

"THE FORCES THAT SHAPED  
MODERN AMERICA" (1):

**AMERICAN MYTHS:**  
**FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY, CAPITALISM**

Courtney Fullilove  
Wesleyan University  
[cfullilove@wesleyan.edu](mailto:cfullilove@wesleyan.edu)

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***"50 Nights of Unrest in Portland"***

Demonstrators marching with flares in Portland, Ore., to protest the death of George Floyd.

***July 17, 2020,  
New York Times***



***"Federal Agents Unleash Militarized Crackdown on Portland"***

Federal officers pulled a protester into a courthouse on July 10 as protesters gathered in downtown Portland, Ore

***July 17, 2020,  
New York Times***



Left, a statue of Robert E. Lee was put in storage by the city of Dallas before being sold at auction. Right, a Confederate monument in Nashville was recently vandalized. Ashley Landis/The Dallas Morning News, via Associated Press

*New York Times*, June 22, 2019

## Dominant American Myths

- Freedom
- Democracy
- Capitalism
- Modernization/Development [post-World War II]

## Dominant American Myths

- To understand US history as a site of conflict between professed ideals and failure to honor them is also to understand the roots of the current crisis.
- Broadly, the United States was founded on a commitment to “freedom,” which was never properly defined
- Another is the growth of the US as a political and economic powerhouse on a world stage.
- These are connected histories.

## Global Contexts for American History

- In its origin, the United States was a **settler colony** of Great Britain and a **commodity producer** for international markets (tobacco, fur, indigo, lumber).
- **State intervention** was required to clear land and secure access to international markets for the export of agricultural surplus.
- This intervention entailed the (1) **removal** of indigenous people, (2) establishment of coercive labor regimes [especially, **slavery**], and (3) the continued use of state power to enforce these policies for the expansion of cotton production in the US South.

## Global Contexts for American History

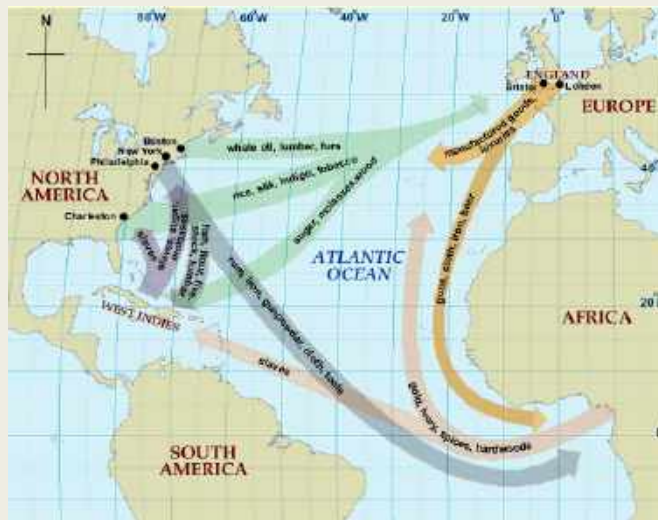
- This lecture tracks the emerging commitment to **capitalist democracy**, and the conflicts and exclusions it entails.
- It is organized around the following three topics:
  - *Thomas Jefferson's idea of the nation of an "empire for liberty"*
  - *Interstate/Domestic Slave Trade*
  - *Removal of Indigenous People*
- We will also discuss the outcomes of these federal policies in the aftermath of the American Civil War (1861-1865) [Reconstruction and Progressive Reforms at home and abroad]



## Global Contexts for American History

- **The American Revolution was just one byproduct of global war between European powers in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.**
  - *Empire was expensive, and hard to manage, and attempts at reform and taxation to pay off European war debt provoked rebellion.*
  - *North America was a particular target because its commercial development made it not just a source of raw materials, but also a market for British consumer goods.*
  - *Shortly, global trade meant global war*
- **This system of global trade relied on slave labor –**
  - *multinational production of sugar, tobacco, coffee, chocolate, dye-stuffs, rice, hemp, and cotton.*
  - *Slave labor enabled the growth of global commodity markets.*

## ”Triangular Trade”



Main commodities traded between Africa, Britain, the Caribbean and North America at the height of the slave trade  
[nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/africa\_caribbean/docs/trade\_routes.htm]

## Thomas Jefferson's "Empire for Liberty"

Thomas Jefferson, on continental expansion, enabled by European warfare and withdrawal from North America:

" . . . we should have such an **empire for liberty** as she has never surveyed since the creation: & I am persuaded no constitution was ever before so well calculated as ours for extensive empire & self-government."

"By enlarging the **empire of liberty**, we multiply its auxiliaries, and provide new sources of renovation, should its principles, at any time, degenerate, in those portions of our country which gave them birth." – Jefferson to president and legislative council, Speaker, and House of Representatives of the territory of Indiana, Dec. 28, 1805



## What is an Empire for Liberty?

- Territorial and ideological program for continental expansion and self-government
- Program of agrarian republicanism and citizenship: the yeoman farmer
- Republican form of government (organized political party, not just popular sentiment)
- Commitment to Expansion

## What is an Empire for Liberty?

- **Healthy Political System:** National government free from any taint of corruption
  - *No national debt*
  - *Reduced government military expenditures*
  - *Repealed direct and excise taxes*
- **Land:**
  - *Unobstructed access to an ample supply of open land*
- **Commercial Expansion:**
  - *liberal international commercial order that would offer adequate foreign markets for America's agricultural surplus*

## Louisiana Purchase (1803)



- Americans regard free navigation of the Mississippi River and right of deposit at New Orleans as essential to national interest.
- Acquisition of 828,000 square miles (2,144,000 square kilometers or 529,920,000 acres) of France's claim to the territory of Louisiana
- 15 million dollars -- doubles size of US
- France needs the money to pay war debts, and its hopes of empire in North America were ended by the Haitian Revolution (1804)

## Thomas Jefferson's Dilemmas

- Jefferson believed that slavery made whites into despots . . .
    - *He was also a slaveowner who declined to free even the slave who bore his own children.*
  - He supported gradual emancipation and believed slavery would die out of its own accord as the virtuous yeoman farmer moved west . . .
    - *But instead policies of westward expansion support the growth of a plantation system based on slave labor.*
  - He drafted an ordinance that would have prohibited slavery in western territories after 1800 . . .
    - *But he also participated in the drafting of a Constitution that secured the expansion of slavery.*
1. *Southern states, which had the greatest numbers of slaves, counted 3/5 of each slave toward representation in Congress, meaning that Southern states wielded enormous power over the federal government.*
  2. *The Constitution allowed the continuation of the Atlantic slave trade for another 25 years, until 1808.*
  3. *The domestic slave trade continued unabated, and in fact, increased dramatically.*

Thomas Jefferson, in response to the charges of a French naturalists that plants, animals, and human beings degenerated in America:

“ . . . I am safe in affirming that the proofs of genius given by the Indians of N. America, place them on a level with Whites in the same uncultivated state . . . . I believe the Indian then to be in body & mind equal to the white man. I have supposed the black man, in his present state, might not be so; but it would be hazardous to affirm, that, equally cultivated for a few generations, he would not become so.”

-- Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785)



# Interstate Slave Trade/ "Second Middle Passage"



## Interstate Slave Trade

- Between 1808 and 1861, a million slaves were sold from the upper to lower South.
- States like Virginia and Maryland no longer relied on large numbers of slaves to farm tobacco, which had declined in productivity and profitability during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Those states profited from the interstate slave trade as well.
- Richmond was a center of the slave trade in the Upper South, Louisiana in the lower South.
- Slaves were transported on forced marches, “down the river” on the Mississippi, and on railroad cars to the lower South – Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Kentucky – to farm cotton on new and growing plantations.

## Coffle for Transporting Slaves



An old print of a group of slaves being taken to a slave auction.

## Slavery (Capital and Finance)

Northern investors and speculators fueled expansion by improvising new financial instruments to extend loans to planters, and they benefitted directly from the profits of slaved-produced cotton.

- *There is an historiographical tendency to regard slavery as primitive and anti-capitalist, but in fact slavery is essential to the growth of modern capitalism.*
- “The cotton and slave trades were the biggest businesses in antebellum America, and then as now, American finance developed its most innovative products to finance the biggest businesses.” (Ed Baptist and Louis Hyman)
- “In the 1830s, powerful Southern slaveowners wanted to import capital into their states so they could buy more slaves. They came up with a new, two-part idea: mortgaging slaves; and then turning the mortgages into bonds that could be marketed all over the world.” (Ed Baptist and Louis Hyman)
- Slave-produced cheap cotton (1) produces a consumer revolution, and (2) destroys alternative circuits of production, making more territory and labor vulnerable to encroachments of global economy (Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton* [133-4])

## Plantation account book

Name	Date	Quantity
John Smith	1860-01-01	100
Jane Doe	1860-01-02	120
...	...	...

Title: The Cotton Plantation Record and Account Book, No. 3: Suitable for a Force of 40 Hands, or Under [page 73]  
Description: Daily record of cotton picked by each slave at Buena Vista Plantation.  
County: Warren  
State: Mississippi  
Country: United States  
Date: 1860  
Creator: Britt, B.F. (overseer); Affleck, Thomas

# Plantation Inventory of goods & Chattels

The image displays a historical document titled "Plantation Inventory of goods & Chattels". The document is presented in two columns: a handwritten list on the left and a typed transcription on the right. The transcription is set against a yellow background.

**Handwritten List (Left Column):**

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# Plantation Slave Inventory

*A List of Slaves on the plantation*

Name	Age	Sex	Color	Value	Remarks
Lilla	20	♀		100.00	good hand
Eliza	20	♀		100.00	ditto
Eliza Ann	11	♀		50.00	good hand
Fanny	11	♀		100.00	good hand
Long Branch	20	♂		200.00	strong and active
Ben	20	♂		100.00	well adapted for his
Eliza	20	♀		100.00	good hand
Sam	20	♂		100.00	good hand
Abigail	20	♀		100.00	very good work
Peggy	10	♀		100.00	good hand
Fanny	10	♀		100.00	good hand
Henry	10	♂		100.00	good hand
Samuel	10	♂		100.00	good hand
Oliver	20	♂		100.00	good hand
Reuben	20	♂		100.00	rather strong hand
Angeline	20	♀		100.00	very good hand
Margaret	20	♀		100.00	strong and active
Lilly	20	♀		100.00	very strong hand
Lucy	20	♀		100.00	good hand
Martha	20	♀		100.00	good hand
Lydia	20	♀		100.00	good hand
John	20	♂		100.00	very little work
William	20	♂		100.00	good hand
Elizabeth	20	♀		100.00	ditto

## Slave mortgage

*List of Slaves mortgaged to the Citizens' Bank  
Jan. 1831.*

50	Henry
31	Thomas
23	James
26	John
9	Robert
1	William
27	George
11	Charles
6	Richard
3	Edward
4	John
11	13

*Approved at N. Orleans  
B. M. M. M.*

"List of Slaves  
Mortgaged to the  
Citizens' Bank,"  
Courtesy of the  
Louisiana Banking  
Series, Manuscripts  
Collection, Louisiana  
Research Collection,  
Tulane University  
Libraries, New  
Orleans, Louisiana.



## Slavery (Capital and Finance)

The expansion of cotton production South required land, labor, and capital. This justified:

- New methods of industrial labor control
- New financial and accounting instruments
- Seizure of land to farm

## Removal of Indigenous Peoples

- On paper, the land had been secured as a result of the Louisiana Purchase, the outcome of attempts to nullify French and Spanish claims to the continent.
- But in practice, these lands were not open. They had been settled for centuries by many indigenous tribes and confederations.
- We talk about North America as if it was constructed around European designs on the continent, but deteriorating relations between indigenous tribes set the stage for the American Revolution.
- Europeans are the exotic other incorporated into native lands.

## Removal of Indigenous Peoples

- The federal government perceives need clear western lands of their inhabitants to make way for cotton farmers. As cotton economy booms, land hungry settlers clash with Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Creek populations who inhabit Southern territories.
- There is a shift from a policy of “conquered nations” to “civilization,” and then again from civilization to removal.
- There is an emerging conviction among Anglo-Americans that perceived deficiencies among natives exist and are racial rather than cultural – and thus that there is no possibility of civilization.

## Removal of Indigenous Peoples: Components of “Civilization”

- Assumption of assimilation
- Agriculture (vs. hunt)
- Private Property
- Religion
- Education
- Government

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- Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek and Seminole as the five “Civilized Tribes”

## Rise of Racist Justification for Removal

- There is an emerging conviction among Anglo-Americans that perceived deficiencies among natives exist and are racial rather than cultural – and thus that there is no possibility of civilization.
- Senator John Forsyth of Georgia, arguing for Indian Removal Act 1830: Natives are: “a race not admitted to be equal to the rest of the community; not governed as completely dependent; treated somewhat like human beings, but not admitted to be freemen; not yet entitled and probably never will be entitled, to equal civil and political rights.”

## Removal of Indigenous Peoples: "Trail of Tears"

- After the admission of Mississippi and Alabama in 1817 and 1819, respectively, the population of white settlers increases dramatically.
- In 1828, Andrew Jackson is elected on a promise to remove Natives from lands in the Southeast. He honors their loyalty with a removal bill the following year.
- Following the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830, federal troops oversee forced relocations of approximately 60,000 Native Americans to areas west of the Mississippi River ("Trail of Tears").
  - *On the eve of the deadline for removal, white settlers ring the Indian Territory in Georgia with state militias and federal troops.*
  - *Between 1836 and 1839, the Cherokee people and their roughly 1,600 black slaves are relocated overland, on foot, to present-day Oklahoma. Approximately 4,000 die en route.*

## Removal of Indigenous Peoples: "Trail of Tears"



National Parks Service image [<https://www.nps.gov>]

Removal of Indigenous Peoples:  
"Trail of Tears"



A 1942 painting by Robert Lindneux depicting the Cherokee on the Trail of Tears



## Removal of Indigenous Peoples: Irony of Andrew Jackson's presidency

- Jackson frames his policy as protection of natives and an exercise of GA's sovereign rights.
- Jackson styles himself as a champion of the common man against the "slaveocracy" and sees himself as clearing land for Jefferson's yeoman farmer -- but in effect, he allows powerful economic interests to take hold and cultivate cotton on large scale.



## Cherokee Removal/The “Civilized Tribes”

- 1783 – Peace of Paris ending Revolutionary War
- 1783 – North Carolina grants Cherokee land to its citizens; Cherokees cede land to Georgia
- 1790-1 Indian Trade and Intercourse Act and Treaty of Holston proposing “civilization” program
- 1800 – Moravian mission
- 1802 – US and GA sign compact regarding future Indian land cessions
- 1813 – Creek War – Cherokees fight with US against insurgent Creeks
- 1819 – More land cessions for western lands
- 1821 – Cherokee syllabary
- 1826 – Cherokees cede last land in Georgia
- 1827 – Cherokee Constitution
- 1828 – Cherokee Phoenix
- 1828 – Andrew Jackson elected
- 1831 – Cherokee Nation vs. GA “domestic dependent nation
- 1832 – Worcester vs. GA – uphold Cherokee sovereignty in GA
- 1835 – Treaty of New Echota signed by select Cherokee leaders, conceding to removal to Western reservation land.
- 1836 – Martin Van Buren elected president
- 1838 – Removal of Cherokee Nation, “Trail of Tears”
- 1839 – Cherokee execution of Major Ridge, John Ridge, and Elias Boudinot, who had conceded to removal.

## Removal of Indigenous Peoples as an Ongoing Process

- Removal does not end with the Trail of Tears.
- Congress ends formal treaty-making with Indians (1871)
- In West, white settlers destroy bison to starve Natives.
  - *'Kill every buffalo you can! Every buffalo dead is an Indian gone.'* [1867, US Army official to troops]
- Dawes Act (1887) authorizes subdivide Native American tribal communal landholdings into individual and family allotments, replacing traditional land tenure with private property holdings.
- Massacre at Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota (1890): US Army kills hundreds of Lakota people in effort to disarm the camp.

## Civil War and Reconstruction

- Slavery and free labor represented competing labor models for agricultural expansion between the 1820s and the 1860s. As agricultural economies specialized and regional economies diversified, white settlers in the North came into conflict with an increasingly assertive and aggressive slave bloc in the South.
- The Civil War emancipated 4.2 million slaves, redefined citizenship, and established a unified nation. (Eric Foner's "second American Revolution")
- In national terms, the Civil War ended slavery but failed to resolve inequity.
- In international terms, the war shifted cotton production to other parts of the world to fill the gap left by the wartime South, converting more of the global countryside into production of global commodities.



After the Battle of Gettysburg  
*Collection of the New York Historical Society,*  
*nhnycw/ad ad23054*  
[[https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/national\\_cemeteries/Death.html](https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/national_cemeteries/Death.html)]

## U.S. Constitution: 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment (formally abolishes slavery in the United States)

- Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.
- Section 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.
  - *passed the Senate on April 8, 1864, and the House on January 31, 1865. On February 1, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln approved the Joint Resolution of Congress submitting the proposed amendment to the state legislatures. The necessary number of states ratified it by December 6, 1865.*

## U.S. Constitution: 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment (equal protection)

- Section. 1. All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without **due process of law**; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the **equal protection of the laws**.
- Section. 2. **Representatives** shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, **counting the whole number of persons in each State**, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the Executive and Judicial officers of a State, or the members of the Legislature thereof, is denied to any of the **male inhabitants of such State**, being twenty-one years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State.
- Passed by Congress June 13, 1866. Ratified July 9, 1868.

## U.S. Constitution: 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment (Right to Vote Not Denied by Race)

- Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.
- **Section 2.** The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.
- Passed by Congress February 26, 1869. Ratified February 3, 1870

## Civil War and Reconstruction

- In 1877, Rutherford B Hayes (Republican) comes to power in exchange for pulling federal troops out of the South. Troops are re-deployed to crush a railroad strike in Chicago, Illinois, one of a series of nationwide railroad strikes of workers protesting paycuts.
- Federal troops are also dispatched in West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania.
- Industrialization requires the same exercise of state violence as did agricultural expansion.



Great Railroad Strike, 1877

"We are not the free people we imagine we are." – Terence V. Powderly, Knights of Labor



## Transcontinental Railroad



Andrew J. Russell, May 10, 1869: joining of the Central Pacific (from Sacramento, CA) railroad to the Union Pacific (from Omaha, NE) railroad.

## Chicago and the Great West



Stereograph, [In the heart of the Great Union Stock Yards, Chicago, U.S.A.]. New markets in grain, lumber, meat



interior of Wanamaker's Grand Depot ca. 1876

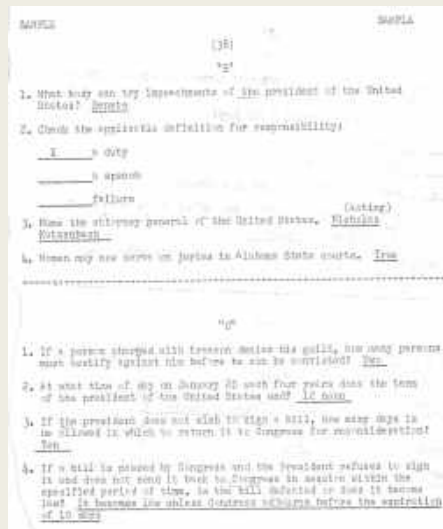
## Labor demonstrations and violence



Haymarket Riot, 1886, Harpers' Weekly (Library of Congress): The demonstration began as a peaceful rally in support of workers striking for an eight-hour work day, the day after police killed one and injured several workers. A bomb targeting police trying to disperse demonstrators and subsequent gunfire killed over a dozen police and civilians.

## Segregation and Disenfranchisement

- In the South, pervasive disenfranchisement, vagrancy laws, segregation, and lynching keep African Americans in a state of servitude.
- The 14<sup>th</sup> amendment, drafted to secure equal protection for African Americans under the law, became used instead to protect corporations' "liberty of contract" against the rights of workers.
- **1883 Civil Rights Cases** invalidated Civil Rights Act of 1875, which had outlawed racial discrimination by theatres, hotels, railroads, public facilities.
- *Court rules that 14<sup>th</sup> amendment prohibit state, not private discrimination.*



Alabama Literacy Test, Parts B & C, from Citizenship School Records

## Lynching of Allen Brooks, 1910 (TX)



Silhouetted corpse of African American Allen Brooks hanging from Elk's Arch, surrounded by spectators. March 3, 1910. Dallas, Texas.

Tinted lithographed postcard. 3 1/2 x 5 1/2 in.

Printed inscription on border, "LYNCHING SCENE, DALLAS, MARCH 3, 1910". Pencil inscription on border, "All OK and would like to get a post from you. Bill, This was some Raw Bunch."



"You did the work of men today and your deeds will resound in every state, village, and hamlet where purity and innocence are cherished and bestiality and lechery condemned."

Accused of assaulting young daughter of local man.

Collected by James Allen, published in  
*Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*

## Progressive Reforms: Justifications

- At home and abroad, progressive campaigns to address social ills pin hopes on governmental reform.
  - *Political Reform: Promote Efficiency; Eliminate Corruption: Towards Greater “Efficiency” in Government*
  - *Economic Reform: Regulate Business; Eliminate Monopoly*
  - *Social Reform: Settlement Houses; Women’s Suffrage: Protection for the “Weakest” Members of Society*
  - *Moral Reform: Promote Morality; Temperance: “Purify” Society*
- Progressive reformers articulate the foundations of liberalism.
  - *Government is best equipped to improve society*
  - *Social problems can be governed through legislation and action*
  - *Government needs to spend money on social welfare*

## Progressive Reforms: Anti-Lynching Campaigns

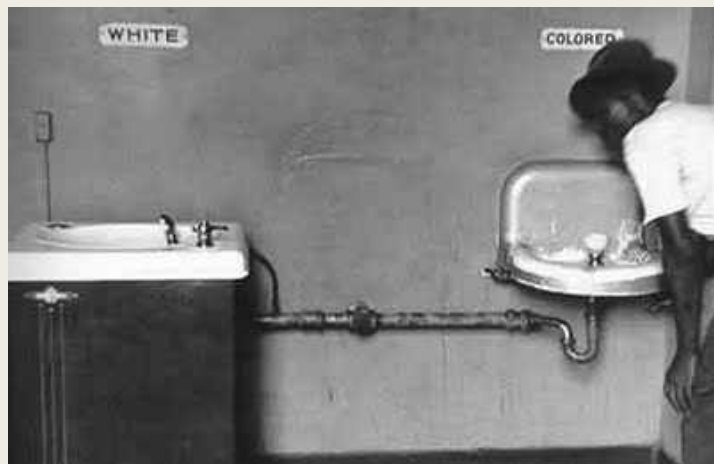
- In practice, progressive reforms united a range of individuals and organizations with government, as in the case of anti-lynching activism:
  - *Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC)*
  - *Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL)*
  - *NAACP*
  - *Ida B. Wells*
  - *Jessie Daniel Ames*



Ida B. Wells [1862-1931], journalist, educator, civil rights activist, founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

## Progressive Reforms: Institutionalized Segregation in the Name of Reform

- Yet at home and abroad, reforms frequently express white supremacist logic.
- **Plessy vs. Ferguson, 1896:**
  - *LA Legislature requires railroad companies to maintain separate car or section for black passengers. Citizen Committee of black residents challenges the law.*
- **Chinese Exclusion (Immigration)**
  - *1875 Exclusion of Women*
  - *1882 temporary total exclusion*
  - *1902 total exclusion made permanent*





## Progressive Reforms: US Imperialism

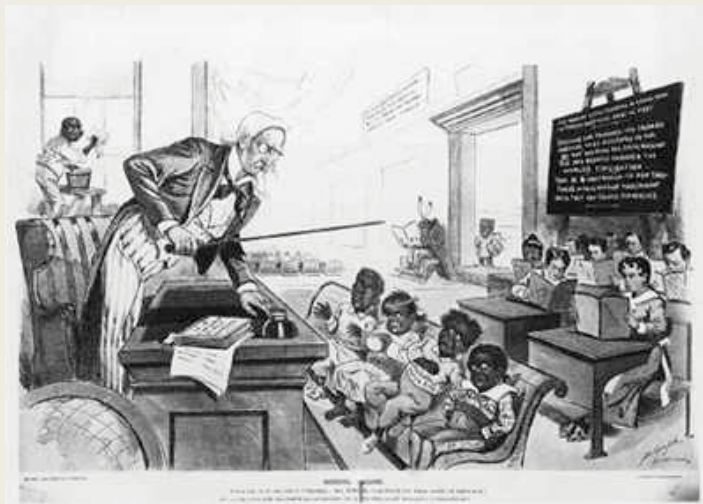
- Overseas, rhetoric of freedom and democracy continues to mask powerful agricultural interests
- At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, interests in sugar led debates over annexation
  - *in Hawaii (US supports coup in 1893, annexes in 1898)*
  - *the Caribbean, and the Philippines (Spanish-American War, 1898 - US supports Cuban independence against Spanish)*
- Major markets in coffee, bananas, and rubber intensifying US interests in the tropics.



THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN.—*The Journal, Detroit.*

## Progressive Reforms: US Imperialism

Uncle Sam teaches a diverse group of students about civilization in this Puck cartoon. In the first row, receiving special attention, are recent U.S. acquisitions: Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines. (New York Public Library)



## US Imperialism and the Quest for Global Markets

- “It is to the oceans that our children must look as we once looked to the boundless west.” – Senator Orville Platt
- “We must have new markets, unless we would be visited by declines in wages and by great industrial disturbances of which signs have not been lacking.” – Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884
- “Within, the home market is secured; but outside, beyond the broad seas, there are markets of the world, that can be entered and controlled only by a vigorous contest, to which the habit of trusting to protection by statute does not conduce.” – Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Seapower Upon History* (1890)
- “When money can be borrowed at a reasonable rate of interest and when capital is willing to invest in the island, a condition of stability will have been reached.” – General Leonard Wood on when Cuba would be considered stable
- “A brief ten years has been sufficient for the Hawaiian nation to break down the hoary traditions and venerable customs of the past and to climb the difficult path from a selfish feudalism to equal rights, from royal control of all the public domain to present proprietorship and fee simple titles for poor and for rich.” – Sanford Dole, pineapple grower and president of the new republic (1895)

HARPER'S WEEKLY



THE GREAT AMERICAN DURBAR  
— HARPER'S WEEKLY —

Harper's Weekly, 03/04/1905

## Anti-Imperialism

- “ We insist that the forcible subjugation of a . . . People is nothing less than “open disloyalty to the distinctive principles of our government . . . That all men are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” -- Jane Addams, resolution of the American Anti-Imperialist League
- The “color line” of imperialism “transferred the reign of commercial privilege and extraordinary profit from the exploitation of the European working class to the exploitation of backward races under the political domination of Europe.” -- WEB Dubois, Pan-African Conference, 1900



## Coda: Development and Modernization as American Exports

- Given this checkered history of forced migration, enslavement, and imperialism, it's ironic that industrializing America of the later 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> c becomes a model for development of other countries in the post-WWII period.
- The premise of modernization theories of the post-World War II period is that agricultural modernization (late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the United States) is an engine of industrial development: railroads, mechanization, biological innovation, monoculture, etc.
- The expansion of grain exports to Allied Europe in World War I seems to support this story: "Wheat Will Win the War!" (See New Deal era documentaries by Pare Lorentz on US development: *The Plow that Broke the Plains* [1936] and *The River* [1938]).
- This narrative of "development" is one with global traction after WWII, both in modernization theory, and to promote a "Green Revolution" export of American seeds agricultural techniques to Asia and Latin America.

## American Myths Revisited

- These histories of capitalist democratic development whitewash a persistent history of state violence.
- Nevertheless, the ability of its inhabitants to challenge contradictions and expand the scope of its founding principles define the nation.
- Non-whites, women, and workers have continued to mobilize to expand access to freedom as political participation, civil liberties (rights individual can assert against authority), and personal, ethical/moral, and economic self-determination.



DW.COM, JULY 27, 2020/ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO

**#BLACKLIVESMATTER: KEY FIGURES IN THE US CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

'Necessary trouble'

The image of civil rights leader and congressman John Lewis, who died on July 17, is projected onto the statue of Confederate Robert Lee in Richmond, Virginia. A champion of non-violent protest, he attended the 1963 March on Washington and played a key role in abolishing racial segregation. He famously declared: "Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble."