

Workshop Series on
The History of Racism in the U.S.



Workshop #1

Origins: The Social Construction of Race, Ethnicity and Racism

Ayo Magwood, M.Sc. Applied Economics

Educational Consultant and Founder,

Uprooting Inequity LLC

uprootinginequity@gmail.com

www.uprootinginequity.com



UC Merced Land Acknowledgement

Local indigenous people, including the Yokuts and Miwuk who understand the earth as a place for everyone, first inhabited the land where UC Merced is located. When we address diversity on this campus, we do so boldly, daring to look forward and backward, imagining diversity's demand for the 21st century and the importance of diversity in addressing past wrongs, reaffirming humanity, and ensuring a reconciliatory path of redress for the future. The most prominent path on our campus is called Scholars Lane. By day, you can see, hear and witness the embodiment of our diversity through campus community members making their way across campus framed by the slopes and peaks of the Sierra Nevada.

-UC Merced Diversity Statement

In addition to acknowledging the lands and its first inhabitants, we must acknowledge that much of what we know of this country today, including its culture, economic growth, and development throughout history and across time, has been made possible by the labor of enslaved Africans and their ascendants who suffered the horror of the transatlantic trafficking of their people, chattel slavery, and Jim Crow. We are indebted to their labor and their sacrifice, and we must acknowledge the tremors of that violence throughout the generations and the resulting impact that can still be felt and witnessed today.



Land & Labor Acknowledgement Reflection

- What intentions do you have to disrupt and dismantle colonialism beyond this land acknowledgement?
- What is your organization doing beyond acknowledging whose land and labor allow you to live, work, and/or learn in that space?

Community Agreements

- We agree to speak for ourselves and allow others to speak for themselves, with no pressure to represent or explain to a whole group.
- We agree to listen with resilience, “hanging in” when something is hard to hear
- We agree to consider asking a question to check out the assumption we are making rather than taking that assumption(s) as fact.
- We agree to share airtime and participate within the suggested timeframe.
- We agree to not interrupt except to indicate that we cannot or did not hear a speaker.
- We agree to “pass” or “pass for now” if we are not ready or willing to respond to a question.
- We agree that when we discuss our experience with people who are not present, we will not attach names or other identifying information to participate comments unless we have permission to do so
- We agree this is a space of learning, that no one, even the presenter is able to know all things. We are all in a process of learning



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Series on The History of Racism

- 1. I will not check the chat until breaks, but feel free to use it to communicate with other participants.**
- 2. Put your clarifying questions in the chat, and someone will communicate them to me.**
- 3. I will ask for 5 volunteers to read slides.**
- 4. Following the presentation, participants will be asked to share their reflections via chat.**



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Series on The History of Racism

- 1. Origins: The Social Construction of Race, Ethnicity, and Racism**
- 2. The Historical Reproduction of Anti-Black Racism**
- 3. The Causes and Impacts of Structural Racism**
- 4. A short history of Latino Americans**
- 5. A short history of Asian Americans**
- 6. History of Coalition and Conflict between Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and Poor Whites**
- 7. Towards an Equitable “Us” Society: Lessons learned and Directions Forward**

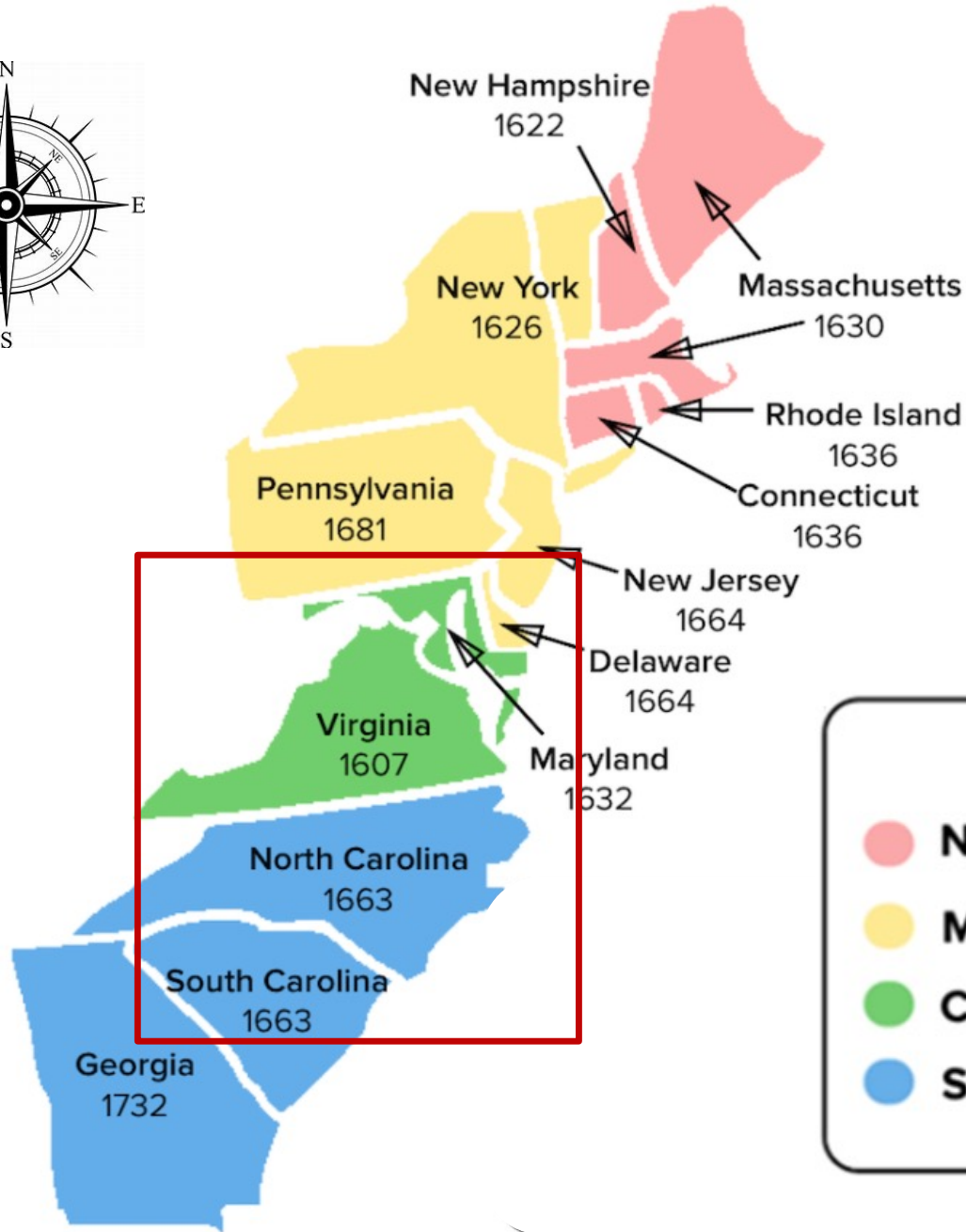
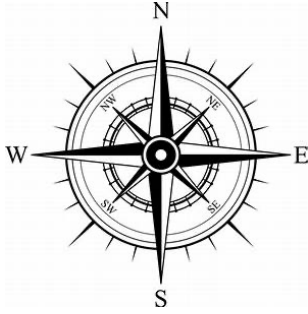


Essential Questions

1. How and why were the **races** constructed?
2. How and why did **anti-Black racism** develop in the U.S.?

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Early-Mid Colonial Period 1607-1725

Key

- New England colonies
- Middle colonies
- Chesapeake colonies
- Southern colonies



1 Race, Racism and Slavery in the *Early Colonial Era*

2 Why Did Things Change? The Great Transformation

3 How Race Was Constructed

4 HOW Racism Was Developed

5 WHY Racism Was Developed

Q&A and Discussion



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Race and Racism Have Not Always Existed

Race Relations, Racism, and Slavery

were very different
during the **Early Colonial Period**
(First 50-100 years of our Nation)

... than they were in the latter
150-200 years of Slavery in the U.S.



Race Relations, Racism, and Slavery were VERY Different during the First 50-100 Years (1619-1676)

1. Relations were governed by **class** rather than **race**.
2. **Racism** had not yet developed.
3. **Slavery** was neither lifelong or hereditary; **chattel slavery** had not yet developed.
4. 90% of labor was **white indentured servants**.
5. **Interracial relationships** and **mixed-race children** were not uncommon.
6. Growing communities of **free blacks**.



Chesapeake Colonies Population 1607-1750



- **Indentured Servants**
- "Coolie" labor
- Serfdom
- Corvée Labor
- Debt peonage/bondage
- Prison labor and contract leasing

Indentured Servant vs. Slave Labor in Colonial Maryland

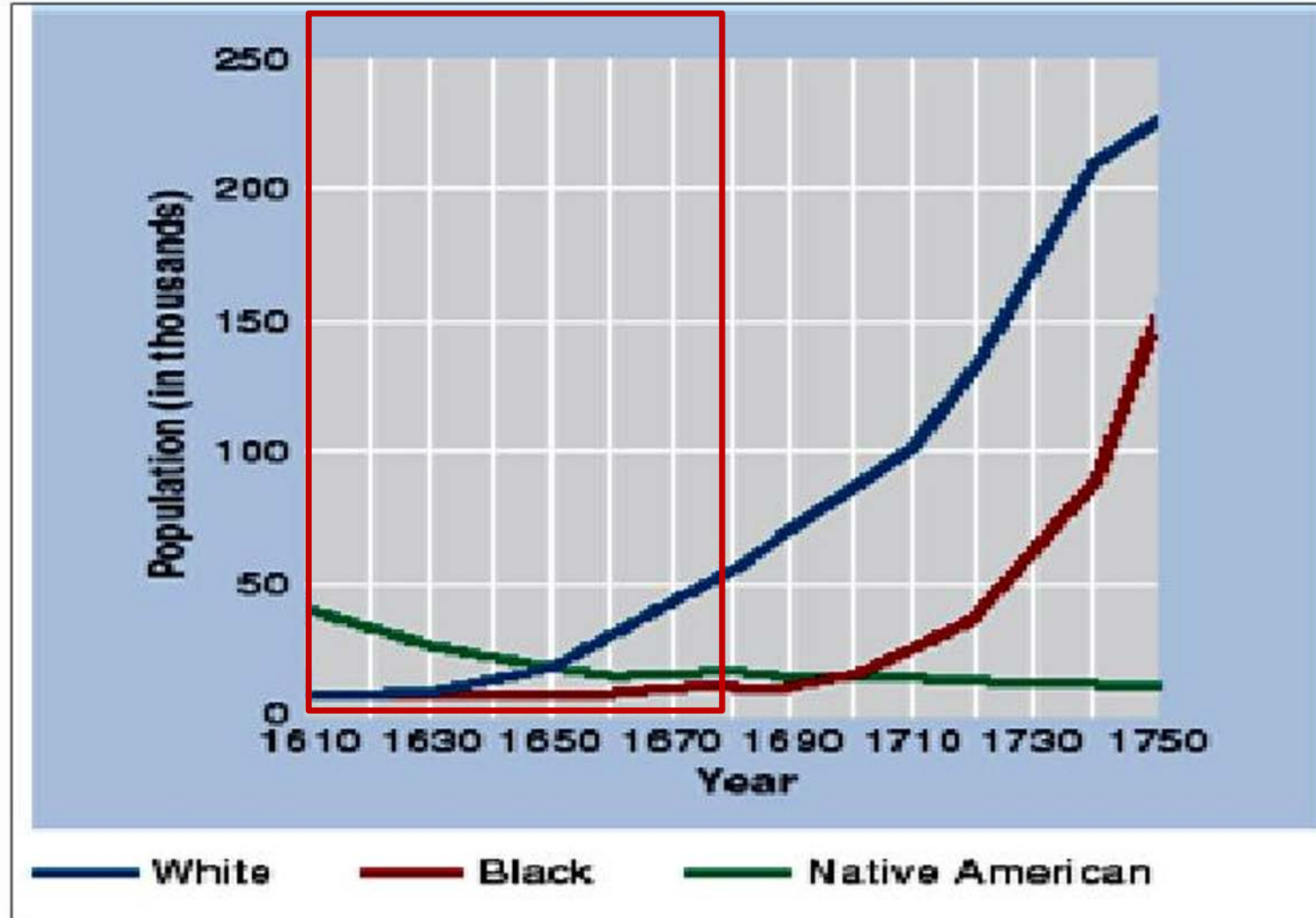
Change in Md. Labor Force

Indentured to Enslaved

1640	45	to	1
1660	11	to	1
1680	5	to	1
1700	1	to	3
1720	1	to	15
1740	1	to	30



Chesapeake Colonies Population 1607-1750



Source: Gary B. Nash et al "The American People. Creating a Nation and a Society, Volume One: To 1877," New York: Pearson Education Inc. U.S. Bureau of the Census data.



Early Colonial Period (1600s): 90% of Labor Supplied by European Indentured Servants

- ❖ English or Irish, poor, young
- ❖ 4-7-year contracts;
- ❖ **“Freedom dues”** paid at end of contract
- ❖ *“Nasty, brutish, and short”* Lives; treated similarly as Slaves
- ❖ Lived, worked, and socialized with enslaved Blacks (10% of labor)
- ❖ More profitable than slavery because only 40% survived

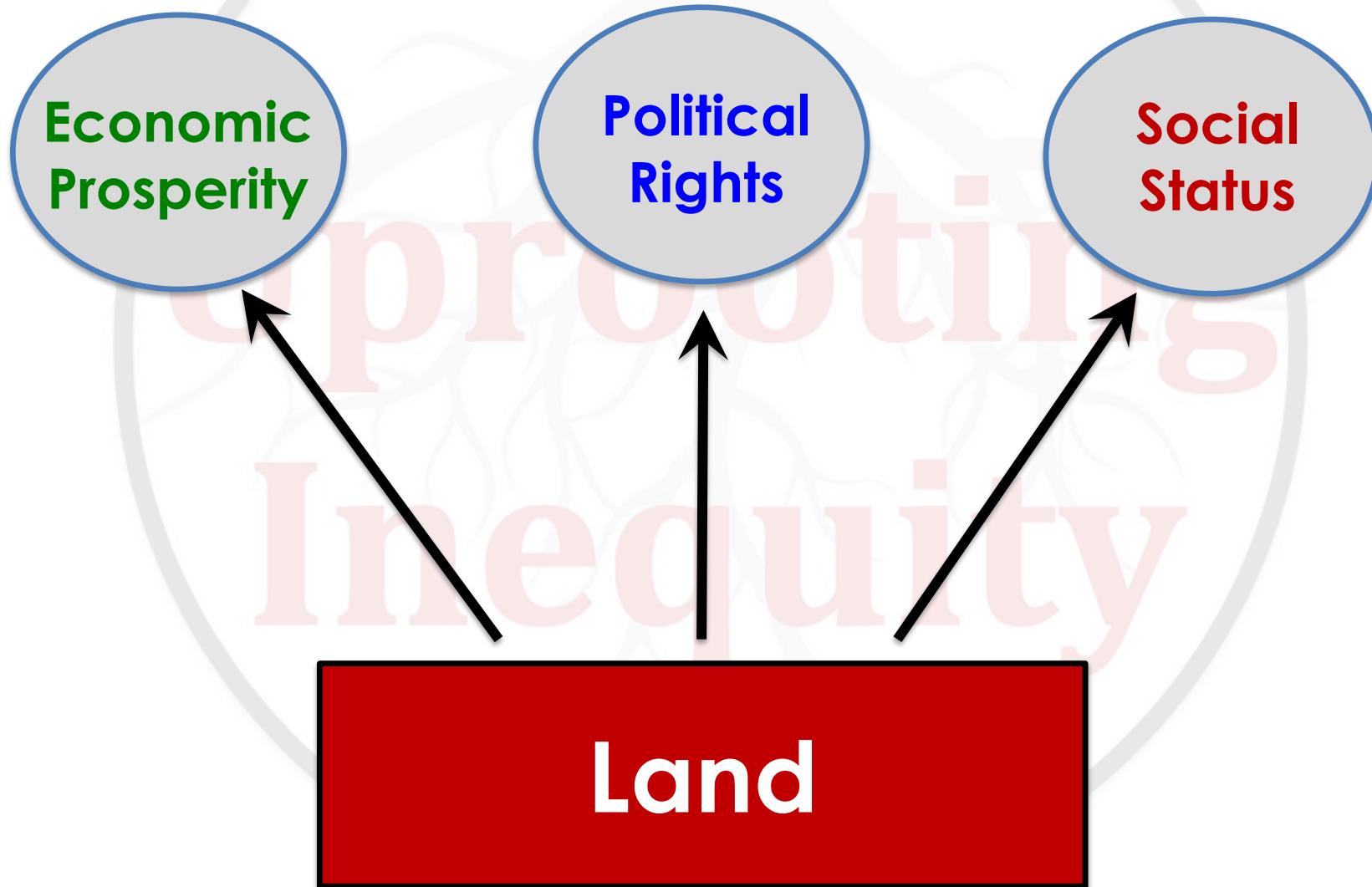


Source: King, Sydney. *Harvesting Tobacco In Early Virginia*, circa 1612. Hulton Archive/Getty [Images](#).

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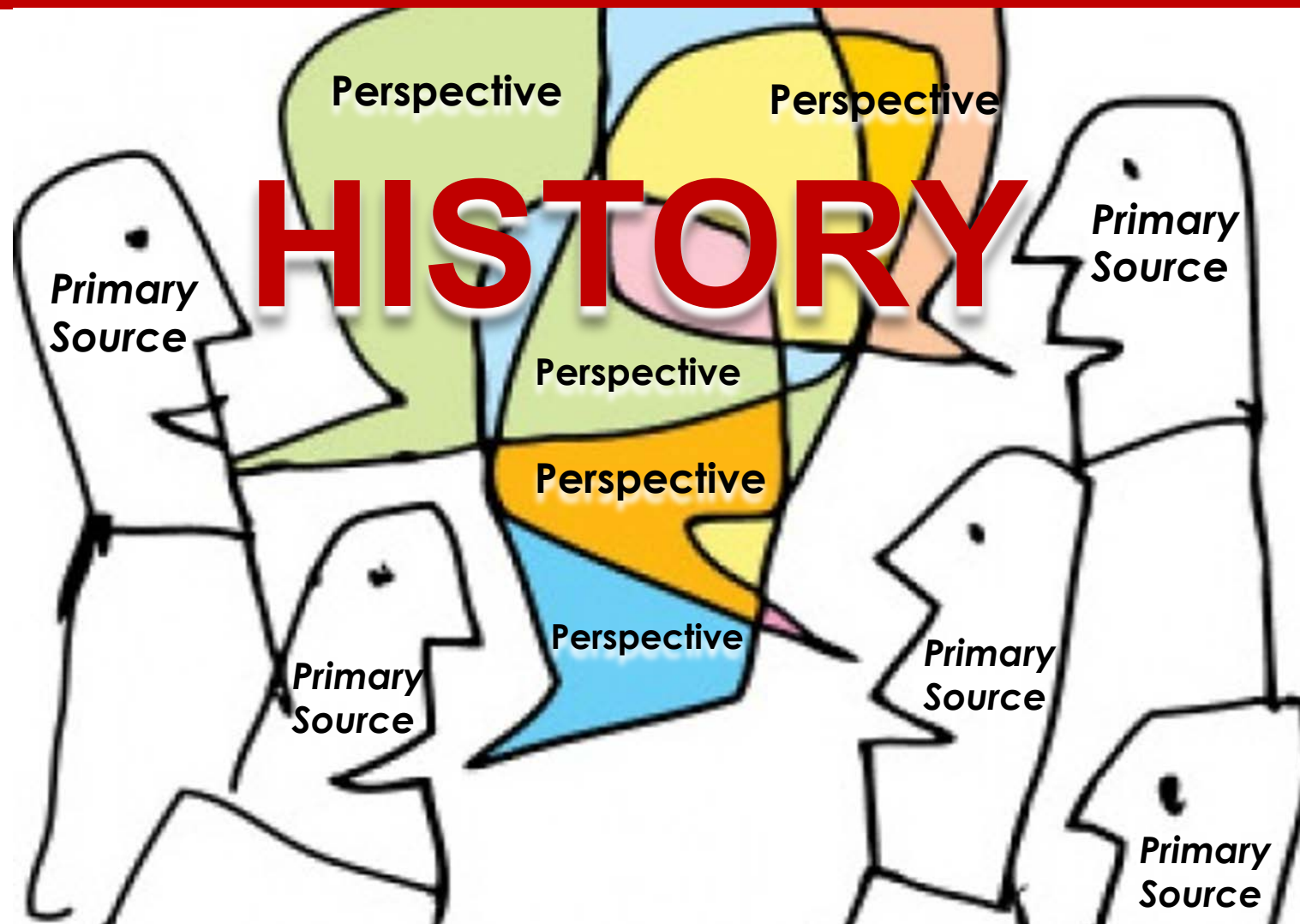


Importance of Land to 17th-18th century England and Colonial America



HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

Constructing History through Primary Sources



We will be History Detectives, Looking at Primary Sources from the Colonial Period for CLUES:



1. How did Blacks and Whites of the same class get along?
2. What did a person's **social status** and **wealth** depend on?
3. What conclusions do you draw? What patterns do you see? What surprises you?



Primary Source #1

Runaway Ad, Virginia Gazette, Feb 21, 1771

- "Twenty five Pounds Reward. RUN away from the [*planter*], in Cumberland County, VA, the 3rd of June last, a Virginia born **Negro Man Slave** named WILL..."
- "N.B. GEORGE KELLY, **an Irishman, had some Dealings with the above Slave** before he ran away, and I have Reason to think **harboured him** some Time after. **Kelly ran away in August**, and crossed the Roanoke River, at Jefferson's Ferry. **It is probable the Slave had some Place appointed to meet him** in Carolina; and if they are together, I have no Doubt **will endeavor to make him pass for a Freeman**".



Primary Source #2

Runaway Ad, Virginia Gazette: July 9, 1772

- "RUN away from *the [planter]*, in King and Queen [*county*], about a Fortnight ago, **a NEGRO WOMAN** about twenty one Years of Age; she is tall and black, and supposed to be **pretty far gone with Child...**"
- "At the same Time went away **an indented Servant Man named JAMES BRUCE**, a Seaman, **from Scotland. ..it is supposed the Servant Man carried her away...**"



Primary Source #3

Christian Finny, a White indentured servant woman, had her contract extended by a year, and her child bound (*indentured*) for 31 years by order of the 7 December **1736** Carteret County NC court because she had a "*Mullato Bastard Child during her service.*"

She was likely the common-law wife of an enslaved Black man because she was charged with having another "Mullato" child born 10 July **1739** and another on 20 December **1743**.

[Minutes 1723-47, fol.33c, fol.58, 59b-c, 62d, 151-2]



Most Free Blacks Descended from White Servant Women

Ancestry of Traceable (~90%) of Free Black Families in Colonial NC and VA

Descended from:	Number of Families
White Servant Women	441
Freed Slaves	50
Native Americans	29
White Men	19

NOTE: Over 1,000 mixed-race children were born to white women in colonial NC and VA



Early Colonial Era: Growing Free Black Community

(Photos from 1885)



Left to Right: Lee Locklear, Steve Lowrey, French Locklear
French Locklear married the daughter of J. Arthur Brewington, of Sampson County

- Most small farmers (50-150 acres)
- Fraternized with whites of same class.
- **5%** of free population in six 1790 NC counties
- **18%** of free population in one 1810 VA county.



C. D. BREWINGTON



LUTHER BLEDSOLE AND CHILDREN AND HENRY BLEDSOLE AND WIFE, HANAH
Dismal Township, Sampson Co., N. C.

Hannah Bledsole was Hannah Warrick of Robeson County. She has three brothers now living in Robeson County who have large families of children, all attending the Indian Schools

Butler, George Edwin, *The Croatan Indians of Sampson County, North Carolina. Their Origin and Racial Status. A Plea for Separate Schools.* Academic Affairs Library, UNC-CH. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2002. Electronic version. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/butler/butler.html>



Primary Source #4

- In **1653**, a Northampton County, VA court officer reported that when he presented Anthony Longo, “**Negro**”, with a summons, Longo had chased him away:
 - *“What shall I go to court for? Go about your business you idle rascal.”*
 - *“Shit of your warrant. Have I nothing to do but go to court?”*

The officer complained that Anthony continued to call him an idle rascal,

- *“As did likewise his wife with such noise that I could hardly hear my own words. And when I had done reading the warrant he struck at me and gave me some blows.”*

(Anthony's wife was white)



Primary Source #5

Race relations were particularly fluid and friendly in less densely populated, “frontier” areas where Whites welcomed new neighbors regardless of race.

- In **1733**, Whites in NC complained to their Assembly:
 - *“some county courts were illegally binding out free Negroes and Molattoes until the age of 31”... “and they fear that some Persons will desert the settlement of those parts.”*
- When the NC Legislature passed discriminatory tax laws against free African American families, white residents of Granville, Halifax and Northampton counties petitioned for the law’s repeal in **1762**, describing their “free Negro and Mulatto” neighbors as:
 - *“persons of Probity and good Demeanor who cheerfully contribute towards the discharge of every public duty enjoined them.”*



Primary Source #6

In **1731**, some members of the free mulatto Gibson family moved from Virginia to South Carolina. A member of the Commons House of Assembly **complained that "several free colored men with their white wives had immigrated from Virginia."** Governor Robert Johnson of South Carolina summoned Gideon Gibson and his family to explain their presence there. After meeting Gibson and his family, the Governor reported:

*"I have had them before me in Council and upon Examination find that **they are not Negroes nor Slaves but Free people**, That the Father of them here is named Gideon Gibson and his Father was also free, I have been informed by a person who has lived in Virginia that this Gibson has lived there Several Years **in good Repute** and by his papers that he has produced before me that his transactions there have been very regular, That he has for several years **paid Taxes for two tracts of Land** and **had several Negroes of his own**, That he is a Carpenter by Trade and is come hither for the support of his Family."*

[Box 2, bundle: S.C., Minutes of House of Burgesses (1730-35), 9, Parish Transcripts, N.Y. Hist. Soc. by Jordan, White over Black, 172].



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Q&A and Discussion



So, Why/How did Things Change?

Indentured servants started surviving their contracts:

1. Servant Labor Less Profitable

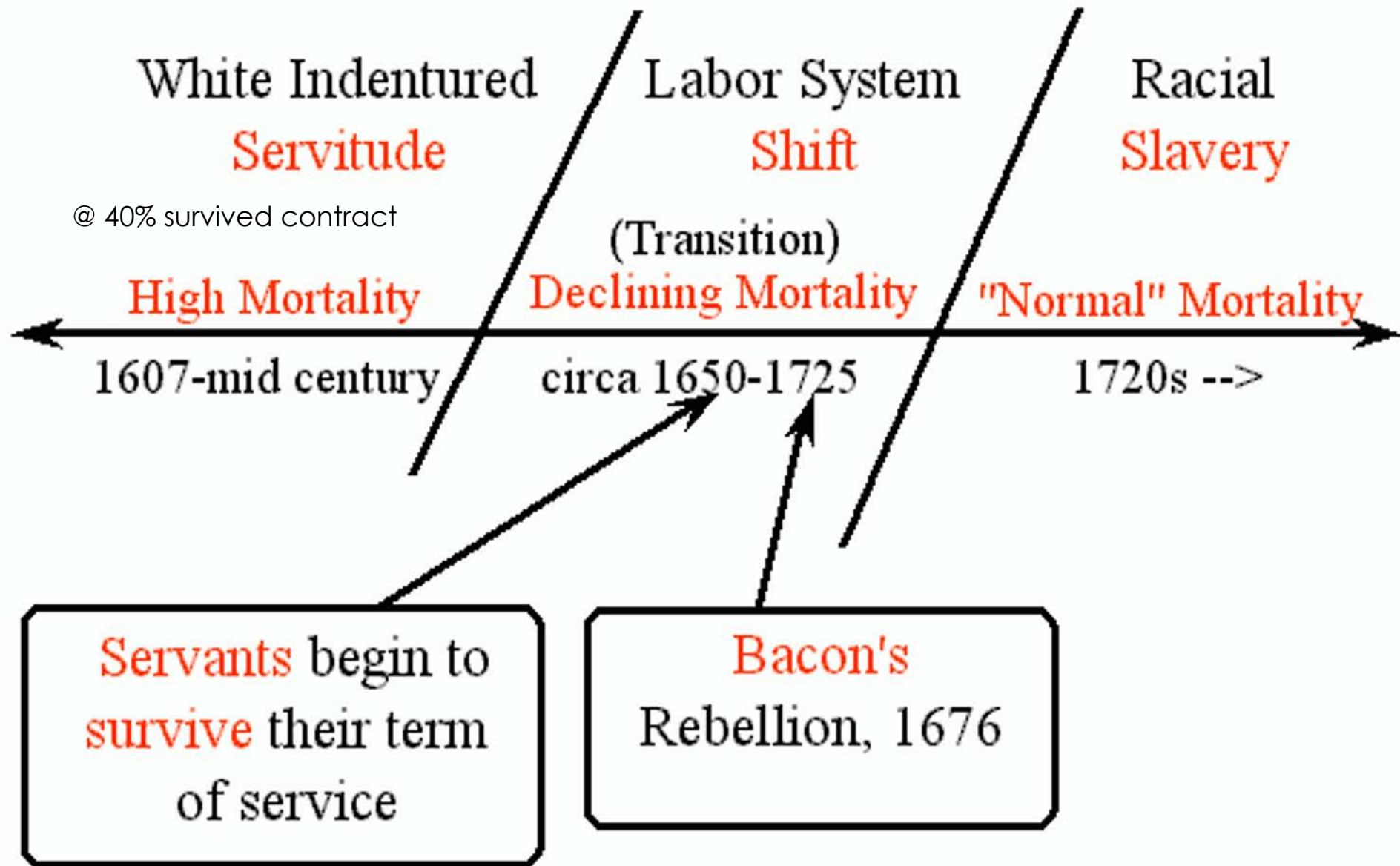
had to pay servants freedom dues;

2. Threat of Rebellion from Poor Whites and Blacks

increasing numbers of angry, landless, poor White men... with guns,
and friendly with poor Blacks...

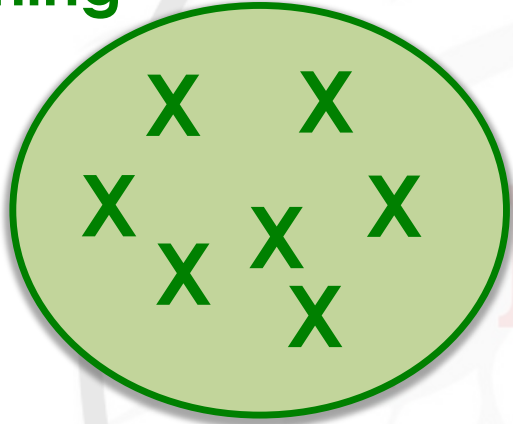
Also, the supply of indentured servants from England/Ireland started to dry up....





Early 1600s

Wealthy
Landing
Planters

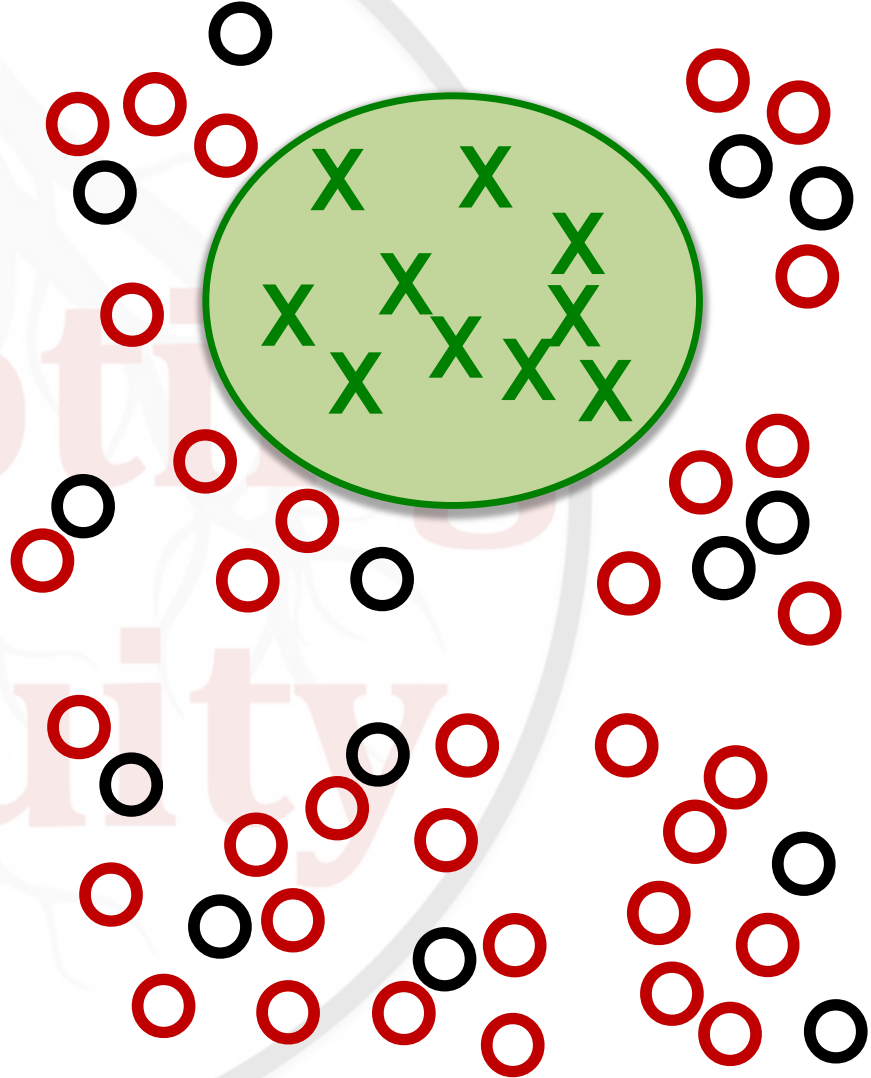


Poor, Landless
Whites



Poor
Blacks

Mid-1600s



Bacon's Rebellion (1676)

The Burning of Jamestown
by Howard Pyle, c. 1905



Source: *Harper's Encyclopaedia of United States History: from 458 A.D. to 1905*, Benson John Lossing, Ed. Vol 5 of 10, (New York: Harper & Brothers 1905), facing page 120. Derived from [scans](#).



The Terrible Transformation

Inequity

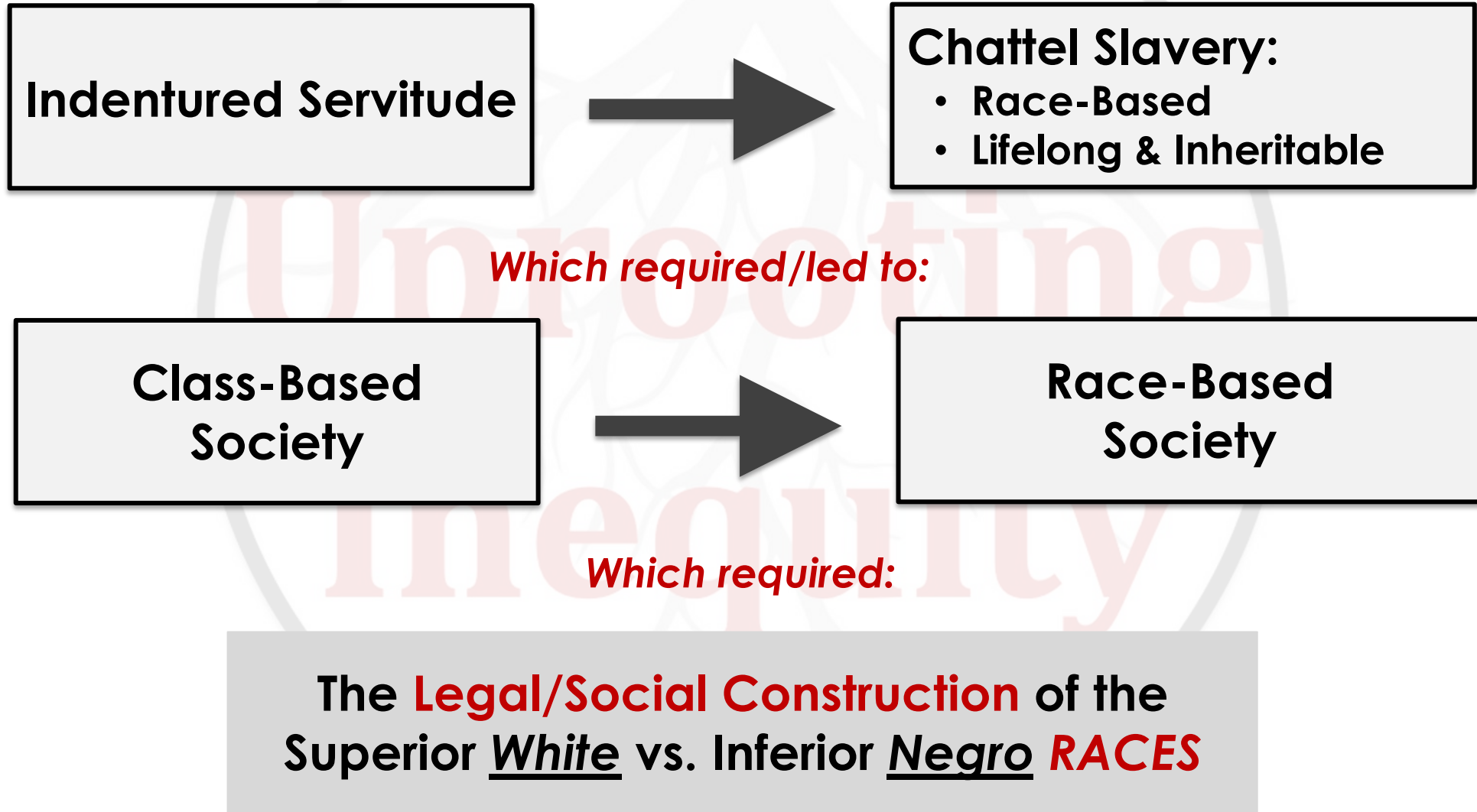
— Peter Wood, historian



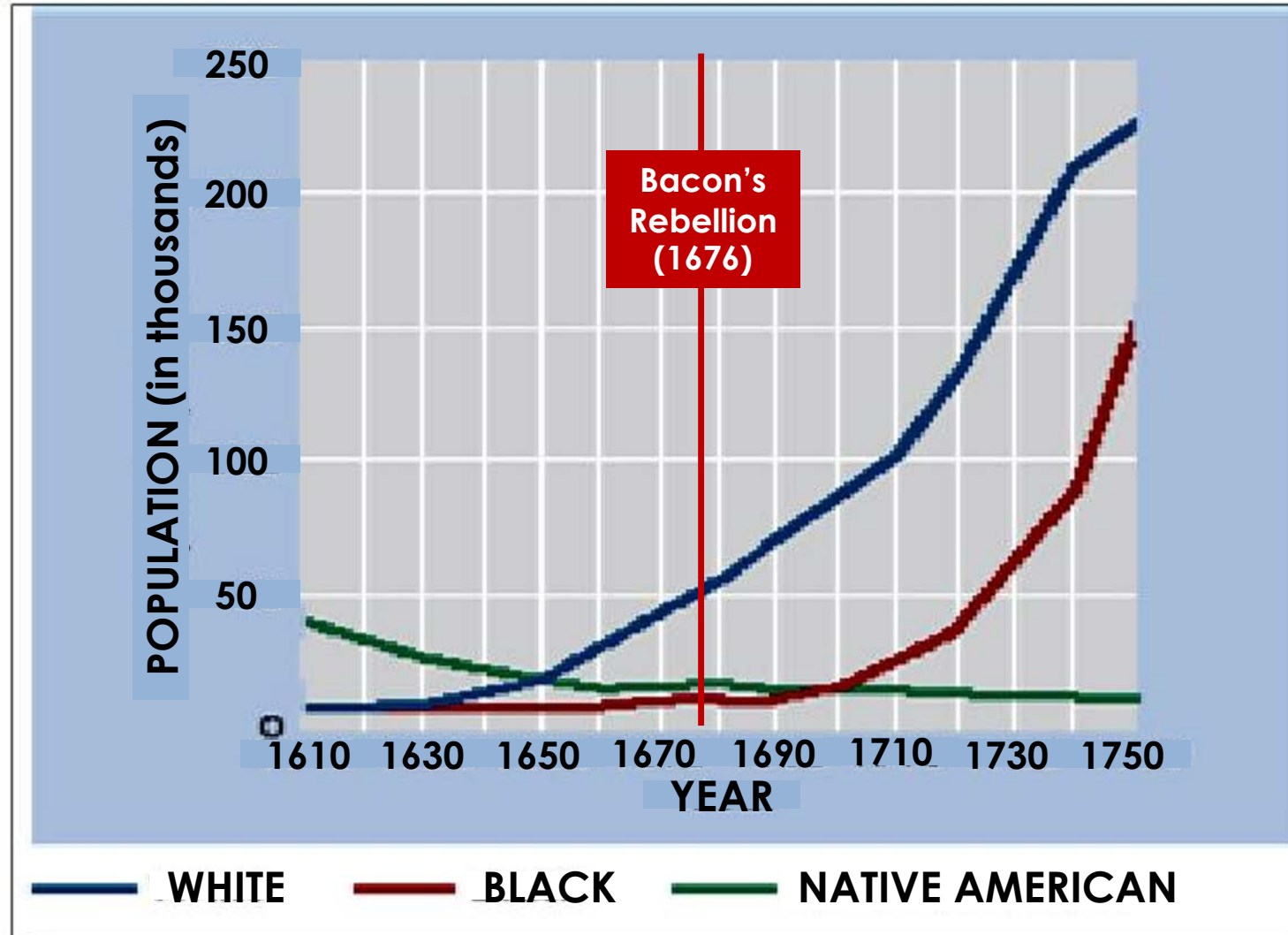
Source: Africans in America: America's Journey Through Slavery. Part 1:
The Terrible Transformation, 1450-1750. PBS Film, 1998. [Webpage](#).

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The Terrible Transformation

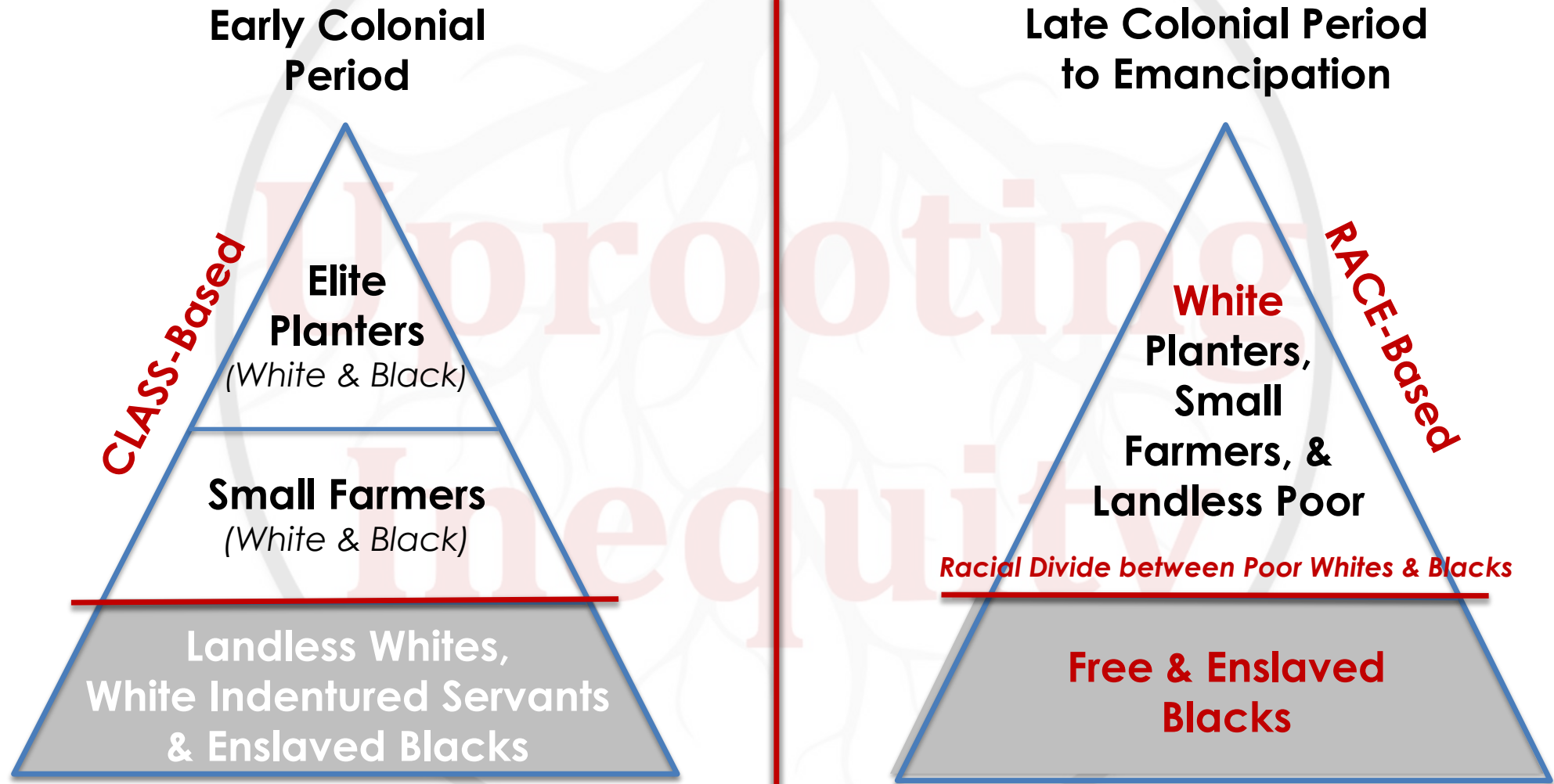


Chesapeake Colonies Population 1607-1750



Source: Gary B. Nash et al "The American People. Creating a Nation and a Society, Volume One: To 1877," New York: Pearson Education Inc. U.S. Bureau of the Census data.

The Transition from a Class- to Race-Based Hierarchy



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Q&A and Discussion



Race is not Biological—

it is a Social Construct

Specifically,

a Legal Construct.



However, **RACE** being a
Social Construct...

...doesn't make **RACISM** any less **REAL**.



Race, Racism and Chattel Slavery Were Legally Constructed Through Laws/Codes (1670s-1850s)

1. The “**Slave Code**” institutionalized chattel slavery
2. The “**Free Negro code**” stripped rights from Free Blacks
3. **Racial distinctions:** prohibition of interracial marriage and deterrence of mixed-race children
4. “**Freeborn rights**” extended to poor whites on basis of **race** (vs. *land ownership*)

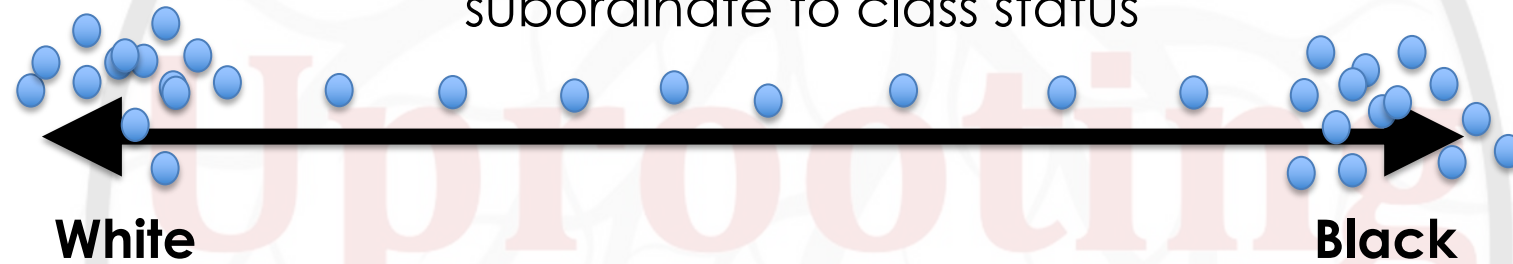


The Institutionalization of Race, Racism and Slavery

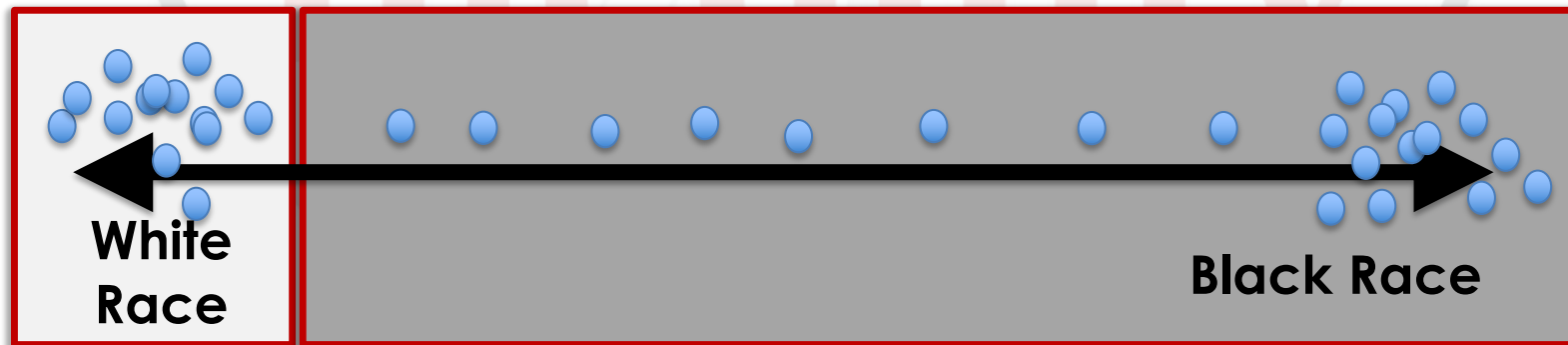
1619. “20 and odd Negroes” First Africans arrive in Jamestown
1640. VA sentences a Black indentured servant runaway (John Punch) with “**servitude for natural life**” (*first documented slave for life*)
- 1662.** VA changes English legal doctrine so **legal status** of children determined by the **mother, making slavery hereditary**
- 1667.** VA declares **baptized Blacks can still be (kept) enslaved**
- 1670.** VA **forbids** free Blacks from **owning (white) servants**
- 1691.** VA **prohibits interracial marriages** and the **freeing of slaves.**
(*First documented reference to a “white” race in VA—1681 in MD*)
- 1705.** VA passes a law barring any negro/mulatto from **holding office**
- 1705.** VA slave law codified; “*all slaves...shall be held to be real estate*”
- 1723.** VA strips rights from Free Blacks, incl. the **right to vote & carry a gun**

The *White* and *Black* Races Were Socially Constructed Through Laws

EARLY Colonial Period: *White, Negro, and Mulatto* as somewhat fluid racial categories subordinate to class status



LATE Colonial Period: *White and Negro* seen as distinct, essentialized, "natural", God-given binary categories



Physical Differences are Biological

But...

1. The "boxes" ("races") we group them in,
2. The characteristics we ascribe to them, and
3. The relative status we rank them by,
are **socially constructed**.



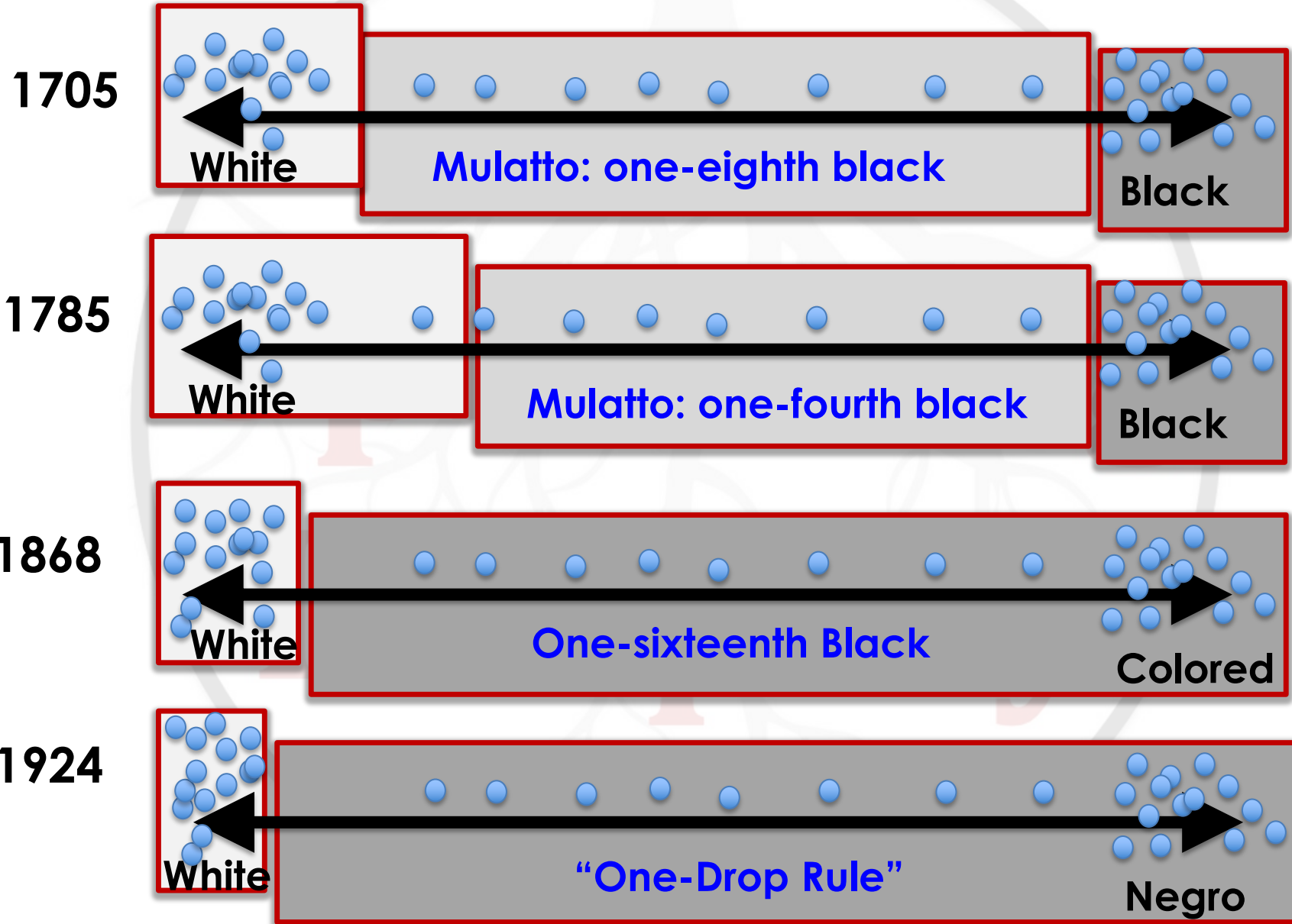
Since Races Are Social Constructs (Rather Than Biologically Determined):

The defined boundaries of races:

1. Change across time/history (are dynamic rather than static).
2. Differ across societies (are culturally specific rather than universal);



U.S. Definitions of Race Have Changed Over Time

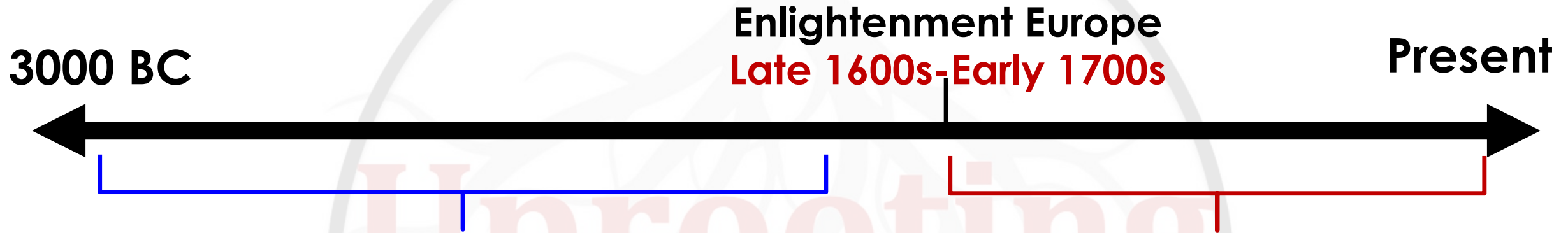


U.S. Definitions of Race Have Changed Over Time

- ❖ **Colonization** (late 1880s): Filipinos, Hawaiians, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans become Black
- ❖ **1790 Naturalization Act** limited naturalized citizenship to “*free, white persons*”:
 - **Armenians** became White
 - *Ozawa v. U.S.* (1922) – **Japanese** ruled not White
 - *U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind* (1923) – **Asian Indians** ruled not White
- ❖ **Racial Housing Zoning** (1950s):
 - Italians, Irish, and Jews became White



The Practice of Constructing Identities Based On Phenotype Was Started by Enlightenment Europe



Socially constructed identities:

- Ethnicity (cultural heritage)
- Language
- Religion
- Kinship

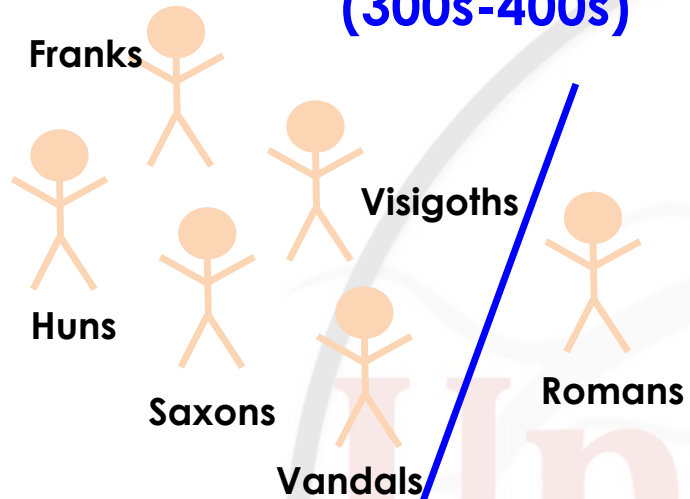
Socially constructed identities:

- RACE: categories of physical differences (phenotype) with ascribed characteristics and values

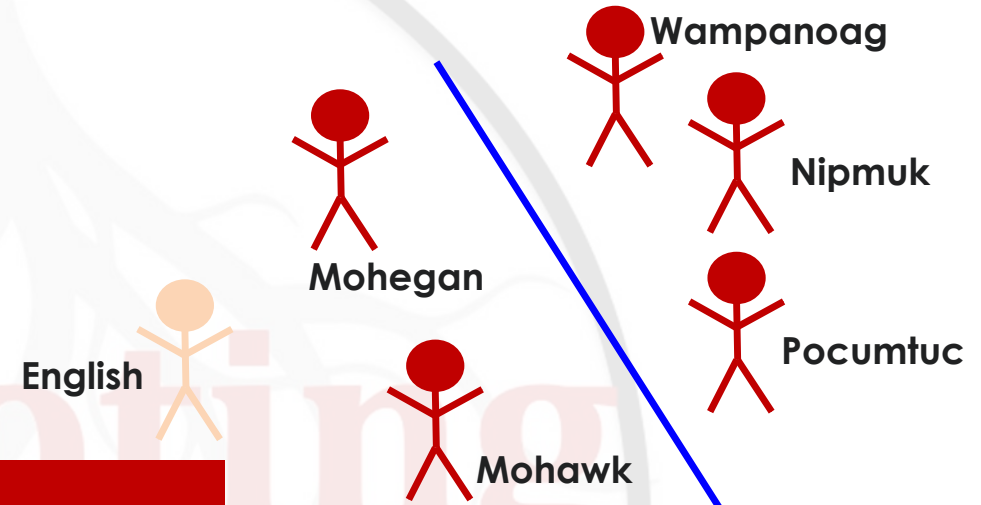
The Enlightenment ideas of the racial superiority of (European) whites and the racial inferiority of all non-white races **justified imperialism, colonialism, and slavery.**



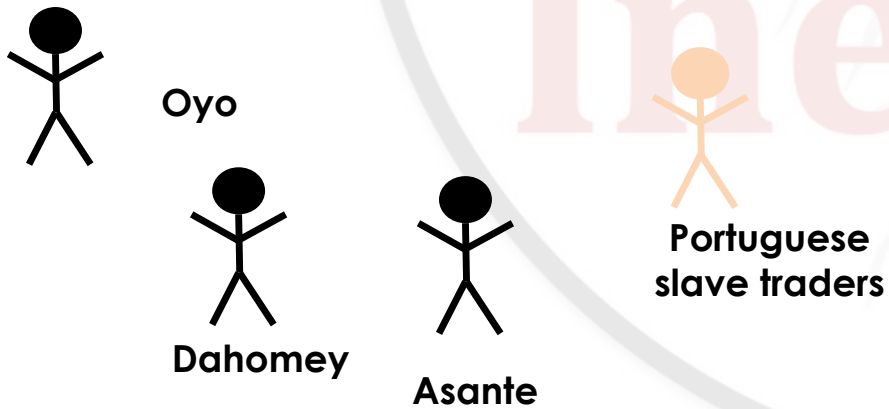
Romans vs. the Barbarians (300s-400s)



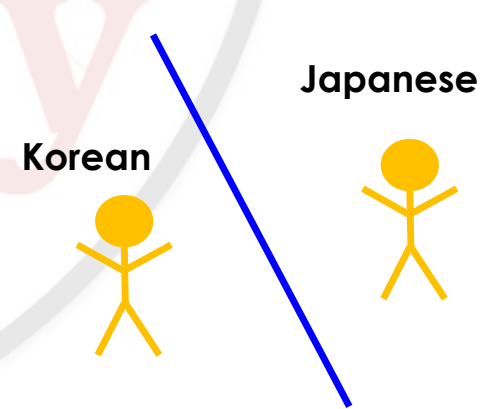
King Philips War (1670s)



Atlantic Slave Trade (16th-19th c.)



Japanese Colonization of Korea (1910-1945)

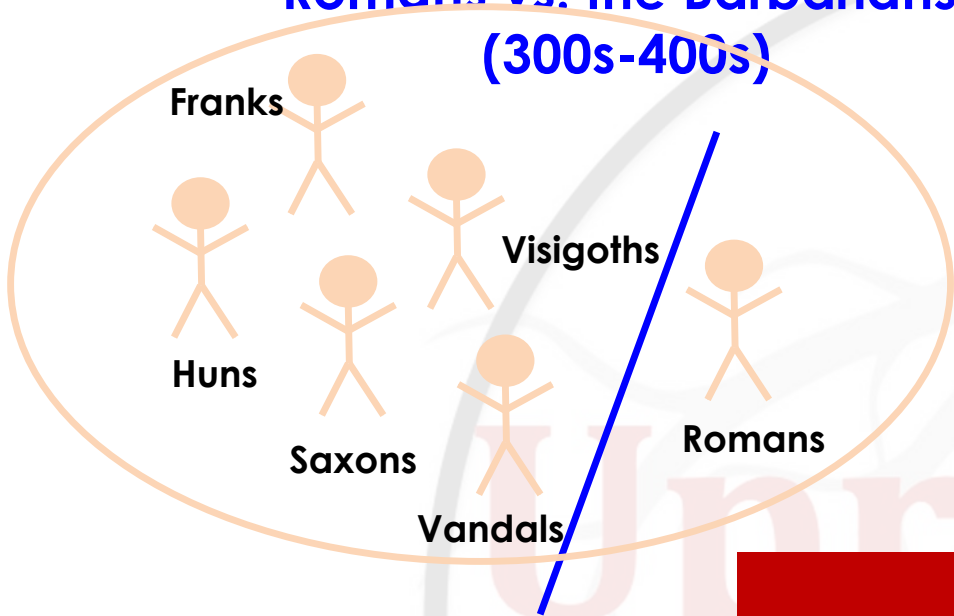


**Pre-
Enlightenment**

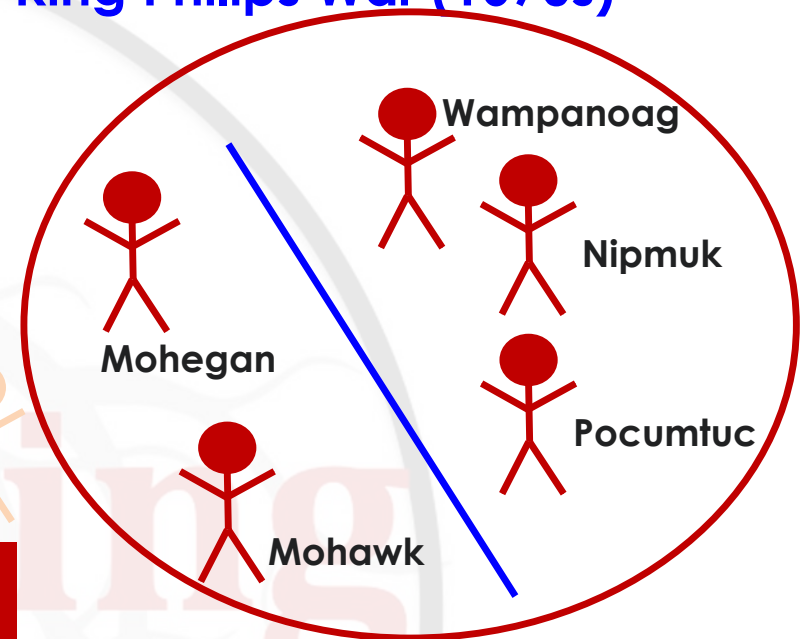
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Romans vs. the Barbarians (300s-400s)

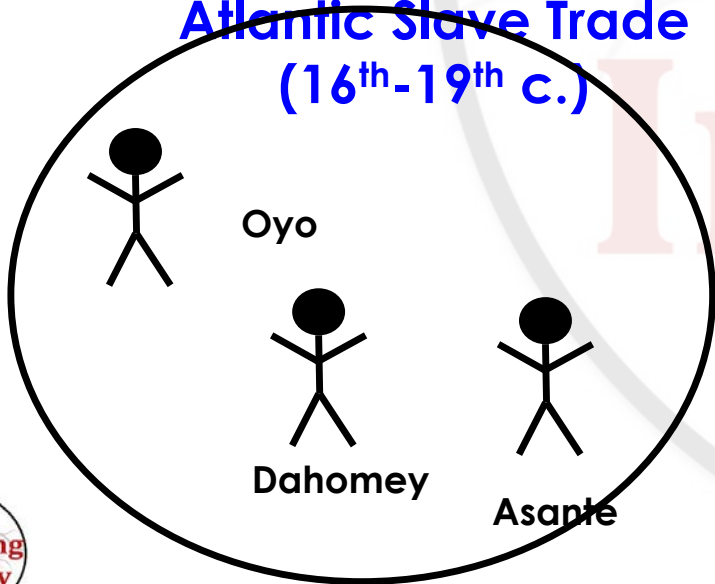


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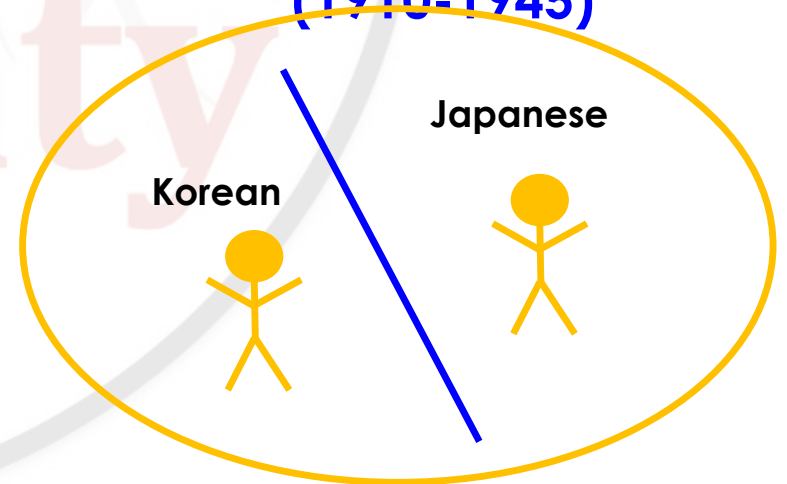


Pre-Enlightenment

Atlantic Slave Trade (16th-19th c.)



Japanese Colonization of Korea (1910-1945)



Since Races Are Social Constructs (Rather Than Biologically Determined):

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Physical Differences are Biological.

But the "Boxes" (Races/Identities) We Group Them In are Socially Constructed.



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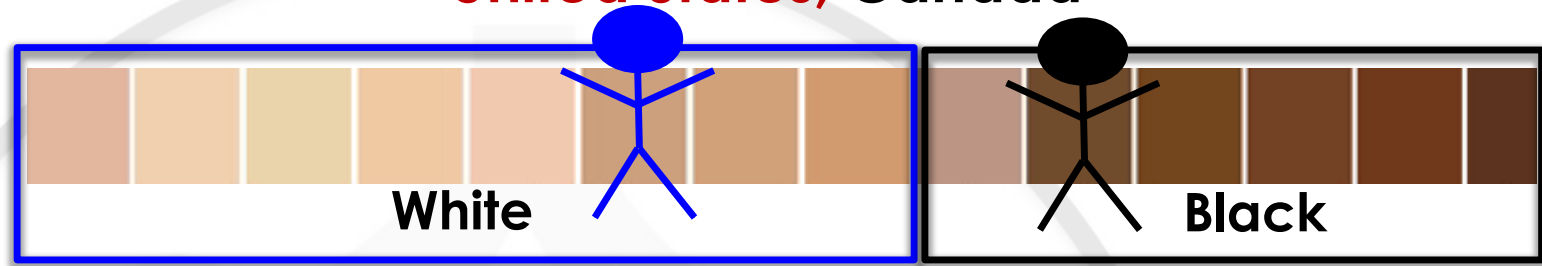
Chromatic scale Luschan Von 's, as a model exhibited at the Peabody Museum at Harvard University No. 2005.1.168



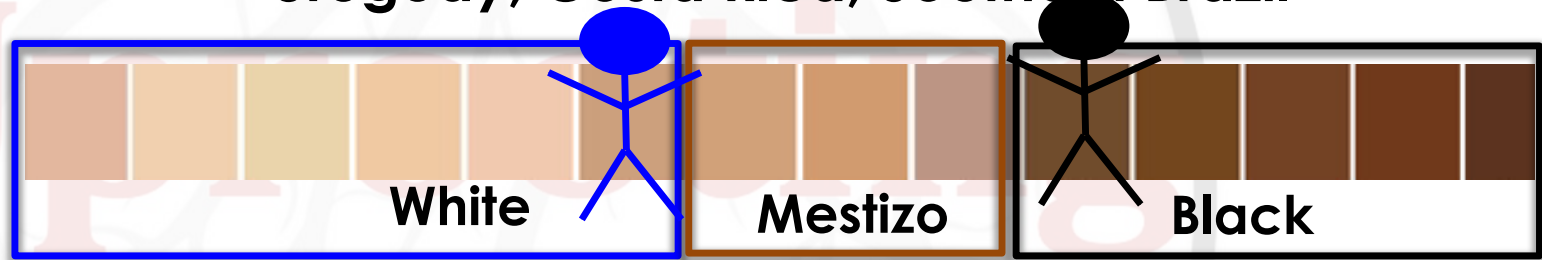
Racial Binaries:

Historical ideologies of whiteness and state policies of white domination

United States, Canada



South Africa, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Southern Brazil



Racial Spectrums:

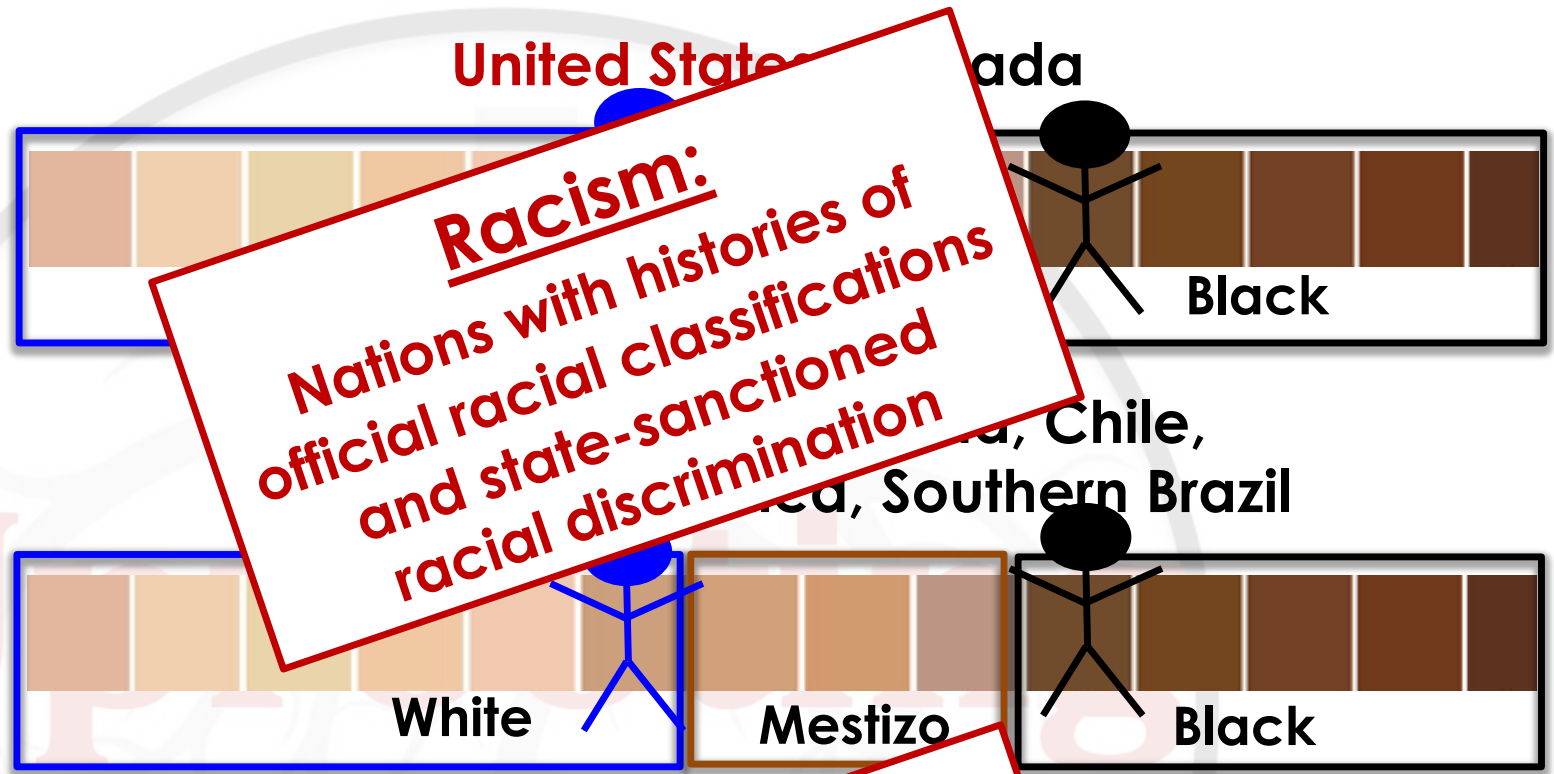
Historical ideologies of mestizaje or racial democracy

Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, Northern Brazil



Racial Binaries:

Historical ideologies of whiteness and state policies of white domination



Racism:
Nations with histories of official racial classifications and state-sanctioned racial discrimination

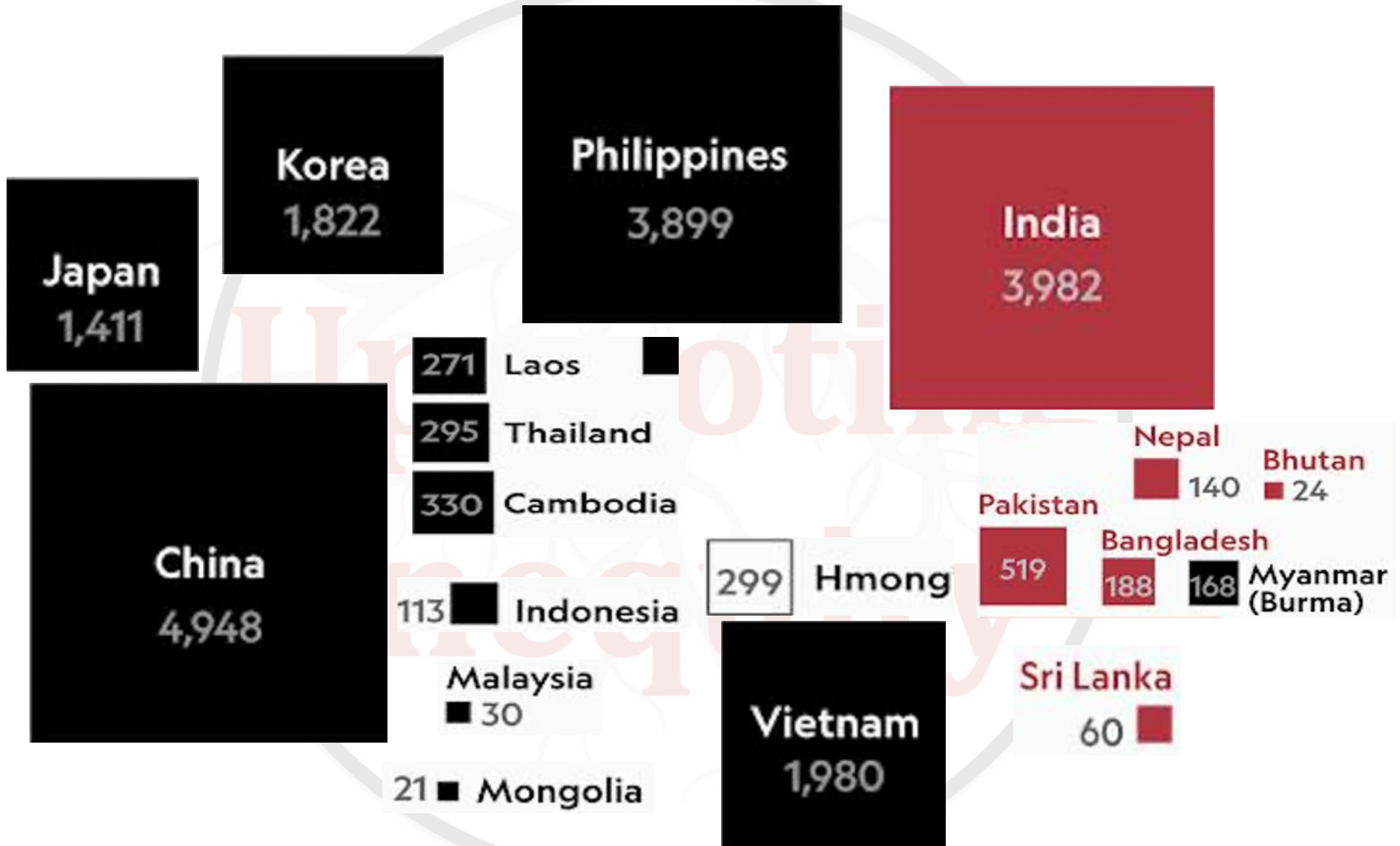
Racial Spectrums:

Historical ideologies of mestizaje or racial democracy



Skin color Bias/Prejudice:
Nations with histories of official ideologies of "mestizaje" or "racial democracy"





Asian Americans

Japan
1,411

Korea
1,822

Philippines
3,899

India
3,982

China
4,948

271 Laos
295 Thailand
330 Cambodia

113 Indonesia

Malaysia
30

21 Mongolia

299 Hmong

Vietnam
1,980

Nepal 140
Bhutan 24
Pakistan 519
Bangladesh 188
Myanmar (Burma) 168

Sri Lanka
60



In other words...

Anti-black Racism

and

rigid, consequential, caste-like

Racial categories/identities

are both **by-products** of

national ideologies of

white normativity/nationalism

(need to unify competing white groups)



Once constructed, state-sanctioned race and racism do not quickly fade, even once the laws are struck down

“Whites in South Africa and the U.S. benefited from defining themselves as [white], **with the state reinforcing racism** in varying forms of ...**segregation**.

But **once race has been so constructed, the state cannot easily dismantle its awful creation**. *"Social structure, types and attitudes are coins that do not readily melt. Once they are formed they persist"* (Joseph Schumpeter).

Racial identities, ingrained through painful experience and imbedded in everyday life, do not quickly fade even if the conditions that reinforced them change".

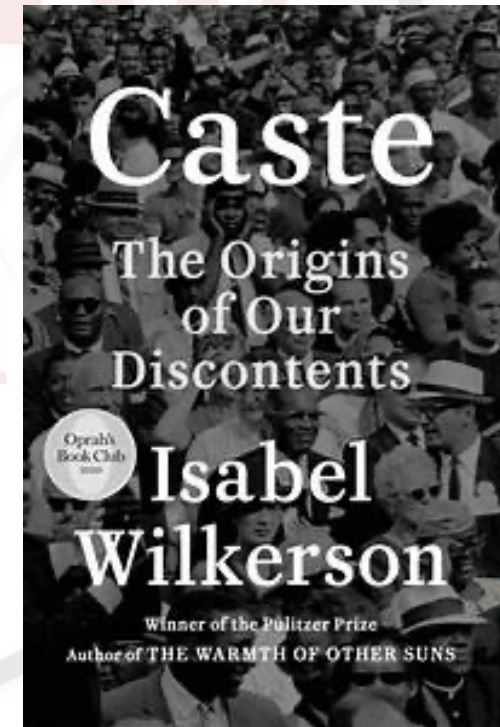


Racial Constructs Differ Across Societies

“You know that **there are no black people in Africa**. Africans are not black. They are Igbo and Yoruba, Ewe, Akan, Ndebele.

...they don't become black until they go to America or come to the U.K.”

— *an unnamed Nigerian-born Playwright quoted in Isabel Wilkerson's book, **Caste***



Physical Differences are Biological...

But the "Boxes" (Races/Identities) We Group Them In, and the Relative importance We Place on Them, are Socially Constructed.

- ❖ Africans often do not see themselves "black", and Asians often do not see themselves as "Asian," until they come to Europe or the U.S.
- ❖ European peoples did not see themselves as "white" until the mid-to-late 1600s.
- ❖ White colonists did not initially see themselves as "white," and Native Americans did not initially see themselves as "Native Americans".
- ❖ Mixed race people are "Black" in the U.S. but "mulato" in Brazil and "Colored" in South Africa.
- ❖ Many Europeans see differences among white vs. black Americans as trivial and cosmetic.



Races are **Categories of Privilege**

“**Whiteness** is a **constantly shifting boundary** separating those who are entitled to have certain **privileges** from those whose exploitation and vulnerability to violence is justified by their not being white.”

— Paul Kivel, author, *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice* (2011)



SUMMARY PART 1: How and why the Black and White races were constructed

1. America was originally a class-based society; Black and White people of the same class generally got along.
2. Colonial America was home to a prosperous community of free Blacks; a few were wealthy slave owners who voted & held office.
3. Interracial marriages and biracial children were not uncommon.
4. Colonial elites faced several multiracial class rebellions.
5. Race is a Social Construct; the U.S.' Black-White binary is arbitrary and unique to our nation.
6. "Races" are categories of privilege. Dominant groups in all societies construct categories of privilege based on perceived societal differences (race, ethnicity, religion, language, caste).



1 Race, Racism and Slavery in the *Early Colonial Era*

2 Why Did Things Change? The Great Transformation

3 How Race Was Constructed

4 **HOW Racism Was Developed**

5 WHY Racism Was Developed

Q&A and Discussion



Racism
is
Prejudice + Power



Bias (prejudice): In-Group Favoritism and Bias against out-groups are vestigial tendencies that evolved during prehistoric times



STRUCTURAL INEQUITY: Societal biases that have been Intensified, codified, and weaponized to protect & rationalize the interests of dominant groups/elites

**TIDAL WAVE (Structural Inequity)
Racism = Prejudice + Power**

WAVES: Individual Biases

Source: Ayo Magwood of Uprooting Inequity LLC, using Tsunami [Clip Art](#).

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Structural Inequity

Bias/Prejudice + Power

Disproportionately less power,
status, and representation

Stereotyping or marginalization
by popular CULTURE and POLITICAL rhetoric

Disparities in ECONOMIC outcomes
across institutions that are unexplained
by economic, cultural or behavioral differences

HISTORY of legal discriminatory policies
with present-day legacies (e.g. segregation & wealth gap)

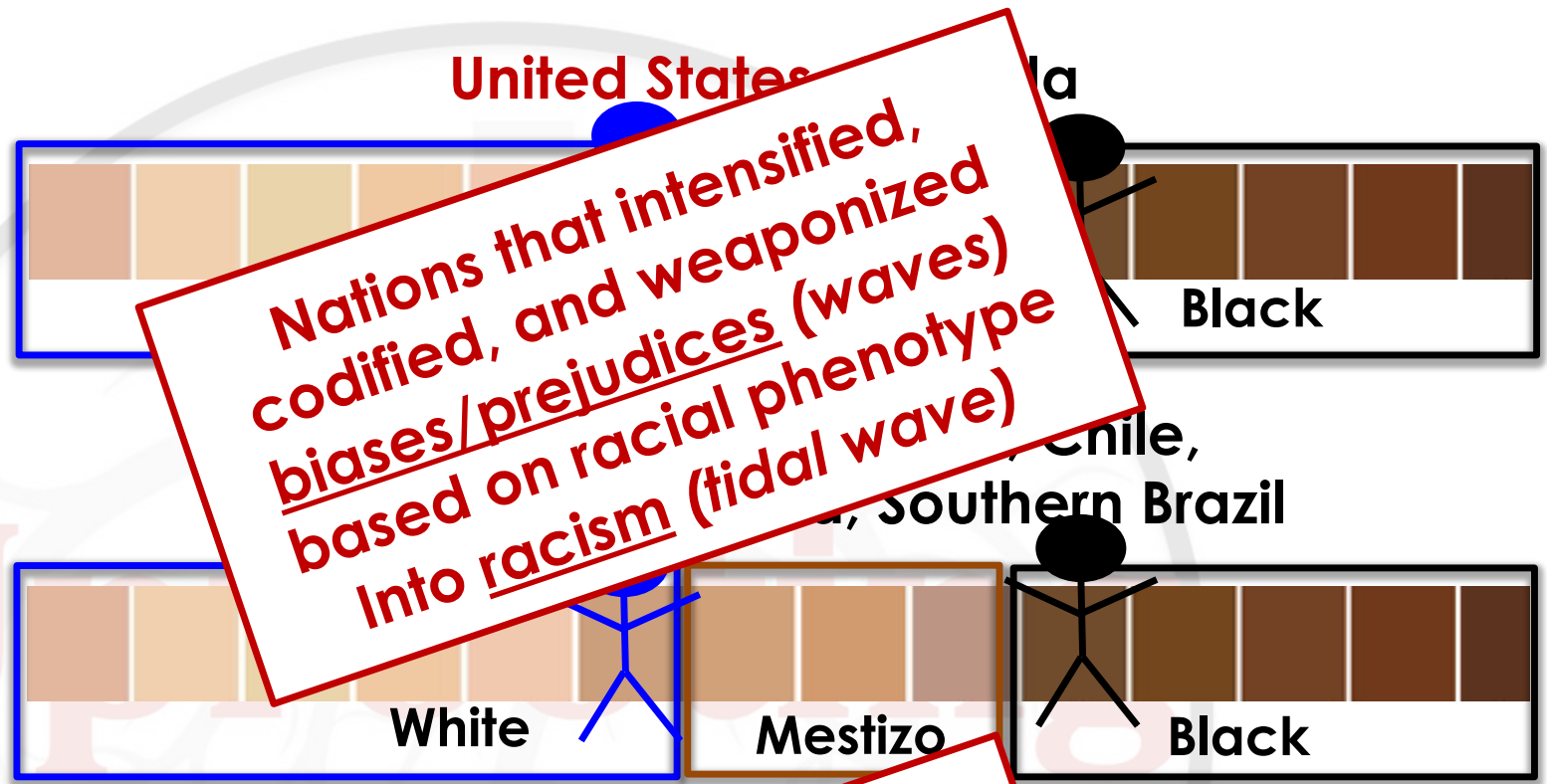
Power

Individual Bias
(individual waves)



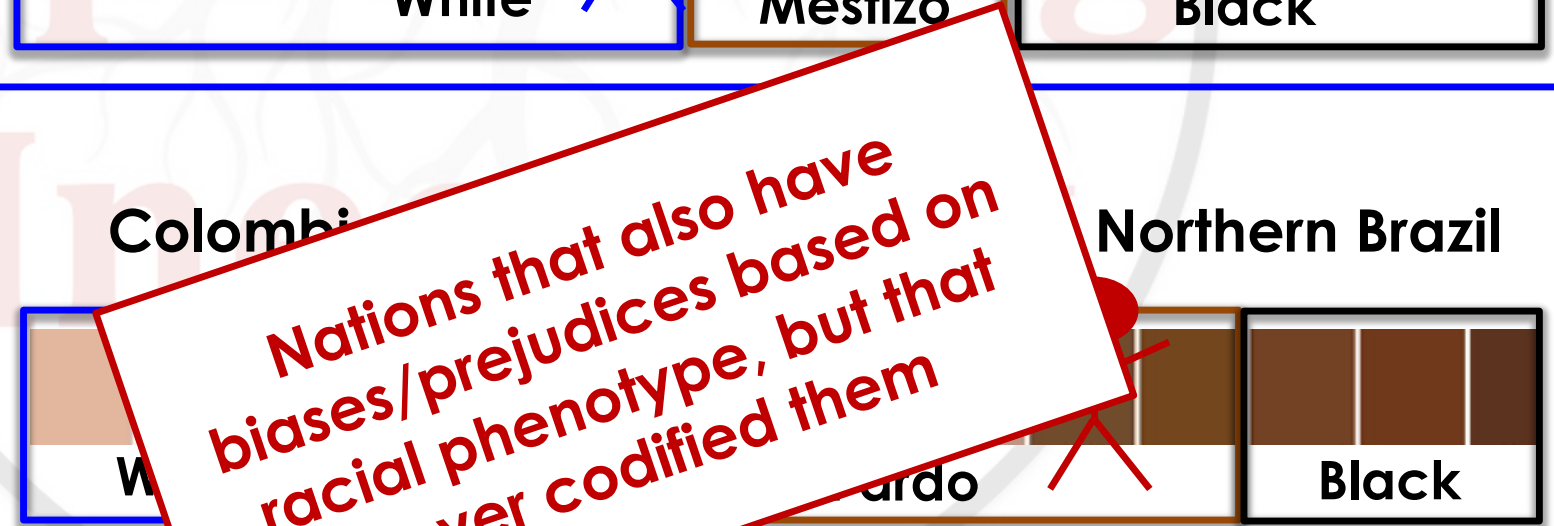
Racial Binaries:

Historical ideologies of whiteness and state policies of white domination



Racial Spectrums:

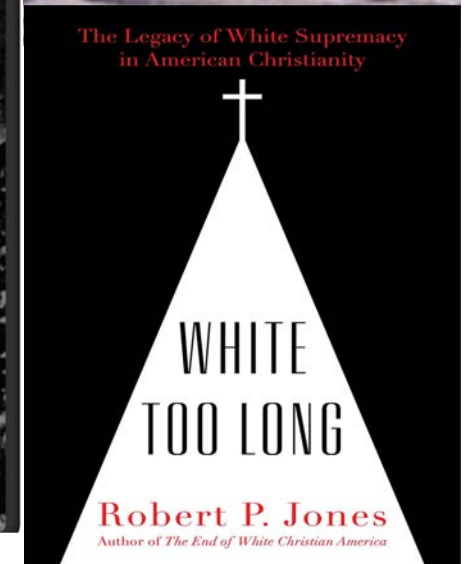
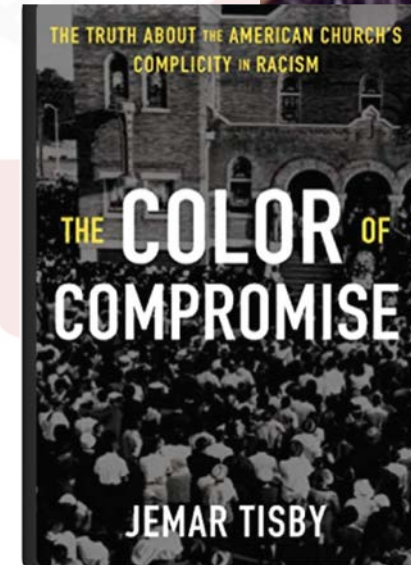
Historical ideologies of mestizaje or racial democracy



Christianity Was Distorted to Justify and Support Slavery and Racism

1. The **Bible** was distorted—by ignoring its social gospel message—to morally and religiously justify slavery (and later, segregation), perpetuate White Supremacy, and keep enslaved people subservient.
2. The **Southern Baptist Convention** broke away from other Baptist churches so they could continue supporting slavery.
3. This distortion of Christianity and the Bible ended up permanently affecting the way many southern White Christians understand their faith today.

“The Curse of Ham”
 (“Noah’s Curse”)



“[Slavery] was established by decree of Almighty God... it is sanctioned in the Bible...”

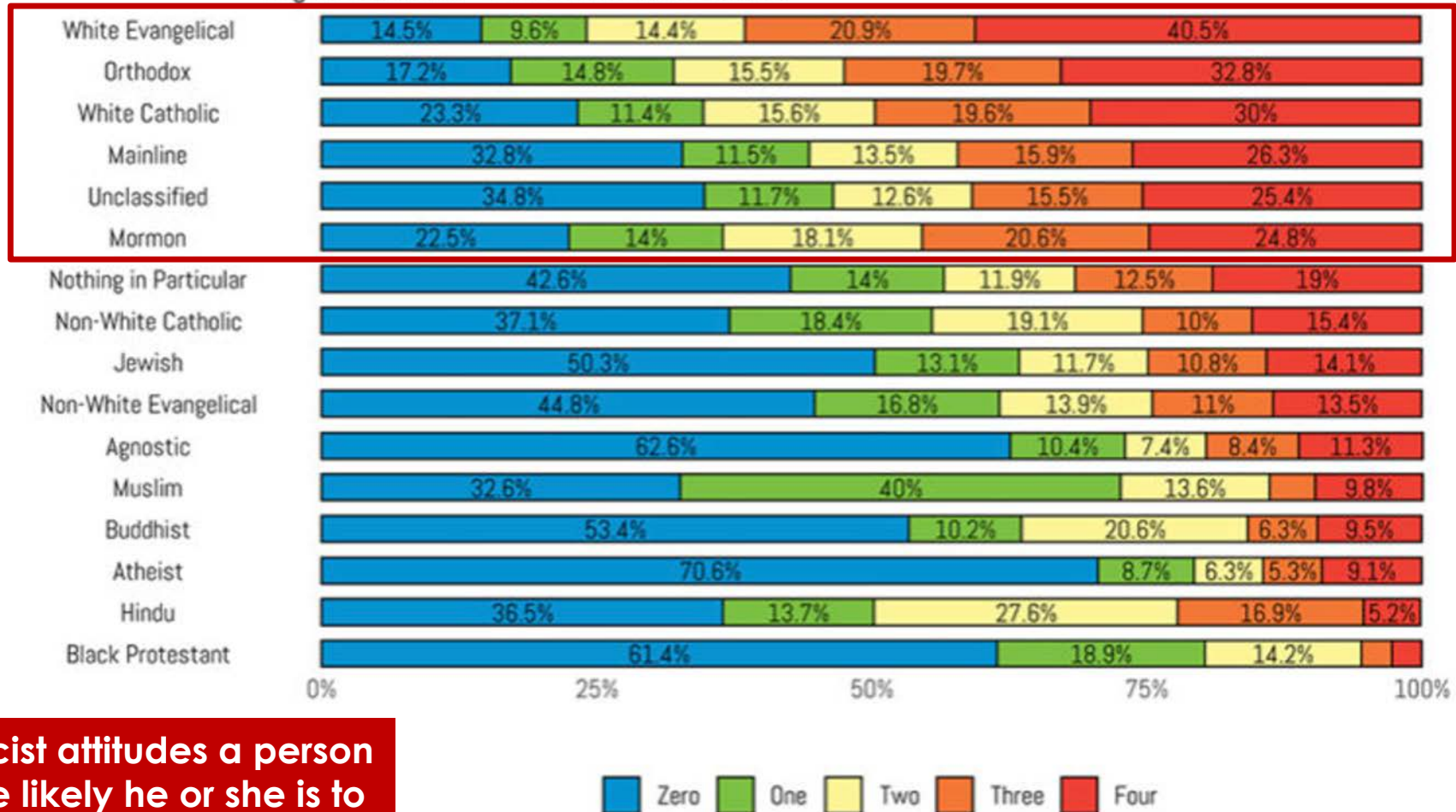
— Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America

Source: Image of Noah's Sons: MS Alba Bible f 33r. Courtesy Fundación Casa de Alba (Goldenberg 111)



The Legacy: Present-Day White Christians Harbor More Racial Resentment Than White Non-Christians

Distribution of Racial Resentment Scores
Higher Numbers = More Racial Resentment



“[T]he more racist attitudes a person holds, the more likely he or she is to identify as a white Christian.”

– Robert P. Jones, *White Too Long*.

Burge, Ryan. “Racial resentment varies widely among religious groups”. Religion News Service, June 9, 2020, based on data from CCES 2018.

@ryanburge

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Eugenics (Pseudo-Science) was used to Justify and Support Slavery and Racism in the mid 1800s (post Colonial era)

Justified slavery during growing tensions between slave and free states (mid 1800s)

Justified anti-Southern European immigration (early 1900s)

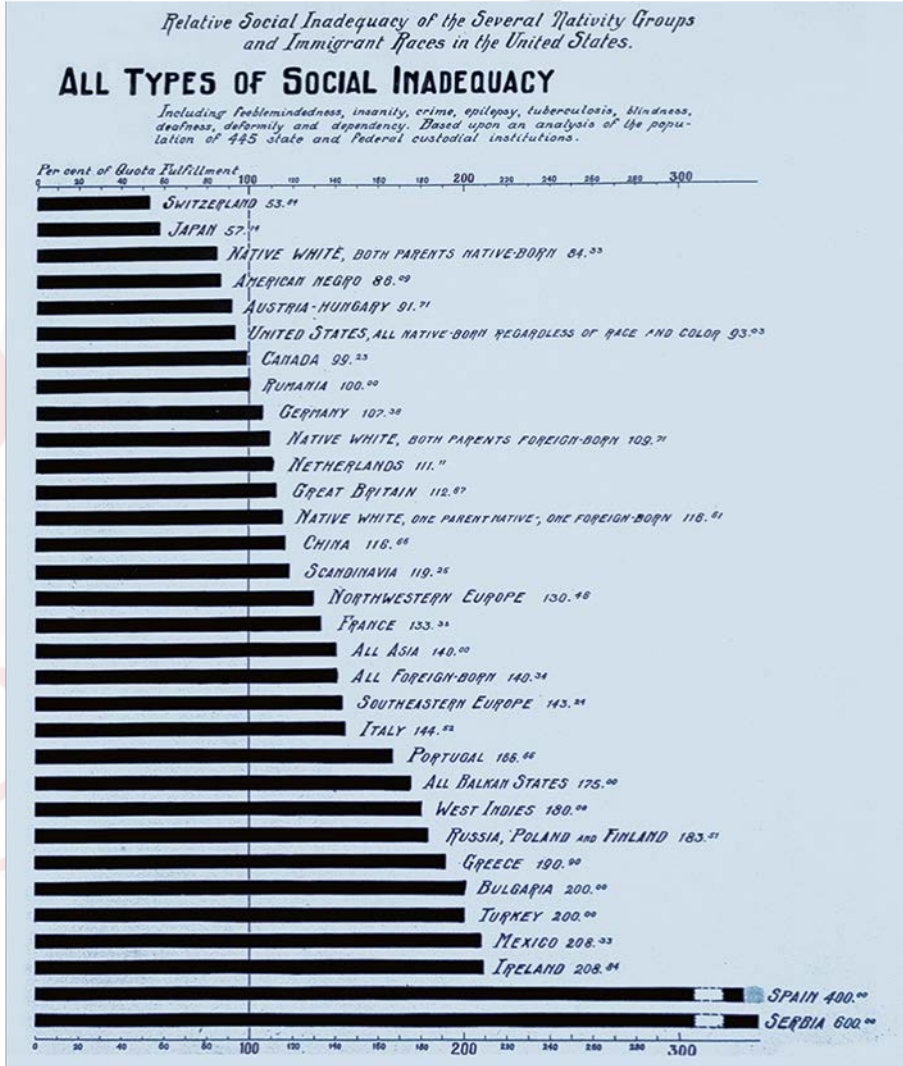
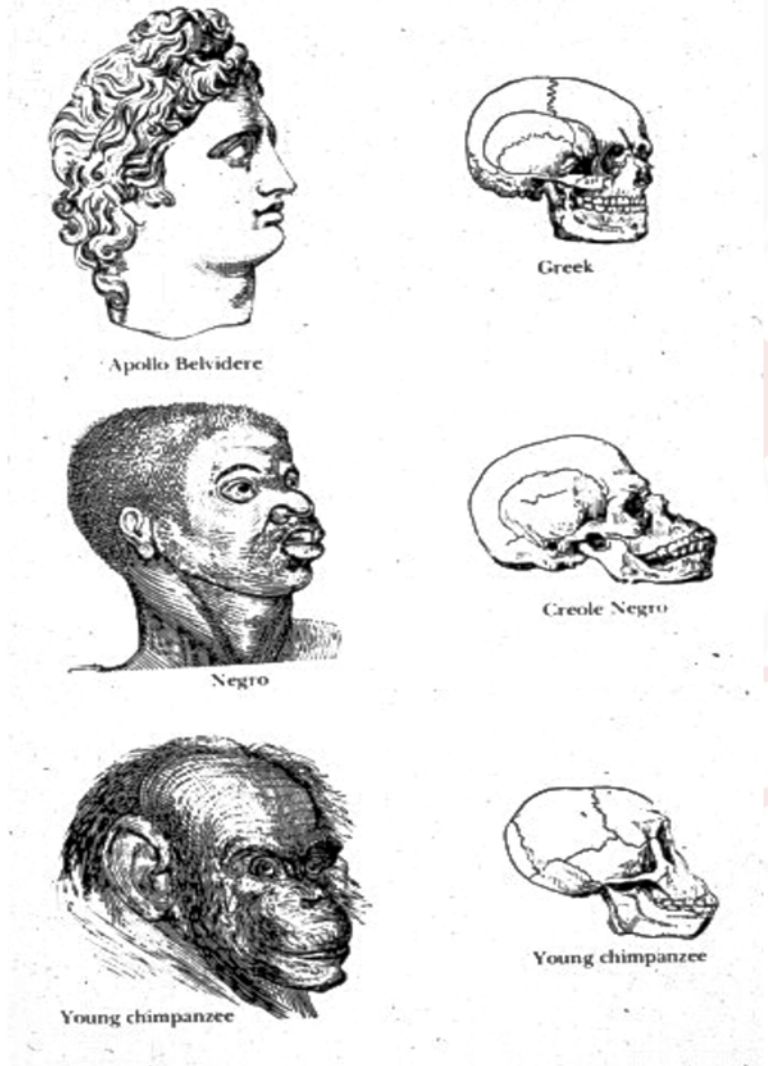


Illustration from *Types of Mankind* (1854) by Josiah Clark Nott and George Robins Gliddon.

"Relative social inadequacy of the several nativity groups and immigrant groups of the U.S.: all types of social inadequacy". 1922. The Harry H. Laughlin Papers, Truman State University, Lantern Slides, Black Case, Section 7,1707

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WHY Was Racism Created?

Racism—the myth of racial inferiority—
was **“the story we told”** to:

1. **Rationalize Slavery** (*Economic Interests*)
2. **“Divide and Conquer”** poor Whites & Blacks
(*socio-political Interests*)



Racism



Slavery

Slavery

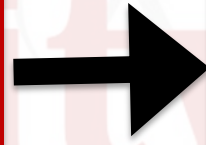


Racism

Slavery



Racism



Race

“Race is the child of racism, not the father”
– Ta-Nehisi Coates



RACISM is “The Story Slave Owners Told” to:

1. Rationalize Slavery

- ❖ **Ironically, it was not slavery but freedom—the revolutionary new idea of liberty and the natural rights of man—that led to an ideology of white supremacy.** Historian Robin D.G. Kelley points out the conundrum that faced our founders:

*"The problem that they had to figure out is **how can we promote liberty, freedom, democracy on the one hand, and a system of slavery and exploitation of people who are non-white on the other?**"*



RACISM is “The Story Slave Owners Told” to:

1. Rationalize Slavery

- ❖ Historian James Horton illuminates the story that helped reconcile that contradiction:

*"It would have been better if America had just looked the world in the eye and said, 'We hold these people in slavery because we need their labor and we've the got power to do it.' **That would have been much better, because then when the power was gone, when slavery is over, it's over.***

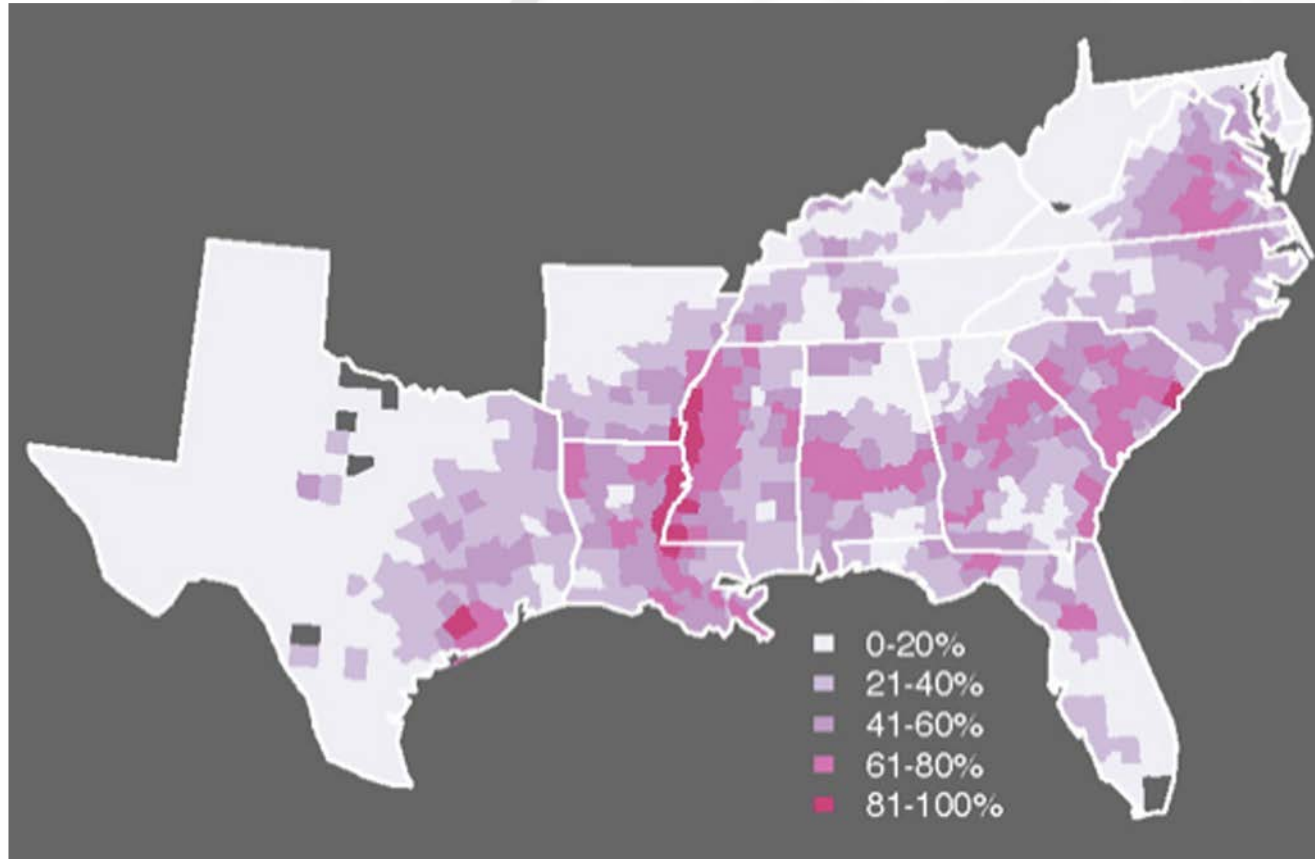
*But what we said was, 'There's something about these people.' **By doing that, it means when slavery is over that rationalization for slavery remains**".*

- ❖ **“Race, a story first told to rationalize deep social divisions in a society that proclaimed its belief in equality, would be carried forward into the 20th century and beyond”.**

— Narrator, *Race The Power of an Illusion*



White Southerners currently living in counties with high historic levels of slavery are much more likely to express racist attitudes



These areas would have **more need** to reinforce **racist narratives**

Source: *Deep Roots: How Slavery Still Shapes Southern Politics*. By Avidit Acharya, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018.

Source Image: "Legacy of Slavery Still Fuels Anti-Black Attitudes in the Deep South" September 18, 2013. University of Rochester website. [News](#).



**PRIOR to Civil War,
Racial Stereotypes justified Slavery:**

Black men as “**SAMBOS**”: slow-witted, childlike “darkies” who needed their kind White masters



Uprooting
inequity

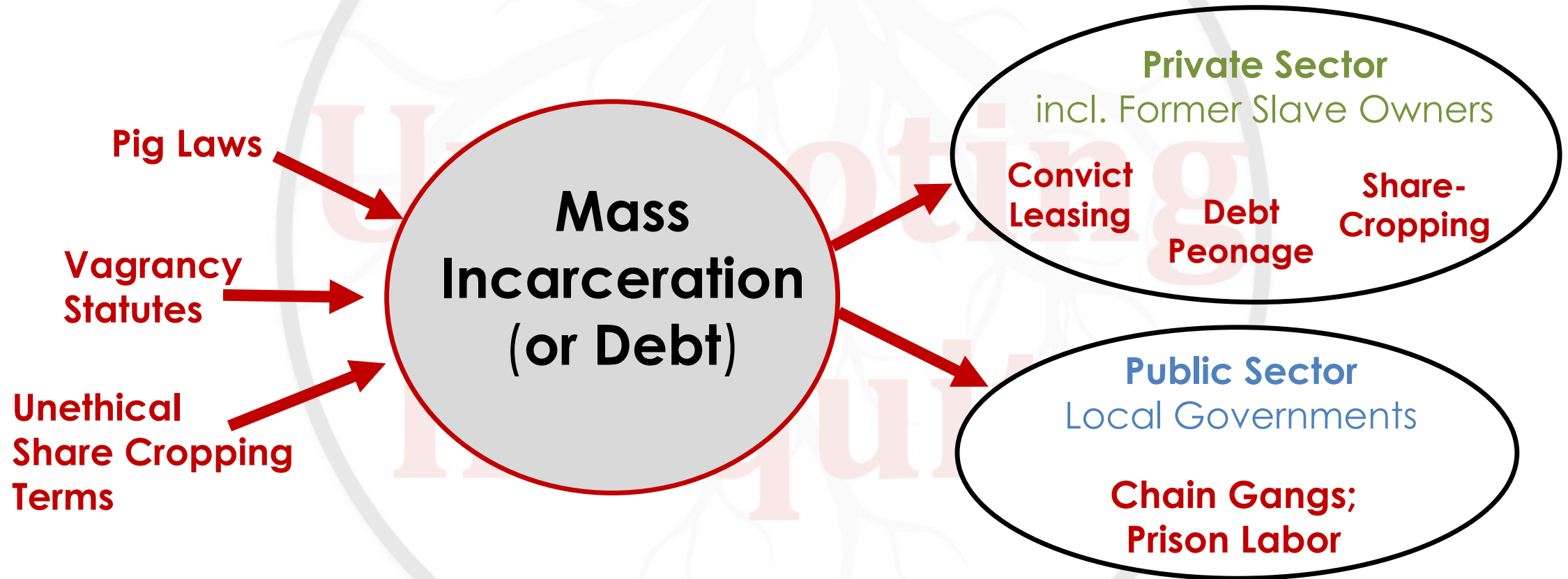
Sources: “How Sleeps the Beast”. Cover of Jan 1, 1950 paperback by Don Tracy.

“Dangerous Black Man”. Front cover of an 1899 book of sheet music.

“You Can Plainly See How Miserable I Am”. “Coon card” from 1911.

Ethnic Notions (documentary), 1984. Available on Kanopy.

Whites “doubled down” on “*The Story of Racism*” during the 90 Years of forced labor in 1876-1965 (“*Slavery by Another Name*” or “*Slavery 2.0*”)



Sources: Blackmon, Douglas. *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. New York: Anchor Books, 2008.
Pollard, JL. Dir. *Slavery by Another Name* (film). PBS, 2012.



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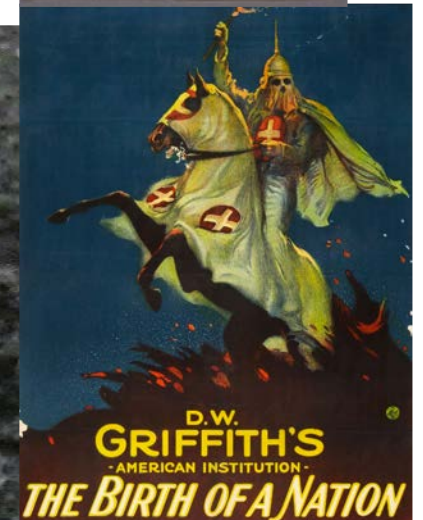
"Dangerous Black Man". Front cover of an 1899 book of sheet music.

"You Can Plainly See How Miserable I Am", "Coon card" from 1911.

Ethnic Notions (documentary), 1984. Available on Kanopy.

POST Civil War, Racial Stereotypes justified Lynchings and Mass Incarceration:

Black men as “**BRUTES**”:
savage rapists and criminals



Movie still from Birth of a Nation (1915).

Film poster for Birth of a Nation (1915).

Economic Systems/Incentives

Racial Stereotypes of Chinese Immigrants

1850s

Chinese immigrants hired to work in gold mines, potentially taking jobs from white laborers

**“depraved and vicious,”
“gross gluttons,”
“bloodthirsty and inhuman”**

1860s

Chinese immigrants hired to work on Transcontinental Railroad, which white laborers were unwilling to do

“sober, industrious, and law abiding” and “very trusty, very intelligent”

1870s

Chinese immigrants competed in the tight antebellum job market

**“criminal,” “conniving,”
“crafty,” and “stupid”**



What other “stories” of inferiority/blame do we tell ourselves to rationalize inequity and oppression?

- Native American Genocide and Mass Land Expropriation
- Colonization of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Hawaii etc.
- Japanese-American Internment
- Deportation of 1 million Mexican-American Citizens (Great Depression)
- Blocking the Immigration of Jews fleeing the Holocaust
- Increasing Poverty and Economic Inequality
- Persistent Systemic Racism and Discrimination Today
- The Gender Pay-Gap and Sexual Harassment/Violence
- Our Violation of Human Rights and Refugee Principles and Laws

When you hear a Story of Inherent Group Inferiority, start looking for the Underlying Economic/Political Interests

RACISM is “The Story We Told” to:

2. Divide Poor Blacks and Whites

- ❖ “Many of the European-descended **poor whites began to identify themselves, if not directly with the rich whites, certainly with being white.**
— Robin D. G. Kelley, historian
- ❖ “All through the late 19th century, there is this constant message hammered at poor white people. **You may be poor, you may have miserable lives right now, but . . . the thing we want you to focus on is the fact that you are white**”.
— James Horton, historian



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., March 25, 1965

“[T]he segregation of the races was really a political stratagem employed by the emerging Bourbon interests in the South to keep the southern masses divided and southern labor the cheapest in the land.”

“Toward the end of the Reconstruction era, ...the Populist Movement. ...began **uniting the Negro and white masses into a voting bloc**”.

“To meet this threat, the southern aristocracy [constructed]... a segregated society.... **That crippled and... destroyed the Populist Movement...**”

“...the southern aristocracy took the world and gave the poor white man Jim Crow. And when his wrinkled stomach cried out for the food that his empty pockets could not provide, he ate Jim Crow, a psychological bird that told him that no matter how bad off he was, at least he was a white man, better than the black man”.



President Johnson, 1960s



I'll tell you what's at the bottom of it. If you can convince the lowest white man he's better than the best colored man, he won't notice you're picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and he'll empty his pockets for you.

— *Lyndon B. Johnson* —

AZ QUOTES



“The Southern Strategy” (late 1960s-1980s)

A Republican Party Electoral Strategy to Increase Political Support among White Voters in the South by Appealing to Racism through Indirect “Dog Whistles”

“You start out in 1954 by saying, "N*****, n*****, n*****." By 1968 you can't say "n*****"—that hurts you. Backfires. So you say stuff like forced busing, states' rights and all that stuff. You're getting so abstract now [that] you're talking about cutting taxes, and all these things you're talking about are totally economic things and a byproduct of them is [that] blacks get hurt worse than whites”.

— Lee Atwater, Republican political strategist and Chairman of the Republican National Committee, 1981



SUMMARY PART 2: Why Were Race and Racism Constructed in the U.S.?

1. **The United States was originally a class-based society;** anti-black racism is not “natural” and did not always exist.
2. **Race is a socially constructed category of privilege** that is constantly evolving (dynamic rather than static); the U.S.’ black-white binary is arbitrary and unique to our nation.
3. **Racism = Prejudice + Power/Law.**
4. Racism did not lead to slavery; slavery lead to racism; it was **the economic interests of slavery that lead to a racial hierarchy and to racist attitudes and stereotypes.**
5. Slaveowners **constructed racism** to:
 - Rationalize slavery (*economic interests*) and
 - Win the allegiance of poor whites, and divide poor whites and blacks (*social/political Interests*).



SUMMARY: Why Do Societies Construct Categories of Privilege and Systems of Systematic Discrimination?

1. Dominant societal groups construct **categories of privilege** based on perceived societal differences (race, ethnicity, religion, language, etc.) to justify their dominance.
2. These dominant groups often construct systems of systematic discrimination by **codifying and intensifying naturally occurring societal prejudices**.
3. They do so to protect economic interests, garner votes, and “divide and conquer”; thus, it is often **economic (and political) interests that are driving** both social hierarchies and individual prejudice.
4. They then tell **narratives of inherent group inferiority** to rationalize this inequity and oppression, or to scapegoat.



Parting Thought...

“[H]ow racism came to be codified in the United States... is a history that tells us something important about the contemporary moment of racial reaction.” Racism is not just a psychological proclivity, but a tool of the elite, a deliberate system of legal, political and economic control.

“As intimidating as this truth is, it is also, in some sense, empowering. Because our history makes clear that systemic racism as it developed in the United States was not an inevitability, it was a series of intentional choices. If the framework for white supremacy was deliberately built in this country, it can also be deliberately dismantled.”

— Vanessa Williamson, Senior Fellow, *Brookings Institute*



Uprooting Inequity LLC

Series on The History of Racism

- 1. Origins: The Social Construction of Race, Ethnicity, and Racism**
- 2. The Historical Reproduction of Anti-Black Racism**
- 3. The Causes and Impacts of Structural Racism**
- 4. A short history of Latino Americans**
- 5. A short history of Asian Americans**
- 6. History of Coalition and Conflict between Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and Poor Whites**
- 7. Towards an Equitable “Us” Society: Lessons learned and Directions Forward**



REFLECTION: How and why the Black and White races were constructed

In the CHAT, please share some of your thoughts and reflections:

- 1. What are some of your biggest ideas you will take away ?**
- 2. What connections are you making?**
- 3. Do you have any questions for me?**

