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# Main Street, Marion, and Miscegenation: The Warren Harding Race Rumor and the Social Construction of Race and Marriage

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**Introduction: Dr. Harding and the Judge**

On an otherwise unexceptional November morning in Marion, Ohio in 1920, Dr. George T. Harding approached a local probate judge, William S. Spencer, on the sidewalk outside a tobacco store. [1] The seventy-five year-old Harding was fuming when he said to the one-legged judge, "I am informed on what you believe to be reliable information that you have been exhibiting a picture of me and asserting I have Negro blood in my veins." To that Judge Spencer replied, "I assure you on my honor I have not done anything of the sort." Harding rebutted with ferocity, "If I had believed that you had done so I would smash your face!" He then took the judge by the arm and marched him down the street to sign and notarize an affidavit denying this possibility of "Negro blood."[2] On the following day, November 2 1920, Dr. George Harding's son Warren was elected the twenty-ninth President of the United States.

Judge William Spencer did not know either Warren or George Harding. There is no reason to believe that he begrudged either of the Hardings personally, and although he was politically aligned with Democrats in north-central Ohio, there is little reason to suspect he thought he could derail the presidential election by claiming the Republican candidate Warren Harding's father had "Negro blood." Someone else, however, had exactly that idea. That person was William Estabrook Chancellor, a Political Science professor at the College of Wooster in Ohio. In the final weeks of the 1920 presidential campaign, Chancellor published circulars with

[1] Dr. George Tryon Harding I, born 1843, died 1928.
[2] *NY Times*, November 2 1920, p.2; *Boston Globe*, November 2 1920, p. 1-2; *Chicago Tribune*, November 2, 1920, p. 2; as cited by David Piestruza, *1920: The Year of Six Presidents* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), p. 385.

titles such as "Hardings [sic] Family Tree" and "Below is the Genealogy of Warren G. Harding." He distributed them by the thousands across the Midwest with the hope of currying voters' favor away from the presumptive president-elect and toward the severe underdog, Democrat James M. Cox.[3] Chancellor's documents charted Harding's family line with little ambiguity about the Wooster professor's goals in doing so. According to the circular "Hardings [sic] Family Tree," the family of Warren G. Harding included "Amos Harding (Black) West Indian Negro," "Huldah Harding (colored)," and his mother "Phoebe Dickerson (white)" who was the second wife of "George Tryon Harding (colored)."[4] Warren Harding was unsuitable for office, Chancellor claimed, because of his mixed race. He published the leaflets, he said, because it "was the right of the American people to know."[5]

Much has been written about William Chancellor, his racist theories, which were based on the "scientific racism" of the time, and his relationship to the Democratic Party.[6] What has not been examined, however, is how his allegations about Warren Harding were connected broadly to the social construction of whiteness in America in the twentieth century. In this context, the Harding race rumor is not at all a marginal moment in the history of the twenty-ninth president.

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[3] William Estabrook Chancellor, ""Hardings [sic] Family Tree," "Below is the Genealogy of Warren G. Harding," "This is the Lineage of Warren Gamaliel Winnipeg Bancroft Harding," "To the Men and Women of America An Open Letter," all archived in Wooster College Library, 1920. William Estabrook Chancellor, born 1867, died 1963.

[4] William Estabrook Chancellor, "Hardings [sic] Family Tree;" as cited by Piestruza, *1920*, p. 372-374. Full text of "Hardings [sic] Family Tree" in Appendix to this paper.

[5] Chancellor, "Hardings [sic] Family Tree."

[6] For both past and recent scholarship on the Harding race rumor see; Samuel Hopkins Adams, *The Incredible Era: The Life and Times of Warren Gamaliel Harding* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1939); J.A. Rogers, *The Five Negro Presidents* (New York: Helga Rogers, 1965); Francis Russell, *The Shadow of Blooming Grove* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968); Eugene P. Trani and David L. Wilson, *The Presidency of Warren G. Harding* (Topeka: University of Kansas Press, 1977); Auset Bhakufu, *The Six Black Presidents: Black Blood/White Masks USA* (Washington D.C., Pik2 Publishing, 1993); Robert Ferrell, *The Strange Deaths of President Harding* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1998); Carl Sferrazza Anthony, *Florence Harding: The First Lady, the Jazz Age, and the Death of America's Most Scandalous President* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1998); Robert K. Murray, *Warren G. Harding and His Administration* (Minneapolis: American Political Biography Press, 2000); John A. Murphy, *The Indictment* (Bloomington: Brockton Publishing Company, 2000); Douglass K. Daniel, "Ohio Newspapers and the "Whispering Campaign" of the 1920 Presidential Election," *Journalism History* 20, 4 (Winter 2001-2002), p. 156-164; David Piestruza, *1920: The Year of Six Presidents* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), p. 369-385; Phillip G. Payne, *Dead Last: The Public Memory of Warren G. Harding's Scandalous Legacy* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2009), p. 95-125.

Rather, it helps to show just how much the 1920s were "the Age of Harding in the sense that Americans saw in Harding something familiar and understood [his] life as part and parcel of the times," to use the words of noted Harding scholar Phillip Payne.[7] Probate Judge William Spencer was accosted on that Election Day eve by George T. Harding because William Chancellor's allegations engaged an Ohioan and national debate about the very definition of race and marriage that was playing out on the nation's Main Streets and in its courtrooms which affected every white family whose racial "purity" was in question.

Warren Harding ended up defeating Democrat James Cox on November 2 by one of the largest and most predictable margins in all of American electoral history.[8] But the debate raised by the race rumors still made the elder Harding's decision to force a notarized "purity" statement out of the Judge all too necessary. George T. Harding was fuming on that November morning because his son's legitimacy in the eyes of the state of Ohio and his neighbors was being questioned on the basis that his own marriage may have violated multiple laws. If this were determined to be true, the consequences for the distribution of his personal estate by a local probate judge to his children and grandchildren would have been substantial. Additionally, anyone with even a slight genealogical connection to himself could have been discredited and disenfranchised in a nation where it only took a hint of white racial "impurity" to deprive a person of the privileges of whiteness. As a result of these implications, George T. Harding's walk down Main Street in Marion with Judge Spencer in tow reveals the ways that existing conceptions of whiteness were reinforced by law and unwittingly reproduced by those who were affected by such laws.

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[7] Payne, *Dead Last*, p. 15.

[8] For the primary record of results of the 1920 presidential election see; Office of the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives, *Statistics of the Congressional and Presidential Election of November 2, 1920*, http://clerk.house.gov/member_info/electionInfo/1920election.pdf, accessed on November 3 2013.

Historians of the 1920 presidential election and Warren Harding biographers have failed to place the Harding race rumor in this context for a variety of reasons. Attitudes changed over the course of the twentieth century and, as a result, the public memory of Harding changed as well. On the whole, however, the historiography of the Harding race rumor was limited by a lens that wrote off Chancellor's accusations as part of the tail end of a dying but vocal breed of seriously noxious scientific racists caught in a modernizing America that was moving away from using race as a category of organization. Earlier historians missed the opportunity to fully examine the dialogue of race in October and November 1920 because they understood the discussion about Warren Harding's race at that time to be one that lacked relevancy in their own.

Recent research on the construction of race in legal debates about citizenship, racial intermarriage, and the institution of marriage in the first half of the twentieth century suggests that what earlier historians overlooked about the Harding race rumor was significant. According to historian Peggy Pascoe, it is important for our understanding of American culture to trace the legal dialogue of race in the early twentieth century because "the legal system does more than just reflect social or scientific ideas about race, it also produces and reproduces them."[9] William Chancellor and the Harding family were engaged in this legal dialogue for reasons they could hardly ignore. Chancellor's rumor about Harding carried a heavy weight in the mind of George T. Harding, in part, because of the unique legacy of Ohio's Black Laws. The Black Laws, which began to take form during Reconstruction, operated similarly to Jim Crow by preserving white privilege legally through discriminatory enforcement that took place within the confines of the Constitution. When the Black Laws were all repealed in 1886, what was left behind was an Ohio with severely segregated and endogamous social groups. This social legacy sat beneath the

[9] Peggy Pascoe, "Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of Race in Twentieth Century America," *Journal of American History* (June 1996), p. 47.

tensions associated with the Great Migration that came decades later and eventually erupted in a brief but emphatic period of race violence in 1919, the year before Warren Harding became president. One of the sites of violence was Marion, Ohio. This was Harding's hometown where he ran his campaign a year later from the front porch of his house on Mount Vernon Avenue.

During the three decades preceding the 1919 race violence, the nation's courtrooms were amongst the most active and influential sites for the establishment of whiteness across the nation. Though far from certain about what race actually was, judges across America increasingly gave consideration to "scientific" determinations of race in the years leading up to Warren Harding's election. Court cases concerning marriage and citizenship proved to be the ideal forums for racially discriminatory court precedents to be set because such discussions could skirt the Constitutional imperative for equality set by the Fourteenth Amendment. Not coincidentally, Warren Harding and William Chancellor's home state of Ohio was in the process of reviewing its own stance on anti-miscegenation legislation with proposals for new laws brought to the statehouse twice during the years surrounding the 1920 election. While these proposals failed to criminalize racial intermarriage in Ohio, the discourse involved in their eventual demise played out alongside a national discussion that culminated in what historian Peggy Pascoe describes as the naturalization of marriage as an institution that was intraracial, heterosexual, and monogamous.[10]

Only a few days prior to Harding's election, Chancellor let the race rumor loose and the onus of verifying an impossible test of whiteness fell on the candidate, his campaign staff, and his family. They devised various ways of addressing Chancellor's allegations by constructing idealized images and memories of Warren Harding that refuted the possibility of mixed-race

[10] Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 3.

ancestry. In doing so, they further reinforced supremacist ideas about racial intermarriage even though they were the ones targeted by a racial attack. The First Lady, Florence Harding, was especially culpable in this regard as her efforts to suppress the allegations after the president's death proved disastrous for the long-term public memory of her husband and herself. By denying the possibility that her marriage did not conform to the norms of American society, she effectively popularized the idea that the nation's First Couple should reflect societal norms exactly. When biographers eventually found that with the Hardings this was hardly true, the popular memory of the twenty-ninth president came to be plagued as one of the worst in all of American history.

**The Legacy of Ohio's Black Laws**

To understand the significance of the allegations made against Warren Harding in 1920, it is necessary to review the history of race relations in Ohio in the nineteenth century. Ohio, in the years before the Civil War, was one of the most racially tolerant states in America. Although late to develop concerted national abolitionism movements in comparison to some New England states which abolished slavery around the time of the Revolution, Ohio passed some of the earliest restrictions on slavery in the Union and had a reputation in the antebellum era as a welcoming sanctuary for escaped slaves.[11] This air of tolerance in the antebellum era made the state a popular haven for racial equality and anti-slavery activists such as Charles Henry Langston and John Mercer Langston. The Langstons founded the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society in 1835 and this group served as a periodic home for some of the nation's most vocal anti-slavery

[11] Slavery was officially abolished in Ohio when President Thomas Jefferson signed the state's first constitution on April 30 1802; *Constitution of the State of Ohio* (1802). Prior to that, slavery was already illegal in the land that would become Ohio thanks to the Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States, North-west of the River Ohio (1787), more commonly called the Northwest Ordinance.

activists including Charles Grandison Finney and Theodore Dwight Weld.[12] Congressman John Bingham was also from Ohio and his significant role as an Abolitionist lawmaker has persuaded historians to refer to him as "the father of the Fourteenth Amendment."[13]

Ohio's anti-slavery leanings in the antebellum era did not mean the state was devoid of explicitly racist laws. Every state and territory in America legally restricted opportunities for African Americans in some way at the time and this Midwestern home to abolitionists and freedmen was no different. One Ohio antebellum race law, for example, restricted gun ownership to whites only, while another demanded that African American migrants be bonded by at least two whites as a guarantee against bad behavior.[14] While these laws were certainly disenfranchising and dehumanizing to African American Ohio residents, they were relatively benign when compared to the state's statutes that would be put in place after the War. This was because in Ohio before 1865, the concept of race was only vaguely defined, allowing for inclusive enforcement of race laws. In 1856 the state legislature legalized this vague interpretation of race by enacting a statute that defined whiteness by the "visible admixture" of physical features commonly associated with people considered to be Caucasian.[15] This statute officially reinforced a court precedent that had stood for twenty-five years that decided that visible "color alone was sufficient" and no minute examination for African genealogy was necessary or prudent in legal proceedings.[16] The implication of this definition was that at that time people only had to pass as white because of a light complexion in order to enjoy the privileges of whiteness. Since Ohio had a small African American population in the antebellum

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[12] Willie Cheek and Aimee Lee Cheek, "John Mercer Langston: Principle and Politics", in *Black Leaders of the 19th Century*, eds. Leon F. Litwack and August Meier (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1991), pp. 106–111.
[13] Gerard N. Magliocca., "The Father of the Fourteenth Amendment," *NY Times*, September 17 2013.
[14] Stephen Middleton, *The Black Laws in the Old Northwest: A Documentary History* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), p. 3-4.
[15] 56 Laws of Ohio, p. 117 - 118 (1856); as cited by Frank Uriah Quillen, *The Color Line in Ohio, a History of Race Prejudice in a Typical Northern State* (Ann Arbor: George Wahr, 1913), p.97.
[16] *Gray v. Ohio,* 4 Laws of Ohio, p. 353 (1831); as cited by Michael Les Benedict and John F. Winkler, *The History of Ohio Law* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2004), p. 760.

era, and local attitudes leaned toward abolitionism, historian Stephen Middleton has surmised that many Ohioans with African American ancestors were included in society and very few were excluded.[17]

Not all Ohioans agreed with this vague (and therefore inclusive) race legislation. As emancipation of all slaves appeared to be on the horizon with the impending end of the Civil War, many took issue with the state's fluid and subjective definition of race because they feared that emancipation would result in an influx of African Americans seeking better opportunities in the North. The newcomers, they argued, would compete with Ohioans for jobs and drive down the cost of labor. As a result, from 1861 to 1886, Ohio passed Black Laws that restricted intermarriage, voting, school and public space integration, and public relief which would have seemed out of place in the first half of the nineteenth century.[18] The anti-miscegenation law was one of these first Civil War-era Black Laws. It went into effect in 1861 and legally proscribed marriage in Ohio as an institution between one man and one woman of the same race.[19] Finding their predictions about a post-war migration to be accurate, Democratic politicians continually pressed for more segregationist legislation from the passage of this anti-miscegenation law until 1886. Like the Black Law's Jim Crow counterparts that arose in the South, Ohio's race legislation was written in such a way as to allow for racial discrimination and segregation without violating the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution.[20] Unlike in the South, Ohio's Black Laws did not mirror an already existing strict caste system such as slavery that had its own

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[17] Stephen Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Ohio, 1787-1860* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), p. 248.

[18] Not to be confused with the Ohio Black Laws of 1807 (or 1804 in some places) which were nearly all eradicated in the 1840s by politicians loyal to the Free Soil Party; "Black Laws of 1807," *Ohio History Central*, Ohio Historical Society, accessed September 22 2013, http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Black_Laws_of_1807.

[19] An Act to Prevent the Amalgamation of the White and Colored Races, 1861, Ohio Acts 6.

[20] Although it did not deprive the Fourteenth Amendment its federal legality and enforceability, Ohio actually rescinded its initial 1866 ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868; see Gabriel J. Chin et. al., "Ratifying the Fourteenth Amendment in Ohio," *Western New England Law Review*, 28, 2 (2006): p. 178-198.

severe legacy. The Ohio Black Laws, written during and after a time when a war was fought over the national institution of slavery, were responsible for producing a tightly segregated society all on their own.

Eventually, with a strong Republican Party vying for African American votes in post-War Ohio, all of Ohio's Black Laws came to be abolished in 1886.[21] Middleton has described this path toward the repeal of Ohio's Black Laws as a historically significant moment in the history of American civil rights movements because it reflected earlier African American efforts and helped cultivate strategies that would be used in later civil rights debates.[22] In Ohio, Republican legislators and African American reformers such as Benjamin William Arnett and George Washington Williams joined forces during 1870s and 1880s with powerful Democrats, including Governor George B. Hoadly, in an effort to affirm that the state should have a clear, unified, and progressive stance on the 1866 Federal Civil Rights Act and the Fourteenth Amendment.[23] Ohioan Democrats of Hoadly's generation were sympathetic to the Republican cause of African American rights because many of them had fought for the Union, and had temporarily joined the Republican Party, during the Civil War.[24] Many of them had also once been under the tutelage of Free Soiler and sometimes-Democrat Salmon P. Chase, who was Governor of Ohio from 1856 to 1860.[25] This helped them find common ground with men like

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[21] The Ohio Black Laws were eliminated for good in the spring of 1887 when the Arnett Bill, named for influential State Representative Benjamin William Arnett, passed in the Ohio legislature; Middleton, *The Black Laws*, p. 248.
[22] Middleton, *The Black Laws,* p. 254-255; Benjamin William Arnett was an admirer of Richard Allen, the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and an early African American activist and reformer who used organized non-violent protest in the eighteenth century to contest segregation in houses of worship; see, Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet*: *Bishop Richard Allen, the A.M.E. Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (NYU Press, 2009), p. 65.
[23] Middleton, *The Black Laws,* p. 255; David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 169.
[24] "George Hoadly, 1884-1886," *Ohio Fundamental Documents: The Governors of Ohio*, Ohio Historical Society (1954), accessed October 1 2013, http://ww2.ohiohistory.org/onlinedoc/ohgovernment/governors/hoadly.html.
[25] "George Hoadly," *Ohio History Central*, Ohio Historical Society, accessed October 1 2013, http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/George_Hoadly, accessed on October 13 2013.

Arnett and Williams, who in most other cases were political rivals. As a result *de jure* segregation fell to the wayside in Ohio in the 1880s.

The repeal of the Black Laws, while symbolically significant for African Americans and social activists, did not spell the end of race classification and racial segregation in Ohio. Those who sought to maintain racial separation in society after 1886 devised ways to ensure the privileges of white people through *de facto* discrimination. Law enforcement and local prosecutors especially were empowered in this regard as they were able to selectively accuse, arrest, and convict many newly settled African American Ohioans proclaiming them to have a natural inclination toward criminality. This was the case for S.J. Howard, an African American Ohioan man who was the only person convicted of solicitation of prostitution in a well-publicized trial involving a woman who kept meticulous records of her business with dozens of well-to-do white clients.[26] Such selective legal discrimination by the authorities made the segregation of communities in the wake of the Black Laws' repeal a fact of life in Ohio. In the town of Felicity, for example, "the white people…kept colored children out of the schools by force, and beat and maltreated the colored parents," a local resident reported, but no one was ever tried for the violence.[27] Similar instances of severe segregation of public spaces were commonplace throughout the state and previously integrated communities became racially dichotomized.

The social segregation of the state would be reinforced when substantial demographic changes came in the first decades of the twentieth century. When an influx of African American migrants from the South and Eastern European immigrants put tension on the state's previously stable workforce in the years leading up to the publication of William Chancellor's "Hardings

[26] *Cleveland Gazette*, January 23 1886; as cited by Middleton, *The Black Laws*, p. 252.
[27] Rachel Myers, Vertical File Manuscripts, ms. 2920, Rachel Myers Papers; as cited by Middleton, *The Black Laws*, p.259.

[sic] Family Tree," the already settled white Ohioans found that the visibly endogamous African Americans made more attractive scapegoats for the labor situation than the Europeans. Another reason for the continuing segregation of Ohio after the repeal of the Black Laws was that nationally the very meaning of race was being created by court precedent, thus reinforcing and reproducing the dividing lines left behind as this period's legacy.

**Race Violence in Marion, Ohio in 1919**

It is of no coincidence that the national dialogue about the definition of race that eventually intersected around the rumors of Warren Harding's own race ran concurrent to the first Great Migration and the eventual wave of social unrest that fell over the Midwest in 1919.[28] During that year, the racial divide of America became impossible to ignore as dozens of localities across the nation were engulfed with mostly white-instigated violence against African Americans. Referred to by African American activist and NAACP field secretary James Weldon Johnson as the "Red Summer," the climate of tension associated with the 1919 season of race violence is almost always referred to as being a facet of the history of large Midwestern cities, especially Chicago and East St. Louis.[29] Small towns and rural America tend to be remembered instead as the Harding campaign strategist and corporate advertising giant of the early twentieth

[28] For a breadth of recent scholarship on the Great Migration see; James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Nicolas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Migration and How it Changed America* (New York: Vintage, 1992); Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Vintage, 2011); Joe William Trotter, Jr. ed., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

[29] James Wheldon Johnson, *Along this Way: The Autobiography of James Wheldon Johnson* (Cambridge: First Da Capo Press Edition, 2000, originally published 1933), p. 341. For a breadth of recent scholarship on the race violence of 1919 see; Kevin Boyle, *Arc of Justice: A Sage of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* (New York: Holt, 2005); Cameron McWhirter, *Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black America* (St. Martins, 2012); Charles Lumpkins, *American Pogrom: The East St. Louis Riot and Black Politics*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008).

century, Albert Lasker, wanted them to be.[30] That is, more akin an image of "normalcy" characterized by quiet Main Streets populated with happily married and economically stable white heterosexual couples living free from the violence and employment concerns of big city America.

Such powerful imagery, however, proved to be deceiving. Main Street in Marion, Ohio where Warren Harding ran his front porch campaign for president was itself embroiled by serious race and class tensions in 1919. Similar to the fictional Gopher Prairie, Minnesota of Sinclair Lewis' 1920 novel *Main Street*, there was a deep hypocrisy hiding beneath the wholesome visage of Marion.[31] During the winter of 1919, a white mob evicted practically the entirety of the African American population of the town after a white woman associated with a Nativist organization was murdered in a district locally associated with African American poverty and criminality. This was the context that William Chancellor was writing in when he collected evidence for his circulars that claimed racial "impurity" in Warren Harding's ancestry. It was also the context in which Dr. George T. Harding threatened Judge William Spencer and dragged him down the street to sign an affidavit to confirm otherwise.

Like much of the rest of Ohio and the Midwest, Marion's population had boomed as part of the Great Migration thanks to rapid industrial growth from 1910 to 1920. Far more than it did during the decades immediately after the Civil War, the population of Marion grew during this period because African Americans were fleeing Jim Crow in the South and South-Eastern Europeans were fleeing poverty and persecution in their own home nations. Because the small-town of Marion was a shipping hub thanks to its position at a nexus of the Pennsylvania and Erie

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[30] See, for the best account of how advertising magnate Albert Lasker crafted the "normalcy" image and the "log-cabin" Harding campaign; John A. Morello, *Selling the President, 1920: Albert D. Lasker, Advertising, and the Election of Warren G. Harding* (Westport: Praeger, 2001).

[31] Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street* (New York: Signet Classics, 1998, originally published 1920).

railroads, it attracted its share of these domestic and foreign migrants to the North who could fulfill a need for unskilled labor. Although exact statistics are hard to come by because of the transient nature of the Great Migration and the unreliable record keeping of a small town like Marion, census records suggest that from 1910 to 1920 the total population of the town increased by as much as ten percent. [32] African American migrants did not make up the majority of this growth, but because that group was visibly endogamous and grew exponentially they made an attractive scapegoat for the labor tensions of whites. Between 1910 and 1920 the African American population probably doubled in Marion, and by 1930 it would triple.[33] Since the earlier repeal of the Black Laws had already left in its wake a legacy of *de facto* segregation of African Americans, tensions escalated and racial pressure came to a head when a murder aroused white suspicions of the rapidly growing and visibly endogamous minority group.

On the night of January 29 1919, Belle Scranton, a woman associated with the National Protective League, a local anti-immigrant association, was found dead around the vicinity of the Marion train station.[34] Marion's residents surely concocted unsubstantiated opinions about the identity of the murderer and the motives behind the crime, but at first Scranton's death was mostly followed by calm attitudes and a concern for town safety in general. *The Marion Star*, coincidentally the paper that Warren Harding owned, for example, actively campaigned against behaviors such as lynching by publishing three editorials in the days after Scranton's death titled "Better Protection Needed," "Conditions Have Changed," and "Time for Calm Judgment."[35]

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[32] This estimate compiled using the better-kept data of Cleveland as a model; Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1790 to 1990, for Large Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States." U.S. Census Bureau, February 2005, p. 68, Table 50.
[33] Gibson and Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race," p. 68, Table 50.
[34] "Woman's Body on Ash Heap," *Marion Star*, January 30 1919; "Probing into Woman's Death," *Marion Star*, January 31 1919; as cited by Payne, *Dead Last*, p. 109. See, for a narrative account of the Belle Scranton murder and investigation; Phil Reid, *The Mystifying Murder in Ohio* (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2009).
[35] "Better Protection Needed," *Marion Star*, January 30 1919, p. 6; "Conditions Have Changed," *Marion Star*, February 1 1919, p. 4; "Time for Calm Judgment," *Marion Star*, February 1 1919, p. 4; all as cited by Payne, *Dead*

Presumably there were some Marion residents who agreed with these articles and thought that both new and old residents of the town could find ways to coexist. The *de facto* definition of race in Marion, however, made such coexistence difficult.

The Marion police department gave way to entrenched segregationist attitudes and made its own conclusions about Scranton's death by blaming the visibly isolated newcomers instead of those who could integrate with the majority but who probably had serious motive to attack the anti-immigration activist. After finding the deceased's body with motor grease on it, the police targeted African American men who lived on a street near the train station in their investigation.[36] In doing so, says historian Phillip Payne, "the police offered, by their actions, a definition as to which citizens were bad" in the broadest possible sense of them having absolutely no place in the community.[37] As such, the Marion police contributed to and reinforced the social construction of race in Ohio, even though their role was *de facto* only and mostly reflected existing segregationist attitudes and perceptions about criminality left behind as a legacy of the Black Laws.

Another reason for police suspicions in Marion to fall on African American migrants instead of foreign immigrants was because of a strong association that existed in Ohio between African Americans and Bolshevism in the years immediately after World War I. According to historian William Wayne Giffin, the International Workers of the World (IWW) contributed to the white fear of African American labor in Ohio by publishing tracts in small towns like Marion

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*Last*, p. 110. Warren Harding was mostly uninvolved in the operations of the newspaper at this time, having been elected a US senator in 1914, assuming that office in 1915.

[36] "Woman's Body on Ash Heap," *Marion* Star; as cited by Payne, *Dead Last*, p. 109

[37] Payne, *Dead Last*, p. 110; An African-American man who worked near the train station, George Washington Warner, was eventually arrested and convicted of Scranton's murder. Payne suggests his conviction was founded on the testimony of a man described as having a "mental defect." Payne, *Dead Last*, p. 113.

that "urged blacks to retaliate against whites for injustices they suffered."[38] This urging produced absolutely no known incidences of widespread violence by African Americans in Ohio. Historian Isabel Wilkerson has found quite the opposite case more likely to be true. Her research for the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Warmth of Other Suns* determined that African Americans who migrated to the North from former Confederate states tended have a low tendency toward violent criminality. The migrants, says Wilkerson, were less dependent on welfare, more stably employed, and more likely to have family lives that centered on a solid two-parent head-of-household partnerships than the Northern-born African Americans.[39] Nonetheless, on February 2 1919 a white mob assembled outside Marion police headquarters after a second white woman, Margaret Christian, was assaulted. An African American man was yet again the police department's prime suspect.[40]

It is difficult to say exactly just what actions this mob took against African Americans in Marion. The historical record is inherently biased because local newspapers changed perspectives in keeping with what they perceived to be the mood of the white paper-buying public. Regarding Harding's *Star*, Payne writes that by the time of the second murder, "gone were the days of thoughtful essays...and pleas for peace. In their place came a concern for order and the need to excuse the mobs action."[41] Outside Marion, however, in the state capital Columbus, reports were less infused with local emotion and provide a clearer perspective on the actions of the white mob. *The Columbus Dispatch*, for example, reported that the mob engaged in a night of saloon burning, window breaking, and anti-black terror.[42] Afterwards, the county

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[38] William Wayne Giffin, *African Americans and the Color Line in Ohio, 1915-1930* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), p. 81.
[39] Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, p. 14.
[40] "Negro Attacks White Woman," *Marion Star*, February 3 1919; as cited by Payne, *Dead Last*, p. 110.
[41] Payne, *Dead Last*, p. 111.
[42] "Marion Negroes Flee to Escape Violence of Mob," *Columbus Dispatch*, February 3 1919, p. 3; as cited in Payne, *Dead Last*, p. 111.

sheriff placed Marion in a state of "semi-martial law."[43] The paper made no hesitation in calling the gathering a "lynch mob" and reported that the "few colored families who remained in the city that night were barricaded in their homes."[44] The February 3 *Star* actually confirmed the *Dispatch*'s reporting, though Marion's local paper used different language and a different tone. That day's *Star* reported that a "general exodus" had taken place wherein about two hundred black families left town in haste, leaving behind property and paychecks issued by local employers that they were too scared to retrieve.[45] Those who remained saw a truly fearful sight when they ventured out onto Marion streets. Signs were posted throughout town with the ominous acronym "TNT" painted on them, which stood for "Travel Nigger Travel."[46]

The recent work of historian David Roediger helps to explain how the labor-related white-on-black violence in places like Marion in 1919 was not just about whites' attempts to construct a notion of blackness associated with physicality and criminality. It was also about construction and reproduction of existing ideas about whiteness itself. According to Roediger, while in the decades before the Civil War white workers derived satisfaction from their ability to define themselves as "not slaves," by the twentieth century their self-definition was formed around their cohesion as group that was "not Black."[47] In effect, the white working class had accepted the pleasures and privileges of whiteness as a "wage" that only they could collect in order to "make up for alienating and exploitative class relationships" associated with rapid industrialization and *laissez-faire* capitalism.[48] As a result, even though Marion was a town populated by whites from a variety of ancestries, the violence played out as a dichotomous event

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[43] "Marion Negroes Flee to Escape Violence of Mob," *Columbus Dispatch;* as cited in Payne, *Dead Last*, p. 111.
[44] "Marion Negroes Flee to Escape Violence of Mob," *Columbus Dispatch*; as cited in Payne, *Dead Last*, p. 111.
[45] "Quiet Night Follows Troubled Monday," *Marion Star*, February 3 1919, p. 3; as cited in Payne, *Dead Last*, p. 113.
[46] "Quiet Night Follows Troubled Monday," *Marion Star*; as cited in Payne*, Dead Last*, p. 113.
[47] David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 170.
[48] Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, p. 13.

with nearly everyone who could pass as white aligning themselves on the side of the mob that expelled the African American minority. This moment in the construction of whiteness had severe implications for the Harding family.

This is because William Chancellor's accusations of Warren Harding's racial "impurity" were formed after conducting interviews with the residents of Marion and surrounding communities only a year after the white-instigated race violence. "By the time Chancellor had arrived" to conduct his investigation about Harding's race, says Payne, the entire "African American population had already fled the town to escape white mobs" and Marion was a "virtually all-white town whose citizens were fully captured by the tensions gripping post-war America."[49] As such, the evidence Chancellor collected was decidedly influenced by a local association of whiteness with respectable citizenship that was fully animated in Marion resident's minds in the months after the expulsion of the African American residents.[50] Because Warren Harding, as the owner of the *Star* and a U.S. senator, was one of the town's leading men, he made an ideal target for gossip in this racially divided environment. When the Wooster professor eventually came to town to collect the evidence to support his theory about the man who was likely to be the next president, the residents of Marion probably found that when asked, making a decision about Warren Harding's race was an easy thing to do. Akron resident and Republican Elias Schaeffer, for example, who had supposedly known Harding for fifty years when Chancellor came to town, was sure that the family line of George T. Harding was one of "negroes" who had always been considered that way by the community.[51] The evidence of the presumptive president's race that the Wooster professor published in his circulars was probably

[49] Payne, *Dead Last*, p. 108.
[50] Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, p. 49.
[51] According to Chancellor, "Hardings [sic] Family Tree."

not fabricated in the least. But it was biased by the social construction of a notion of whiteness that did not accommodate the Hardings.

**The Miscegenation Debate in Ohio, 1913 to 1925**

As much as Ohio in 1919 was a state with a legacy of racial segregation, and Marion was a town whose residents had a personal experience with the meaning of protecting and enforcing white supremacy in 1919, William Estabrook Chancellor's rumors about Warren Harding also played into a broad legal debate that stretched across America. This debate centered on anti-miscegenation laws which restricted marriage and sex between people considered to be of different races. Because anti-miscegenation laws permitted the legal proscription of racial identity as a result of "separate but equal" court precedents, white supremacists and other purity advocates found the arena of racial intermarriage legislation an attractive one to pursue their segregationist goals. Anti-miscegenation laws across America in the first decades of the twentieth century "built on a political tradition in which a man's participatory citizenship was built on his marriage and headship of his household," to use the words of historian Nancy Cott.[52] This meant that a couple suspected of violating such laws was at risk of losing nothing less than their essential personhood in the eyes of state and federal courts as well as their neighbors. As such, historian Rachel F. Moran argues, the laws "sent a clear message that some members of the population could not be trusted to make responsible decisions."[53] Confronting this notion was a serious hardship for any family suspected of being mixed-race. It turned out to be an especially serious concern for the family of the man who would be president.

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[52] Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 98.

[53] Rachel F. Moran, *Interracial Intimacy: The Regulation of Race and Romance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 5.

Although there is tendency to remember the transition to marriage equality for mixed-race couples in the twentieth century as a gradual but inevitable one that culminated in a with the Supreme Court case *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), such was definitely not the case in Ohio in the 1910s and 1920s. Well after the repeal of Ohio's Black Laws, bills were brought to the state legislature with significant support to recriminalize miscegenation in 1913 and 1925. [54] It was during the second attempt that passage seemed a more likely possibility than the first because purity movements got stronger as the years progressed. Both of these attempts to pass anti-miscegenation laws eventually failed. Nonetheless, the debates over them were fierce and were fueled by national lobbying groups on both sides. Conservatives and progressives alike considered what the meaning of marriage should be in America and all had clear views about whether the institution should remain intraracial or be opened up to mixed-race couples.

The Ohioan debate about anti-miscegenation law was an important one because of Ohio's geographical placement. The majority of states had anti-miscegenation laws on the books at the time of Warren Harding's election. Seventeen of those states would not have their statutes declared unconstitutional until the *Loving* decision in 1967.[55] These included the bordering states of Indiana, Kentucky, and West Virginia. Indiana was particularly well-known for serving as a substitute site for the prosecution of Ohioan couples suspected of miscegenation whose marriage was entirely legal on one side of the state line but not the other, according to Middleton.[56] Kentucky and West Virginia previously had been part of the Confederacy and are separated from Ohio by only the Ohio River which is only one mile wide at its widest point near Louisville.

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[54] Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, p. 167, 180-181.
[55] *Loving v. Virginia*, 388 U.S. 1 (1967); not all states, however, accepted the Supreme Court decision as legal precedent immediately; Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, p. 288-291;
[56] Middleton, The Black Laws, p. 252.

The debates about anti-miscegenation laws proposed in 1913 and 1925 in Ohio were won by tolerant and equality-minded Democrats and Republicans in public office, but only with the substantial support of African American lobbying groups. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was overwhelmingly the most experienced and vocal of these groups advocating against the passage of anti-miscegenation laws during this period. In Ohio, the Cleveland Association of Colored Men (CACM) was the NAACP's associate organization. Catholic dioceses were also supportive of both the NAACP and the CACM in Ohio, and granted their cause increased legitimacy.[57] Since Irish migrants to America were not always considered white, and Catholic congregations in Ohio were predominantly Irish American, the NAACP and the Catholic Church made sound allies in the struggle to prevent the passage of racially segregationist legislation.[58]

According to Pascoe, the NAACP and allied groups campaigned against anti-miscegenation law using three overarching arguments.[59] First, they critiqued the notion of black inferiority. A marriage between people of two races, they claimed, was just as legitimate as any other because all people were equally capable of raising families and producing good citizens. Second, they painted anti-miscegenation law as restriction of individual choice and American "freedom." This stance invited the support of states-rights Democrats and former Free Soilers in Ohio who explicitly found the moral obligation to protect the notion of "Free Men" greater than any other.[60] Finally, the NAACP critiqued the sexualization of anti-miscegenation law. This third strategy proved to be essential as it "was designed to counter the objections from Blacks as well as Whites" who were "conditioned by the accumulated effects of a half century of miscegenation

[57] Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, p. 171.
[58] Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2009), p. 3.
[59] Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, p. 175.
[60] "Free Soil, Free Speech, Free Labor, Free Men," Free Soil Party Campaign Slogan, 1848.

law" to believe that interracial marriages were, as Pascoe summarizes it, "unwise, if not outright dangerous."[61]

These arguments of the NAACP were ironically buttressed by a contrarian theory that claimed that interracial sexual attraction was actually a "natural" human condition and that to control it with legislation was lacking in a fundamental understanding of human sexuality. Although this theory ran against the NAACP's position that whites had little to fear and mixed-race marriage and sex would be rare even without anti-miscegenation legislation, it proved to be at least somewhat effective in the debate over such laws in Northern states like Ohio by positioning the imposition of sexual norms as a further infringement on the right to personal choice. The historian Joel Augustus Rogers was especially influential in promoting this theory through his 1919 book *As Nature Leads* which used historical anecdotes of interracial relationships to show that mixed-race couplings were far more complex, far more prolific, and far more consenting than had been previously assumed.[62] According to Rogers, "white men from very early times have had a particular weakness for Negresses and mulatto girls and women…but much greater is the alluring force exercised by the white upon the black."[63] By this he meant nothing less than idea that those of different races were inherently and mutually attracted to one another. Not coincidently, Rogers explored the Harding controversy himself in 1965 in his popular pamphlet *The Five Black Presidents*, agreeing with William Chancellor that Warren Harding was not white.[64] Although a self-taught practitioner of the "Great Black Man"

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[61] Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, p. 176.
[62] J.A. Rogers, *As Nature Leads: An Informal Discussion of the Reason Why Negro and Caucasian are Mixing in Spite of Opposition* (Black Classic Press, 1987, originally published M.A. Donahue & Co., 1919).
[63] Rogers, *As Nature Leads*, p. 40.
[64] Rogers, J.A. *The Five Negro Presidents: According to What White People Said They Were* (Helga Rogers, 1965). In this 18 page pamphlet Rogers claimed that Harding was only one of the African Americans or mixed-race men to occupy the White House. The book makes a good case for this by reflecting that almost all Americans have an African American person in their genealogy, but is weakened substantially when it regards Warren Harding by using William Chancellor's findings as primary evidence without critique of their efficacy.

theory of history, who was never given the academic credibility in his own time of university-educated African American activist-writers like W.E.B Dubois, Roger's ideas influenced the debate over miscegenation nonetheless.[65] They helped to strengthen the NAACP cause by giving further argument that legislating racial intermarriage meant Northern governments would be entering a complicated legal territory that ran contrary to their moral persuasion to protect individual liberties. In 1913, the NAACP-led coalition lobbied hard and gained enough support from both Republicans and Democrats in the Ohio legislature to soundly prevent the passage of new anti-miscegenation legislation.

The debate did not conclude in 1913, however. The passage of anti-miscegenation legislation became a more important goal for many Ohioans after 1913 because in the second half of the decade the second Ku Klux Klan became a significant force in Ohio politics. The second Ku Klux Klan was a revitalized version of the first Reconstruction era Klan. It was spurned into fierce revival in 1915 when *The Birth of the Nation*, D.W. Griffith's silent motion picture adaptation of Thomas F. Dixon's 1905 novel *The Clansman*, was released in movie houses across the country. Even more, the new Klan grew in the North in response to the Great Migration. The visible addition of African Americans as well as the less visible addition of European immigrants in the first decades of the twentieth century brought different cultures to regions of America that were previously mostly homogenous. Although the organization had its official second founding ceremony on Stone Mountain in Georgia, chapters in Indiana, Ohio, and New York were amongst the largest and were highly influential at lobbying their causes. The Klan chapter of Summit County, Ohio, for example, claimed 50,000 registered members in 1920

[65] For more on Rogers and the "Great Black Man" theory of history see; J.A. Rogers, *World's Great Men of Color, Volume 1: Asia and Africa and Historical Figures Before Christ* (New York: J.A. Rogers, 1946); J.A. Rogers, *World's Great Men of Color, Volume II: Europe, South and Central America, the West Indies, and the United States* (New York: J.A. Rogers, 1947).

making it the largest chapter nationwide at the time of Warren Harding's election and the publication of Chancellor's circulars.[66] Although the large city of Akron was located in Summit County, according to historian Rory McVeigh concentrations of Klan activity in Ohio in the 1910s and 1920s were highest in rural areas and small cities.[67]

This second Klan preached white purity in the most exclusionary sense. The organization was anti-Black, anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic, and anti-immigrant. In addition to advocating for race "purity" legislation, the Klan involved itself in national politics by supporting only "100 percent Americans" for elected office.[68] Since in Ohio the Democratic Party tended to attract Jewish and Eastern European immigrants *en masse*, most Klansman and Klanswomen at the time were politically aligned with Republicans, the party of Warren Harding not of William Chancellor. Warren and Florence Harding were even believed to have been Klan members themselves. According to historian Wynn Craig Wade, Klansmen probably started the rumor about the Hardings' membership in 1920 or 1921, once Warren Harding was in the White House. [69] That Warren Harding never confirmed this notion is the surest evidence that he did not actually belong to the organization. This is because to be a Klansman in the 1920s was a significant asset that a career politician like Harding would almost surely have exploited were it true. Nonetheless, in Ohio the Republic Party and the Ku Klux Klan were two interest groups whose political goals were often intertwined. Chancellor's racial attack on Harding, therefore, seems to have been designed to draw some of Harding's own constituency away from his candidacy by

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[66] "Ku Klux Klan," *Ohio History Central*, Ohio Historical Society, accessed September 19 2013, http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Ku_Klux_Klan.
[67] Rory McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Social Movements and National Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 13, 16, Table 2.
[68] McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, p. 25.
[69] Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 165. Although he probably wasn't a Klansman, Warren Harding was no stranger to joining fraternal organizations that buttressed his political image and often had overt racial or ethnic associations. He was openly a Master Mason, a Knight of Malta, and a Noble Shriner.; See for example, "Harding to be made Milford Tall Cedar," *The Delmarvia Star*, November 27 1921.

using the language of the Klan, a powerful conservative social movement that many Republicans believed in.

In the debate for legislation concerning miscegenation in Ohio, favor tipped away from the NAACP and to the side of the Klan in the years approaching Warren Harding's election. Partly this was related to the organization's phenomenal growth. Another reason for the reinvigoration of the debate about racial intermarriage in the years preceding Warren Harding's election was that supporters of laws that restricted racial intermarriage often came from unlikely places. Specifically, Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) had its own ideas about racial purity and was at its strongest from 1916 to 1920. The UNIA's beliefs about purity were rooted in Garvey's belief that strong Black Nationalism could only be possible if it was built on a foundation of pure black ancestry. Garvey believed unambiguously that the UNIA existed to "save the negro race from extinction through miscegenation."[70] Many other African American people did as well. Even when compared against the Harlem-centered New Negro movement and the NAACP, the UNIA was the largest African American lobbying organization in the 1920s. Historian Mark Christian argues that Columbus, Ohio was just as significant a UNIA stronghold as New York City.[71] By some accounts, at its peak, the UNIA claimed as many as four million members counting some international membership.[72] The Klan was probably just as large in 1920.[73] This meant that at least about a tenth of the population of the nation was in explicit agreement that racial intermarriage was a serious concern at the time that Warren Harding had his ancestry called into question with circulars that claimed his father's

[70] Marcus Garvey, "Essays on Race Purity by Marcus Garvey," *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, ed. Robert Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 4: p. 217-220.
[71] Mark Christian, "Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA): With Special Reference to the "Lost" Parade in Columbus, Ohio, September 25, 1913," *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, 28, 3 (2004), p. 428.
[72] David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin, 1997), p. 40.
[73] "Ku Klux Klan," Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed September 15, 2013, http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-files/ideology/ku-klux-klan.

own marriage was illegal. Far more Americans followed these groups' lead in suit. The momentum of this sizable group of racial purity advocates, however, was not unstoppable.

In 1923, Marcus Garvey was sentenced to prison for mail fraud. Shortly thereafter, he was deported to Jamaica. In 1925, prominent Klansman D.C Stephenson was arrested for the brutal rape and murder of a young Indiana woman. Upon his arrest, he disclosed to the press his "black boxes" full of connections between the Klan and Midwestern politicians which exposed just how interwoven the organization was with the Republican party.[74] As a result of these arrests, support for both organizations declined precipitously. Once again the NAACP, the Ohioan Catholic dioceses, and the supporters of responsible and fair marriage and divorce laws won out when the 1925 push for miscegenation law in Ohio was defeated.[75] The Ohioans of 1920 could not have predicted this. At the time of Warren Harding's election and the publication of William Chancellor's circulars, Ohioan Democrats and Republicans were deeply divided in regards to the issue of how to responsibly legislate the meaning of race in a state that had substantially different demographics than it did during the previous generation. These Ohioans had Klansmen and the UNIA lobbying them on one side and NAACP activists and Catholics on the other, fighting for votes in the debate over miscegenation law. Although neither Warren Harding nor William Chancellor were Klan members nor were they marital law activists, their politics and personal lives were intrinsically tied to this debate by the simple consequence of their residency in one of the most divisive states in America when it came to the impending construction of a rigid definition of whiteness.

**Important Court Precedents in the Construction of Whiteness**

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[74] Thomas R. Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s* (Plymouth: Ivan R. Dee Press, 2011), p. 207; for a detailed account of Stephenson's role in the Ku Klux Klan and a thorough description of his arrest and subsequent disclosures see; M. William Lutholz, *Grand Dragon: D.C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan* (Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1993).
[75] Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, p. 181.

Running parallel to the public discussion about reinstating miscegenation law in Ohio was a series of cases being heard in federal and state supreme courts all across America that helped to construct the definition of race during the time of Warren Harding and William Chancellor.[76] These cases centered on miscegenation and the segregation of public spaces because such debates could be used to bypass the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment by producing institutions that were "separate but equal." Court cases about immigration also were used to reinforce the construction of whiteness in America because judgments about non-citizens could also easily define personhood with little concern for the constitutionality of the judges' decisions. Collectively, these court judgments sanctioned discrimination in Ohio by reinforcing norms in the already existent in the segregated American society. They also produced new definitions of personal legitimacy in the eyes of the state and society by encouraging the adoption of a more rigid and exclusive understanding of race in America. The series of court precedent cases did this through the gradual adoption of pseudo-scientific "one-drop" theories used to determine a person's race. As a result, over time "the legal system elevated the notion that interracial marriage was unnatural to commonsense status and made it the law of the land."[77] When William Chancellor published his ancestry tracts about the Hardings, he was appropriating the ideas created by these judicial precedents for his own racial supremacist and political use. When the Hardings, their personal and political allies, and their biographers responded to Chancellor's racist smears, they engaged with these legal precedents as well.

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[76] For more detailed summaries of court precedents that established race classification norms by 1920 see; Pascoe, "Miscegenation Law and Race Classification," *What Comes Naturally*, p. 75-159; Moran, "Judicial Review of Antimiscegenation Laws: The Road to Loving," *Interracial Intimacy*, p.76-100; Lopez, "The Prerequisite Cases," *White by Law*, p. 49-78.

[77] Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, p. 3.

One nationally important pair of precedent cases about race was *Pace and Cox v. State* (1881) and *Pace v. Alabama* (1883).[78] *Pace and Cox v. State* was heard in Alabama Supreme Court. It was concerned with the legality of different punishments in cases of both interracial and intraracial adultery and involved an African American man and a white woman. The Alabama Supreme Court determined that mixed-race adultery could be punished far more severely than that between couples of the same race. This decision, in the opinion of the court, was non-discriminatory because punishments were to be "directed against the offense, the nature of which is determined by the opposite color of the cohabitating parties."[79] The decision claimed that racial intermarriage, "produc[ed] a mongrel population and a degraded civilization, the prevention of which is dictated by a sound policy affecting the highest interests of society and government."[80] In *Pace v. Alabama*, this reasoning was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court thus institutionalizing "separate but equal" logic as permissible in marital regulation. According to the justices' ruling, the Alabama laws concerning mixed-race sex and racial intermarriage were within the bounds of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment because "there is in neither section discrimination against either race."[81] By questioning only the punishment and not the crime of interracial adultery itself, *Pace v. Alabama* legally produced and reproduced the idea that interracial relationships were undesirable and "unnatural" in America. The overall argument for the constitutionality of the *Pace* decision was reconfirmed by the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896).[82]

Another series of cases that had important implications in the construction of race at the time neither involved African Americans nor were concerned with anti-miscegenation law.

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[78] *Pace and Cox v. State*, *69* Alabama 231 (1881); *Pace v. Alabama*, *106* U.S. 583 (1882); as cited by Moran, *Interracial Intimacy*, p. 81.
[79] *Pace & Cox v. State*, 69 Alabama at 232 (1881).
[80] *Pace & Cox v. State*, 69 Alabama at 233 (1881).
[81] *Pace v. State*, 106 U.S. 583 (1883).
[82] *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 137.

Beginning in 1878 with *In re Ah Yup* (1878) and continuing through to the 1940s, state and federal courts defined race in legal matters concerning citizenship by debating the racial status of people who came to America from other nations.[83] In doing, so they first confirmed that whiteness and citizenship, and the privileges contained within such citizenship, were to be considered legally synonymous. These cases were able to set this precedent because justices repeatedly framed fundamental questions about race and citizenship in terms that did not necessarily consider an individual's actual perceived race. Instead, they overwhelmingly tended to consider whether they or not the immigrants involved were white.[84] A federal district court judge in the 1897 case *In re Rodriguez* (1897), for example, made a memorable comment when he said of the case's Mexican American defendant, "[i]f the strict scientific classification of the anthropologist would be adopted, he would probably not be classed as white."[85] His comment was significant because when he made it the individual in question had already been granted citizenship, meaning that his musings about whiteness were wholly unnecessary as far as the proceedings of the court on that day were concerned. A second implication of the citizenship cases that began with *In re Ah Yup*, was that increasingly a "scientific" determination of race came to be legally sanctioned, replacing the previous affinity for "racial admixture" determinations. As such, a restrictive and inflexible "one-drop" test eventually came to be embedded in the nation's various legal systems by the 1940s and early 1950s.[86] At the time Warren Harding's race was called into question by William Chancellor, however, this debate over the definition of race was hardly settled, which is to say that there was no legal consensus as to how to actually determine a person's race.

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[83] *In re Ah Yup,* 1 Fed.Cas. 223 (D.Cal.Cir.Ct., 1878). For a comprehensive list of important prerequisite citizenship cases see Lopez, *White by Law*, Appendix A, p. 203-208.
[84] Lopez, *White by Law*, p. 4.
[85] In re Rodriguez, 81 F. 337, 349 (W.D. Texas, 1897); as cited by Lopez, *White by Law*, p.61.
[86] The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952 abolished racial restrictions on immigration to the U.S.

A court case that exemplified the disputability of race determinations during the time was argued before the Arizona Supreme Court the year after Warren Harding was elected. *Kirby v. Kirby* (1921) concerned a married couple where the husband was asking the state of Arizona for an annulment on the grounds that his partner was a "person of negro blood."[87] The arguments presented in *Kirby v. Kirby* are important to review because even though there was a legacy of race law and a history of court precedent to apply to Mr. Kirby's case in 1921, defining the couple's races proved exceedingly difficult. Pascoe has said that what resulted was a "definitional dispute that bordered on the ridiculous."[88] This is because neither witnesses, attorneys, judges, nor even the couple themselves could decide on what race Joe and Mayellen Kirby belonged to or what the determining factors of race actually were. One witness, for example, was asked about Mayellen Kirby and responded that, "I distinguish her by her color and the hair; that is all I know." [89] When the same witness was asked about Joe Kirby's race she testified that his mother "only claims a quarter Spanish blood; the rest of it is native blood."[90] The judge in the case replied, "I know, but that does not signify anything."[91]

*Kirby vs. Kirby* illustrates that as much as racial segregation and the meaning of race was being solidified by court precedent, *de facto* social discrimination, and anxiety over labor competition at the time of the publication of the Chancellor circulars, that definition was far from settled. Support was building for a "one-drop" determination of race though, and William Chancellor used his knowledge of this support to buttress his pre-election circular campaign about Warren Harding's race. By responding to the race rumor in such a way as to reinforce the definition of marriage as an institution limited to couples consisting of one man and one woman

[87] Pascoe, "Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of "Race" in Twentieth-Century America," p. 44.
[88] Pascoe, "Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of "Race" in Twentieth-Century America," p. 44.
[89] Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, p. 111.
[90] Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, p. 111.
[91] Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, p. 111.

of the same race, Warren and Florence Harding and their political operatives unwittingly affected the memory of the twenty-ninth presidency in ways they could never have predicted.

**The Harding Family and the Possibilities of History**

Although the Harding race rumor was directed only at the individual candidate running for president, it called into question a host of family relationships. More than just a smear against Warren Harding's suitability for president, the rumor made extended Harding family members consider how their race was constructed and how that determination of race affected issues such as citizenship, personal and familial rights, and rightful inheritance. This was the result of Ohio's unique place within the debate about the construction of whiteness that was related to both law and labor as well as forms of segregation both *de facto* and *de jure*. To be clear, no member of the Harding family was ever actually brought into court to defend their whiteness and the race rumor ended up having little effect on the election results in 1920. However, suggesting possibilities about the trajectory of the Hardings' lives and their public memory in the context of the social construction of race and marriage serves as a meaningful exercise that helps to clarify the history of this controversial family. Feminist theorist Dorothy Roberts has written that "because race was defined as an inheritable trait…reproductive politics inevitably involved racial politics."[92] Nowhere was this concept more clear than in 1920 when the family members of President Warren Harding had their genealogy questioned on a national stage.

Dr. George T. Harding's virtual assault of a local probate judge on the eve of his son's election seems hardly an outlier of history when seen from the vantage point of the Ohio's place within the national debate over the meaning of race in 1920. George Harding, according to the Chancellor circulars "Hardings [sic] Family Tree" and "To the Men and Women of America: An

[92] Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage, 1997), p. 9.

Open Letter," as well as the Wooster professor's later monograph *Warren Gamaliel Harding: President of the United States,* was the immediate cause of Warren Harding's racial "impurity."[93] He would have failed both a "one-drop" test of purity because his father Charles Harding was considered to be "colored," and a "visible admixture" test because the Hardings were known to have "the color, features, and hair of negroes."[94] Because of this accusation George Harding had serious reason to believe that, in the eyes of the state of Ohio, his 1865 marriage to Warren Harding's mother Phoebe Dickerson Harding could be annulled by a court of law. At the time of their marriage, Dickerson Harding's father might very well have objected to her marriage on account of George Harding's race.[95] The marriage still took place, however, because in 1865 Ohio's "racial admixture" determination allowed for discretionary inclusion. By 1920 the meaning of race in Ohio had changed in reflection of laws and court precedents from around the country. No longer was passing for white enough to be granted the privileges of marriage that came from wedding a white person. Instead, one could be subjected to an impossible and exclusionary pseudo-scientific test of ancestry that used any hint of racial "impurity" as grounds for illegality. Although Dickerson Harding died in 1910, this declaration would have invalidated Warren Harding and his siblings of the same parentage as the legitimate children and heirs of George Harding who was a respected retired medical doctor and a Civil War pensioner. The seventy-five year-old Dr. Harding accosted Judge William Spencer on the eve of his son's election to the presidency for this reason.

Compounding George Harding's stress in 1920 about the future of his estate, was a previous experience he had had with the legal enforcement of whiteness. After Phoebe Harding

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[93] William Estabrook Chancellor, *Warren Gamaliel Harding: Anthropological, Historical, and Political Researches* (The Sentinel Press, 1923).
[94] Chancellor, "Hardings [sic] Family Tree."
[95] As William Chancellor claimed had happened; Chancellor, "Hardings [sic] Family Tree."

Dickerson died in 1910, George T. Harding remarried in 1912.[96] He eventually filed for divorce from this wife, Eudora Kelley Luvisi Harding, in 1915. The divorce proceedings were held in Indiana, where the couple was first wed, and ended with Eudora Luvisi Harding being granted full custody of the couple's children, then-senator Warren Harding's step-siblings.[97] Beyond these court-documented facts we know little about the couple's relationship nor do we know why they divorced. However, because other couples faced with accusations of a mixed-race marriage were subjected to the exploitation of cross-border differences in law, we can speculate that George T. Harding and Eudora Luvisi Harding entered their divorce trial fearing that their situation would compel a legal ordeal similar to that of Henry Morton and Mary Stuart. Morton and Stuart were an Ohioan couple, like George and Eudora Harding, suspected of an illegal mixed-race partnership. When they crossed into Indiana shortly after their wedding, their marriage was invalidated, the couple was arrested, and a summary of the court hearing wherein their guilt was proclaimed made its way into the newspaper of their hometown, the *Cleveland Gazette*.[98] Although Harding and Luvisi Harding were originally married legally in Indiana, when they returned to sit in front of a judge to settle their divorce they surely feared a possibility that they would experience the complications and public humiliation brought upon Henry Morton and Mary Stuart. That Dr. George T. Harding's concerns about the enforcement of anti-miscegenation laws were real does not dismiss the fact that years later when he explicitly denied his mixed-race status by forcing Judge Spencer's hand he reinforced the existing paradigm of whiteness that was causing him trouble. People accused of mixed-race in 1920 had little other choice but to do so.

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[96] Francis Russell, *The Shadow of Blooming Grove* (McGraw-Hill, 1968), p. 219.
[97] Russell, *The Shadow of Blooming Grove*, p. 219, 258.
[98] *Cleveland Gazette*, August 30 1884; as cited by Middleton, The Black Laws, p. 252.

As much as Warren Harding's father was affected by the allegations of mixed-race, First Lady Florence Kling Harding's father came to be engaged in the ordeal as well, even though the Klings were never considered to be any race other than white.[99] The role of Amos Kling, father of Florence Harding, was important to William Chancellor's argument when he published his circulars about Warren Harding shortly before the 1920 presidential election because Kling was known to have a severe lack of trust in his son-in-law. [100] Said Chancellor in "Hardings [sic] Family Tree, the marriage between Warren Harding and Florence Harding on July 8 1891 "was objected to by the father-in-law, Mr. Amos H. Kling, a prominent Republican and one of the wealthiest men in Marion, who spoke out publicly and openly denouncing this marriage said his daughter had disgraced herself and family by marrying a man with negro blood in his veins."[101] The Wooster professor's claim of Kling's dissatisfaction with his daughter's new husband was not a fabrication. Kling was an overly obsessive father when it came to how his children's actions might affect the family's reputation and a mixed-race marriage would certainly do so. According to historian Robert P. Watson, "the Kling home was not a happy one…Amos Kling was extremely controlling, dictating the actions of everyone in the family…young Florence was often at odds with her father and they frequently fought."[102] When Florence Harding brought the news of her engagement to Warren Harding back to her father, Kling was infuriated. For his

[99] Except by William Chancellor, who did make assertions in his book *Warren Gamaliel Harding* that the Kling's were ethnically Jewish. This rumor probably never took off because Jewish ancestry did not necessarily correlate with racial impurity, as well as for the simple reason that Florence Harding was never president. For a synthesis discussion of the idea that Jewish people form a biologically endogamous group see; John Entine, *Abraham's Children: Race, Identity, and the DNA of the Chosen People* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2007). For a history of anti-Semitism in America see; Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[100] Amos Kling, born 1833, died 1913.

[101] Chancellor, "Hardings [sic] Family Tree."

[102] Robert P. Watson, *Life in the White House: A Social History of the First Family and the President's House* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), p. 210.

daughter to be marrying a man of a questionable racial status put the whole Kling family's respectability at risk.

Kling was also upset at the time of his daughter's marriage on to Warren Harding in 1891 because a marriage suspected of violating anti-miscegenation laws could carry with it severe legal consequences. Florence Harding's marriage to the future president might very well have been sanctioned by the local Ohio authorities around Marion, but once they left the state the couple's legal partnership might have been invalided. Because Florence Harding had been in a previous marriage that ended in divorce before she met Warren Harding, this would have left Mr. Amos Kling's eldest daughter a woman who had gone through two failed marriages, with one son to care for from her first partnership (and, by the time of the 1920 election, two grandchildren) but no husband to lend support.[103] As such, Amos Kling had plenty of reason to object when the marriage between Warren Harding and Florence Kling Harding took place.

Kling was never totally happy with his daughter's choice of a husband. He disliked Harding's drinking habits and, as a Marion businessman himself, the two men were often professional rivals. According to historian Betty Boyd Carol, Kling did not speak to his daughter for seven years after her marriage to Harding.[104] Once the couple was wed, however, Kling kept any further objections on the grounds of race to himself. To do otherwise would put his family's reputation at severe risk in the climate of early twentieth century Ohio. As such and notwithstanding that he had died seven years before William Chancellor published his circulars about Warren Harding's race, Amos Kling did not remain the disapproving father-in-law that the Wooster professor had hoped would lend credence to his case that Harding was unsuitable for

[103] Before Warren Harding, Florence Kling Harding was married to Henry Athenton DeWolfe (1859-1894). They divorced in 1886. They had a son together, Marshall Eugene DeWolfe (1880-1915), who had two children of his own, Florence Harding's grandchildren.
[104] Betty Boyd Carol, *First Ladies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 158.

the presidency on the grounds of his potentially "impure" bloodline. He was, however, a person belonging to the family of a person accused of mixed-race status intertwining his reputation and social status with the perceived race of the man who would become the twenty-ninth president.

For similar reasons pertaining to anti-miscegenation law and the social construction of race in 1920, Harding's rival in the presidential election and Governor of Ohio, James Cox, was also not a co-conspirator with Chancellor. At first glance, however, he does seem like a likely player in the drama. This is because both Cox and Chancellor ran in the same circles of Democratic elite in Ohio. We know the two men knew each other and were politically aligned because in 1919 Cox appointed Chancellor to be Ohio's representative at the anniversary of the Pilgrim's landing at Plymouth Rock.[105] Cox, being a successful newspaperman owner of both the *Dayton Daily News* and *Springfield Daily News*, also had both the capital and distribution network to spread the Harding race circulars.[106] Finally, because James Cox was so seriously lagging in polls of the presidential contest in its final weeks, a desperate and underhanded attack on Harding in the final days does seem likely.

However, because the legal implications of an impossible "one-drop" test of impurity could affect extended family members, even at the very far ends of a family's genealogical tree, Cox was most definitely not involved. James Cox and Warren Harding were more than just political and professional rivals. They were blood relatives. Cox's first wife, Mayme Simpson Harding, considered herself a cousin of Warren Harding and this relation was well known throughout Ohio.[107] Had Cox supported Chancellor's smears, he would have also been claiming that his daughter by Simpson Harding, Helen Cox, carried the "one-drop" of blood necessary to

[105] "Obituary," *Wooster Alumni Bulletin*, 1962-1963; as cited by Payne, *Dead Last*, p. 101.
[106] Purchased the *Dayton Daily News* in 1898, purchased the *Springfield Daily News* in 1903; "Cox, James Middleton, (1870 - 1957)," *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*.
[107] Piestruza, *1920*, p. 380.

incur a designation of racial "impurity." As a result, the Cox campaign's way of addressing the Chancellor circulars was to deflect the issue entirely. Cox operatives claimed the circulars were actually produced by Harding advisor Harry Daugherty and other members of the "Ohio Gang" in order to cater to African American voters.[108] This tactic didn't help them at all and Harding sailed to victory.

Warren and Florence Harding's own responses to the race rumor during the election and during their short stint as America's reining political couple warrant the deepest analysis. The ways that the Harding's addressed the Chancellor rumor differed substantially. While the debate was implicitly about how their identities might have been more racially complex than assumed, gender roles determined the couple's reactions more so than racial self-identity. Warren Harding was hardly vocal about the rumors. Biographers agree that he only responded to Chancellor's allegations once, in passing, and under the gaze of campaign advisers who coached him on political semantics. But Florence Harding embroiled herself in concealing the writings of the Wooster professor and ended up detouring the memory of her and her husband for the worse by reinforcing the constructed system of race classification that was being used to denigrate her family. As a wife whose own identity was wrapped up in that of her husband, she apparently felt that she had little choice but to protect that identity anyway she could. In doing so, she ironically drew attention to the nature of her marriage to the twenty-ninth president. When future biographers of Warren Harding seized on this, they found that the Harding's marriage was far from the socially normative relationship that Florence Harding had sought to portray it as.

Well before hearing about William Chancellor's circular campaign in 1920, Warren Harding's advisors had already composed a racialized image of their candidate. The image of candidate Harding was one that stressed European ancestry and humble "log-cabin" origins on

[108] Piestruza, 1920, p. 383.

the frontier. It reflected previous presidential campaign strategies especially those of Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Jackson, although in many respects Harding's origin story was far more grounded in truth than almost every other president who employed the strategy previously. When compared to the military men and the First Families presidents who came before him, the Ohioan newspaperman Harding was actually a decidedly modest individual in wealth and in social standing. His father, George T. Harding, who accosted the one-legged judge on the eve of his election, was a Civil War surgeon who ran a small family practice after the war. His mother, Phoebe Dickerson, was a midwife. Most of Warren Harding's wealth at the time of his election was the result of his and Florence Harding's own labors at *The Marion Star*. Florence Harding was, by some accounts, the skilled business manager of the family who made the paper a financial success.[109]

Regardless of its inherent grounding in humble truths, however, Harding's campaign team made serious efforts to racialize the already believable "log-cabin" story. They correctly anticipated that a racial charge might eventually emerge in the final stage of the campaign. Harding advisor and future Attorney General Harry Daugherty was instrumental in promoting and marketing this story of racial origin. He memorably remarked about the Hardings at the 1920 Republican nominating convention that "no family in the state had a clearer or more honorable record than the Hardings, a blue-eyed stock from New England and Pennsylvania of the finest pioneer blood, Anglo-Saxon, German, Scotch-Irish and Dutch."[110] This was a three-pronged rebuttal to Chancellor's accusations. Daugherty was implying that Warren Harding had the visible features, European ancestry, and native-born heritage synonymous with whiteness and therefore respectable personhood in America. Once the "Ohio Gang" advisors heard of the

[109] Anthony, *Florence Harding*, p. 49.
[110] Harry Daugherty, *The Inside Story of the Harding Tragedy* (Western Islands, 1975, originally published 1932), p. 56

circular campaign in the final days of the election, they repeated similar racialized rhetoric to the press. Their influence persuaded local papers with Republican leanings to publish articles with titles such as "Harding's Folk Fought Indians," which took front page in *The Toledo Blade* on Oct 20 1920, and which tied the notion of whiteness to military bravery. [111] Because that article also made the assertion that men in the Harding family had fought wars against indigenous non-citizens, Indian-fighting became additional vanguard of respectable personhood. The *Akron Beacon Journal* was even able to find a self-proclaimed professional, Frank Dart, to confirm the long Harding family tradition of patriotism, frontier ethics, and blood purity. His qualifications to speak about Warren Harding's ancestry and against William Chancellor's pseudo-anthropology was that he had been Abraham Lincoln's messenger rider during the Civil War.[112]

Warren Harding was coached by his political advisors to repeat the racialized "log cabin" story as a necessary political strategy. According to Ohio Republican state committee chairman George H. Clark, Harding had little choice in the matter since "the thing [was] flying over the state" and beyond. It was being picked up outside Ohio by major newspapers not limited to *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Atlanta Constitution*.[113] The sensation was enough that campaign advisors persuaded Warren and Florence Harding to leave their Marion front porch and embark on a rail tour of Ohio only five days before Election Day. The whole trip was designed "basically to convince white voters that [Warren Harding] wasn't black," to use the words of historian David Piestruza.[114] Warren Harding, however, managed to keep mostly quiet about the situation despite his advisers' coaching. He never actually invoked his own campaign-created "log-cabin" story in the final days of the election nor

[111] "Harding's Folk Fought Indians," *The Toledo Blade*, October 20 1920.
[112] "Most Disreputable Tactics," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 1 1920.
[113] George H. Clark, *Letter to Charles Hard* (1920); as cited by Russell, *The Shadow of Blooming Grove*, p. 405; Anthony, *Florence Harding*, p. 231.
[114] Piestruza, *1920*, p. 382.

did he bring up Chancellor at all during any of his stump speeches. He only made one statement publicly about the race rumor and it was given off-hand to a local reporter. Said Harding, to a writer for the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, "How do I know Jim? One of my ancestors may have jumped the fence."[115]

This comment leaves little doubt that Warren Harding knew there was little chance he would pass a "test" of white race "purity." It shows an explicit lack of defensiveness regarding the accusations of William Chancellor. Whatever the press might eventually find out about the Harding family, Warren Harding knew what happened in the past was beyond his control. Nonetheless, his silence on the issue for the remainder of his life leaves only a hint of evidence to help construct a case about how Warren Harding internalized race as part of his self-identity. A comment made in private to Ohio state committee assistant secretary Charles Hard indicates that in whichever directions he leant, he was surely incensed by how the whole affair of how the race rumor hindered his campaign. "If you just let me see this fellow Chancellor," Harding roared across his whistlestop train the week before the election, "I'll make him a subject for 'niggers' to look at."[116] He wanted to say more. He wanted to confront those who agreed with Chancellor that a man's ancestry should be a determining factor when deciding who was suitable for higher office. But before he got the chance the future First Lady let her own ideas known about how she thought the next few days should play out. Florence Harding did not have the privilege of making such ambiguous comments about her family's racial composition as her husband did.

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[115] Warren G. Harding to James Miller Faulkner, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 29 1920; as cited by Anthony, *Florence Harding*, p 232; Adams, *Incredible Era*, p. 280.
[116] Warren G. Harding to Charles Hard (1920); as cited by Anthony, *Florence Harding*, p. 232; Piestruza,, *1920*, p. 382.

"I'm telling all you people that Warren Harding is not going to make any statement," Florence Harding said to Harry Daugherty and the rest of the "Ohio Gang" members who went on the statewide tour.[117] It was a bold assertion on her part because the whole tour was put together at great expense for the explicit purpose of giving the candidate an opportunity to respond to the Chancellor circulars. Nonetheless, she won over the group. Warren Harding never did speak about Chancellor or his own racial identity again and there is no evidence that his advisers continued to pressure him to do so either. In part, the men left the issue alone thereafter because they respected Florence Harding's social acumen and "acute sensitivity to the nation's pulse."[118] They probably recognized that since the election was almost over and Harding was already assumed to be the eventual victor, giving credit to the race issue by even mentioning it was unnecessary, if not outright harmful. The Harding campaign team probably also found some personal sympathy for the future First Lady in heeding Florence Harding's plea for silence. They surely were aware that Warren Harding's engagement in deflecting or denying the rumors would have less significance if he won on Election Day, since as President-elect he could safely ignore them. In contrast, the effect that the family race rumor had on Florence Harding was far more severe, long-lasting, and unavoidable.

This is because marriage and divorce laws at the time of the Harding race rumor overwhelming operated in the favor of husbands, who have served as the primary source of a couple's identity in any American marriage until recent decades. Although state statutes almost never acknowledged this gender discriminatory fact, the unrestricted nature of at-fault divorces, probate cases, and dependency trials almost always disadvantaged women up until the 1970s. In many cases such discretion left them or their children in abusive or severely dependent

[117] Charles Michelson, *New York World*, 1920; as cited by Anthony, *Florence Harding*, p. 233.
[118] Anthony, *Florence Harding*, p. xii.

relationships.[119] This differential treatment echoed mores held over from English common law. Legal deference to the family patriarch was strengthened substantially in the mid-nineteenth century by the formation of the veterans' pension system after the Civil War.[120] The veterans' pension system legally reinforced the idea that men's hierarchical place in society was as the primary family provider by nationalizing and formalizing a cultural standard through law and bureaucracy. In the years approaching the 1920 election the marriage clause of the 1907 Immigration Act further substantiated the gender hierarchy of American marriages with law.[121] This law granted citizenship to foreign-born wives of American men. At the same time, it made American women who married foreign-born men aliens because they had to assume the nationality of their husbands. Laws like the 1907 Immigration Act legalized the idea that the joining of two people as one (male) individual under the bounds of marriage was natural. That one individual, until very recently, was always cast in the image of the husband. Florence Harding lived under a looming threat of a loss of the social and legal privileges afforded by the institution of marriage. She was a wife in the 1920s and, as such, the threat was real. Reviewing the actions and decisions she made in the final years of her life in regards to William Chancellor's evidence about her husband's race make this especially clear.

After Warren Harding's death on August 2 1923, Florence Harding enlisted the aid of Attorney General, former Republican operative, and family friend Harry Daugherty to help conceal much of her husband's personal records as well as controversial texts including those of William Chancellor. Daugherty was able to do so because his position gave him great power of enforcement that was further buttressed by his network of semi-official deputies. One of these

[119] The California Family Law Act of 1969 is an important precedent case that is generally understood as being the first of many no-fault divorce laws that eventually be passed in the US in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries.
[120] Cott, *Public Vows*, p. 144.
[121] *The Immigration Act of 1907*, 34 Stat. 898.

deputies was Gaston Means, who called himself a private investigator. Means and Daugherty described the suppression of the Chancellor monograph and the suppression of sensitive Harding documents in their memoirs published in 1930 and 1932.[122] Given their characters and motivations, their accounts must be seen as helping them gain attention and an audience for their memoirs. Nonetheless, they almost certainly engaged in a cover-up of the race rumor. According to Florence Harding biographer Carl S. Anthony, every official and personal document that Florence Harding thought could be "misconstrued" was brought to her friend and confidante Evalyn Walsh McLean's house in northwest Washington D.C. to be burned. This included cases of William Chancellor's monograph on Warren Harding's race, *Warren Gamaliel Harding*, that were seized from bookstores and publishing houses by government agents in 1922 and arrived at McLean's house in a "guarded express car…packed full."[123] In most historical discussions, this suppression of sensitive Harding documents is remembered as an attempt to deny the legitimacy of claims that Warren Harding's presidency was marred by political scandals, especially the Teapot Dome bribery affair concerned with the illegal sale of federal lands to oil companies, and the president's bacchanalian attitudes toward women and alcohol. In this context, the suppression of documents that could be misconstrued is likely related to Florence Harding's concerns about the essential legitimacy of her marriage.

A new perspective on the Harding document suppression helps to explain one of Harding biographer's most potent questions. If Warren Harding was such a corrupt president and amoral man then why did Florence Harding stay with him as his wife? Florence Harding never filed for divorce from her husband despite his known infidelities because she had practically no choice in

[122] Gaston Means, *The Strange Death of President Harding* (New York: Guild Publishing Corp., 1930) p. 139-140; Harry Daugherty, *The Inside Story of the Harding Tragedy* (New York: Churchill Co., 1932), p. 56.
[123] Anthony, *Florence Harding*, p. 361-362. Suppression of sensitive texts was a legal and regular occurrence during World War I so a bureaucratic apparatus was already in place when Florence Harding requested the seizure of Chancellor's writings. However, since it was illegal in 1920 to do so, official evidence of the seizure cited by Harding biographers does not exist.

the matter. While divorce was becoming far more common in the 1920s than it ever had been previously, terminating a marriage was still very much a disrespectable choice for a woman to make, especially when one's husband was the President of the United States.[124] More importantly, however, Florence Harding's choice to remain partnered to Warren Harding until his death was likely related in part to the contestable legality of the couple's marriage on the grounds of miscegenation. After Warren Harding's death in 1923, had Nan Britton or Carrie Phillips come forward with an extramarital Harding child (as Britton did in 1928), that child might have been entitled to inheritance ahead of Florence Harding and her grandchildren if her marriage was shown in a court hearing to be in violation of an anti-miscegenation law.[125]

Regardless of the speculative outcome of such a hearing, Florence Harding and her deceased husband would have certainly been subjected to a "test" of their ostensible race purity, if not in court then at least in public discourse, if there was a dispute over the Harding estate. This is because Americans suspected of mixed-race status in the first half of the twentieth century who lived their entire lives as openly white and who almost always passed as such were not exempt from determinations of racial "impurity" upon death. This was the case within a New Orleans family whose patriarch, Abelarde Duvigneaud, had his race changed in court, and his surviving children's legal legitimacy threatened, twenty-years after his death during the 1912 debate concerning the passage of family property to his children after his wife's death.[126]

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[124] See, for statistics of divorce rates in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; Elaine Tyler May, *Great Expectations: Marriage and Divorce in Post-Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 2-7, 76, 77, 169.

[125] Britton eventually did claim that Warren Harding was the father of her daughter Elizabeth Ann Britton in her 1928 book *The President's Daughter* (Mountain View: Ishi Press, 2009 edition, originally published 1928). She pressed the matter in a court of law when amateur writer Dr. Joseph De Barth published a rebuttal to Britton's book titled *The Answer* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958 edition, originally published 1928). The case of *Britton v. Klunk* (1929) (so named because Charles Klunk, the owner of the Marion Hotel, was the financier of De Barth) was initiated by Britton as a libel suit and the jury in the case decided "no cause for action" on the part of any of the involved parties. See; Ferrell, *The Strange Deaths of President Harding*, p. 68-76.

[126] *Duvigneaud v. Loquet et. al.*, (Louisiana, 1912) as cited by Frank W. Sweet, *Legal History of the Color Line: The Rise and Triumph of the One Drop Rule* (Palm Coast: Backintyme, 2005), p. 425; see also, Erica Faye Cooper, *One*

Abelarde Duvigneaud died in 1873. Upon his death, his estate passed to his wife, Marie Philomene Bechet, who later remarried. When she died in 1910, the family estate was to be divided between the children she had with Duvigneaud and the children she had with her second husband, the Loquets. The Loquets refused to cede partial ownership of the family home to the Duvigneaud children who then took the matter to court. The Loquets argued that since Abelarde Duvigneaud was not "pure" white his marriage to Marie Philomene Bechet was illegitimate under the state's anti-miscegenation laws. These laws had existed uninterrupted since before Louisiana was admitted to statehood in 1812, but they had rarely been enforced until the early twentieth century.[127] Initially, the Civil District Court of the Parish of Orleans agreed with the Loquets' position that Abelarde Duvigneaud was not white and his biological children were made illegitimate. This was despite him having been legally married as a white man partnered to a white woman at the time of his death in 1873. On appeal, however, the Louisiana Supreme Court eventually decided with *Duvigneaud v. Loquet* (1912) that Abelarde Duvigneaud was white and therefore his children were legitimate heirs to the estate of Marie Philomene Bechet along with the Loquets.

There was no small amount of debate and questioning from the court justices prior to making their decision about the Duvigneauds. Even though the judges ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, the nature of their determination of whiteness for the Duvigneaud family proved to be demeaning and dehumanizing in itself. Hair was gazed at by lawyers and judges, and babies, the Duvigneaud grandchildren, were not exempt from this ritual. Questions were asked about family genealogy in an effort to compel evidence that the family under threat surpassed the 1/32 blood

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*'Speck" of Imperfection: Invisible Blackness and the One-Drop Rule: An Interdisciplinary Approach to examining Plessy v. Ferguson and Jane Doe v. State of Louisiana* (Ann Arbor, University Microfilms International Publishing, 2011), p. 212-214.

[127] Sweet, *Legal History of the Color Line*, p. 425.

requirement of whiteness particular to Louisiana law. The family's school board was even contacted to verify which check box about race had marked on official forms throughout the years.[128] A posthumous race "test" of this sort would have entailed tracing both partner's ancestries when it came to the Hardings, thus involving more than just the ornery Dr. George T. Harding in the rumor but also giving reason to consider just what his orneriness was all about. Florence Harding, wife of the president accused of mixed-race status, was even more upset than Warren Harding's father. She surely contemplated whether her grandchildren and heirs to the Harding estate, George Warren DeWolfe and Eugenia DeWolfe, would have their inheritance and reputations threatened by a demeaning experience of familial racial judgment similar to that of the Duvigneauds.[129] As a result, she took the deliberate and understandable action of hiding any evidence that could quell her anxiety that the family secret might be discovered even after her husband was dead.

The suppression of the Chancellor documents by Florence Harding and her late husband's colleagues had an unintended and unpredictable side effect. By denying the Wooster professor's racial evidence the light of day, Florence Harding was practically acknowledging an element of truth behind his arguments. By understanding how and why she suppressed the racist accusations of Chancellor, the Wooster professor appears differently than the "crackpot" racist other historians have portrayed him as. [130] Chancellor was actually a serious voice in the discussion about the president's race in the 1920s since his allegations had a real chance of damaging the reputation of Florence Harding even after the president's death. Although he published his circulars shortly before the 1920 election with the intention of currying favor for

[128] *Duvigneaud v. Loquet et. al.,* as cited by Cooper, *One 'Speck' of Imperfection*, p. 212.
[129] George Warren DeWolfe (1914-1968) and Eugenia DeWolfe (1911-1978) were the principal heirs of Warren and Florence Harding's estate after Florence Harding's death in 1923. They were the children of Marshall Eugene DeWolfe (1880-1915), Florence Harding's son by a previous marriage to Henry Athenton DeWolfe (1859-1894) which ended in divorce. Warren and Florence Harding had no biological children together.
[130] Piestruza, *1920*, p. 369.

Democrat James Cox, Chancellor's credibility as an expert on Warren Harding's race was ironically granted years later when Florence Harding's suppression of his theories came to be known publicly.

Since Florence Harding's suppression of the sensitive documents hardly touched the surface when it came to hiding evidence of her husband's extramarital relationships with women or the ideas of William Chancellor, she unwittingly and ironically contributed the public memory of her husband as one of the worst men ever to occupy the White House. Biographers in the decades after the Hardings' deaths became preoccupied with the ways that their marriage failed to adhere to societal norms because Florence Harding's defensive act of suppression amplified the idea that presidential marriage should be emblematic of those norms. Since the legal and social repercussions were real into the final year of her life, she hardly had a choice in the matter. As such, Florence Harding's actions were similar to other wives at the time, black or white, who were in marriages suspected of being mixed-race, but who could never publicly admit or even suggest that their marriage was anything other than entirely monogamous and racially "pure."

**The Harding Race Rumor and the Memory of Warren Harding**

According to Phillip Payne, twentieth century historians of the life and presidency of Warren Harding, "did not expose the [1919 Marion white-instigated race violence]…because [they] agreed with the goals of the rioters and approved of the actions of the mob."[131] The event was out in the open for them to see, recorded in Warren Harding's own newspaper even, yet they overlooked it for almost one hundred years because conscious and unconscious white supremacy skewed their perspective. The connection between the Harding race rumor and the construction of race, especially as it took place in the nation's courtrooms, was similarly overlooked because the same preoccupation with the status quo informed the writing of Warren Harding's

[131] Payne, *Dead Last*, p. 114.

biographers. This is not to say that Harding's biographers were all racists. Rather, their work was informed by the racialisms of their times just as Florence Harding's decision to suppress William Chancellor's accusations was informed by that of her own.

Although rumors about Teapot Dome, Warren Harding's polyamory, and the race controversy certainly permeated private discussions of the man in the 1920s and 1930s, when professional biographers first put the twenty-ninth president's life to print publicly they created narratives of patriotism and frontier morality that left these unseemly topics alone. This was a smart marketing decision because public sympathy for the deceased couple was very real in America in the 1920s. Despite all the rumors, most people regretted that the two people who instilled great hope and optimism for America on Election Day in 1920 had their lives, and their White House tenancy, cut short. Biographers also left unseemly topics alone in the 1920s out of respect for the families of the deceased couple. Although Warren Harding might well have been a mediocre president and an amoral man, his biographers seemed interested in denying his father, brothers, cousins, nephews, and non-biological grandchildren responsibility for his failings. Nonetheless, Harding's relatives experienced an inordinate amount of grief and mourned for an unconscionable amount of time when both the Hardings died within eighteen months of one another, he unexpectedly at age fifty-seven from a heart attack, and she at sixty-three after years of struggling with a debilitating kidney condition.[132] The first Harding biographers also tempered their narratives of the twenty-ninth president because they had a political interest in mind. Warren Harding's Republican White House successors, Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover, had ample reason to continue to use the Harding "normalcy" template in their own campaigns in

[132] Although there is still substantial contention regarding the cause of Warren Harding's death he most likely died from a heart attack on August 2 1923 in San Francisco, California. Robert Ferrell's *The Strange Deaths of President Harding* discusses the competing theories about his cause of death, including one theory that Florence Harding poisoned him. Florence Harding died of renal failure on November 21 1964 in Marion, Ohio.

1924 and 1928. They supported a memory of Warren Harding that acknowledged their predecessor's flaws, especially Teapot Dome, but did not ignore the deceased man's potential as an iconic representation of the idea that a vote for the Republic party was a vote for national stability. Coolidge and Hoover's implications about Harding from their seats in the Oval Office surely funneled down into public consciousness and informed public biography. As a result, the exceedingly poor memory of Warren Harding that eventually came to be was not at first inevitable.

One of the first biographies of Harding was written by historian Thomas Herbert Russell and was published before the end of 1923, the year that Harding died. Titled *The Illustrious Life and Work of Warren G. Harding*, the book used a quotation from Calvin Coolidge on its cover page that stated "the world has lost a great and good man."[133] Historian Willis Fletcher Johnson's biography of Harding published in the same year likewise made no secret that it would avoid sensitive discussions. Its title *The Life of Warren G. Harding: From the Simple Life of the Farm to the Glamour and Power of the White House* suggested a replication of the "rags-to-riches" or "log cabin myth" presidential origin story that had become commonplace since the death of Abraham Lincoln and was actively promoted by the Harding campaign in 1920.[134] As has been previously mentioned, the life of Warren Harding was a quite modest one when compared to almost every other president before him. These "log cabin" biographies written by Thomas H. Russell and Willis F. Johnson were not totally untrue and contained more than a few strains of truth about them even though they avoided mention of the rumored complications of Harding's life and presidency.

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[133] Calvin Coolidge, as cited by Thomas Herbert Russell, *The Illustrious Life and Work of Warren G. Harding*, (T.H. Russell, 1923), p. 1.
[134] William Fletcher Johnson, *The Life of Warren G. Harding: From the Simple Life of the Farm to the Glamour and Power of the White House* (Middletown: F.W. Mead, 1923).

When the Warren G. Harding Home and Tomb were first opened in 1926 and 1927 there was a similar patriotic deference to scandal seen in the way the memory of the recently deceased president was publicly created. Notably, no official homage to the couple was performed by then-president Calvin Coolidge who was Harding's running mate in 1920 and his eventual Vice President. Although Coolidge would evoke "normalcy" in his 1924 campaign when he ran for president on his own, he had much to lose politically by further associating himself with the idea that he was an installed president who came to power upon the death of the popularly elected Harding. In addition, Coolidge was avoiding a personal connection to Harding because Teapot Dome was an ongoing scandal that brought suspicion upon White House and high-ranking federal officials whose employment carried over from administration to administration. The Harding administration's responsibility for Teapot Dome was debated in federal courts and the House of Representatives from 1924 to 1930 and included the highly public Supreme Court case *McGrain v. Daugherty* (1927) which was concerned with the Attorney General's inability to effectively interrogate those involved in the Teapot Dome scandal and created the precedence of Congress having the right to compel witness testimony.[135] Since President Coolidge declined to do so, Herbert Hoover finally officially dedicated the Harding Museum and Tomb sites on June 16 1931. He made mention of Harding's reputation as a morally disreputable politician, because it was at that point unavoidable, but he blamed Harding's faults on untrustworthy colleagues "whom [Harding] had believed were his devoted friends."[136] Hoover insisted to the audience at the dedication that whatever scandals the twenty-ninth presidency had come to be known for "these acts never touched the character of Warren Harding."[137] He was positioning Warren

[135] *McGrain v. Daugherty*, 273 U.S. 135 (1927).
[136] Herbert Hoover, "Address at the Dedication of the Harding Memorial" (Marion, Ohio, June 16 1931), The American Presidency Project, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=22708, accessed December 6 2013.
[137] Herbert Hoover, "Address at the Dedication of the Harding Memorial," (Marion, Ohio, June 16 1931).

Harding as a president whose term was plagued by the bad influences of others, while leaving the man in the office revered for his own sake.

Hoover's address, however, marked the end of the era of patriotic respect for the deceased Warren Harding. The next generation of biographers found the allure of the race rumor and Warren Harding's romantic life all too irresistible when the Daugherty and Means memoirs about Florence Harding's suppression of documents were published and when women close to Warren Harding, especially Nan Britton who claimed to have given birth to the president's biological daughter, began to identify themselves.[138] These biographers became preoccupied with the concept of race because Florence Harding's actions made it evident to them that a secret was being kept from the public that had serious implications for understanding of the life of the twenty-ninth president. Florence Harding's suppression provoked biographers to question whether the lives of the First Couple were at all normative, let alone presidential, and the race rumor gave them an axis from which to hang Warren Harding's association with amorality and scandal.

The first writer to seriously attempt to uncover what Florence Harding was trying to hide was Samuel Hopkins Adams. His biography of Harding, *Incredible Era: The Life and Times of Warren Gamaliel Harding* was published in 1939. As a writer, Adams was uniquely positioned to tackle the revision of the Harding story. His career had been forged as a New York City muckraker and he was an exceptional investigative journalist. Best known for his writings on the medical profession, a series of articles published under the heading "The Great American Fraud" in *Collier's Weekly* in 1905 had a substantial effect on national attitudes toward deceptively marketed medicine-show "miracle cures" and the "miracle worker" pseudo-doctors who peddled

[138] Britton, *The President's Daughter*.

them.[139] This experience as a journalist made Adams a self-proclaimed arbiter of hidden truths. He felt that the skill-set he possessed was especially suited to reinvigorate presidential biography. In the preface to *Incredible Era* Adams proclaimed that traditional "writers of autobiographies [sic]...portray, palliate, embellish, or conceal."[140] "The reporter," Hopkins Adams continued, "has nothing to conceal, and to embellish fact is a violation of code."[141] Despite his experience and sound intentions, however, Adams still failed to make meaningful connections between the rumors started by Chancellor and the life story of Harding.

Sensing that the suppression of the Chancellor documents about Warren Harding's race meant that the Wooster professor's writings had some validity, however, put race at the front of Adams' mind when he wrote *The Incredible Era*. Relying heavily on Chancellor's own *Warren Gamaliel Harding* monograph for his research about Harding's race because there was little else available, Adams had probably hoped to use the Wooster professor's allegations to answer the question of whether Warren Harding was black. Adams looked at legitimate Ohioan ancestry records of the Harding family and cross-checked them with Chancellor's work. All his research, however, failed to produce a definitive answer. Nonetheless, he felt that the race question needed to be discussed in his book, if not for its own sake then for the book-buying public that craved to know more about the president whose wife made it evident through her efforts at suppression that he and his family had serious secrets.

The narrative of how the Chancellor circulars stirred the final days of the 1920 election is discussed at length in *The Incredible Era*. Even though the election between Harding and James Cox was hardly tilted one way or the other as a result, the circular campaign was a moment of

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[139] Samuel Hopkins Adams, *The Great American Fraud: Articles on the Nostrum Evil and Quacks Reprinted From Collier's Weekly*, (Chicago, American Medical Association Press, 1907).
[140] Adams, *The Incredible Era,* p. ii.
[141] Adams, *The Incredible Era*, p. ii .

intense electoral drama and Adams exploited that drama for the sake of his biography. Adams, however, also applied his own spin to race controversy that would further entrench the idea that the race secret was a secret worth keeping by the Hardings. According to Adams, Warren Harding might very well have lacked racial "purity," but his race and the stigma he endured were not the causes of his successes and failures as president. In his own words, "if negro blood there were in his line, he honorably and courageously lived down the handicap."[142]

This perspective acknowledged the possibility that Harding was not white, appeasing curious audiences and popularizing the allure of the Harding race rumor considerably. It also made clear, however, that the twenty-ninth president had the necessary personal strength to overcome the problems that came with having mixed-race "negro blood" so he could enjoy the privileges of whiteness. As such, Adam's text left open the idea that the race and ancestry of the president were exceedingly important aspects of the man's character that shaped his short presidency. *Incredible Era* positioned Warren Harding as president who was associated with secrecy and corruption, but the flaws of his administration could not be explained by racial "impurity" because he had "lived down the handicap." Instead Adams reverted to the argument of the previous generation's biographers. "Not all of [Harding's] teammates," meaning his presidential advisors, "were as altruistically disposed" as the president, whose poor choices in life did not discount his "amiable nature and talent for friendliness."[143] Adam's argument that the importance of the race rumor was found in the president's courage to evade his potentially complex ancestry in favor of racial conformity, practically begged for revision when historians would revisit the Harding story decades later.

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[142] Adams, *The Incredible Era*, p. 282.
[143] Adams, *The Incredible Era*, p. 226, 441.

*The Incredible Era* was well received in its time. The book offered a reasonable balance between the patriotic "log-cabin" template biographies of Harding and the memoirs written by members of the presidential administration and the president's romantic paramours. Since Adams only considered the racial origins of Warren Harding's life and presidency, however, and not whether his life and presidency were actually as amoral as he perceived them to be, he helped to place Harding at the lower end of public esteem when it came to great presidents. No longer was the question whether Harding was an adored or a scorned president. *The Incredible Era* painted Harding as a president whose life was surrounded by mystery and graft, with a lifestyle that did not adhere to social norms. The question then came to be why he was that way. Almost thirty years after *The Incredible Era*'s publication, another author, with a perspective anchored in the racial compassion of the Civil Rights Era, revisited the Harding race question and significantly intensified the negative assessment of Warren Harding with a direct rebuttal to Adams assertion that the twenty-ninth president "lived down the handicap" of being suspected of mixed race status.

Francis Russell's *The Shadow of Blooming Grove*, published in 1968, was written just as the American Civil Rights Movement was in full swing, and the same year that the 1967 Supreme Court case *Loving v. Virginia* was being debated in the Supreme Court. Russell's book was therefore particularly interested in the issues surrounding Warren Harding's race. Although Russell's take on the Harding race rumor was a rebuttal to Samuel Hopkins Adams assertion in *The Incredible Era* that the twenty-ninth president "lived down the handicap" of suspected racial "impurity," Russell reinforced the idea that Warren Harding was a mediocre president with an abnormal marriage in *The Shadow of Blooming Grove*. By claiming that the stigma caused by a suspicion of mixed-race made Harding an anxious and depressed man, Russell was able to

explain the twenty-ninth president's supposed flaws. He failed to understand, however, that the Harding family's experience of adhering to the social norms of their time made them more akin to other American families than he was able to perceive. It is of no coincidence that *Loving v. Virginia*, which legalized interracial marriage while also buttressing the idea that heterosexual and monogamous marriage was natural, was decided the year before the publication of *The Shadow of Blooming Grove.* Russell's book had a similar subversive effect when it came to the memory of Harding as his amplification of the race issue that consumed the family effectively prevented readers from considering the possibility that the life of Warren Harding might also have been "natural."

Russell amplified the race controversy to unprecedented heights by positioning the rumor of blackness as a fundamental aspect of Harding's life, from boyhood to death. He did this by writing a not particularly subtle biography centered on a "shadow" metaphor that came to stand for the effects that a stigma of racial impurity must have had on a person trying to succeed in politics in Harding's time. According to Russell, the looming "shadow" of a suspicion of questionable race led Harding to become anxious and overcompensate in all of his personal and private affairs. This, in Russell's estimation, explained why Harding was prone to making so many of the supposedly poor life choices that damaged his reputation. One only needs to know the definition of the word "shadow" to comprehend the significance of the metaphor that form the title and thesis of Russell's biography of the twenty-ninth president. Harding, implied Russell, was constantly trying to outrun "a source of gloom or unhappiness...an imperfect or faint representation...a state of ignominy...phantom."[144]

Warren Harding, Russell believed, was a damaged man, incapable of being anything other than the corrupt president and amoral husband Samuel Hopkins Adams had made him out

[144] "shadow." *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2013.

to be decades earlier. In Russell's own words, "there was a flaw in this successful family, a shadow that the Hardings could not escape, a rumor that would not quite die down."[145] "The Hardings were all well aware of the legend of their mixed blood," he continued, and "its shadow would darken their lives and follow them to their graves."[146] Harding's "shadowed" personality metamorphosed throughout his adult life into what Russell called a "chrysalis of private self-doubt."[147] "For all his appearance of jovial good health," Russell continued, "Harding kept a hazardous balance between his outer and inner being."[148] *The Shadow of Blooming Grove* positioned this mental state as the reason that Harding tended to make morally questionable life choices. According to Russell, it also drove him to spend a brief period of time in the Battle Creek Sanitarium between 1889 and 1901 for what modern medical professionals would probably diagnose as Generalized Anxiety Disorder.[149] In this sense, Russell was using the rumors of Harding's race in a literary manner that could be described as "the poetics of melancholy," a phrase most recently used in academic discourse by the author of *Black: The History of a Color*, Michel Pastoureau.[150] While Pastoureau used those words to refer the use of blackness metaphors by eighteenth century writers like Goethe, they hold true and firm for Russell's text about Warren Harding written in the 1960s.

Russell also used a second, equally unsubtle metaphor in *The Shadow of Blooming Grove*. While the "shadow" represented the reason why Harding became a flawed and conflicted

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[145] Francis Russell, *The Shadow of Blooming Grove* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), p.26.
[146] Russell, *The Shadow of Blooming Grove*, p. 26.
[147] Russell, *The Shadow of Blooming Grove*, p. 113.
[148] Russell, *The Shadow of Blooming Grove*, p. 90.
[149] Between 1889 and 1901 Warren Harding stayed in the Battle Creek Sanitarium on five occasions for unknown periods of time. According to Francis Russell, the purpose of his visits was "to recover from fatigue, overstrain, and nervous illnesses." According to historians John R. Bumgarner and L.M. Deppisch, today's mental health professionals would have found that Harding suffered from Generalized Anxiety Disorder. See; John R. Bumgarner, *The Health of the Presidents: The 41 United States Presidents Through 1993 from a Physician's Point of View* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co, 1994), p. 189-191; L.M. Deppisch, "Homeopathic Medicine and Presidential Health: Homeopathic Influences upon Two Ohio Presidents," *Pharos* 60 (Fall 1997): p. 5-10. See, for the best description of Harding's time at the Battle Creek Sanitarium; Russell, *The Shadow of Blooming Grove*, p. 80.
[150] Michel Pastoureau, *Black: The History of a Color* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 165.

man, a "white landscape" represented the possibilities that were never realized because of the secret of his mixed-race in his past. When in *The Shadow of Blooming Grove* a political career first seems feasible to the young Harding, Russell wrote that "the white Columbus [Ohio] landscape...stretched before him still unknown, a blank sheet of paper on which the course of his political life was to be written."[151] He was implying that at points in his life Harding was faced with decisive choices of how he should live his life. The "shadow" hiding in his family's past that he could never tell anyone about, however, overwhelmed Harding and he tended to choose poorly, Russell claimed. "Politics was like chess," Russell continued with yet another analogy, "one did not change the color of one's pieces."[152] In this he meant that once Warren Harding had begun his career in electoral politics he no longer was able to confront the family secret that caused his anxiety.

All the pervasive race metaphors of *The Shadow of Blooming Grove* provided a way to understand how Warren Harding became an amoral man and unqualified president. In turn, Russell's book secured the notion that Harding was one of the most maladjusted men ever to inhabit the White House. The pervasive air of racial gloominess, however, was not all that made *The Shadow of Blooming Grove* the popular biography it became. Russell, an experienced and reputable academic who regularly contributed to the conservative American news and commentary magazine *National Review,* was the first historian to be granted access by the Harding Home and Museum to the twenty-ninth president's personal correspondence in its entirety. This correspondence included letters between Harding and at least two of the women with whom he had romantic relationships outside of his marriage. Reproductions of these letters were entirely redacted prior to the publication of *The Shadow of Blooming Grove* because a

[151] Russell, *The Shadow of Blooming Grove*, p. 132.
[152] Russell, *The Shadow of Blooming Grove*, p. 221.

Harding nephew successfully sued Russell for defamation.[153] This redaction, like the suppression of sensitive texts by Florence Harding, Harry Daugherty, and Gaston Means after the president's death, only further popularized the book. By preventing Warren Harding's personal correspondence from being reproduced, the Harding family members who took Russell to court essentially validated the sexual rumors and intensified them as examples of the ways in which the First Couple deviated from a lifestyle befitting the tenants of the White House. They also lent further legitimacy to the melancholic thesis of *The Shadow of Blooming Grove*.

Subsequent biographers and presidential historians followed Francis Russell's lead in claiming that the stigma of the race rumor helped generate the trajectory of Warren Harding's supposedly corrupt presidency and amoral personal life. They essentially accepted the argument that the stigma of a racial allegation helped to explain what they perceived to be presidential and personal missteps. In doing so, they failed to question seriously whether those flaws had any basis in reality or how Warren Harding's presidency stacked up against his predecessors and successors in the White House. Even though the firm hold of the "shadow" did eventually subside somewhat and new perspectives on Harding's life came to be taken into account, the question of why Harding was corrupt and amoral persisted while considerations about whether he actually was so remained largely in the sphere of wishful thinking. Historians who have explicitly tried to revise and revitalize the memory of Warren Harding have also fallen into this trap. Nearly every recent book or article on Harding begins not by talking about his life or presidency but by addressing his memory, as if the man's words and deeds deserve less consideration than discussions about his contemptible reputation. As a result, in popular

[153] "Francis Russell, RIP," *National Review*, April 21 1989.

presidential rankings, Harding's place in these informal grading systems stayed remained at the bottom for the rest of the twentieth century.[154]

**Conclusion: Race and President Harding**

By placing Warren Harding and the Harding family in the context of the construction of race and marriage in the twentieth century, we find that the man who became president and his family were ultimately emblematic of their time when it came to their experiences as people considered to be of mixed-race. Although the Chancellor-spread rumor was a brief and ineffective campaign smear against a single presidential candidate in the last week of the 1920 election, the rumor about Warren Harding grew because a mixed-race allegation in the first half of the twentieth century could engulf an entire family. Because federal and state laws, court precedents, and the changing social situation of the country made racial "impurity" an incredibly difficult condition of personhood to live with, Harding family members, like the family members of other persons suspected of mixed race status, made serious efforts to deny allegations of racial "impurity." In doing so, they unwittingly insisted that the First Couple unrealistically adhered to all the social norms of familial life, particularly marriage. This had severe implications. For Warren and Florence Harding it drew attention to the polyamorous aspects of their own marriage. When it eventually became apparent that the Warren Harding failed to live up the American norms of marriage, Florence Harding's plan to cover-up truths about the family backfired and the legacy of the twenty-ninth president came to be one of personal abnormality rather than political normalcy.

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[154] Warren Harding was considered the worst president in popular presidential rankings as early as 1948 when Arthur Schlesinger Sr. published the first such tally; Arthur M. Schlesinger, "Historians Rate the U.S. Presidents," *Life*, November 1 1948, p. 65-66, 68, 73-74. He remained the president considered to be worst or second worst in all published popular rankings until 2008 when James Buchanan and Franklin Pierce took his place. For a detailed graph of the results of seventeen presidential ranking surveys conducted between 1948 and 2001 see; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_rankings_of_Presidents_of_the_United_States.

The story of how perceptions about race shaped the legacy of American presidents neither begins nor ends with Warren Harding. Thomas Jefferson, Calvin Coolidge, Dwight Eisenhower, Abraham Lincoln, and Andrew Jackson have all been subject to race rumors and have all had their historical memories shaped in some way by the enduring contemplation that their genealogical tree may not hold what most Americans expect it to. By far the president laden with the most prolific discourse about this topic of race is Thomas Jefferson. Recent work by historians has focused on the history and historiography of Jefferson's relationships with his slaves and the evidence of his paternity of six children borne by him outside of his marriage with a slave woman named Sally Hemings. Historian Annette Gordon-Reed's work on this topic helped motivate the need for a study on the DNA of persons who could have been the descendants of Jefferson's children. [155] That study, which was conducted in 1998 by a team of American and European biochemists and geneticists, found an almost certain likelihood of Jefferson's paternity of at least one of Heming's children.[156] The Smithsonian Institution, along with the Thomas Jefferson Foundation headquartered at Monticello, confirmed their support of the findings of this study by jointly hosting a museum exhibition, *Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello: The Paradox of Liberty* in 2012.[157] Yet, the assumption that the third president was anything but a once-married widower with six children borne by his wife Martha Wayles Jefferson has been hard for Americans to shake. In her 1998 book *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* Gordon-Reed suggested that the enduring and one-sided

[155] Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* (University Press of Virginia, 1997), p. 217.
[156] Eugene A. Foster et. al., "Jefferson Fathered Slave's Last Child," *Nature* 396 (November 5 1998), p. 27-28, accessed November 25 2013, doi:10.1038/23835.
[157] *Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello: The Paradox of Liberty*, January 22 to October 14 2012, Smithsonian Institution.

understanding of Jefferson's relationships with his slaves "is evidence of the continuing grip that the doctrine of white supremacy has on American society."[158]

Gordon-Reed's findings about Jefferson provoke two interesting questions with which to conclude this study of Warren Harding and race. First, what would a DNA test on a descended family member of Harding actually reveal? And second, would a genetic determination that Warren Harding's ancestry was more complex than previously assumed change the way we remember his life and presidency?

To date, no descendant of Harding's parents, George T. Harding and Phoebe Dickerson, has come forward as a potential subject for DNA testing. Nor has any person related to Harding paramour Nan Britton's daughter, the twenty-ninth president's suspected biological child. Additionally, there is no active search for a willing participant being conducted by the Warren Harding Home, the Ohio Historical Society, or any other group. Whether there should be any extensive effort to find more about Warren Harding's genetic origins is debatable. While such a test would in all likelihood find traces of genetic material that could be identified as being passed on from a person who migrated to America from Africa at some point in the last five hundred years, that particular finding would pale in comparison to the greater realization that the structure of Harding's DNA is significant because of its similarities, rather than its differences, to that of other presidents.

We already know that Warren Harding has a strong similarity of DNA patterns with every other president because genetic markings are 99.9% percent similar across all members of the human species. However, if a DNA test of a Harding descendant found that Warren Harding was African American, the genetic connection between the twenty-ninth president and forty-

[158] Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, p. viii.

fourth, Barack Obama, would be even more than a 99.9% match. Because Harding was likely the great-great grandson of a nineteenth century immigrant who might be considered today to be Afro-Caribbean, and Obama is the son of a man from Kenya who first came to America in 1959, the DNA markings shared between the two men only would be so faint as to be almost imperceptible. Harding and Obama would have no substantially greater or lesser genetic similarity than any other two presidents except for the Adams', who were father and son, and the Roosevelt's, who were fifth cousins. Additionally, because intraracial "purity" in sex and marriage was not always considered to be the only "natural" means of human reproduction as it was during Warren Harding's time, it is unlikely that Harding and Obama are the only presidents to have the genetic markings of an ancestor who migrated from Africa to the Americas sometime in the last five hundred years. The likelihood of such a high biological similarity amongst presidents compels us to realize that "human beings' short history relates us all to one another," and "incessant human migration has made us all multiracial," to use the words of historian Nell Irvin Painter.[159]

A verification of Warren Harding's supposed African American ancestry would have no bearing on how others understand his racial identity. This is to say that such a finding will not make Harding the first black president. He will still be considered a white president because he almost always passed as such and lived his entire life as a man who conformed to the constructed notions of whiteness that existed during his time. However, while not conducive to changing his racial identity, a verification of Warren Harding's supposed African American ancestry will add substantial complexity to the ways his biography is understood. Specifically, a determination that Harding belonged to a family that would have been considered to be of mixed-race status in the

[159] Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2010), p. 396.

early twentieth century would compel historians to question whether his record as a president who advocated for civil rights was about more than just electoral politics.

There is no dispute that Warren Harding tried as president to combat the race dichotomy of his own time. Throughout his presidency he advocated for the economic and political equality of African Americans. He never promoted social equality for African Americans, however, because to do so would incur a great political cost by contradicting the "equal but separate" ruling set by the Supreme Court with *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896. Nonetheless, while in office Harding supported the reform of electoral laws in the Jim Crow South, the passage of a Congressional anti-lynching bill, and the appointment African Americans to high federal offices.[160] Although these efforts might seem *de riguer* if considered alongside the political standards of recent decades, in the 1920s they cut sharply from the positions of the previous presidential administration of Woodrow Wilson. Wilson openly cast the first Ku Klux Klan as an honorable "self-preservation" group full of "prudence" in his *A History of the American People*, and he "imposed full segregation in Washington and hounded from office considerable numbers of black federal employees," to use the words of historian Eric Foner.[161]

There is no denying that Harding's radically new civil rights advocacy was mostly about currying the favor of voters. Although African Americans had voted Republican as practically a solid bloc in every election since the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified in 1870, a realignment of

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[160] The anti-lynching bill supported by Harding, called the Dyer Bill after Congressman Leonidas Dyer who introduced it, passed in the House of Representatives on January 26 1922 but was defeated in the Senate. It called for a $10000 fine to be assessed to any county where a lynching took place. The U.S. Senate officially apologized for failing to pass the bill in 2005. See; "Senate Apologizes for Not Passing Anti-lynching Laws," *Associated Press*, June 13 2005. A notable federal appointment made by Harding was of Walter L. Cohen, an African American man named comptroller of customs at the Port of New Orleans.

[161] Woodrow Wilson, *A History of the American People, Volume 9* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1918, originally published 1901), p. 58-64; Eric Foner, "Expert Report of Eric Foner," *The Compelling Need for Diversity in Higher Education* (Court Deposition, University of Michigan, January 1999), http://www.vpcomm.umich.edu/admissions/legal/expert/foner.html, accessed December 12 2013.

the Fourth Party System was impending in the 1920s. It was becoming apparent that African Americans had to be actively courted in the twentieth century rather than presumptuously counted on in presidential elections as they were in the late nineteenth. Harding, as well as his Republican presidential successors Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover, therefore, made sure to be explicit about their party's commitment to the civil rights of African Americans. Some of Harding's radically new efforts to secure the civil rights of African Americans from the Oval Office, however, were more than just part of the political sea change of the times. The twenty-ninth president understood the plight of people not considered white in the early twentieth century.

The ways that people considered to be non-white were treated in the early twentieth century troubled Warren Harding personally because his own family endured serious hardships on account of the race rumor. Even George T. Harding, a Civil War veteran, established community doctor, and the father of the presumptive president-elect, was not immune to the stress caused by a mixed-race accusation in a nation that had constructed "pure" whiteness as condition of respectable personhood. On the eve of his son's election, he felt he had no other choice but to use force to obtain a notarized affidavit from a local probate judge confirming that he was white. If it is discovered that Warren Harding had the African American ancestry that William Chancellor accused him of then these hardships are substantially compounded as the Hardings did not just have to conform to meet the definition of whiteness, but they also had to deny their family's origins. In many cases, Americans suspected of belonging to a mixed-race family had to deny that they were related to their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings essentially delegitimizing their own family tree. If this is found to be the case with members of the Harding family there can be little doubt that the twenty-ninth president had more

than a cursory understanding of the emotions of people who suffered under the race dichotomy of the early twentieth century.

Revising the biography of Warren Harding as a president who took personal issue to civil rights inequalities will take substantial time and effort on the part of interested historians or it may never happen at all. While Harding was definitely not the worst president, he was a mediocre one who was unprepared for the burdens of the office and his presidency was cut short by his death two years and five months into his only term. Serious interest in the revision of his place in American history is therefore limited. For those intrepid enough to confront new perspectives on the twenty-ninth president and race, however, a solid place to start is by reviewing a speech he gave to an audience of both white and non-white Americans in Birmingham, Alabama in 1921 as part of that city's fiftieth anniversary of its Reconstruction era founding.[162]

Harding's Birmingham speech marked the first time a sitting president addressed a Southern audience of mixed race in the twentieth century and explicitly discussed race issues. The crowd of over 25000 was separated by a fence with whites on one side and non-whites on the other.[163] The speech received polarized reactions because it promoted the idea that apparent political and economic inequalities split along race lines would not be ignored by a government headed by a Republican president as they were by the previous Democratic one. Nonetheless, critics of all persuasions agreed that the president spoke with an emphasis that could not be dismissed. W.E.B DuBois said of the Birmingham speech, for example, that "the President brings the crisis. We may not dodge nor hesitate. We must all, black or white, Northerner or

[162] Warren G Harding "Address of the President of the United States at the Celebration of the Semicentennial of the Founding of the City of Birmingham" (Birmingham, Alabama, October 26 1921), archive.org., https://archive.org/details/addressofpreside00hard.
[163] David Keene, "A Second Look at Harding," *The Hill*, November 23 2009.

Southerner, stand in the light and speak plain words."[164] Similarly, the Democratic leaning local newspaper the *Birmingham Age-Herald* offered an opinion that the Harding speech was "not a matter for cheering but for study" and "[the president] spoke on the broad grounds of humanity."[165] Pat Harrison, a Democratic Senator from Mississippi, initially chastised the president's speech in a manner that carries with it some irony for us today. He said that if Harding's race opinions were realized "then that means that a black man can strive to become President of the United States."[166] Harrison also praised Harding's oratory, however, by saying, "the President is right that the race question is a national one and not confined to any one section."[167] Although he might not have had the perfect solutions, both liberals and conservatives, and both non-whites and whites agreed that Warren Harding was right to speak about race in Birmingham.

The inherent difficulty in deciphering Harding's Birmingham speech is in separating the words of Warren Harding the Republican politician from those of Warren Harding the man whose family endured rumors of mixed-race status. When Harding called for the death of the "lily-white" image of the Republican Party at Birmingham, and explained that white Republican supporters must not "inconsiderately wave aside [African Americans] who have hereto carried the party banner," for example, he was acting as a consummate politician hoping to mend the rift between two constituencies he was dependent on.[168] However, when Harding spoke of African American soldiers who served in Europe during World War I, he was reflecting on concerns particular to his family's own experiences with race relations in America. The life story of

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[164] W.E.B. DuBois, "President Harding and Social Equality," *The Crisis*, 23, 2, (December 1921), p. 53.
[165] *Birmingham Age-Herald*, as cited in "Harding's Birmingham Speech on Race Issue Stirs the Whole Country," *The Sunday Morning Star*, October 30 1921.
[166] "Praise and Assail Harding Negro Talk," *NY Times*, October 28 1921.
[167] "Praise and Assail Harding Negro Talk."
[168] President Warren G. Harding, *Address of the President of the United States at the Celebration of the Semicentennial of the Founding of the City of Birmingham, Alabama*, October 26 1921.

Harding's father, who served honorably in the Civil War alongside men of many backgrounds but was later placed under such a threat of the laws of the country he had fought for that he had no choice but to violently accost a local probate judge, compelled the president to speak with an understanding of the experiences of African American soldiers.[169] Said Harding to the crowd at Birmingham, "thousands of black men, serving their country just as patriotically as did the white men, were transported overseas and experienced the life of countries where their color aroused less of antagonism than it does here." "A high-grade colored soldier," Harding continued, found that Russian-Ukrainian allies were more welcoming than people in his own country and had even provided the soldier with "the first real conception of citizenship" that he had ever known. Experiences like these, the president concluded, convinced "many of [the returning African American soldiers] to aspire to go to Europe to live."

Warren Harding's personal experience with the racialism of the early twentieth century did not persuade him to dream of leaving America like the African American soldiers who found war-torn Europe more welcoming than their homeland. Nonetheless, he lacked satisfaction when it came to the nation's treatment of people not considered white. His family suffered because unreasonable laws and a segregated society imposed real consequences upon persons accused of being related to someone of mixed-race status. In this way, the president's family was like other American families who lacked compatibility with the impossible demands of the nation they lived in. Understanding this incompatibility on account of the race rumor, however, only partially provokes a revision of the life story of Warren Harding. We must also consider that maybe Harding was a special case when it came to persons accused of mixed-race status. Unlike those who could do little else but conform and kept their real selves closed to the world, Warren

[169] This included 5092 African American Ohioans who served in United States Colored Troop units, see; William Gladstone, *United States Colored Troops, 1863-1867* (Gettysburg: Thomas Publications, 1996), p. 120.

Harding used his presidential pulpit to be proactive about making America a better place to live for people who suffered under the hardening line of the racial dichotomy. At times, he harnessed his anxious energy related to the race rumor in a positive manner by supporting civil rights reform whenever he could. Even though he was not the first black president, he was one of the most empathetic presidents ever when it came to understanding how African Americans felt about the ways they were treated in their own country.

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## Appendix

Full Text of "Hardings [sic] Family Tree" by William Estabrook Chancellor, 1920

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**The Right of the American People to Know**

| | |
|---|---|
| Amos Harding (Black) West Indian Negro | Wife-Huldah Harding (colored) |
| Issue, George Tryon Harding (colored) | First Wife-Ann Roberts (colored) |
| Issue, Charles A. Harding (colored) | Wife- Mary Ann Crawford (pass for White) |
| Issue, George Tryon Harding | Second Wife-Phoebe Dickerson (White |

This marriage was objected to by the brother of Phoebe Dickerson for the reason that George Tryon Harding, the second (the father of Warren G. Harding) had Negro blood.

The above is verified by Elias Shaffer, 804 Holloway St., Akron, Ohio, who has known Mr. Harding for fifty years. He went to school with Dr. Geo. Tryon Harding, the second (the father of Warren G. Harding), knew his father Charles Harding and Charles Harding's two brothers who were uncles of George T. Harding, the second, and says that they had the color, features, and hair of negroes and were so considered and accepted in the community. Mr. Shaffer is seventy-three years of age, a member of the Grand Army Post at Marion, and a Republican in politics.

| | |
|---|---|
| Issue, Warren Gamaliel Harding (colored) | Wife-Florence Kling (White) |

This marriage was objected to by the father-in-law, Mr. Amos H. Kling, a prominent Republican and one of the wealthiest men in Marion, who spoke out publicly and openly denouncing this marriage said his daughter had disgraced herself and family by marrying a man with negro blood in his veins. This statement can be verified by a hundred people in Marion, Ohio.

Senator has not publicly or privately denied this statement. All denials have been made by unofficial announcements.

Authority: William E. Chancellor, Wooster University, Wooster, Ohio.

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