Introduction

In April 2010, the White House publicized Barack Obama’s self-identification on his U.S. census form. He marked one box “Black, African Am., or Negro,” settling one of the most prevalent issues during his 2008 presidential campaign: his racial identity. This choice resounded with the monoracial ways of thinking so prevalent throughout U.S. history. People who believed he was only black because he looked like a black person or because many others (society) believed so or because of the historical prevalence of the one-drop rule received confirmation of that belief. The mainstream media had been calling him the black president for over a year, so they received confirmation of this moniker.

Many people who had followed the adoption of multiple checking on the census found his choice surprising. Surely, as president, he would be aware of the ability to choose more than one race. To pick one alone went against everything activists wanting to reform the government’s system of racial categorization had worked for in the 1990s. Many found it surprising that the man who had called himself “the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas” would choose one race. After all, he had used this construction far more times than he had called himself black, giving the impression that he embraced his mixture along with identifying as black. That snippet, along with images of his diverse family, had been part of what endeared him to mixed-race supporters. Similarly, his campaign’s deployment of his white relatives built sympathy with white voters. Some people argued that he had failed to indicate what he “was” by choosing one race. He made the diverse backgrounds in his immediate family a footnote. But, recalling Maria P. P. Root’s “A Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People,” a pillar of contemporary thought on mixed race, they had to respect his prerogative. He had the right to identify himself differently than the way strangers expected him to identify.

Three lessons emerged from this episode: How one talks about oneself can be different from how one identifies from day to day. How one identifies from day to day can be different from how one fills out forms. And on a form with political repercussions, such as the census, one may choose a political
statement different from both how one talks and how one identifies. Obama had always been a political creature; he never did anything for simple reasons. By the regulations, the administration could have withheld the information for seventy-two years. Instead, it became a small yet notable news piece in real time. Publicizing his participation in the census could motivate other minorities (beyond those who knew the history of multiple checking) to do so as well. More likely, he was thinking about the 2012 election. His response to the 2010 census could influence voters later on. If the number of those who would have hurt feelings over a singular answer was less than those who would find offense in a multiple answer, then a singular answer was the best to give. Even though mixed-race Americans took great pride in Obama’s ascendance, they were a small faction to satisfy.

Then why did Obama take so much care to cast himself as a young, mixed-race hope for the future? Because even though the number of people who identify as mixed race is small, they hold immense figural power for the nation as symbols of progress, equality, and utopia, themes he wanted to associate with his campaign. In other words, he piggybacked onto positive notions about racially mixed people to improve his symbolic power. At the same time, he nurtured the stable, concrete, and accessible identity that people so used to monoracial thought could embrace, not the ambiguous one that challenged everyone.

Interpretation of current events such as this can disentangle the complexities we encounter here and now. However, while historical analysis always enriches the understanding of current events, writing history about current events presents a pitfall: they are moving targets resisting our attempts to focus on them. Similarly, following figures such as Obama lures us into announcing sea changes in racial conditions. Americans of all walks like indicators of progress. But addressing racial inequality calls for more than well-wishing. As a guiding principle, we should remember to appreciate that these are stories that have no resolution, much like the story of racialization in general. The meanings of mixture, the language we use to describe it, and its cast of characters have always been in flux.

Even before colonial Virginia established the first anti-interracial marriage laws in 1691, efforts to stabilize racial identity had been instrumental in securing property, defending slavery, and maintaining segregation. The study of interracial intimacy has labeled racially mixed people either pollutants to society or the last hope for their inferior parent groups. To this day, many Americans label each other monoracially, interracial marriage remains a rarity, and group identities work best when easy to comprehend. However, at the same time that many worked to make racial categorization rigid, a few have
defended racial mixing as a boon for the nation. Ever since English explorer John Smith told the story of the Indian princess Pocahontas saving his life in 1608 (a founding myth of the United States), some have considered racial mixing a positive. These voices were often privileged with access to outlets. Many were men, and many were white. This study reconsiders the under-studied optimist tradition that has disavowed mixing as a means to uplift a particular racial group or a means to do away with race altogether. Instead, this group of vanguards has praised mixture as a means to create a new people, to bring equality to all, and to fulfill an American destiny. Historians of race have passed over this position, but my narrative shows that contemporary fascination with racially mixed figures has historical roots in how past Americans have imagined what radical abolitionist Wendell Phillips first called “The United States of the United Races.”

Each of this book’s seven chapters explores how tensions in our intellectual history have revised themselves in every period since the early republic. In the 1780s, Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, author of *Letters from an American Farmer*, defined America as new and composite, while Thomas Jefferson warned against whites mixing with blacks. The future president’s secretary, William Short, proposed recognizing mixed offspring, transitioning slaves toward tenant farming, and offering universal citizenship. During the Civil War era, Wendell Phillips deemed interracial marriage inevitable for a multicultural democracy, while most others shied away from the controversial topic. Not only did the defense for the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case use a racially mixed defendant to challenge categorization, but its lead attorney, Albion Tourgée, imagined an interracial future for the United States. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court rejected this position, sanctioning segregation. Dramatist Israel Zangwill first considered blacks and Asians participants in his famous engine of intermarriage, the melting pot, in his 1908 play of the same name, but he then acquiesced to pressure and removed them. It would take Jean Toomer and José Vasconcelos, two writers more sensitive to racial difference, to address the vagaries of this American symbol. The middle decades of the twentieth century featured a hush around mixed race, but a closer look reveals that foreign wars, changes in immigration, and progressive mass media maintained the relevance of this topic at a different frequency. In the fall of 1993, racial mixing became fodder for the front pages of *Time* magazine via its computer-generated New Face of America and for newspapers such as the *New York Times* that covered the social movement aiming to include a multiracial identifier on the U.S. census. Intellectuals within and outside the Multiracial Movement looked to racially mixed people to bring about the end of all labels. Since 2000, the tension between
racial ambiguity and certainty has played out in the popularity of consumer genomics tests, the allure of racially mixed fashion models, and the symbolic value of a variety of mixed-race figures.

Using analytic tools from the fields of U.S. history, ethnic studies, American studies, and media studies, I challenge the centuries-long conversation about the morphology, capacity, and status of racially mixed people. Through this work’s deeper historical perspective, it diverges from what some scholars call “mixed-race studies,” a set of titles from the past two decades that work against past, negative conceptions. This field began with three edited collections from the early 1990s: Maria Root’s *Racially Mixed People in America* (1992); her follow-up, *The Multiracial Experience* (1995); and Naomi Zack’s *Race and Mixed Race* (1993). As groundbreaking texts, they employed many disciplines but explored few of them in depth. Among more recent collections, Jayne Ifekwunigwe’s *Mixed Race Studies* (2004) spanned 150 years, but its reliance on excerpts diluted the context of any of the selections. Others go into greater depth concerning one type of mixture, including Kerry Ann Rockquemore’s *Beyond Black* (2002), Kip Fulbeck’s *Part Asian, 100% Hapa* (2006), and Teresa Williams-León and Cynthia Nakashima’s *The Sum of Our Parts* (2001). Many single-author titles from the past dozen years have focused on the negative associations around the topic. Leading this approach are Werner Sollors’s *Neither Black nor White yet Both* (1997), which covers the tragic mulatto trope; Gerald Horne’s *The Color of Fascism* (2006), a biography of racial passing through the life of white supremacist Lawrence Dennis; and Peggy Pascoe’s *What Comes Naturally* (2009), which surveys prohibitions to interracial marriage in U.S. law. Last among mixed-race studies titles are those of the congratulatory model, focusing on the transformative potentiality of a “new multiracial consciousness,” for example, Reginald Daniel’s *More than Black?* (2002) and Maria Root’s *Love’s Revolution* (2001). Justifying the attention their work received, their writing negotiated a line between drawing the potential of mixed race and promising its cures, often favoring the latter.

Instead, I avoid arguing for progress, especially since one of this book’s main goals is to interrogate the notion that racial mixing indicates progress. Following the liberal arts conventions, I have attempted to trace change as a means to avoid the same pitfalls I critique. However, progress does happen. Over time, through activism, legislation, and other social forces, conditions can improve, not just change. (I am thinking of the span between 1896 and now, not 1967 and now.) Merely recording the mutations of racism is a safe way to practice evenhanded analysis, but it is shortsighted—and masochistic.
I eschew equating progress with mixture, but I also want to convey that optimism is reasonable.

This study is unique for three reasons: First, it uncovers a narrative of positive notions just as important as the negative. Second, it puts both the positive and the negative in historical context, recovering past advocates for or against racial mixture and amplifying the resonances across time. Third, instead of privileging one kind of racial mixing (for example, black and white), it interrogates mixture in any configuration as an engine for positive change. This is crucial to understanding the themes of progress, utopia, and inclusion that underlie positions on racial mixing more broadly. This book presents the career of an idea more so than the biographies of particular writers, orators, or activists. My unified approach shows that in every period, an optimistic stance has been as central to the American conversation on race as the pessimist. Because antipathy toward mixture is so established, and because critics of the dominant position have no formal connection to predecessors, each must re-create the position in new ways.

Defenders of racial mixing have been highly visible commentators on the making of Americans, or ethnogenesis. Werner Sollors put this process in context of typology, or “a form of prophecy which sets two successive events into a reciprocal relation of anticipation and fulfillment.” This involves repetition of a prophecy to the point of overshadowing the promise. But it also means that the anticipation increases with repetition, making signs of fulfillment, such as increasing intermarriage or mixed-race birthrates, more prophetic. Those who rely on a linear, upward path toward racial equality repeat their optimistic prophecy to the point of overshadowing any original promise, making the anticipation of racial equality more important than achieving it. Even an everyday statement such as “In the future, everyone will be mixed” expresses positive ideas about racial mixing, place, and time by predicting an ideal America full of improved, mixed citizens. But predictions alone are not enough for achieving racial equality.

In contrast to such narratives, I illustrate the interplay between dominant and alternative discourses over the span of U.S. history. By presenting a chronological narrative around race mixing, my approach offers a way to appreciate temporal as well as spatial discontinuity in discourse around mixture, progress, and utopia. Rather than islands one can only connect by sailing between them, I maintain that expressions in favor for racial mixing constitute a coral reef that pokes through the surface at various points. A change in perspective reveals that these expressions connect beneath the expansive ocean. With that in mind, a new organizing principle emerges in
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this book, one with radical implications in the historiography of race in the United States.

Because of the potential of mixed race to disrupt racial categorization, it is one analytical tool for understanding how reconfigurations of race go hand in hand with the creation and dissolution of racial terms. But a historical work of this breadth requires some attention to terms such as race and mixed race, especially since they are constantly in flux. I follow Michael Omi and Howard Winant in defining race as “a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies.” This definition resists pinpointing what those signifiers and symbols are, but its attention to bodies does acknowledge that persons and physical appearances are the objects of signification. Omi and Winant’s assertion that race is “a social construction which alters over the course of time due to historical and social pressures” is especially useful. The meanings of race change, depending on the social organization of the time and place, and these endless possibilities result in vagary about exactly what race is. However, certain concepts have prevailed through U.S. history, from Blumenbach’s hierarchy by continental origin to Morton’s hierarchy by physical features to the Chesapeake colonies’ hierarchy by labor status. In each of these, it is hard to pinpoint which came first, racial categories or the processes of racialization. With the approach of the twentieth century, main currents in racial thinking shifted toward cultural positivism, social Darwinism, and eugenics. Even with the shame that the Nazi regime brought to racial science, many of its ideas have become common sense to Americans.

The arc of these paradigms tends to obscure particular meanings of race that individuals cobble together. At any moment, popular understandings reinterpret, contradict, and undermine accepted racial logics. They are socially constructed, much like Stuart Hall’s expansion on the processes of encoding and decoding, which highlights the importance of active interpretation within relevant semiotic codes. Rather than mere absorption of discourse on a topic, Hall categorizes readings as dominant, negotiated, or oppositional. The moment of encoding describes when producers inscribe meanings into texts. The moment of decoding describes when audiences make their own meanings from the texts, perhaps very different from the originals. This theory applies to the meanings of race just as it applies to meanings of texts. However, race is one ideology out of many useful for analyzing the world; we also rely on gender, class, religion, and other lenses to make sense of society. This individualism further disrupts the linear narrative that insists on societal progress through time.
Some people take this subjectivity to an extreme, saying that race does not exist. They argue that the language around race is faulty, so we ought to jettison the whole way of thinking. But racism, the practice of determining outcomes by racial heritage, is relevant to this day. This is true even though legislation has removed racial barriers to education, employment, voting, and immigration. Even though the public outcry against derogatory statements indicates a high level of racial etiquette, reticence, paranoia, and resentment prevail. Though there is more visibility for interracial intimacy, intermarriage, and racial mixing, great inequalities remain. The vast majority of relationships and families in the United States today are monoracial. We cannot compel interracial intimacy to all, nor can we celebrate the integration of a few without making equality the charge for us all.

Omi and Winant explain the practice of racism through their theory of racial formation, “the process by which these socio-historical designations of race are created and manipulated,” organizing racial projects into the micro- and macro-level. This approach can lead to two dangerous conclusions: that race is trivial or that it is institutional. One can interpret micro-level racial projects as individual prejudice or ignorance. For example, a bus driver made Rosa Parks give up her seat; Ebens and Nitz beat Vincent Chin; my new neighbors thought I was the gardener. Or one can interpret macro-level racial projects as the product of forces beyond our reach. For example, blackface minstrelsy grafted the mockery of blacks into American popular culture; Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act; neighborhood associations plan private Halloweens rather than participate in the citywide event. Both of these poles hinder our ability to pinpoint that racism is a system and discourage us from doing anything about it.

For historical analysis of post-civil-rights white supremacy, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva’s guidelines are especially useful. He discerned, “In contrast to race relations in the Jim Crow period, however, racial practices that reproduce racial inequality in contemporary America are (1) increasingly covert, (2) embedded in normal operations of institutions, (3) void of direct racial terminology, and (4) invisible to most whites.” The racialized social system that oppressed minorities for much of U.S. history has persisted, in different forms, despite the social movements of the mid-twentieth century. Because Bonilla-Silva’s totalized racial system appreciates racism as “society-wide, organized, and institutional,” rather than the work of a powerful few, I believe it augments Omi and Winant’s racial formation theory. Together, they help make racism tangible, a set of practices we can address. This understanding of racism as changing values, practices, and beliefs is especially useful in discussing notions around racial mixing.
Surely, the protection of racial purity has been central in U.S. history; for many racial projects around property, labor, and access, “white racial purity as thus defined” was the objective. However, the definitions of whiteness have changed, bestowing privilege to members of previously undesirable groups, such as Irish, Italians, Jews, fair Latinos, and mixed grandchildren of Asians in America, and showing that purity is unnecessary for membership. Even as a tool for civil rights enforcement, the census concerns itself with racial stabilization. It works best when we answer the questions in ways that fit Census Bureau models, and the work the agency does between decennials is in hope that fewer people choose nonconforming answers such as “Other.” Many minorities strive for stabilization or consolidation under a monoracial label, rather than negotiating a mixed-race experience, calling for a distinction between racially mixed people and people with racial mixing in their backgrounds. The former refers to those with parents from different racial groups, with an appreciation for how “racial” varies. The latter refers to groups that acknowledge a high degree of mixture in their past, that do not label themselves mixed but, rather, prefer some other label, such as black.

The minority adoption of consolidation emphasizes unity over variable heritages. Following the lead of African Americans, other minority groups have discouraged mixing to promote unity, cultural pride, and mass action toward civil rights. Brown, Red, and Yellow Power movements emulated Black Power, but just as Black Nationalism of the 1960s built on previous consolidation efforts, the other minority youth rearticulated cultural nationalism for their situations. In the 1970s, the umbrella ethnicities of Asian American and Latino/Hispanic arose, exercises of strategic essentialism that collected groups with some similar experiences but many disparate ones. Past animosities are energized when national origins outweigh the collective label, and new divisions are fortified when those within umbrella ethnicities who achieve material success consider themselves higher than others who have not.

Considering how the stabilization of racial identity has affected all racial groups, I address many configurations of racial mixture, so that the impact of race as an organizing principle, the ways many people have worked to stabilize it, and the potential that mixed race has to disorganize it will be more apparent. While the drama around slavery, emancipation, and civil rights figures centrally in U.S. history, by no means do I wish to suggest that racism against blacks has been exclusive. Likewise, while some people have elevated their status by denigrating blacks, other minority groups have received similar treatment. Asians have experienced exclusion from citizenship,
internment, and the backhanded platitude of the model minority. Hispanics and Latinos have experienced an array of discrimination in education, employment, and social services that aligns with physical appearances and degrees of acculturation. Native Americans have faced removal and marginalization since first contact and now operate under a system of blood quantum that requires minimum fractions of Indian parentage to claim membership and resources. These dynamics become more apparent when we loosen the American story from the conventional, east-to-west narrative, uncovering the racial situations of other regions. In regard to mixture, this project is relevant to all racial minorities, as the protection of racial stability has plied laws of purity on all of them.

Continuing this discussion of terminology, I prefer mixed race over multiracial, to distance myself from those who wanted to create a new category for racially mixed people. Coverage of the 2000 census gave the impression that all within the Multiracial Movement wanted this. In reality, most wanted some useful identifier of mixed heritage, and the decision to implement multiple checking was satisfactory to them. The faction that did want a new category tended to believe that there was a true, singular, multiracial consciousness that united racially mixed people across race, class, gender, and geography. Because mixed-race experiences are so varied, I reject this notion. Similarly, I avoid labels that connote specific configurations of mixing, for example, hapa or biracial. The former hails from the native Hawaiian term hapa haole and often refers to mixed Asian and white individuals. It is a term popular with racially mixed Asian Americans to express pride in their mixture. At the hands of scholars of mixed race, Multiracial Movement activists, and journalists, the latter term often refers to mixed black and white individuals. Although the word is indeterminate, its use reinforces the notion that race in the United States is only about blacks and whites.

Because nicknames for mixture veer too close to epithet, I also dislike terms such as blasian. Similarly, I follow the lead of Maria Root, Rebecca Walker, and Katya Gibel Azoulay in rejecting the language of fractions—for example, half Indian. Lastly, unless employing the vocabulary of a historical period, I avoid antiquated terms such as mulatto, quadroon, mongrel, or half-breed. We have seen provocative redeployment of offensive terms, but we have also seen episodes involving Seinfeld actor Michael Richards, radio personality Don Imus, and the rapper Nas showing we are far from demobilizing racial slurs. In the end, I use an additive language that is both appropriate for current mores and encompassing of the complexity of mixed-race identity.
Chapter 1 begins in the year 1782, when Thomas Jefferson updated *Notes on the State of Virginia* and Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur published *Letters of an American Farmer*. The former set forth a defense of racial purity that was becoming the standard in the republic. Slavery vexed Jefferson and other founding fathers, but *Notes* used both science and law to defend the slave system. While Jefferson wrote that “all men are created equal” in the Declaration of Independence, he was also a son of prominent planter families. Like them, he was deeply invested in Virginia’s systems of privilege, land, and labor. He is famous for his relationship with Sally Hemings, but his public legacy is one that argued that free blacks “be removed beyond the reach of mixture.”8 The *Letters*, written by a French immigrant who adopted the new nation, bound together mixture and newness as centrally American traits. Speaking from Orange County, New York, which had a slave population of 5.2% in 1790 (compared to Virginia’s 35.1%), Crèvecoeur’s narrator marveled at a family “whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations,” calling them quintessentially American.9

Later conceptions of race coalesced around pseudoscientific differences, but at this time, the mixing of European nationalities was remarkable. Mixing between indigenous people, colonists, and Africans from different nations had been part and parcel of American life since the 1600s, so Crèvecoeur was describing a way of life in practice for over 150 years. Crèvecoeur’s experience in New France introduced him to paradigms that relied more on trade and intimacy with Indians than Virginia’s racial dynamics did. While he denounced slavery in Charlestown, South Carolina, he also spoke of blacks and Indians in terms we would now find condescending. However, not once did he exclude these groups from participating in the secular life of the United States, and this is the main difference between these two authors. Jefferson’s *Notes* and Crèvecoeur’s *Letters* have both a descriptive mission and a prescriptive one; they shed light on the early republic and offer paths toward the ideal America of the future. Even though ideas about race and mixture have changed since then, their legacies persist, with one defending racial purity and the other celebrating mixture. Starting at this historical moment, I show how the relationship between the dominant and alternative positions began over two hundred years ago.

Over the next fifty years, the American racial order solidified, with white supremacy the norm, blacks as servile, and mixture an unwelcome saboteur. At the same time that territorial expansion incorporated more land and more types of people, lines of inclusion remained tenuous. Most relevant during this interim is the array of reform movements that arose, including
abolitionism. Wendell Phillips, among others, combined a belief in making God’s kingdom on earth with a sense of individual responsibility. Born into Boston’s upper class in 1811, he became active in the abolitionist movement in 1836, becoming a sort of Aaron to William Lloyd Garrison’s Moses, tempering prophetic fervor with a lawyer’s clarity.

Phillips’s willing defense of amalgamation set him apart from his more cautious fellow radicals. In 1838, he became legal counsel for an Antislavery Society campaign to eliminate Massachusetts’s anti-intermarriage laws. Unlike others, he continued to defend “honorable marriage” between racial groups through the following decades, his response to our founding documents, the sin of slavery, and antiabolitionist violence. In fact, his statements became the model for the *Miscegenation* pamphlet of 1864, a hoax that suggested amalgamation was a platform of the Republican Party. This product of Democratic journalists in New York attacked Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation by lampooning Phillips’s rhetoric, just as blackface minstrelsy attacked fair labor by satirizing black cultural forms.

The Civil War years provide a tumultuous intersection between slavery, politics, and popular culture, but I use Wendell Phillips’s statements to show that the defense of racial mixing existed well before and after the war. In my reading in chapter 2, Phillips did more than target the conflict at hand; he also addressed racial inequality of the decades since Jefferson and Crèvecoeur, amending their statements with the knowledge that fighting for equal rights meant including all in the intimate making of future Americans. His 1853 editorial in the *National Era* (the inspiration for this book’s title) named Chinese and East Indians as worthy of citizenship, a statement prescient of the Supreme Court’s expansive decision in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* (1898). Phillips’s assertions resound in almost every defense of racial mixing that I present in this book. While some historians mention these optimistic statements about racial mixing in passing, I show that they are crucial to debates around equality, politics, and constructing a post–Civil War America.

Chapter 3 opens in the late nineteenth century, when Chinese laborers settled in more areas of the South and West but also received the label “aliens ineligible for citizenship.” Battles throughout the plains subdued the Native American population to a point where many thought they would vanish. The residents of the former Mexican territory found they were the wards of colonization, rather than the beneficiaries of the supposedly inclusive Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. After Radical Reconstruction ended, southern whites developed a retrograde system of segregation that disciplined blacks for exercising political agency or interracial intimacy. In fact, the conflation of these
two threats was essential to arguments against social equality and remained so through the modern civil rights movement. In 1892, the Comité de Citoyens, a Louisiana social justice organization, and former Republican Superior Court judge Albion Tourgée deployed Homer Plessy, a racially mixed person, to challenge uses of racial categorization. They levied his white parentage against his black parentage, hoping the white seven-eighths would outweigh racial conclusions based on the black one-eighth. Plessy identified himself as a colored person sitting in the white section of a train, and his arrest led to a Louisiana Supreme Court case and then an appeal.

Tourgée’s brief to the U.S. Supreme Court described the Fourteenth Amendment as the source of “new rights, privileges and immunities, derivable in a new manner” that would result in interracial families of various combinations and a wholesale disruption of racial categories. He spelled out what the Reconstruction Amendments attempted to do: expand the Declaration of Independence to include all. However, nearly twenty years into Jim Crow, the defense wielded an underdog’s position. The Court delivered a decision devastating to Tourgée, the Comité, and activists of the period, sanctifying racial segregation. But it also made degrees of mixture irrelevant, leading to the institution of hypodescent for all racial minorities.

The Plessy defense stands as an example of progressive thinkers on race (both mixed and unmixed) using mixture to disrupt racial order. The coalition employed positive ideas about racially mixed people that later became central to twentieth-century assimilation theory, the later foundations of the Multiracial Movement, and Barack Obama’s victory in 2008. In placing racial mixture at the center of the long struggle for civil rights in the United States, chapter 3 provides a case of mixed-race activism that appreciated civil rights more broadly rather than espousing one variety of identity politics.

Chapter 4 picks up in the early twentieth century, when African American leaders articulated a meaning of race that brought together everyone of African descent, transforming the one-drop rule into a unifying tool for a diverse set of people. In particular, W. E. B. Du Bois established a definition of race that emphasized shared experience and group progress more than biology. However, descent remained central to this concept, ultimately influencing other minorities in their efforts for progress. At the recommendation of Du Bois and other scholars, the “Mulatto” category disappeared from the census, and hypodescent became the standard for all minorities. Rather than intermarriage, the collective focus for traditional racial groups was in mass action, litigation, and executive intervention. Likewise, racial pride, unity, and strategic essentialism became priorities for groups seeking progress. The umbrella ethnicities of “Latino” and “Asian American” solidified in
the 1970s, reflecting the government’s acknowledgment of the disadvantages these groups faced. The use of these terms attempted to smooth out matters of identity, making diverse collections of people monoracial. During the 1980s and 1990s, multiculturalism elevated minority experiences but also led to a pigeonholing of race, ethnicity, and culture.

President Theodore Roosevelt, a believer in imperialist expansion, racial hierarchy, and robust patriarchy, promoted the United States as a liberal democracy that could bestow equality on people of all nations. His counterpart in the arts was Israel Zangwill, the Jewish-British author of *The Melting-Pot*. Since the 1908 debut of Zangwill’s play, “the melting pot” has become the most popular, positive description of American diversity of the twentieth century. In his 1914 revision of *The Melting-Pot*, Zangwill plucked out blacks and Asians, and the symbol has remained utterly vague regarding racial minorities ever since. Rather than intolerance, both of these men expressed the best of qualified liberalism. Their contradictions show that this period, like others, hosted an array of ideologies, not just a battle between inclusion and xenophobia.

Two contemporaries of Zangwill, José Vasconcelos and Jean Toomer, offered statements regarding mixing that continued where he stopped. Both had heard of the melting pot but chose their own tropes to describe a future mixed race that would actively participate in an egalitarian society, possess a higher consciousness, and advance society by creating art. They provided positive metaphors that differed from both the Americanization programs and the cultural pluralists of the time. In 1925, Vasconcelos, a Mexican educator and politician schooled in the United States, wrote “La Raza Cósmica,” a manifesto praising the mixed Latin American race. His essay influenced several generations of thought on mestizaje, including the founders of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the La Raza movement of the late 1960s, Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), and Richard Rodriguez’s catch phrase “the browning of America.” Toomer, author of *Cane* (1923) and descendant of Washington, D.C.’s mulatto elite, repeatedly described the United States as a “great stomach into which are thrown the elements which make up the life blood.” This organ was already in the process of producing a new, mixed, American race neither white, black, nor yellow. Vasconcelos and Toomer answered questions Zangwill and Roosevelt evaded: What will the Americans look like? What do they do? Do they participate in creating the Americans of the future? While Zangwill’s symbol has been in the limelight for the past century (even inspiring a *School House Rock* segment), Vasconcelos’s and Toomer’s writings have remained obscure. I offer them here to demonstrate how intellectuals addressed issues of mixed race even if few noticed at the time.
Chapter 5 covers the greater part of the twentieth century, which included the rise of a new mixed race in the United States: the white race, fulfilling a narrow conception of Zangwill’s vision. From 1914, when Robert Park and Ernest Burgess first described assimilation as “interpenetration and fusion,” up to Mary Waters’s *Ethnic Options* (1990), which finally drew the connection between white privilege and flexibility in identification, assimilation literature elevated interethnic marriage rates as the prime measure of incorporation into the mainstream. Edward Reuter’s *The Mulatto in the United States* (1918), Everett Stonequist’s “The Problem of the Marginal Man” (1935), and Joel Williamson’s *New People* (1980) echoed Josiah Nott and George Gliddon’s infamous antebellum proslavery text *Types of Mankind* (1854) in describing racially mixed people as superior to their minority racial group yet intermediary in social status and prone to confusion. However, these twentieth-century scholars hoped to address racial inequality, so they promoted the idea that mixed people were inseparable from their minority parent groups.

Along with suggesting that interracial intimacy and racially mixed people are new phenomena, scholars and students of civil rights cast them as tangential to the social movements of the twentieth century. However, these were the decades when American soldiers married women in Asia and petitioned to bring them to the States. Mass media broadened American influence, exporting our rhetoric of inclusion but also opening us to scrutiny. Transracial and international adoption aimed to reform the nation by bringing diverse members into families. By removing racial barriers, the Immigration Act of 1965 initiated a change in the way we define assimilation today. Lastly, in a struggle many authors omit from the traditional civil rights movement, the Supreme Court deemed seventeen states’ remaining anti-intermarriage laws unconstitutional with its 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* decision. Chapter 5 recovers the centrality of racial mixture during these middle decades by integrating these currents into the master narrative of civil rights.

Chapter 6 picks up in the early 1990s, a period that featured a major shift in the visibility of racially mixed people in the United States, thanks to various media, scholars, and activists who charged racially mixed Americans with precipitating the end of race. While small support organizations for interracial families had existed since the 1890s, these grew after the 1988 and 1991 founding of Association of MultiEthnic Americans and Project R.A.C.E. (Reclassify All Children Equally). In July 1993, the presidents of these two national organizations testified before Congress, advocating the implementation of a Multiracial identifier on the U.S. census.
At the same time, a body of academic writing challenged racial categorization as oppressive, if not obsolete. While these titles provided an intellectual basis for the Multiracial Movement, both the praise and the demonization of racial mixing gained greater visibility in 1993, when *Time* put a mixed-race star on the cover of its fall special issue. The magazine’s staff used Morph 2.0 software to combine features of seven ethnic types to symbolize the effects of immigration and intermarriage on American diversity. The New Face was young, comely, and hygienic, revealing the designers’ aesthetic choices. Her creation, her physical appearance, and her lack of history supported the impression that racial mixing was a new phenomenon, one that in a matter of generations would produce a nation of people who appeared 15% Anglo-Saxon, 17.5% Middle Eastern, 17.5% African, 7.5% Asian, 35% southern European, and 7.5% Hispanic. Besides this visual tour de force, the magazine’s articles echo earlier hopes in racial mixing as a means to overcome divisions in America. Scholars such as David Roediger, Donna Haraway, and Mike Hill have articulated many of the New Face’s possible meanings, often arguing that she expresses a wish for racelessness—that is, the obsolescence of race through its blurring. However, I emphasize how the cover star supposes that it is through mixing race, not obliterating it, that Americans can shape “the world’s first multicultural society,” as the issue’s cover promised. In other words, the country’s diversity will produce a mixed future that will celebrate its constituent parts. Just as racially mixed people have an abundance of race, so does the New Face, and that quality is at the core of her potency.13

Concurrently, as chapter 6 shows, the Multiracial Movement created a sense of community, employed the nascent uses of the Internet, and appeared in major media outlets. However, it also created opposition, mostly from traditional civil rights organizations that perceived the addition of a new category as a threat to their representation. Such opposition came from the National Urban League, the National Council of La Raza, and the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund. The Census Bureau tested proposed changes, desiring to make the data collection most useful for equal employment, civil rights, and fair housing. Then in 1996, racially mixed golf pro Tiger Woods rose in the limelight, disavowing any monoracial label. More Americans outside the movement acknowledged the relevance of changing racial categories, and some made Woods a poster boy for color-blind meritocracy. In October 1998, the federal Office of Management and Budget settled on a system of multiple checking rather than an umbrella category, disappointing some activists. As many demographers anticipated, this decision complicated enumeration, but “mark all that apply” has popularized
an idea Crèvecoeur articulated in 1783: that Americans can be many things at the same time. Looking back on the 1990s, it is easy to compartmentalize Census 2000, the rise of academic writing on mixed race, and the New Face as separate events. I bring them together to show how this moment fits with previous and following hopes for racial mixing in the United States. Altogether, this chapter reveals the multiple voices that were influential during the 1990s.

Census 2000 provided a detailed description of the nation's racial makeup, indicating that 97.6% of Americans identified with one race, with 75.1% white, 12.3% black, 3.6% Asian, 0.9% American Indian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian, and 5.5% some other race. Hispanic or Latino, an ethnic designation, made up 12.5% of the population, with members across many of the traditional racial groups. Those who checked two or more races made up 2.4%, or 6.8 million, of the population. Along with those who checked "Other," 7.9% of the population (or one out of every thirteen) chose to identify in ways divergent from monoracial categorization. After spring 2001, the topic of multiple checking went dormant, indicating that Census 2000 was a gratifying exploration. While the public has bestowed popularity on celebrities who refuse to reveal their racial makeup (e.g., Vin Diesel, star of *Pitch Black*, *The Fast and the Furious*, and *XXX*), it is more accurate to say that Americans praise racial ambiguity, but in reality they prefer certainty. Colonial Virginia's rules to categorize mixed offspring, terms such as *mulatto*, *quadroon*, and *octoroon*, eugenicists wishing to discourage mixing, and the mathematics of the New Face show that this has been true throughout U.S. history.

In chapter 7, I bring together three phenomena that show how the use of mixed-race people as signs of racial progress, harmony, and the future of America has always worked best when satisfying the need for quantifiable racial makeup. The increase in mixed faces and bodies in advertising and marketing reversed the decades-long patterns of white standards of beauty. These prejudiced norms displayed themselves in plain sight, and minority supermodels did not appear until the 1970s and later. Consideration of racial minorities in marketing strategies rose with the appreciation of them as consumers, and now there are many products and many kinds of people to sell them to. By 2001, advertisers, marketers, and casting directors praised a "multiracial look," often in the same breath as reflections on the latest decennial census data. In emphasizing mixed Americans under eighteen years old, these movie makers, advertisers, and casting directors would have us believe that less than 1% (or three million) youth embodied the future. In addition to this rationalization, the increased visibility came with the tendency to reveal subjects' backgrounds. Whether magazine covers, art photography,
or cognitive psychology experiments, areas of contemporary discourse persist in quantifying racial makeup in order to make racial ambiguity more manageable.

Consumer D.N.A. tests have recast the tension between purity and mixture in a new way. Even though genomics can recover family histories and broaden minds concerning race, the percentages they provide do far more to naturalize eighteenth- and nineteenth-century notions of hybridity. They simplify mixed race via the figurative power of D.N.A., just as Census 2000 simplified mixed race via the figurative power of checking boxes. While the Multiracial category was a concern of Americans who knew they were racially mixed, these tests appealed mostly to those who did not. I suggest that many people desired to learn they were mixed so they could claim the positive qualities they associate with mixture, such as exoticism, ambiguity, and cultural richness. These tests have grown in popularity because they suggest that everyone is mixed to a certain percentage.

A decade after Tiger Woods appeared, another racially mixed figure, Barack Obama, reached or surpassed his fame, speaking at the Democratic National Convention in 2004, winning a seat in the U.S. Senate, and then leading a monumental presidential campaign. Like the golf protégé, Obama disclosed his racial makeup upon entering the national spotlight, satisfying the need for certainty. Unlike minority politicians of the previous decades, he concentrated on being accessible to all, rather than foregrounding the concerns of one group. Commenting on race only when necessary, Obama practiced a sort of symbolic ethnicity that one usually associates with ethnic whites. Most important, the candidate exercised a multiple-checking way of describing his background: “I am the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas,” leaving the enumeration of his identity to his audiences. If the president is supposed to be heroic, forward thinking, and inclusive, then Obama’s black and white and mixed-race image befits the position he sought. Throughout his campaign, questions of mixed-race character challenged the public just as they have since the early republic. Some people simplified his identity to simply black—or not black enough. Others attributed his leadership style to his racial makeup, suggesting he was able to see two sides of issues because of it. These tendencies show how the conflict between demonizing and heroizing racial mixture persists. Putting these cases in conversation produces a warning against taking twenty-first-century praise of racial mixing at face value. Considering Barack Obama, the terms regarding race shifted, but the tensions between racial stabilization and the praise of mixing have remained. Along with the changing vocabularies, the contexts are always in motion, making efforts around either pole constantly
difficult. One way Americans have come to terms with this flux is to imagine some kind of utopia or dystopia. Each chapter of this book features versions of these, with racial mixing playing a central role.

While it is premature to propose a resolution to the narrative I present in *The United States of the United Races*, I do point to the optimism that my cases employ. Each requires critical analysis, but they also dare to propose a nation correcting its racial past. Although they have been the underdogs for much of U.S. history, their expansive optimism has opened up far more inclusive possibilities than their opposition could.