

## Introduction

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When Barbara Fields published her now classic essay on ideology and race in American history in 1982, her claims were met with skepticism, criticism, and caution.<sup>1</sup> Within a decade, however, her basic premise—that race is socially and culturally, not biologically, constructed—took hold in the academy. Indeed, there is now a mini industry among scholars focused on the making of race in America. Yet despite the radical implications of Fields's argument, the works her intervention generated break down largely along a black-white divide. Scholars of African American life have probed ways that region, color, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality mark blackness within both African American and white communities, while historians of whiteness have explored the process by which Irish, Italians, Jews, and other immigrant groups became white. This rich and provocative work has complicated our understandings of race, but has, at the same time, etched racial dichotomies more deeply into the historical, and historiographical, record.

The following chapters join a small but growing literature that moves beyond the black-white binary in American history by exploring social groups and historical developments that cut across or contested a biracial system. Scholars such as Gary Nash, Peggy Pascoe, Martha Hodes, James Barrett and David Roediger, Kirsten Fischer, and others, including the authors in this volume, have explored *mestizaje*, miscegenation, “in-between peoples,” and “suspect relations” as ways of opening up discussions of racial constructions on the North American continent from the seventeenth century to the present.<sup>2</sup> Yet with few exceptions, such as Hodes and Fischer, this work has focused on the West or the Northeast, leaving the South as the first and last bastion of biracialism. The authors in this volume take on that critical terrain, probing moments and spaces of conflict where diverse populations confronted each other and, in the process, challenged the ideological and institutional constructions of southern society. These crises were most frequent and most visible in the Southwest, particularly Texas and Oklahoma, where large populations of American Indians and Mexicans and smaller communities of Asian and southern European immigrants confounded attempts to impose a black-white template on multiracial communities.

The focus on the South's geographical margins is not surprising. As Geraldine Pratt has argued, and a wide range of scholars have demonstrated, borderlands are especially useful spaces for exploring complex identities, because they are "saturated with inequality, domination and forced exclusion; they are social and political constructions that are used to construct differences. But they are also relational places where individuals live and construct themselves in relation to each other."<sup>3</sup> This volume centers on the Southwest but also pushes beyond it to argue persuasively for a recasting of race throughout the entire South. And if the South cannot sustain conventional understandings of black and white, then our conceptualizations of race in the United States and the North American territories must be dramatically recast.

The complex dynamics of race in the United States are rooted in the nation's long history of enslavement, conquest, and immigration. Millions of Africans were forcibly transplanted to North American soil and, despite cultural and later legal prohibitions on sex and marriage between them and Anglo Americans, large numbers of blacks were coerced into sexual relations with their white owners and a far smaller number crossed racial lines voluntarily. Moreover, Africans and African Americans did not engage in intimate intercourse only with Euro-Americans. They also formed sexual liaisons and long-term relationships with American Indians, Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and other groups considered not quite white.<sup>4</sup> By the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, mixed-race and multiracial communities had formed throughout the South, most notably in the Carolinas, Florida, and the Southwest, even as white legislatures and courts worked with increasing diligence to impose a biracial order on the region.<sup>5</sup>

By pushing groups once isolated from each other—Indians, African Americans, and Mexicans—into intimate proximity, military and political efforts to dominate the North American continent contributed mightily to creating the very racial heterogeneity that civic leaders sought to eradicate or obscure. In addition, massive immigration from Europe, Asia, the Caribbean, and elsewhere assured that racial mingling would increase even if the particular forms of race mixing differed by region and over time. Finally, late-nineteenth-century imperial ventures added territories such as Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Hawaii, with their own complex racial traditions, into the American fold, bringing more "people of color" under U.S. authority.

Despite this history, the ability of economically and politically powerful whites to insist on biracial categories as the bedrock of U.S. society meant that challenging the black-white dichotomy and the power relations it was intended to enforce was fraught with peril. Indians, for example, who forged communal and familial bonds with African Americans, found themselves having to choose between traditions of racial assimilation and conflicts with

the federal government—resulting in warfare in the nineteenth century and struggles over tribal recognition and limited benefits in the twentieth. Poor Mexicans whose agricultural labors marked them as “like blacks” in the South’s racial and economic hierarchy were subject to forms of discrimination and abuse similar to those visited upon African Americans. Thus, as racism in the United States continued to be framed in black and white, those who identified with these bifurcated categories and those who did not embraced a variety of strategies to function within and against such dichotomous constraints. Still, the system of domination was never total, a fact that was especially clear in areas inhabited by large numbers of Caribbean, Mexican, and/or American Indian peoples.

My own research on conditions in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Tampa, Florida, brought me face to face with both the stubborn grip of the South’s black-white divide and persistent challenges to it. Teaching at the University of South Florida in Tampa during the 1980s, I was introduced to a South marked by bilingualism more than biracialism, tobacco and tourism more than cotton and textiles, Caribbean more than Confederate influences, and the attractions of Disneyland more than Dixieland. These differences from southern orthodoxy were not, however, simply the effects of the late-twentieth-century Sunbelt boom. Florida, along with a broad swath of the Gulf Coast region, formed part of the Spanish empire from the sixteenth through the early nineteenth century. Distinct ideas about race, religion, and empire were forged in North America’s Spanish colonies as Catholic traditions converged with harsh New World conditions. Writing on slavery in early Florida, Jane Landers notes that, as in other Spanish colonies, “slavery was not exclusively based on race. A slave’s humanity and rights and liberal manumission policy eased the transition from slave to citizen.”<sup>6</sup> Because of the sparse settlement and wilderness environment of Florida in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a significant number of Africans and African Americans in the region remained free, gained high-status occupations, and took up arms in defense of Spanish interests. In addition, intermarriage was fairly common, especially between black women and Spanish men, creating a free community that incorporated individuals across a broad spectrum of race, color, and class.

Only in the early to mid-1800s did military conquest bring the Gulf Coast territories under U.S. authority; Spanish, Caribbean, and Mexican influences remained powerful in the region long after its official incorporation into the United States. For example, even when Florida was written into southern American history, it was largely as a refuge for runaway slaves and recalcitrant Indians. After Andrew Jackson’s 1817 raid convinced Spain to cede Florida to the United States, the Seminole Nation continued to harbor fugitive slaves, some of whom had married into the tribe. When the U.S.

government sought to resettle Florida Seminoles in the Indian Territory of Oklahoma, a minority refused to go. Under the leadership of Osceola, they fought a seven-year guerrilla war (1835–42) against federal troops. Seeking to end the conflict in 1838, General Thomas Sidney Jessup offered to send mixed-race insurgents, that is, those with African American and Indian blood, to Oklahoma and allow the “pure-blood” Seminoles to remain in Florida. Assuming that such racial divides existed and could be turned to political advantage, Jessup was surprised when the Seminoles refused his offer. Fighting continued until U.S. forces used deceit to capture Osceola.<sup>7</sup>

Even then, the defeated Seminoles moved to Oklahoma en masse, keeping their racially mixed community together and providing a haven in Indian territory for slaves held by the Cherokee, Choctaw, and other southern tribes. Moreover, one Seminole chief, Wild Cat, led some two hundred Indians and African Americans into Coahuila, Mexico, in 1850, where they established a colony in the Santa Rosa Mountains, eighty miles southwest of the Rio Grande. The existence of this community attracted other fugitives from Texas and the Plains Indians and increased tensions between Mexico and the United States over the next decade. As a consequence, white Texans increased their attacks on and deportations of Mexicans residing in ten southwestern counties, whom they feared were “instilling false notions of freedom” in slaves and making them “discontented and insubordinate.”<sup>8</sup>

While the removal of the Seminoles intensified racial conflicts in the Southwest, it eased tensions back east. The end of the Seminole War increased settlement by U.S.-born whites and led to statehood in 1845, suggesting that Florida might take on a more conventional southern cast. Yet Spanish cultural, religious, and legal traditions maintained a hold on the population well beyond the territory’s official transfer to the United States. Under Spanish law, for instance, women could inherit, hold, and distribute property, which could not be seized to pay debts owed by their husbands. Women could enter into a wide variety of legal contracts and could testify in court on their own behalf. Even slave women were allowed some of these rights, because Spanish law recognized them as legal persons instead of chattel, as in Anglo American law. The Catholic Church reinforced legal statutes by supporting the right of slaves to choose their spouses and opposing the breakup of families through the sale of slave children or parents. In addition, significant numbers of Africans and African Americans in Florida and other Gulf Coast cities retained or gained their freedom, creating a large population of free people of color, a majority of whom were women. Finally, children born out of wedlock—including daughters of free black women and Spanish men—could inherit goods and property from their fathers.<sup>9</sup>

Certainly, many slaves and free blacks were treated brutally by Spanish owners and employers; many wives and concubines were abused by fathers,

husbands, and lovers. Nevertheless, women and people of color in Spanish territories that came under U.S. authority in the early nineteenth century expected to maintain the rights they had historically enjoyed. For example, Andrew Jackson, who was appointed territorial governor of Florida in 1821, was immediately swept into a legal challenge that pitted Mercedes and Carolina Vidal, free women of color, against the executor of their father's estate, John Innerarity.<sup>10</sup> The father, a Spanish colonial official, had left behind property in Louisiana and Florida for his daughters, who were born out of wedlock to two different free women of color. Innerarity, with the apparent acquiescence of the Spanish courts, had refused to turn over the property or its proceeds to them. Clearly in this case, colonial Spanish authorities had refused to recognize the rights of women and free people of color granted under law, and the women sued. Under Anglo American law, the women had no right to inherit their father's property; indeed, they would not have been acknowledged as legitimate heirs or allowed to sue in court on their own behalf. Yet Jackson chose to assist them, and when the former Spanish governor refused to turn over requested documents, the newly appointed governor had his predecessor jailed for violating agreements between the United States and Spain over the transfer of territory, including all documents related to property rights.

The Vidal case was one of many in which women and people of color claimed rights recognized in Spanish law after Florida had become part of the United States. The Vidal sisters and others gained the support of U.S. authorities, who were interested mainly in imposing their domination over former Spanish territories. In the process, Governor Jackson and others ended up protecting "rights" not accorded under Anglo American law and thereby sustaining residents' belief that their "traditional" rights would be recognized.

Despite the state's complex heritage, white Floridians did gradually embrace the values, politics, and legal structures of the Old South. Florida's slave codes and miscegenation laws were increasingly modeled on those of the cotton South, and contests that pitted women and people of color against Spanish authorities soon waned. In spring, 1861, Florida was among the first six states to follow South Carolina in seceding from the Union. In the aftermath of the Civil War, its history paralleled that of other Confederate strongholds. A brief stint with racially progressive government quickly gave way to white supremacy and Jim Crow legislation.<sup>11</sup>

Still, in southern Florida especially, biracialism dominated the social and political landscape for only a brief period—during the Civil War and Reconstruction. By the late 1870s and 1880s, Cuban immigrants flooded into Key West and Tampa in response to Spain's defeat of the Cuban independence movement and the relocation of dozens of cigar factories from the

island to the peninsula. According to the 1900 census, more than 3,500 Cubans resided in Tampa along with nearly 1,000 Spaniards and 1,300 Italians; most of these immigrants lived in the ethnic enclave of Ybor City. Based on linguistic and cultural similarities, these groups came to think of themselves as Latin.<sup>12</sup> Another 2,500 residents were second-generation immigrants, including Germans and Rumanians as well as descendants of the various Latin groups. At the same time, the city's black population exceeded 4,300, including several hundred Cubans, Bahamians, and other Afro-Caribbeans. The 4,557 native-born whites with native-born white parents—that is, Anglos—clearly formed the minority in this multiracial metropolis at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>13</sup>

The racially and ethnically diverse population of Tampa and other South Florida cities and towns created havoc with the state's Jim Crow regulations and with more general assertions of white supremacy. The largest cohort of wage-earning immigrants in Tampa and Key West, for instance, were cigar workers and members of radical interracial and mixed-sex labor unions that staged periodic industry-wide strikes. Although Anglo Tampanians viewed the mass of Latin workers as docile exotics, they feared "foreign agitators," who, they claimed, sought to impose "a transplanted despotism" on the city.<sup>14</sup> By the early twentieth century, prolonged cigar strikes, massive parades of workers, and frequent demands for improved public services illustrated the power of Tampa's Latin community to maintain a sense of solidarity across lines of ethnicity, race, and gender and to wield significant political clout. Yet so concerned were white civic leaders to maintain the enormous economic benefits of the cigar industry that they allowed Afro-Cuban women and men to work alongside whiter Cubans, Spaniards, and Italians in the cigar factories and the union halls. Indeed, until 1901, even the social clubs and mutual aid societies of Ybor City were racially integrated, and the neighborhoods, coffee shops, restaurants, and stores remained so for considerably longer.

These challenges to Jim Crow were never confined simply to the ethnic enclaves but repeatedly spilled over into Tampa proper. In 1899, for instance, thousands of cigar workers marched in the Labor Day parade, while thousands of local residents—white, black, and Latin, lined the streets. A white reporter noted that one float honored the "'Queen of Labor,' a very dark brunette," who was surrounded by her court and sitting beneath a sign that read "Labor Knows No Color, Creed or Rank." The reporter was moved by the tableau but claimed that it "would have met with more approval from the discerning public had the attendants been colored and the queen white." "The dusky belle," he declared, "was somewhat of a startling innovation."<sup>15</sup> Both the language of the report and the impact of the float suggest the ease with which black-white distinctions could be challenged by the mere pres-

ence of other racial or ethnic groups. Despite the clear implication that the queen was Afro-Cuban, the reporter described her only as “dusky” and “a very dark brunette,” shying away from any direct accusation that Jim Crow restrictions had been violated. At the same time, his assertion that “the discerning public” would have preferred a different racial ordering made clear that neither African Americans nor Latins were part of that public from an Anglo perspective, even though they likely constituted a majority of parade spectators. Perhaps it is not surprising that shortly after this event, civic leaders barred blacks from participation in the annual parade and insisted as well that racial segregation be enforced in El Club Nacional Cubano, resulting in the organization’s division into two separate associations—one “black” and one “white.”<sup>16</sup>

Still, the complications introduced by the existence of multiracial communities under a Jim Crow regime could not be easily resolved. In 1902, the Tampa Electric Company decided to impose segregated seating on the streetcars running along the Port Tampa route, which carried wealthy white residents back and forth between the city center and their Hyde Park homes along with large numbers of African American domestics and day laborers. Three years later, the state legislature mandated segregated seating on all streetcars throughout the state. H. H. Hunt served as manager of TECO in 1902 and in 1905 as a liaison with the Boston firm, Stone and Webster, Inc., that owned numerous southern streetcar lines. Hunt voiced concern about the ability of conductors to enforce segregation given the multiracial character of Tampa. After an inspection tour in July, 1905, he wrote his superiors that only “the really black Cubans . . . are not riding the cars.” The “balance of Cubans,” he claimed, “do not seem to mind . . . but on the contrary appear rather pleased at the fact that they are permitted to keep the same portion of the car as the white people.” A year earlier, however, he had taken a more pessimistic (and perhaps more realistic) stance. “As you know,” he wrote, “the Cubans comprise many shades of color, from the white man to the black man, and any attempt to separate the colored from the white people” on streetcars “would necessarily result in trouble.” He referred to an earlier attempt, probably in 1902 on the Port Tampa line, which “resulted in the separation of husband and wife in some cases, and it had to be ultimately abandoned as an absolute failure.”<sup>17</sup>

For Tampa civic leaders, the possibility of angering Cubans who rode the streetcars was serious. Cigar workers formed a significant portion of riders on a daily basis, and the cigar unions had earlier threatened to boycott the line if their needs were not given due consideration. But, of course, this experiment could not be abandoned; state law now mandated segregation. In some Florida cities, such as Jacksonville, African Americans organized extended and effective boycotts; Hunt was no doubt concerned that such

efforts could be sustained much longer in Tampa if supported by immigrants as well as African Americans. Instead, the implementation of segregation in Tampa proved easier than in Jacksonville, suggesting the limits of racial solidarity.

Some Afro-Cubans and African Americans refused to ride the streetcars in summer, 1905, as a protest against second-class seating. Unfortunately, the two groups had little history of cooperation or collective action, limiting their ability to sustain a coalition. Although forced together by racial segregation, most older Afro-Cubans continued to identify as Cubans and to speak Spanish as their primary language; many considered themselves superior to African Americans economically and culturally. At the same time, Afro-Cubans formed less than twenty percent of the city's Cuban population in the early 1900s, and lighter-skinned counterparts were willing, even happy, according to Hunt, to ride the newly segregated cars. Hunt believed that light-skinned Cubans recognized the benefits of being categorized as white and therefore accepted Jim Crow regulation of the streetcars without protest. It is just as likely that Tampa conductors enforced the regulation selectively, assuring fewer protests, at least by Latin riders. For whatever reasons most cigar workers declined to join the boycott, and their absence assured that the strategy would prove ineffective. As long as the vast majority of Cubans and Italians continued to ride, the impact of African Americans and Afro-Cubans not riding was minimized.<sup>18</sup>

The streetcar episode makes clear the difficulty of forging alliances among people of color despite the common ground they seemed to share in the face of native-born white claims of racial superiority. In the Tampa case, however, this cannot be explained simply by pointing to the different ways in which Anglos treated Latins and African Americans, or even by the fact that in some instances Anglos were willing to grant that some Latins were white. There were simply too many cases in which immigrants and African Americans were lumped together, sharing similar modes of rhetorical denigration, legal discrimination, and vigilante justice. Although Anglos claimed attacks against Latin immigrants were justified by labor agitation rather than the violation of social and sexual norms used to rationalize anti-black violence, the effects were similar. Anglo citizens' committees, organized by some of the wealthiest and most powerful men in Tampa, formed in response to the industry-wide cigar strikes that erupted throughout the early twentieth century. The committees threatened and arrested strikers; kidnapped and deported labor organizers; attacked soup kitchens, union halls, and the labor press; and tarred, feathered, and beat labor leaders. In 1910, a bookkeeper was shot and gravely wounded outside a cigar factory during a prolonged strike. Six days later two Italian workers—Angelo Albano and Castenge Ficarrotta—were arrested. While they were being transferred to

the jail in West Tampa, the two were taken from sheriff's deputies by a group of twenty to thirty white men. They were discovered a short time later, handcuffed together and hanging from a tree with a sign warning other strikers to take note. As with so many lynchings in the South, no evidence connected the victims to their supposed crime, but the horrific violence perpetrated by native-born whites certainly linked Latin workers to their African American neighbors.<sup>19</sup>

A dozen years earlier, the first race riot in Tampa already suggested that the fates of African Americans and recently arrived immigrants were intertwined. In spring, 1898, thousands of U.S. troops arrived in Tampa, which served as the staging area for American military intervention in Cuba. Both African American and white soldiers encamped in the area, leading to a series of confrontations between army units and local residents and between black and white soldiers. The mixed-race composition of the Cuban independence movement quickly raised concerns among some white civic leaders; according to the *Tampa Tribune*, the "colored infantrymen" had "made themselves very offensive to the people of the city" by "insist[ing] on being treated as white men are treated."<sup>20</sup> Although local Anglos applauded rowdy white troops, including Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders, for their martial spirit, they met simple demands for fair treatment by African American soldiers with hostility. Efforts by black troops to order food at a white-owned restaurant, get a shave at a white-owned barbershop, or buy a drink at a white-owned saloon led to refusals, ejections, curses, and physical violence. The sight of black men in uniform simultaneously inspired pride in African American residents and aroused antipathy in white residents and white soldiers.

The mixed-race environs of Ybor City might have provided a haven for black troops, especially because Cuban insurgents had created an explicitly interracial movement to assure Spain's defeat. Unfortunately, white soldiers viewed the ethnic enclave as a playground for themselves, an opportunity to visit bars and brothels with little fear of being reprimanded by local authorities or their own officers. It is not surprising, then, that it was on the streets of Ybor City where Tampa's first race riot erupted. It began on June 6, 1898, when a group of drunken white Ohio volunteers decided to use a two-year-old black boy, most likely an Afro-Cuban, for target practice. Grabbing the boy from his horrified mother on the streets of Ybor City, they handed him back only after a bullet had pierced his small sleeve. In response to this latest injustice, African American soldiers poured into the streets demanding retribution. With pistols drawn, white and black troops wreaked havoc on saloons, cafes, brothels, and other local businesses as they fought each other to a bloody standstill. The riot ended when U.S. forces were hastily loaded onto transport ships for the voyage to Cuba; however, the message to Tampa

residents was clear.<sup>21</sup> Whites, whether local or outsiders, viewed as an outrage any attempt by “colored” people—Latin or African American, soldiers or citizens—to claim equality. The people of color, on the other hand, considered themselves partners in the war against Spain and expected their political and military efforts to be rewarded with rights and respect.

It was in the year following the race riot that Latin workers chose a “dusky belle” as their “Queen of Labor” and local authorities began insisting that Cuban residents abide by at least some of the strictures of Jim Crow. It would be another twenty years before Latin and African American residents forged meaningful alliances; even then, it was largely Afro-Cubans, Black Bahamians, and African Americans who found common ground. Lighter-skinned Latins generally remained more flexible in their conceptions of and attitudes toward racial difference than Anglos, but as the failure of the street-car boycott in 1905 showed, most came to accept Jim Crow customs and laws.<sup>22</sup>

The articles in this volume expand upon the issues and themes raised by the Tampa case. They appear in roughly chronological order and indicate how the differences present in Florida resonated across time and throughout the South and Southwest. Together these authors move the discussion beyond black and white and beyond dichotomous categories more generally. Laura Edwards examines the other side of southern “justice.” She explores court-based claims for protection in the heart of the antebellum South and suggests that there was room even here for black and white women to maneuver for control. They could do so, in part, because the boundaries between dependents and patriarchs were in flux, allowing legal understandings of race and gender dichotomies and hierarchies to be challenged. Focusing on extralegal activities of redress, William Carrigan and Clive Webb recast the history of lynching by incorporating western as well as southern Mexican and also African American victims of vigilante violence into their analysis. Sarah Deutsch and Stephanie Cole explore turn-of-the-century Boley, Oklahoma, and Dallas, Texas, respectively, settings with racial dynamics at least as complex as those in South Florida. Finally, Neil Foley traces some of the most significant political implications of the developments discussed in the preceding articles. He demonstrates how the logic of multiracial communities living for more than a century under a biracial order shaped, and distorted, campaigns for Mexican civil rights in the late twentieth century.

In “The People’s Sovereignty and the Law,” Edwards focuses on the Old South, both geographically and chronologically. She demonstrates the ramifications of upending sharp dichotomies in a place and time that supposedly relied on them so fundamentally. Arguing that racial and gender hierarchies were contested within the legal system even before the eruptions

of Civil War and emancipation, Edwards analyzes a series of court cases in antebellum North and South Carolina to suggest the mutability of purportedly fixed relations of power. She then questions the standard concepts that historians have used to understand racial dynamics in the South and claims that scholars “have taken legal categories too literally.” On that basis they have assumed that all white men wielded authority over all dependents—slaves, women, children, and employees. Here, too, however, overlapping hierarchies and competing sets of rules and understandings challenged neat distinctions between women and men, blacks and whites, even slaves and free people. This study does not focus on the multiracial diversity or the legacies of Spanish laws and customs that upset the white patriarchal order in Florida and Texas. Rather, Edwards explores contradictions within that order that allowed women, slaves, and other dependents to gain some leverage by positing one authority—the court—against another—individual husbands, owners, and employers.

Edwards traces the new possibilities provided by the legal system back to its incomplete transformation following the American Revolution. Combining British common law with colonial traditions and precedents and new constitutional mandates, Carolina courts both embraced and reinforced tensions between white male household heads and those supposedly dependent on them. Challenging a too-easy reliance on race, class, and gender differences to explain legal battles and their outcomes, Edwards shows how local circumstances shaped the specific dynamics of particular cases. Even a slave-owning male head of household, for instance, could be vulnerable to accusations of wife beating if his holdings were relatively small and his wife’s family had sufficient standing. Also, a white man, unable to control a slave woman on loan from his father, might be forced to sue in court to impose his will on her, despite the fact that he supposedly already had “complete” authority over her.

These openings in the legal system were never large enough to endanger seriously white patriarchal authority in the heart of the slave South. Yet the examples illustrate why other disruptions of the existing order posed such severe threats. The legacy of Spanish law and custom in Florida and the Southwest, or the power of the southeastern Indian tribes before and after their removal to Oklahoma, or the challenges to biracialism posed by Cubans, Mexicans, Chinese immigrants, Indians, Italians, and other “others” were layered on top of an established order that was already laced with fractures of various sorts. As “the people” came to occupy the legal position once reserved for the monarch, it was increasingly critical to define precisely which people had access to legal rights and protections.

In “*Muerto por Unos Desconocidos* (Killed by Persons Unknown),” Carrigan and Webb make clear that Mexicans often shared with African

Americans the absence of such rights and protections. Yet the authors are not claiming that Mexican Americans simply need to be added to the existing literature on extralegal violence against blacks, but that the comparative analysis of Mexican or Mexican American and African American cases will transform the historical understanding of both lynching and resistance to it. When whites in the South felt most directly threatened, they turned to brutal forms of racial control, including lynching. A weapon used throughout the South, it was wielded primarily but not solely, against African Americans. As Carrigan and Webb show, the attention to white-on-black violence in the South, for instance, led the principal collectors of lynching statistics to undercount cases in the Southwest and to obscure ethnic differences among nonblack victims by categorizing them all as white. Although individuals from many backgrounds—Italian, Chinese, American Indian, and Anglo American as well as Mexican American and African American—died at the hands of vigilantes, Mexican Americans were the only group to suffer lynching in roughly the same proportion to their population as blacks. By comparing these two groups, scholars can also explore similarities and differences between western “frontier justice” and southern lynching and raise questions about the standard interpretations of each. In addition, this investigation reveals that African Americans and Mexicans challenged extralegal violence in distinct ways: blacks emphasized their rights under the law as U.S. citizens; Mexicans asserted their rights as persons legally recognized as white. As this article suggests, such differences had and have important implications for relations among people of color.

Having mined numerous archives and reports as well as local newspapers throughout the South and Southwest, Carrigan and Webb paint a detailed portrait of the chronology, geography, justification, economics, racial dynamics, and forms of execution that characterized lynching of blacks and Mexicans. They note some key differences between the two sets of cases, including the diplomatic issues raised by those involving Mexicans and the greater focus on alleged crimes of property rather than sexuality in these lynchings. Still, the authors clarify that racism and fear of economic competition played key roles in attacks on both blacks and Mexicans. Despite the shared dangers of vigilante violence, the two groups rarely forged coalitions to address the problem. Indeed, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, racial conflict more often characterized relations between Mexicans and African Americans. Members of the former group viewed themselves as white and often as superior to blacks, while African Americans resented the attention given to Mexican victims by a federal government more concerned with cross-border relations than with domestic persecution. The comparative analysis of lynching, then, opens a window on a fundamental problem in southern and American history: what

defines an American, and what rights and protections does being an American guarantee?

Stephanie Cole's "Finding Race in Turn-of-the-Century Dallas" offers a fine-grained analysis of the subtle distinctions made by residents of one southern city, as they sought to answer this question. Cole opens her story with a series of telling examples from the 1900 census that illustrate census takers' difficulty in fitting the local populace into the federal government's four official categories: White, Negro, Mongolian, and American Indian. Chinese residents, for instance, were alternately listed as white and Chinese; and despite the so-called "one drop" rule, the daughter of a Chinese father and an African American mother was listed as Chinese. The children of a black woman married to a Mexican, however, were designated black. Despite this seeming confusion of categories, native-born whites in Dallas were determined to draw clear boundaries between themselves and a variety of "others." In the process, those who were clearly not African American but were also not quite white—Mexican Americans, Russian Jews, Asian immigrants—became caught in the high-stakes game of gaining or disclaiming white privilege. As Cole contends, "the flexibility of racial identity worked both for and against" groups living on the racial margins.

As those in power, mostly long-time residents who claimed deep white southern roots, sought to draw definitive lines between whites and non-whites, the impossibility of the task became obvious. As in Tampa, it proved difficult in Dallas to impose Jim Crow regulations on streetcars given the presence of Mexican, Indian, and Chinese riders. The complicated history of the "separate cars" law in Texas suggests the racial self-consciousness of white leaders who sought to implement segregation without offending possible "white" voters. The concerns were largely confined in Dallas to Asian and Mexican residents. Unlike New Orleans and Tampa, where Italians became the victims of vicious lynchings in 1891 and 1910, respectively, European immigrants in Dallas seem to have been readily accepted as thoroughly white. Clearly, then, the issue had more to do with demographics than bloodlines. The relatively small and acculturated Italian community in Dallas posed no threat, and local newspapers discussed the brutal lynching in New Orleans in 1891 in terms of flawed legal procedures rather than racist indignation. Indeed, the *Dallas Morning News* claimed that officials must "maintain safeguards for foreigners as well as themselves."

Attitudes toward Asian immigrants also suggested contradictory impulses. Certainly white Texans absorbed fears of the "yellow peril," but they also demonstrated their fascination with Chinese and Japanese culture. Some of the most fashionable local ladies hosted parties and fund-raisers with "Oriental" themes, while the editor of one of the city's smaller papers voiced his support for Filipino leader Emilio Aguinaldo. Still, such fads

among wealthy residents who felt assured of their racial status did not mean that Chinese and Japanese residents could necessarily gain access to the everyday privileges of whiteness, such as equal employment and pay.

Economic success was certainly one way for Asians to claim whiteness. So, too, Mexicans, or rather “Spaniards,” could be incorporated into elite circles with sufficient wealth. Russian Jews, too, once established in the city, were recognized as white even though they continued to be noted—in city directories, voluntary associations, and society pages—as Hebrew. For African Americans, however, affluence could not blur the color line, assuring that biracialism would be maintained in practice as well as law. Of course, the apparent immutability of blackness and the use of class to mark race also meant that poorer members of “white” ethnic groups were in danger of slipping over the line by failing to maintain the power and privilege that supposedly defined the race.

By examining one city in detail, Cole reminds us that even as southern whites employed a black and white lens to order their world, they could never fully contain the multiracial amalgam that continually challenged—sometimes overtly, sometimes implicitly—that biracial system. It was not only whites, however, who sought to simplify and control racial dynamics. As African Americans moved west in hopes of gaining economic power and personal autonomy in the late nineteenth century, they too constructed racial hierarchies as a means of gaining status and asserting order.

In “Being American in Boley, Oklahoma,” Sarah Deutsch traces the process by which African Americans, Creek Indians, Creek freedmen, and Afro-Creeks negotiated the racial identities and relations in the “black township” of Boley. Locating events there in the context of the Spanish-American War, she suggests the war’s importance to developments in the Southwest as well as the Southeast. The war fostered—and was nurtured by—a new imperial culture of colonization that marked a dramatic shift from older notions of territorial incorporation. In this context, concepts of “race,” “citizenship,” and “manhood” were reconstructed with the critical distinction being drawn between “whites” and “others.” The international expositions that were so popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century linked southern blacks, frontier Indians, and newly colonized Caribbean and Pacific Islanders in exhibits that claimed to reproduce “native” cultures in their “natural” primitive surroundings. In these sites, whites assumed superiority and maintained seemingly clear definitions of who was white.

In real towns and cities, however, residents from varied racial and ethnic backgrounds faced more complicated situations. Boley, Oklahoma, had been settled in 1903 on land purchased by African Americans from Creek freedmen. Creek freedmen were those of African descent formerly enslaved by the Creek, who held Creek citizenship in 1901 when the federal govern-

ment allotted Creek lands. As Deutsch shows, there was no easy way to force African Americans, Creek Indians, Creek freedmen and Afro-Creeks into the new system of racial dichotomies. In this case, it was not only whites that sought to impose racial categories on others. Here native-born blacks considered themselves the dominant group and their relations with Creeks echoed in many ways those between African Americans and Afro-Cubans in Tampa. Those who celebrated the “black” township, such as Booker T. Washington, embraced the classic white narrative of the “disappearing Indian,” refusing to recognize either the importance of Creeks to Boley’s development or the existence of a substantial mixed-race population. At the same time, the Oklahoma Constitution recognized only persons of African descent and whites, thereby offering a white identity to those Creeks without visible African ancestry. Creeks themselves were divided not only by differences in their racial lineage but also by class (measured mainly in landholdings), political affiliation (Union versus Confederate in the Civil War era), and gender. (By the 1890s, Creek men could no longer marry black women, but Creek women could marry black men.) By excavating the multifaceted racial histories of the residents of Boley and tracing them through the town’s political and economic struggles in the early twentieth century, Deutsch demonstrates the process by which a rigid biracialism was imposed on and sought to erase a multiracial past. She illustrates as well the ways that Jim Crow became entrenched in the West and the concomitant subjugation of Creek and African American women to the dominant white patriarchal order.

More often included in western than in southern history, Oklahoma was in fact a regional hybrid, created specifically to ease land and racial tensions in the Southeast by providing for Indian resettlement on the frontier. From the beginning, however, the “native” Americans who settled in the “Indian Territory” included people of African ancestry. These settlers also mixed with “whites” of European descent and Mexicans. This racial tapestry was not only evident in the rural landscapes and small towns of Oklahoma but also in the burgeoning cities of Texas. Although much history is still written as though the masses of immigrants who entered the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century avoided the South, studies of Tampa, Miami, New Orleans, Dallas, El Paso, and other cities along what became known as the Sunbelt suggest otherwise.

Tensions and conflicts among white property-owning men over the definition of racial categories and the distribution of rights and protections often created a gap between the stated authority of those in power and their actual ability to rule. Perhaps if all of those who were relatively less powerful had banded together, especially in the late nineteenth century when political, economic, and demographic transformations necessitated change on all sides, white privilege and power could have been thwarted. As these articles

demonstrate, however, groups excluded from power do not necessarily see their interests in common. Those that do forge alliances at one moment may not be able to sustain them as circumstances change. Creek Indians, African Americans, and Afro-Creeks created some of the strongest bonds across barriers of race in the nineteenth century United States. Yet amid the shifting political and economic struggles of the early twentieth century, the links were broken, or crushed. Jim Crow laws created the potential for collective action among all those considered nonwhite, yet only rarely did Cubans, Mexicans, Asians, or other immigrants join protests against these racist regulations. Mexican Americans and African Americans, both facing mob violence, developed different—sometimes competing—strategies of resistance. White women and slaves, equally dependent under the law on white male heads of households, most often fought their battles on different terms and with different chances of success.

In “Partly Colored or Other White,” Neil Foley traces the implications of these earlier patterns of thwarted cross-racial alliances into the present. Documenting the growing importance of Latinos in the United States—demographically, economically, and politically—he demonstrates the way that “the black-white binary stubbornly continues to shape thinking about the racial place and space of Latinos in the United States.” He then explores how the persistence of biracialism shaped, and distorted, Mexican American civil rights struggles in the last half of the twentieth century. From the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 on, Mexicans were eligible to become U.S. citizens and, at least from the Mexican perspective, were recognized as white. In embracing Louisiana lawmakers’ definition of blackness, the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1896 accepted Mexican Americans’ whiteness. As noted above, Texas laws that mandated segregation differentiated only between whites and those of African ancestry. Foley explores how this “long history of black-white racial thinking has not only impinged upon the freedom of Mexican Americans and other Latinos, but it has also stifled the ability of all Americans to reconsider and reconfigure racial discourses in new and productive ways.”

Beginning in the 1930s, Mexican American civil rights activists fought their second-class status by emphasizing their whiteness and stressing the importance of assimilation. This set them at odds with African American activists, who argued for justice and equality based on their uniquely American heritage, which they believed should negate differences of race. Responding in part to the immigration restriction debates of the 1920s and the insertion of the category “Mexican” in the 1930 federal census, middle-class, urban Mexican Americans forged a distinct identity and formed organizations to protest de facto discrimination. In El Paso, for instance, members of the League of United Latin American Citizens successfully challenged efforts

to register the births and deaths of Mexican-descent residents as “colored” rather than “white.” Other actions were directed at the U.S. Treasury Department when it requested that applicants for social security cards who were not “white” or “Negro” write in their “color or race” and used as examples “Mexican, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Filipino, etc.” In protesting this debasement of their racial heritage, Mexican American civil rights activists accepted the notion that “colored” people were inferior and sought to secure their own rights by maintaining their whiteness.

Foley’s piece carries forward questions about citizenship highlighted by Carrigan and Webb and by Edwards. For Foley, Mexican American assertions of whiteness were tied in part to the ambiguities that continued to surround their nationality into the twentieth century. Whereas African Americans were clearly U.S. citizens, Mexican Americans, whether or not they were born in the United States, were, and still are, often perceived as foreigners. The fact that most Anglo Americans identified Mexican Americans with illegal aliens, “wetbacks,” and the poor more generally nurtured concerns among affluent Hispanics about the dangers of slipping into nonwhite categories. This largely forestalled the building of coalitions with those groups who were denied white racial status: African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, the last especially relevant because so many Mexican Americans historically intermarried with Indians in the Southwest. In the post–World War II era, when civil rights itself became closely identified with blacks, some Mexican Americans, such as those in the American GI Forum, refused to use the term for their own efforts at achieving first-class citizenship. By tracing civil rights cases brought to state and federal courts by Mexican Americans in the 1950s, Foley demonstrates the distinct logic of a group that could claim whiteness to challenge discrimination in schools, courts, and other public institutions. Yet he also laments the opportunities thus lost to define a “transnational multi-racial identity that acknowledges the Indian and African heritage of Latinos.”

Despite the continued power of the black-white binary in American and southern history, the following chapters demonstrate the limits of such dichotomous categories. Clearly there has been extensive racial mixing among a variety of supposedly distinct groups—African Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Euro-Americans. Yet by distributing rights and resources according to a rigid biracialism, “whites” in power have been able to sustain their privileges and to nurture internecine struggles among all those categorized as “others.” By accepting culturally constructed categories of racial identification as “real,” many historians, often inadvertently, helped to obscure the complex and tumultuous relations that defined race in America. Certainly other scholars, reaching back to Barbara Fields and forward to the authors included here, have now

examined the process by which diverse peoples were forced into bifurcated racial categories. Many of these researchers built on the work of Winthrop Jordan and others, whose intimate explorations of slavery in America revealed the ethnic and linguistic differences among those Africans and Afro-Caribbeans who forged an African American culture.<sup>23</sup>

Too often, however, southern historians have been reluctant to move beyond black and white. They have feared, sometimes with good reason, that muting these categories might obscure our understanding of their power to fuel the most brutal forms of oppression and the most exhilarating models of resistance in the region. This volume makes clear that biracialism distorted as well as shaped the South's past and challenges us to unravel the complex racial legacies that molded the region's history and continue to influence its development. Today we are faced with new and powerful dichotomies: evil terrorists versus innocent victims, Muslim fundamentalists versus Christians and secular humanists, American democracy versus anti-American tyranny. We will remain hostage to the political and social constraints imposed by such bifurcated categories until we acknowledge and embrace the transnational and multiracial character of our own past. *Beyond Black and White* contributes to that critical process.

## Notes

1. Barbara J. Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, ed. by J. Morgan Kousser and James MacPherson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 143–77.

2. Gary Nash, "The Hidden History of Mestizo America," *Journal of American History* 82 (1995): 941–64; Peggy Pascoe, "Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of 'Race' in Twentieth-Century America," *Journal of American History* 83 (June, 1996): 44–69; Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-century South* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997); James Barrett and David Roediger, "Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality and the New Immigrant Working Class," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16 (Spring, 1997): 3–44; Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations: Sex, Race, and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002); and Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Work by scholars in women's studies—especially by Chicana feminists—American studies, and cultural studies has been critical in shaping many of these historical analyses.

3. Geraldine Pratt, "Spatial Metaphors and Speaking Positions," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10 (June, 1992): 243–44.

4. Martha Hodes, ed., *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

5. See, especially, Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations*; Neil Foley, *White Scourge*; Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880–1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733–1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Nancy Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s–1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001). There is, in addition, a large and growing literature on Native Americans and on Mexican Americans, Chicano/as, Latino/as, and Hispanics, reaching back to the sixteenth century and up to the present, that implicitly challenges the idea of North America or the United States as biracial at any time in its history.

6. Jane L. Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 2. For material in rest of paragraph, see also Larry E. Rivers, *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), chapter 1.

7. Kenneth Wiggins Porter, "Florida Slaves and the Free Negroes in the Seminole War, 1835–1842," *Journal of Negro History* 28 (1943): 390–421; Rivers, *Slavery in Florida*, chapters 8–10.

8. Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528–1990* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), pp. 60–66, quote, 61.

9. Jane Landers, "'In Consideration of Her Enormous Crime': Rape and Infanticide in Spanish St. Augustine," in *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South*, ed. by Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 205–17.

10. Virginia Meacham Gould, "'A Chaos of Iniquity and Discord': Slave and Free Women of Color in the Spanish Ports of New Orleans, Mobile, and Pensacola," in *The Devil's Lane*, ed. by Clinton and Gillespie, pp. 232–46.

11. See, for instance, Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet: Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863–1877* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1974), and J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880–1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), especially pp. 91–103.

12. "Latin," rather than "Latino," was the preferred term in Tampa, and in much of the coun-

try throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. For example, Rudolf Valentino, the “Latin Lover,” suggests this popular understanding of the term. Later in the twentieth century, especially in the Southwest, the term Latino or Chicano was more widely used.

13. Gary Mormino and George Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885–1985* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), especially pp. 55–57.

14. *Cigar Makers’ Official Journal*, Nov., 1900. On labor agitation and anti-labor violence in Tampa, see Robert P. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes in the New South: Tampa, 1882–1936* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988).

15. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, Sept. 5, 1899. For a thorough discussion of this incident, see Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort*, chapter 4.

16. On this division, which many white Cubans accepted without protest, see Susan Greenbaum, *The Afro-Cubans of Ybor City: A Centennial History* (Tampa: Tampa Printing Co., 1986), p. 7.

17. H. H. Hunt to Stone and Webster, July 17, 1905, and July 11, 1904, George J. Baldwin Papers, #850, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

18. For a detailed discussion of this episode, see Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort*, chapter 5. On African American and Afro-Cuban relations more generally, see Nancy Raquel Mirabal, “Telling Silences and Making Community: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in Ybor City and Tampa, 1899–1915,” in *Races and Empire: African-Americans and Cubans before the Cuban Revolution*, ed. by Lisa Brock and Digna Castañeda Fuertes (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), pp. 49–69.

19. See Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, especially pp. 95–97, on lynching.

20. Quoted in Willard Gatewood, “Negro Troops in Florida, 1898,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 49 (July, 1970): 3–4. On these racial confrontations more generally, see Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort*, chapter 4.

21. Gatewood, “Negro Troops in Florida,” pp. 8–10; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, June 8, 1898; and Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort*, pp. 108–11.

22. Nancy A. Hewitt, “Becoming Black: Creating a Shared Identity among African Americans and Afro-Cubans in Tampa, Florida, 1880s–1920s,” in *Black Women’s History at the Intersection of Knowledge and Power: ABWH’s Twentieth Anniversary Anthology*, ed. by Rosalyn Terborg-Penn and Janice Sumler-Edmond (Acton, Mass: Tapestry Press Ltd., 2000), pp. 101–13; and Mirabal, “Telling Silences and Making Community.”

23. Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).