African Americans and the Color Line in Ohio, 1915-1930

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Published by The Ohio State University Press

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African Americans and the Color Line in Ohio, 1915-1930.
The Ohio State University Press, 2005.
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The Color Line’s Changing Dimensions

The Great Migration of African Americans and the magnification of the Ohio color line occurred in parallel. Racial segregation and racial discrimination intensified in Ohio during and immediately after World War I. Residential segregation of African Americans in Ohio cities increased significantly. Racial separation was maintained in Ohio’s business and professional activities, social life, and cultural institutions. Discrimination against Ohio’s African Americans was noticeably greater in housing, schools, public accommodations, law enforcement, and press coverage. Ohio’s white employers and private associations, such as fraternal organizations, generally drew color lines. Further, instances of violence against African Americans in Ohio were more frequent. In a narrow view, the growing intolerance in Ohio seemed to be a white reaction to the wartime black migration. Actually, the factors underlying this rising intolerance encompassed more than the migration, Ohio, and the war period.

During the period from 1882 to World War I, Anglo-Saxon Protestants across the nation became less tolerant of people who did not share their color, their land of origin, their cultural heritage, and their religious faith. The color bias against Native Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and African Africans was expressed in various ways. The federal policy of “civilizing Indians” (1877–1934) showed virtually no tolerance for Native American cultures. The Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and the Gentlemen’s Agreement (1907–1908) respectively prohibited the immigration of laborers from China and Japan. During 1890–1915, as horrendous lynching of African Americans proliferated in the South, southern states enacted laws that required racial segregation in virtually every aspect of life and that
In this era, disfranchised African American voters. Meanwhile, in the northern states, extralegal racial discrimination and segregation rose. Race riots occurred in New York in 1900 and in Springfield, Illinois in 1908. In the 30 years before World War I, nativists organized to oppose southern and eastern European immigrants, who were largely non-Protestants. For example, the Immigration Restriction League attempted to curtail immigration by advocating the passage of a federal literacy test bill that was repeatedly introduced in Congress (1898–1917). Meanwhile, some intolerant persons were emboldened by the development of a new pseudo-science that used grossly biased assumptions and concluded that humans were divided in a hierarchy of racial and nationality types headed by Anglo-Saxons and northwestern Europeans, who were superior to all others. William Z. Ripley’s *The Races of Europe*, published in 1899, disseminated one such theory. An anti-foreign thread ran through the Progressive Era’s reform movements favoring prohibition, women suffrage, and municipal reform. Reformers inflamed intolerance by blaming immigrants for supporting conservative urban political machines that opposed reforms.

The nationwide phenomenon of growing intolerance reached a new level of intensity and breadth during and shortly after World War I, when the increased black migration to Ohio was in progress. Restrictions on immigration from Asia, ethnocentric federal policies on Indian reservations, and the legal racial caste system in the South carried over from earlier times. In addition, the Ku Klux Klan, revived in 1915, issued anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic, anti-foreign, and white supremacy propaganda through Klan organizations in the North as well as the South. In 1916, Madison Grant published the *Passing of the Great Race* that was more influential than earlier pseudo-scientific works with racially biased conclusions. In 1917, the Congress passed and the President signed a literacy test bill meant to sharply curtail immigration from non-Protestant countries of southern and eastern Europe. Americans were further divided along ethnic lines by President Woodrow Wilson’s rhetorical attempts to turn public opinion in favor of United States’ entry into the war. According to Wilson “100 percent Americans” supported the war, unlike “hyphenated Americans.” Official war propaganda sparked a hysterical reaction against German Americans and their culture in the United States. Some of the foreign-born from southern and eastern Europe were the victims of a similar hysteria in the postwar Red Scare when nativists associated immigrants with Bolshevism. Meanwhile, black men were lynched and whites initiated race riots in cities across the nation. Hollywood distributed racially insulting films like “The Birth of a Nation.” Also, in that time context, increasing racial segregation occurred in urban residential areas.
During and immediately after World War I, residential segregation of African Americans proceeded at a quicker pace in Ohio and elsewhere in the North. The wartime trend in Ohio lacked the duration and magnitude to cause the development of African American residential areas comparable to the very large all-black districts that appeared in New York City, Chicago, and Philadelphia before the war. In 1920, all-black districts of major proportions still did not exist in Ohio’s urban centers or in many other northern cities where residential segregation increased in the previous decade. Nevertheless, by the war decade’s end, black urban concentrations in Ohio were significantly greater than before.

African American population densities increased in prewar black neighborhoods as well as in adjacent or nearby areas. Small predominantly black areas and streets existed in Ohio cities in 1914. These included parts of Central Avenue in Cleveland, East Long Street in Columbus, and the West End near the Ohio River in Cincinnati. During the war, black population density in Cleveland grew in the area bounded by East 55th Street, Euclid Avenue to the north, and the Cuyahoga River to the west. In addition, a few smaller black residential areas gained population in other parts of Cleveland’s East Side, while the West Side remained almost unoccupied by African Americans. In Cincinnati the black population growth was largely concentrated just above the Ohio River in the city’s lower West End, particularly within a north-south corridor composed of Cincinnati Wards 15–18. Black population gains in Columbus were more widely distributed than in other Ohio cities. Prewar migrants to Columbus tended to locate in several African American neighborhoods in that city instead of congregating only in East Long Street’s old black neighborhoods. By 1914 small black enclaves existed in each quadrant of an area encompassing downtown Columbus. Apparently, like earlier black newcomers, wartime migrants settled in black neighborhoods in various sectors of Columbus.

Census figures reflected patterns of residential segregation existing in Ohio during the World War I and the postwar period. In 1920 Ohio’s African American urban populations remained concentrated in a few census wards of each large city. In Cincinnati, seven wards encompassed 78 percent of all African Americans in the city. There were twenty-six wards each in Cincinnati and Cleveland. Sixty-three percent of Cleveland’s black population was located in two wards. In Columbus, four of sixteen wards contained 53 percent of the city’s black population. (See map 2.)

Between 1910 and 1920, migration trends among whites as well as blacks raised the proportions of blacks in the inner city wards of Ohio’s major urban centers. In-migration of blacks to old inner city districts
paralleled the out-migration of whites from those same areas. Undoubtedly, departing whites were engaged in flight from black newcomers, but at the same time they were participating in a larger phenomenon, nationwide suburban growth.\(^{17}\)

The accelerating trend leading to the formation of large residential patterns composed of predominantly black census districts was shown in

Map 2
Map of Columbus, Ohio, Showing Racial, National, and Industrial Localities, 1918.

the 1910 and 1920 census figures for major Ohio cities. The trend was most advanced in Cincinnati and Cleveland. Black population growth after 1910 was significant in Ohio wards, but in 1920 only one predominantly black ward existed in the state. In 1910 African Americans in Ohio rarely comprised more than a quarter of a ward’s population and never accounted for more than a third. However, in 1920 the black proportion of the ward population was 52 percent in Cincinnati’s Ward 18 and 40 percent in Cleveland’s Ward 11. These percentages were much higher than those for wards elsewhere in Cincinnati, Cleveland, and other Ohio cities in 1920. In Columbus, blacks were only a little more than a quarter of the population in Ward 7, which was the Columbus ward where African Americans were most populous. Blacks accounted for no more than 19 percent of the population in any Toledo ward. African Americans in Toledo resided in small neighborhoods, most notably in the areas of Toledo’s Pinewood, Canton, Stickney, and Summit Streets. Although the sizes of the state’s black urban neighborhoods varied, residential segregation was the rule in Ohio’s cities.

The residential segregation of African Americans in Ohio was largely the result of the fact that blacks were barred from certain houses, streets, and neighborhoods. Generally there was an informal, unstated understanding that dwellings in white neighborhoods would not be rented or sold to African Americans. Also, the residential exclusion of blacks sometimes was maintained by overt means, legal and illegal. Racially restrictive covenants in real estate agreements appeared in Ohio before the wartime migration. Historian Stephen Meyer demonstrates that such practices were widespread in the United States at the time. For example, in 1914, there was in Cleveland “a noticeable tendency toward inserting clauses in real estate deeds restricting the transfer of the property to colored people, Jews, and foreigners generally,” according to a National Association for the Advancement of Colored People branch report. By 1915 many white residents of Greenlawn Avenue near East 105th Street in Cleveland northeast held property deeds with clauses designed to prevent sales to blacks. Nevertheless, an African American was able to purchase property on Greenlawn Avenue and maintain residence there even after white neighbors expressed objections. Greenlawn Avenue’s white property owners met to discuss ways to remove the new black resident of the neighborhood. They claimed that the presence of African American or Jewish residents on the avenue depreciated property values. Evidently the racially restrictive real estate agreement existed in Ohio even after 1917 when the United States Supreme Court ruled that such devices were unconstitutional. In 1919 a formal agreement meant to exclude blacks from houses in the vicinity of Vinal and Albert
Streets in East Toledo was signed by 146 white residents and filed in the Lucas County Recorder’s office.23

Harassment and violence sometimes were used to prevent African Americans from occupying certain houses in all-white or racially mixed residential areas in Ohio. For example, in 1917, racial tensions rose in East Toledo as the wartime migration altered black residential patterns. An African American rented a house near a Bulgarian immigrant residential area in Toledo; the black renter subsequently received an anonymous note stating a racial epithet and threatening violence in imperfect English.24 In 1917 and 1919, several houses occupied by blacks in Cleveland were vandalized by whites who broke windows and sometimes caused other more substantial damage.25

Meanwhile, whites in Ohio less often expressed their objections when African Americans occupied additional houses on already racially mixed streets adjacent to largely black neighborhoods. Indeed, some white property owners in such areas were financially interested in changing the occupancy of houses from white to black. Referring to Cleveland’s racially changing areas in 1918, a Cleveland Negro Welfare Association official said, “landlords raise rents in houses occupied by white people to get rid of them, and then make a higher charge to colored tenants.”26 Some black tenants lacking rental alternatives were required to pay rents that were racially discriminatory. The Welfare Association officer noted that in some instances blacks in Cleveland’s largely African American Central Avenue area paid more per room than whites living in the same district.27 Similarly, in Cincinnati some whites exploited the housing crunch for African Americans. During and after World War I, land speculators in Cincinnati acquired West End tenement houses in racially changing areas. The new landlords raised rents and then sold the tenements, making inflated profits at the expense of new African American tenants.28

During 1915–1920, the separation of blacks and whites in Ohio’s churches was more extensive than racial segregation in the state’s residential areas. Church color lines in Ohio and across the country were shaped by a long trend reaching back into the eighteenth century. Prior to 1800, blacks and whites in the South and North commonly attended the same church services. Increasingly from the 1790s onward African Americans worshipped in black churches affiliated with black Protestant denominations and, to a lesser extent, with white Protestant denominations. In Ohio and other states, few black churches were linked to any one white denomination by 1916; for example, only one of Ohio’s black churches was associated with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, while two were connected with
Congregational churches. They included Cincinnati’s Shiloh Cumberland Presbyterian Church and Cleveland’s Mt. Zion Congregational Church, whose members were socially prominent African Americans. Eighty percent of Ohio’s 392 African American churches belonged to black denominations. Most of them were affiliated with the African Methodist Episcopal church and the National Baptist Convention. Also, color lines existed in the joint activities of Ohio’s clergymen. In large cities there were black ministers’ associations, including the Baptist Ministers’ Alliance in Cleveland and the Baptist Ministerial Association in Columbus. The distance between blacks and whites grew as white congregations relocated from church buildings in the vicinity of black neighborhoods to the suburbs. In Cleveland, over a dozen white churches sold their edifices to African American congregations in 1920. Racially integrated congregations were rare in Ohio during and after World War I. White Protestant churches did not encourage blacks to join. Perhaps excepting one family, African Americans did not attend white Protestant churches in Cleveland. Generally, the Roman Catholic church did not provide separate parishes for the comparatively few black Catholics in Ohio. In 1865 St. Ann’s Church was established in Cincinnati, and in 1916 it still was the only black Catholic parish in Ohio. Sometimes, through 1920, attempts were made to involve blacks in Catholic church activities in Cleveland.29

This exclusive color line in churches mirrored the separation of blacks and whites that generally existed in Ohio’s organized social life during 1915–1920, as noted in Chapter 1. In Ohio and throughout the country, Masons, Odd Fellows, and other fraternal societies and sororities were almost completely divided along the color line well before 1915. Likewise, racial separation also was perpetuated in various other kinds of voluntary associations including social clubs, civic organizations, and business and professional associations.30

During 1915–1920, there was less racial separation in Ohio public schools than in the state’s churches and other private institutions and organizations. Generally, Ohio schools were racially integrated, but some segregated schools existed at each level of education. Segregation was more common in elementary schools than in high schools. Most segregated schools were in southern and central Ohio. In a few public school districts, schools were segregated because local authorities officially maintained dual school system policies. In other districts, schools were unofficially segregated because of the residential concentrations of blacks in those districts. Sometimes the gerrymandering of school district boundaries created racially separate schools.

This basic pattern of racial practices in Ohio’s public schools existed
from the late nineteenth century through 1920. Desegregation of public schools occurred after 1887, when the Ohio legislature prohibited racial segregation in the public schools. Dual schools systems were most common in southern and central Ohio in 1887. Desegregation proceeded rapidly in most school districts in those regions; however, it occurred slowly over several years in some places, largely in southern Ohio, where whites resisted school integration. Dual school systems contrary to state law were retained in a few southern and central Ohio school districts, particularly in Gallipolis, Baltimore, and Hillsboro. In the same regions, the gerrymandering of school district lines resulted in separate schools for blacks in Chillicothe and Xenia. Yet integrated schools were located across southern and central Ohio, notably in large cities. Black students attended various Cincinnati public schools. One black elementary school remained in Cincinnati after that city abolished its dual school system policy. Schools were integrated in Columbus, Springfield, and Dayton.31

Integration prevailed in northern Ohio’s school districts, for example, in Cleveland and Youngstown. Blacks attended public schools in Cleveland in antebellum times.32 Cleveland’s schools were probably more integrated than those of any other city in the state. However, by the end of wartime black migration, some Cleveland schools had large African American enrollments resulting from the residential segregation of blacks in certain school districts. Fifty-six African American teachers were employed by the Cleveland school system in the school year 1918–1919. Most of them taught in predominately white schools. Only in a few cases was more than one African American teacher assigned to the same school. Few African American teachers were assigned to schools in predominately African American school districts.33 In the school year 1919–1920, the number of African American teachers in Cleveland schools increased to sixty-eight.34 In Youngstown and Columbus as well as in Cleveland, African American teachers regularly were assigned to teach in racially mixed classrooms during 1887–1915. But African American teachers elsewhere in the state generally were hired to teach only in black schools and in segregated classrooms in integrated schools systems.35

Forceful and enduring campaigns for the restoration of racially dual school systems were practically unknown in Ohio communities that abolished such dual school systems in accordance with state legislation requiring school integration. But interest in separate schools for African Americans mounted after 1900, and new all-black schools were established within the integrated school systems of Columbus and Cincinnati between 1910 and 1920.36
In Columbus there was no segregated public school between 1887 and 1911, and a few African American teachers were employed in several of the city's integrated public schools, mainly in ones with large black enrollments. The situation changed somewhat when the Columbus school board evidently attempted to appease whites advocating the introduction of a system-wide school segregation policy. In 1909, after preparing for a couple of years, the Columbus school board redrew the lines of some school districts using gerrymandered boundaries designed to form a district including a large body of black students. In 1911 African American students were admitted to Champion Avenue Junior High School, recently built in the new district that included black neighborhoods in an area of East Long Street. Some of the black students in the Champion Avenue school district lived across the street from an integrated school. White students in the district were sent to other junior high schools. All four African American teachers previously employed in various public schools were reassigned to the Champion Avenue Junior High School where they joined newly hired personnel, other black teachers, and a black principal. Integration continued in schools at the elementary and high school levels within the district encompassing the Champion Avenue School; it was the only segregated school in any Columbus district then. Black students attended integrated schools in various parts of Columbus in subsequent years. For example, in 1919–1920, African American pupils were enrolled in Columbus East High School, Columbus North High School, and Columbus Commercial High School.

In Cincinnati, a dual city school system including separate school boards was abolished a few years after 1887. But one all-black elementary school remained in an African American area of Walnut Hills. In 1901, at the request of many African American parents, the all-black institution's name was changed to the Frederick Douglass Elementary School in honor of the renowned black abolitionist. African American students in any Cincinnati school district were eligible to attend Douglass School on a voluntary basis. All the teachers and the principal of Douglass School were African Americans. In each of Cincinnati's other schools there were mixed classes, white teachers, and a white principal. In 1908 the parents, teachers, and principal of Douglass School urged the authorities to improve their educational facilities. In response, the school board approved the construction of a modern building for black students. The opening of the new Douglass School building in 1911 did not alter the integration status quo. There was still only one separate school in Cincinnati.

In following years, however, support for the establishment of a second
all-black public school developed among African American parents who were impressed by the quality of education in the new Douglass School and in private schools for blacks that appeared in Cincinnati between 1910 and 1914. An African American teacher previously employed at Douglass School, Jennie D. Porter, started a privately financed all-black kindergarten in 1911. Initially housed in a church, it moved to a larger building after winning local popularity and gaining enrollments. In 1914 the school superintendent and the school board, responding to voices in the black community, authorized the establishment of another separate elementary school, eventually named the Harriett Beecher Stowe School. Although approved on a temporary basis, the school endured and grew under the supervision of Principal Jennie D. Porter. In 1915 an African American teaching staff was employed and classes were held in the former Hughes School building. Enrollments increased regularly in the following years of the decade. Attendance was voluntary and all students retained the right to enroll in integrated schools in their own districts. In 1916 the school board approved the construction of a new building for the school, but the construction plan was not finalized before the end of the decade. At the same time, the Cincinnati superintendent of schools refused to exclude black students from Walnut Hills High School. In 1916 many white students threatened to strike if the black students were not removed from the high school. In response to their threat to strike, the superintendent said, "to do so [to strike] would not only be a violation of the law, but also at variance with the spirit of our public schools."

Meanwhile, a few separate schools for African Americans in Ohio received financial backing from white philanthropists ostensibly interested in "uplifting the Negro." The white philanthropists' control over black education in the United States is a subject of scholarly discussion. Northern philanthropists since the Civil War had tended to fund separate black vocational training schools in states of the South and the North. White philanthropists contributing to black education in Ohio in this decade supported separate schools that emphasized industrial training. Sallie Peters McCall of Cincinnati was the white benefactor of the Colored Industrial School of Cincinnati established in 1914 with an endowment of $400,000. Also, the philanthropy of a private company supported separate education for African Americans at Middletown in southwestern Ohio. In 1918 the American Rolling Mill Company constructed a building for the Booker T. Washington School, as it became known, and then donated the school structure to the city of Middletown. Three African American teachers staffed Middletown's separate school.
Following the advent of the wartime migration, black migrant children were placed in special classes in the integrated public schools of some Ohio cities. Even in Cleveland, whose tradition of integrated education was extraordinarily long, some schools formed all-black classes in 1917. The segregated students were largely recent migrants from the South. Cleveland school officials justified their separation from other students on grounds that their scholastic achievement levels did not match their grade levels according to Cleveland public school standards. When African Americans in Cleveland questioned the practice, the school officials gave assurances that the segregation of black students from the South was temporary, indicating that it would continue only until the students were properly classified.45

African Americans were admitted to public universities and to several private colleges in Ohio during the second decade of the twentieth century. One private denominational institution in Ohio offered separate undergraduate education for African Americans. The Methodist Episcopal church founded Wilberforce University in 1856. Located at Xenia in southwestern Ohio, Wilberforce eventually was affiliated with the African Methodist Episcopal church. Wilberforce was distinguished as one of two enduring black colleges established in the United States before the Civil War.46

Ohio’s racially integrated colleges and universities sometimes practiced racial discrimination. For example, administrators sometimes tactfully discouraged African Americans from entering specific programs at The Ohio State University. In reply to a prospective African American student’s inquiry about an engineering program, the University president replied: “I should be very glad to aid you in any way possible in securing an education in Electrical Engineering.”47 Using discouraging words, the president concluded: “On one matter, however, I feel constrained to say just a word. The sentiment north of the Ohio River seems to be so persistent against the Negro in skilled labor that I doubt very much whether an educated Negro has a fair show or a show worthwhile in this part of the country.”48

Many black students enrolled in The Ohio State University during this time and some participated in campus activities. A partial list of black students at the university in 1919–1920 included 47 names.49 African Americans participated in some of the university’s nonacademic activities. Daniel Ferguson was elected class orator for the Class of 1916.50 William Mason of Cincinnati won first prize in an oratorical contest in March 1917.51 George R. Dorsey was a member of the 1916–1917 debate team captained by John W. Bricker, who later served as United States senator representing Ohio.52
Several of Ohio’s universities and colleges granted academic degrees to African Americans during 1914–1920. They included Antioch College, Case School of Applied Science, Denison University, Oberlin College, The Ohio State University, Ohio University, Ohio Wesleyan University, University of Cincinnati, Western Reserve University, and Wilberforce University. The numbers of African Americans graduating from each of these academic institutions ranged from zero to as many as eleven in a given academic year.53

Discrimination against African Americans in Ohio’s public accommodations intensified as the state’s black population grew during and after World War I. This increasing racial discrimination in the state’s public places was rooted in a trend that was already in progress by the end of the nineteenth century. In the 1890s, while Ohio cities were receiving black migrations, some of Ohio’s urban public accommodations departed from an earlier custom of admitting financially comfortable and socially prominent African Americans.54 Commenting on the Cincinnati example of the phenomenon, Wendell P. Dabney, editor of the Cincinnati Union, recalled: “Colored people used to go to Parker’s Grove, the site of our Coney Island. All of the picnic grounds were open to them, the beer gardens, theaters, Over-the-Rhine resorts, the Zoo café, dining room and most of the ordinary restaurants.”55 Subsequently fewer and fewer public places in Cincinnati welcomed blacks of any social economic status. Dabney explained: “Always a large increase in numbers of colored people has been followed by a large increase of prejudice.”56 By World War I, practices of racial exclusion and segregation were commonplace in Ohio’s public places.

In southern and central Ohio, racial discrimination in public accommodations often was blatant during 1915–1920. Signs reading “For White People Only” or “Colored Trade Not Wanted” were posted in private businesses that were open to the public.57 Hotels, theaters, restaurants and other public accommodations discriminated against blacks. For example, in 1915 one observer noted that in Columbus “there is not a moving picture house which does not openly declare seating our people in the last seats.”58 In 1919 all but one of Cincinnati’s hotels excluded African Americans.59 Restaurants in Springfield, Columbus, and other Ohio cities were accused of racial discrimination.60

In the meantime, racial bias also spread in the public places of northern Ohio where the commitment to equality traditionally was greater than in the state’s other regions. After 1898 African Americans were increasingly turned away from hotels and other public places in Western Reserve towns and cities including Cleveland.61 Discrimination against blacks was practiced less openly in northern Ohio than elsewhere in the
state. Signs excluding African Americans were rarely seen in windows. A variety of subtler, but no less insulting, tactics were used to turn away black patrons. In 1914 attorney Harry E. Davis of the Cleveland Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People reported: “Cleveland is, to a large degree, free from the baneful prejudice with which some of our brethren must contend. But there has been some trouble in the theatres, restaurants and other places of public accommodation, and some attempt at discrimination in institutions supported by public funds.”

By the eve of the wartime black migration, racial discrimination was widespread in Cleveland’s downtown restaurants, hotels, and theaters, while racial bias existed in recreational facilities elsewhere in the city. For example, the concessions at Cleveland’s Luna Park were closed to African Americans except when the Cleveland Caterers’ Association held its annual summer picnic there. On such days, however, the park swimming pool was always out of order and not open for use. In a letter to the Cleveland News written in 1919, The Reverend O. W. Childers commented on the spread of prejudice in Cleveland’s public places over the decade. Drawing on personal experiences in Cleveland, the pastor of the St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church wrote:

Mr. Editor, how would you like to go about your daily duties always in fear you will disturb the quiet of the community and bring upon yourself woe simply because you are a colored man? We go into public places . . . always expecting insult and fearing for our safety. Only a few weeks ago four ladies of my congregation, some children and I were stoned on a streetcar of this city for no apparent reason than that we were colored.

The level of white hostility rose in Ohio cities and in urban centers elsewhere in the country during and after World War I. The growth of racial intolerance was expressed in violence against urban African Americans as well as in increased racial discrimination in public accommodations. Periodic mob actions and race riots occurred in the United States prior to World War I. Major race riots broke out in East St. Louis, Chicago, the District of Columbia, and many other cities outside Ohio during the war and postwar periods. Typically, whites initiated the violence and blacks responded accordingly. Major riots involved large numbers and caused many physical injuries and fatalities. The magnitude of racial violence in Ohio was comparatively small. Yet between 1915 and 1920, there was lynch mob activity in Lima, rioting in Cleveland and Youngstown, and racial incidents bordering on violence in Marion and
Toledo. Also, in a number of instances, white mobs harassed and sometimes stoned blacks who were using a public facility or public area.

Perhaps an account of an attempted lynching in Lima during the summer of 1916 best illustrates the kinds of extreme conduct that arose from racial intolerance in Ohio at the time. On August 30, Allen County Sheriff Sherman Eley arrested Charles Daniels, an African American transient from Mississippi, for allegedly attacking Vivian Baber (white) in her home. Mr. and Mrs. Baber lived on a farm in Shawnee Township of Allen County, where Lima was the county seat. On the same day, a posse of two hundred men apprehended Daniels in the vicinity of the Baber farmhouse. Fearing trouble, Sheriff Eley took Daniels to Ottawa, some eighteen miles away. Ottawa authorities then transferred Daniels elsewhere. Meanwhile, a white mob formed at the Lima jail before dusk. The whites broke into the jail in search of Daniels. After failing to find him there, the mob broke into the Allen County courthouse and into the sheriff’s home. Upon his return to Lima Sheriff Eley found the mob awaiting him. He escaped it temporarily, but was finally caught. The mob stripped off his clothes, beat him, and kicked him in an attempt to force him to disclose Daniels’ whereabouts. The mob went so far as to string a rope from a telephone pole, place a noose around the sheriff’s neck, and pull the rope taut before Eley revealed that he took Daniels to Ottawa. Traveling by car, many in the mob went to Ottawa, where they again failed to locate Daniels. In the meantime, Sheriff Eley escaped.68

Afterwards, Lima law enforcement officials got the situation in hand. Nevertheless, it was reported that “a strong undercurrent of feeling” against African Americans continued to exist. Upon the advice of Lima city officials, railroad and street paving contractors removed about 150 African American transient laborers from Lima. White men were hired to take their places. The police advised prominent African American residents of Lima to remain in their homes after dark.69

Charged with assault, Daniels was put on trial, found guilty, and sentenced to three to twenty years in prison. At the trial, “Mrs. Baber identified Daniels as her assailant,” according to a press account that said: “It was proven and admitted by the defendant that he had been near the Baber home shortly before the assault, but he steadfastly denied the charge.”70 Defense witnesses testified that Mrs. Baber had previously singled out as the perpetrator a different black man, Charles Cole, when he, Daniels, and other county jail prisoners appeared before her.71 Subsequently, several in the lynch mob were brought to trial, some were found guilty and some were given jail sentences.72

Minor riots occurred in Ohio as the wartime migration was reaching
a peak in 1917. On June 11, Cleveland police were called out twice to quell rioting in the Central Avenue and East 14th Street area. The origin of the rioting was unclear. According to one account, the trouble grew out of a saloon incident. An African American representing himself as a beggar was chased from a saloon by a group of white men. Those seeing the African American being pursued by white men evidently assumed that he insulted a white woman. Rumors about the incident contributed to violence in that Cleveland neighborhood. Whites of foreign origin and blacks fought with fists, stones, and clubs. Scores of people were involved, but there were no serious injuries. In the summer of 1917, white and black laborers participated in a Youngstown race riot. Evidently the violence in Youngstown ensued from a competition for jobs in the labor market there. In 1919, vandalism and some violence occurred in Columbus when the Pennsylvania Railroad angered white employees by hiring black workers to break a strike.

Rioting did not occur in other Ohio cities, but expressions of prejudice against African Americans occasionally raised concerns about the possibility of racial violence, for example, in Toledo and Marion. Racial tension was high in East Toledo during the summer of 1917. Several incidents suggesting possible hostilities between foreign-born whites and blacks in Toledo were reported in July. In 1919 biased whites in Marion evidently vandalized property owned by African Americans and put up racist signs. Responding to this harassment, Marion police chief James W. Thompson took steps to protect Marion's black residents. The Marion police issued bulletins that declared: “Every protection will be given the colored citizens of Marion and those interfering with their rights will be punished to the full extent of the law.”

Also in 1919, white mobs physically attacked young African Americans who used Cleveland parks. On June 24 about thirty black children were attacked on a streetcar while returning from an afternoon excursion at Garfield Park. A mob of about fifty white men and boys stoned the streetcar and otherwise harassed members of the young excursion party that was under the supervision of three chaperones, including the Reverend O. W. Childers of St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church. Following complaints, the Cleveland Police investigated the violent incident. Also in the summer of 1919, whites threw stones at small black children who were swimming in one of Cleveland's park lakes. The lifeguards at the lake did not try to prevent this stoning. Afterwards, complaints were made and the lifeguards were dismissed.

These racial incidents in Cleveland and elsewhere in Ohio were symptomatic of a hostile white reaction to the growing African American presence in the state that accompanied the wartime black
migration to the North. The trend in every Ohio region was toward greater exclusion and segregation of African Americans in the period 1915–1920. The color line encircled all African Americans as one group, and all African Americans in Ohio experienced manifestations of color prejudice.

The nature of the Ohio color line, nevertheless, varied from region to region in 1920, being most rigid in southern Ohio. For example, racial segregation in hotels, restaurants, and other public accommodations was greater in Cincinnati than in Cleveland. Some all-black public schools existed in the state's southern and central regions, but there were no such separate schools in northern Ohio. The explanation of such differences in this time requires looking backward to Ohio's early history. Different color line customs were established in each Ohio region in the early nineteenth century, and these heritages were perpetuated in altered form through 1920. Starting early in the nineteenth century, white intolerance was most intense in southern Ohio, somewhat less so in central Ohio, and least intense in northern Ohio. Conversely, the color line was least restrictive in the northern region and successively more prescriptive in the central and southern regions respectively.

The factors influencing the initial character of black-white relations in Ohio were the geographical origins and settlement patterns of blacks and whites in pioneer Ohio and their proximity to the South, according to historians John D. Barnhardt, Robert E. Chaddock, and David C. Shilling. The racial perspectives of white settlers reflected their geographical backgrounds. In the early years of Ohio statehood, white natives of the South and their progeny constituted most of the population in many southern counties and a large part of the central region's population. Such migrants, often from Virginia and Kentucky, came with anti-slavery as well as anti-black views. Generally they were poor farmers who had owned no slaves. Previously disadvantaged in their economic, social, and political competition with slave-owning planters in the South, they did not wish to see slavery and a planter aristocracy established in Ohio. At the same time, their racial views were harsh and encompassed preferences for the kinds of black subservience found in the South.79

Other white settlers came from northeastern states and carried with them the values of that quarter of the United States, where a relative tolerance prevailed on issues of color. For instance, the first state constitutions of several New England states contained anti-slavery provisions. Some southern Ohio settlements, notably Marietta, were composed of New Englanders. But, especially after 1830, white migrants to central and northeastern Ohio counties frequently came from Pennsylvania and
the eastern seaboard. Among them were anti-slavery English Quakers and immigrants from German provinces and Ireland. 80

The white New Englanders' impact on settlement was greater in northern Ohio than in any other Ohio region. They were the earliest white settlers of that part of Ohio and, until midcentury, New Englanders comprised most people in the Connecticut Western Reserve, a large area encompassing present-day Cleveland. People of New England stock were a minority of the population in northwestern Ohio, but they were extraordinarily influential there. 81

African American settlement patterns in the antebellum period also impacted the character of black-white relations in Ohio. White intolerance levels in Ohio regions were related to the distribution of African American population across the state. White intolerance was least pronounced in northern Ohio where African Americans were least numerous. Color bias was most evident in Ohio's southern and central regions where African Americans were most densely populated. Most African Americans in early Ohio came from southern states, and prior to 1860 the great majority of blacks in Ohio resided in the state's southern region, where Cincinnati housed Ohio's largest urban black population. 82

An Ohio region's proximity to the slaveholding South also was a factor shaping the nature of its race relations early in the nineteenth century. The nearness of many southern Ohio counties to slave states reinforced and perpetuated southern Ohio's custom of strictly enforcing the color line. The state's Ohio River counties shared borders with either Virginia or Kentucky. Cross-river economic and social relations fostered a common culture in the Ohio Valley that was much influenced by the South's way of life, for example, regarding the roles of free blacks. The South's social-cultural impact on Ohio was minimal in regions located west of Ohio's boundary with Pennsylvania, and the color line was less vivid there than in Ohio's southern counties. 83

The early nineteenth century regional model of white intolerance was perpetuated into the twentieth century as the color line heritage of each Ohio region was handed down from generation to generation. A tradition of protesting against color prejudice was a part of this legacy. Chapter 3 discusses social justice and social welfare issues and the activities of black leaders in Ohio. It asserts that the nature of protest activities in the period 1915–1920 varied from region to region under the influence of Ohio's nineteenth century black-white relations model.