INTRODUCTION:

THE MISMEASURE OF CRIME

This book tells an unsettling coming-of-age story. It is a biography of the idea of black criminality in the making of modern urban America. The link between race and crime is as enduring and influential in the twenty-first century as it has been in the past. Violent crime rates in the nation's biggest cities are generally understood as a reflection of the presence and behavior of the black men, women, and children who live there. The U.S. prison population is larger than at any time in the history of the penitentiary anywhere in the world. Nearly half of the more than two million Americans behind bars are African Americans, and an unprecedented number of black men will likely go to prison during the course of their lives. These grim statistics are well known and frequently cited by white and black Americans; indeed for many they define black humanity.\(^1\) In all manner of conversations about race—from debates about parenting to education to urban life—black crime statistics are ubiquitous.\(^2\) By the same token, white crime statistics are virtually invisible, except when used to dramatize the excessive criminality of African Americans. Although the statistical language of black criminality often means different things to different people, it is the glue that binds race to crime today as in the past.\(^3\)

How was the statistical link between blackness and criminality initially forged?\(^4\) Who were the central actors?\(^5\) By what means did black and white social scientists, social reformers, journalists, antiracist activists, law enforcement officials, and politicians construct, contest, and corroborate their claims regarding black criminality? How did they use crime among blacks to articulate their vision of race relations in modern urban America: what it was, what it is, and what it should be?\(^6\) How did they incorporate others’ ideas about race into their own suggestions about and solutions to the “Negro Problem”? How did they
produce, translate, and disseminate racial knowledge about crime to others? To put it another way, between 1890 and 1940, how and why did racial crime statistics become what Ted Porter calls a "strategy of communication"—a subject of dialogue and debate—about blacks’ fitness for modern life? Why did black criminality outpace, at times, many competitors—such as body odor, brain size, disease, and intelligence—in the national marketplace of ideas about, and “scientific” proofs of, black inferiority?8

In 1928 Thorsten Sellin, one of the nation’s most respected white sociologists, argued that African Americans were unfairly stigmatized by their criminality. His article, “The Negro Criminal: A Statistical Note,” captured the moment when nearly four decades of statistical research on black criminality began to be called into question.9 In the aftermath of wide-scale racial violence during the Great Migration of black southerners to the urban North, African American researchers in the 1920s published a flurry of new statistical reports of racism among police officers, prosecutors, and court and prison officials. Convinced by the weight of evidence presented by these “New Negro” crime experts and crime fighters—the second generation of academically trained black sociologists and social workers—Sellin brought their work to the attention of his white academic peers.10 Speaking as a representative of the white majority in a Jim Crow nation, he exposed the “unreliability” of racial crime statistics and the deeply troubling ways in which blackness and criminality shaped racial identity and racial oppression in modern America:

We are prone to judge ourselves by our best traits and strangers by their worst. In the case of the Negro, stranger in our midst, all beliefs prejudicial to him aid in intensifying the feeling of racial antipathy engendered by his color and his social status. The colored criminal does not as a rule enjoy the racial anonymity which cloaks the offenses of individuals of the white race. The press is almost certain to brand him, and the more revolting his crime proves to be the more likely it is that his race will be advertised. In setting the hall-mark of his color upon him, his individuality is in a sense submerged, and instead of a mere thief, robber, or murderer, he becomes a representative of his race, which in its turn is made to suffer for his sins.11

Sellin’s “we,” linked to the notion of the Negro as a “stranger in our midst,” marked not only his whiteness but also and more importantly, his
position within a dominant racialized community with the power to define those outside it. That same power, Sellin implied, could be used to break with the past—to change the future of race relations—because crime itself was not the core issue. Rather, the problem was racial criminalization: the stigmatization of crime as "black" and the masking of crime among whites as individual failure. The practice of linking crime to blacks, as a racial group, but not whites, he concluded, reinforced and reproduced racial inequality.

The issue here was not whether crime was real. Instead, what struck Sellin as the key variable to expose and contextualize was the ideological currency of black criminality. Since the 1890s influential black crime experts such as W. E. B. Du Bois, a pioneering social scientist, and Ida B. Wells, an internationally-known antilynching activist, labored tirelessly to deracialize black criminality. Although their early efforts to convince white academic and activist peers failed repeatedly, Sellin owed a great debt to their struggle, and ultimately their vision of racial justice. Their vision of fairness and equality included a society in which innocent law-abiding blacks would not suffer the sins of individual black failures. They imagined African Americans within what sociologist Orlando Patterson calls the "broader moral community" of the United States.\(^\text{12}\) Black scholars and activists pursued something akin to color-blind criminal justice by arguing that equal treatment, was the first step toward disentangling race and crime, destroying a pillar of racism, and creating a society in which blacks, like their white immigrant counterparts, were included within, as Du Bois wrote, the "pale of nineteenth-century Humanity."\(^\text{13}\) They may not have set the terms of the initial discourse, but they most certainly altered it over time in unanticipated ways. Thus for Sellin and for the many black experts marginalized within the academy (but cited in his notes), black criminality had become the most significant and durable signifier of black inferiority in white people's minds since the dawn of Jim Crow. During the 1930s Sellin would leverage his influence alongside the persistent efforts of black scholars and activists to break the legacy of racial criminalization, to disentangle race from crime.\(^\text{14}\)

The Condemnation of Blackness reconstructs the key moments, beginning one generation after slavery, when new sources of statistical data were joined to ongoing debates about the future place of African Americans in modern urban America. With the publication of the 1890 census, prison statistics for the first time became the basis of a national discussion about blacks as a distinct and dangerous criminal population. In the
wake of the Civil War and Reconstruction, when the culture and politics of white supremacy in the South and across the nation were being reconstituted, African American freedom fueled far-reaching anxieties among many white Americans.\textsuperscript{15} The census marked twenty-five years of freedom and was, consequently, a much-anticipated data source for assessing blacks’ status in a post-slavery era.

New statistical and racial identities forged out of raw census data showed that African Americans, as 12 percent of the population, made up 30 percent of the nation’s prison population. Although specially designed race-conscious laws, discriminatory punishments, and new forms of everyday racial surveillance had been institutionalized by the 1890s as a way to suppress black freedom, white social scientists presented the new crime data as objective, color-blind, and incontrovertible. Neither the dark color of southern chain gangs nor the pale hue of northern police mattered to the truth of black crime statistics.

From this moment forward, notions about blacks as criminals materialized in national debates about the fundamental racial and cultural differences between African Americans and native-born whites and European immigrants. These debates also informed questions about appropriate levels of African American access to the social and economic infrastructure of the nation. Calls for greater African American access to public education, for example, were challenged by statistical arguments that education turned black people into criminals.\textsuperscript{16} Still, to friend and foe alike, black criminality offered both a discursive and a practical solution to healing the deep sectional divisions of a war-torn nation. For white Americans of every ideological stripe—from radical southern racists to northern progressives—African American criminality became one of the most widely accepted bases for justifying prejudicial thinking, discriminatory treatment, and/or acceptance of racial violence as an instrument of public safety.

Tracing the emergence and evolution of the statistical discourse on black criminality sheds new light on the urban North as a crucial site for the production of modern ideas about race, crime, and punishment. On the one hand, the dominant historical narratives about black criminality before the 1960s have been told through southern criminal justice practices and framed as premodern. Racist southern politicians, vigilante criminal justice officials, and body-parts-collecting lynch mobs during the long Jim Crow era have formed the core subject matter of these backward-looking studies.\textsuperscript{17} On the other hand, the prevailing history of
the northern criminal justice system, starting in the nineteenth century, has been a modernizing narrative, one in which the development of everything from prisons to policing to juvenile justice to probation and parole has turned almost exclusively on the experiences of native-born whites and European immigrants. In this literature, it is as if black criminality had not been shaped by modern ideas or modern agencies, or that very little happening in the urban North pertained to black experiences until the post-World War II era. Much historical and sociological scholarship proceeds from this vantage point, giving the impression that the history of racial criminalization began and ended in the Jim Crow South. Then in the late 1960s, according to most accounts, a latent subculture of violence erupted and spread across the nation’s northern inner cities. But the statistical discourse on black criminality from the 1890s forward was a modern invention that encapsulated northern and southern ideas about race and crime. Many postbellum race-relations writers innovatively pointed out that the highest rates of black criminality could be found in the cosmopolitan, freedom-loving urban North. Since then, such “indisputable” statistical evidence from places like Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia has been at the heart of modern ideas about race and crime.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, in a rapidly industrializing, urbanizing, and demographically shifting America, blackness was refashioned through crime statistics. It became a more stable racial category in opposition to whiteness through racial criminalization. Consequently, white criminality gradually lost its fearsomeness. This book asks, how did European immigrants—the Irish and the Italians and the Polish, for example—gradually shed their criminal identities while blacks did not? In other words, how did criminality go from plural to singular?

By examining both immigrant and black crime discourses in the urban North as they were mutually constituted by new statistical data and made meaningful to a Jim Crow nation, we can more easily discern distinct (and novel) patterns of talking about race and crime. Rather than following the lead of social historians of working-class immigrant and black communities who link ethnic culture to distinct patterns of criminal behavior, this book explores the genealogy of distinct patterns of racial crime discourses. In the period under investigation, crime, despite its variability in form and expression across groups, was a ubiquitous problem across the nation—so much a problem in the urban North that it was not clear that blackness would eventually become its sole signifier.
Even the wellspring of violent crime, as historian and criminologist Jeffrey S. Adler found in his recent definitive study of homicide in Progressive era Chicago, flowed from the same broader cultural, social, economic, and demographic shifts and tensions affecting all non-white urban people. “Contrary to the impressions of most observers,” he writes, “African American violence was similar to white violence. It resembled white homicide in the form it took; and African-American violence paralleled white violence in how that form changed.”22 From the 1890s through the 1930s, from the Progressive era through Prohibition, African Americans had no monopoly on social banditry, crimes of resistance, or underground entrepreneurship; the “weapons of the weak” and “lower-class oppositional culture” extended far and wide in many directions.23 The Condemnation of Blackness demonstrates and explains how ideas of racial inferiority and crime became fastened to African Americans by contrast to ideas of class and crime that shaped views of European immigrants and working-class whites.24

Whiteness scholars have shown how crucial the attributes of skin color, European ancestry, and the gradual adoption of anti-black racism were to immigrant assimilation “into the singular ‘white race.’”25 Such benefits, Thomas Guglielmo found recently, even secured the whiteness of Chicago’s “Sicilian Gunmen” because their criminality “never positioned them as non-white in any sustained or systematic way.”26 Building on whiteness and critical race scholarship, I explore how postbellum southern black out-migration to the urban North—to Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York in particular—fueled an invidious black migration narrative framed by crime statistics and reshaped broader racial discourses on immigration and urbanization during Progressive era. Evoking the specter of black rapists and murderers moving north one step ahead of lynching mobs, innovative racial demographers such as Frederick L. Hoffman explicitly sanitized and normalized the criminality of northern white working and immigrant classes. Consequently, the black southern migrant—the “Negro, stranger in our midst”—was marked as an exceptionally dangerous newcomer.

One of the strongest claims this book makes is that statistical comparisons between the Foreign-born and the Negro were foundational to the emergence of distinctive modern discourses on race and crime. For all the ways in which poor Irish immigrants of the mid-nineteenth century were labeled members of the dangerous classes, criminalized by Anglo-Saxon police, and over-incarcerated in the nation’s failing prisons, Progres-
sive era social scientists used statistics and sociology to create a pathway for their redemption and rehabilitation. A generation before the Chicago School of Sociology systematically destroyed the immigrant house of pathology built by social Darwinists and eugenicists, Progressive era social scientists were innovating environmental theories of crime and delinquency while using crime statistics to demonstrate the assimilability of the Irish, the Italian, and the Jew by explicit contrast to the Negro. White progressives often discounted crime statistics or disregarded them altogether in favor of humanizing European immigrants, as in much of Jane Addams's writings. In one of the first academic textbooks on crime, Charles R. Henderson, a pioneering University of Chicago social scientist, declared that “the evil [of immigrant crime] is not so great as statistics carelessly interpreted might prove.” He explained that age and sex ratios—too many young males—skewed the data. But where the “Negro factor” is concerned, Henderson continued, “racial inheritance, physical and mental inferiority, barbarian and slave ancestry and culture,” were among the “most serious factors in crime statistics.”

Similar comparisons would echo for the rest of the twentieth century. The Progressive era was indeed the founding moment for the emergence of an enduring statistical discourse of black dysfunctionality rather than the 1960s, as is commonly believed. The post-Moynihan social-scientific and public policy view of black pathology that scholars such as Robin D. G. Kelley criticize as “ghetto ethnography” began, statistically speaking, in the 1890s. The racial project of making blacks the “thing against which normality, whiteness, and functionality have been defined,” was foundational to the making of modern urban America. Shaped by racial ideology and racism, the statistical ghetto emerged, study by study, in the Progressive era as the northern Black Belt formed block by block. Inextricably linked at birth, they grew up together.

Northern black crime statistics and migration trends in the 1890s, 1900s, and 1910s were woven together into a cautionary tale about the exceptional threat black people posed to modern society. In the Windy City, in the City of Brotherly Love, and in the nation's Capital of Commerce this tale was told, infused with symbolic references to American civilization, to American modernity, and to the fictive promised land of unending opportunity for all who, regardless of race or class or nationality, sought their fortunes. In these imagined communities of a post-slavery, post-Reconstruction civil rights America, “color-blind universalism” added an additional thread of contempt to the narrative. In a moment when
most white Americans believed in the declining significance of racism, statistical evidence of excessive rates of black arrests and the overrepresentation of black prisoners in the urban North was seen by many whites as indisputable proof of black inferiority.\textsuperscript{33}

What else but black pathology could explain black failure in these modern meccas of opportunity? Unlike subsequent commentators in the 1920s and 1930s, Progressive era white race-relations writers frequently asserted that racism had nothing to do with black criminality. They self-consciously critiqued black criminality in what they perceived to be race-neutral language. The numbers “speak for themselves” was one frequent refrain, followed by “I am not a racist.”\textsuperscript{34} A variant attached to both rhetorical strategies accused black race-relations writers of being biased and sentimental toward their own. They were accused of “coddling” their own criminals and excusing their behavior. When black experts dug in, when they made forceful counterarguments of epidemic racism in the heyday of “separate but equal”—even in the North—they were often charged with playing the race card (a concept then still in its infancy). The familiar resonance of these statements and exchanges is a testament to their longevity in American culture and society.\textsuperscript{35}

One explanation for the staying power of black crime rhetoric is that it had far more proponents than opponents compared to other racial concepts.\textsuperscript{36} Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the statistical rhetoric of the “Negro criminal” became a proxy for a national discourse on black inferiority. As an “objective” measure, it also became a tool to shield white Americans from the charge of racism when they used black crime statistics to support discriminatory public policies and social welfare practices. Evidence throughout the first half of this book shows that the gap in the racial crime rhetoric between avowedly white supremacist writers and white progressives narrowed significantly when it came to discussing black crime, vice, and immorality. Progressive era white social scientists and reformers often reified the racial criminalization process by framing white criminals sympathetically as victims of industrialization. They described a “great army of unfortunates” juxtaposed against an army of self-destructive and pathological blacks who were their “own worst enem[ies].”\textsuperscript{37} Race and crime linkages fueled an early antiliberal resentment that pushed African Americans to the margins of an expanding public and private collaboration of social, civic, and political reform.\textsuperscript{38} Northern white settlement house workers, for example, drew on these ideas when they
limited their crime prevention efforts “for whites only.” Local YMCA officials, playground managers, and recreation center supervisors drew on these ideas when they locked black youngsters out of constructive sites of leisure and supervised play. Trans-ethnic gangs of white men—backed by consenting police officers—drew on these ideas as they attacked black pedestrians and homeowners in an increasingly violent and enduring contest over racialized space in the urban North.

To be sure, racial liberals—a subset of white progressives—pushed back against the rising tide of northern segregation, discrimination, and violence during the Progressive era. Such leaders as Jane Addams and Mary White Ovington distinguished themselves in their NAACP commitments to civil and political rights. Drawing on the pioneering work of cultural anthropologist Franz Boas, racial liberals also promoted new cultural explanations of black criminality and rejected the biological determinism of the racial Darwinists who had dominated scientific discourse on race since the mid-nineteenth century. But there were limits to Boas’s culture concept. The statistical evidence of black criminality remained rooted in the concept of black inferiority or black pathology despite a shift in the social scientific discourse on the origins of race and crime. The shift from a racial biological frame to a racial cultural frame kept race at the heart of the discourse. Although racist notions of (permanent) biological inferiority gave way to liberal notions of (temporary) cultural inferiority, racial liberals continued to distinguish black criminality from white and ethnic criminality. In effect, they incriminated black culture. Attempts to deemphasize blackness and provide social welfare for African Americans never matched the scale or intensity of the Americanization project among immigrants. The racial-cultural content of white ethnic criminality gradually began to lose its currency during the Progressive era, while black criminality became more visible (and more contested by blacks).

Black crime researchers and reformers in fact contributed to and drew inspiration from the cultural discourse on crime. Many black elites had embraced Victorian ideals of morality and respectability in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, often trumping their white elite counterparts in sophistication and refinement. Seeing themselves as walking billboards for the race’s capacity for equal citizenship, and distinguishing themselves from “uncouth” and “criminally inclined” poor blacks, black elites often employed the language of racial uplift and the
“politics of respectability” to describe black criminality in terms of class and culture. Their race-relations writings and their social welfare efforts were often shot through with class bias and victim-blaming. At times, black northern elites were especially contemptuous of southern migrants. In rhetoric alone, when speaking to all-black audiences or when seeking credibility and financial support from white benefactors, their talk about black criminality seemed indistinguishable from that of their white counterparts. In the first post-civil rights era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—Jim Crow’s early years—ideology often trumped race for African Americans vying for political, economic, and social resources among whites. Conservative black opinion makers and race reformers who dwelt on the self-destructive behavior of poor blacks were more likely than antiracist activists to be heralded as clear-eyed and unbiased by their influential white peers.43

For some African American writers and reformers, black criminality was a passport to relevancy in a wider white world in which black voices were actively suppressed.44 Others, such as James Stemons, a Philadelphia race-relations reformer and local crime fighter, used black criminality to engage in a kind of double-speak: they used the rhetoric of black criminality to draw attention to themselves for the purposes of critiquing racism. Often out of genuine concern for public safety, Stemons, Du Bois, Wells, and many others did not ignore crime in their own communities. But neither did they ignore the racial double standards in the urban crime discourse, the mistreatment of black suspects and criminals, and the poor quality of police protection offered to black communities. Despite their elitism, many black reformers tended to offer “root-cause solutions” alongside their class-infused cultural critiques of black criminality.45

Progressive era black social scientists and reformers also exposed and challenged the limits of racial liberalism long before the post-World War II failures of residential and workplace integration in the urban North fueled a national civil rights movement and set the stage for a national political backlash against liberalism.46 White social workers and white philanthropists failed to invest sufficient material resources into the uplift of African American urbanites, advising these communities to “work out their own salvation” before others could help them. But black progressives cried foul, and they pressed for the same responses to their needs that were being offered to white working-class and immigrant urbanites.
As much as they embraced the self-help ethos of the era, and as willing as they were to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and build churches, settlement houses, schools, businesses, labor organizations, and entertainment venues in their own communities, they recognized that, dollar for dollar, African Americans stood most in need of community investment and economic resources but were least likely to be helped. In the segregated black communities of the urban North, members of the working class and the elite recognized that thoughtful, constructive crime prevention cost money, lots of it. White philanthropy was the dominant financial source for all crime-prevention efforts, but native-born poor whites and new immigrants received the lion’s share of attention and aid. The hidden cost to black residents was not simply victimization by bad guys, but also brutality by bad police officers and the loss of faith in American society by the young and old, who saw the police as a representation of the government’s malign neglect of black people in general. As black sociologist Kelly Miller noted, thoughtful, caring policing was an important solution to inspiring blacks to invest in their own citizenship. Better policing would lead to better citizens in a feedback loop. The empathy police officers brought to black communities would be one pathway, he argued, through which African Americans would come to know they were valued in modern urban America.

Beyond their own need to distinguish themselves from social and cultural inferiors, black reformers noted time and time again that the stigma of criminality fell most heavily on the most disadvantaged, isolated, and neglected people of the urban North. As they saw it, the Progressive era discourse of black criminality was at its best a self-serving justification for segregation and black self-help even as its proponents—white elites—helped Europe’s huddled masses by advocating for social welfare agencies, recreation facilities, better policing, economic fairness, and an end to political corruption. At its worst, the stigma of criminality was an intellectual defense of lynching, colonial-style criminal justice practices, and genocide.

The worst fears of black race-relations writers, crime experts, and social workers came true when widespread mob violence and race riots erupted across the urban North during the Great Migration years and beyond. Out of the bloodshed, black researchers and reformers rewrote black criminality in terms of racism in the criminal justice system. They tied testimonies of white police officers’ complicity in anti-black violence
to evidence that Progressive era white vice had been deliberately relocated by police (and politicians) from immigrant communities into segregated black communities. Police misconduct, corruption, and brutality, they argued, helped to produce disproportionately high black arrest rates, the starting point for high juvenile delinquency commitments and adult prison rates. In this new formulation, New Negro researchers and civil rights activists such as Charles S. Johnson, Anna Thompson, and Walter White used statistical evidence of racial disparities in the northern criminal justice system as evidence that racial crime statistics were an unreliable index of black behavior. National Urban League and NAACP-affiliated black social scientists and reformers effectively appropriated the mainstream environmental discourse of white progressives and later Chicago School sociologists, breaking, for a time, the double standard that had long precluded such logic from working on behalf of African Americans. Sellin's 1928 article captured the ascendancy of this formulation and its legitimacy among some of the most influential white sociologists and criminologists in the country.

Yet even as National Urban League reports and NAACP press releases brought unprecedented attention to new evidence of police brutality and called into question racial disparities in northern prisons in the 1920s and 1930s, black criminality remained a racial problem. Certainly, civil rights workers significantly transformed black criminality discourse among many white social scientists and white liberal social reformers. Their activism also contributed greatly to one of the most persistent themes within civil rights discourse—the fight for due process and equal protection within the criminal justice system. But an emergent civil rights critique of racial criminalization did not dissolve the link between race and crime.

By 1940, on the eve of the Second World War and a northward migration three times larger than the Progressive era migration, black criminality had not become a universal signifier of poverty and social marginalization; it had not become a universal social problem in the same way that Americanization helped to unbind nationality and criminality in the Progressive era. New knowledge of racial criminalization and a new awareness of the limits of black crime statistics had not guaranteed a New Deal for blacks or a fundamental shift in the scale or intensity of social, economic, or political reform directed toward black communities. New Negro antiracism and crime prevention gained a foothold in the
broader ideological debate about the origins of black inequality just when America’s inner-city landscapes were undergoing dramatic changes. The harvest of white ethnic succession—economic mobility, suburban home ownership, union membership, and whites-only schools, playgrounds, and recreation centers—sown in the seeds of Progressive era reforms and crime prevention fueled a growing antiliberal sentiment that northern blacks were still their own worst enemies because immigrants by dint of hard work escaped slums in spite of poverty, nativism, and police misconduct.  

But contrary to popular belief, the gradual quieting of the statistical discourse on white ethnic criminality was as much the consequence of racial ideology linking whiteness with class oppression as it was the result of new social and economic interventions at the state and federal levels. Liberalism fueled immigrant success even as racial liberalism foundered on the shoals of black criminality. From the New Deal through the post-World War II period and for decades beyond, “the federal government, though seemingly race-neutral, functioned as a commanding instrument of white privilege.” It was a period “when affirmative action was white,” according to historian Ira Katznelson. “[A]t the very moment when a wide array of public polices was providing most white Americans with valuable tools to advance their social welfare—insure their old age, get good jobs, acquire economic security, build assets, and gain middle-class status—most black Americans were left behind or left out.”

African Americans were also left behind in the federal government’s new Uniform Crime Reports, a breakthrough achievement in crime reporting developed in the 1930s. The new annual federal crime reports became the most authoritative statistical measure of race and crime in New Deal America, superseding decennial census data. Not only did these reports breathe new life into racial crime statistics, reversing gains made by black crime experts since the 1890s. The authors gradually removed the “Foreign Born” category from the crime tables, and by the early 1940s, “Black” stood as the unmitigated signifier of deviation (and deviance) from the normative category of “White.”

The preceding half-century of increasing statistical segregation and expanding residential segregation naturalized black inferiority, justified black inequality, and tended to mask black counter-discourses and resistance, shaping race relations into the second half of the twentieth
century. Although by the 1930s the statistical discourse on black criminality in the urban North was far more contested than it had been in the 1890s, it remained largely rooted in segregationist thought and practice and in competing visions of blacks’ place in modern urban America.55