RESEARCH IN THE HISTORY OF ECONOMIC THOUGHT AND METHODOLOGY

Founding Editor: Warren J. Samuels (1933–2011)

Series Editors: Luca Fiorito, Scott Scheall, and Carlos Eduardo Suprinyak

Recent Volumes:

Volume 31A: Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology: A Research Annual; Jeff E. Biddle, Ross B. Emmett; 2013

Volume 31B: Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology: Documents Related to John Maynard Keynes, Institutionalism at Chicago & Frank H. Knight; Ross B. Emmett; 2013

Volume 32: Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology: A Research Annual; Luca Fiorito; 2014

Volume 33: Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology: A Research Annual; Luca Fiorito, Scott Scheall, Carlos Eduardo Suprinyak; 2015

Volume 34A: Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology: Including a Symposium on Austrian Economics in the Postwar Era; Luca Fiorito, Scott Scheall, Carlos Eduardo Suprinyak; 2016

Volume 34B: Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology: Including a Symposium on Albert O. Hirschman; Luca Fiorito, Scott Scheall, Carlos Eduardo Suprinyak; 2016

Volume 35A: Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology: Including a Symposium on the Historical Epistemology of Economics; Luca Fiorito, Scott Scheall, Carlos Eduardo Suprinyak; 2017

RESEARCH IN THE HISTORY OF ECONOMIC THOUGHT AND METHODOLOGY VOLUME 35B

RESEARCH IN THE HISTORY OF ECONOMIC THOUGHT AND METHODOLOGY: INCLUDING A SYMPOSIUM ON NEW DIRECTIONS IN SRAFFA SCHOLARSHIP

EDITED BY

LUCA FIORITO
University of Palermo, Palermo, Italy

SCOTT SCHEALL
Arizona State University Polytechnic Campus, Mesa, AZ, USA

CARLOS EDUARDO SUPRINYAK
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil

United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

ILLIBERAL AMERICA: RETHINKING THE PROGRESSIVE ERA IN THE AGE OF OBAMA AND TRUMP

Matthew Frye Jacobson

> The entire man is, so to speak, to be seen in the cradle of the child. The growth of nations presents something analogous to this: they all bear some marks of their origin; and the circumstances which accompanied their birth and contributed to their rise affect the whole term of their being. If we were able to go back to the elements of states, and to examine the oldest monuments of their history, I doubt not that we should discover the primal cause of the prejudices, the habits, the ruling passions, and, in short, of all that constitutes what is called the national character…
>
> – Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America, Vol. I*

> Where was the NRA on Trayvon Martin's right to stand his ground? What happened to their principled position? Let's be clear: the Trayvon Martins of the world never had that right because the "ground" was never considered theirs to stand on.
>
> – Robin D.G. Kelley, "*The U.S. v. Trayvon Martin*"

Thomas Leonard sets out to expose the Progressives' "crusade to dismantle laissez-faire, remaking American economic life with a newly created instrument of reform, the administrative state." The progressives' abandonment of "their classically liberal roots was one of the most striking changes of the late nineteenth century," he argues, going on to describe a wholly new fretwork of institutions, agencies, disciplines, and practices designed for the well-being of a national collective imagined in terms quite distinct from the free individual of classical liberalism (Leonard, 2016, p. 22). But his interpretation of the "illiberalism" of the Progressive Era plays against two distinct meanings of the word "liberal," and we would do well to parse these more carefully, especially in the

Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology: Including a Symposium on New Directions in Sraffa Scholarship, Volume 35B, 345–355

ISSN: 0743-4154/doi:10.1108/S0743-41542017000035B015

light of the book's compelling and noble final words on the dangers of repeating – and reliving – the Progressives' "false claims" out of an unawareness of history (Leonard, 2016, p. 191).

The first meaning has to do with classically liberal economics, and the Progressives' departures from it. Here Leonard is at his best, documenting the energetic dismantling of strict laissez-faire principles and the concomitant rise of both a cult of expertise and new institutions and agencies of the administrative state for the sake of a rationalized, "modern" governing logic in all matters economic. This was indeed a critical period in the history of US state building. But I am most concerned with the second set of implied meanings, where "liberal" and "illiberal" reference instead ideas about liberty, equality, and human value. The Progressives were "discontented with liberal individualism," Leonard (2016, p. 8) writes, and their thinking along these lines was of vast consequence when it came to the creation of new, scientifically derived structures of hierarchy and inequality. "Woodrow Wilson, when President of Princeton University, dismissed talk of the inalienable rights of the individual as 'nonsense'" (Leonard, 2016, p. 25). But along this axis, the framing of Leonard's argument artificially cordons off the Progressive era from all that came before and after, thus concealing many fundamentally enduring continuities in the timelines of US history that may be more important for us to mark than the discrete details of inequality during the Progressive era proper. *This* meaning of the word "illiberal" implies the disruption of an American liberalism that never fully existed.

Leonard acknowledges such continuities in a glancing discussion of political scientist Rogers Smith's concept of "ascriptive inequality," the political culture's bedrock presumption of Anglo-Saxon, male superiority "based on the inferiority ascribed to blacks, immigrants, women, and the unpropertied" (Leonard, 2016, pp. 78–79). The book is peppered with oblique references to a longer-standing "illiberalism." Elsewhere he notes, "The US Constitution expressly protected individual rights to life, liberty, and property. But not for all. The United States was also a slave republic" (Leonard, 2016, p. 82). Or again, "Hostility to immigrants, like race prejudice, was nothing new in America.... American nativism, like American racism and sexism, was not an occasional mild fever. It was a chronic and debilitating illness" (Leonard, 2016, p. 142). At the end of the day, however, Leonard is less interested in these continuities than in an interpretation of the Progressive era not only as a discrete period in and of itself, but as a period perhaps unique for its "braiding together of the admirable and the reprehensible" (Leonard, 2016, p. 189) in US political impulses. A catalog of progressive accomplishments includes things like trust-busting, worker compensation, food and drug regulation, and environmental conservation right alongside legislation that "made permanent the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882; and excluded from American shores, with the Immigration Act of 1917, a meticulously enumerated compendium of racially undesirable aliens" (Leonard, 2016, p. 45).

But even the metaphor of the "chronic and debilitating illness," I would argue, does not go nearly far enough in identifying the core, racialist presumptions that have characterized US political culture over time, including those first hundred years of US history leading up to the Progressive era. "[H]ereditarian thinking was new," Leonard wants to say, "or at least newly scientific in its presentation. The new discourses of eugenics and race science recast spiritual or moral failure as biological inferiority, making old prejudices newly respectable and lending scientific luster to the arguments of critics and defenders of American economic life" (Leonard, 2016, p. 124). And to be sure, the historical record of the Progressive era is rife with a brand of racism in "respectable" quarters that is not only frank, but bombastic and proud. "Black suffrage," economist John R. Commons said, "was not an expansion of democracy, but a corruption of it... 'One man, one vote,' Commons said, 'does not make Sambo equal to Socrates.'" "The progressive goal was to *improve* the electorate, not necessarily to expand it" (Leonard, 2016, p. 50). Likewise, Senator Albert Beveridge could glibly argue that the principle that just rule derives from the consent of the governed, "applies only to those who are capable of self-government" (Leonard, 2016, p. 52). In his tome, *The Races of Europe*, William Z. Ripley could worry that the incoming waves of East European Jewish immigrants were

> the product of "a great Polish swamp of miserable human beings," which, without immigration restriction, would drain itself into the United States. In 1908 he warned of a dual threat to American racial integrity. First was the usual race suicide indictment: inferior immigrants were outbreeding their Anglo-Saxon betters. But Ripley had landed on another hereditary threat: the immigrants were also interbreeding. The mixing of inferior races, he said, threatened to produce an atavistic European type, a kind of negroid throwback. The *New York Times* covered Ripley's alarming forecast under the headline, "Future Americans Will Be Swarthy." (Leonard, 2016, p. 72)

For his part, Richard T. Ely, among the founders of the American Economic Association, felt that the "absolutely unfit would plague society until society controlled their breeding." For Ely, writes Leonard (2016, p. 74), "the price of progress was eugenics."

My departure from Leonard has mostly to do with his treatment of immigration as purely an *economic* issue for the Progressives. From the period of rapid industrialization in the mid-nineteenth century onward, immigration debate in the United States has unfolded on two distinct planes of argument: an economic argument over whether or not "they" are a benefit to the nation (most famously and most often, over whether or not "they" are taking "our" jobs), and a civic argument over whether or not "they" are capable of responsible citizenship. These distinct lines of argument characterized both vernacular and legislative discourse in the run-up to Chinese Exclusion; they gave shape to the debates that produced the 1924 Immigration Act; they can be discerned in the spiked fevers over immigration that have shaped American discussion since Reagan's Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), Pete Wilson's Prop 187, and Donald Trump's "big beautiful wall." But Leonard tends to conflate

these two planes of discussion, and in doing so he makes one, sturdy Progressive compound out of one thing that was new to the period (namely, the interventionist nature of economic thought, and the rise of new agencies, institutions, and modes of "expertise" to carry out such interventionism) along with another thing that was not at all new (a hierarchical and highly exclusionary notion of the democratic polity). Even the assertion that "hereditarian thinking was new" in the Progressive era will not withstand scrutiny, as the Irish who washed ashore in the 1840s and after were immediately and increasingly described in hereditarian terms. The newly arrived Irishman was not only "brutish," "low-browed," and even "simian" in popular discourse (*Harper's Weekly* 1851; quoted in Jacobson, 1998, p. 48), but it was further argued that, "All the qualities which go to make a republican, in the true sense of the term, are wanting in the Irish nature" (*Atlantic Monthly* 1866; quoted in Jacobson, 1998, p. 48).

There are two distinct but intertwined threads worth pulling from the tapestry of prior US history for the sake of this analysis of Leonard's "illiberalism." The first thread to pull at and expose here is the fact that "individual rights" had *never* been at the core of the political culture, though we do tend to celebrate them as the nation's very genius. "[Adam] Smith died in 1790, too early in the British Industrial revolution to see his radical claims borne out," Leonard (2016, p. 82) writes.

> But he lived long enough to see George Washington inaugurated as the first US president, and Smith believed that America might well offer the most fertile soil for his system of natural liberty. Smith had cause for optimism. The United States in 1790 was a rare thing, a liberal republic.

But the record chafes at this particular usage of the word "liberal." The "we the people" of the founding documents bestowed full rights on white, male property-holders *as a group*. Africans were enslaved as a group, and they were eventually emancipated as a group. Later they were Black Coded and Jim Crowed as a group. Women were initially disenfranchized and later enfranchized as a group. Unpropertied males were ultimately enfranchized as a group. Indians were dispossessed or removed as a group. Mexicans were annexed as a group (as later on were Hawaiians and Puerto Ricans), and these peoples often had their rights curtailed on a group basis, as well. The Chinese were excluded as a group. All Asians were eventually barred as a group; and, as Leonard describes, East European immigrants were restricted according to nationality (racial) groups, too. Native Americans were admitted to citizenship as a group; and later, long after the Progressive era, Japanese immigrants and their children were interned as a group, Chinese immigrants were permitted naturalization as a group, and African Americans achieved long-promised citizenship rights as a group. In short, beneath a fairly thin veneer of "individual rights" – read: "liberalism" – the nation's political culture has from the very beginning been deeply structured according to a logic of group rights, from which the Progressive era's "illiberalism" was no departure.

The second, closely related thread, has more explicitly to do with race. In Adam Smith's "liberal republic" of 1790, the first Congress sat down to determine who would be eligible for naturalization in the newly established nation. The critical phrase of that first Naturalization Act was "free white persons," as in:

> ...all free white persons who, have, or shall migrate into the United States, and shall give satisfactory proof, before a magistrate, by oath, that they intend to reside therein, and shall take an oath of allegiance, and shall have resided in the United States for one whole year, shall be entitled to the rights of citizenship. (*Annals of Congress 1789-1856*, p. 184)

One of the striking aspects to this decision on the founding generation's part is that they apparently settled upon the prescription of "free white persons" with no hesitation or discussion whatsoever. So natural was the relationship of whiteness to citizenship that in their debate the Congress did not pause over the racial requirement at all (though they did debate at some length allowances or restrictions for Catholics, Jews, nobles, aristocrats, monarchists, criminals, and other potentially problematic sorts from other lands). In general the first legislators saw the law as too inclusive, not too exclusive; and nowhere did they pause to question the limitation of naturalized citizenship to "white persons" (*Annals of Congress 1789-1856*, 184–190, 555–558).

The reasons for this go to the heart of "liberalism" in the young republic, and might be delineated along both practical and philosophical lines. The practicalities for the founders concerned the day-to-day challenges and dangers of settler colonialism: generated within a context of encounter, political identity was rendered *racial* identity at least implicitly in the earliest documents establishing a European political order in the New World. The colonial charters routinely evoke the perils posed by "savages" at the boundaries of European settlement. Although the word "white" did not appear in the charters themselves, over time it was written into an immense body of statutory law in the colonies, delineating who could marry whom, who could participate in the militia, who could vote or hold office, and in laws governing contracts, indenture, and enslavement. As Higginbotham (1978, 1996) has argued, in practice the idea of citizenship had become thoroughly entwined with the idea of "whiteness" (and maleness) because what a citizen really was, at bottom, was someone who could help put down a slave rebellion or fight in Indian wars. A political conception like "domestic tranquility," then, was a thoroughly racialized conception from the beginning, as was the idea of the normative citizen.

In addition to such practical concerns of governance in the new republic, whiteness was tacitly but irretrievably written into the Enlightenment's philosophical conceptions of rationality, equality, and human perfectibility, and so into the very fabric of republican political thought as well. In altering the lines of monarchical authority from the Crown to "the people," the experiment in

self-governance heightened the premium on a polity that was virtuous, disciplined, self-sacrificing, moral, productive, far-seeing, and wise – traits that were all racially inscribed in eighteenth-century Euro-American thought (Takaki, 1979, esp. 3–15; Ringer, 1983). With its abolition of monarchic, top-down authority and power, the new democratic order would require of its participants a remarkable degree of *self-possession* – a condition already literally denied to Africans in slavery and figuratively to all "nonwhite" or "heathen" peoples in prevailing Enlightenment conceptions of human capacity. In the political thinking of the period, according to Gordon Wood, a republic was so fragile precisely because it required an exacting moral character in the people. With its emphasis upon community and self-sacrifice, with its reasoned suppression of "private desires" for the sake of the "public interest," republican government placed "an enormous burden" on individual members and "demanded far more of... citizens than monarchies did of their subjects." (Wood, 1969, 1991; pp. 104-105). (This at a time when the definition of the word "Negro" in a Philadelphia-produced encyclopedia included the following catalog of traits: "idleness, treachery, revenge, cruelty, impudence, stealing, lying, profanity, debauchery, nastiness and intemperance" [White, 1991, p. 71].)

It is not too much to say that the 1790 Naturalization Act is among the most portentous pieces of legislation in US history. It is portentous, literally, for what it portended in ensuing years: its legacies include the arrival of the millions of Famine Irish and migrants from Italy, Russia, Poland, or the Balkans later on – groups who were neither foreseen nor intended (nor, we can guess, welcome) in the framers' worldview, but who were able to enter the polity under the broad definition of "white persons." Its legacies also include Chinese Exclusion and Japanese internment, both policies perpetrated against pariah groups whose status as "aliens ineligible to citizenship" by the terms of 1790 had left them uniquely vulnerable in this political culture.

But in the present context, the 1790 law is perhaps even more portentous in the sense that it is *indicative* – it tells us much that we need to know about the nature of race and democracy in North America. Over the course of the past several generations it has become patent to many Americans that the logics of racism and of true democracy are in conflict, the one tending toward hierarchy or exclusion and the other toward egalitarianism and inclusivity. We learn in grade school that racism is a blot. But the Naturalization Law of 1790 tells a different story: racism, for the founders, did not *contradict* the democratic experiment, but *protected* it. Racism for them was not a stain on democracy, but was its guarantor – it was the unforgiving exclusion of the putatively "unvirtuous" or "irrational" based on race that would ensure success for the fragile experiment in self-government. According to the logic of 1790, racism and democracy were mutually constitutive; they were like one of those figure-and-ground puzzles that appear to be two faces in profile at one glance and a sculptural vase at the next. They do not contradict, but fully form one another.

Where democracy denoted "self-government," it was *race* that defined "fitness" for it.

This is the "illiberalism" that Leonard attributes to the Progressives, as he delineates the social (as opposed to the economic) aspects of their rejection of classical liberalism. And there is much to work with here, to be sure. The racial logic of "fitness for self-government" defined the unfreedom suffered by recently emancipated African Americans in the states of the former confederacy; it structured the nature of imperial rule in the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, just as it tempered debates over immigration from the non-Anglo-Saxon regions of the globe, whether Europe, Asia, or the Americas; it gave shape to the range of Progressive era social engineering projects that went by the name of eugenics. "Other races lacked the founding fathers' capacity for democratic government," Leonard (2016, p. 127) writes, "which was a uniquely Anglo-Saxon inheritance. It was a deeply significant fact, [Woodrow] Wilson declared, that democracy had taken root only in the United States and a few other places 'begotten of the English race.' ... Race determined whether democracy succeeded or failed."

Pointing up the historical continuities linking 1790 to 1890, the founders' inegalitarian presumptions to the Progressives', does not necessarily disturb the surface description of illiberalism in Thomas Leonard's Progressive era, but it does alter its mechanics. While there is nothing in the descriptions or characterizations of Leonard's Progressive Era that I would find fault with, this longer history does behoove us, I believe, to think more closely about the nature of classical liberalism and about the Progressives' supposed departures from it. Along one axis, this was surely a period of immense energy and innovation when it came to the realms and the practices of governance; and Leonard is right to suggest that the contours and scope of the administrative state that Progressives bequeathed to us is much closer to our own than the state that prior generations had handed down to them. But along another axis – the axis of democratic citizenship, responsibility, and "fitness" – they were hewing very tightly to deep tradition indeed.

It is in the spirit of Leonard's own closing remarks that I offer this counter-interpretation of race in US political culture. "Progressivism reconstructed American liberalism," Leonard (2016, 191) writes in his closing paragraph, "by dismantling the free market of classical liberalism and erecting in its place the welfare state of modern liberalism. The new liberalism discarded economic liberties as archaic impediments to necessary improvements to society's health, welfare, and morals...." So far so good. But he goes on to add that Progressives

> assaulted political and civil liberties... trampling on individual rights to person, to free movement, to free expression, to marriage and to reproduction. The progressives denied millions these basic freedoms, on grounds that their inferiority threatened America's economic and hereditary security. They were wrong on both counts. That did not stop them, nor has it stopped those who, unaware of the history, repeat the same false claims today.

The "today" of Leonard's closing line begins to hint at what is at stake in how we choose to articulate the continuities or disjunctions in our history. The stakes, in fact, have never been higher than they are in 2017, as the so-called "alt-right," in the person of Stephen Bannon, sets up shop a few feet down the hall from the Oval Office. Bannon's *Breitbart News* has unabashedly trafficked in many ideas that the likes of eugenicists John R. Commons, Edward A. Ross, and Richard T. Ely would have been entirely at home with, and we do ourselves no favors in seeing such intellectual fashions as episodic or as oddities in our history rather than as the darker warp and woof of a "democratic" political culture born of settler colonialism – the "marks" of our nation's birth that Tocqueville urged us to keep watch for. Richard Spencer, whom *Breitbart* described as a leading "intellectual" of the alt-right, wrote, "In the popular imagination, the word 'eugenics' conjures up images of death panels, concentration camps, and piles of bodies." But "the 'totalitarian' connection to eugenics has never held much water. For instance, the eugenics programs in Nazi Germany were, historically speaking, quite unremarkable: They were begun during the Weimar Republic and were no more advanced than those of Sweden or the state of California" (Bari Weiss, "Steve Bannon's Heart Doesn't Matter, His Actions Do," *Tablet*, November 17, 2016. http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/218219/steve-bannon-alt-right [accessed November 29, 2016]). This from the man who said, "We willed Donald Trump into office, we made this dream our reality!" (Sarah Posner, "Radically Mainstream: Why the Alt-Right Is Celebrating Trump's Win," *Rolling Stone*, November 28, 2016. http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/features/why-the-alt-right-is-celebrating-trumps-win-w452493 [accessed November 29, 2016]).

While many journalists and scholars understandably struggle to assure that Donald Trump's affinity with white nationalists like Bannon and Spencer does not become "normalized," an equally pressing task might be to reconsider the relationship between the "norms" and the "extremes" in US political culture in the first place – between the entwined histories of democracy and racism – and to assure that we do not *denaturalize* by collective delusion the core principles of racism that have deeply structured our political history. Teddy Roosevelt may have been articulating a common Progressive era outlook when, speaking of the peoples in the new US possessions in the Caribbean and Pacific, he testily swatted down the notion "that any group of pirates and head-hunters" could be transformed "into a dark-hued New England town meeting" (Dyer, 1980, p. 140).[1] But one is hard-pressed to find a moment along the timelines of US history where some version of this idea was not in operation – from the messianic white supremacism of the Colonial Charters; to the institution of slavery; to the 1790 Naturalization Act; to dispossession and Indian Removal; to debates over monogenesis and polygenesis as a basis for understanding slaves' humanity; to the conquests and annexations that took possession of various lands even while holding their populations at arms length; to the crushing of Reconstruction and the reestablishment of black unfreedom under the name of

Jim Crow; to Chinese Exclusion; to the eugenics movement and immigration restriction; to the white terror of lynching, and the White Citizens' Councils and the white backlash of the modern Civil Rights era; to the racial crisis of criminal justice and policing; to the phenomenon of birtherism; to – finally – Donald Trump's rise on a wave of white entitlement and resentment. Each step along the way has witnessed some rehearsal of the argument (whether cast as eugenic "science" or not) that democratic governance is only for the few, not the many, and that race holds the key to proper patterns of inclusion and exclusion, just as it does to a primacy of white rights based upon "fitness for self-government." We neglect this continuity at our own peril.

The "today" of Leonard's (2016, 191) "those who, unaware of the history, repeat the same false claims today" probably begins with the Obama-era backlash against the very idea of a black president. The whiteness of the normative "American," written so deeply into the nation's political culture from the founding, was nowhere more forcefully inscribed than in the normative figure of the president. It has been our great fortune that the founding documents were drawn up in universalist language – phrases like "all men are created equal" lent a rhetorical foothold to later comers like Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and Martin Luther King, Jr., even if the three-fifths clause, the 1790 Naturalization Act, or George Washington's efforts to recover his "absconded" slave, Oney Judge, left no doubt as to what the framers actually intended. This was not simply a matter of slavery, but of race more generally. Which is why the rights of even *free* blacks were severely curtailed in most regions even before Jim Crow; it is also why white "democrats" could comfortably embrace Indian Removal, Manifest Destiny, Chinese Exclusion, or the abrogation of "inalienable rights" in any number of places both at home and abroad. This is also partly why Reconstruction governments met with such a storm of white terror in the 1870s, and it is probably why the *crushed* experiment of Reconstruction is often misremembered as a "failed" experiment. The most extreme anti-Obama backlash, in fact, resembles nothing in US history quite so much as it resembles the white response to "black rule" in the 1870s.

But the "today" of Leonard's "repeat the same false claims today" has also come to include the 2016 election and the rise of Donald Trump, though Leonard finished the book well before the election results were known, and probably before the viability of the Trump candidacy was even surmized. It is not just that Trump and his allies on the alt-right are prone to a frank language of eugenics and racial hierarchy that was perhaps more unguarded in the Progressive era (though they are – Trump has attributed his success in life to "good genes"; and according to a former colleague, Steve Bannon speaks quite openly of "genetic superiority" and has mused on the desirability "of limiting the vote to property owners" (Laurel Raymond, "Steve Bannon's disturbing views on 'genetic superiority' are shared by Trump," *Slate*, November 28, 2016. https://thinkprogress.org/steve-bannons-disturbing-views-on-genetic-superiority-are-shared-by-trump-243d73866e2d#.mviwiewuk [accessed November 28, 2016]).

One might also make a case that the "democratic" impulse expressed in Trumpism depended upon the foil of elite expertise (or expert elitism) that dates from roughly the Progressive era. But in riding his wave of red-state whiteness all the way to the White House, Trump was also both embracing and exploiting a brand of "illiberalism" that dated back to that period and beyond – not only the remarkably long-lived and robust logic espoused by John R. Commons or Edward A. Ross, as Leonard has depicted. He was also exploiting the even *longer*-lived, *more* robust white supremacist logic of settler colonialism as articulated in 1790. The *back* of "I'm mad as hell and I want my country *back*" does raise a question: back from *who*? But you know who. And the normative whiteness of American political subjectivity is so powerful that Trump's appeals to the white working class are not even counted in most quarters as "identity politics."

This brand of illiberalism runs far deeper than bigotry. "It wasn't the whiteness of the Tea Party that I found most striking," writes historian Lepore (2011, p. 95). "It was the whiteness of their Revolution..., [the] fantasy of an America before race, *without* race. There were very few black people in the Tea Party, but there were no black people at all in the Tea Party's eighteenth century... There were only the Founding Fathers with their white wigs, wearing their three-cornered hats, in their Christian nation, revolting against taxes, and defending their right to bear arms." The racism that characterized American political discourse in the Obama years was not generally a language of outright white supremacy, though there was some of that. More profoundly and more pervasively, it was a language of white *primacy* – that preconscious but powerful sense of white normalcy and entitlement (and hence, now, of displacement) that is highlighted in the observation, "when you're accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression." On the far right, Lepore (2011, p. 137) later concluded, "it's not the past that's a foreign country. It's the present."[2]

If historiography is not merely an intellectual calling but also a civic one, as the closing words of *Illiberal Reformers* suggest, then we need something more, something deeper than a disjointed, episodic, anecdotal, or artificially segmented accounting of racialist thought and ideology in US political culture in order fully to reckon with our "chronic and debilitating illness." Thomas Leonard has given us an excellent analysis of the Progressive era proper, and in particular of the relationship between Progressive thought and classical liberalism in the economic realm. But as for the civic realm, in the face of the persistent and now seemingly ascendant racism of the twenty-first century, this is not enough.

NOTES

1. This is not to suggest that the egalitarian impulse in US political culture was entirely lacking. See for example Kelly (2003) and Kurashige (2016).
2. Also see Hochschild (2016) and Parker and Barreto (2013, esp. 153–217).

REFERENCES

Dyer, T. (1980). *Theodore Roosevelt and the idea of race*. Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press.

Higginbotham, L. A. Jr. (1978). *In the matter of color: Race and the American legal process: The colonial period*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Higginbotham, L. A. Jr. (1996). *Shades of freedom: Racial politics and the presumptions of the American legal process*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Hochschild, A. (2016). *Strangers in their own land: Anger and mourning on the American right*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Jacobson, M. F. (1998). *Whiteness of a different color: European immigrants and the alchemy of race*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kelley, R. D. G. (2003). *Freedom dreams: The Black radical imagination*. Boston, MA: Beacon.

Kurashige, L. (2016). *Two faces of exclusion: The untold history of anti-Asian racism in the United States*. Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press.

Leonard, T. C. (2016). *Illiberal reformers: Race, eugenics, and economics in the progressive era*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lepore, J. (2011). *The Whites of their eyes: The tea party's revolution and the battle over American history*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Parker, C., & Barreto, M. (2013). *Change they can't believe in: The tea party and reactionary politics in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Ringer, B. (1983). *We the people and others: Duality and America's treatment of racial minorities*. New York, NY: Tavistock.

Takaki, R. (1979). *Iron cages: Race and culture in nineteenth century America*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

White, S. (1991). *Somewhat more independent: The end of slavery in New York City, 1770–1810*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Wood, G. S. (1969). *The creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787*. New York, NY: Norton.

Wood, G. S. (1991). *The radicalism of the American revolution*. New York, NY: Vintage.