. So while the committee was seemingly established with the order of combating “mental defection” it was equally concerned with defection of another sort. Indeed, the CMD’s researchers uncovered thousands rural, poor whites who had “defected” from their “fine” families, of whom everyone understood as the very best ambassadors of a supreme
race. To Hansford, they had defected and had become little more than “poor white trash from the South.” However, their reckless and lascivious behavior now necessitated obtrusive surveillance and coercive control, lest the defection continue en masse.

Despite the committee's severe accusations, they offered no conclusive evidence that consanguinity occurred more in rural Indiana among migrant Kentuckians than anywhere else. Instead, the reports portray little more than the severe poverty in which the families and communities lived and persisted. Medical physician and CMD researcher, Jane Griffiths carried out her fieldwork in Delaware County, northwest of Indianapolis. There she “discovered” several families who possessed all of the tell-tale signs of “feeble-mindedness:” running eyes, shabby clothes, persistent illness, and ramshackle homes that she pithily described as “a horror.” Not surprisingly, each supposed cultural and racial trait just as easily demonstrated the dire impoverishment that typified the state and nation’s shift to an industrialized economy. The Milner Family spent a paltry $18.25 over the last several years on clothes and shelter according to the CMD’s calculation. At age sixty-eight Mrs. Milner’s husband was “far too old” for her and displayed the reckless behaviors of an “idiot.” Griffiths noted that, “this is another Kentucky family.” The Milner’s thus broke all of the rules: Mr. Milner was neither an acceptable sexual partner nor patriarch, their clothes and shelter belied Griffith’s middle-class expectations of comfort and cleanliness, and they had arrived from the Upland South as little more than pre-modern throwbacks, unequipped for the twentieth century.

245 Ibid.
246 For a nice summation on the sexual and moral component to “mental defectiveness” see Matt Wray, Not Quite White, 83-85.
247 The State Institution for Feeble-Minded Mental Defectives, Photograph Collection for Delaware County Folder in the Records of the BSC, Box 4.
248 Ibid.
The Board of State Charities assigned Griffiths several other families as well. The Riley’s, the Dye’s, and the Curtis’s, she concluded, all lived in “filth and squalor” as well as “utmost poverty.”249 The Curtis’s arrived from Tennessee while the rest originally hailed from Kentucky. But they were all, “irresponsible, happy go lucky; as pleased to be lame as whole.”250 In short, the Committee on Mental Defectives was more accurately a committee to monitor and regulate poor white people who arrived in Indiana from the Mountain South. Their chief sins were alleged sexual impropriety and the failure to enter the industrial labor force as unskilled wage earners. The committee’s surveillance rested upon moral aggrandizement, masquerading as the evidence for sexual deviancy, laziness, dirtiness, and overall moral as well as racial degeneracy. But more sinister motives may also be attributed to the committee. Working in the context of the eugenics movement – with its explicit aims of reproducing a master race from the so-called protoplasm of the Teutonic and Anglo Saxon – the CMD needed to urgently account for the reasons as to why that very race had shown itself so debased and culturally backwards.251 Their findings revealed nothing more than entrenched poverty, economic dislocation, and the physical and psychological health problems that always accompany such pernicious social ills. But to the researchers and field workers who participated, their findings explained how the strongest and most fit race “degenerated” into little more than racial detritus or quite literally, “white trash.”252

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249 Ibid.
250 Ibid
251 For a discussion on protoplasm see Kevles, 47-54.
When Oscar McCulloch arrived in Indianapolis during the tumultuous summer of 1877, he brought an ebullient spirit of benevolence and charity to the city and state. What awaited him was an economic breakdown of the likes he and others had never known. McCulloch fashioned a career of understanding – and in his mind, alleviating – the pervasive poverty affecting his adopted region. He defined impoverishment as a genetic and racial problem. The so-called pauper was in fact a fallen Teutonic, identified as either he who lost his work ethic or she whose sexual proclivities clashed with normative middle-class standards of feminine propriety. But in any case, both passed along her or his defective genes and the problem grew. In made little difference that by the end of his career, however, McCulloch reevaluated the causes and effects of poverty, viewing most poor people – especially able-bodied white men – as worthy of assistance and needy only of a well-paying job and a strong union. On his deathbed, McCulloch asserted that manly labor and its accompanying fraternal societies and labor organizations were the best bulwark against the egregious excesses of industrial capitalism. It was the latter that most threatened the Teutonic pauper, and only by countering its unchecked aggression could a city like Indianapolis – dominated by rural, white Southerners of such prized Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic descent – be saved.

But the legacy of his late career never trumped his most notable contribution to the nation’s scientific canon. McCulloch’s *The Tribe of Ishmael*, with its lurid description of the city’s poor and its unqualified indictment of their heredity far overshadowed anything else he accomplished or said at the end of his life. His published study quickly became a foundational text in the nascent eugenics movement, shaping how a generation of reformers
understood the causes and effects of poverty as well as heredity and race. Within years of his death, Indiana became a focal point in a burgeoning movement to address poverty through the prism of sexual and racial redemption. Not coincidentally, this movement initiated from self-identified Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic men who were most explicitly motivated to build a better race. First, however, they needed to understand why it was that so many members of this presumably superior breed of people had so miserably failed.

McCulloch was thus also a bridge figure, straddling the old ways and the new. His vision of religious charity and targeted, private benevolence was a model of poverty work prevalent for generations. For certain, the reverend's charitable work and organizations conducted surveillance, conceived of the poor dichotomously as either “worthy” or “unworthy,” and upheld the intrusive moralizing that so typified virtually all middle-class efforts to address the so-called pauper problem. Yet, the sun was setting on the archaic paradigm of private relief. By the turn-of-the century, a new class of elite, public professionals emerged. Even as they were educated and liberal Anglo-Saxons, they were not industrial capitalists, and they most certainly were not among the throngs of immigrant laborers who toiled for such men. Rather, they were a middle-class buffer between the two. They found work not in a factory’s foundry or in a corporate boardroom, but instead in the growing ranks of the state’s bureaucracy. They were social workers and researchers like Arthur H. Estabrook, Jane Griffiths, and their colleagues on the Committee on Mental Defectives, or perhaps they were skilled physicians such as Harry Sharp and John Hurty, both on the leading edge of scientific and medicinal advancement.

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253 On the class position of the reformers see Rafter, 12-23 and Wray, 69-85.
The Tribe of Ishmael was then an invitation as well as a presage to the transition of poverty work from the private to the public. It invited an ascendant and creative class of professionals to mobilize the state as the primary institution to regulate the poor. The problem had grown too large and pervasive for private charity workers to tackle alone. Now, the stakes of pauperism became entwined with sexual perversion and racial declension, matters far beyond the understanding of well-meaning lay people. Indiana – with its unique demographics and heady personalities – proved the laboratory from which experimental measures such as sterilization spread. The state was uniquely and ideally situated to take in white Upland Southerners, those whom such looming intellectual figures as Theodore Roosevelt, Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, and William Goodell Frost had in these very years ascribed racial supremacy. Unfortunately, the motley band of “Kentucky hill folk” failed to live up to their Anglo-Teutonic expectations and threatened the very order and foundation of a racial hierarchy still under construction.

Such was the context of the world’s first legislation directly informed by the insurgent eugenics movement. For certain, not all agreed with the legal and moral implications of the legislation. In fact, the Indiana Sterilization law was overturned in 1909. However, the legislature quickly reinstated the measure. It stuck on the books until it was finally deemed unconstitutional over sixty years later in 1974.254 But even before the procedure was made legal and after it faced challenges from activists and the courts alike, it was nevertheless utilized. Upon repeal, seventy-five years after Harry Sharp first performed vasectomies and ovariectomies to the state’s defectives, an additional 2,300 people

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254 For a time line of the Indiana Eugenics movement see Hall, 214-221.
underwent the procedure. Nearly 60 percent were women whose sexual activity, claimed the Indiana Board of State Charities, constituted such a threat that the state asserted control over their bodies and ultimately, halted their reproduction. The Board claimed that only by doing so could the defectives be pruned and purged from the otherwise effective race, and that a proper Anglo-Saxon femininity and sexual propriety be redeemed and upheld.

Most significantly, while Indiana was the first to pass such laws, the state was far from atypical in its approach to poverty control as a means of racial restoration and moral correction. In fact, the professionalization of the field of social work and the collusion of modern medicine and science with modern racial thought occurred nationwide and soon after, worldwide. Over the next three decades, over thirty other states followed the Indiana lead and adopted sterilization laws, and ominously these same laws would then leap across the ocean and influenced leaders across Europe as well. More fundamentally, the nation pathologized poverty as an embodied condition rather than an economic one, and began to address it within the public institutions of the state. But there was still more to the picture. Beneath these laws that were seemingly and ostensibly crafted to remedy the scourge of impoverishment lay the desire to cleanse the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic races of any potential impurities, toxins, and pollutants. But while we have explored the strange career of Oscar McCulloch and the strange case of Indiana, unfortunately, the story only begins rather than ends in the Hoosier state.

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255 Statistics available through Indiana's state website: http://www.in.gov/judiciary/citc/cle/eugenics/index.html - in 2007, the state issued a formal apology, and launched the conference, "Reflections on 100 Years of Eugenics." Noted Eugenics scholar, Paul Lombardo provided the keynote. His powerpoint presentation may be accessed through above website.

256 Ibid.
CHAPTER THREE

A Pioneer Dance: Constructing Racial and Cultural Purity in Virginia, 1923-1940

Whether musician, writer or layman, the principle is the same; for every human being has the creative instinct in some form; perhaps never developed. And this development will be only in proportion to the degree to which he has utilized his own personal and racial inheritance.²⁵⁷

- Annabel Morris Buchanan, circa 1935

Carrie Buck was born of little means in Charlottesville, Virginia in 1906. Her mother, Emma, abandoned by her husband around the time of Carrie’s birth, relinquished single-motherhood, deciding instead to put the infant up for adoption. Within a year, the young girl found a home in the foster care of John and Alice Dobbs. Despite the rocky start to Carrie’s life, her childhood was uneventful. She attended school, earned adequate grades, developed several friendships, was courted by a few of her classmates, and by all appearances, lived her youth in ways typical of any young woman hailing from a small Appalachian town.²⁵⁸

All of that changed, however, in 1923 when – at the age of seventeen – Carrie was raped and impregnated by a member of her foster family. The Dobbs, refusing to accept the overwhelming evidence that their nephew perpetrated the crime, instead blamed Carrie. Instantly, John Dobbs committed his foster daughter to the Virginia Colony of Epileptics and Feebleminded. The Virginia state authorities deemed her guilty of incorrigible behavior and promiscuity. While in the state’s custody, Carrie gave birth to a healthy child

²⁵⁷ Annabel Morris Buchanan, “Foreword,” in White Top Folk Tales, unpublished manuscript in the Annabel Morris Buchanan Papers (hereafter AMB), Series 3.1, Folder 348.
whom she named Vivian. Unfortunately, her “mental incompetence” forced her to surrender the girl to the Dobbs family. Vivian died a short seven years later due to complications from intestinal colitis, and her mother was eventually paroled for her accused crimes and went on to marry. Buck had no additional children despite her wish to start a family with her husband, William Eagle. As a condition of her release from State Corrections, Buck was required to undergo an operation that effectively sterilized her and ensured that she would never again mother a “defective” child. Carrie Buck went on to live a rather long if lonely life. She outlived her husband and died estranged from both her paternal and foster families, isolated in a Virginia nursing home at the age of 83.\footnote{Lombardo, 2-7.}

Had Carrie Buck’s life not been on public display, the details of her violation would likely have been relegated to the dusty bins of a Virginia state archive. Instead, the doctors’ decision to seize the young woman’s body and assert control over her reproductive capacity, resulted in a national debate that went straight to the nation’s highest court. Could the state, under the threat of “racial degeneracy” sterilize its “defective” citizens? In 1927, the Supreme Court answered this question in the affirmative as they ruled in favor not of Carrie Buck but rather, her doctors and the state’s correctional facility. Writing in the majority, Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes sided with the era’s leading eugenicists, many of whom appeared before the justices to offer their “expert” testimony. Holmes – referring to Buck and her family – famously quipped that, “three generations of imbeciles are enough.”\footnote{See Olive Wendall Holmes, Delivering the Majority Statement in the Supreme Court Case, Buck v. Bell, 274, U.S. (200), 1927.} Within just hours of judicial deliberation, it became constitutionally viable, and indeed advisable for the state to sterilize those deemed “unfit.”
The procedure that Buck underwent was of course neither novel nor new. For twenty years Indiana deployed the operation as a means to control a “feeble-minded” and “pauper” population who had demonstrable records of promiscuity, laziness, and low intelligence. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court codified in Virginia that which the Committee on Mental Defectives had worked to accomplish for years in Indiana. Indeed, the Old Dominion sought and gained permission to “purify” the Anglo-Saxon race from its degraded specimens. Harry Laughlin’s testimony articulated these stakes in no uncertain terms. He referred those on the court to his piece in the *Eugenical News*, entitled “Purging the Race.”

Laughlin claimed that it must be “the right of the state to limit human reproduction in the interests of race betterment.” To Laughlin and his colleagues it was obvious that miscegenation degraded the “purity” of the white, Anglo race. However, far more deleterious and difficult to deal with was the unmarked scourge of “degenerate” whites.

After all, Virginia took a leading role and enacted some of the nation’s earliest and most stringent “anti-miscegenation” laws. The 1924 Racial Integrity Act made it illegal for white people to marry anyone with “one-sixteenth Negro or Indian blood,” and the state’s Sterilization Act – the very law that the Supreme Court upheld as constitutional in the Buck case – was based upon Harry Laughlin’s “model eugenical sterilization law.” From Richmond, Virginia to Washington D.C, racial integrity soon became a national preoccupation. The infamous Johnson-Reed Act (alternatively referred to as the National

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261 Harry Laughlin testifying before the Virginia Court of Appeals, Staunton, VA, September Term, 1925, pg. 29. AMB, Folder 43, Series 9.
262 Ibid.
Origins Acts) severely restricting immigration based upon notions of maintaining “racial hygiene.” It emerged from the very debates that surfaced and the personalities who cut their teeth in Richmond, Virginia.²⁶⁴

But while African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and immigrants presented an obvious threat to the perceived strength of the white Anglo-Saxon/Teutonic race, it was people like Carrie Buck and the so-called *Tribe of Ishmael* who presented a more intractable problem. Not cloaked in the darker skin or adhering to the peculiar culture of the readily identifiable inferior races, she and other impoverished whites could only be revealed through rigorous surveillance and the moral judgments of professionalized state bureaucrats and anointed experts. Laughlin continued: “the administrative and institutional forces in any state, upon whom devolves the responsibility for caring for inadequate individuals and in preventing race degeneracy by the reproduction of hereditary inadequates, require authority to segregate or to sterilize certain individuals...if the state is to prevent race degeneracy.”²⁶⁵ Laughlin and his eugenicist colleagues seldom needed to elaborate the threat of miscegenation. After all, no law could effectively address the problem and persistence of a poor, debased, and sexually deviant white population, the precise failings represented by Carrie Buck.

This chapter moves from the Midwest back to the Southern hills of Virginia. In the wake of the Buck verdict, Virginia - behind only the far more populous state of California –

²⁶⁵ Ibid.
sterilized more people than anywhere in the nation and the most per capita.\textsuperscript{266} Here, as in the nation \textit{writ large}, the two threats to the supposed biological supremacy of the native-born, white racial “stock” were “pollution” from the darker and inferior races and the “degeneracy” that occurred \textit{within} the race as a result of moral declension and sexual depravity. The Racial Integrity Law of 1924 tackled the former concern and the Carrie Buck decision afforded the state the ability to act under threat of the latter. Moreover, deploying Virginia as a case study – exploring both its policies and personalities – provides a vehicle to further understand the ways in which white impoverishment and economic failure needed to be explained and reconciled in order to uphold the era’s racial hierarchies, and indeed, launch the state’s polices toward the poor. Such polices most often included monitoring, regulating, surveying, and asserting bodily control over poor people.

Virginia also presents an ideal case study precisely because of the lengths to which leading figures went to not only prohibit the allegedly ubiquitous threat of racial mixing and degeneracy, but also to demonstrate the inherent cultural supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race. Thus, the Carrie Buck decision and the Racial Integrity Law were accompanied by cultural efforts to save, restore, and illustrate the heritage of this prized, if endangered race. For instance, the state was home to the first and largest network of Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America (ASCoA). The ASCoA professed that the Anglo-Saxon was an endangered racial and cultural population that required restoration and rehabilitation. Like the local-colorists and race theorists, the Anglo-Saxon Clubs attached a special meaning to the Appalachian portion of Virginia where they claimed that the purity of the race remained mostly intact.

\textsuperscript{266} For a detailed account of the eugenics movement in the west, see Alexandra Minna Stern, \textit{Eugenics Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
Efforts to protect this rare outpost of racial and cultural purity became a top priority for the Anglo-Saxon Clubs, and moreover, without the efforts of this group’s leaders, Racial Integrity may well never have come to pass.267

The chapter begins and concludes with the ASCoA’s founder, musician John Powell. A native son of Virginia, Powell ranked among the most notable American composers throughout the 1920s and 1930s. He also cultivated a deserved reputation as one of the leading spokesmen of eugenics and scientific racism. Powell’s prolific career bridged the divide between the eugenics movement, public policy and popular culture. Deeply participating in and shaping all three, Powell expertly – if alarmingly – demonstrates just how fully the era’s culture and politics became imbricated. This chapter furthers the case that public policy aimed at addressing the increasing and incessant problem of white impoverishment and failure hinged first upon stabilizing, and ultimately, bolstering culturally constructed racial hierarchies.

A Musician Makes the Case for Racial Integrity

Born in Richmond, in 1882, John Powell was an indisputable musical prodigy. He breezed through primary school, and then quickly graduated from the University of Virginia with a degree in musical composition by the remarkably young age of 18. He then continued his studies in Vienna, Austria for several years, making connections with some of the continent’s most well-known composers. By the time Powell reached thirty-five, he had

written several highly acclaimed concertos, rhapsodies, and etudes as well as having performed with some of the most renowned orchestras in the world. Perhaps the highlight of his nascent career came when the 38-year old Cavalier toured Europe with the New York Symphony, performing classical standards alongside his own compositions.268

But despite such a prolific and illustrious start, Powell nevertheless experienced a crisis of musical identity. As an American composer, he continually faced accusations that his native country lacked a classical music tradition in the vein of Germany, France, or Russia. The United States offered no equivalent to Beethoven, Wagner, Ravel, or Tchaikovsky. Powell’s European colleagues proposed that the genetics and biology of the Anglo-Saxon race were to blame. He recounted that, “people who heard my music doubted that I was a Virginian...Anglo Saxons they all declared were notoriously unmusical. And as proof they brought forth the staggering argument that Anglo Saxon people have no folk music.”269 Powell, unsatisfied with such logic, spent his professional career working to overturn such cruel misconceptions.

The composer urgently believed that his native country needed to “develop a national music,” and he was quite clear about its source: “it must be founded upon the music of the Anglo-Saxon races which were the pioneers in America.”270 But unfortunately, according to Powell, each passing day brought about the further erosion of his beloved race, increasingly weakened through the forces of miscegenation and racial degeneracy. If

269 Ibid., quoted from Whisnant, 220
something was not done, the nation would lose both its strongest race as well as its native culture. In light of such clear and present danger, John Powell – with some critical assistance along the way – successfully mobilized his musical fame in Virginia to lobby for the nation’s first and most stringent anti-miscegenation laws. Only through such efforts could the musician illustrate, and more importantly, preserve the genetic supremacy and unadulterated cultural achievements of his race.

Following a successful European tour where Powell, “demonstrated his uniquely ‘American’ compositions, such as ‘the Banjo Picker,’ ‘Pioneer Dance,’ and ‘In Old Virginia’,” he began a new project, stateside.271 Fittingly, on Columbus Day, 1923 Powell along with ideological colleagues, Walter Plecker and Ernest Sevier Cox adjourned a convention that initiated the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America. At the convention, held in Powell’s hometown of Richmond, participants drafted the organization’s constitution and set the goal at extending the clubs nationwide. The ASCoA traced its incipience to “the striking result of patriotism that swept over the country during the world war.” The authors believed that immediately following the war there “occurred a rapid submergence of the original American stock in many parts of the country” due to “alien groups; the intensification of racial animosities; the increase of foreign language and race newspapers.”272 This preamble quickly segued into the clubs’ mission statement:

The principal object of this organization is the maintenance of Anglo-Saxon institutions and ideals, and in furtherance of the attainment of that object this organization stands for the support of the Constitution and Laws of the United States of America...for the preservation of racial integrity; for the supremacy of the white race in the United States of America.273

271 Richmond Time Dispatch, March 31, 1931, JPP Box 36 Folder 9.
272 ASCoA Constitution, Adopted at the Convention, October 13, 1923, JPP, Box 38, Folder 4.
273 Ibid.
The boldness of the club’s racism was no surprise in this the nadir of race relations throughout the South as well as the nation. What remained striking about Powell’s new club was how quickly it ascended to leverage power over in the State Capitol and play a pivotal role in crafting public policy.

The Anglo Saxon Clubs of America sought three primary outcomes: “the strengthening of our Anglo-Saxon instincts, traditions and principles among representatives of our original American stock; second, by intelligent selection and exclusion of immigrants; and third, by fundamental and final solutions of our racial problems in general, most especially of the Negro problem.” Phrases such “intelligent selection” and “final solution” not only presaged the most horrific outcomes of the eugenics movement abroad, but also demonstrated the club’s immediate intellectual kinship with the work of Arthur H. Estabrook, Madison Grant and Harry Laughlin. More locally, it was this group of individuals who diligently collected and delivered a petition containing 200,000 signatures to the Richmond State House. The document urged state legislatures to pass a measure that secured the “maintenance of the color line.” Racial integrity was thus the core principle from which the organizational efforts of the club revolved.

Even before Powell convened his club and a year before the Racial Integrity Act passed, he adroitly exploited his musical fame to access the media and call upon the state to prevent the ascent of a “negroid nation.” If allowed to persist, racial mixing polluted Anglo-Saxon purity with “Negro” blood proven inferior from “over sixty centuries of history from

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274 Ibid.
275 Ibid.
which we can draw inferences.” In another editorial, Powell concluded that the “maintenance of racial purity, racial integrity and lofty racial ideals...depends on its social standards and on its morality not less on its laws.” Here, he placed responsibility in the institutions of the state, lest the Anglo-Saxon race pay a “price of pollution” that would eventuate in its extinction. By the middle of 1923, months before official hearings began on the issue, he relayed to Richmond’s leading daily paper the precise steps that the state must take to avoid such a fate:

1. Institute immediately a system of registration and birth certificates showing the racial composition of every resident in the state. 2. No marriage license shall be granted save upon presentation and attestation under oath by both parties of said registration. 3. White persons marry only whites. 4. For the purposes of this legislation, the term “white persons” shall apply only to individuals who have no trace whatsoever of any blood other than Caucasian.

This precise language reemerged in the final version of the eugenics legislation passed in Virginia during the 1924 legislative session.

In the meantime, Powell assumed the role of an amateur anthropologist, taking to the field to observe first hand the deleterious impact that the inferior races had wrought upon his Anglo-Saxons. In a comprehensive study of each congressional district in Virginia, entitled The Last Stand, Powell provided evidence demonstrating just how pervasive was this “threat to the color line.” Powell first examined the Congressional District around

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276 John Powell to the Richmond Times Dispatch, Sunday July 22, 1923, “Is White America to Become a Negroid Nation?” JPP Box 38, Folder 4.
278 Ibid.
279 Ibid.
280 John Powell, “The Last Stand: The Necessity of for Race Integrity Legislation in Virginia as Shown by an Ethnological Survey of the State by Congressional Districts,” Unpublished, JPP Folder 10, Box 38.
Hampton. He noted that this was home to the “the oldest permanent English speaking settlement in America, Yorktown, where American liberty was brought forth...here we should expect to find unbroken maintenance of the old ideals and traditions.”\textsuperscript{281} Powell instead found six cases where Indians and Blacks, “collapsed the color line.”\textsuperscript{282} The presence of such “decadence of racial sense” in this, the very point of English arrival, “could safely be taken as typical conditions to the state at large.”\textsuperscript{283}

The composer’s underlying fear was best summed up in the curious case of Bob Doe. The man who Powell called Doe resided in a “southern county of the state,” and by all accounts was an easily recognizable figure. However, Powell received a startling set of answers upon inquiring about Doe’s race. He documented the following exchange between two people who knew Doe, one of whom referred to him by the informal first name, and the other by the more formal and respectful surname:

“Since when have you been on intimate terms as to call Bob Doe by his first name” to which Resident A replied, “I call him by his first name as I do every Negro to whom I speak.” Resident B replied: “why Bob Doe is no Negro. I have known him all of my life.” Resident A, “why so have I and I can tell you he is a Negro.” The registrar attempted to find out but one half who were asked claimed he was white and another half claimed he was black. They could never know.\textsuperscript{284}

The exchange illustrated the threat that Powell long warned against and sought to curb. Here, Bob Doe’s race became so ambiguous as to be rendered unidentifiable, and thus irreconcilably polluted. If the circumstances that led to Doe’s racial ambiguity continued, one could expect nothing short of the extinction of the Anglo race. The dangers to such a “homogenous America” (by which he curiously meant homogeneously miscegenated)

\textsuperscript{281} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{282} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{283} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{284} John Powell’s notes for The Last Stand, JPP, Box 38, Folder 26.
according to Powell would result in, “a race of octaroons.” He ominously and dramatically concluded that this “would mean the death of all civilization in our country and in the world.”

For Powell and his followers such a fate was avoided when at midnight on June 16, 1924, his law took effect, its language lifted straight from Powell’s pen and the Anglo-Saxon Club’s petition. *The Richmond Times Dispatch* marked the occasion by loftily asserting that, “of all the legislation which becomes effective at midnight tonight, one act stands out as a law which may take rank in history with the half dozen major reforms which have contributed most to the advancement of civilization. This is the racial integrity law.” Further, the paper parsed no words in locating accountability: “Passage of the bill was due entirely to the efforts of John Powell, world famous composer and pianist and organizer of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America, and Major Ernest Sevier Cox, nationally known ethnologist.” Powell’s impassioned labor secured the passage of the bill with the precise language that he and his colleagues demanded. His focus on public policy and eugenics was met only by the passion and zeal from which he approached his music.

Even the most looming figures in the eugenics movement noted his contributions and lauded his efforts. Madison Grant, a man whose writings Powell had long referenced, personally praised the Virginia composer. In one correspondence, Grant claimed that, “it would be living up to Virginia’s great traditions if she took the lead in legislation of this character and set, once and for all, the stamp of her approval upon the importance of

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285 John Powell, speech entitled, “Homogenous America,” date and place not included, JPP Box 38, Folder 43.
286 Ibid.
287 *Richmond Times Dispatch*, June 15, 1924. JPP Box 38, Folder 13.
288 Ibid.
maintaining race purity.” Lothrop Stoddard, another leading eugenacist, invited Powell and his wife to dinner, and later added that his lobbying was crucial, “in order that the purity of the white race be safe-guarded from possibility of contamination with non-white blood.” By all accounts then, securing passage of the Racial Integrity Law provided Powell a guiding focus through these years. An accomplished composer, Powell’s name became just as synonymous with scientific racism and eugenics. He successfully leveraged his cultural capital through the highest orders of the state to enact the nation’s strictest laws governing who may marry and reproduce with whom, laws that in his mind preserved and ultimately bolstered the vaunted Anglo-Saxon race.

Moreover, Powell and Cox successfully expanded the ASCoA to over 26 chapters throughout the state. By 1925, the clubs were now present in Richmond as well as Virginia’s largest and most prestigious universities. Powell’s alma mater, the University of Virginia but also the Virginia Military Institute, the Virginia Polytechnic University (Virginia Tech), and Washington and Lee University all housed chapters open to receptive students and faculty. These, alongside the Racial Integrity Act and the emerging debate on Carrie Buck led many eugenicists to turn their attention towards the Old Dominion. One man, whom we first encountered in Indiana, soon resurfaced in the hills of Virginia. Arthur H. Estabrook arrived shortly after the Racial Integrity Laws passed. It was in support of the racist law that Estabrook researched and completed the last of the infamous family studies that had so typified the movement. To Estabrook’s final contribution we now turn.

289 Madison Grant to John Powell, February 1, 1924. JPP Box 39, Folder 18.
290 See both: Lothrop Stoddard in response to a request by the ASCoA that he endorse the petition for Racial Purity, February 1, 1924 and Folder 100 Lothrop Stoddard to Powell, April 23, 1927. JPP Box 39 Folder 19.
291 For a listing of operational Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America in Virginia see JPP Box 64, Folder 71.
Hoosier Connections in the Old Dominion

Arthur Estabrook first gained a name for himself in 1910 working with Charles Davenport and Harry Laughlin to establish the Eugenics Records Office (ERO) in Cold Spring Harbor, New York. The ERO became the seat of eugenic scholarship and research in the United States, and by the 1920s and 30s gained an international reputation for its leading edge research on race, biology, and genetics. Estabrook first applied the lessons that he learned under the guidance of Davenport and Laughlin to examine a community of poor whites living around the Berkshire Hills of Western Massachusetts. In fact, this brief endeavor led to Estabrook’s co-authored publication with Davenport, entitled *The Nam Tribe: A Study in Cacogenics*.292 The term “cacogenics” conveyed racial degeneracy or an evolutionary back step while the term tribe directly alluded to the perception of racial ambiguity and questionable whiteness within the community.293

The Nams, according to Davenport and Estabrook, were the descendants of the “Dutch or English,” and many were deeply influenced by the “Revolutionary generation.”294 Davenport and Estabrook claimed that by the middle of the nineteenth-century the family had succumbed to “licentiousness,” “lack of ambition,” and engaged in “unconventional” sexual behavior, including promiscuity, prostitution, and maybe incest.295 When paired with an infusion of Native American blood, the results were devastating as the community became hopelessly mired in poverty, alcoholism, and vagrancy.296 By the later standards of

293 See Deutch for explanation the term Tribe, 44-52.
294 Davenport and Estabrook. 2-4
295 Ibid.
296 Ibid., see “Line A,” 4-15 for one example where this language was deployed.
the eugenic family studies, this early work was rather abbreviated and offered little of the analytical prose that typified Estabrook’s more sophisticated, in-depth studies.

After a brief stay in the Massachusetts, Estabrook spent the following ten years revisiting the work and subjects of Dugdale and McCulloch. In New York, Estabrook wrote a follow-up report to Richard Dugdale’s study on the Jukes, the infamous rural family living among the majestic Catskill Mountains. Dugdale, an amateur, self-funded anthropologist whose writing actually predated eugenic era thought by over twenty years, positioned environmental and economic factors as the primary catalyst for the Juke family’s impoverishment. To Dugdale, the poverty in the community seemed indicative of a lack of employment opportunities, little public infrastructure, and a lack of education. Estabrook, however asserted that the Jukes in 1915 faced dire poverty almost exclusively because of hereditary reasons. Admittedly breaking from Dugdale’s “very cautious conclusion” that placed heredity and environment on equal footing, Estabrook unapologetically favored the former and disregarded the latter.297

But if Estabrook and Dugdale differed in their respective conclusions, both agreed that the Jukes, “belonged to a long lineage, reaching back to the early settlers of New York State, and the they had intermarried little with immigrant stock, and were therefore a strictly American family.”298 This of course was no different than his observations of Indiana’s poor as well. In fact, as Estabrook traveled from New York to Indiana, he was consistently flummoxed by the declension and failure of “strictly American families.”

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298 Ibid.
offered some explanations to account for this unsettling fact. In Indiana for example, Estabrook claimed that McCulloch’s fallen Teutonic pauper was a result of sexual deviancy.

Likewise in New York, Estabrook found evidence suggesting the Jukes too lived in the wicked path of sin. Since Dugdale’s 1877 study, Estabrook argued that, “as the Jukes increased in number a community of criminal men, semi-industrious laborers, and licentious women developed.”299 Nearly all of “the girls and young women of these communities were very comely in appearance and loose in morals.”300 Estabrook concluded that the hereditary problems plaguing the Juke tribe were attributed to “illicit unions, illegitimate children, or harlots” who so flippantly spread any number of sexually transmitted infections.301 His conclusions between the Jukes in New York and the Ishmaels in Indiana were thus the same. In each instance, a racially pure population – “strictly American” or “Teutonic pauper” – fell victim to dire impoverishment. In the end, Estabrook found white poverty an aberration from the natural order of things, and easily explained by wayward behavior such as sexual deviancy, fallen womanhood, and overall moral turpitude.

Recalling his trip in Indiana, Estabrook quickly established contact with the Committee on Mental Defectives. And for a time, he assumed the role as a Special Investigator, working directly with the CMD. Estabrook’s study of white poverty in Indianapolis relied heavily on none other than Oscar McCulloch and J. Frank Wright’s notes on the Tribe of Ishmael. Indeed, Estabrook was consistently struck by the level of “idiocy and feeblemindedness” that pervaded both the city of Indianapolis as well the rural Indiana

299 Ibid, 14.
300 Ibid.
301 Ibid.
countryside. In both instances, Estabrook attributed the poverty and racial deterioration to the “hill folk” and “lookout ridge” populations who came from Kentucky, Tennessee, and to a lesser extent, North Carolina. But curiously, and unlike his conclusions on Dugdale’s subjects, Estabrook never published his meticulously detailed study on the Ishamaels, despite completing an ambitious manuscript that exceeded several hundred pages.

Nonetheless, by the 1920s, after successfully publishing on the Nams and Jukes, and extensively researching the Ishamaels, Estabrook relocated yet again. Sensing the buzz that surrounded Virginia, he decided that the state’s rural, mountainous countryside was the ideal setting for his fourth and most exhaustive study to date. Heretofore, Estabrook had worked either collaboratively with Davenport, or built upon earlier findings from McCulloch in Indiana and Dugdale in upstate New York. But it was in Virginia that Estabrook gained full credibility as a leading eugenics thinker and theorist. Arriving just in time to launch his study and advocate on behalf of the state’s Racial Integrity Law, Estabrook was called upon to provide testimony on the Carrie Buck trial, then working its way through the State’s Court of Appeals and eventuating before the Supreme Court. Right alongside Laughlin, Davenport, and Madison Grant, Arthur H. Estabrook’s words swung the nation’s highest justices towards adopting a public policy that allowed the state to seize one’s body in the name of racial fitness and poverty control.

Estabrook began the study in early 1924 just as Powell lobbied the Virginia legislature to pass the Racial Integrity Act and wrote passionately about the dangers of racial mixing. Estabrook along with his research assistant, Ivan McDougle roamed the Blue

302 See Carlson and Largent.
303 The book length manuscript exists, albeit incompletely among Estabrook’s papers at the State University of New York at Albany.
Ridge Mountains in search of the “Mongrel Virginians,” those whom Powell demanded the state monitor and prohibit from marrying with the supposedly pure mountain whites. Estabrook and MacDougle did not have to look far, quickly identifying an extensive community of racially ambiguous mountaineers whom they original termed the “Isshies,” a moniker emerging from the term, “issue.” This population was said to have been the descendants of slaves who were “issued” their freedom, only to move into the hills and “amalgamate” with the white Anglo families. However, Estabrook and MacDougle inauspiciously noted the proliferation of “Indian blood” in addition to the amalgamation between white and “Negro” blood. At this point, they renamed the community the “White, Indian, Negro” tribe, or Win for short, and added to the title, Mongrel Virginians.

Among the Wins, they “discovered” folks such as Silas Branham, who MacDougle described as, “a typical coon although he has straight hair.” One woman, Emma Willis John, “looks exactly like a mulatto...a mean white woman who had a little negro blood in her.” Nearly without exception, Estabrook and MacDougle claimed that these “triple crosses,” occupied, “one or two room shacks so often found in areas where there is low mental and social development.” The “Guilder Hollow” Wins were representative of the region’s deep poverty and its presumptive causes. Here, an unnamed white female, born in 1847 had a reputation of “chastity and moderate intelligence,” until a fateful lapse in judgment. She allegedly conceived a child with a man who was known as “lazy and

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304 See Estabrook and MacDougle, “Triple Crosses in the South,” abstract, June 14, 1924. AHE Papers, Box 1 Folder 9.
305 MacDougle to Estabrook, May 3, 1924. AHE, Box 1 Folder 3.
306 MacDougle’s notes, May 10, 1924. AHE, Box 1 Folder 3.
307 Estabrook and MacDougle, “Triple Crosses in the South,” abstract, June 14, 1924. AEH, Box 1 Folder 9.
unambitious and would not pay his debts,” and was likely an Indian. This one indiscretion, according to Estabrook and MacDougle forever altered, and indeed, spoiled the original white racial stock of the woman. From that point forward, the family tree was forever compromised, “mongrelized,” and not coincidentally, poor.

Estabrook’s findings in Virginia stood in stark contrast to his previous work in Indiana and New York. Compared to the failings of “strictly American” families featured in those studies, he claimed to have located the “mongrelization” of a formerly racially pure population in Virginia. In the case of the Ishmaels in Indiana, both McCulloch and Estabrook identified morally abhorrent and sexually deviant behavior as the leading cause of racial decline and poverty. Virginia, however, offered yet another way in which to redeem and restore white racial supremacy. If the folks who lived in such squalor and made such reckless decisions regarding their sexuality were not in fact white, then such living conditions and sexual decisions could hardly be said to reflect poorly on or subvert the supremacy of the Nordic/Anglo/Teutonic race.

Yet Estabrook’s assessment of the region as a bastion of “triple crosses” and “mongrels” contravened many accepted observations. Madison Grant claimed that the, “poor whites of the Cumberland Mountains of Kentucky and Tennessee present a more difficult problem, because here...the climate of these mountains cannot be particularly unfavorable to men of Nordic breed. There are probably other hereditary forces at work that are little understood.” The other side of the Cumberlands that Grant described of course was the Virginia Blue Ridge, a place that presumably shared similar demographics.

308 Notes on Nams and Wins: Key Indexes to Places in Guilder Hollow. AHE, Box 1 Folder 9.
309 See Deutch for a long discussion on this point, 49-72.
310 Grant, 39.
to the Cumberlands. Other notable contemporary writers such as Horace Kephart and John C. Campbell gained a widespread readership through their lurid descriptions of the Appalachian mountaineer’s Anglo-Saxon and Celtic culture and lifestyle.\(^{311}\) Grant, Kephart, and Campbell, despite their many differences, all believed that the region was one of racial purity rather than a home to the hundreds of “tri-racial mixtures” that Estabrook claimed to have discovered.

But fact and fiction were secondary to all parties, and fortunately for Estabrook – if not surprisingly – his tendentious findings fit well with his eugenics background. As a man who spent his professional career constructing racial hierarchies, all of which placed the fictive white Anglo-Saxon race at the top, his research in Virginia offered nothing short of a confirmation. He concluded that, “it is evident from this study that the intellectual levels of the negro and the Indian race as now found is below the white.” Before amalgamation, “the white stock was probably at least of normal ability.” However, the years of contact and breeding among the inferior races resulted in a “general level of the white lowered in the mixing.”\(^{312}\) Such was Estabrook’s contribution in his landmark study of the *Win Tribe*. Offering an oppositional view to Grant’s assertion on the “Nordic nature” of the poor whites

\(^{311}\) Horace Kephart was among the region’s most eloquent spokesmen. His leading accomplishment was his lobbying efforts to set aside and preserve the region that would become Smoky Mountain National Park. See Kephart, *Our Southern Highlanders; a Narrative of Adventure in the Southern Appalachians and a Study of the Life Among the Mountaineers* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1922) and John C. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2004), originally 1921.

in the Cumberland Mountains, Estabrook and MacDougle positioned racial mixing as the leading factor in the region’s deeply entrenched poverty.\textsuperscript{313}

\textit{Mongrel Virginians} was the last major expression of the eugenic family studies in the United States. Published in 1926, it was also arguably the most racist and explicitly focused on the hereditary rather than the environmental causes of poverty. Whether describing the Brown Family – who "mixed with “full-blooded Indians” or Belinda Jones, who “mated with a half negro” and had two children who were “very ignorant and amounted to nothing” – the outcome was always the same.\textsuperscript{314} The “white race,” claimed Estabrook, was at least "average" – though usually far superior – and declined with each "drop" of inferior blood. Racial pollution precipitated a decline in the purity of the white Virginians’ “stock,” but also precipitated a wave of poverty and sexual deviancy. Estabrook thus further bolstered the scientifically and culturally constructed racial hierarchy by uncovering evidence that a purely white and Anglo-Saxon race had not in fact declined on its own, but was instead the victim of dilution and pollution of other, lesser races.

The Virginia Racial Integrity Law of 1924 was meant to prevent this precise predicament. In fact, Estabrook copied the law as an appendix to his study. He boldly concluded that the unfortunate decline of the Wins was “presented not as theory or as representing a prejudiced point of view but as a careful summary of the facts of history.”\textsuperscript{315} With such assuredness over his objectivity, perhaps it was little surprise that the nation’s highest judicial arbiter sought Estabrook’s counsel. As he put the final touches on the \textit{Mongrel Virginians}, Estabrook, along with his colleague Harry Laughlin, appeared before

\begin{thebibliography}
\bibitem{313} Ib\textit{id}.
\bibitem{314} Ib\textit{id}, 31 and 135.
\bibitem{315} Ib\textit{id}, 202.
\end{thebibliography}
both the Supreme Court of Appeals in Virginia and the Supreme Court of the United States. They provided the expert testimony that propelled the Taft Court to rule in favor of Virginia Superintendent of the State Colony for Epileptics and Feeble Minded, James Hendren Bell over Carrie Buck in the landmark decision that legalized mandatory and coerced sterilization at the federal level.316

The Virginia Court of Appeals took an immediate interest in Estabrook’s work, designating him an authority on racial degeneracy. The justices were most curious over whether or not he believed Buck was truly feebleminded and to what degree her family was to blame. One justice on the Appeals court asked, “Have you personally made any investigation of Carrie Buck and her ancestry with a view of passing upon the probable heredity of her descendants?”317 Estabrook confidently replied that he, “made a brief study of the two,” on Carrie and her mother, Emma. He then concluded that, “the evidence points to the fact that Emma Buck is a feeble-minded woman. That she has had three feeble-minded children by unknown fathers.”318 Absent any evidence of “mongrelization,” Estabrook instantly mobilized sexual impropriety and fallen femininity as a cause for the young women’s genetic devolution.

Harry Laughlin then extended the case against Buck with his own scathing deposition:

These people belong to the shiftless, ignorant and worthless class of anti-social whites of the South. She – Buck’s mother – has a sister, and two half-brothers, whose paternal parentage cannot be determined. The same traits are shown in the daughter, Carrie Buck,

316 See Lombardo, 31-40.
317 Proceedings for the Supreme Court of Appeals at Staunton, Virginia, September Term, 1925. AHE Box 1, Folder 43, 84-85: Series 9.
318 Ibid.
whose chronological age is 18 years; her mental age is only 9 years. She has a life long record of moral delinquency and has borne one child illegitimately.\textsuperscript{319}

As the case moved to the Supreme Court, Oliver Wendell Holmes referred to Buck only as the “feebleminded white woman.”\textsuperscript{320} In any case, all presented Buck’s body – already inscribed and marked through a coerced and invasive operation – as evidence of fallen femininity as well as racial degradation and failure. It was this very logic that propelled the decision. Only a measure as extreme as sterilization, argued Laughlin, would “mitigate race degeneracy.” Put differently, sterilization inscribed the previously unmarked scourge of depraved and perverted whiteness while ceasing its proliferation.\textsuperscript{321}

Thus, if Estabrook’s facts of history revealed white, Anglo-Saxon racial supremacy, there remained the ubiquitous threat that history could nevertheless be subverted. The deep hollows of the Virginia hills demonstrated to all who cared to look how racial mixing and moral decline tore asunder the most prized race history had ever known. This unruly fact of history, it turned out, could only be altered by the state’s ability to legislate, maintain, and seize – often violently, intrusively, and coercively – control over the precarious boundary lines of white racial purity. Something needed to account for the subversion of biology and history to a far more complex reality where many whites remained deeply impoverished, and according to a bureaucratized and professional elite, sexually deviant and increasingly, racially degenerate.

\textsuperscript{319} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{320} Proceedings for the Supreme Court of the United States No. 292, October Term, 1926, AHE Box 1, Folder 43: Series 9.
\textsuperscript{321} Proceedings for the Supreme Court of Appeals at Staunton, Virginia, September Term, 1925, 5.
That both the Carrie Buck case and the nation’s first racial integrity law emerged in Virginia was not a coincidence. For it was here that eugenicists took a special interest in the state’s demographic peculiarities. It was an ideal setting to demonstrate the dangers of racial degeneracy and miscegenation, the former manifest in Carrie Buck and her family, while the *Win tribe* most wholly demonstrated the latter. Both examples provided an explanation for the destabilizing problem of Anglo racial degeneracy. Miscegenation and “mongrelization” led each to surrender membership to their race, and also became grim reminders that biological and genetic supremacy was contingent upon maintaining one’s Anglo-racial purity as well as a gendered conception of sexual propriety.

But Virginia’s battle to restore and maintain the purity of the Anglo-Saxon race implied the existence of some pure racial population who were most endangered, those whom the state’s policies would preserve and save. Not coincidentally then, just as John Powell established his Clubs for the “maintenance of Anglo Saxon ideals and institutions,” Estabrook deployed the *Wins* to demonstrate just how miscegenation ravaged the state’s racial composition. Upon successfully lobbying the state legislature to pass the Racial Integrity Law, Powell returned to his first passion. In so doing, he forcefully displayed, or more accurately, contrived, the cultural achievements of his beloved race. In what at first seemed an innocuous folk music festival was in fact, the culmination of Powell’s racial fantasies coupled with his career ambition to display the “beauty” of his Anglo-Saxon racial and cultural heritage. The chapter concludes with the bizarre story of the White Top Music Festival.
A John Powell Reprise: From the Halls of the State Capital to the Hills of “Old Virginny”

John Powell’s role as the leading voice for racial integrity alongside his activities in the Anglo-Saxon Clubs received a mostly positive or muted response among his musician colleagues. However, some wondered whether he was capable of continuing with such energy his careers as both a musician and racist. One writer for the Musical Courier believed his elite status as the United States’ leading composer was compromised by his recent divergence into the world of Virginia state politics and eugenics. Powell stated that, “there are matters which are of more importance than the personal welfare and career of any individual. If the work of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs should demand the sacrifice of my musical career – which is highly improbable – I trust that I shall not hesitate to meet the demand.”

But at the time of this proclamation Powell had already completed his heaviest lifting on behalf of the new law and had begun to refocus on music.

Over the next fifteen years, Powell dedicated his career to the very Anglo folk music that many of his European colleagues claimed did not exist. In opposition to these naysayers, he long argued that the, “the beauty of Anglo-Saxon folk music surpasses any other in the whole wide world. It embraces all historical periods of the race from Lord Rendal...of the Teutonic migrations to the Green Mossy Banks of the Lea,” to white settlement in North America. Even the title of his magnum opus, Sonata Teutonica revealed the ways in which Powell’s racial anxieties informed his music. Powell’s pervasive

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322 January 11, 1925 Powell answers critics that he has spent too much time pursuing his Anglo-Saxon Club activities in “Anglo-Saxon Club Activities No Tax on Artist’s Ability. JPP Box 6, Folder 20.
323 John Powell, Beauties of the Anglo-Saxon Folk Song, miscellaneous articles, AMB Series A Folder 148, Articles by and about John Powell.
fear that the nation’s prized race was fading into oblivion through the joint forces of dilution and degeneracy inspired him to spread the alleged musical and artistic genius of “his” race. The passage of racial integrity and the Supreme Court’s Buck decision allowed Powell to turn his attention toward creating a festival that documented and demonstrated once and for all, the achievements of the Anglo-Saxon. Held atop Virginia’s second highest peak, the White Top Music Festival was supposed to be a celebration of all that was refined and beautiful within those who managed to remain pure. Hundreds of thousands were supposed to come and behold the spectacle.

Much to the Richmond composer’s dismay, Powell found little more than poverty and “mongrelization,” among the mountaineers of his home state. Music, however, was a “remedy” for the masses of “aliens and uncouth” people who called White Top home.\(^{324}\) Despite their poverty, they not only possessed an, “innate musical gift of our race but also the high plane of musical culture and taste that our forefathers, as a whole, had reached and which, consequently, is reattainable by us, their descendants.” Curiously though, what Powell meant by reattainable was that it was his duty to impose upon those who should have already possessed a superior culture, the culture he had expected to find. In effect, Powell constructed an authentic Anglo-Saxon culture in the absence of one. Indeed, as David Whisnant has aptly remarked, the festival quickly emerged not as an organic expression of local culture from the bottom up but rather a grotesque spectacle of “cultural intervention” from the top down.\(^{325}\)

The festival was held in Grayson County atop an impressive 4,200-foot overlook that provided a majestic view of the Blue Ridge Mountains as they soared over the state lines of

\(^{324}\) Ibid.

\(^{325}\) Whisnant, 208.
Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Originally named the “Tri-State Music Festival,” White Top ran from 1931 through 1939, and was discontinued only after severe flooding rendered the site unusable in 1940. At the same time, a falling out between its three primary organizers: John Powell, Annabel Morris Buchanan, and John Blakemore likely doomed the festival in any case. Blakemore, a principal owner in the White Top Company – a group who purchased land rights to the mountain years prior – desired to establish the mountaintop as an entertainment and tourist hub. Blakemore and his group had never expressed strong interest in a music festival beyond its capacity to develop into something more lucrative. After a decade, when the festival failed to spur the development that Blakemore had hoped for, he rescinded his support. Nevertheless, while it never approached the inflated numbers Powell had envisioned, the festival’s attendance managed to peak during the nation’s worst economic Depression, once enticing upwards of 25,000 attendees, many traveling from across the county to witness Powell’s creation.326

John Powell’s motives for the festival were two fold. Primarily, it was “organized in 1931, as an endeavor to discover and preserve the best Anglo-Saxon music, balladry, arts, and traditions.”327 Additionally, Powell grew increasingly incensed by the “Hillbilly” music craze, hatched by the recording industry in the late 1920s. The newly proclaimed genre’s rising stars gained recording contracts with the emergent label, Okeh records. Ernest Stoneman, Dock Boggs, the Carter Family, Al Hopkins and his Hillbillies, among many others proved to be overnight sensations. The industry seized upon mountaineer

326 John Blakemore calculated the attendance in 1933 at 16,143 and the in 1934, when Eleanor Roosevelt appeared, at over 20,000. See the John A. Blakemore Papers, 1928-1980, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill, Box 1, Folder 117.
327 National Federation of Music Clubs press release for the Fifth Annual White Top Folk Festival, AMB Series A Folder 146, 1935
stereotypes of the uneducated and simple-minded “hillbilly” to sell records. The performers exuded the lack of refinement that Powell loathed and worked tirelessly to overturn. Yet they were also refreshingly rustic and authentically bucolic, fabricating a “traditional” ethos of a simpler time marked by a slow paced, rural lifestyle that contravened 1920s opulence and urbanity. Fittingly, Powell proclaimed of his festival: “the only requirement being that the contributions must be traditional, of real worth (no “hillbilly” music permitted) and (the music must be) presented in a traditional manner.” Ultimately and ironically, Powell’s festival simply exchanged and reproduced one fabricated tradition for another.

According to Powell, the hillbilly stereotype romanticized the region’s people and their poverty, but most distressingly, the “hillbilly” became the representational figure of a region that in Powell’s mind was indisputably the last place in the nation where a pure Anglo-Saxon race and culture could be located. He believed that such vulgar images and sounds, marketed by outsiders in the recording industry, belied the fact that the region’s people were the “direct and unestranged descendants of the original Scotch, English and Irish settlers who came into the mountain vastness prior to and following the Revolutionary War.”

Here, ensconced and preserved in Virginia’s secluded mountain hollows, “has been retained much of the original manners, customs, religion, language,

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329 National Federation of Music Clubs press release for the Fifth Annual White Top Folk Festival, AMB Series A Folder 146, 1935.
music and lore of the ‘old country.’” In stark contrast to the hillbilly music, the region’s true folk songs revealed that, “our race, from the earliest of times has shown the true mark of genius.” If successful, Powell’s White Top Festival would educate and reconnect the masses to their true racial roots by way of introducing them to the alleged beauty of their estranged culture.

It was no surprise then that Powell deployed folk music, art, and dance as evidence for white Anglo-Saxon cultural and biological supremacy. He was clear on this point: “we have seen that our only hope for a nation in America lies in our grafting the stock of our culture on the Anglo-Saxon root. Is it not equally evident that if we desire a music characteristic of our racial psychology that it must be based upon the Anglo-Saxon folk song?” Whether the statement was a delusion of grandeur or otherwise, Powell nonetheless linked the very future of the nation and the race to the proliferation of Anglo-Saxon folk music as displayed at the White Top Music Festival. His endeavor would forever set the record straight. Powell asserted that, “before this time, the Anglo-Saxon peoples had been looked down upon as the most unmusical of civilized races, particularly in that they possessed no folk music.” But with White Top as well as the efforts of acclaimed folklorist Cecil Sharp, who had recently published an exhaustive study on the link between English folk music and Appalachian mountain culture, such perceptions began to change. Powell continued that, “this misconception was not only dispelled, but it was manifested that the Anglo-Saxons possessed the richest, most varied, and most profoundly beautiful

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331 Ibid.
332 John Powell, address before White Top Folk Festival Conference, August, 1933. Drated notes available in AMB Series A Folder 144, 1932-33.
333 Powell, Etude, 349.
334 John Powell, “Powell Sees Bond of Sympathy Between England-America,” unknown publication and date. John Powell Papers, Box 44, Folder, 22.
folk music in the world.” The festival’s performers needed to live up to rather lofty expectations.

Upon arriving at the festival, patrons found themselves surrounded by the “most beautiful music in the world.” The grounds included tents where onlookers witnessed fiddle competitions, Elizabethan era plays, and balladeering youngsters and elders alike. Attendees wishing to learn the music first hand could enroll in crash courses entitled, “Emotional and technical quality of Anglo-Saxon Folk Music” or “Modal Characteristics of Anglo-Saxon Folk Music.” George Pullen Jackson, reporting on the mountaintop event, concluded that, “an affirmative answer was given to the often asked question, 'is American folk music beautiful?'” He then validated Powell’s efforts with a powerful declaration that, “a definite denial was given by White Top experiences to cynical and unwarranted doubts as to the innate musicality of the Anglo-Saxon racial composite in America.” The festivities peaked in 1934 when attendance at White Top soared to over 20,000, undoubtedly there to take in Powell’s pure Anglo-Saxon sounds and performances, but also for a chance to see the guest of honor, Eleanor Roosevelt. By any estimation, the White Top Music Festival proved a great success in its initial years.

But beyond an appearance by the first lady as well as the dozens of performances, the promoters never lost sight of the festival’s deeper considerations. In fact, Powell and Buchanan organized an academic conference before each festival. It provided professional musicians, folklorists, and educators an opportunity to reflect and pontificate upon the true

335 Ibid.
336 Unknown author, “Real Southerner and the White Top Folk Festival,” The Southern Literary Messenger, June 1939. AMB Series A Folder 147.
337 George Pullen Jackson, “Ballad Art Revived at White Top Festival,” in Musical America, September, 1934. JPP Box 27, Folder 34.
338 Ibid.
meaning of the event, easily lost in sensory overload of the music and pageantry. In 1933, Powell delivered a telling keynote address. Given the high levels of so-called miscegenation and racial degeneracy that plagued most parts of his native state as well as the nation, he concluded that, “for almost three hundred years the great masses of our English speaking people have been cut off from the natural source (of our cultural inspiration) – our folk songs.” Fortunately, however, there resided in the Virginia hills a racially pure population that made it “possible for us to draw inspiration from this great treasure of folk music that is at our disposal.” Of course, Powell had gleefully perpetuated the myth of regional, racial purity to anyone who wished to listen.

Promoting the festival to the *Richmond Times Dispatch* two years later, Powell proclaimed, “that deep in the mountains of Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee, where dwell the descendants of the purest Anglo-Saxon stock in America, it also lies their simple expression in ballads and folk tunes, constituting the fundamental impulse of native white America.” White Top thus provided attendees an authentic playground in which they could experience their racial and cultural heritage amidst the last unadulterated Anglo-Saxon region.

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339 Powell, address, JPP Box 27, Folder 34.
340 Ibid.
Figure 1: John Powell in Europe, Credit: John Powell Papers.
Figure 2: Eleanor Roosevelt pictured front, seated second on the right and Annabel Morris Buchanan pictured standing, fourth to the right. Photo Credit, John Powell Papers.
John Powell later went so far as to argue that the “mountaineer is freer in his manner, more alert, and less inarticulate than his British prototype and bears no trace of the obsequiousness of manner which, since the enclosure Acts robbed him of his independence and made of him a hired laborer.”\textsuperscript{342} The secluded Appalachian mountaineers lived throughout a rugged region of over “10,000 square miles...larger than England, Scotland and Wales” combined.\textsuperscript{343} Here, he tamed the wilderness and improved upon an already strong genetic composition. Echoing the gendered theories of race long advocated by Theodore Roosevelt and Madison Grant among others, Powell suggested that the cultural circumstances that greeted the Anglo-Saxon on the North American continent – the frontier and its readily available land – at once improved genetic virility while enhancing his manly independence and explaining his unwillingness to succumb to wage labor.

Meanwhile, Robert Nelson, another festival promoter, boldly promised that, “the joys and tragedies of Anglo-Saxon history...epitomized in the folk tunes and dances will be presented by the bearers of the Southern tradition of folk music at the White Top Music Festival.”\textsuperscript{344} He provocatively continued that, “the White Top Festival was brought into being to create a true appreciation of beautiful music – a combative influence to jazz – and to save for posterity those ancient tunes that sprang from the native emotions of our race.” Of course, in combating jazz, the festival expunged the contributions of African Americans.

\textsuperscript{343} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{344} Robert Nelson, miscellaneous news clippings, unknown source, AMB Series A Folder 146, 1935.
to the American musical tradition. Thus, John Powell organized a festival that provided a
glimpse into what a renewed Virginia and eventually, the nation *writ large* would look like
once the Racial Integrity Law and sterilization successfully rehabilitated the damage done
by years of racial degeneracy and mongrelization.

But while Powell adroitly demonstrated an ability to manipulate and construct a
festival based upon a racial fantasy, the region nevertheless possessed certain demographic
realities. Just as writers had for so long wrongly supposed that the Southern hills were a
bastion of an isolated and pure racial stock, Powell too conveniently spurred the region’s
ture diversity. Black migration in the southwestern counties of Virginia had proceeded
pace for generations and while never comprising a significant minority, African Americans
nevertheless shaped the very culture that Powell so lustfully tried to expropriate. David
Whisnant has reminded us that within even the more remote parts of Grayson County,
several Black families lived for generations.345 Cecilia Conway and others have noted the
ways in which folk instruments such as the banjo arrived on the North American continent
from West Africa. At least a handful of Black banjo players lived in the very hollows where
Powell located musicians for his festival. And moreover, they undoubtedly influenced his
supposedly pure Anglo-Saxon folk music.346

Annabel Morris Buchanan, to her credit, recognized the contributions that African
Americans made to the region and proposed to include Black performers in the program.
She even wrote to Powell, asserting that, “everyone knows your views on racial integrity,
but...we owe it to our negro musicians to pay some attention to what they are doing,

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345 Whisnant, 244-246.
Folks Lore Society* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995) and Karin Lynn, *That Half
especially because they’re doing considerably better choral work than anybody else in Virginia.”347 Powell refused. After all, he had long maintained that, “Negro music...when analyzed is almost as meager and monotonous as the Red Indian music.”348 Perhaps not surprisingly, Powell found the music to match the biology of the “inferior races:” simplistic and primitive.

Yet even more inexplicable and contrary to all evidence, Powell also argued that, “many of the best known negro songs are now known to be compositions of white men, as, for example Stephen Foster’s songs. And the Negro spirituals, it has now been discovered, are also chiefly European in their origins.”349 Evidently, John Blakemore sided with Powell’s faulty assessments over Buchanan’s observations and desires. When asked if he would include “Negro spirituals” in the program, Blakemore curtly replied that, “no Negro contestants are permitted and there have never been any on the mountain.”350 Blakemore, like Powell, was more interested in upholding the racial fantasy of White Top than displaying a rich and diverse cultural reality flourishing at the very site of the festival. This was not surprising since both men never intended the festival to reflect a multicultural, reality-based view of Virginia’s diverse demographics and rich culture. In fact, they desired quite the opposite. After all, theirs was a mission of racial redemption and restoration, predicated upon the very fiction of Anglo-Saxon purity and supremacy.

This mission, masquerading as the White Top Folk Festival, continued until 1940 when severe flooding on the mountain forced a cancellation. The festival’s popularity

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347 AMB to Powell, March 23, 192. AMB Folder 118, Series A.
349 Ibid.
350 Quoted in Whisnant, 244.
peaked with the appearance of Eleanor Roosevelt in its third year, but throughout the next six renditions, White Top remained viable and typically brought several thousand people to the mountain.\textsuperscript{351} Even in 1940, the planning moved apace and all indicators suggested that the festival would once again go off without a hitch. But unfortunately for Powell and his benefactors, the rains began to fall just a few days in advance, transforming the formerly manicured grounds into a swampy, unusable mud pit. By the late 1930s, however, Blakemore receded as a reliable financier and eventually withheld his support altogether, and by 1940 Powell instead secured funds from the Wrigley Company. The press release that went out to innumerable radio stations around the country proclaimed that Wrigley Gum, under the direction of John Powell, sponsored “the White Top Folk Festival...Preserving the best of Anglo-Saxon folk music, balladry, arts, and tradition, August 15-17, 1940.”\textsuperscript{352} Whether or not Wrigley would have committed to be a longtime partner for Powell remains conjecture. So too is the degree to which the famous gum manufactures shared his expansive and racist vision of the festival.

However, Wrigley proved little more than a short-term solution to the financial problems set off by Blakemore’s exit. By 1941, Powell searched for more viable candidates. At one point, he even contacted the eminent British historian and diplomat, John Wheeler-Bennett. Wheeler-Bennett, a man who hobnobbed with such looming twentieth century figures as Winston Churchill, Leon Trotsky, and Benito Mussolini, was best known as the official biographer of King George VI. He was also faculty for a brief period at the University of Virginia, where he evidently developed a love affair with the culture of the American

\textsuperscript{351} Ibid, 191-194.
\textsuperscript{352} John A. Blakemore Papers, 1928-1980, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill, Box 1, Folder 102.
South.\textsuperscript{353} It was in Charlottesville that Powell first met the Briton and presumably developed a collegial relationship.

Powell maintained correspondence with Wheeler-Bennett after he returned to London. He contacted the historian to gauge his interest as a backer to his festival. Powell wrote that Blakemore, “owing to the pressure of other affairs” could no longer lend support to the mountaintop endeavor.\textsuperscript{354} He then followed up by suggesting that perhaps Wheeler-Bennett could mobilize his considerable influence and push the British government to sponsor the event. After all, in Powell’s mind, White Top fostered “unity” between the United States and Great Britain. In one of the Virginian’s most common refrains, he told the British historian that, “of all such ties, that which lie closest to my heart and possess potentially the most compelling emotional appeal is the common heritage of folk music. This seems to me the supreme embodiment of fundamental emotional and cultural oneness of all English-speaking peoples.”\textsuperscript{355} In the midst of increasing belligerency in Europe and just months before Pearl Harbor, Powell believed that his festival would solidify the trans-Atlantic bond.

It was more likely, however, that these very reasons relegated the White Top Music Festival to less than an afterthought to someone such as John Bennett-Wheeler. As the blitz moved across London, one may safely assume that a music festival in Virginia was not among anyone’s top priorities, except of course a composer who had always held an earnest belief that Anglo-Saxon folk music would save civilization. Neither the British government nor Wrigley Gum would save White Top. Moreover, music festivals, a hallmark

\textsuperscript{354} Powell to John Wheeler-Bennett, June 12, 1941. JPP, Box 40, Folder 40.
\textsuperscript{355} Ibid.
of the 1920s and even to a degree, the 1930s, fell from favor during war years. At its incipience, White Top was among over a dozen of other folk festivals that tapped into a national anxiety over the collapse of the economy. Each of the festivals conveyed a rustic simplicity and harkened back to an era allegedly free from the oscillations of industrial capitalism. Folklorist Percy MacKaye believed that White Top and its peer festivals represented a veritable social movement or what he referred to as, “the age of the folk against the machine.”\footnote{Miscellaneous Article, AMB Series A Folder 144, 1932-33.} But by decade’s end, the populist sentiments that emerged with the depression faded into the fervor of war and militarism.

Moreover, the war effort necessitated that “pure” Anglo-Americans serve alongside Italian-Americans, Irish-Americans, Asian-Americans, and others of questionable racial fitness. Given such a context, it seems unlikely that a sizable segment of the nation would have continued to embrace a festival built so explicitly upon white supremacy alongside racial and cultural exclusion. Whatever the reasons, Powell’s racial fantasyland – conveyed through the seemingly innocuous medium of a music festival – came to an end with the opening of the new decade. At the same time, the eugenics movement, of which Powell was such an erstwhile participant, endured. In fact, it spread to points far beyond the Virginia hills or a laboratory on Long Island, and of course, the national fascination with the Southern mountains, showcased so favorably in the White Top Folk Festival, endured as well.

So while Powell’s festival may never garner the attention or notoriety of his work on racial integrity, it was nevertheless a crucial response to, and conversant with, both the Buck decision and the Virginia’s stringently racist legislation. Carrie Buck represented the
unfortunate detritus of racial declension, an unfortunate “defective” whose reproduction needed to be ordered, controlled by state, and ultimately, halted. The Racial Integrity Act, on the other hand, ordered, controlled and indeed, limited not reproduction per se but rather, who one could reproduce with. Both measures transparently and proudly reflected the era’s latest scientific thought and racial theorizing. Still more accurately, they reflected an emerging fear and anxiety among a white, professionalized, Anglo middle class who had grown increasingly paranoid that any pollutant or impurity to their race would ultimately lead to cultural and biological extinction. Powell and Blakemore as well as Estabrook took seriously the threat of the former as well as the latter.

White Top, with its contrived meddling and manipulated cultural expressions, nevertheless served the precise purpose that its promoters sought. At a time when racial hierarchies were at once hardening among a cohort of assured scientists and professional bureaucrats, these same racial hierarchies displayed many vexing vulnerabilities. Carrie Buck’s defection required a counterpoint. Estabrook tried to explain white racial decline through the proliferation of bad blood that resulted from miscegenation. Powell and Blakemore on the other hand, focused on what they saw as the prized beauty of a white, Anglo-Saxon mountain fiddler or balladeer. For it was Powell’s racially pure musician who had successfully avoided the sexual improprieties of someone such as Buck or the “mongrelization” that led to the impoverishment of the Wins. Then again, it was also this same White Top performer who remained most vulnerable and susceptible to degeneracy, but also presented the strongest genetic hope that the nation could once again be racially purified and redeemed.
Uneasy Bed Fellows: the End of the American Eugenics Movement?

This chapter then comes to a fitting end precisely where the previous chapter began: with Arthur Estabrook’s colleague at the Eugenics Record Office, author of Virginia’s Sterilization Act, and star witness in the Carrie Buck case, none other than Harry Laughlin. As it turned out, a composer from Virginia was not the only one influenced by the eugenics movement and its goal to build a racial utopia. Of course, Virginia’s Sterilization Act was not the only expression of state policy to descend directly from Laughlin’s writing. An Austrian who harbored delusions of grandeur not altogether different from John Powell most infamously extended the eugenics movement to its logical and appallingly horrific extreme.\(^{357}\)

In the tragic wake of the Nazi Holocaust – a campaign explicitly designed to “cleanse” Germany of its alleged racial impurities – the American eugenics movement and its intellectual founders fell from the graces of acceptable science. But they fell only so far. And while Laughlin never received the official recognition and accolades in the United States that the Nazis bestowed upon him, many states in his native country nevertheless maintained their sterilization laws, and even continued to deploy the insidious practice well after the atrocities committed by the Third Reich came to light.\(^ {358}\) And lest one forget, it was 1994 when Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray published their controversial collaboration, The Bell Curve, the latest intellectual offspring of Laughlin, Estabrook, and Davenport. The best selling publication immediately preceded, and indeed, furnished

\(^{357}\) See Carlson, Part III, “Racsim, the Holocaust, and Beyond,” 279-383.
\(^{358}\) See Black, 411-444. Indiana for example, kept its sterilization laws on the books until 1974.
evidence to further eviscerate the remaining vestiges of the nation’s floundering welfare state. A must read among Newt Gingrich’s colleagues after they successfully swept both chambers of Congress in the 1994 midterm elections, Herrnstein and Murray’s study simply repackaged many of the conclusions that the ERO presented three-quarters of a century earlier, namely that one’s intelligence and socioeconomic status was sine qua non with one’s biology and race.

The specious evidence presented in the Bell Curve as well as Murray’s earlier work, Losing Ground, at least partly propelled the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, or more commonly referred to simply as welfare reform. Under the act’s provisions, Bill Clinton significantly slashed government assistance to the most impoverished and vulnerable families. The Clinton administration effectively ended Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and supplanted it with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). However, TANF attached a number of rigid requirements that the older program never possessed. For instance, it provided a much more modest level of federal assistance. While it also disproportionately affected single mothers, and had the combined impact of forcing those who were typically disadvantaged already by a general lack of higher education or advanced job skills, into the low wage work force.

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360 James Patterson concludes with this explicit connection in America’s Struggle Against Poverty, 240-242.
Even though Herrnstein and Murray explicitly posited race as a factor in one’s intelligence, and by extension, one’s social worth, they nevertheless dropped the language that so typified their eugenicist forbearers. One fails to find any allusion or mention of a “Nordic,” “Teutonic,” or “Anglo-Saxon” race. Likewise, gone was any sense that an American region possessed biologically strong people. Thus, the modern geneticist seems to have abandoned entirely the notion of a peculiarly strong, virile and artistically blessed race that originally hailed and proliferated from the reaches of northwestern Europe. Such a position would have been manifestly blasphemous not only to Powell, Blakemore, and Buchanan, but also Estabrook, Laughlin, or their many colleagues scuttling between the hills of Virginia and the Eugenics Records Office back on Long Island.

Yet to connect the work of Laughlin’s generation to that of Herrnstein and Murray’s skips a crucial if often overlooked step. This chapter and the previous one have collectively argued that the eugenics movement was due largely in response to the unseemly problem and growing presence of white poverty and alleged Anglo-racial failure. Nevertheless, the incessant problem of poverty – white or otherwise, was never solved through such methods as racial integrity legislation or sterilization. And just what to do about the troubling specter of a population of the white and impoverished was an issue that persisted. Following the Second World War, and amidst a period of sustained economic growth, national leaders and liberal observers located, yet again, the startling presence of entrenched white poverty. More strikingly, they looked for and found it in the very region that just a generation earlier held Powell’s festival and was the subject to Estabrook’s final eugenics family study.
The following chapter reconsiders the domestic policies of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson alongside some the era's most memorable cultural phenomena in light of what we have uncovered thus far. In a culminating moment, Lyndon Johnson famously declared a war on poverty in 1964. He signed the key provisions of this so-called war, amidst much ado, from the front porch of Tom Fletcher’s wooden ramshackle home in Inez, Kentucky. Significantly, Fletcher’s humble abode sat just across the Cumberland Gap from the White Top Mountain in Grayson County, Virginia and not far south from the Indiana border. If the Fletcher family had relocated across the Ohio River into Switzerland County, Indiana sixty years earlier – as so many other eastern Kentuckians had – he and his family may well have attracted the attention of the Indiana Committee on Mental Defectives. Had his descendants lived just east in Virginia, they may well have been the subjects of Arthur Estabrook’s study. Mr. Fletcher, rather than being personally guaranteed that his plight would improve from none other than the President of the United States may well instead have been sterilized or even have been the target of the Racial Integrity Act.

Times had indeed changed. Nevertheless, old habits never die easily, and in an unlikely pairing, the same impulses underlying the Indiana sterilization laws, the White Top Folk Festival, and the Virginia Racial Integrity Act also propelled John F. Kennedy’s New Frontier policies as well as Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society. All shared the same points of origin. All reflected the desire and will of a political and cultural elite to uplift and redeem white people who had fallen into entrenched poverty. All reflected the anxiety attached to the recognition that the presumptively superior race had failed. Chapter four makes these connections all the more clear.
CHAPTER FOUR

West Virginia Mountaineers, Kentucky Frontiersmen, and Beverly Hillbillies: Reconsidering the War on Poverty, 1960-1964

In 1960 John F. Kennedy went before Appalachia’s poor rural Protestant people to ask their help in his quest for the Presidency. They said yes to him, those “hillbillies” did, with their long bodies and craggy faces and their Protestant Anglo-Saxon heritage.362

- Robert Coles, 1969

It was the fall of 1962. John F. Kennedy proposed an across-the-board tax cut. Elvis Presley’s “Return to Sender” topped the pop charts. The New York Yankees beat the San Francisco Giants for their record twentieth World Series title. The nation watched in anticipation as a young African-American man requested to enroll in a Colonial American History course at the University of Mississippi. Would the Supreme Court’s Brown decision – now eight years old – be enforced or would Mississippi persist under Ross Barnett’s apartheid regime? At the very moment that James Meredith graced television screens and newspapers nationwide, so too did a roving family of white Southerners. Premiering just a week before the University – against its will – admitted Meredith, The Beverly Hillbillies capped the CBS primetime lineup and quickly ascended the ratings ladder, becoming among the most successful television sitcoms in the nation’s history.363 The simultaneity of these two events was more than a coincidence, and reveals the key political and cultural impulses that presaged Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty and the nation’s most earnest flirtation with a substantive welfare state.

An eventful two years later, Johnson and the eighty-eighth congress passed the ambitious Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. And in the elections that followed just months later, the president and his Democratic colleagues consolidated power in the nation’s most lopsided political contest of modern times. By November’s end, Johnson counted sixty-eight Democratic Senators and nearly three hundred Democratic representatives in the House. He won a staggering 61 percent of the popular vote. Not even a year after John F. Kennedy’s assassination, Johnson and his party were certainly the beneficiaries of a national tragedy still weighing upon an electorate. Clearly, voters responded to Johnson’s agenda to finish and expand what Kennedy had initiated. But what was it precisely that the voters so enthusiastically embraced? After all, the Economic Opportunity Act was the legislative manifestation of Johnson’s call to “eliminate” poverty. But still, he and his predecessors always believed that government assistance was a measure of last resort, and they knew that as the economy and the middle-class both expanded at record pace and poverty rates continued to decline, expanding the social safety net could be perceived as needless. Without public support, or simply with public ambivalence, launching a war on poverty was a politically risky and fruitless effort. But that liberals did precisely that and received such instant vindication begs the question: how and why did the Democratic Party come to declare it politically advantageous – at a moment of

364 Johnson first proposed a “war on poverty” during his first State of the Union address on January, 20, 1964.
365 John Kenneth Galbraith’s *The Affluent Society* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1958) first articulated and problematized this point. To be clear, Galbraith’s argument centered upon the dangers of the nation’s increasing economic disparity. Moreover, at the time that Johnson announced plans for a war on poverty, it had actually, if unevenly declined – from 23% to 19% - during the preceding five years.
expanding affluence - to wage a “war on poverty” and pass some of the most comprehensive, liberal legislation in the nation's history?

The answer lies among an unlikely trio: West Virginia mountaineers, Kentucky frontiersmen, and Beverly Hillbillies. Understanding the country’s newfound fascination with the above three illustrates the social, cultural, and political considerations that propelled 1960s liberalism. This chapter argues that the Great Society and the War on Poverty became realities only after white liberals constructed and represented impoverishment as an affliction that undeservingly befell and threatened white, rural, and mostly Southern men. Interrogating the racialized and gendered contours of poverty is nothing new to scrupulous observers. Historians have long noted the ways in which policy makers and the public more generally have offered various responses to poverty depending upon who they have perceived it affected. But scholars have done a poor job noting the confluence of popular culture that centralized white, rural poverty and the implication that it had upon political culture. Instead, we have bifurcated studies, some exploring public policy and politics and others, the era’s most prevalent cultural expressions. Rarely however, do we acknowledge the inextricable relationship between the two. Other studies on the 1960s expertly reveal how a peoples’ movement heroically coerced an intractable, white political elite into begrudgingly enacting civil rights and

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voting rights. These works successfully demonstrate how the specific nature and persistence of local struggles throughout the South dismantled Jim Crow from the bottom up.368

However, the era’s most progressive economic policies emerged not strictly in dialogue with the Civil Rights movement, mobilized by poor and middle-class African Americans, but rather, Lyndon Johnson’s landmark legislation was the culmination of a national “rediscovery” of poverty that focused on and targeted white male and mostly rural Southerners. John F. Kennedy’s primary campaign in West Virginia during the spring of 1960 set this supposed rediscovery apace. *The Beverly Hillbillies*, with their unprecedented appeal rendered a sympathetic image of the “hillbilly” even more ubiquitous. For certain, the Clampetts did not need any assistance. After all, Jed’s accidental discovery of crude oil in his yard instantly ushered his family into the nation’s financial elite. But it was the less fortunate Clampetts who provided the impetus for the Great Society and a war on poverty, those who never made it to Beverly Hills, but instead languished in the hills of West Virginia or in the hollows of eastern Kentucky.

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A Nation’s Ambivalent (re)Introduction to White Poverty

Only in Hollywood could a poor family from the Ozarks strike “black gold” and end up in the nation's most prestigious neighborhood within the span of two twenty-minute episodes. However, poor white migration out of the hills and into the city was indeed a post-War fact. Chad Berry has calculated that, “between 1940 and 1970, a total of 3.2 million mountaineers bolted (north).”369 The destination, however, was far less glamorous than the Beverly Hills, and most typically included the inner-city neighborhoods of Chicago, Cincinnati, Detroit, Columbus, Akron, and Indianapolis. By the late 1950s, Chicago’s Uptown neighborhood was primarily comprised of white, Appalachian migrants. In Detroit, a city rapidly shifting to a majority African American, poor whites – predominantly from Kentucky and Tennessee – congregated in the Briggs neighborhood. At present, Briggs remains the only Detroit neighborhood with a white majority amidst a city that is now around 80 percent Black.370 In contrast to the road Jed Clampett and his family traveled, “The Hillbilly Highway” was a northbound rather than westbound route. However, the Clampetts struggle to win the affection of their wealthy neighbors did reflect the tepid reception that greeted so many rural, white migrants in their newly adopted Northern, urban environment.

No one described this transition with more confused and ambivalent vitriol than Albert Votaw in a 1958 Harper’s column. He noted the large influx of Southerners, both white and Black to Chicago, but singled out the large number of West Virginians and

Kentuckians who crammed the city’s Uptown neighborhood. He claimed that, “the city’s toughest integration problem has nothing to do with Negroes...It involves a small army of white, Protestant, early American migrants from the South—who are usually proud, primitive, and fast with a knife.”371 Votaw interviewed a Chicago police officer who believed that, “they are worse than the colored...they are vicious and knife happy.”372 Most significantly, Votaw asserted that:

These farmers, miners, and mechanics from the mountains and meadows of the mid-South—with their fecund wives and numerous children—are, in a sense, the prototype of what the ‘superior’ American should be, white Protestants from early American, Anglo-Saxon stock; but on the streets of Chicago they seem to be the American dream gone berserk.373

By purporting that the white migrant from the “mid-South” was the prototypical American of “Anglo-Saxon stock,” Votaw positioned his claims squarely in line with such turn-of-the-century Progressive thinkers as Theodore Roosevelt, Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, Edward Ross, and William Goodell Frost.374 It was Roosevelt who claimed that the Kentuckians – with their alleged religious zeal – were at once the “Protestants of the Protestants” and the “American stock who were pioneers of our people in their march westward, the vanguard of the army of fighting settlers, who, with axe and rifle won their way from the Alleghenies to the Rio Grande and the Pacific.”375 Beyond Roosevelt’s gendered conception of the warlike and manly mountaineer, Frost argued that, “Appalachian America has received no

372 Ibid., 64.
373 Ibid., 64.
374 Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, American Commonwealths, 11.
375 Ibid, 119.
foreign immigration, it now contains the largest proportion of ‘Sons’ and ‘Daughters’ of the Revolution than any other part of our country.” Frost thus bestowed a desirable racial purity upon the region’s inhabitants. It was upon the shoulders of these writers that Votaw located the allegedly unadulterated “Anglo-Saxon stock” that invaded Chicago.376

Also like those commentators, Votaw expressed cognitive dissonance over witnessing people who “should” have been purveyors of the “American Dream,” go “berserk.” Recall that George Phillips, the Christian missionary who we encountered earlier and who had spent the last quarter of the nineteenth century in the Southern Mountains, reported “an alarming drift toward barbarism.”377 W.E. Barton – another missionary we have analyzed – was so alarmed over the social and cultural declension that took place in the region that he demanded that the American Missionary Association (AMA) shift its priorities and funding away from its historical mission of Black uplift, and focus on “our own race.”378 Barton clarified of whom he was referring, insisting that the AMA must assist the “isolated people living in the inland empire composed of eastern Kentucky, eastern Tennessee, West Virginia and corners of adjacent states...these people are of the purest British blood.”379 Indeed, Votaw’s column articulated a one hundred year contradiction: the so-called pure blooded Anglo-Saxon – supposedly the world’s most superior – was poor, violent, and an all around cultural embarrassment in need of correction. But beneath Votaw’s antipathy, lay a disappointing concession that the heralded “Anglo-Saxon” had so

378 Ibid.
379 Ibid.
far declined socially, economically, and culturally. Reversing this decline became one of the defining preoccupations of 1960s liberalism.

As Votaw offered his vitriolic diatribe against impoverished white migrants in Chicago, another journalist offered a decidedly more sympathetic view. In fact, no national reporter highlighted the conditions in the Southern Mountains as often as the *New York Times’* Homer Bigart. Some of his most notable stories detailed rural Southern, white poverty. He portrayed poor whites in Kentucky and West Virginia as victims of the coal industry’s collapse. Bigart’s stories appeared in 1959 and periodically ran through the 1960s, garnering two Pulitzer Prizes. One of his pieces dealt with unemployment in West Virginia where “about 15 per cent of its work force lay idle.” He found that “45,000 workers have exhausted their unemployment benefits, 280,000 to 300,000 persons are subsisting mainly on ‘mollygrub’... - the monthly dole of Federal surplus foods.”³⁸⁰ In virtually all cases, unemployment resulted from layoffs at the mines, and the ensuing poverty emerged from the structural and economic forces endemic to deindustrialization.

Bigart also uncovered the creative ways in which some of the laid off dealt with their unemployment. As government assistance ran out and the miner knew not the source of his next meal, Bigart noted an uptick in crime. Still, he refused to deploy the stereotype of the lawless mountaineer, and instead attributed the increase as a logical response to the dire economic circumstances. He rationalized and justified poor, white criminality: they were “driven by desperation to seek a jail sentence for non-support so that his wife could then apply to the State Department of Public Assistance for benefits.” Bigart even quoted a Sheriff who also believed that incarceration was a desirable option: “a man who can’t

support his wife can do it by going to jail.” The journalist then restored and redeemed the masculinity of the mountaineer who despite losing his job, nonetheless fashioned a way in which to creatively provide for his family. Bigart’s reporting exposed – in the midst of widespread and expanding affluence – a pocket of poverty that ran so deep that it was advantageous to commit a crime serious enough to receive a jail sentence. It was a stunning indictment of the nation’s welfare system, or lack thereof.

Bigart’s reporting on West Virginia was as incisive as it was selective. As a correspondent for the New York Times and a resident of that publication’s city, Bigart did not need to travel nearly 500 miles to find a story on poverty. He could have walked mere city blocks to witness and report on conditions even more severe than what he found in West Virginia. In Harlem and across the river in the Bronx for example, poor Blacks and Latinos faced jobless rates that exceeded a staggering forty percent, a figure on par with or worse than even the most depressed Appalachian counties. In the best of circumstances, Blacks and Latinos nationwide coped with a steady unemployment figure of around 13 percent. There is no evidence to explain one way or another why Bigart and so many others that followed selectively portrayed white poverty with such consistent sympathy. While there is nothing to suggest that Bigart did not care about poverty as it affected people of color, its general journalistic omission nonetheless had deep political as well as cultural implications.

381 Ibid.
Bigart’s reports coincided with John F. Kennedy’s bid for the Presidency in 1960. In fact, West Virginia proved the turning point of the primary campaign, catapulting a junior Senator from Massachusetts into a Presidential frontrunner. It was no secret that John F. Kennedy required support from West Virginia’s voters in both the primary and general election. In the process, the charismatic New England Senator brought unprecedented attention to the state, and more specifically, rural white poverty. Kennedy’s victory hinged upon the successful electioneering of the very people of whom Bigart wrote. The primary campaign season thus initiated a relationship between the eventual inhabitant of the White House and rural, Southern whites that continued for several years. These formative months laid the groundwork for both landmark legislation as well as a swell in the popular fascination with white poverty. Whether Kennedy needed to mobilize as political agitprop the white poor and the allegedly endangered “proud heritage” of the manly “Anglo-Saxon” race is secondary to the fact that he did.

The story began during the deeply contested West Virginia Democratic Primary between Kennedy and his challenger, Hubert H. Humphrey. Victory ensured an easy path to the Party’s nomination. West Virginia’s overwhelmingly Protestant and working-class constituency was supposedly deeply suspicious of Kennedy, a Roman Catholic member of the landed New England elite. Ahead of the election, *Time Magazine* reported that, “mountaineer Protestants were likely wary of a Roman Catholic candidate.”383 An internal poll conducted within the Kennedy campaign revealed that Humphrey’s support emerged

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from presumptive voters harboring antipathy toward Kennedy’s region. Just a year earlier, the West Virginian’s elected as their Senator, Robert Carlyle Byrd, a former member of the Ku Klux Klan, the notorious terrorist organization whose racist ideology made room for virulent anti-Catholicism as well. Byrd urged his state to reject Kennedy in favor of the Texas-born Protestant, Lyndon Baines Johnson. Kennedy had every reason to expect repudiation at the polls come spring. He thus needed to shake any suspicions and fashion broad-based support. Shortly after, on May 10, 1960, Kennedy demonstrated how successful he was at doing just that. As voters turned out in record numbers, Kennedy ran away with the primary, convincingly defeating Humphrey with nearly 60 percent of the vote. Upon proving that a New England-born, Harvard educated, Roman Catholic appealed to West Virginians, Kennedy’s nomination and eventual election was nearly inevitable.

Kennedy, with press in tow, scripted the drama of rural poverty in the economically troubled state, casting the white, male mountaineer – or depending on the source, the hillbilly – in a lead role. He urged West Virginians to move beyond his religion and entrust him with rehabilitating the state’s “proud heritage.” Undergirding the notion of “pride” and “heritage” lay a thinly veiled emphasis on white uplift. In one notable speech, Kennedy reminded his audience that West Virginia, “for its size, had suffered more deaths in combat in the Korean War than any other state in the Union.” The New York Times reported that

he “hammered at the theme of Federal neglect of a staunch and worthy people.” Kennedy’s use of “staunch” conjured images of Theodore Roosevelt’s manly and staunch mountaineer who had “won the west,” through foraging across the wilderness of the Alleghenies. Implicitly, Kennedy, like Oscar McCulloch and so many other reformers who came before, bifurcated poverty into the oft-noted categories of “worthy” and “unworthy.” If the supposedly staunch West Virginian was indeed worthy of state assistance, the question begged: who was unworthy? Additionally, by positioning the West Virginian as the patriotic warrior always willing to fight and die for country, Kennedy alluded not only to Roosevelt, but also Nathaniel Shaler, a professor who had taught Roosevelt in college and a leading Progressive-era race theorist who reminded his colleagues that the Southern mountaineers, “were a strength to Virginia in the revolution, and their children gave character to the army of Jackson in the Civil War.”

The theme of the manly mountaineer in service to his country was thus recurring not only throughout the nation’s history, but also throughout the campaign. At a stop in Glenwood Park – centrally located amidst rocky, unproductive soil and closing coalmines – Kennedy noted that his Republican predecessor, “has sent overseas under our surplus food disposal program, beef, chicken, turkeys, ducks, pork, sausage, potatoes, milk, orange juice peaches, cherries and other fruits and vegetables.” While at the same time, he continued, West Virginians relied upon, “flour, rice and corn-meal.” Such a paltry diet according to

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388 Ibid.
390 Ibid., 18.
Kennedy simply could not “maintain the strength of your men.”\textsuperscript{392} He proposed to shift food subsidies to the state’s poor under a new food stamp program. Kennedy ended his speech by quoting the lyrics to an old folk song, “Give me men to match my mountains.”\textsuperscript{393} But luckily, asserted the Senator, “West Virginia already has men to match her mountains – men of vigor and courage and determination – men who have contributed to America’s strength in the past and who will contribute again in the future.”\textsuperscript{394} His gendered appeal to provide aid to impoverished white men sounds upside down to twenty-first century observers. In the current era, when political leaders and reactionary conservatives have so effectively shifted the cultural stereotype of food stamp recipients to the province of poor, Black, and single females, lest one forget Kennedy’s success in doing precisely the opposite. Indeed, Kennedy’s argument to increase food subsidies relied upon his belief and ability to persuade West Virginians, and later, voters nationwide, the necessity for the state to assume leadership in rejuvenating mountaineer masculinity and vitality. It was the federal government’s responsibility then to dictate the nutritional needs of a naturally “vigorou” – though recently malnourished – male population, along with supplying the dietary requirements to satisfy such needs.

By the end of April, days away from the primary, Kennedy took up full-time residence in the state, crisscrossing the hills daily. Speaking in Charleston, the state’s capital, and then hours later in the small mountain town of Mount Hope, he declared before both audiences that, “of course West Virginians are not asking for handouts – for charity – or for special treatment. The people of West Virginia are a proud and independent people –

\textsuperscript{392} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{393} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{394} Ibid.
typical of the best of American life.”395 Just over a month before, with the primary looming, the Saturday Evening Post featured a cover story entitled, “the Strange Case of West Virginia.” What was so “strange,” uncovered journalist Roul Tunley after speaking to a West Virginian identified only as Mr. Ruby, was that “there’s nothing wrong with the people...they’re intelligent and conscientious and want to give a day’s work for a day’s pay.” Tunley continued in his own indicting assessment that, “any unbiased observer must agree that Mr. Ruby is right about the people. Largely native born, Anglo-Saxon stock, they strike the visitor as gentle, proud, polite and full of kindness to strangers.”396 Race was thus Kennedy’s floating signifier as well as the silent thrust of his appeal and argument. So long as publications such as the Saturday Evening Post informed its readers that the “proud” – if desperately poor – West Virginian was “native born, Anglo-Saxon stock,” Kennedy simply needed to remind his “proud” audience that they were “typical of the best of American life.” From The Post’s Roul Tunley to Homer Bigart on back to Theodore Roosevelt, generations of reformers, politicians, and journalists created the context from which Kennedy could address the incongruity and unacceptability of white poverty without ever daring to speak its name.

Though as adroitly as the Senator made poverty a topic of national conversation, he was stridently unable or unwilling to conceive of it as anything beyond a rural, white, and mostly Southern problem. How he secured as many Black votes as he did remains a topic of scholarly debate, but what is not debatable was the utter lack of overtures that Kennedy

extended to civil rights leaders throughout his political career. Noted Black journalist Simeon Booker recalled how completely unengaged the Kennedy team was regarding Black poverty and civil rights. Booker, perhaps the era’s most famous and well-connected Black reporter, “had no contact with the Kennedys. I had covered Washington...about ten years and the Kennedys just never crossed those areas that I covered, civil rights, human rights.” At best Booker believed Kennedy, “wasn’t conversant in civil rights, in all of the sectional sides of it. He wasn’t familiar.” But at worst, and contradicting the former statement, Booker pointed out that Senator Kennedy voted with the high-ranking Mississippi segregationist James Eastland in rendering the 1957 civil rights bill unenforceable. Between Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon, the latter had a much more consistent record on civil rights advocacy, and as Booker pined, “Nixon had won a lot of respect in the Negro community,” notably among outspoken members of Martin Luther King’s family.

Yet it was all for naught as Nixon would have to wait eight more years to successfully vie for the presidency. When he quashed Hubert H. Humphrey in 1968, many commentators spoke of a new “Southern strategy” used by the GOP. In a stunning hundred-year reversal, Republicans acquired the electoral votes of several Southern states. In the next presidential election, this reversal was complete as the so-called “Solid South” – Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana – all supported Nixon’s reelection bid. But in 1960’s razor thin election, the Democrats fashioned a Southern strategy of their own, albeit nearly a decade before the term came into popular use. As the push for civil

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398 Interview by John Stewart with Simeon Booker on April 24, 1967, Washington D.C. for the John F. Kennedy Library. King himself however did remain neutral until the famous phone call Kennedy made to King’s wife, Coretta, expressing sympathy and outrage over the civil rights leader’s arrest. At which point, King – if tepidly – supported Kennedy.
rights increased, the Democrats appealed not to the burgeoning social movement, but instead to a wide swath of the South that was deeply impoverished, white, and by nearly any indication, quite unorganized. Had Kennedy not won West Virginia, the Carolinas, or Georgia, it was very likely – in a precursor to 2000 – that the incoming President would have won the electoral vote though lost the popular one. At any rate, valorizing the “tradition,” “pride,” and “heritage” of native-born, white Southern men while at the same time, exploiting their resentment, fear, and class volatility was a campaign strategy pioneered long before the late-1960s.

But Kennedy’s emphasis on white, male uplift need not be seen only as cynical or political pandering. Upon ascending to the Presidency, he directed his policies where his mouth was during the campaign and to his credit, his message on the trail quickly manifested in legislation and public policy. On May 1, 1961, Kennedy passed the Area Redevelopment Act (ARA), a key component to his famous New Frontier domestic agenda. The bill provided $451 million for the “construction, alteration and expansion of public facilities in both industrial and rural areas.” William L. Batt, the ARA Administrator recalled that area redevelopment had its roots in the 1955 Depressed Areas Act, written by Illinois Senator, Paul Douglas. The targeted areas were Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maine and reflected the districts of the bills’ sponsors. Despite falling to three Eisenhower vetoes, the Douglass Bill’s key provisions nevertheless reemerged as

399 Though to be sure, Kennedy’s win in 1960 reflected his success in the key electoral states of Texas, Pennsylvania and New York while George W. Bush’s victory was predicated more upon the whimsical judgment of a politicized State Supreme Court, coupled with widespread voter irregularities.

400 Area Development, Section 1 Public Law 8727, approved May 1, 1961.


402 Ibid.
the ARA. The primary difference between the two was that the ARA was administered through the Commerce Department, something Senator Douglas strongly opposed. Both possessed rural and urban components, but nonetheless reflected the desire of Southern and Midwestern Democrats to privilege and emphasize impoverished areas that were disproportionately white (see figure 3). In fact, Letcher and Harlan County, both in eastern Kentucky were among the first to receive federal funds for redevelopment and remained among the most well funded throughout the program’s history.

![Map of Redevelopment Areas](image)

**Figure 3:** Reprinted from *Area Redevelopment*, 242. Note the heavy black over the portion of Appalachia, which garnered the most interest and funding per capita.

That those two counties received federal attention, however, was the exception rather than the rule. After a year, the Area Redevelopment Administration was a rather
diffuse, ill-defined, and unresponsive bureaucracy that was technically given jurisdiction “to act” in nearly 30 percent of the nation's counties. For this reason, the Appalachian Governors Association called on the Kennedy Administration to establish a separate, more targeted program to address the specificities of rural poverty in the Southern Mountains. Kennedy pledged to create the Appalachian Regional Commission that targeted assistance directly to West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, East Tennessee, the western Carolinas, and western Virginia. Unfortunately, he never saw these efforts materialize, as Johnson signed into law the Appalachian Regional Development Act (ARDA) as one of the first programs contained within the Great Society.403

As the ARA’s shortcomings became readily apparent, the University of Kentucky published the notable survey, *The Southern Appalachian Region*. Thomas R. Ford’s edited volume brought together scholars in several different fields. They collectively demonstrated the allegedly unique problems and culture of the region, thus necessitating a federal response that would go beyond Area Redevelopment, and focus entirely on Appalachia and its perceived specificities.404 The study positioned white poverty as an unacceptable phenomenon that befell a racially strong population. Building on Oscar Lewis’s famous “culture of poverty” thesis, Ford’s influential survey portrayed a racially superior population who had nevertheless become entrenched in a perpetual cycle of material deprivation.405 However, beneath the cultural component of learned behavior and

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405 This was first articulated in Oscar Lewis, *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* (New York: Basic Book, 1979 reprinted from 1958).
chronically low expectations for advancement lay the solid foundation of biological and genetic health. Thus, this was the very demographic who could benefit the most and see an immediate impact from targeted uplift and government assistance. The arguments echoed Kennedy’s campaign message, but were even more explicit in their overt appeals to racial supremacy.

Rupert Bayless Vance, a prominent sociologist at the University of North Carolina and former head of the American Sociological Society, wrote the volume’s introduction. Steeped in the trends of his discipline, Vance restated the ubiquitous culture of poverty thesis, claiming that “poor people have poor ways and left undisturbed, these poor ways tend to perpetuate themselves.”406 He further believed, that in the case of the poor Southern mountaineer one could, “impute no unworthiness to the populations involved.”407 Like so many prior observers, Vance’s use of the dichotomizing adjective, “unworthy” deductively implied that somebody, somewhere, was “worthy” of their poverty, or simply put, some people deserved to be poor while others did not. Vance clarified his coy word play by explicitly stating that, “certainly the history of settlement offers no indication that people were shunted into the mountains nor that they were of inferior stock.”408 Vance thus set the survey’s tone by conveying that the “Southern Appalachian Region” indeed faced unprecedented obstacles, but that the race of the region’s people – they lacked no “inferior stock” – rendered these obstacles surmountable. Vance’s introduction set the stage for subsequent arguments, all of which upheld the belief that the Southern

406 The Southern Appalachian Region, 3.
407 Ibid., 3.
408 Ibid., 3.
mountaineer's desirable genetics and biology furnished the reasonable expectation for
cultural improvement and economic advancement.

The remaining contributors built the case of Southern mountain exceptionalism
upon the seeming paradox of an economically depressed region that nevertheless housed
racially strong people. The latter ensured that the former could be corrected with the
proper form of state assistance. W.D. Weatherford and Wilma Dykeman provided an
analysis of literature and folk art in the Southern Mountains. Both argued that the region’s
frontier legacy uniquely situated its people to define and defend freedom. This innate sense
of freedom and independence emerged from a “dominating strain of Scotch,” harkening
back to their days of pre-modern highlanders fighting on the cool British Isles. The two
critics used Elizabeth Maddox Robert’s work of fiction, the Great Meadow, with its mythic
representation of frontier masculinity as a realistic depiction of Kennedy’s staunch
mountaineer before he had fallen on hard times. To Weatherford and Dykeman, Robert’s
fictional characters represented an entire population of “pioneers...who came first,
remained stronger than the wilderness, and never let go of their grip on hope and
courage.” Strikingly, Weatherford and Dykeman’s literary sketch of the region’s mythic
past was marshaled as a means of engendering sympathy for its troubled present. Thomas
R. Ford described the men as possessing “fierce independence and proud self-reliance,”
despite the massive levels of deprivation that they had endured.

Only the geographer John C. Belcher broke rank with the prevailing tenor of the

409 W.D. Weatherford and Wilma Dykeman, “Folk Arts in Transition: Literature since 1900,”
410 Ibid., 264.
fallacy of so-called Anglo-Saxon purity in the Southern Mountains. To his credit, Belcher correctly offered that:

Many writers have commented on the pure Anglo-Saxon population residing in the Appalachians at the present time. The impression is left that a distinct racial group settled the Appalachians and has remained racially pure for many generations. Actually no reliable evidence is available as to the origins of those settling the Appalachian...the probability is that the settlers of the mountains were representative of the population of the nation in the early nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{412}

Curiously, his colleagues refused to acknowledge that “no reliable evidence” existed for their phantasmal theories of race and the region. But unfortunately, even if Belcher corrected one pervasive misconception, he upheld another. He mistakenly believed that, “throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth the major arteries of transportation bypassed the Appalachian region.” This isolation ensured “the perpetuation of a folk culture based in large part upon the traditions that existed when the area was first settled in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.”\textsuperscript{413} While one may indeed discern a local folk culture, it did not follow that such a culture emerged through isolation. Railroads, for example, crisscrossed the region as early as the Civil War.\textsuperscript{414} Meanwhile, the coal boom’s apogee at the turn-of-the-century connected Appalachian counties to every industrial center in the nation. In fact, contemporary historians who presumably have no interest in constructing the region as a racial promise land have corrected the record. Joe Trotter found that Blacks comprised a high of 29.7 percent of the coal-miners in southern West Virginia counties by 1929, while “foreign-born whites” comprised an additional 11.9 percent of the labor force. In some counties, Trotter has noted that African Americans and

\textsuperscript{412} Ibid., 38.
\textsuperscript{413} Ibid., 38.
\textsuperscript{414} Kenneth Noe, \textit{Southwest Virginia’s Railroad, Modernization and the Sectional Crisis in the Civil War Era} (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003).
Eastern European immigrants were a majority of laborers throughout the late-1920s and 1930s.\textsuperscript{415} By the time of the Ford Survey’s 1962 release, virtually every Appalachian hollow was integrated into the nation’s industrial grid for well over half of a century.

Still, perception often overshadowed reality and even Belcher’s correction did not deter from a preponderant if false belief that the region remained a bastion of racial purity and cultural authenticity. Ford, Weatherford, and Dykeman all portrayed the Southern Mountains in such terms, but more importantly, they all believed that white poverty was an ambiguous phenomenon, one that was at once tragic yet quixotically enticing. On the one hand, material deprivation was deleterious to one’s health and well-being as well as blow to the region’s “proud heritage.” But on the other hand, the Ford Survey also suggested that rural poverty revealed the mountaineer’s simplistic austerity and rusticity. The latter emphasized poverty as a lifestyle choice that maintained an independence and autonomy both from the cultural ennui and stagnation of white middle-class suburbia as well as the reckless opulence of the leisure class. The studies contributors nearly all emphasized that the quaint quality of doing without necessitated a practical side among rural Southerners. From this emerged a stubbornness and self-induced paucity that left the mountaineers unwilling to adopt the conventions of modernity.

Concurrently, it was these same traits that supposedly nurtured a prized folk culture that persisted uncorrupted through generations. Whether mountain poverty was peculiarly quaint or not, the Ford consensus nevertheless upheld its perniciousness and deemed it worth addressing. Overall, the Ford Survey offered little in the way of insightful analysis,

\textsuperscript{415} See Joe William Trotter, \textit{Coal, Class, and Color: Blacks in Southern West Virginia, 1915-1932} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 69-74 for but one example of these figures.
and revealed far more about the writers than it did the region or its people. Written in conjunction with the Kennedy Administration’s domestic policy goals, this survey and a veritable explosion of other poverty literature that came out within months shaped the contours of a public debate that culminated a few years later with Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty. The Ford Study thus was a predecessor to several more famous and influential works that also appeared in 1962, perhaps none more notable than Michael Harrington’s famed *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* and Harry Caudill’s *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area.*

**A Tale of Two Poverty Warriors**

Today, we situate Harrington’s text as among the most progressive tracts to alter, and indeed, set the tone of a national debate on poverty and inequality. Yet its release received little fanfare, and copies remained overstocked until the credentialed Progressive, Dwight Macdonald glowingly reviewed it for *the New Yorker.* While Kennedy’s campaign increased national awareness over the issue, Macdonald’s first paragraph reminded readers of the prevalent “insular poverty of those who live in the rural South or in depressed areas like West Virginia.”

Maurice Isserman has noted that both Macdonald and Harrington had indisputable socialist credentials and remained committed to radical social change. Both knew well that poverty cut across the racial divide and was more ubiquitous among

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minority communities. Harrington’s book explicitly and correctly conveyed that poverty was a non-discriminating affliction. He devoted chapters to the rural white poor as well as the migrant poor, urban Black poverty, and the elderly, the latter of whom Harrington argued remained the most vulnerable population of all. At the same time, it was this broader emphasis and interest in the white poor, primarily on the heels of Kennedy’s West Virginia campaign that opened the space from which Macdonald and Harrington found a broader as well as a sympathetic audience in the first place.

In fact, The Other America utilized the same set of racially coded, linguistic appeals within its argument that Kennedy and generations of predecessors did. Harrington portrayed biologically superior, frontiersmen who had gone astray and stumbled deeper into poverty with each successive generation, yet another iteration of the “culture of poverty thesis.” In the book’s opening pages, Harrington captured the attention of his readers by emphasizing poverty in the Southern Mountains:

The traveler comes to the Appalachians in the lovely season. He sees the hills, the streams, the foliage—but not the poor. Or perhaps he looks at a run-down mountain house and, remembering Rousseau rather than seeing with his eyes, decides that ‘those people’ are truly fortunate to be living the way they are and are lucky to be free from the strains and tensions of the middle class.

Harrington’s poetic portrayal of the region’s natural beauty positioned its inhabitants’ poverty as beyond the view of middle-class observers. His allusion to poverty as a lifestyle choice along with its alleged quaintness echoed Weatherford and Dykeman. Appalachia was thus one example of the “invisible” nature of mid-century poverty, but it was also a preserve from the entrapment of middle-class malaise. He continued by perpetuating the

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419 Ibid, 3.
same racialized and gendered misconceptions of the region’s people that became so commonplace:

It is not just physical beauty that blinds the city man to the reality of these hills. The people are mountain folk. They are old American stock, many of them Anglo-Saxon, and old traditions still survive among them. Seeing in them a romantic image of mountain life as independent, self-reliant, and athletic, a tourist could pass through these valleys and observe only quaintness.\textsuperscript{420}

Despite Harrington’s well-documented anti-racist and socialist leanings, he nevertheless deployed the very adjectival signifiers that so many others before him had used as justification for white uplift. It was the erstwhile belief among this crowd that Appalachian people required federal aid and relief precisely because “they are old American stock.” Harrington never desired nor sought the intellectual company of Theodore Roosevelt, Edward Ross, or even more recently, Roul Tunley. He was far more inspired by the Christian-utopianism of Thomas More and the political musings of Leon Trotsky.\textsuperscript{421} Yet the way in which he understood the racial dynamics of poverty in the Southern Mountains placed him closer to the former group than the latter.

Harry Caudill, another of the era’s most influential liberals did not share Harrington’s influences, though he nevertheless wrote with zeal and passion that demanded the attention of the nation’s leaders. Caudill’s \textit{Night Comes to the Cumberlands} exploded on the scene the same year and to more initial buzz than both Harrington’s work and the Ford Survey. Caudill was a native son of the eastern Kentucky hills, and his book – or as he described it, his “biography of a depressed area” – conveyed the passion of a man

\textsuperscript{420} Ibid., 41.
\textsuperscript{421} Ibid., 113-116.
who had witnessed the “rape” of his homeland.422 Born and raised in Whitesburg, Kentucky, Caudill left his hollow to serve abroad during World War II. Upon return, Caudill served again, this time in the Kentucky Statehouse as a three-term Democratic Representative. Throughout his life, he grew increasingly irate over what he believed was the mistreatment of both the environment and his fellow Kentuckians at the hands of self-serving and shortsighted coal companies. Night Comes to the Cumberlands was thus a manifesto, reading as a left-wing critique of reckless industrial capitalism as well as a diatribe against those whose biggest sin of all was the insidious exploitation of the mountains’ proud people and abundant resources.

Caudill, like the earlier cohort of race theorists who expended so much intellectual energy on the region also asserted that the Kentuckian was biologically and genetically unique and ultimately, superior. Theodore Roosevelt, Madison Grant, and Caudill all noted that the Kentuckian was a select and prized race who emerged through the propitious mix of heroic manliness, biological supremacy, and the triumphant migration of Nordic people from Scandinavia southward to Scotland and England, eventually settling the “wilderness” of North America. Though unlike Roosevelt’s earlier analysis of the so-called “Kentucky race,” Caudill observed the prevalence of interracial relations: “while he fought the Indian as beast, the frontiersman unhesitatingly mated with the red man’s squaws. White women and girls were frequently in short supply and great demand, and the frontier standards of beauty could not be high...great numbers of dusky aborigine women found their way into the cabin of borderers – to bear broods of unruly half-breed children.”423 By simple

422 Harry Caudill, Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1962), Chapter 19, “the Rape of the Appalachianians.”
423 Ibid., 14.
necessity, wrote Caudill, the frontier developed as a racial laboratory where white men—often coercively—claimed Indian women as objects of sexual gratification. According to Caudill, the curious offspring that emerged from such unholy bonds was something altogether unknown.

In contrast to notions of “pure Anglo-Saxonism” persisting in the region, Caudill’s Kentucky “half-breeds” combined the “savage” nature of the Choctaw and Cherokee with the untamed virility of the white frontiersman, arriving from the rugged highlands of “mostly England but also from Scotland and Ireland.” This combustible combination proved a, “spawning ground of such heroic American scouts as Daniel Boone, Simon Kenton, John Colter, Kit Carson, Jim Bridger, and scores of hundreds others who, in buckskin jacket and leggings, with butcher knife, tomahawk and rifle, marked the trails for a century of westward migration.”

Caudill then claimed that, “it was here on the frontier of the middle and upper South that the Indian wars rose to their fiercest and cruelest pitch. Here the savage was taught his lesson in perfidy by the masters of the trade.” This analysis of the Kentuckian’s alleged frontier exceptionalism merely mimicked Theodore Roosevelt’s former professor, Nathaniel Southgate Shaler. Shaler, like Caudill, was a native Kentuckian who had written extensively about race, gender, and the frontier during Progressive Era, and later became a leading figure in eugenics movement. Shaler described the Kentucky mountaineer as “fed by tradition and by a nearly continuous combat down to the present,” eagerly participating not only in the day-to-day frontier skirmishes but also the Revolution and the Civil War.

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424 Ibid., 13.
425 Ibid., 13.
426 Shaler, 18.
of 1898 and again in 1917 thousands of boys ‘jined the army.’” Caudill’s Kentucky volunteers marched, walked, or ran to the state capital in Lexington “from a distance of one hundred and seventy miles when the War with Spain broke out, and nineteen years later Breathitt County (KY) provided so many volunteers that it was the only county in the United States in which the draft never became operable.” Caudill’s assertion that “the mountaineer was ardently patriotic” was identical to not only Roosevelt and Shaler, but also echoed John F. Kennedy’s appeal to the manly West Virginians who served in World War II and in Korea.

In each instance, Roosevelt, Shaler, Kennedy, and Caudill all presented a mythic vision of frontier patriotism and rugged white masculinity to explain the biological supremacy of the Southern frontiersmen. Even as Caudill departed from the belief that the Kentuckian was purely Anglo-Saxon, he nevertheless believed that racial advancement proceeded from innate biological differences, a notion derived straight from the eugenics movement of a half-century earlier. Ultimately, the frontier experience furnished Caudill with the evidence to claim that the Kentuckian’s heroism – wholly displayed in his warding off of the “savage” and taming the wilderness – placed him at the apex of manly virility and racial superiority. But as Caudill so fervently reminded his readers, several generations had now passed and tragically as Caudill saw it, the coal industry and its villainous leaders managed to reverse nature’s course and effectively transformed the nation’s most ruggedly independent and manly frontiersmen into a state of unemployed dependency. The vaunted frontiersmen – the descendants of Boone, Kenton, Carson, and Jackson – became emasculated and forced to seek federal assistance. “Bit by bit, his self-reliance and initiative

427 Caudill, 90.
428 Ibid, 90.
deteriorated into self-pity...he became in countless cases, a welfare malingerer,” according to Caudill.\textsuperscript{429} From the manly trajectory of the brave mountaineers who carved out the wilderness to the strong coal miners who fueled an industrial revolution, the white Southern male had in mere decades, lost his vitality and withered in the hollows of an Appalachian abyss.

Caudill’s resolution to this urgent matter went well beyond simply increasing government aid and keeping his downtrodden neighbors “on the dole.” Indeed, “condescending charity in any form is harmful to the moral fiber of a people.”\textsuperscript{430} Instead, Caudill conceived of his eastern Kentucky hills and the surrounding area in much the same way that the famous eugenicist, Madison Grant conceived of an endangered Anglo-Saxon race forty years earlier. Grant desperately feared that the northeastern, urban-dwelling Anglo Saxon who, “refused to work with his hands when he can hire or import serfs to do manual labor for him is the prelude to his extinction and the immigrant laborers are now breeding out their masters and killing by filth and by crowding as effectively as by the sword.”\textsuperscript{431} Similarly, Caudill believed that the Kentucky frontiersman was in grave danger of languishing to the point of extinction. What had propelled and constructed frontier identity was the continuous engagement with manly and rigorous labor. The frontier experience of taming and clearing the wilderness bred the Kentuckian with an assertive aggression and independence, while the coalmines honed a specialized industrial skill. In the absence of a frontier and King Coal, Caudill described how absentee landowners and coal barons had stripped Southern Mountains not only of their peaks, but also of their

\textsuperscript{429} Ibid., 280.  
\textsuperscript{430} Ibid., 374.  
\textsuperscript{431} Grant, 12.
manly inhabitants’ livelihood. Caudill then believed that there was no other option than for the Federal government to create a modern day Tennessee Valley Authority to “organize projects on which idle men could work.”

Night Comes to the Cumberlands thus fit perfectly among other liberal calls to action. Each requested state intervention, but only insofar as it would restore the vitality and independence of unemployed, white Southern men. Here again, Caudill struck a tone reminiscent to Madison Grant. Despite their notable differences, both believed that the state should function to replenish and restore a desirable population. Grant long believed that without the state, treasured American relics such as the Bison, the Redwoods, and the Anglo-Saxon would eventually succumb to men of irresponsible and shortsighted proclivity, be they reckless poachers roaming the Great Plains, overzealous loggers plodding the West, or breeding immigrants, diluting the genetic pool of superior native-born whites in the Northeast. Caudill grew up in the shadows of a majestic mountain beauty. But this natural splendor diminished with each stick of dynamite that blew away the rocky top to reveal a buried ribbon of bituminous coal. Each explosion represented the both wholesale destruction of a fragile ecosystem as well as the mechanization of an industry that now required simple gunpowder more than longwall miners. Caudill’s preservation efforts were thus two fold: he demanded environmental accountability among coal operators, but he also demanded that the state fashion responsive solutions that went beyond “welfare handouts,” and actively restored the pride, masculinity, and work ethic of the emasculated miner.

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432 Caudill, 392.
433 Jonathan Peter Spiro, Defending the Master Race, 1-17.
Stewart Udall, Kennedy’s Secretary of the Interior wrote the book’s foreword and certainly made its presence known to his boss. Udall knew well the stakes of creating a program that targeted the region. “This is Daniel Boone country,” Udall proclaimed, “where Indians and then fiercely independent frontiersmen found in these isolated valleys the elements that sustained vigorous life. Yet it is one of the ironies of our history that many of their descendants live there today in bleak and demoralizing poverty almost without parallel on this continent.”\footnote{Stewart Udall, \textit{Foreword} in Caudill, iii.} The irony that Udall noted – of Boone’s descendants living in “bleak” poverty – was of course the racialized and gendered propulsion that motored government involvement with such urgency. Udall, Caudill, and the contributors of the Ford Survey all knew that by the end of 1962, Area Redevelopment was ineffectual and in great need of overhaul. William L. Batt, the ARA’s lead administrator recalled that Kennedy and his legendary speech writer and head council, Ted Sorenson both read Caudill’s book, and immediately demanded to know, “what could be done to help in there?”\footnote{William L. Batt recorded interview by Larry J. Hackman, October 26, 1966, 184. John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.} The nation had turned its collective sights on the spectacle of white poverty. Udall’s irony was now a national predicament and apparently, a politically fashionable topic. Though it was not by politics alone that thrust the implications of white poverty to fore of the cultural imaginary. For every copy of \textit{Night Comes to Cumberlands} and \textit{the Other America} that left the bookstore, perhaps hundreds of thousands more tuned into CBS for a new and entertaining television genre: the situation comedy.
By the early 1950s, all three major networks were experimenting with the format. *The Jack Benny Show, I Love Lucy, Leave it to Beaver, the Honeymooners*, and *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* were among the first primetime offerings for most commercially licensed stations. While they all fed an insatiable appetite that Americans developed for televised entertainment, it was not until Paul Henning – an unknown producer from Independence, Missouri – rendered the lives of rural white people funny and thought provoking that the genre reached new heights. His breakthrough series featured an impoverished if lovable family from the Ozarks striking it rich with the discovery of oil on their property. *The Beverly Hillbillies* instantly became a ratings busting bonanza for the better part of a decade. In fact, during the show's first two seasons in 1962-63 and 1963-64, *The Beverly Hillbillies* became the first sitcom to consecutively rank as the nation's most watched program. Throughout its twelve seasons, only twice – during the last years – did it fail to achieve high ratings.\(^{436}\) On several occasions, well-promoted episodes set the contemporary record for the most-watched television event to date. In the pre-Super Bowl era of ratings, Paul Henning's *Hillbillies* were second to none. Understanding Henning's comedic formula and his portrayal of displaced rural, white Southerners may reveal why. Just as *Ozzie and Harriet* and *Leave it to Beaver* gained widespread success by feeding the perception of white, heteronormative, middle-class suburban contentment that allegedly

\(^{436}\) The Beverly Hillbillies were the highest television series at the time. See see Harkin, *Hillbilly*, Chapter Six, “The Hillbilly in the Living Room, Television Representations, 1952-1971.”
typified the 1950s; so too did *The Beverly Hillbillies* nourish, and indeed, help constitute a context of their own.\textsuperscript{437}

*The Beverly Hillbillies* made its CBS premier on September 26, 1962 around the same time that Harrington and Caudill released their respective volumes, and Kennedy signed his well-publicized Area Redevelopment legislation. Though emerging news from Oxford, Mississippi dominated the headlines in the very days that the sitcom shot to the number one slot. James Meredith arrived at the University of Mississippi on September 20, after successively being denied enrollment. Over the next week and a half, a nation waited in anticipation to find out whether the *Brown* decision was mere rhetoric or an enforceable dictum that would meaningfully assist in Jim Crow’s demise. In the weeks and months earlier, Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett twice denied Meredith’s admission over executive and judicial orders to the contrary. And though Kennedy dispatched U.S. Marshals to keep the peace and enforce federal law, Barnett, with a large segment of the white community’s backing, remained intractable. Meredith’s success seemed far from inevitable as sporadic violence throughout September turned into a full-scale white riot by month’s end. Two people died and perhaps one hundred more were injured in the racially motivated uproar.\textsuperscript{438} But on October 1, despite the terror perpetrated upon not only Meredith, but also African Americans more generally (in Oxford and nationally), he entered the campus lyceum, flanked by troops, as an enrolled student. The Associated Press relayed

\textsuperscript{437} Neilson Media Research, Top 100 Shows of All Time, August 6, 2000.
\textsuperscript{438} See Willliam Doyle, *An American Insurrection: The Battle of Oxford, Mississippi, 1962* (New York: Doubleday Press, 2001) and Mary Stanton, *Freedom Walk: Mississippi or Bust* (Oxford: University of Mississippi Press, 2003) for two recent works on the drama and violence that plagued Mississippi through the early 1960s. Doyle is particularly effective in conveying the terror tactics that whites deployed in hopes of keeping Meredith and successive African Americans from integrating the state’s public institutions.
to anxious readers that, “approximately 100 uniformed State Highway patrolmen and scores of sheriffs, deputies, plainclothesmen and policemen held back a crowd of 2,000 jeering students” as Meredith heroically walked forth.\footnote{Claude Sitton, “Negro Rejected at Mississippi U.; U.S. Seeks Writs,” \textit{The New York Times}, September 23, 1962.}

Perhaps because of the escalating tension that greeted the 1960s – Civil Rights advancement, white reaction, and an emerging conflict in Southeast Asia – Henning and the network executives initially doubted the show’s ability to capture popular sentiment.\footnote{See Harkin, 198-203. Here Harkin also makes the interesting point that show did take on some political themes in its later years.} Such fears were quickly allayed as the \textit{Hillbillies} topped the Neilson ratings, a position that the show mostly clung to through such momentous events as Meredith’s integration, but also the March on Washington, Kennedy’s assassination, Medgar Ever’s brutal murder, Freedom Summer, the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, and Johnson’s signing of the Voting Rights and Civil Rights Acts respectively. Strikingly then, as two of nation’s rockiest and traumatic years unfolded, its most popular cultural phenomenon made not a single mention of the turmoil, and in fact, Henning avowedly claimed that his show was apolitical, a brief respite from a troubled reality. It was an opportunity for a nation to forget about its frightfully uncertain future.\footnote{Harkin, 210. For a more recent discussion of this lineup and its cultural implications see Harkin, \textit{Hillbilly}, Chapter Six, “The Hillbilly in the Living Room, Television Representations, 1952-1971.” Here, Harkin does an expert job of tracing the genealogy of the ‘mountaineer’ from Ma and Pa Kettle to the more sinister portrayals in \textit{Deliverance}. Distressingly, Harkin gestures toward the connections with these representations and the Black Freedom Movement, but does not explore this theme deeply.} But it was exactly in this space of uncertainty and growing national anxiety that \textit{The Beverly Hillbillies} resonated so strongly with a preponderant message that harbored nostalgia, tradition, and opposition to change. In short, before a white audience, facing for the first time since Reconstruction, a direct threat to their power, status, and
privilege, *the Beverly Hillbillies* represented – albeit in comic relief – everything that the 1960s did not.

The show’s inaugural episode conveyed this with expert lucidity. Within minutes of the premier, the show successfully presented a stereotype of a culturally backward and economically disadvantaged white family from the Southern Ozarks, likely Arkansas. Granny Clampett, instantly discernable as an archetype of a wise and elderly matriarch, yearned for the Confederacy. As her son, Jed, mistakenly took the utility poles that ran adjacent to the neatly coiffed Beverly Hills lawns as ready-made firewood, Granny disapprovingly uttered, “so help me Jefferson Davis.”442 Jed replied that he was no longer president, implying that Davis’s tenure as the Confederate’s political leader was at one time sanctioned and legitimate though simply eclipsed. Granny curtly responded that, “there’ll be no more Yankee talk in this house.”443 The brief exchange was one of the first bits of extended dialogue and provided a glimpse into the Clamplett family ideology. Distressingly, this ideology – though masked in benign humor – tacitly endorsed a social order predicated upon racial terror and exploitation. At the very moment of Granny’s utterance, James Meredith and countless other African Americans throughout the South faced murderous reprisals in their efforts to righteously dismantle the very underpinnings of a society in which the Clampett’s nostalgically and wistfully celebrated.

The show’s second episode aired the day after Meredith finally integrated the University of Mississippi under continuing threats of violence. In that episode, the Clampetts settled in to their Beverly Hills mansion as extended family stayed behind.

443 Ibid.
Tension emerged when Jed’s cousin Pearl expressed a desire to move from her impoverished hollow to California. In a rare moment of solemnity, Pearl revealed to Mr. Bruester – the oil speculator who bought out the Clampett’s – “that I ought to be out there in Beverly Hills helping Cousin Jed.”

Bruester – an opulent, Western oilman, apparently unfamiliar with the modest social graces of the Southern countryside – responded, “well he certainly has plenty of room for you. This mansion has thirty-two rooms and fourteen baths.” But size was not the issue. After all, families had crammed tight mountain quarters for centuries. Rather, Pearl furled her brow and tersely exclaimed to Bruester that, “of course I wouldn’t go without being asked.”

The viewer knew that Jed simply forgot to extend the invitation in the haste of moving from one set of hills to the other. In a split screen that at once depicted Pearl in the broken down log cabin and Jed standing about his new mansion, he proclaimed that, “I sure wish she was out here.” By episode’s end, all was resolved as she moved out to Beverly Hills at Jed’s clear insistence. Upon arriving, Pearl, always the feminine and crafty mountain dame, began working with Elly May – Jed’s daughter – to help her overcome her manly tendencies that included picking fights with the boys and wearing coveralls.

The famous philosopher of language, Mikhail Bahktin, has notably argued that the social and cultural meaning of language, “will always be determined by the real conditions of its uttering and foremost, by the nearest social situation.” This of course did not mean that Pearl’s wish to join her family in Beverly Hills was remotely analogous to the “social

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445 Ibid.
446 Ibid.
447 Ibid.
448 Valentin Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, 101.
situation” of James Meredith’s integration, nor should Bahktin’s theory provide license to attribute covert and cryptic intention to Paul Henning’s script. Rather, his intervention challenges us to cast a broad context where meaning emerges through the representation and contradistinction of a matrix of various social and linguistic interactions. Thus, the Clampetts – in their resounding success – obviously conveyed a cultural, and despite Henning’s contention, a political message that resonated in time and place. Pearl, in her embodiment of submissive, white femininity maintained the clear and sanctioned lines of grace and etiquette by refusing, despite her yearning to the contrary, to impose upon her own brother. This representation of proper white femininity, of course stood in diametric opposition to James Meredith, the “surly” Black male who so stridently “imposed” upon and threatened the “traditional” institutions of white male hegemony. Conclusively, on the day after Meredith’s integration, regardless of whether Henning intended to or not, the nation’s highest rated television program upheld a national tradition of white patriarchal dominance at a crucial moment when it met a formidable and resolved challenge.

Beyond these first two episodes, The Beverly Hillbillies continually – if predictably - applied the same comedic formula that presumably solidified its success. In a decade increasingly divided by racial, generational, and gender conflict, the Clampetts were an effective anodyne. Despite their humble and impoverished background, they remained an extremely close family who never permitted their newly acquired wealth to sever roots. In fact, Henning used the Clampetts as a vehicle to critique and satirize what he believed was the conspicuous excess that so pervasively typified the post-War elite. Apparently, this required portraying the Clampetts as crude and one-dimensional stereotypes of rural-born whites: they were culturally backwards, out of step with the modern world, and
technologically inept, but beneath these negative stereotypes revealed the simplistically wise, quaint, and morally informed certitude that Granny Clampett conjured. Jed, for his bumbling antics and unreformed boorishness, nevertheless was a deeply nurturing patriarch. His underwhelming acumen intimated that bourgeois intellectualism was perhaps a hindrance rather than a facilitator in clearly defining an unquestioning patriotism as well as normative conceptions of familial hierarchy and masculine authority. Even as Jed’s daughter, Elly May refused to abide by cultural standards of feminine behavior and decorum, her perpetual gender confusion was always framed as comic relief and subject to rigorous discipline and correction, typically by her father but also by more “lady-like” characters such as Pearl or Mrs. Drysdale. Thus the one potentially subversive Clampett was a foil to reinforce rather than disrupt normative sexuality and gender.

_The Beverly Hillbillies_ achieved such acclaim that CBS executives commissioned Paul Henning to produce two more similarly themed comedies. _Petticoat Junction_ premiered the following season in 1963 and _Green Acres_ in 1965, both were instantly successful. These sitcoms joined _The Andy Griffith Show_ – written by legendary producer Sheldon Leonard not Henning – to complete a primetime lineup that was a veritable smorgasbord of white, rural comedy. Despite some notable differences, all utilized relatively similar plotlines and archetypal characters. Clampett, Uncle Joe Carson, and Sheriff Andrew Jackson “Andy” Taylor – the protagonists of _The Beverly Hillbillies, Petticoat Junction_ and _the Andy Griffith Show_, respectively – each demonstrated, amidst their modest upbringing, a commitment to the patriarchal family, rigorous and manly labor, and an unwavering sense of Christian

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449 Again, the very first episode expertly established this theme. Paul Henning, “The Clampett’s Strike Oil,” _The Beverly Hillbillies_, (CBS, September 26, 1962).  
450 At one point, these shows all aired on Tuesday evenings.
morality. Moreover, their negotiation with modernity provided the shows’ comic foundation, but also impressed upon the viewer, the allegedly evil and vice-ridden nature of the mid-century United States’ city. Despite – or perhaps because of – their simplistic ideology, peculiar folksiness, and reverence for a supposedly traditional if endangered way of life, Clampett, Carson, and Taylor expertly demanded, and if ratings are any indication, received sympathy and respect.

Only *Green Acres*’ Oliver Wendell Douglas broke this mold. Douglas was quite separate from his “authentic” backcountry colleagues who all shared a penchant for exposing, even if inadvertently, the folly of the modern age. After all, he abandoned a flourishing law practice in New York City in pursuit of what he believed was the simple life of a farmer in the fictitious town of Hooterville. The naïve Douglas, however, was consistently depicted as in over his head and an inferior steward of the land. Throughout the episodes, he never quite caught on to the vigorous nature of manly, country living. Seldom did he perform any labor correctly without substantial assistance from a “native.” Here, the feminized city slicker, while always a pleasant and amiable protagonist, nevertheless failed to earn viewers’ respect and sympathy in the same way as his primetime counterparts. Regardless of Douglas’s elite education or urban sophistication, without the “local yokels” who seemed to possess a natural predisposition for tilling the land and slaughtering the pigs, his existence was a mere trifle. If nothing else, *Green Acres* prematurely belied Frank Sinatra’s famous claim. Mr. Douglas did in fact “make it” in New York, though he could not so easily make it anywhere, or at least not Hooterville.\footnote{While not particularly analytical, see Stephen Cox, *The Hooterville Handbook, A Viewer’s Guide to Green Acres* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin Press, 1993) for a series of useful character sketches.}
From Jed Clampett to Tom Fletcher: A Conclusion

So what, if anything shall we make of the success of *the Beverly Hillbillies’* and their CBS primetime counterparts? Did it matter beyond a coincidence that the show peaked in popularity just as the Civil Rights movement permeated the news on a near daily basis? Was the “rediscovery” of white poverty – by Kennedy on the campaign trail, then by the likes of Harrington and Caudill – an indicator that the white, middle-class had an internal desire to once again engage projects of racial uplift? On the latter question, history offers a precedent. Theodore Roosevelt’s coalition of so-called Progressives appealed to white voters by making clear their desire to save the “American race.” Perhaps it was no mistake that his nephew, a rather popular President in his own right, launched a New Deal that displayed the wretchedly tortured faces of migrant Okies and mining mountaineers as the poster people who would receive immediate and deserved aid. Likewise, in 1964 Lyndon Baines Johnson declared a War on Poverty from the ramshackle home of Tom Fletcher, an unemployed miner from Inez, Kentucky. Johnson, like Homer Bigart needed to travel mere blocks to find poverty just as severe as that found in the deepest Appalachian hollows. The president could have simply crossed the Anacostia River into Southeast D.C. to find similarly deplorable conditions. That he did not revealed a simple political calculus. In the early 1960s, the nation became so enamored with rural, white people that their presence

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pervaded both mass politics and mass culture, though perhaps the two were not so easily disentangled.

This chapter has argued that 1960s political liberalism emerged in tandem with the broader forces of popular culture. Amidst the expanding affluence of a suburbanized white middle class, there nonetheless materialized a rejuvenated fascination with those who shared their skin color though not their class position. This fascination revealed an ambivalent curiosity. Poor white, rural Southerners were portrayed as the purveyors of a quixotic rusticity and authentic folksiness that seemingly vanished in the dust of a bulldozer, making way for yet another vapid suburban subdivision. At the same time, regardless of such romantic appeal, there was something simply unacceptable about such levels of white deprivation. By 1964, two presidents successfully made addressing it a cornerstone to their elections and at least several authors, journalists, and television producers found a receptive audience in exposing, analyzing, romanticizing, or even poking fun at its prevalence and alleged peculiarity. But even if the desire to “eliminate” poverty emerged from a specific raced and gendered perception of who it most severely affected, the actual policies – under Johnson more than Kennedy – nevertheless moved beyond the explicitly exclusionary measures that defined previous generations of liberal legislation.\textsuperscript{453}

In fact, as the Office of Economic Opportunity achieved brief measures of success in poor communities – be they white, Latino, or African American – conservatives countered and initiated its demise.

\textsuperscript{453} On the racially exclusive nature of the New Deal, see Ira Katznelson, \textit{When Affirmative Action was White: An Untold Story of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America} (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006).
We return then to that fateful fall of 1962. A mostly sympathetic nation believed that James Meredith’s integration of the University of Mississippi made moral sense. The violently oppressive nature of Jim Crow was a national embarrassment that some white leaders in Washington D.C. were willing to work with Black leaders throughout the South to overturn.\textsuperscript{454} That they succeeded was far more a credit to the latter than the former. However, addressing the social contours of the Civil Rights movement proved much easier than the economic ones. Black Power scholars have long asserted that the era’s white liberals readily provided “a mouthful of civil rights but not a mouthful of food.”\textsuperscript{455} Most agreed that one’s race should not preclude them from sharing a water fountain or sitting together on a bus or even voting for candidates who best represented them. Yet, as one pollster noted, by the mid-1960s, seven out of ten white homeowners still resisted the integration of African Americans into “their” neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{456} Such obstinacy maintained the rigidity of the United States’ racialized class system as well as demonstrated the limits of white liberalism.

And of course, Tom Fletcher’s house – the very setting where Johnson declared a war on poverty – looked suspiciously like Jed Clampett’s former Ozark abode (see figures 4


\textsuperscript{456} CBS News, “Black Power/White Backlash,” September 27, 1966. The figure comes from the findings of Lewis Harris—pollster for \textit{Newsweek Magazine}. 
and 5). Though upon striking oil, Clampett wasted no time relocating to the sumptuous Beverly Hills. Suspending for a moment our knowledge that the Clampetts were fiction, let us consider the very non-fiction 1960 census numbers for Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, California. In a community of 30,817 residents, only 649 were “Negro” – a figure barely surpassing 2 percent, many of whom were undoubtedly “live-in help.”\footnote{457} While there was no census category available that provided figures on just how many poor white people became millionaires by fortuitously misfiring a rifle into a “bubbling crude,” one safely assumes that the numbers were low.

But that was precisely the point. Though Henning’s \textit{Hillbillies} escaped their condition, the same could not be said for many weary-eyed West Virginia mountaineers or Caudill’s manly Kentucky frontiersmen – now shamefully personified not as Daniel Boone, but as Tom Fletcher. Nonetheless, this was the initial population who propelled and mobilized support for the nation’s most expansive era of liberal public policy. Distressingly, the crowning achievement of liberalism’s ascent, the War on Poverty, never even competed for the funding that another contemporary war so easily received.\footnote{458} Moreover, political adversaries quickly and opportunistically uncovered the ways in which the Office of Economic Opportunity had the potential, if not the resources, to serve all poor people, regardless of race, gender, age, or ability. Within two short years, these reactionaries effectively shifted the popular perception of poverty from Southern, rural,

and white to Northern, urban, and Black. Not coincidentally and rapidly thereafter, the foundation of a welfare state lay permanently moribund.

**Figure 4:** The Clampett family home in the Ozarks (Source: Paul Henning, “The Clampett’s Strike Oil,” *The Beverly Hillbillies* (CBS, September 26, 1962)

**Figure 5:** Johnson and advisors meet outside of Tom Fletcher’s home in Inez, Kentucky on April 24, 1964. Reprinted from corbisimages.com “Johnson Meets Poor Family.”
CHAPTER FIVE


No, nothing about the War on Poverty is commonplace. In the zeal of its administrators, in the freshness of their ideas, in the innovations of organization and policy approach, it stands alone – even in a period when many New Frontiers were being crossed and a Great Society was being born. No matter what may happen to the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Economic Opportunity Act, their influence upon American institutions will have been profound.459

- James L. Sundquist, 1969

By August 1964, not even a summer after he declared a War on Poverty, Lyndon Johnson had already received hundreds of letters such as the one sent by David Beard. The Florida resident had grown incensed over a series of missteps that he accused the Administration of taking. But just a few months earlier, Beard apparently jumped at the opportunity to meet the thirty-sixth president. When Johnson arrived in Miami to give a speech and greet some of his supporters, Beard claimed to be at the front of the line. Unfortunately, during the anticipated exchange, Johnson signed an autograph and then carelessly wandered off with Beard’s prized Parker pen. A few months later, Beard angrily reminded the White House of the incident. Johnson’s personal secretary, Juanita D. Roberts smoothed over the snafu by sending Beard one of Johnson’s presidential ballpoint pens, impressively emblazoned with an insignia of the White House. Roberts conceded that, “it will not take the place of your Parker, but I hope you will accept it in the spirit with which it is sent.” Beard never followed up.460

Curiously, however, his letter contained more than an angry tirade over Johnson’s absentminded mistake. Seemingly unrelated, Beard also demanded, “an explanation on why you are not as quick to call out troops to bring law and order in Harlem as President Kennedy was to call them out to bring law and order in Oxford, Mississippi.” He then proclaimed that, “the riots in New York are far more serious than the riots brought on by federal ‘Marshals’ in Oxford.” Beard was of course referring to Kennedy’s deployment of Federal troops to assist James Meredith’s integration of the University of Mississippi two summers earlier. That he blamed the ensuing Oxford riots on the Federal Marshals rather than the white racists who had violently resisted efforts to admit Meredith into the university revealed precisely where Beard’s sympathies lay.

Beard’s frustration thus extended far beyond his stolen pen, and in fact, revealed a growing antagonism toward Johnson that was increasingly pervasive among many poor, middle-class, and elite whites, an antagonism defined by a growing perception that the state had tacitly supported or even given license to Black, urban unrest and militancy. By 1965, not even a year into it, the War on Poverty developed into a political albatross that, according to critics such as Beard, fashioned the Democratic Party into the enablers of sloth, excess, and most ominously, Black male violence and insurrection. This chapter expands upon the preceding argument that the War on Poverty’s support was contingent upon its ability to be interpreted and represented as yet another effort to uplift and

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461 Ibid.
462 Ibid.
support white people who had failed to gain access to postwar prosperity and economic advancement. The focus here however turns to a series of scandals and attacks from reactionary forces such as Beard but also the media as well as some of the nation’s highest ranking political leaders and elites. These attacks effectively shifted the perception of the War on Poverty from a benefit program for poor, rural, white and mostly Southern men to a catalyst for urban revolt that revealed the threatening “problem” of uncontrolled Black masculinity and allegedly inherent criminality. The latter became a problem solved not by government assistance, but instead by violent control, confinement, and surveillance.\textsuperscript{464}

Yet, the shifting perception belied and contradicted much of what the War on Poverty actually achieved, and equally notable, what it did not. While the most sensational stories almost always portrayed the War on Poverty as an ill-conceived social experiment, at its best it provided some limited funding from which poor communities of color exerted autonomy, self-activity, and empowerment. But still, despite some measured successes, the War on Poverty never received the opportunity to markedly improve the economic conditions of poor people of color. Paradoxically then, even as it lost support for its alleged connections to urban Black unrest, the War on Poverty continued apace as an initiative that provided assistance to far more white, male-headed families as well as the nation’s aged than any other demographics. That it produced a fairly high level of success along rigid

lines of race, gender, and age must be viewed as an expression of the precise aims that the program’s architects implicitly established from its outset.465

Though perhaps most importantly, the critical events of the middle 1960s forever altered the very way in which the nation imagined poverty and reshaped how the state would respond to it in the decades to follow. Curiously, the Kennedy-Johnson coalition rescinded or scaled back many of the most progressive elements of the War on Poverty just as the Civil Rights and Black Power movements made their most dramatic gains. In fact, rather than strengthen a program that demonstrated some ability to respond to the needs of poor people, Johnson instead moved to pass a series of measures that decisively shifted tactics and resources away from poverty amelioration and towards law enforcement and most obviously, war abroad. Not surprisingly, a new consensus among many in the body politic now relegated economic misery to a racialized, gendered, and criminalized status. This recasts the incipience of so-called “law and order” politics firmly within the context of Johnson-Kennedy era liberalism rather than as a response to it.466

This interpretation positions white disillusionment not as a backlash, but instead as what Vesla Weaver has more aptly described as a “frontlash.” Here, the successes of Civil Rights and Black Power engendered the necessity to reconstitute racial control and white


supremacy through a new strategy that emphasized the language and policies of crime prevention and security.\textsuperscript{467} Beyond signaling an electoral shift among many poor, working-class, and Southern whites a frontlash brought with it an articulation and enactment of a transformative agenda that violently asserted control over Black and Brown bodies. This final chapter – along with the dissertation’s conclusion – mobilizes Weaver’s powerful argument and historicizes it within the state’s tradition of white racial restoration. This chapter then demonstrates the way in which the War on Poverty at once lost credibility as an instrument to address white failure just as it responded, even if in a limited way, to the demands of a social movement led by people of color. But while the state’s commitment to maintain white supremacy and address white failure may have briefly buckled under the weight of a tremendous people’s movement, the commitment nevertheless found a new expression in the form of mass incarceration in the immediate years to follow. So in the seemingly unlikely soil of 1960s liberalism, the seeds appear to have been sown for an era of mass incarceration and the emergence of the prison industrial complex. Thus James Sundquist’s contention that the War on Poverty would have “a profound impact” upon American institutions was accurate, though the profundity of which he predicted evolved quite differently, and indeed, tragically.

Lastly, the chapter concludes by briefly placing the War on Poverty into context with the war against Vietnam. As many scholars have noted, the latter received far more funding and attention that did ever the former, and as previous chapters have argued, white racial

restoration at home has often relied upon racial domination abroad. So perhaps the drive to restore fallen whiteness in the early 1960s through the War on Poverty was paired with the logic of military domination in Southeast Asia. The subjugation of Vietnam – wholly embraced by the nation’s liberal establishment – reflected little more than the machinations of a neoliberal empire, driven precisely by the same impulses of the nation’s earlier imperial encounters. Might the two great “wars” of the sixties constitute the same ideological project to uplift poor whites at home while reinforcing the global color line and white dominance abroad? Put differently, might midcentury liberalism reveal the similar tendencies and impulses as those of previous state-led efforts to restore and redeem fallen whiteness?

The Dissolution of a War on Poverty

From the beginning, the perception of the War on Poverty and its reality differed handily. In a 1980 interview, Adam Yarmolinsky – one of Johnson’s key advisors on and architects of the initiative – recalled that, “the original picture of the poverty program in the public eye was Appalachia.”\(^{468}\) He continually argued that the OEO, “offered very little for blacks because most poor people are not black and most black people are not poor.” And he later famously revealed that, “if anything color it (the War on Poverty) Appalachian if you’re going to color it anything at all.”\(^{469}\) This original picture as Yarmolinsky described turned out to be the key towards maintaining much public support for the program. Everyone

\(^{468}\) Yarmolinsky appearing before the conference “Poverty and Urban Policy,” quoted in Katz, The Undeserving Poor, 85-86.
\(^{469}\) Ibid.
knew “the color” of Appalachia was white, and if they cared to tune into debates about poverty over the past century, they also knew that it was a pure white, one worth restoring to its formerly prized status. And if Yarmolinsky knew that “poverty was not regional,” such a perception certainly benefited both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations as they forged their respective domestic policies. Yet as the legislation’s day-to-day implementation failed to live up to its portrayal, the War on Poverty not only lost public support, it also became the target of outright antipathy among many white people.470

Any image that linked the War on Poverty to Black Freedom received at best, tepid favor and at worst, violent antagonism. White ambivalence towards the Civil Rights movement was manifest during the summer of 1964, just as Congress passed the momentous Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts. In the euphoria of the laws’ passage, several hundred college students – both white and Black – embarked upon the South to launch a voting drive that determined whether or not the state would actually enforce its legislation. The endeavor became known as Freedom Summer.471 Just as the young women and men made their way across the Mason-Dixon line, a Harris Survey revealed that, “the American public, by an overwhelming 2 to 1, views with disfavor the efforts of northern students to push for civil rights for Negroes in Mississippi.”472 The pollsters found that of those surveyed, 31% approved of the voter registration effort while 57% disapproved and 12% were not sure. Johnson’s special counsel Lee White stridently opposed any effort to

470 Interview with Adam Yarmolinsky conducted by Michael Gillette, October 21, 1980. The Lyndon B. Johnson Oral History Project, The Oral History Interviews of Adam Yarmolinisky, Interview II, White House Central Files, Papers of LBJ.
471 See Doug McAdam, Freedom Summer (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) for the most definitive account of the ambitious project.
enforce the Voting Rights Act through registration drives. He urged Johnson to deny any requests for troops that protected the students. He asserted that, “it is nearly incredible that those people who are voluntarily sticking their head into the lion’s mouth would ask for somebody to come down and shoot the lion.”

The lion of course, was Southern Apartheid and Lee White demanded that his superior avoid any conflict with the forces of Jim Crow.

FBI director J. Edgar Hoover – long known for his surveillance of the Black Freedom movement – informed the Jackson, Mississippi daily paper, The Clarion Ledger that his “organization most certainly does not and will not give protection to civil rights workers.” Almost mockingly, the paper concluded, much to the delight of white racists in the city that, “protection is in the hands of the local authorities.” Local protection was tantamount to an official endorsement of white supremacy, and more than contributed towards the disappearance and murder of James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman, all of whom gave their lives to register Black voters. Aging activist and reformer Upton Sinclair could no longer maintain his silence over the issue and questioned Johnson’s handling of Mississippi Freedom Summer. He took issue with Hoover’s callous and irresponsible abdication of federal authority and wryly observed that, “if murder is not a Federal crime; surely kidnapping is, and it is no quibble to say that the victims were kidnapped before they were murdered…I think we are disgraced in front of the whole world if that horrid crime ends up as a mockery of the government.”

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475 Ibid.
Sinclair, proclaiming that, “I can assure you that the same intense effort that went into the investigation of this and other crimes related to civil rights will be made with respect to bringing a trial to those we think guilty.” But Johnson’s claim was disingenuous as the full weight of federal law enforcement was never brought to bear and several known suspects were never questioned. Only in 2005 did Edgar Ray Killen, known white supremacist, alleged conspirator, and assailant in the murders face trial. He was convicted on three counts of manslaughter over forty years later.

Still, while Johnson mobilized the image of poor whites as a mechanism to ensure support for the War on Poverty, the program's innovative Community Action Programs (CAPs) provided a means to allocate funding through a needs-based system that proved far more racially inclusive than any federal effort hitherto. For the first time, Federal legislators agreed to disburse comparatively large sums of money to foster Black and Latina self-activity and community empowerment. Herbert Hill, the NAACP’s labor director, noted the momentous opportunity that was uneasily embedded in the War on Poverty. He acknowledged that it seemed yet another “extension of white welfare paternalism,” but at the same time, Hill also believed that it remained possible, and indeed, a necessity to, “rescue the antipoverty program from the politicians who want merely a

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479 This is where this chapter breaks with much of the historiography on the War on Poverty. We must view it as contradictory in its representation as a vehicle of white uplift but as quite inclusive in its implementation of Community Action. This at once problematizes early perceptions of the War on Poverty but at the same time allows room to acknowledge the relationship that activists nevertheless forged with the OEO and made a space of their own.
sterile and ineffective program that will mean little or nothing for the Negro community...the NAACP favors a real war on poverty, not a symbolic encounter.” Hill thus recognized the potential if not always the image or intention of the War on Poverty and the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). He recognized that through CAPs, poor people could establish a modicum of local control over federal money and deploy it in any number of ways to mitigate the misery of economic injustice. He and countless others rapidly mobilized the state’s limited – though unprecedented – resources and launched new and creative forms of activism.

Unfortunately, just as the proliferation of Black self-activity became an unintended consequence of the Great Society, the white voting public, the media, and many political leaders launched a violent assault on the program that severely hampered the state’s ability to act on behalf of local communities of color, even if in a limited way. Indeed, the more African Americans successfully secured funding from the OEO and created their own Community Action Agencies, the more strident the opposition became to end the War on Poverty. By the spring of 1965, it received a series of damning blows, each contributed towards decreasing support, calls for defunding, and eventuating in the dissolution of community action by the early 1970s. Tragically, these very blows occurred at the precise moment when the programs proved responsive to local needs. Not surprisingly, the OEO was thus never given the opportunity to make a lasting imprint on the very communities that creatively commandeered its limited resources.

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One need not look any further than the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM). The state’s Black population was perhaps the most impoverished in the nation and child welfare services were nonexistent in many counties. And even though the CDGM had long operated in the state independent of any consistent funding, it periodically shut down and went in and out of business. Its mission to provide daycare and early childhood education for children of the working poor made it an ideal candidate for funding through the OEO’s Head Start program.481 When local community leaders successfully secured a $1.5 million bloc grant to shore up the state’s many financially strapped daycare centers, it seemed Herbert Hill was vindicated in his call for the War on Poverty to be more than a “symbolic encounter.”482

In fact, the grant extended by Head Start was the largest that it awarded, and that summer the CDGM became the model for federally funded, locally controlled childcare. The group elected a prestigious roster of board members that included A.D. Beitell, former president of Tougaloo College, Marian Wright, a lawyer for the NAACP’s legal defense fund, and Rev. James McCree, a well-regarded Mississippi Minister with deep connections in the state’s Civil Rights movement.483 They collectively decided that the Mary Holmes Junior College in West Pointe, Mississippi was an ideal, centralized location for the CDGM to be organized, managed and headquartered. At every level, Black Mississippians autonomously ran the organization, asking for and receiving no input or support from the state’s

481 See Greenberg’s introduction for an explanation of state provided childcare and healthcare in Mississippi.
482 For a complete history of the CDGM see, Schiff and Goodell, 45-59 and Polly Greenberg, The Devil Has Slippery Shoes: A Biased Account of the Child Development Group of Mississippi (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1969). Greenberg was among those most intimately involved with the group through its final years.
483 Schiff and Goodell, 55-58.
notoriously white supremacist government. The OEO thus provided an innovative means by which many local communities of color in the South could bypass racist state governments and directly access federal funding.

This drew the ire of Mississippi’s white Democratic establishment, and not long after, a controversy broke out that forever sealed the fate of the CDGM. Conservative members of Congress – notably white Southern representatives long opposed to civil rights – fought what they considered a grotesque federal overreach and quickly coalesced to protest Black autonomy. Just as the childcare provider received its first infusion of federal dollars, Mississippi’s two staunch segregationist Senators John Stennis and James O. Eastland accused the CDGM of “gross malfeasance and corruption.”\footnote{Ibid.} Stennis launched an investigation, alleging that the Head Start money went not to childcare, but instead to provide legal aid and defense for the Mississippi Freedom Democrats, the opposition Democratic Party that fought for racial and economic equality in the state. He claimed that, “deceit and disorganization” typified the way in which the OEO delegated funds to subversive groups such as the CDGM. Stennis and the local press relentlessly portrayed the childcare organization as a front that subsidized “racial zealots and agitators” instead of providing formula and shelter for poor children.\footnote{Ibid., 50-59.}

As a concession to Stennis, the CDGM relocated from Mt. Beulah to Jackson, a move that in effect, coercively diverted tens of thousands of dollars away from childcare to move across the state. Stennis nevertheless continued to single out the program for superfluous audits, all of which amounted to little more than efforts to intimidate the group. White men forcefully rummaged through the various daycare centers staffed by predominately Black
women, searching for anything that could be perceived as a nefarious use of taxpayer money. Meanwhile, Stennis and Mississippi Governor Paul B. Johnson deliberately misapplied the recently passed Civil Rights law that banned federal funding for nonprofit groups that had failed to integrate. They discovered that eight child development centers were all Black and thus “not integrated,” and therefore ineligible for Federal assistance through Head Start. Within a year, the group lost 50 percent of its funding after several audits revealed “peculiarities,” ranging from “excessive car rentals” to paid absences. Stennis argued that “SNCC types” were responsible for the malfeasance and that Head Start should immediately defund the CDGM, and instead work with the relatively unknown group, Southwest Mississippi Opportunity Incorporated. Both claimed to assist poor children and provide affordable daycare, but CDGM was now tainted with its association to the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

As quickly as Stennis demanded and received the shift of federal funds to Southwest Mississippi Opportunity, he immediately claimed that they too had on their payrolls members of Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. The same “racial zealots” had infiltrated and hijacked this new organization as well. For the next two years, Stennis and Eastland stonewalled the funding for both the CDGM and Southwest Mississippi Opportunity. The ordeal demonstrated just how far white Southern Democrats would go to obstruct the ability of Black Mississippians to mobilize the OEO’s resources to achieve even modest levels of local control. At the same time, by virtue of their complacency and unwillingness to speak out against their Southern colleagues, one discerns just how fearful national Democrats truly were over the prospect that the War on Poverty be seen as a

486 Ibid.
487 Ibid.
purveyor of Black autonomy and assistance. The controversy clearly signaled the resistance that the War on Poverty met as soon as it became a vehicle through which African Americans could derive uncontested control at the local level, especially in Southern states still dominated by white racist lawmakers.\textsuperscript{488} However, that Black Mississippians still managed to navigate the Federal Bureaucracy to secure some limited and deeply contested funding amidst massive pushback, intimidation, and white resistance also reveals the passionate spirit as well as a cautious belief in the possibilities that still might be realized within the War on Poverty.

Unfortunately though, the white resistance and trumped-up scandals that defined the CDGM proved to be typical of what other OEO funded enterprises would also experience. But allegations over the misuse of public funds in Head Start paled in comparison to the explosive findings that critics unearthed in other Community Action Programs. Politicians, media, and law enforcement agencies all uncovered what they believed to be damning evidence linking the War on Poverty to the growing phenomena of urban rebellions and civil unrest. These connections – some fabricated, some real, though all sensationalized – dispelled any hope that the OEO would receive steady and adequate funding, or that the War on Poverty could maintain its image as an initiative that fostered white uplift and racial restoration. That these accusations seldom if ever proved to be accurate was beside the point. So too was the fact that the sensational nature of these rather isolated instances obscured some progress that the War on Poverty had begun to make among some segments of the nation’s poor. It was most important for reactionaries

\textsuperscript{488} Ibid. See also J. Todd Moye, \textit{Let the People Decide: The Black Freedom Movement in Sunflower County, Mississippi, 1956-1986} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) for a well researched account of activism at the county level. Many of those involved with the CDGM went in and out of Sunflower County as well.
to represent the OEO as a means to finance the radical machinations of the urban Black ghetto, be it through cultural events, local redevelopment, or most alarmingly, armed resistance to white authority.\textsuperscript{489} In any case, all represent the ways in which racist opposition to civil rights could be recast by constructing narratives of Black violence and criminality – both of which received license and sponsorship by the state.

One of the earliest of these incidents occurred in Harlem during the summer of 1965, just a year after civil unrest erupted in the neighborhood. Controversy broke out when a young Black writer named LeRoi Jones secured several million dollars of federal funds through one of the OEO’s subsidiaries, Project Uplift and established the Black Arts Theatre. Jones wanted the theatre to be the cultural accompaniment to Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (HARYOU). For over three years, the noted psychologist and native New Yorker, Kenneth Clarke had overseen the growth of HARYOU into one the city’s largest nonprofit vocational and job training institutes.\textsuperscript{490} Jones wanted to further HARYOU’s mission with a series of theatrical productions that would “explore, develop, extend, propagate, and preserve the dramatic arts and talents of the Afro-Americans.”\textsuperscript{491} He staged several plays including \textit{Experimental Death Unit}, \textit{Black Ice}, and \textit{Jello}, all of which conveyed themes of racism, oppression, and genocide while collectively reflecting Jones’ philosophy of Black self-defense, separatism, and Afro-centrism. Here, Jones had taken the

\textsuperscript{491} LeRoi Jones on the mission of the Black Arts Theatre, quoted in Schiff and Goodell, 77.
cultural politics of HARYOU well beyond the liberal, pluralistic calls of the Civil Rights movement as well as Clarke's rather paternalistic mission of vocational training.

Not surprisingly, as soon as OEO director Sargent Shriver recognized the radical nature of the performances that Project Uplift was funding, he instantly shut the program down. He described the OEO’s inadvertent funding of Jones as an “embarrassment that would never happen again.” Yet, in marked contrast to the summer before, Harlem remained calm even as the rebellions broke out in Watts, 2,000 miles away. Some observers argued that Jones’ plays had a “cathartic” affect on the impoverished Harlem community. And even Shriver would later wonder, “if they would have preferred a Watts” to the Black Arts Theatre. Notably, while the Black Arts Theatre was stripped of its federal funding, Jones continued with several projects in the city. While no direct evidence fully accounts for the relative peace that persisted in Harlem through the late 1960s – even as civil unrest in other cities peaked after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. – it is likely that the continuity and strength of the Black arts movement was one cause. In New York, the nation’s largest and most culturally dynamic metropolis, Jones may have provided another crucial outlet for the poor, young, and Black to channel their anger. There was indeed a notable dearth of these outlets in such places as Detroit, Cleveland, Baltimore, and even nearby Newark.

In the wake of HARYOU and the Black Arts controversy, New York Representative, civil rights advocate, and member of the House Committee on Education and Labor, Adam

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492 Ibid.
493 Ibid, 81.
Clayton Powell watched helplessly as his Republican and Southern Democratic colleagues tried to eliminate many of the programs under the OEO, including Project Uplift and Head Start. At one point, Powell accused Sam Gibbons, the senior ranking Committee member and Democratic Representative from Florida of being the "chief assassin" of the War on Poverty. But most tellingly, Powell – whose district was an overwhelmingly Black section of Harlem – defended the War on Poverty to his fellow lawmakers by reminding them that it mostly benefited poor whites. He noted, “there is a battle plan now forming against the War on Poverty to exterminate the future of 32,000,000 poor people, the vast majority of whom are white and I am here to fight for them – not for myself.” He then accused Gibbons of stirring the “hysteira of Black Power” in order to frighten white voters and dismantle Johnson’s domestic agenda. The Harlem Representative thus thought that the best way to shield the OEO from attack was to reiterate that the “vast majority” of those whom it served were white children. But thanks to Gibbons and others who inaccurately viewed the War on Poverty as a state accompaniment to Black Power, Powell noted that millions, including those in his own district, would be adversely affected. That the Harlem Representative framed his argument around the need to “fight” against the “extermination” of the white poor is thus quite noteworthy.

As the Congressional assault unleashed by Gibbons, Stennis, Eastland, and others threatened to undo much of the War on Poverty, an even more widespread attack on the nascent legislation reached a fever pitch as the “urban crisis” reached its zenith. By 1966

496 Ibid.
497 Ibid.
and intensifying over the next two years, headlines such as *The Chicago Tribune’s* bold proclamation that the Johnson Administration had “subsidized riots,” became increasingly common.498 In Roanoke Virginia, the *Roanoke Times* asserted that “militant misfits in the poverty war” received a “blank check...to stir up anti-white sentiment or open violence.”499 In one instance after the next, local newspapers, police, politicians, and perhaps most crucially, angry white observers continually sensationalized or fabricated the link between urban violence and federal funding. And perhaps nowhere did these accusations surface as strongly as in Nashville, Newark, Cleveland, and Detroit.

After civil unrest broke out in Nashville during the spring of 1967, the city’s Police Chief, John Sorace testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee, intending to discredit the War on Poverty. He blamed the uprising on “militant negroes” who had received financial support from liberals in Washington. He claimed that, “the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee is teaching Negro children pure, unadulterated hatred of the white race in a summer school subsidized by the Federal Government.” According to Sorace, the OEO issued a $7,700 grant that funded an experimental “liberation school” whose educators he claimed, participated in the city’s “racial rioting.” The school and the militants who ran it conspired, “to teach Negro history and culture and inspire pride in race among colored children.”500 Sorace accused the educators of, “teaching hatred for the white man,” and that, “we believe in this instance, the Federal funds are helping to perpetuate the

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498 “Subsidized Riots?” in *The Chicago Tribune*, date unknown, Records of the Community Service Administration, Office of Economic Opportunity, “Public Reaction to OEO Programs,” Box 5 CSA/OEO.
500 Associated Press Reports, August 3, 1967 in The Lyndon B. Johnson Papers, White House Central Files (WHCF), Box 27, Folder 2.
problems of our cities.”

Missing from Sorace’s bold claim was any consideration of the resentment felt by thousands of Black Nashvillians, who for generations faced rigid segregation, police oppression, and entrenched impoverishment and inequality. Instead, Sorace proclaimed that the riot’s participants were merely duped by a small cadre of Black militants who incited the city’s poor into an open rebellion which was fed by little more than the unmitigated hatred of white people. Sorace’s claim that “federal funds” were responsible for the civil unrest contradicted the much broader post-War phenomenon of the near total federal disinvestment of the nation’s cities.

The veracity of Sorace’s claims, however, received scrutiny from Shriver and some liberal members of Congress. Following the uprising in Nashville as well as 26 other cities that summer, Sargent Shriver testified before Congress. He defended the role of the OEO and the War on Poverty more generally. Shriver noted that, “in the 27 cities that have had riots this summer, there are 12,128 persons who are direct employees of OEO funded agencies.”

He then figured that, “in the same 27 cities, six of the 12,128 paid poverty workers were arrested and to date, none of the six has come to trial and none have been convicted.” Shriver conclusively added that the property damage accrued during the rebellions totaled nearly $274 million and that the OEO paid rent on 491 properties, none of which sustained damage. Shriver thus argued that his poverty warriors “resolved in conversation rather than in conflict, in mediation rather than with Molotov cocktails.”

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501 Ibid.
502 See Katznelson, When Affirmative Action was White.
504 Ibid.
505 Ibid.
The OEO director defended the War on Poverty and the various Community Action Agencies as mollifying rather than provoking urban rebellion.

However, Shriver’s assessment mattered little in the court of popular and public opinion. The perception of the War on Poverty as the unforgivable catalyst to Black revolt rather than a benign project of white uplift continued apace and only ossified further. By 1967, one study launched by White House fellow J. Timothy McGinley found that nearly 70 percent of the public believed that “the president had gone too far in the Civil Rights area.”

Just as Shriver delivered his testimony, the White House received thousands of letters that at once condemned African Americans for their poverty and violence, but also conveyed the strong belief that the state had acted to enable their actions. Letters from Mildred Griffen and Leo Stronczek summed up the widespread sentiment. Griffen concluded that the riots in Nashville and Newark occurred because, “the Negro had a right to expect handouts without any responsibility.” She implored her friends and community members to protest whenever, “we see our money go to the poor colored.” Stronczek agreed with Griffen, proposing that Johnson rescind the War on Poverty and the Civil Rights legislation, “until we see that these people become civil.” A discourse on the “lawless and uncivilized negro” was of course nothing new, but nevertheless, reached new heights by the late 1960s. And with it, so too did the disillusionment among many whites.

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506 See Weir, “From Equal Opportunity to the New ‘Social Contract’,” in Cross and Keith, 97-99. McGinley allegedly circulated the results widely within the White House and top advisers all grew familiar with the study’s conclusions.
508 Ibid.
509 Leo Stronczek to Johnson, July 25, 1967, Fort Wayne, IN. LBJ/HR/General Box 35.
over the War on Poverty. The calls to defund the measures grew louder as did calls to violently quell urban insurrections launched by young Black men.

Many observers believed that as taxpayers, they were forced to underwrite the unbridled violence that seemed to be exploding throughout Black ghettos nationwide. Angry protestors such as Ardis Kuehne had “conclusive evidence that our tax money is being used to finance these riots staged by these people that supposedly are working for the OEO.”\textsuperscript{510} Pearl Laupert asserted that Black Power advocates started the riots in Detroit after receiving taxpayer dollars and that some even, “want to be the dictators of the United States.”\textsuperscript{511} And perhaps most creatively, Virginia Behnke initiated a letter writing campaign on behalf of “Mr. Average Citizen.” Behnke’s fictional observer lost all faith and respect in Lyndon Johnson as he “refused” to quash Black revolt.\textsuperscript{512} Mr. Average Citizen and his fellow “taxpayers pay these wonderful young men to protect our property and our lives.” Behnke’s “wonderful young men” were the nation’s police officers who could easily dispel the urban discontent if only they were permitted to “open fire and kill off the first of these men (rioting).”\textsuperscript{513} Notably, if we allow Behnke, but also Laupert, Kuehne, and Stronczek to represent a composite of “Mr. Average Citizen,” one might infer the role that white, ethnic working-class Midwesterners played in turning the tide against Johnson.\textsuperscript{514} Regardless, the beleaguered Johnson Administration prevaricated and the violence continued to spread.

\textsuperscript{510} Ardis Kuehne to Johnson, January 22, 1968, LBJ/HR/General Box 35.
\textsuperscript{511} Pearl Laupert to Johnson, July 25, 1967, Ellicot City, MD. LBJ/HR/General Box 35.
\textsuperscript{512} Virginia Behnke to Johnsson, July 28, Tampa, FL Ellicot City, MD, Papers of LBJ, President, 1963-1969, Human Relations. General Files 2/ St 22 (Michigan) July 28, 1967, Box 35
\textsuperscript{513} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{514} Perhaps the most obvious display of Midwest ethnic whites moving toward an explicitly white supremacist agenda was found in the stunning success that George Wallace had during the midterms and primaries during 1965-66 in Michigan, Wisconsin and Indiana. See Michael Rogin, “Wallace and the Middle Class: Backlash in Wisconsin,” Public Opinion Quarterly, (1966), 98-108.
Nearly all respondents – ethnic names or otherwise – viewed Johnson as weak on crime and his policies, precipitating a cultural environment and financial apparatus that enabled Black dependency and fostered violence.

Making matters worse for the Johnson Administration, Sorace’s testimony along with the inflammatory claims of thousands of white observers gained even more currency after a few sensational events. Cleveland, Ohio was perhaps the most alarming example. Since a riot in the Hough neighborhood on Cleveland’s East Side in 1966, the city’s race relations continued to decline. Deep poverty persisted in many Black communities and tension increased between the city’s overwhelmingly white police department and its Black citizens. Nonetheless, some believed that a non-profit, community development group, Cleveland: Now! – initiated by city’s first Black mayor Carl Stokes – was best suited to serve the needs of low income Clevelanders and address some of the problems facing the city. The non-profit received $1.6 million in federal matching funds to launch several neighborhood improvements and disburse small business loans. One local Black activist, Ahmed Evans received close to $10 thousand from Cleveland: Now! to open a bookstore called the Afro Culture Shop. But not even a progressive non-profit dispelled the seething tension and resentment that boiled over one evening during the summer of 1968 in the Glenville neighborhood. Allegations of police brutality spilled into the streets, culminating in a gunfight between the police and a Black militant group known as the Republic of New Libyans. The shootout resulted in the death of three officers and three civilians.\footnote{For a full explanation of the Cleveland riots, see Louis H. Masotti and Jerome Corsi, \textit{Shootout in Cleveland: Staff Report Establishing a National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence} (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 20-23.}
After the uprising subsided, authorities uncovered evidence that Evans was among several of the armed militants. More damningly, he had recently purchased several firearms and stored them in his Afro Culture Shop. Not surprisingly, immediate calls came out to investigate whether or not Evans had used the bookstore as a staging ground for the armed insurrection.\textsuperscript{516} J. Edgar Hoover’s FBI quickly issued a statement that proclaimed Evans and other New Libyans were “a threat to the internal security of this country.”\textsuperscript{517} The Cleveland Press and Cleveland Plain-Dealer ran several incendiary reports that accused Evans of using the public funds to purchase weapons and engage in armed struggle against the city’s police. One reporter claimed that the funds might have been an attempt to “bribe” poor African Americans from rebelling as they did two years earlier in Hough. “By paying off those considered to be explosive elements,” the city’s race relations were supposed to be mitigated.\textsuperscript{518} However, the plan apparently backfired as a huge controversy broke out, at once implicating Mayor Stokes and the War on Poverty as instigators of armed Black insurrection.\textsuperscript{519} The riot torn Hough and Glenville neighborhoods emerged as some of the poorest in the nation. Not surprisingly, both became synonymous with urban blight, decay,

\textsuperscript{516} Donald Williams vs. Federal Bureau of Investigation No. 94-5373, November 14,1959. Testimony online at \url{http://www.ll.georgetown.edu/federal/judicial/dc/opinions/94opinions/94-5373a.html}.
\textsuperscript{517} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{518} Ibid.
and depopulation. Indeed, Hough’s population peaked in the early 1960s with over 65,000 people, but not even twenty years later, in 1980 just over 20,000 remained.  

Though as striking as was the fall out in Cleveland, perhaps in no place did a white public react with more vitriol than in Detroit. With estimates between $40 and $80 million in property damage, the 1967 riots in the Motor City were by far the most devastating and damaging uprisings of any kind in the nation’s history to that point. The White House received thousands of letters demanding that the military violently suppress the rebellion, shift funds away from poverty programs, and instead, simply kill or imprison any Black Detroiter engaged in the unrest. One irate observer named Hawthorne Lane blamed “the Supreme Court, the Justice Department, the Congress and the Administration (for) tying the hands of law enforcement officials to a point where they are afraid to even fight back when being attacked.” He continued that Johnson and the War on Poverty, “made the negro think he is the ruler of the white people, therefore, he does what he pleases because the Federal Government upholds his actions.” Albert Turk argued that the OEO gave “negroes money to arm themselves” and the ability to seize Detroit. He demanded to know “why taxpayers should pay money to be murdered?”

Lane and Turk were among an increasing multitude that now believed the state had initiated Black rebellion through its insidious efforts to mitigate urban poverty. They all expressed the same racist discontent for what they believed the War on Poverty and the

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520 David D. Van Tassel and John J. Grabowski, eds., The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History: Case Western Reserve Bicentennial Commission: http://ech.cwru.edu/
522 Ibid.
523 Albert Turk to Sargent Shriver, August 18, 1967, CSA/OEO Box 5.
524 Ibid.
OEO created. White Detroiter James Andrews clairvoyantly predicted that, “God must be laughing Himself to death at the problems raised by you liberals who have encouraged the negroes to think they can live without working.”\textsuperscript{525} He continued that it would require divine intervention rather than a War on Poverty for “lawless and uncivilized negroes” to achieve the social, economic, and cultural advancement of their white counterparts.\textsuperscript{526} Lastly, Andrews advised Johnson to fire his whole cabinet and appoint, “some men like Wallace of Alabama, Reagan of California, Goldwater of Arizona, and some other people who know that two and two equals four.”\textsuperscript{527} Andrews thus proposed that the only way to halt urban unrest was to turn the government over to an outspoken white supremacist and his right-wing colleagues, all of whom had direct experience with, or were avowedly willing to deploy violence in order to subjugate Black bodies.

However, Turk’s insistence was not to be surpassed by the racist logic of another Detroiter, Warren H. Folks. Folks first declared that the President’s crackdown of the Ku Klux Klan – “that all-American, pro-Christian organization” – allowed African Americans “to achieve their racial integration, amalgamation and cross-breeding of the races.”\textsuperscript{528} He then cynically concluded that “your ultra-liberal anti-poverty agenda may have some merits were it not for the proven fact that your American Negroes are so hungry and thirsty that whisky stores are the places first looted after their sniper and fire-bomb attacks.”\textsuperscript{529} The statement at once emasculated Johnson and infantilized thousands of African Americans.

\textsuperscript{526} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{527} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{529} Ibid.
Johnson was thus the cowardly, impotent father, unable or unwilling to exact authoritative and decisive discipline upon “his” violent and out of control children. Folks thus positioned both Johnson and the urban Black population in a dysfunctional familial relationship that through its subversion displayed the necessity for normative, white male authority backed by the use of violence.

Furthermore, it was Folks’ letter that most deeply displayed the widespread loathing toward the poverty programs that most whites now felt. He demanded to know, “Just how great is your Great Society? No, perhaps I should ask, HOW BLACK IS IT?” The culminating question summed up the widespread loathing over the War on Poverty and the Great Society. Not even two years into it, a vocal and growing segment of the white public seemed to believe that the Great Society accomplished little more than fomenting racial unrest – be it through the direct funding of the Black Arts Theatre, the Afro Culture Shop, and the CDGM, or through the Johnson Administration’s allegedly weak response to Black revolt. One poll even suggested that among whites, only 17 percent approved of the War on Poverty and believed it was “doing a good job.” In any case, Folks represented a widely held belief that the Great Society had become less “great” and more “Black.” The two could not coexist, and as such, the War on Poverty had now gone dangerously awry from an otherwise acceptable mission of white, rural uplift into one that subsidized Black, urban violence. It was a zero-sum proposition according to Folks and undoubtedly, many others: anything great could not be Black and the empowerment of African Americans correlated to disempowerment of white taxpayers.

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530 Ibid.
Throughout the duration of 1967 through 1968, the letters came pouring into the White House and newspapers nationwide printed one deleterious and sensational story after the next. For certain, some viewed the uprisings as an inevitable outcome to years of federal neglect and institutional racism. Edward Richardson believed that the Detroit riots represented a “renewed thrust for freedom” that went beyond the unmet calls for social justice and economic equality in the urban north. He reasoned that, “when we see murderers go unpunished and we see the indifference to the rights and needs of some of the citizens of this country,” rage and desperation accumulated and violence ensued. To Richards, it was the logical outcome of a national “failure to respond to peaceful, dignified and rightful protest.” As artfully as Richardson captured the sentiment of many poor and working-class Blacks who remained confined to the ghettos of the nation’s great cities, his opinion was submerged in the racist proclamations of Beard, Turk, Folks, and millions of others.

Not surprisingly, support for the Johnson Administration crumbled between 1966 and 1967. The President’s approval rating peaked at around 80 percent following the assassination of Kennedy and remained over 70 percent between his defeat of Barry Goldwater and the passage of the Great Society. But by the latter months of 1965, Johnson’s popularity continued to decline, never recovering until he announced to not seek reelection. During the summer of 1967, as rioting broke out in Detroit and elsewhere, Johnson’s approval ratings bottomed out at 35 percent. His approval took still another hit after the Tet Offensive in January 1968. Tet thus initiated one the nation’s most tumultuous


\[533\] Ibid.

\[534\] Ibid.
years as opposition to the Vietnam War peaked as would urban unrest just months later. By year’s end, the image of the Great Society and the War on Poverty had completely shifted from the white, rural, and Southern to the Black, urban, and Northern. Within four short years, violent and uncontrolled Black masculinity manifest in the rubble of riot-torn cities forever supplanted the sympathetic image of Kennedy’s white mountaineer as the signifier of United States poverty. Unemployed Appalachian coalminers such as Tom Fletcher gave way to armed Black militants such as Ahmed Evans as the face of the Office of Economic Opportunity. Black masculinity, and its most ominous and frightening accompaniment, accumulated rage and unbridled violence seemed to have replaced the benign and necessary project of white male uplift as that which were the products of the War on Poverty.535

Perceptions and Reality: Evaluating the War on Poverty

But images and perception seldom inform let alone constitute reality, and in fact, the perception of the War on Poverty among many observers could not have diverged further from what it actually achieved, and equally as important, what it did not. For an anxious public, media, and political establishment to emphasize LeRoi Jones, Ahmed Evans, Black Power, and urban revolt required overlooking or ignoring much of the earlier achievements of the 88th Congress. Prior to the War on Poverty, Johnson and Congressional leadership commandeered the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts through the Capitol.

These admirable measures once and for all dismantled the legal underpinnings of Jim Crow and for the first time since Radical Reconstruction, a major political party advanced legislation in the interest of African Americans in the South. Upon passage of the War on Poverty, the OEO provided a mechanism from which poor communities secured some limited funding, and in fact, facilitated an unprecedented level of local self-activity, all of which of course, was never intended to launch radical projects in the mold of Leroi Jones for example, though nevertheless still provided precisely such a space.

Far more common than the explosive controversies of Jones and Evans were the prosaic ways in which the OEO functioned in concert with local poverty activists. Rhonda Williams has aptly demonstrated how the OEO disbursed federal funds for urgently needed projects such as urban housing. Williams details how Black women navigated the state's Byzantine funding mechanisms to develop sustainable housing alternatives and foster autonomous, Black controlled urban renewal. Likewise, Noel Cazenave has explicated the ways in which local activists in New York mobilized the Community Action Agencies – notably the Mobilization for Youth and HARYOU, to advance neighborhood empowerment. These youth programs, the much maligned HARYOU included, successfully secured Upward Bound funding and according to one estimate, intervened to keep nearly three in four would-be drop-outs enrolled and matriculating in public high schools. Annelise Orleck has explained how young civil rights lawyers converged on Las

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538 Goodell and Schiff, 93.
Vegas to work with welfare rights activists and poor people to establish legal services. Orleck argues that poor Las Vegans worked in a coalition of idealistic lawyers and activists, and often in direct conflict with Sargent Shriver. Nonetheless, the multi-racial, cross-class coalition established several CAPs and used their OEO funding to challenge, and eventually overturn, discriminatory policies long embedded within Nevada's welfare requirements.\footnote{Orleck, 112-117.}

At the federal level, as much of the white public turned against the War on Poverty, they seemed to have ignored how much relief the legislation delivered to the nation's single most impoverished demographic: United States citizens over the age of 62. Medicare and Medicaid offered the largest single attempt to provide non-profit, national healthcare to the poor, aged, and disabled. Indeed, the Social Security Act of 1965 – legislation that included Medicare and Medicaid – was perhaps the most momentous achievements of the 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress. The expansive legislation at once established the state as a healthcare provider and expanded benefits for those with disabilities as well as low-income children and adults. Belatedly then, the United States joined nearly other Western democracies in providing a single-payer, nonprofit healthcare provider for a limited segment of its population.\footnote{France and Britain both deployed the state as a comprehensive healthcare provider immediately following World War II, while the Scandinavian countries followed suit shortly after.} At the same time, the Social Security Act increased adult assistance and within a decade, the nation's aged population saw a drastic decline in its overall poverty rate, going from over 40 percent in 1959 to under 25 percent in 1970. By 1974, after Richard Nixon re-indexed adult assistance under the new Supplemental Security Income program, the poverty rate fell even further to 16 percent. This latter figure was the lowest it had ever been among
seniors 62 and over since the Social Security Administration first recorded such statistics.\textsuperscript{541}

Additionally, the 1965 legislation expanded the eligibility and raised the payments to those who qualified for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Not surprisingly, the program received a near instant boost in claims, and disbursed nearly 20 percent more in benefits from a year earlier.\textsuperscript{542} AFDC greatly expanded as many African Americans who had been formerly excluded could now secure assistance, and between 1965 and 1970, the program's enrollment doubled from 3.1 million to over 6 million. It continued to rise, and did not reach its peak enrollment figures until the Republican Administrations of Nixon and Ford when nearly 11 million recipients participated in program by 1975.\textsuperscript{543} That same year, congress passed the earned income tax credit, enacting a lower marginal tax rate for married couples filing their taxes jointly. AFDC payments combined with adult income assistance and earned income tax credits created the highest levels of Federal welfare assistance in the nation's history. That these figures peaked during the 1970s under the Nixon and Ford administrations remains a fact that both contemporary liberals and conservatives are prone to selectively overlook. Indeed, while legislators enacted these and other provisions, many of which explicitly encouraged marriage and upheld heteronormative citizenship as a condition to receive state assistance, welfare policy in 1960s through the early 1970s produced an indisputable reduction of the

\textsuperscript{541} Stanley M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur, \textit{The Great Society: the High Tide of Liberalism} (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 320-351 and Patterson, \textit{America's Struggle Against Poverty}, 158-159. \\
\textsuperscript{542} Patterson, 171. \\
\textsuperscript{543} Ibid.
nation’s overall poverty rate.\textsuperscript{544} In the first two and most aggressive years of the War on Poverty, nearly 5 million people exited the nation’s poverty rolls. A more expansive view yields a decline in poverty from 22 to 11 percent of the population in the years between 1959 and 1975. Since then, the United States has made virtually no progress in reducing its poverty rate, as the figure has hovered between 11 and 14 percent for nearly forty years.\textsuperscript{545}

Still, despite the new inclusivity of AFDC and several new tax incentives, poverty reduction always occurred unevenly. Moreover, the War on Poverty’s most convincing successes reflected its early perception and original emphasis on white, male economic advancement and uplift. Contrary to the public perception of the late-1960s, articulated by Warren Folks and his demand to know “how Black” the War on Poverty was, it nevertheless most benefited the heteronormative, white, and “male-headed households,” precisely those such as Tom Fletcher and his family. Even the official classification of male-headed household to designate and normalize the nuclear family unit reflected the heterosexist assumptions behind the state’s logic and mechanism of poverty calculation and aid disbursement. As evidence, over 12 million of these male-headed families earned enough income and received enough assistance to exit the official poverty roles between 1963 and 1969, 11 million female-headed – or more accurately defined as unmarried women with children – remained impoverished. Distressingly, this was exactly the same number as before both the Kennedy and Johnson legislation. James T. Patterson has revealed that a closer examination of these figures further unearths the racial and gender


\textsuperscript{545} For another meticulous breakdown of these figures and statistics see the University of Michigan’s National Poverty Center website: \url{http://www.npc.umich.edu/poverty/} accessed on February 3, 2011.
disparity within the War on Poverty. By 1974, only six percent of white, male-headed families and fewer than 10 percent of white men lived in poverty, both historic lows.\textsuperscript{546} By contrast, 17 percent of nonwhite, male-headed families were poor while 27 percent of white, female-headed families still faced impoverishment. But most strikingly, 55 percent of nonwhite, female-headed families remained mired in poverty.\textsuperscript{547}

Delving deeper still, even these disparities masked the true levels of economic misery that persisted through the 1960s and into the 1970s, despite some measurable gains. The Social Security Administration had established an arbitrary and perhaps even specious means of setting the official poverty level, evidenced by its meager calculation of food costs, then estimated at a paltry seventy cents a day. A discrepancy between the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) illustrated the latter’s disingenuous estimations. By the late 1960s, the BLS calculated that the lowest income that still provided a family of four to budget the necessary food, clothing, shelter, and transportation was $6,960 per year. This was nearly twice the dollar amount that the SSA had calculated. Using the BLS income calculation yielded a poverty rate as high as 33 percent, or nearly three times the Social Security Administration’s. But like the SSA, the BLS located the heaviest burden falling on female-headed families of color.\textsuperscript{548}

Conclusively then, AFDC, the earned income tax credit, Medicare, Medicaid, and the variety of other adult assistance programs initiated under Johnson and mostly continued by Nixon all served white, able-bodied men and their families far more broadly and effectively than any other single demographic with perhaps the exception of the nation’s

\textsuperscript{546} Patterson, 159-162 and Mink and O’Connor, \textit{Poverty in the United States}, 37-39.

\textsuperscript{547} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{548} Ibid.
aged. So even while many believed that the War on Poverty served only to stoke the fires of urban rebellion and Black violence and militancy, it in fact achieved the highest levels of success among those whom John F. Kennedy had so diligently campaigned on behalf of nearly a decade prior. Indeed, the War on Poverty must be viewed in its totality as a state initiative that upheld and in fact deepened the chasm of economic inequality along lines of race and gender even as it achieved – by some measures at least – its stated intent of alleviating impoverishment.  

**Liberalism, Militarism, and White Uplift: The Collapse of an Uneasy Alliance**

Then again, perhaps it was never the intention of the state – contrary to what Lyndon Johnson famously declared in 1964 – to wholly “eliminate poverty.” Even at its peak, the liberal coalition that gave rise to Kennedy and Johnson remained far more preoccupied with maintaining United States military supremacy and dominance abroad. Lest one forget, the very 88th and 89th Congress that relished the momentous passage of the Great Society was the same body that put through the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, an ill-fated war measure based on what we now know was obfuscation at the highest levels of the state. The resolution fabricated evidence to present the North Vietnamese as the belligerent party who treacherously torpedoed the *U.S.S. Maddox*. The congressional fiat instantly if fraudulently embroiled the United States into war against North Vietnam even more

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549 See Patterson, Mink, O’Connor, and Weir.
550 See Johnson’s 1964 State of the Union address for one of the first expressions of this.
Between 1965 and 1968, following the Gulf of Tonkin, defense spending topped an average of $300 billion annually. Meanwhile, domestic spending on the Great Society and the War on Poverty never exceeded $30 billion in any fiscal year. When it first passed, the White House guaranteed no more than a comparatively meager $1 billion to eliminate poverty. Defense spending then consistently outpaced even the nation's most ambitious anti-poverty campaign by a figure of over 100:1.552

The Johnson Administration's decision to drastically increase the Pentagon's budget and escalate the war thus at once increased both federal spending and the deficit. Three years earlier, Johnson's predecessor passed the largest single tax cut since the implementation of a progressive, federal income tax in 1913. Kennedy's 1962 tax cut – specifically targeting the nation's highest earning corporations and businesses – ensured that government revenues would drop off sharply in the immediate years to follow. However, the Johnson Administration's strong and unwavering commitment to Cold War militarism suggests that there never truly was what historian and Johnson biographer Jeffrey Helsing described as “the guns vs. butter dilemma.” While Johnson evidently believed that, “two great streams in our national life converged – the dream of a Great Society at home and the inescapable demands of our obligations halfway around the

551 Errol Morris, The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons From the Life Robert S. McNamara, Sony Classic Documentaries. This Morris documentary is a starting point to understanding the misinformation campaign that the Johnson Administration launched in the mid-1960s. See also H.R. McMaster, Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Lies that Led to Vietnam (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 107-179.
world,” the tepid engagement with the former calls into question just how much “butter” the Johnson Administration was ever truly willing to spread in the first place.\textsuperscript{553}

Scholars have long noted such shortcomings of the Great Society and United States liberalism more broadly. One prevailing interpretation – most famously articulated by the sociologists Francis Fox Piven and Richard Cloward – positions the War on Poverty as an instrument to capture and solidify an urban, Black-voting bloc for the Democratic Party.\textsuperscript{554} But this longstanding and rather cynical view does not account for the ways in which both the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations presented their policies in their crucial early phases. From 1959 through 1964, the expansion of the nation’s welfare state relied upon a national understanding that it would restore a so-called worthy population of otherwise, strong, white Southern men, mostly from Appalachia and its allegedly isolated and “racially pure” mountain hollows. Interpreted through this lens, it is not surprising that the War on Poverty disproportionately benefited this very demographic while achieving few economic gains for most people of color. Kennedy’s West Virginia campaign and then his Area Redevelopment Act – the most expansive piece of the New Frontier legislation – heaped much attention upon Appalachia and the white poor. That Johnson and key advisors such as Adam Yarmolinsky, Robert Lampman, Robert Coles, James L. Sundquist, and many others conceptualized the more ambitious Great Society in much the same way should come as no surprise. In those moments where it appeared otherwise, the most racially inclusive and empowering of the Community Action Programs overcame seemingly


\textsuperscript{554} See Piven and Cloward, \textit{Regulating the Poor}. 
insurmountable obstacles to achieve relatively modest and limited victories, most of which were short lived.

In the end, it was private capital in service to the nation’s imperial ambitions that forged a far more lucrative and stable relationship with the state than did poor people. Even as the United States’ legislature acquiesced to a massive people’s movement that demanded an unprecedented expansion of civil rights, welfare, social security, and healthcare, the exigencies of the military-industrial complex nevertheless prevailed. The Cold War fostered, or perhaps more accurately, continued a bipartisan consensus between the major political parties that placed primary emphasis on the violent proliferation and imposition of the so-called free market. Here, the United States’ predominantly white political leadership actively and coercively continued a policy of Anglo-American imperialism that prioritized vital access to markets and natural resources in regions populated by non-white peoples. A violent and militaristic foreign policy – buttressed by billions in defense spending – ensured that the free flow of goods and resources to western consumers would continue unabated while the availability of non-white, cheap labor on foreign soil remained high.\footnote{For some works on U.S. foreign relations in this period see, Thomas J. McCormick, \textit{America’s Half Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), Odd Arne Westard, \textit{The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Sean Wilentz, \textit{The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008} (New York: Harper Books, 2007).}

While the explicit racial justifications of United States foreign intervention, pronounced by Theodore Roosevelt, Albert Beveridge, Henry Cabot Lodge, and others were eclipsed by a popular discourse that celebrated the nation’s new role in the world as the stalwart opposition to Godless and totalitarian communism, the outcome was the same.
Indeed, the postwar polarity between the so-called East and West, most commonly recognized as the division between communist and non-communist regimes obscured a still deeper power play. The anticommunist “West” was in fact a coalition of the former colonial powers that more accurately reflected the Northern Hemisphere’s continued supremacy over, and exploitation of, the Southern. Not surprisingly, the postwar years continued the violent subjugation, domination, and underdevelopment of the Global South at the hands of those nations who had for so long self-identified as Anglo, Saxon, Nordic, or Teutonic.556

Not surprisingly, anticommunism most typically emerged as the new justification to thwart the aspirations of anti-colonial nationalists in Southeast Asia and Africa as well as South and Central America. Illustratively, the codependent, triangular relationship among private defense contractors, rapidly escalating defense budgets, and a nation’s insatiable appetite for natural resources, cheap consumer goods, and even cheaper labor beyond its borders ensured that third-world democracy and racial equality remained a cruel fiction.557 United States’ foreign policy thus continued to place profit margins and the threat of communism before human rights. The latter in fact remained the strict province of so-called Anglo-Saxon (now mostly coded by the adjective, “Western”) civilization, and only stood to strengthen the dividing line between the overdeveloped and underdeveloped


world. An imagined community, built upon a manly conception of white racial citizenship and civic participation that had for generations defined the global color line thus persisted. The language of empire as well as its justifications changed over time, but the willingness of the state to deploy violence to secure “national interests” as well as maintain racial dominance most certainly did not.558

The demands for economic and civic equality made by Black and Brown people within the United States and beyond continued to confront the forces of national and global white supremacy and militarism. That the nation failed to deliver on many of the promises of the Great Society while nevertheless managing to so thoroughly wage war against Vietnam satisfied this logic, and furnishes the most demonstrative evidence. Martin Luther King Jr. famously made this precise point in one of his most provocative speeches. He succinctly argued that as long as the United States prioritized and pursued its unrelenting quest for military dominance, corporate profit, and white supremacy, so too would it sacrifice the dream of freedom, democracy, and self-determination. Before a congregation at a church in New York, King famously explained why he opposed the war in Vietnam. The reverend concluded that, “when machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, militarism and economic exploitation are incapable of being conquered.”559 The perceptive and

558 A burgeoning body of historiography has developed around the racial underpinnings of United States imperialism in the postwar era. See Christina Klein, Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middle Brow Imagination (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), Maria Hohn and Seungsook Moon eds., Over There: Living with the U.S. Empire from World War Two to the Present (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010) and Jodi Kim, Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

559 See “Why I am Opposed to the War in Vietnam,” Martin Luther King Jr., April 30, 1967, Riverside Church, New York, New York. Full transcript available through the Pacifica Radio
intrepid civil rights leader thus recognized the limits of United States liberalism as an ideology that even at its most progressive ambivalently coexisted with such inherently contradictory impulses as profit motives and property rights on the one hand, and equality, opportunity, and democracy on the other.

Unfortunately if predictably, the coexistence was temporary, and ultimately irreconcilable. The War on Poverty never successfully competed for the financial resources that perpetuated United States’ imperialism, nor did it interfere with the powerful and entrenched alliance between the nation’s militarized economy and its corporate clients. And yet, the domestic vision of the War on Poverty remains unprecedented, and the impact of many key provisions are still experienced daily by much of the population. The sweeping changes brought about by the 88th and 89th Congresses ended nearly 100 years of Jim Crow, ensured that more poor people achieved greater access than ever before to federal assistance, created the nation’s first single-payer healthcare system, and disbursed millions of dollars to fund locally controlled community projects. Yet despite the best intentions of the era’s liberals, the most looming legacy of the War on Poverty may well be something that even its staunchest architects could never have foreseen. Ominously then, the ascent of radical conservatism in the decades to follow exploited the fear and resentment articulated by the likes of David Beard, Warren Folks, and other voices we have heard in this chapter.560

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560 Social Activism Sound Recording Project at the University of California, Berkeley – accessible online at http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/pacificaviet/riversidetranscript.html

And even as the Nixon Administration allowed welfare rolls to swell, it concurrently worked to abolish the OEO and render the War on Poverty ever more ineffectual. By the early 1970s, the memory and perception of the prior decade’s liberalism created the context from which yet another epoch of public debate and policy would emerge. This new era once again leveraged the state as an entity of racial control, though in a markedly different way. While Lyndon Johnson never called out the National Guard to violently suppress the rebellion in Harlem as David Beard requested, Beard’s desire soon became reality. In the years to follow, as the perception between liberal policy and Black urban unrest grew, so too did the demand for the state to violently reclaim control over Black space and bodies. Violent Black masculinity coupled with political militancy now surpassed the fear of white failure and poverty as the problem that most threatened the nation’s long-term stability and racial hierarchy. In response, lawmakers, and a complicit public from which they derived support constructed yet another system of control that placed emphasis not on white uplift, but instead, Black incarceration.

So as the representation of the War on Poverty shifted from white and rural to the urban and Black, the reality remained far more complex. Nonetheless, the rift that emerged between representation and belief on the one hand, and the actual impact of the Kennedy and Johnson agenda on the other mattered little. What mattered more was how a white political establishment with the support of an increasingly antagonistic public responded not to what the decade’s liberalism actually achieved, but instead to what they believed it created. What remains is the link forged between the state’s quest to restore fallen members of an allegedly superior race and the new priority of carceral control over the bodies of those deemed violent, disorderly, and indeed, inferior. This link helps us to
connect a global neoliberal economic formation and a national trend towards mass incarceration, confinement, and surveillance that at once signals a violent reassertion of white supremacy both nationally and internationally.
CONCLUSION

White Restoration and Black Incarceration: Manufacturing Control in a “Color-Blind” Society

The carceral network does not cast the unassimilable into a confused hell; there is no outside. It takes back with one hand what it seems to exclude with the other. It saves everything, including what it punishes. It is unwilling to waste even what it has decided to disqualify. In this panoptic society in which incarceration is the omnipresent armature, the delinquent is not outside the law; he is from the very outset in the law, at the very heart of the law, or at least in the midst of those mechanisms that transfer the individual imperceptibly from discipline to the law, from deviation to offense.561

– Michel Foucault, 1975

According to Foucault’s famous study on the birth of the prison, the opening of the Mettray Penal Colony just outside of Tours, France in 1840 signaled the moment where the disciplinary logic of the modern carceral state first clearly emerged. The French historian provides a common point of reference for scholars theorizing the ways in which the modern capitalist nation state at once functions as a regime of regulation, surveillance, and discipline as well as a conduit for trade, commerce, and expansion. And while Foucault’s analysis provides a starting point, it nevertheless possesses limited portability in explaining the specific arrangements governing United States economic, cultural, and political developments over the past generation. Still, Discipline and Punish offers a useful vocabulary and general framework to position not only mid-19th century France, but also, the late 20th century United States. Despite their many differences, the conclusion of this dissertation, like Foucault’s famous study, hypothesizes, imagines, and perhaps even locates a moment in which a fundamentally new system of control and disciplinary logic took root.

The “carceral network” in the United States is certainly embedded in a much deeper history of surveillance, control, and regulation, but nevertheless the realignment and transition from a post-war, industrial economy to one situated firmly in the matrix of global, neoliberal governance still marks a radical departure. Moreover, the desire to maintain and enforce a white supremacy in the post-civil rights era – alternatively referred to as an era of color-blindness – has given rise to what scholars have termed the carceral or security state, periodized here from 1968 into the present. But what they have failed to note is the degree to which this modern era builds upon a previous historical epoch to restore and uplift failed whiteness. Thus the conclusion and final tale of the “fallen” race at the same time raises several new questions, makes some unsettling observations, and may provide an introduction to yet another ominous chapter in United States history.

Might the roots of some of the most central questions of United States sociological, historical, and political inquiry over the past generation be found in the effort to restore fallen whiteness? What accounts for the ascendancy and power of reactionary, right wing, and mostly white conservatism? Does this ascendancy offer an explanation as to why more African Americans now find themselves ensnared in the nation’s prison system in the twenty-first century than found themselves enslaved at any point in the nineteenth? Perhaps more to the point, why conclude a study on tales of the “fallen” race with the entrenchment of a carceral state dependent upon manufacturing the illusion of security,

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control, and order? What does the dissolution of the War on Poverty, the eclipse of midcentury liberalism and the emergence of a prison/military-industrial complex have to do with Daniel Boone, the United States eugenics movement, or a forgotten folk festival on White Top Mountain, Virginia?

The answer lies in a rather bold concluding hypothesis: the expansion and entrenchment of the carceral state may yet be the newest incarnation of white uplift and racial restoration. By presenting a genealogical analysis of racial control and poverty representation, this dissertation has reimagined the history of liberal reform, but also and perhaps more importantly, it has provided a foundation from which to interpret the present. Exploring the variegated ways in which political leaders, professional bureaucrats, academic scientists, and public intellectuals – those who comprise the very leadership and establish the intellectual orthodoxy of the state – have justified and legitimized white supremacy presents still a new and troubling realization. As the very purest and exemplary members of the supposedly strongest race appeared to be morally deviant, intellectually inferior, and behaviorally deficient, any modern, intellectual defense of white supremacy crumbled and became untenable. But rather than defending the indefensible, criminalizing Black masculinity at home and exerting dominance over racialized others abroad has effectively consumed the anxiety and instability wrought by the persistence of white poverty and its corollary, Anglo-Saxon racial failure. By reconfiguring economic inequality as an inscription that writes criminality and violence onto Black and Brown bodies, the purveyors of white supremacy have positioned impoverishment as an unforgivable offense as well as an embodied condition that exists beyond the boundaries of white, U.S.-American
citizenship.563 And while former notions of inherent Anglo-Saxon racial superiority can no longer be taken seriously as an intellectual pursuit – receiving neither the blessings of modern academic science, nor the explicit acceptance of the political mainstream – white supremacy may nevertheless be pursued through the confinement of nonwhite bodies, the control of nonwhite space, and the production and consumption of security by an overwhelmingly white consumer population.

For certain, confinement and control of poor populations is far from a new phenomenon, and indeed, finds a multitude of expressions. This dissertation has merely described one such instance and hopes to initiate discussion on the next. It has demonstrated the ways in which the prized though perpetually troubled population of Upland Southern whites – those who failed to fulfill their racial destiny – were targeted as feebleminded, biological failures, and as a result, institutionalized and their bodies seized by the state. We saw in Indiana how the Board of State Charities believed that confinement and sterilization was the solution to the problem posed by poor “hill people” who arrived from just across the river in Kentucky. In the hills of Virginia, Carrie Buck’s sterilization represented nothing less than the desire among eugenicists to control her reproduction and effectively purge her from the race, thus restoring a proper Appalachian femininity based upon a broader notion of Anglo-Saxon racial purity. The latter was precisely what John Powell so fraudulently put on display high atop the Blue Ridge. Within twenty years of Powell’s spectacle, we then saw how a popular fascination with Kentucky frontiersmen,

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West Virginia mountaineers, and *Beverly Hillbillies* fostered the impetus for a War on Poverty around an eerily similar set of concerns. For their wide variety of differences, each of these disparate expressions revealed the drive to restore what many believed to be a failed or fallen race. However, now in the wake of these efforts, still a new tactic has come to the fore, one that still relies upon bodily control, confinement, and surveillance, though stakes out a very different ideological justification.

Both Anglo-Saxon racial restoration and Black mass incarceration are thus indeed racially based systems of social control and manipulation. But in stark contrast to the efforts explored heretofore – all of which were born from an anxiety to validate, illustrate, and preserve white superiority – mass incarceration and the rise of a prison/military-industrial complex at once acknowledges the impossible dream and definitive limits of wholly restoring “fallen” whiteness while also addressing the economic necessities of the de-industrialized nation. In fact, one way to ameliorate racial anxiety has been to exploit and mobilize the insecurity of white masculinity to violently dominate nonwhite bodies, and coercively regulate nonwhite space. As the Unites States now reckons with the consequences of late-capitalist economic decline, a new disciplinary logic – one that is seemingly hidden though deeply embedded in neoliberal desires of crime control and security has emerged in tandem with the trends of so-called market reforms – producing a new and virulent incarnation of a white supremacist state.\(^{564}\)

This state requires both by cultural and economic necessity, the production of fear and the consumption of security to perpetuate its survival. Most of all, it relies upon the systematic and radical alienation of middle-income and poor whites, the precise demographic whose advancement was most predicated upon post-war prosperity and a racially exclusionary state. In this fertile socio-economic and cultural soil, one locates the seeds of reactionary and radical right-wing conservatism, though to be clear the movement wishes to create a new social order rather than conserve an existing one. This ascendant ideology and movement masterfully bridges the interests of corporate and political elites – those who oversee and advance the militarized and securitized state – with alienated and economically insecure whites. Neoliberal economic policies such as privatization, deregulation, and trade liberalization – all of which disproportionately benefit a small, wealthy minority – are nonetheless embraced by a large segment of the white voting bloc. The failure of many white working-class men to make sustainable economic gains over the past forty years is mollified by their privileged and strategic placement in the new industries of social control and coercive regulation. This reconfigures the identity of many poor and middle-income whites as the shock troops of neoliberal economic reform. Here, a cross-class coalition of low, middle, and upper income U.S. Americans exploit and benefit from the politics of fear and resentment. The collapse of the Kennedy-Johnson coalition provided the locus from which the movement would initiate, but only in the present has it wholly materialized. Thus, the “fallen” whiteness as we have previously understood it is now absorbed into an ideological coalition which explicitly serves the interests of a
corporate state, and alarmingly, this state is economically dependent upon one commodity above all: security, or perhaps more accurately, the idea thereof.565

**The Urban Crisis, Law Enforcement, and the Legacy of the War on Poverty**

The moment where these trends begin to coalesce predates the so-called Reagan Revolution, and extends far beyond its alleged reach. While seldom receiving the same consideration as the Great Society or the War on Poverty, Lyndon Johnson’s Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 was perhaps an even more decisive piece of legislation. Within months of the urban uprisings, and amidst rising levels of militancy and dissent, Johnson and the congress responded by passing a series of measures that marked a departure from the liberal sentiment that typified the previous five years. The Act took aggressive measures to curb the availability of guns by banning sales to minors under 21 and establishing a federal licensing system that monitored all sales and distribution of firearms. It also streamlined the procedures for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to obtain wiretaps. However, most importantly, the omnibus bill included the Law Enforcement Administration Assistance Act (LEAAA). This act provided $100 million to state governments to further delegate to local law enforcement agencies. It also established an ongoing trend to not only enlarge, but also update and in effect, militarize many of the

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nation’s largest police forces. It was this legislation, among Johnson’s final acts as president that the War on Poverty unofficially gave way to a new era defined not by the desire to alleviate poverty, but to instead produce security through increased surveillance and spatial control. If not stated, it was nevertheless clear that the legislation’s new approach was supposed to allay an anxious white public’s fear of Black criminality and militancy while simultaneously bringing to bear a Cold War military apparatus upon domestic police departments. This fashioned the latter into technologically elite fighting units, equipped to control urban space and exert violent retribution with unprecedented efficiency.

Even though it was Johnson’s new legislation that signaled a shift away from funding poor communities through community action and towards policing them with evermore aggressive law enforcement tactics, Richard Nixon nevertheless became the candidate who most profited from his rhetoric of “law and order.” Hubert H. Humphrey thus never capitalized on the late efforts of his former running mate, and during a hotly contested election where segregationist candidate George Wallace captured fifteen percent of the popular vote it was Nixon who prevailed. In fact, 57 percent of voters turned their back on the Democratic Party in favor of either Nixon or Wallace. Humphrey’s base support came from organized labor, African American, and Jewish voters while Nixon won a large percentage of votes among white men from lower and middle-income households, and even more prominently, among rural voters. Between them, Nixon and Wallace collected

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567 See Davis, *City of Quartz*, especially Chapter 4, “Fortress L.A.” 221-265.
nearly 70 percent of the vote.\textsuperscript{568} It was clear that the Kennedy-Johnson coalition now lay in ruins, and that the “high tide” of liberalism had receded into the political abyss.

Among Nixon’s first directives was to appoint a young congressman from Illinois named Donald Rumsfeld to assume leadership over the fledgling OEO. Curiously and perhaps contrary to Rumsfeld’s reputation as a reliable neoconservative, the young bureaucrat nevertheless defended many of the OEO’s programs including community health and job training centers. He also warded off Southern Governors who tried to veto OEO funded projects in their respective states in the effort to uphold segregation. However, Rumsfeld’s tenure lasted only through Nixon’s first term, and upon an even more emboldening and convincing reelection effort, the president immediately abolished the OEO, in its place establishing the Community Services Agency (CSA). Shortly after, Frank Carlucci (another future Secretary of Defense) assumed leadership over the newly formed CSA, and transitioned the increasingly ineffectual bureaucracy into a consolidated clearinghouse for the remnants of the OEO. The community action programs that typified the most innovative aspects of the War on Poverty were abandoned as the rightward lurch to Nixon’s second term became even more strident.\textsuperscript{569}

Operating with great bipartisan consensus, the Nixon administration, with congressional approval, expanded Johnson’s LEAAA, decisively shifting the national policy

\textsuperscript{568} Walter LaFeber’s \textit{The Deadly Bet: LBJ, Vietnam and the 1968 Election} (New York: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2005) is the standard text on the election though LaFeber, as a historian of international relations, places primacy on the role that the Vietnam War had upon the election.

on poverty even further away from liberal prescriptions of job training, community action, and income support and towards the outright criminalization of the poor. Not surprisingly, this policy emerged in tandem with the shifting perceptions of the poor from a rural and white demographic to an urban and Black one. More precisely, the advent of the security state flowed from the seeming inability of the Johnson Administration to adequately control Black masculinity and militancy, and as a result, Nixon and each of his predecessors have easily made the case that crime control and security must be atop any domestic agenda. Between 1972 and 1980 alone, the number of incarcerated men in the United States nearly doubled to over 400,000. Notably, this was before the still more aggressive policing of poor communities of color that accompanied the Reagan-Era War on Drugs. But the dye was cast, and according to statistics from the Department of Justice, by the end of the 1970s, Black men were over 4 times more likely than white men to serve time and Latino men, roughly twice as likely.

Jimmy Carter’s term witnessed no abatement to the ascendant phenomenon, but it was indeed Ronald Reagan who institutionalized the project of mass incarceration even more deeply. During the 1980s, the nation’s incarcerated population doubled again, rising from just under a half of a million in the beginning of the decade to over a million by the end. In California alone, Ruth Wilson Gilmore has noted that the state’s population of incarcerated people increased over a staggering 500 percent from 1982 through 2000.

The nation writ large experienced a similar rate of growth and today, over 2.5 million

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571 Bureau of Justice Statistics – accessed at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/

people are incarcerated and up to six million more are formerly incarcerated. In sum, over 3 percent of the nation's population, a rate far exceeding any in the overdeveloped world remain or have been incarcerated. But these figures alone do not reveal the most striking and devastating reality of mass incarceration upon poor communities of color. Of this 2.5 million, 35 percent are Black men. Yet African American males comprise little more than six percent of the general population. Statistically then, over one in nine Black men between the ages of 20-34 are imprisoned, thus quite literally decimating entire communities.573 Moreover, upon their release, formerly incarcerated people must negotiate a new position in society that has rendered them stigmatized and outside the ranks of full citizenship. Fourteen states – eleven of them in the South – ban for life any convicted felon from ever again voting. As a result, over three percent of the nation's population is permanently disenfranchised with percentages far higher in several states.574

Controlling and confining such a large segment of the population has required and has even received wholesale subsidization from the state. According to Michelle Alexander and several others, the so-called war on drugs provided the necessary cover for the United States government to freely wage war against poor communities, ensuring a veritable blank check from Congress to do so.575 During Reagan’s first term for example, FBI anti-drug funding increased from $8 million to $95 million. Within the Department of Defense, anti-drug spending skyrocketed over 20-fold from $33 million to over a billion by the end

575 See Alexander, 45-55 and Gilmore 37-42.
of Reagan’s second term. Not surprisingly, poor, urban neighborhoods were those targeted most rigorously by local, state, and federal law enforcement. At the same time as federal funding for these efforts increased, allocations for drug treatment and prevention programs declined. All the while, no conclusive evidence has effectively linked crime reduction to increased incarceration, and no credible study has demonstrated that African American or Latino drug use exceeds that of whites or other population groups. Still, the policing efforts have disproportionately affected precisely the former communities. The iniquitous social and demographic devastation inflicted by the Drug War as well as the even longer and continuing trend of mass incarceration are well established and convincingly documented by Alexander, Gilmore, Heather Thompson, Marc Mauer, Christian Parenti, David Garland, Glenn Loury, and many others.

But what is far less noted though crucial to contextualizing these developments is an understanding of how the state has fostered restorative policies of white uplift throughout the twentieth century. We must position the military/prison-industrial complex as yet another one of these polices. Controlling nonwhite bodies and regulating nonwhite space reinforces white masculinity through the venues of the penitentiary as well as urban police departments. Each provides white workers a means to exact state sanctioned violence upon populations that are predominantly African American and Latino. More expansively, the nation’s military adventures deploy this very logic upon “foreign soil” and

576 Gilmore 3-11.
578 See Alexander, 197.
“enemies abroad.” Violence and coercion present an opportunity then to reclaim a manly form of labor predicated upon control, order, and white dominance.

The neoliberal economic formation – its onset occurring in full force precisely as the War on Poverty lapsed – has resulted in the evisceration of the nation’s manufacturing and industrial base. These jobs once provided the bedrock for the expansion of a white middle class in the immediate postwar years.\(^\text{579}\) Over the past generation, however, middle-income workers have witnessed a steady decline in real wages, earning power, and job stability.\(^\text{580}\) As the manufacturing base has declined, so too has the gendered and racialized space of the manly shop floor. And though the factory – with its routinized and regimented labor – was itself a far cry from the frontier independence and masculinity embodied by the likes of Daniel Boone, it nevertheless became a decidedly masculine space. Manufacturing and industrial jobs – often buttressed by the gains of organized labor and Cold War defense spending – firmly established the male head-of-household and nourished the cultural legacy of the white, manly breadwinner.

In its place, one discerns the rise of the service sector with its emasculated reliance upon the hospitality industries and other feminized forms of employment such as healthcare, education, and retail, all of which notably lack the cultural perception of manly

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rigor that typified industrial labor. In 1955, the nation’s largest private-sector employers were General Motors, Ford, U.S. Steel and Chrysler – all of which were unionized and provided middle-class earning potential. By the end of the century, Walmart and McDonald’s were far and away the nation’s largest employers, and not surprisingly, dual family incomes became a virtual necessity to maintain familial financial solvency.

Through this lens, we must interpret the prison, law enforcement, and the military as sites where masculine reclamation and white racial dominance may find expression. The state penitentiary – with a population overwhelmingly comprised of men of color – is among the few spaces in a deindustrialized economy from which working-class men are given the opportunity, and indeed, expected to exert bodily control, coercion, and authority in the workplace.

Likewise, urban police forces – of which only in the past twenty years have undergone drastic demographic transformations – have served a similar function. At the time of the uprisings in Detroit, a paltry 2.8 percent of the force was African American.

Both the New York City and Los Angeles Police Departments were 95 percent white at the time of the Harlem and Watts Rebellions respectively and in fact, the LAPD remained over 80 percent white through 1980. By the mid-1960s, the nation’s five largest cities - New

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582 See Lichtenstein, 5.


York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Detroit - were at least 25 percent Black though all had police departments that were between 85 and 95 percent white.585

The national mythology of the so-called urban jungle gives broader historical context to these statistics.586 Here, large cities are ambivalently positioned as primitive, lawless, and chaotic spaces populated by racial others while simultaneously conceived as hubs of business, culture, and bourgeois refinement. That the former does not threaten the latter has required constant surveillance, enforcement, and the coercive regulation of space. Like the jungles of distant lands, the city must be colonized and controlled by the purveyors of civilization, perhaps modern day Daniel Boones and Kit Carsons. Police, law enforcement officials, and the prison system thus all contain the jungle’s more unruly aspects of poverty, crime, and vice while ensuring that it remains safe for the free and unimpeded flow of commerce as well as white bodies. The largest law enforcement agencies in the country then have thus provided white workers (police officers) a job description that necessitates the coercive control and the manly ordering of public space for the private benefit of (mostly) white actors.587 This positions the police and the penitentiary as sights of production where workers manufacture the commodity of

security, and like all methods of manufacturing, this too yields by-products: in this case, none more obvious than white supremacy and racial control.

But the phenomenon extends beyond even the nation’s borders. The Department of Defense, propelled by a series on-going, seemingly never-ending conflicts and wars has delegated trillions of dollars in state subsidies to contractors who employ hundreds of thousands in high-tech, upper-income occupations. At present, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that “defense related outlays” account for over half of all discretionary spending.\(^{588}\) Perhaps nowhere do we see the financial imprint more deeply ensconced than in the nation’s four wealthiest counties. Falls Church, Loudoun, and Fairfax in Virginia and Howard County in Maryland – all of which comprise the Washington D.C. metropolitan area – house the corporate infrastructure of the nation’s military industrial complex. Booz Allen Hamilton, Northrop Grumman, Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, and the Applied Physics Laboratory are among the top private employers in each county.\(^{589}\) The Department of Homeland Security is a top employer in Loudon and the Central Intelligence Agency along with its 20,000 employees has long made its home in Fairfax. And curiously, in an age of alleged austerity and “belt-tightening,” few have called for scaling back such huge portions of federal spending on defense and so-called security-related industries.

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Alternatively, the massive expansion of the state prison system has also garnered billions in tax dollars and enabled millions of people – often less educated and from rural areas – to find relatively stable, though still fairly low-income work. Small towns outside of major metropolitan areas have been among the most prominent sites of prison construction. Between 1980 and 2000, the Urban Institute found that 350 state prisons were built in rural areas, and that between 1992 and 1994 alone, over 60 percent of new prison construction occurred in nonmetropolitan areas. Moreover, passage of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 – among its dozens of other provisions – provided the Federal Government with an unprecedented $10 billion to finance new prison construction and allocate funding to the states to hire more police officers and update their weapons. These federal measures alongside the “get-tough” policies of several state governments have effectively turned prison construction and maintenance into a reliable and steady growth industry. The penitentiary and law enforcement coupled with the military thus collectively represent the means by which the state has most thoroughly addressed economic decline thorough the creation of a new industry rooted in a manufactured desire for security and control.

Upon closer examination, the success and proliferation of these industries necessitate the perpetuation and violent enforcement of a national and global color line as the last defense against racialized, alien enemies. To be sure, the line is porous and most certainly permits, and indeed, seeks limited expressions of racial and cultural pluralism. Through the politics of limited inclusion, there will always be those “who are just like us” or

“share our values.” People of color have and will continue to advance and assume positions of leadership in corporations and at the highest levels of state. Yet the rhetoric and valorization of the so-called color-blind society, and in fact, even the advancement of individual people of color does little to threaten the underlying institutional and economic infrastructure of a white supremacist state. To the contrary, it is now as entrenched as ever, able to flourish with little contestation through the logics of late capitalism. This logic artfully mobilizes the production and exploitation of fear along with the consumption, commodification, and fetishization of security, control, and surveillance as the only way to ensure domestic tranquility and global supremacy.\textsuperscript{592} Perhaps most brilliantly if distressingly, is the way in which violence and fear function as naturalized and intrinsic features perforce to the manufacturing and consumption of security. Thus the state must create an enemy and produce fear to legitimate an extension of military power abroad and police surveillance at home.\textsuperscript{593} Visible displays of state violence and coercion along with the ever-increasing methods of surveillance thus make the implicit argument that danger and fear ubiquitously exist, and thus require the constant consumption of security. Not surprisingly, the neoliberal marketplace must respond accordingly.


\textsuperscript{593} For an effective treatment of this topic see Chalmers Johnson, \textit{The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic} (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004).
Back to the Hills of Virginia

Lest these forces remain overly abstract, theoretical, and seemingly divorced from the context and content of this dissertation, we return to the western hills of Virginia one last time. Here, in the very hollows where Carrie Buck lived, where Arthur Estabrook located the infamous Win tribe, and where John Powell launched his festival there now sits three state penitentiaries, all built between 1999 and 2008. Coincidence or not, just after Democratic President Bill Clinton signed a massive increase for prison funding, Virginia’s Republican Governor George Allen abolished parole in 1995. Instantly, incarcerated people in the Commonwealth of Virginia experienced a drastic increase in the time they spent imprisoned.\(^{594}\) Not surprisingly, with a mandate that all convicted felons serve out the duration of their sentences with no chance for parole, Virginia’s prisons became tremendously overcrowded. As a response, Allen – with the use of federal dollars – initiated a prison-building boom, and between 1995 and 2008, the Commonwealth constructed 14 facilities at a cost of $500 million.\(^{595}\) Most recently, the Pocahontas State Correctional Facility opened in the depressed Appalachian city of Pocahontas, located on the western edge of Tazewell County. The facility brought with it over 300 jobs to a region with an economy long dependent upon a collapsed coal industry. Red Onion State Prison and Wallens Ridge State Prison – both built in 1999 in Wise County – are identical structures located just miles apart in Big Stone Gap, and opened as maximum-security facilities. The prisons confine nearly 2500 inmates, employ over 800 Virginians, and have an annual

\(^{594}\) For a brief summary of the impact see Shahidullah, 31-33.

\(^{595}\) Jon Ozmint, “Adopting ‘No Parole’ Requires Paying for its Consequences,” Post and Courier, January 30, 2008. As the prison population continues to increase, it is estimated that five more may be required to avoid overcrowding.
payroll totaling $27 million. These institutions provide a foundation for a local economy that long ago collapsed after the mechanization of coal mining and the emergence of mountain top removal, an industry requiring far less labor than the former long-wall mining methods.

Following Allen’s successful bid to abolish parole, those who have been convicted of the most serious crimes now reside under maximum-security confinement in Red Onion and Wallens Ridge. Most are serving life sentences, and are granted virtually no rehabilitative services. The two facilities are widely known for being among the toughest in the state, if not the nation. The pervasive hopelessness has created a powder keg where frustration accumulates, and violence and abuse are part of daily life. This is likely why Red Onion and Wallens Ridge have been in the news for reasons beyond their economic impact to Big Stone Gap. Over the past decade, each has been the target of investigations by the Washington Post, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International. The combined inmate population is over 80 percent Black, most of whom are from urban areas around Washington D.C. or Richmond. Notably, these cities are both over a five-hour drive for family and friends wishing to visit. However, the guard and staff population is over 90 percent white, and drawn from a radically different rural culture. Reginald Yelverton, an incarcerated African American at Red Onion described the prison as “very terrible, very racist.” Both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch were denied entry into the facility though representatives interviewed several prisoners, all of whom reported that beatings were regularly administered to shackled and handcuffed inmates, and that

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597 Ibid.
medical staff worked with guards to cover up records and evidence of physical abuse.\textsuperscript{598}

Prison guards at Red Onion and Wallens Ridge are also among the only maximum-security facilities where live ammunition is provided as a means of securing order and control.

These foreboding institutions, built into some the nation's most picturesque scenery cast a figurative shadow upon several notable landmarks in the town of Big Stone Gap. Just down the mountain from Wallens Ridge, one finds museums, specialty shops, and an outdoor theatre, all of which highlight the town’s Appalachian culture, scenery, and personalities. One would find it hard to miss the many sites and references to Big Stone Gap’s native son: none other than John Fox Jr. Just a block off of the town square, one stumbles upon the John Fox Jr. museum, the restored former residency of the novelist. It was in this modest mountain home that Fox wrote \textit{The Trail of the Lonesome Pine} and \textit{The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come}. In one area, a placard maintains that within years of its publication, \textit{The Trail of the Lonesome Pine} became the nation’s first novel to garner sales of over a million, a claim that is almost certainly untrue.\textsuperscript{599} Still, reverence for the man and his celebrated Appalachian opus are on display elsewhere as well. Each summer, the Big Stone Gap theatre stages several open-air renditions of the novel. It achieved such popularity as a


\textsuperscript{599} The Bible and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s \textit{Uncle Tom’s Cabin} are universally regarded as the highest selling novels/books and Stephen Crane’s \textit{the Red Badge of Courage} certainly outsold \textit{Trail of the Lonesome Pine} as well.
local destination and attraction that the play has since been recognized as the “Official Outdoor Drama of the Commonwealth of Virginia.”

Fittingly then, the study ends with the commemoration of one of the very figures with whom we began. The theatrical production remains quite faithful to John Fox’s original 1908 work. Like virtually all of his other novels, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* portrays an age-old feud – the origins of which no one knows for certain – between two leading mountain families: the Tollivers and the Falins. All of the requisite narrative devices are at play: violent and tempestuous mountaineers who harbor as much resistance and suspicion towards encroaching modernity as they do any outsider or low country intruder, and of course, a tortured romance between one of these outsiders and the very daughter of a violent, feuding mountaineer. The chaotic and rugged Appalachian landscape comes to life in the lawless code of the mountains where respect for manly honor exceeds the importance of all other social conventions. June Tolliver, Fox’s heroine “was of pure English descent, she spoke the language of Shakespeare.” Fox’s lurid descriptions of pristine and virgin timber along with the soaring peaks and unexplored hollows of Big Stone Gap and the surrounding Blue Ridge allegorized the very body of June Tolliver, and Appalachian feminine purity more generally. *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* is – among other things – a sexualized drama whereby the penetrative forces of the railroad, entering overland and the extraction of coal from beneath threatened both the geological and environmental purity of the land, and equally as alarming, sexual and racial purity of its people. As the railroad brought the “pure English” mountaineer into contact with those

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600 See the Virginia’s official state website for various tourist attractions in Big Stone Gap, including information of the town’s production of *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* http://virginiaturism.info/site/cities.asp?city=Big%20Stone%20Gap
who Fox described as “furriners,” the formers’ blood and customs were forever compromised and contaminated. Likewise, mining coal at once reconﬁgured the rugged, independent frontiersman into a subservient, wage laborer whose pure whiteness was now cast in doubt beneath a face blackened by coal dust.

At ﬁrst glance then, Fox’s novel and its modern day adaptation appear to be little more than a pulp romance embedded within the stereotypes and mythology of an American region. But the true drama of the text emerges with its alarming, if perhaps unintended prescience. The tension of economic dislocation and restructuring undergird an otherwise banal plot while fear and suspicion motivate each and every action undertaken by the Tollivers and Falins. Though beyond all else, the success of the novel and play relies upon the reader or viewer to ascribe a regional exceptionalism to Big Stone Gap and the Southern Mountains more generally. For the romance between Jack Hale – the handsome engineer from the city and June Tolliver – the pure and virginal mountain mistress – to gain any literary currency, one must identify and locate within the hills, an isolated, primordial purity that encompasses biology, race, culture, and sexuality. And even as Fox positions Hale and Tolliver as protagonists deserving of each other’s affection, despite their divergent backgrounds and culture, one cannot read the novel or watch the play without sensing that their relationship symbolizes what may well be lost and forever unrecoverable.602

Today, as visitors funnel into Big Stone Gap’s intimate theater to watch Virginia’s official outdoor drama, there resides an ironic and troubling resolution to Fox’s now

602 For a nice contextualization of Fox see Darlene Wilson, “A Judicious Combination of Incident and Psychology: John Fox Jr. and the Southern Mountaineer Motif,” in Dwight B. Billings, Gurney Norman, and Katherine Ledford eds., Back Talk from an American Region, 98-118.
century-old novel. Both the long deceased writer and the town’s contemporary boosters alike have advertised the Virginia Blue Ridge as a remaining vestige of frontier culture, and a reserve of racial and sexual purity. Predictably, the local economy’s reliance upon the prison-industrial complex receives no attention in the glossy tourist brochures that so effectively emphasize the region’s natural beauty and cultural mythology. But nevertheless, the mountain landscape at once documents as well as brilliantly displays the rocky transition from industrialization to late capitalist decline. As tourists gather to watch the Tollivers and Falins negotiate one emerging economic order, yet another finds expression just up the hill at Wallens Ridge State Prison. The rise of industrial capitalism dramatized in *the Trail of the Lonesome Pine* required adaptive ideologies of social control, regulation, and discipline, all of which white supremacy proved a lynchpin in not only maintaining, but indeed, constituting.

As Big Stone Gap along with hundreds of other towns in the United States just like it attempt to adjust and remain viable in the twenty-first century, could it be that a new drama might follow the same script? Might the winding five-mile journey from Big Stone Gap’s outdoor theater up to Wallens Ridge be more than a trail of lonesome pines? If the trail begins with a play valorizing a secluded land of racial purity and terminates with an institution that largely functions as a setting for violent racial control, might fact and fiction become ever more difficult to discern? Perhaps the trail of lonesome pines that so scenically leads from the theater to the prison may at once provide a path towards understanding these vexing questions while at the same time, raising a host of others.
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