

# AMERICA'S RACIALIST MOMENT

## RACISM AS REFORM

GEORGE MCDANIEL

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This presentation summarizes the history of racial attitudes of American whites toward blacks beginning in the last decade of the nineteenth century and continuing until the aftermath of World War II. I call this period "America's Racist Moment," the period in which the old, romantic ideas that whites held about blacks, either as faithful servants or as potential equals, were cast aside and whites began to see blacks in what many would consider a more realistic light. In response, two strains of racism developed in America: the "Radical Racists" and the "Scientific Racists."

What was Radical Racism? Historians use this term to distinguish this group from the "Conservative Racists" in the post-Reconstruction South, who still maintained paternalistic views of blacks. The Radical philosophy in fact expressed the prevailing opinion about blacks shared by the vast majority of whites, both North and South, during the period under study.

This view had been an implicit part of white psychology for almost as long as whites had been aware of blacks. It had only become explicit during the antebellum period. In its pro-slavery incarnation, this attitude held that blacks were an immature race incapable of either developing or sustaining civilization on their own, and hence they functioned best when bonded as servants to whites. After emancipation, Radical Racists quickly gave up on the idea of ever returning to slavery. They also gave up on the possibility of any further black uplift. As many pro-slavery writers had predicted, blacks seemed to have regressed in the years since emancipation. Individuals who as slaves had been loyal and relatively productive had, as freedmen, descended into shiftlessness. What was worse, white perceptions of them had changed from regarding them as a seemingly benign presence to one now seen as immoral, sullen, alien, and dangerous.

Most of the major proponents of Radical Racism were Southern politicians, exemplified by Ben Tillman of South Carolina and Jim Vardaman of Mississippi. Its most effective spokesman, however, was not (except briefly) a politician. He was the Baptist minister-turned-novelist Thomas Dixon. I will examine the work of each of these men in some detail.

But first, let's set the scene in which these schools of modern racialism appeared.

In many ways, America in the 1890s was on the verge of finally being reunited after the War between the States and the even more divisive Reconstruction period. Reconstruction, with its black state legislatures, the tyranny of the Freedmen's Bureau, and a thousand more indignities heaped upon Southern whites, had in the eyes of whites effectively removed any remaining vestiges of innocence from blacks. In 1876, with the withdrawal of Union troops and the end of Reconstruction—the event known as the Redemption—white Southerners began to deal with the presence of large numbers of free blacks for the first time.

The changing attitudes on the part of whites had been greatly accelerated by a wave of black violence. During Reconstruction, Negroes had lost their fear of whites. Instead, many began to act on a growing hatred of their former masters, initiating a decades-long spasm of violence that has lasted into the present, as those familiar with the New Century Foundation report, *The Color of Crime*, can testify. And, as the recent events in New Orleans would seem to suggest, barbarous impulses among blacks stand ready to resurface any time white-enforced order is diminished.

Most horrendous in the eyes of whites, black violence in the early 1890s often involved the rape of white women. Within a short time, rapes of white women by blacks in the South went from almost none to one hundred or more each month. In response, whites adopted desperate measures.

### LYNCHING

Previously confined to the western states and usually carried out by whites against other whites, lynching grew more common in the South. While in recent years leftist historians portrayed the phenomenon as a virtual sine qua non of all Southern history, more objective historians have discovered that lynchings of Southern blacks by whites were widespread over a period of no more than four decades. Lynchings became common in the South only in the 1890s and by the late 1920s had all but disappeared. (See, for example, Murphey, *Lynching: History and Analysis*.) Moreover, lynching was seldom if ever the baseless result of the spontaneous hostility of white mobs toward blacks. Lynchings were almost always motivated by strong and often well-substantiated suspicions of the target individual's guilt, generally of crimes of sexual violence against white women. While sometimes appalled at lynching's brutalities, the Radical Racialists often defended the practice in theory as the only way of punishing and deterring the scourge of rape. Rebecca Latimer Felton, the Georgian suffragist, reformer, and prohibitionist who would one day be the first woman to take a seat in the U.S. Senate, issued the following advice to white farmers:

I warned those representative men of the terrible effects that were already seen in the corruption of the Negro vote...That week there were seven lynchings in Georgia from the fearful crime of rape. I told them that these ...would grow and increase with every election where white men equalized themselves at the polls with an inferior race and controlled their votes by bribery and whiskey. A crime nearly unknown before and during the war had become an almost daily [occurrence]...[I]f it takes lynching to protect woman's dearest possession from drunken, ravening human beasts, then I say lynch a thousand a week...

### THOMAS DIXON

Radical Racialist Thomas Dixon, in his first novel, *The Leopard's Spots*, treats the lynching situation with surprising sensitivity. In fact, from his descriptions and in the words of the other Radicals, it is clear that they felt much the same way about lynching: It was a horrible, brutal crime brought about by a terrible necessity. All of them were adamant, however, that if vigilantism was the only way to protect white womanhood, then so be it.

In *The Leopard's Spots*, Dixon's hero Gaston attempts to prevent the lynching of a Negro named Dick, who has raped and murdered young Flora Camp. Gaston fails, however, and the lynch mob prevails. Afterwards, Gaston reflects upon the events:

Such crimes as Dick had committed...were unknown absolutely under slavery...Now, scarcely a day passed in the South without the record of such an atrocity, swiftly followed by a lynching...The encroachments of Negroes upon public offices had been slow but resistless. Now there were nine hundred and fifty Negro magistrates in the state, elected for no reason except the color of their skin. Feeling themselves entrenched behind state and Federal power, the insolence of a class of young Negro men was becoming more and more intolerable.

Thomas Dixon was born during the war years, in Shelby, North Carolina, and he spent his childhood under the yoke of occupation. In his autobiography, *Southern Horizons*, Dixon recounts a trip to the "Negro legislature" in Columbia, South Carolina:

It certainly was a Negro legislature. There didn't seem to be a white man ...anywhere ...in the building...It was so funny to see such a bunch in the grand hall of the State House. Some of them, the better dressed ones, had evidently been waiters. You could tell by the way they stepped and bent over a desk as if they were balancing a tray. Some of them were preachers in frock coats. One funny little coal black strutted down the aisle wearing a tall stovepipe hat nearly as big as he was. Many of them were in overalls covered with red mud. A lot of them were barefooted. A member threw his feet in red socks on his desk and the Speaker rapped and shouted: "The Chair has ruled that all members must wear their shoes. Put 'em on!"

Dixon himself served in the post-Reconstruction North Carolina legislature while a very ambitious, and presumably appropriately shod, young man. Later he became by turns an actor, a Baptist minister, popular lecturer, pioneer filmmaker, then finally best-selling author of no fewer than twenty-two novels. His most famous, *The Clansman*, was transformed in 1915 by D. W. Griffith into the first great motion picture epic, *The Birth of a Nation*. Dixon's novels and Griffith's film together probably did more to enhance and embody the racist movement in America than the work of any other person or group. Even today, they continue to generate interest and controversy. Until the 1960s, the film was still widely considered the greatest movie ever made, but political correctness has taken its toll. In 1998, the American Film Institute listed it at forty-one. By 2005, when *Time* magazine came out with its own top one hundred movie list, *The Birth of a Nation* failed to make the cut.

(Curiously, *The Birth of a Nation* is still shown on college campuses, albeit with a postmodernist twist. Making the rounds of the university circuit these days is something called *Rebirth of a Nation*, a remix intended to "deconstruct" the original film using contemporary music and multimedia, and is the brainchild of so-called "philosopher" D. J. Spooky.)

As a youthful state legislator, Dixon opposed the oligarchic Conservatives (or Bourbons, as they were also known), wealthy white Democrats who came to power in many Southern states in the late 1870s. As a youthful progressive, he somewhat naively introduced a bill to raise revenue through an inheritance tax, and also a measure to establish a state-funded agricultural college. Though both bills failed, they were in keeping with the progressive stand characteristic of the Radical Racialists.

The practice, referred to by Ms. Felton, of seeking the Negro vote through liquor and bribery, was a hallmark of Bourbon rule. Principal among the Bourbons was Wade Hampton, a former Confederate general, who became governor of South Carolina in 1876. He and his fellow Bourbons were regarded as "conservative" racialists because they still felt a degree of paternalism toward the Negroes.

Radicals like Felton rightly disapproved of the practice of bribing Negroes for votes in the belief that it led to unintended social consequences. One Radical who campaigned against this practice was Ben Tillman. Tillman, called "Pitchfork Ben" because he once promised to "poke old Grover" Cleveland with a pitchfork, succeeded Wade Hampton as governor of South Carolina, beginning a long and storied career, first as governor and then as a three-term U.S. senator.

### BEN TILLMAN

Ben Tillman came from an upcountry South Carolina farming family. His older brother George, a lawyer and state legislator, had served with William Walker's pro-slavery filibuster army in Central America. Another brother was

killed in the Mexican War. Ben was a teenager at the start of the War between the States and, though anxious to get into the fight, was prevented from doing so by an infection that cost him an eye.

Tillman entered politics in the 1880s, having established a reputation as a successful farmer. Originally a member of the Hampton faction, Tillman soon began to view the Bourbons as unconcerned about the welfare of white small farmers and businessmen. He was elected governor in 1890 over a conservative who had notoriously courted the Negro vote. Though that campaign was surprisingly free of racial division, by 1892 a growing number of rapes had hardened Tillman's attitudes. He told an Aiken, South Carolina, audience: "There is only one crime that warrants lynching, and Governor as I am, I would lead a mob to lynch the Negro who ravishes a white woman." Even Tillman's opponents, however, admit that, as governor, he did what he could to quell lynching.

Tillman also took a stand against a law passed by the South Carolina elites that taxed labor recruiters who attempted to lure black workers to other states. Appalled that the state's low-country planters would attempt to hold onto what Tillman regarded as South Carolina's excessive black population, he succeeded in repealing the act.

Ben Tillman hit his full stride in 1895, when he took Wade Hampton's seat in the U.S. Senate. Tillman was a born public speaker and his speeches in the Senate won him a national reputation. Throughout his Senate career, Tillman's focus was the crafting of segregation laws in any sphere affecting the federal government. In his more than twenty years in office, he successfully segregated the Post Office, the Civil Service, and many other departments of the federal service, as well as day-to-day life in the District of Columbia. Along with promotion of segregation, Tillman's other primary message was that educating blacks was counterproductive. It simply resulted in frustration and crime. "[T]he poor African has become a fiend, a wild beast, seeking whom he may devour, filling our penitentiaries and our jails... Yet he can read and write. He has a little of the veneer of education and civilization, according to New England ideas."

Tillman was by no means alone in his belief that education had only made the Negro more dangerous. John Roach Straton, a professor at Mercer University, wrote that black education since the war had resulted in

crime...and immorality...in even greater ratio...[T]he more the Negroes live to themselves and the nearer they remain to a simple life...the better they are, while the...closer they come in contact with our civilization and the more they endeavor to take it on, the worse they become....

#### JIM VARDAMAN

It was Tillman's Senate colleague, James K. Vardaman, who was the most vociferous opponent of the education of the Negro. Vardaman was elected

governor of Mississippi in 1906 on a platform that called for the abolition of state aid for Negro education. Vardaman's position was that educating the Negro was an injustice to him, since it made him unhappy in doing the only work he was suited for. The measure ultimately failed, but Vardaman was successful in several other efforts, most of them very progressive. For example, he opposed laws that would permit railroad mergers and increased corporate landowning. He attacked the banks and the railroads as "locusts, devouring the farmer by their usurious rates and exorbitant tariffs." He supported state efforts to fight yellow fever and created a state department of agriculture to better look after farmers' interests. He promoted penitentiary reform, and supported efforts to provide more educational opportunities for white children. Vardaman even attempted to deal with the lynching problem, by increasing the penalty for rape. Through it all, Vardaman never lost sight of his ultimate goal: to improve the lot of his own people. He went so far as to say that if the protection of his people required it, "every Negro in the state will be lynched."

(Another famous Mississippian, William Faulkner, toward the end of his life told an interviewer: "[I]f it came to fighting I'd fight for Mississippi against the United States even if it meant going out into the street and shooting Negroes. After all, I'm not going to shoot Mississippians." Incidentally, there are several characters in Faulkner's novels named "Vardaman.")

### THE RADICALS AND PROGRESSIVISM

An examination of the careers of Felton, Dixon, Tillman, and Vardaman makes clear that Radical Racialism should be viewed as a distinctively Southern manifestation of the national Progressive movement. To quote historian C. Vann Woodward, from *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*:

The omission of the South from the annals of the progressive movement has been one of the glaring oversights of American historians... [I]n some particulars the Southern progressives anticipated and exceeded the performance of their counterparts in the West and East. They chalked up some spectacular gains against the bosses and machines, the corporations and railroads, the insurance companies and trusts. They democratized politics with direct and preferential primaries, with corrupt practices and anti-lobby acts, with initiative and referendum. They scored gains in humanitarian legislation for miners, factory workers, child labor, and the consumer....

Having said this, Woodward adds:

[T]he typical progressive reformer rode to power in the South on a disfranchising or white-supremacy movement. Racism was conceived of by some as the very foundation of Southern progressivism.

While Professor Woodward might approve of the progressive ideas and disapprove of the racialist views, and others might think the opposite, in fact to the Radical Racialists and their supporters the two ideologies went hand in glove. The Radicals championed, with no apologies, what can only be called

white supremacy. At the same time, they supported progressive social and economic legislation on the federal level. If we now know that there were risks in empowering the central government thereby, it is through the benefit of hindsight.

### THE RADICALS AND THE IMPERIALISTS

It was difficult to predict which side the Radicals would take in regard to the national government's overseas adventurism. Tillman opposed the Spanish-American War on the very reasonable grounds that any successful campaign would bring under U.S. purview many more members of the colored races – which it did, to the tune of about eight million. Thomas Dixon, however, supported the war, and Vardaman even volunteered for it, serving for a time in a cavalry unit in Cuba.

At any event, the consensus among historians—for what it's worth—is that the Spanish-American War and other imperialist adventures only served to bolster the growing opinion of Americans, Northern and Southern, that the white race should have dominion over the colored races. The federal government acted as though it felt so, too, treating the subject colored populations as apparent inferiors. As C. Vann Woodward observes, quoting an exasperated Boston newspaper of the time, "The Southern race policy was 'now the policy of the Administration of the very party which carried the country into and through a civil war to free the slave.'" At which point we can imagine the proper Bostonian editor throwing up his hands in despair.

### MOVEMENT OUTLIERS

There are two figures associated with both the Radical and the Scientific branches of the racist movement that I call movement outliers. Both were Negroes. One of them, Marcus Garvey, was of Jamaican birth and was closely associated with various figures on the Scientific side. We will take a look at Garvey shortly.

The other outlier was a mulatto named William Hannibal Thomas. Thomas had been a free black living in Ohio at the beginning of the War between the States. He joined the Union Army and eventually lost an arm in the fighting at Wilmington late in the war. After the war he busied himself in various carpetbagger activities, always more or less with the aim of assisting the freedmen of the South. The ensuing decades, however, brought Thomas into contact with his more purely black kinsmen and, by the turn of the century, he had had enough. Fed up with what he saw as the abysmal lack of progress and even regression exhibited by the Negro, he wrote a book analyzing his wayward brethren.

Entitled *The American Negro: What He Was, What He Is, What He Can Become*, the book is an often scathing description of the Negro race as seen by Thomas at

the turn of the century. Refusing to make excuses and refusing to blame white oppression and mistreatment, he puts the blame squarely on the shoulders of the blacks themselves. He cites the tendency to violence on the part of black males and the tendency to licentiousness of black females. Both traits had grown worse since emancipation, he asserts. Thomas's conclusions are much the same as those of Tillman and Vardaman and others: The Negro race is at best a static one, and without guidance from whites, may be regressing toward barbarism.

The Radicals welcomed Thomas's contribution. Ben Tillman was said to have purchased a hundred copies of the book for distribution among his friends and associates.

Needless to say, the liberal elements of the day did not take kindly to this message from a man recognized by everyone, including himself, as "colored." Thomas was ostracized by the black community and savagely attacked in the liberal press. He became a "man without a race," according to his biographer John David Smith, who doesn't much like him either. Smith's 2000 biography bears the unambiguous title *Black Judas*.

### THE SCIENTIFIC RACIALISTS

Radical Racialism tended to be Southern, Protestant Christian, and rural. It had grown seamlessly out of the pro-slavery arguments before the war. The second movement in American racialism arising in the 1890s, though in practice in substantial agreement with the former, had very different philosophical underpinnings. This is the ideology generally called "Scientific Racialism." Scientific Racialism was Northern, intellectual, and secular. Quite unlike the ideology of the Radicals, the underpinnings of which were essentially Biblical, Scientific Racialism issued from Darwin's theory of evolution, published just before the War between the States. (Interestingly, the founder of international Scientific Racialism, Joseph Arthur Count de Gobineau, was not a believer in evolution. A devout Catholic, he wrote that, "We are not descended from the ape, but we are headed in that direction!")

Whereas the Radical Racialists typically had hardscrabble upbringings in the Reconstruction-era rural South, the Scientific Racialists generally had childhoods of privilege in the North of the Gilded Age, childhoods that more often than not culminated in expensive college educations at Harvard and Yale.

Although there were many differences between the two racist groups, both movements were legitimate, full-fledged participants in the broader reform movement of the time.

Who were the Scientific Racialists? Undoubtedly the foremost among them was Madison Grant, a Yale-educated lawyer, hunting companion to Theodore Roosevelt, and friend of countless other movers and shakers of his day. The other major figures were all friends and associates of Grant. They included the

journalist and writer Dr. Lothrop Stoddard, the paleontologist Henry Fairfield Osborn, and a writer and explorer who in many ways forms a bridge between the two racialist camps, Earnest Sevier Cox.

### MADISON GRANT

Grant, the acknowledged leader, may be the most productive forgotten man in American history. He was a New York-born lawyer and big-game hunter who almost single-handedly created both the conservationist movement and the eugenics movement in this country. Even to list the organizations that he founded or chaired, not to mention the innumerable causes that he supported, would take more space than is available here.

Although Madison Grant's career is an object lesson in what happens when one makes the wrong enemies in America, thanks to a still-unpublished biography by historian Jonathan Spiro, Grant is not quite as forgotten now as he once was.

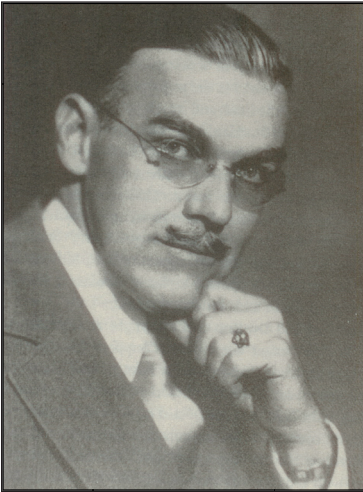
Madison Grant was born shortly after the close of the War between the States in 1865. His father had been a surgeon in the Union Army and late in the war had received the Congressional Medal of Honor. Madison had a privileged childhood, growing up among the elites of Long Island and New York City and studying for a time in Dresden, Germany. Yale and Columbia law school awaited him as a young man, and he emerged from them an energetic and enthusiastic man about town. Somewhat curiously for one so urban and urbane, Madison first fell in love with hunting, a pastime he enjoyed with his friend Teddy Roosevelt, another Progressive who came from the same city and the same social class. Together the two started the Boone and Crockett Club, the first of many organizations Grant would found in his lifetime.

Hunting inspired in Grant—and Roosevelt and others in their orbit—a desire to preserve wildlife. This may seem ironic today, especially to non-hunters, but hunters have always been the first to notice declines of species, and the first humans to suffer for it. Grant began a series of campaigns to preserve wild game animals throughout the country: elk, bison, deer, and fowl of all types. Soon this urge to preserve led to the preservation of plant life as well, and Grant helped found the Save-the-Redwoods League. He was instrumental in the growth of Yellowstone National Park and numerous other state and national parks, and he took the lead in founding the Bronx Zoo and the New York Aquarium. This conservationism brought him into conflict with the wealthy and powerful—the railroads and the mining interests, for example—and it clearly established Grant and his followers as turn-of-the-century progressive reformers.

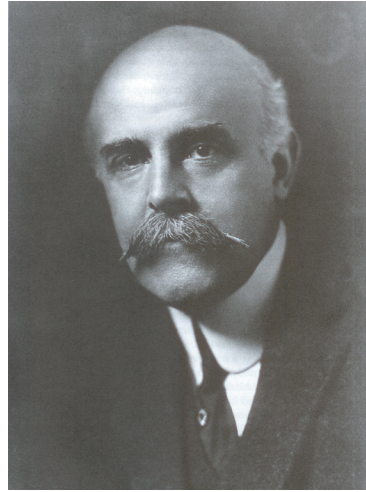
Grant's efforts on behalf of wildlife and nature conservation were exceeded only by his devotion to preserving the most valuable species of all: his own kind. Grant had grown up with a deep appreciation for the racial stock that had created America. Upon encountering William Z. Ripley's *The Races of Europe*,

he began a lifelong study of the European races: the Nordics, Alpines, and Mediterraneans. He observed that everywhere the Nordics predominated, the economy was more productive, the society better ordered, the arts more refined. Those areas where Alpines or Mediterraneans were dominant, he found wanting.

His studies led Grant to encourage the continued dominance of Nordic life in America. Along with his many friends and associates who felt the same way, he began to agitate for restrictions on immigration to avoid the swamping of Nordic blood by evidently less desirable races from eastern and southern Europe.



**Lothrop Stoddard**



**Madison Grant**

Grant's first major written work was *The Passing of the Great Race*, published in 1916. The book went to four quick editions and was a watershed event for both layman and professional. It presented in explicit, forthright language the case for the dominant racial stock in American history and sounded a warning about increased immigration from the margins of Europe.

The attention and interest that Grant generated from this book helped him win a great victory in the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act, which put a stop to almost all of the immigration that Grant had opposed as undesirable.

A campaign later in that decade to similarly limit immigration from Mexico was not successful, however, and the effects of that failure are increasingly felt today. According to Grant's biographer, "[i]t remained one of the great disappointments of Madison Grant's life that he had failed to outlaw immigration from Mexico. His friend C.M. Goethe called it 'a national tragedy' and a 'crime,' and predicted that future generations 'will rise up and curse us...for failing

to close...that Back Door.'" Though many would more likely curse the Ted Kennedys who gave us the 1965 Immigration Act, Goethe had the right idea.

Until the 1920s, Grant had scarcely considered the potentially far more dangerous implications of the growing Negro and other colored populations domestically and around the world. That warning call was sounded instead by his close friend and colleague, Lothrop Stoddard.

#### LOTHROP STODDARD

Stoddard, like Grant, had been born to wealth in New York and later educated in the Ivy League (Harvard, Class of 1905). He is best known for his 1920 book *The Rising Tide of Color*, for which Grant wrote the introduction. A large part of *The Rising Tide* has to do with the potentially catastrophic effects of miscegenation on the white race. Stoddard writes:

Two things are necessary for the continued existence of a race: it must remain itself, and it must breed its best. Every race is the result of ages of development which evolves specialized capacities that make the race what it is and render it capable of creative achievement. These specialized capacities (which particularly mark the superior races), being relatively recent developments, are highly unstable...[W]hen a highly specialized stock interbreeds with a different stock, the newer, less stable, specialized characters are bred out, the variation, no matter how great its potential value to human evolution, being irretrievably lost. And, of course, the more primitive a type is, the more [predominant] it is. This is why crossings with the Negro are uniformly fatal.

#### EARNEST SEVIER COX

A personality who serves as a bridge between the Radical Racialists and the Scientific Racialists is Earnest Sevier Cox. Cox was a Tennessean, born in 1880. In the years 1910–1915 he traveled extensively throughout Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America. Returning home, he began giving lectures on the Negro race. In 1916, Senator Vardaman arranged a job for Cox in the Senate office building. Vardaman also suggested he read the newly published *The Passing of the Great Race*; upon reading it, Cox was immediately inspired to begin writing his own book, which would ultimately bear the title *White America* and become the third important volume in the series begun by Grant and continued by Stoddard.

When *White America* was published in 1923, Cox paid tribute to both Grant and Stoddard in the introduction. While *The Passing of the Great Race* had portrayed the threats to Nordic civilization by non-Nordic but otherwise white immigration, *The Rising Tide of Color* analyzed the threat to the entire white world by the colored races everywhere. And *White America* described the very immediate threat to America of the domestic Negro population.

Although scorned by many critics, *White America* established Cox as an authority in the racist movement. At Grant's suggestion, Cox put his new influence to work in Virginia, lobbying for a tougher antimiscegenation law. Not only was he successful in securing the law's passage, but the public relations effort resulted in the founding of dozens of "Anglo-Saxon Clubs" at Virginia college campuses. The Racial Integrity Act, as the new law was called, was a model for other states in the South and Midwest, as well as California.

Immediately after the law's passage, Grant wrote to Cox and suggested their next step: It was to be nothing less than the wholesale resettlement of blacks to Africa. Though a daunting task, both men believed it could be accomplished given sufficient will. Grant suggested that, to start the ball rolling, Cox should get in touch with Marcus Garvey.

### MARCUS GARVEY

Marcus Garvey differs from the other racist outlier discussed here—William Hannibal Thomas—in that Garvey was never critical of his race. Quite to the contrary, he was intensely proud of being black. As James Lubinskas wrote of Garvey in *American Renaissance* a few years ago, Garvey may even have coined the slogan "black is beautiful."

A few weeks after Cox and Grant corresponded, Garvey came to Richmond on a national speaking tour. The only white to attend his lecture was Earnest Sevier Cox. Cox introduced himself, gave Garvey a copy of *White America*, and pledged to help Garvey in his cause. In return, the black crusader included in the next volume of his *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* a full-page ad for Cox's book. Garvey's adherents took to *White America* almost faster than did Cox's, and the Garveyites in Detroit alone accounted for sales of seventeen thousand copies. In gratitude, Cox dedicated his next work, a pamphlet called *Let My People Go*, to Garvey. Mrs. Garvey bought a thousand copies.

Marcus Garvey's alliance with the white racials rankled the black leadership of the time, of course, and men such as W. E. B. DuBois led a loud chorus of derision, not unlike the one that had greeted William Hannibal Thomas.

Like Thomas, Garvey soon ran into legal troubles. He was eventually sentenced to federal prison in Atlanta for mail fraud. His supporters cried foul but Garvey nonetheless had to serve two years before being released, despite the efforts of Cox and others to have him freed. Since Garvey, now a convicted felon, was not a citizen, he was subject to deportation and was soon deported to Jamaica. Marcus Garvey was never allowed to return to the United States, and in his absence his organization eventually disintegrated.

### THE FLAMING SWORD

Thomas Dixon does an excellent job of telling the story of Cox and Garvey—and indeed much of the story told here—in his last novel, *The Flaming*

*Sword*, published in 1939. In this sequel to *The Clansman*, Dixon treats the period from 1900 to 1939, which he calls the "Conflict of Color" in America. *The Flaming Sword* is based on real historical events, among which it describes the publication of *The Clansman* and the making of *The Birth of a Nation*. A large part of the story revolves around the theme of the "Negro As Beast" and the white response. Garvey's and Cox's repatriation proposals are treated in detail, as well as Garvey's ultimate fall from grace at the hands of his enemies.

### THEODORE BILBO

With the disintegration of the Garvey movement, Cox and Grant decided to seek another, more powerful ally. They found one in Senator Theodore Bilbo, Democrat of Mississippi, like Cox another bridge between the two racist camps. Bilbo, the son of a Confederate veteran, was born in Mississippi in 1877. In 1910, he teamed up with Jim Vardaman, forming an alliance that dominated Mississippi politics for many years. In 1911, when Vardaman was running for reelection to the U.S. Senate, Bilbo ran for lieutenant governor. Since his and Vardaman's supporters had been derided as "rednecks," the crowds at the two candidates' rallies began to show up wearing red neckties. Both Bilbo and Vardaman won handily.

Theodore Bilbo had an unusual way with words. During that campaign, he described his opponent as "a cross between a hyena and a mongrel... begotten in a nigger graveyard at midnight, suckled by a sow, and educated by a fool."

Bilbo eventually followed his mentor Vardaman to the Senate, where he served three terms. Like Earnest Sevier Cox, who would become his close friend, Bilbo belongs to both the Radical Racialists and the Scientific Racialists. True to his origins as a Racialist Reformer, Bilbo supported Social Security and the whole raft of social legislation that was spawned by the New Deal. A great admirer of Madison Grant, in 1938, while filibustering against a pro-Negro bill, Bilbo quoted at length from both *The Passing of the Great Race* and *White America*.

When Cox and Grant approached Bilbo and suggested that he spearhead the repatriation movement, Bilbo readily agreed, and he and Cox worked together to draft a repatriation bill in May 1938. Bilbo's introduction of the bill on the floor of the Senate occurred in an all-day speech on May 24. He demonstrated in this speech that he had mastered the principles of Scientific Racialism, as he made an impassioned and well-informed case for the resettlement of blacks to Africa. His bill proposed that the new colony be formed out of land that would be provided by Britain and France as payment for their war debts. The cost (estimated in 1938 terms at one billion dollars) would ultimately be recovered by the savings in social welfare payments once the Negroes were relocated. In a light-hearted moment, Bilbo also proposed that Eleanor Roosevelt be sent to Africa as well, there to rule as the "Queen of Greater Liberia"!

Marcus Garvey applauded the speech from exile, and Bilbo's plan and some 50,000 signatures from Garvey's followers were delivered to Washington. Senate support was lacking, however, and Bilbo had to withdraw the bill. He tried again the next year, with the retitled "Greater Liberia Bill." This time, 2.5 million signatures were obtained in support but the Senate balked again. The outbreak of World War II forced Bilbo to withdraw his bill a second time, but he vowed to re-introduce it when the war was over.

Bilbo was unable to get the bill back to the Senate until 1947, and by then the world, and America, had changed. Bilbo was now under extreme pressure from his enemies. He died later that year as his bill was languishing once again, effectively ending the possibility of repatriation as a solution to the Negro problem.

Bilbo did however leave behind an important book in the tradition of *The Passing of the Great Race* and *White America*. Entitled *Take Your Choice: Separation or Mongrelization*, Bilbo's book—whose introduction was written by Earnest Sevier Cox—displays surprising scholarship for a professional politician.

Today the book is still a very useful compendium of period racist thought and contains numerous anecdotes about the early racist struggle in Mississippi. Among its more interesting discussions is Bilbo's counterattack on the man most responsible for the eclipse of Scientific Racism: Professor Franz Boas.

### FRANZ BOAS

Bilbo devotes an entire chapter to Boas. He writes:

A naturalized citizen of the United States, Professor Boas did everything in his power to destroy the racial ideals of the Nation which he took for his own. When he arrived on these shores, from the heart of Germany at the age of twenty-one, he saw what the white race had accomplished in the new world...[F]or some reason which has never been publicized, this German Jew, a newly-arrived immigrant, wanted to destroy the racial stock which had carved this mighty Nation out of a wilderness.

Franz Boas was born in 1858 in Westphalia to a Jewish family with socialist leanings. Believing that he could rise higher in his chosen academic field in the United States, he emigrated to this country in 1887. He soon obtained a professorship in anthropology at Columbia University and for the next forty years trained an organized cadre of followers who proceeded to march through the universities, spreading the Boasian gospel of egalitarianism and environmentalism.

Boas was a dedicated enemy of the Scientific Racist community and of Madison Grant in particular from the start. The two seldom mentioned one another by name, but the subtext of their arguments and counterarguments over the years is filled with veiled references to one another.

In the beginning of their decades-long feud, the well-connected, well-bred, and well-financed Grant had the upper hand. The alien Boas was a rather lonely specialist in the none-too-highly regarded upstart science (some called it a pseudo-science) of cultural anthropology. In those days the “reputable” scientific field in anthropology was physical anthropology, and that was the province of the Scientific Racialists.

Yet with the dogged perseverance of the zealot, Boas continued to lecture, to write, and to convert student after student who passed through the Columbia anthropology department. One of his first publications was a paper claiming that skull shape – long one of the defining racial characteristics for the Scientific Racialists – was determined by environment, not heredity. The food a person ate, the home he grew up in, the school he attended – a thousand environmental factors determined his skull shape, not his race, which for Boas did not exist.

In 2002, researchers at the University of Tennessee and Penn State, after working with Boas’s own data, published an article refuting Boas’s contention. They concluded that heredity was the cause of skull shape after all. Even if this refutation had come in Boas’s lifetime, it is doubtful that he would have acknowledged it. Unaffected by criticism, he continued to spoon-feed environmentalism and antiracism to a seemingly endless series of graduate students. The catalog of scholars who received their Ph.D.s from Boas reads like a Who’s Who of twentieth-century anthropologists, primarily because, like Boas, they had a talent for marketing themselves to the public. The list includes A. L. Kroeber, Edward Sapir, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, Ashley Montague, and many others. Most were immigrants; the vast majority were Jews.

The Boas school maintained a steadfast opposition to the hereditarians. Although their field, cultural anthropology, was viewed as scientifically suspect by physical anthropologists, the Boasians diligently earned their degrees (most often conferred by their mentor himself) and proceeded to establish themselves in newly created anthropology departments around the country.

## EUGENICS

Grant and his allies had meanwhile been developing and expanding the science of eugenics, first propounded by Francis Galton in 1865. The Galton Society was formally created in Madison Grant’s New York City office on April 2, 1918. Its founders included a number of Grant’s associates and fellow members of other organizations, such as the Boone and Crockett Club and the New York Zoological Society. They included, aside from Grant, Henry Fairfield Osborn, Lothrop Stoddard, Charles Davenport, William K. Gregory, John C. Merriam, and Edward L. Thorndike.

The Galton Society held a series of International Eugenics Congresses – in 1912, 1921, and 1932. The story of these conferences and indeed the history of the eugenics movement are too rich and too detailed to relate here. Jonathan Spiro’s biography of Grant – *Patrician Racist* – devotes much detail to both.

The controversy surrounding the publication of Grant's last important work, *The Conquest of a Continent*, is a telling incident from the movement's latter years. By 1933, the tide of color revealed by Stoddard and Cox had risen high enough for Madison Grant to realize the imminent danger. This inspired one last, desperate appeal on behalf of the Nordic people—and indeed all of the white races. *The Conquest of a Continent* is Grant's paean to the race that created America and the country he loved, and sounds an explicit warning of the growing biological threat to that same country and race.

When *The Passing of the Great Race* had appeared in 1920, it was controversial, drawing criticism from groups like the NAACP, but there was little in the way of organized opposition. By 1933, the situation had changed dramatically, and the publication of *The Conquest of a Continent* brought Boas and his group out in force. Boas's friend and associate, Richard E. Gutstadt, director of the Anti-Defamation League, organized a campaign among the Jewish press to "[stifle] the sale of this book...[to] sound the warning to other publishing houses against engaging in this type of venture."

Thanks to this kind of opposition the book, though an extraordinary work, had little impact. It should be noted that *The Conquest of a Continent* hardly mentioned the Jews.

#### WHAT WENT WRONG

Toward the end of *Patrician Racist*, Spiro asks what ultimately caused the collapse of the Scientific Racist movement in the 1930s and 1940s. He answers with a list of no fewer than ten possible causes. While some of them are more convincing than others, foremost among them, in this author's opinion, are (1) the concerted efforts by the Jewish Boasians, who never let up on their attacks and their derision of the racialists; (2) the "guilt by association" incurred by the racialists when a number of their German allies were discredited—and in some cases hanged—as Nazis; and (3) the simple fact that so many—an overwhelming percentage, actually—of the hereditarians were unmarried and died without heirs. If ever a movement was literally stillborn, it was the Scientific Racist/eugenics movement.

And so they all soon began to die out. Osborn died in 1935 and Grant in 1937. Ben Tillman was gone by 1918, Vardaman passed away in 1930, Thomas Dixon in 1946, and Theodore Bilbo in 1947. Only Earnest Sevier Cox lived long enough to see the end game, when segregation was finally abolished. He lived on until 1966.

On the other side, Franz Boas died in 1942, while making a speech on the need to keep fighting "racism."

#### A FINAL WORD

Since in many ways our story begins with the War between the States, the epic struggle between white men over the black man, it would be appropriate to close by quoting from a work relating to that war. It comes from a biography that attempts to apply the structure of racial history that Madison Grant developed in *Passing of the Great Race*. Published in 1923, *Jefferson Davis: President of the South*, by Hamilton J. Eckenrode, the official historian of the state of Virginia, is an explicit attempt, as the author says, to “apply anthropological science to American history.” Most interesting to today’s racial-minded readers is the final chapter, entitled “The Moral.” Here Eckenrode explains his view of the racial meaning of the war and the implications of its outcome. The following short excerpt is remarkable in the poignancy of the author’s tone and the Grantian pessimism it conveys:

The South fought for the race which has made the world what it is, for the agricultural organization of life, for political conservatism, for social order...Between two groups of Nordics fighting a mighty fight was this difference – that one fought for the Nordic race, the other against it...The chief result of the Civil War was the ruin it brought on the Nordic race in America...In the more than half century since the great struggle, immigration has swamped [us]. The New England of today...contains a thin Nordic upper class and a mass of factory workers of almost wholly non-Nordic stock... [T]he South [too] is changing, and the time must come when it, like the rest of the country, will be largely non-Nordic.

But what has Jefferson Davis to do with all this? Much. The Southern Confederacy was, essentially, a protest against modernity. It was...the effort of the Nordic race to save itself. If it had succeeded, there would have been a new chapter in history...Success depended...on Jefferson Davis. He failed...and with him faded the last hope of the Nordic race.

We can only hope that Professor Eckenrode was mistaken.

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