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**Jim Crow in the Saddle: The Expulsion of African American Jockeys from American Racing.**

Michael Leeds  
Department of Economics  
Fox School of Business and Management  
Speakman Hall  
Philadelphia, PA 19122-6091  
Voice: 215.204.8030  
E-mail: mleeds@temple.edu

Hugh Rockoff  
Department of Economics  
Rutgers University, 75 Hamilton Street  
New Brunswick NJ 08901  
Rockoff@econ.rutgers.edu

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## **Abstract**

During the postbellum era there were many prominent African American Jockeys, winners of all the big races. But at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century African American jockeys were forced out. This paper uses a new data set on the Triple Crown races to explore the causes and consequences of the expulsion of African American jockeys.

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## 1. The Great African American Jockeys

At the first running of the Kentucky Derby in 1875 thirteen of the fifteen horses were ridden by African Americans. The winning horse was Aristedes, the favorite. The jockey was Oliver Lewis, an African American. The trainer was Ansel Williams, an African American. This was the legacy of slavery, when most jockeys on Southern tracks were African American. Gradually in the decades that followed, more and more White jockeys entered the field. But African Americans continued to play an important role. Among the great African American jockeys were Willie Simms who won the Kentucky Derby twice, the Belmont Stakes twice and the Preakness Stakes once. At the turn of the century Jimmy Winkfield won the Kentucky Derby two years running, in 1901 and 1902, but Winkfield was the last African American to win a Triple Crown race. Indeed, he was one of the last African Americans to ride in a Triple Crown race. At the turn of the century, African American jockeys were expelled from American racing.

The expulsion of African American jockeys was a particularly clear example of Jim Crow, the policy of excluding African Americans from political life and all but the lowest rungs of economic life. Racism and segregation had always existed in both North and South.<sup>1</sup> But at the turn of the century there was a surge of racism. African American were disenfranchised and forced out of many jobs that they had occupied previously. The classic history of Jim Crow is

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<sup>1</sup> Vann Woodward later conceded that he may have underestimated the early extent of segregation, particularly in cities.

C. Vann Woodward's *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. Racing fits the pattern he describes to a T. Somers (1974, 35) reports that the races were separated at New Orleans tracks in the immediate aftermath of Reconstruction but that things then changed for the better.

“Black jockeys continued to ride on local tracks in the 1880s and 1890s and often dominated the winner’s circle. Negroes gained the right to attend races on equal footing with whites in the 1880s after professional sportsmen assumed control of local racing from the city’s socially exclusive jockey clubs.”

But by the beginning of the twentieth century racial inclusion at the race track was over.

## **2. Who Forced the African American Jockeys Out?**

Contemporary accounts suggest that White jockeys conspired to force out the African American jockeys; to “draw the color line,” as it was expressed at the time. They had the tacit support of the owners, although it is difficult to tell the extent to which owners passively accepted as opposed to actively supported drawing the line. We will return to the interests of the owners below. One of the most convincing accounts of start of the expulsion appeared in the *New York Times* (July 29, 1900, p. 19). After describing the sudden decline – from the 1899 racing season to the 1900 season – in the number of African American jockeys, the *Times* reporter explains that

“The public generally accepted the theory that the old time favorites of African blood had outgrown their skill, and really were out of date because of their inability to ride up to form of past years. Racing men know better. As a matter of fact, the Negro jockey is down and out not because he

could no longer ride, but because of a quietly formed combination shut him out.”

The reporter could not say for sure, or was not willing to say, whether the owners played a role in the expulsion of the African American jockeys. He would only go this far.

“Gossip around the racing headquarters said that the white riders had organized to draw the color line. In this they were said to be upheld and advised by certain horse owners and turfmen who have great influence in racing affairs. Rumor even went so far as to state that The Jockey Club approved the plan tacitly and unofficially.”

The reporter had some circumstantial evidence that the conspiracy had reached the Jockey Club, the ruling body of New York racing: a report that a member of who was close to offering a ride to an African American jockey, one whom he had employed before, suddenly decided to break off negotiations. He also reports that initially some owners laughed at the idea of a color line and continued to offer mounts to African American jockeys, but they were soon brought into line.

“The Negro riders got mounts at first, but they failed to win races. Somehow or other, they met with all sorts of accidents and interferences in their races. The doubting horse owners seem to have been convinced since the early meetings that if they want to win races they must ride the white jockeys.”

In the summer of 1900, fresh off a third-place finish in the Kentucky Derby, the Hall of Fame African American jockey Jimmy Winkfield went to New York to look for rides. There he heard about the “Anti-Colored Union” of White jockeys, and saw famous African American jockeys searching desperately for rides. Winkfield then went to Chicago, but the determination of White jockeys to shut out African American jockeys hit Chicago as well. Winkfield was attacked in a

race at a track near Chicago, crashed into the rail by a White jockey. Winkfield was hospitalized with severe leg injuries, but the story did not end there. Soon the papers were reporting a “race war” between White and African American jockeys at the track (Drape 2006, 71-84, Hotaling 2005, 36-39). Winkfield was not out of American racing at this point – he would go on to win the Kentucky Derby twice – but it was clear that the color line was being drawn. Drape (2006, 81-82) suggests that hiring African American jockeys lasted longer at Southern tracks because Southern jockeys were used to competing against African Americans and did not feel threatened.

Here is the way Charles B. Parmer (1939, 150) summarized the tactics used by White jockeys in *For Gold and Glory*, his classic history of American racing.<sup>2</sup>

But some of his [African-American Jockey Jimmy Lee’s] compatriots of color became a trifle cocky in the jockey rooms. The white boys retaliated by ganging up on the black riders on the trails. A black boy would be pocketed, thrust back in the race; or his mount would be bumped out of contention; or a white boy would run alongside, slip a foot under a black boy’s stirrup, and toss him out of the saddle. Again, while ostensibly whipping their own horses those white fellows would lash out and cut the nearest Negro rider ... They literally ran the black boys off the track.

At the time, of course, it was all too easy, as the *Times* reporter noted, to accept a racist explanation for the disappearance of the African American Jockey. In 1905 in a column called “Negro Rider on Wane: White Jockeys’ Superior Intelligence Supersedes” in the *Washington Post* (August 20, p. S3) the author

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<sup>2</sup> We haven’t been able to learn much about Parmer, and he doesn’t document his conclusions in academic fashion. But on the internal evidence his book appears to be based on impressive knowledge of the industry.

catalogued the achievements of African American jockeys at length, but then reports that

“Horseman ascribe the passing of the colored riders to the fact that it is no longer considered ignoble to be a jockey, and the money to be made in the profession has drawn boys of good family to essay to learn the art of riding, So the white jockey is now crowding out the colored riders, as the paleface is pressing back the red men on the plains.”

No mention was made here of the violence used to drive African American jockeys from the track.<sup>3</sup>

Some journalists got it right. Leroy Williams was one of the last great African American jockeys. But as the *Washington Post* (January 11, 1907, p. 8.) explained.

Williams has a hard row to hoe every time he mounts a horse, for not only has to force every ounce of speed out of his horse, but he has to steer clear of the “pockets” and snares that the white boys set to trap him in.

The expulsion of African Americans from Major League Baseball preceded the expulsion of the African American jockeys by a decade (McDaniel 2013, 280 and Seymour 1960, 278). It was, perhaps, somewhat easier for White players to threaten to boycott teams that fielded African Americans. Adrian “Cap” Anson, perhaps the first great star of professional baseball, was an influential opponent of integrated baseball. As famous as they might be, no White jockey had that sort of market power that as did “Cap” Anson or his teams. On the other hand, mob violence – threats by fans to attack African American players – may have been more effective in baseball. Owners of race horses were unlikely to tolerate violence that might injure a valuable and fragile animal.

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<sup>3</sup> Nor was there any mention of violence against Native Americans.

### 3. The Owners

The role of owners is an important but complicated question. Mooney (2014, Kindle locations 4229-4257) argues that White jockeys needed the “tacit consent” of the owners to expel the African American jockeys. “Tacit” seems the right adjective. Some, motivated by bigotry, were probably actively involved in expelling the African American riders, as suggested in the rumor reported by the *Times* above, but many had been willing to hire African American riders before the wave of White violence, and probably would have continued to do so in its absence.

Becker’s analysis of discrimination tells us that an owner that practiced discrimination, before the wave of violence, was operating against his own pecuniary interests. The violence changed that calculation. Afterwards, an owner who hired an African American jockey risked losing not only a race, but perhaps even a valuable race horse. Even owners who felt some sympathy for African American riders would think twice about employing them. The reporter for the *Times*, who we quoted above, noted that “Even the trainers of their own color appear to be afraid to employ them, for results tell, ...” (*New York Times*, July 29, 1900, p. 19).

Mooney (2014 Kindle location 4251) also notes that in the 1890s the Jockey Clubs gradually took control of the administration of racing in the United States. This made it even harder for owners who wished to ignore the color line

to do so. Jockey Clubs thus played the same role as craft unions, which had a history of excluding African Americans.<sup>4</sup>

From an economic point of view, the expulsion of African American jockeys can be analyzed as a tax on the owners: the owners had to pay more to get a good jockey. Like any tax, the impact differed from owner to owner. Less wealthy owners probably felt the expulsion of the African American jockeys more than wealthy owners. Owners who harbored racist feelings and wanted to exclude African American jockeys could get some satisfaction from seeing them forced out that made up for the increased cost of hiring jockeys.

Owners that had developed good working relationships with outstanding African American jockeys probably paid the highest price. On the other hand, Joe Drape (2006, 54) tells the story of “Father” Bill Daly an Irish-American owner and trainer – not by any means a priest – based in New York. Daly trafficked (Drape’s term) in Irish-American jockeys, whom he brutalized, but pushed to success. Perhaps his two best known jockeys were Winnie O’Connor and Hall of Famer Danny Maher. Daly specialized in poor, usually Irish-American boys, and benefitted when African American jockeys were driven from racing. Any resulting increase in jockey salaries was probably a small part of the cost of breeding and racing horses, and as a result there was only a limited incentive for some owners to oppose the expulsion of the African American jockeys. For many owners, including the richest and most influential, horse racing was a hobby; losing

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<sup>4</sup> Being organized along skill lines, craft unions exert their power by restricting access to skills and employment. This leads naturally to the exclusion of specific groups.

money was less important than winning. As long as the same rule applied across the board, they would not be much affected by the drawing of the color line.

#### **4. What do the odds tell us?**

Although records of early races are not complete, there are newspaper accounts of the great American races, and we have used these accounts, and various secondary sources, typically also based on these accounts, to construct spread sheets showing the basic data – winning times, winning horses, bloodlines, odds, jockeys, etc. – for America’s triple crown: the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness Stakes, and Belmont Stakes.<sup>5</sup> The odds given by bookmakers or by the track in the case of parimutuel betting reflect a wide variety of variables: a horse’s performance in recent races, its bloodlines, the jockey’s record, the weather, day-of-the-race rumors about the health or mental readiness of the horse, theories about horse racing (which probably change over time) and many other factors. We do not have sufficient data to extract the impacts of all of these factors. Nevertheless, the odds can give us additional insight into the nature of discrimination in horseracing. If owners discriminate, African American jockeys will have to settle for longshots, and the odds will lengthen further if bettors refuse to wager on horses ridden by African American jockeys.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Although these three races were always important, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were challengers for the position of America’s top races. Term “triple crown” was first used to describe the three most important British races. The term itself was first used by the *New York Times* in 1923; but we have not done a comprehensive search for the origin of the term in American racing.

<sup>6</sup> Brown and Yang (2015) compare the odds on female jockeys with their success rate to determine and show that female jockeys were somewhat underestimated.

Chart 1 shows the “implied probabilities” derived from odds at the track of winning in each Kentucky Derby from 1875 to 1902 by race of the jockey riding the winner. We used these “implied probabilities” rather than the odds reported in the newspapers mainly because a chart based on the odds used by bettors is hard to read: the races won by long shots obscure all the other races. The “implied probabilities” on the other hand, all fall between 0 and 1. Probabilities, moreover, are more familiar to economists.

The formula connecting the track odds to the implied probability is

$$(1) P = 1/(O + 1)$$

Where P = the “implied probability” a horse will win the race

O = the track odds on the horse

Suppose the odds are 3:2. Then the “implied probability” is

$$P = 1/[(3/2)+1] = 0.40.$$

The frequency interpretation is that if the race was run 5 times, we would expect that this horse to win twice and lose three times.

We put the term “implied probability” in quotation marks because the calculation assumes that the odds are determined in a fair pool. Suppose the pool consisted of a total of \$100 bet on the race and \$40 dollars were bet on horse X. Then if X won, the people who had bet on X would win the pool, receiving a profit of \$60 on their \$40 bet; and the odds, or the payoff ratio as betters think of it, would be \$60/\$40 or 3/2. The implied probability of winning, calculated according to (1) would be 0.40. But the track or the bookies take a

share off the top, the vigorish or the vig as it is known.<sup>7</sup> The vig reduces the odds offered the bettor. In our example, if the track took 20% off the top, the folks who had bet on X would receive only \$80 and the odds would be \$40/\$40 or 1/1. The implied probability, according to (1) would be higher than with a fair pool, 0.50 rather than 0.40. It is possible with parimutuel betting to back out the vig and adjust the implied probabilities. But during most of the period we are interested in the reported odds are from bookies, who used their own idiosyncratic systems for determining the odds and making payoffs, so we have not adjusted for the vig. In any case, we believe that the comparisons we wish to make between African American and White jockeys are not seriously affected by assuming the vig to be zero.

As Chart 1, shows African American Jockeys sometimes had to beat the odds to win. The outstanding run was by the African American jockey “Babe” Hurd who rode Apollo, a 33:1 longshot, to victory in the 1882 Derby, a record that was not exceeded until the White jockey Roscoe Goose rode a 91:1 longshot to victory in the 1913 Derby, the latter still a record. But African Americans were also hired to ride favorites: in 1885, 1891, 1895, and 1896. In 1885 the African American jockey, Erskine Henderson, who had ridden in two previous Kentucky Derbys, was hired to ride Joe Cotton. Joe Cotton was an outstanding horse, sired by King Alfonso, who had previously sired Fonso, the winner of the 1880 Derby.

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<sup>7</sup> The term is also used to describe the amount charged by “loan sharks” a fact that probably tells us something about how track goers think about the people with whom they bet.

All told, 15 winners of the Kentucky Derby were ridden by African American Jockeys and 13 winners ridden by White jockeys during the period 1875 to 1902, after which African American jockeys were excluded. The average probability of winning implied by the odds was 0.33 for entries ridden by African American jockeys and 0.43 for White jockeys. If we restrict our attention to the period 1885 to 1910, to allow some time for the lingering effects of slavery to dissipate, we find something similar. There were 10 winners ridden by African American Jockeys and 8 winners ridden by White jockeys. The average probability of winning implied by the odds in this period was 0.43 for entries ridden by African American jockeys and 0.70 for White jockeys. The averages suggest some discrimination in favor of white jockeys. But the hiring of African American jockeys to ride entries with superb blood lines, and the willingness of race fans to bet accordingly, suggests that when it came to racing and making money owners and fans, at least a substantial proportion of them, were willing to abide by African American jockeys.

We use the implied probabilities described above to estimate whether African American jockeys consistently outperformed the odds. If they did, then an unprejudiced bettor would be able to win consistently by betting on horses ridden by African Americans. Consistent “overachievement” by African American jockeys thus indicates customer discrimination by track patrons.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For a similar analysis of discrimination against African American head coaches in the NFL, see Madden (2004) and Madden and Ruther (2011).

We test this by using the implied probabilities to generate a predicted order of finish for all Kentucky Derbys from 1875 to 1915. We then ran an ordered probit regression with 0 designating horses that finished worse than predicted, 1 designating horses that finished as predicted, and 2 designating horses that finished better than predicted. Results appear in Table 1.

The regression shows that the implied probability of winning the race did not have a significant impact on whether the horse overperformed. The dummy indicating a black jockey, however, is significant at the 10-percent level. As noted above, this suggests that bettors consistently underrated horses ridden by black jockeys. Computing the marginal effects of the explanatory variables shows that black jockeys were 9.0 percent less likely to finish below expectations, 1.2 percent less likely to finish as predicted, and 10.3 percent more likely to finish above expectations.

Regressions not shown here included other variables that were statistically insignificant. These include the number of other horses in the race, the number of other horses in the race ridden by African American jockeys, and a dummy variable indicating whether the race took place after 1890. We included this last variable to account for possible changes in attitudes that might have resulted from witnessing the performance of Isaac Murphy, the great African American jockey who won three Kentucky Derbys.

## **5. What were the underlying forces?**

The surge in racism at the turn of the nineteenth century, of which the expulsion of the African American jockeys is a striking example, was the product of several forces -- cultural, political, and economic -- that have challenged historians for more than a century. We cannot hope to make a definitive analysis here. But the expulsion of the African American jockeys is a particularly clear case of Jim Crow. By studying it, we can add to the general understanding of the phenomenon.

C. Vann Woodward (2002 [1955], 77) attributed the sudden rise of Jim Crow at the start of the twentieth century in part to the “agrarian depression of the ‘eighties and ‘nineties” which “caught the [southern] conservatives off guard and threw them on the defensive.” As he goes on to explain ...

“A great restiveness seized upon the populace, a more profound upheaval of economic discontent than had ever moved the Southern people before, more profound in its political manifestations than that which shook them in the Great Depression of the 1930’s”

After the Civil War, Southern conservatives had practiced a form of paternalism that offered some protections for African Americans. Wealthy Southerners looked on African Americans as a source of labor for field or factory. Poor Whites, however, were in direct competition with African Americans for jobs. Initially, when Midwestern populism spread to the South it produced an alliance between poor African American and White farmers. But conservatives, anxious to hold on to power, turned away from their traditional paternalism, a force that had kept racism in check, and began campaigning as champions of white supremacy. White Populists, not to be outdone, in turn abandoned their alliance with African Americans and campaigned as even stronger proponents of white control than

the conservatives. African Americans were scapegoats for hard times without allies. One of the most telling examples of this process is Josephus Daniels. Daniels was a self-made man, a newspaper owner from North Carolina. As secretary of the Navy during World War I he became a close advisor to Woodrow Wilson and mentor to Franklin Roosevelt. In economics, he was staunch progressive, taking positions we would now associate with the left, often calling for government ownership of corporations. In race relations, he was a staunch segregationist and a staunch advocate of disenfranchising African Americans. His biographer Lee A. Craig (2013) thought Daniels more responsible than any other individual for the disenfranchisement of North Carolina's African Americans. Only by removing African Americans from the political equation, Daniels believed, could a progressive agenda succeed in the South.

Competition for jobs in hard times, and the politics based on it, in turn reinforced extremes of racial hatred that produced demands for segregation and racial deference, and that sometimes produced mob violence. Note that in the description of the attack on African American Jockeys quoted above, Charles B. Parmer describes the White jockeys' retaliating for African American jockeys' becoming "a trifle cocky in the jockey rooms." Today a response like this would seem abhorrent to most of us, but it is a familiar reaction in the Jim Crow era, when a perceived lack of deference could provoke a violent response.

We have seen both hard times and a response to "cockiness" affect the racial composition of other American sports. For the first decade or so of its existence, the National Football League featured a number of African American

players. With the advent of the Great Depression, Black players were gradually forced out of the league, not to reappear until after World War II. (See, for example, McCambridge 2005).

The perceived brashness of Jack Johnson, the first African American to hold the heavyweight boxing championship, helped fuel white resentment. This, in turn, often resulted in racial violence after his matches. After Johnson lost the title in 1915, no Black boxer fought in a heavyweight championship match until Joe Louis, who had been specifically counseled to avoid any appearance of cockiness, won the title in 1937. (See Ward 2004 and Margolick 2005)

In the case of the expulsion of the African American jockeys, the argument that anxiety about jobs was an important, perhaps a decisive contributing factor to the call for drawing the color line seems unusually clear. First, there is the nature of racing itself. There were a limited number of slots, especially in the top races. The demand curve for jockeys, in other words, was highly income (price?) inelastic. Eliminating African Americans from racing would increase the number of rides for White jockeys, increase their per capita earnings, and improve their working conditions. That efforts to exclude African American jockeys began in the North also suggests that in this case that it was the demand for more and better jobs that explains the push to draw the color line. It certainly was not about the complexities of southern politics.

High unemployment seems to be highly correlated with the expulsion of the African American jockeys and the rise of Jim Crow in general. In 1893, the United States experienced a severe financial crisis, similar in many ways to the

crisis of 2008. It began with a series of failures of financial institutions in the Midwest, some of which would clearly meet today's criteria for a "shadow bank." But it soon spread throughout the financial system, culminating in a nationwide suspension of gold payments. Unemployment rose dramatically in the wake of the panic. In 1894 Jacob Coxey led his famous march of unemployed workers on Washington demanding a federally financed road building program to create jobs. Although some measures of economic activity, such as industrial production, recovered quickly, it took a number of years for labor markets to recover. Indeed, as shown in Chart 4, unemployment after the Panic of 1893 followed a path similar to unemployment after the Panic of 2008. Unemployment didn't return to the pre-panic levels until 1901.

An indication that panics and hard times can exacerbate racial tensions is suggested by the data on lynching. Chart 5 shows lynchings in Kentucky from 1890 and 1910, and the national unemployment rate. Both the Panic of 1893 discussed above, and the next major financial panic in 1907 seem to be associated with an increase in lynchings.

George C. Wright, who compiled these lynching statistics, also discussed the efforts at the turn of the century to expel African Americans from parts of Kentucky (1996, 132-154) through violence. He argued (1996, 132) that

"It can reasonably be concluded that the greatest number of Afro Americans were forced to leave communities all over the commonwealth not because they were warned out of town after lynchings nor because they were involved in political activities, but because whites were determined to eliminate them from the workplace."

In parts of Kentucky this effort was led by the Night Riders made famous in Robert Penn Warren's (1939) brilliant first novel. Starting out as an organization of farmers resisting the efforts of the American Tobacco Company to control tobacco prices, an organization that included African American farmers, the Night Riders deteriorated at times into Klan-like gangs determined to drive African American farmers out of Kentucky through violence. All this was happening at the same time that White jockeys were conspiring to force African American jockeys out of racing.

Racism in Louisville, the home of the Kentucky Derby, however, was more restrained than in the southern and rural parts of the state. The color line was omnipresent in Louisville; but African Americans could vote, streetcars were not segregated, and mob violence aimed at African Americans was rare. According to James C. Nicolson's (2012, 68) this relatively benign form of racism worked to the benefit of the Kentucky Derby as it strove to become America's premier race, and one of its premier sporting events. Race goers could conjure up a romantic picture of Old South plantations while believing that the racism on which those plantations were based belonged to another age.

While hard times afflicted almost all businesses after the panic of 1893, racing was affected by several forces that increased the pressure on jockey salaries, and increased the attractiveness of forcing out the African American jockeys. One was immigration. Large numbers of poor immigrants were arriving in America, and riding was a way for poor immigrants or their children to make a living, and possibly achieve fame and fortune. The Irish were important because

of their long tradition of racing, and we have already referred to “Father” Bill Daly and his troupe of young Irish-American riders, a troupe that included Hall of Fame jockey Danny Maher, who began riding at 14. Another example is Walter Miller, a Jew from Brooklyn, who also began riding at 14 and went on to become a Hall of Fame Jockey and who won the Preakness in 1906.

Another factor undermining the market for jockeys was the anti-gambling sentiment that was beginning to bite at the turn of the century. Opposition to gambling was a brother to Prohibition, another reform movement that was gaining strength at the turn of the century. Anti-gambling forces were active in the South, but all parts of the country were affected. New York passed anti-gambling legislation in 1895 and New Jersey did so in 1898. Charles Evans Hughes, the reform governor of New York, thought that the 1895 law did not go far enough and in 1908 he signed legislation banning all but verbal contracts at race courses. Hughes enforced the law vigorously. As a result, attendance at race tracks declined precipitously. One victim was the Belmont Stakes, which was not run in 1911 or 1912. In short, anti-gambling laws and social pressure not to gamble hit racing hard, and jockeys found the demand for their services contracting. Excluding African Americans was a way for White jockeys to offset the effects of the attack on race track gambling.

One offsetting factor for the best jockeys was the European racing circuit, which continued to be prosperous and to welcome African American jockeys. Willie Simms, who rode briefly in England, is said to have introduced the crouched aerodynamically efficient American style of racing. Jimmy Winkfield,

after winning the 1901 and 1902 Kentucky Derbies went on to a fabled career in Russia, Germany, and France. Of course, these great jockeys had already proven their skill on American tracks. Once African Americans had been banned from racing it was impossible for young African Americans and to learn the skills and establish the record that would have recommended them to European owners.

To test the above hypotheses more systematically, we regressed the percentage of jockeys in the Kentucky Derby from 1875 to 1915 on a series of explanatory variables. Because this number is necessarily between 0 and 1 – and was frequently bounded from below in the later years of the sample – we ran a tobit regression with censoring at 0 and 1. The results appear in Table 2.

The explanatory variables reflect our desire to capture economic conditions (the national unemployment rate), racial attitudes (the number of lynchings of African Americans in Kentucky), the financial awards at stake (the prize for a first-place finisher in the Derby), and the stock of available substitutes (the number of immigrants). The first regression appears to show a strong relationship between the presence of black jockeys and lynchings and most of the variables.

Unemployment rates and Immigration have the expected negative sign and are significant at the 10 and 1 percent levels. Lynchings are significant at the 5 percent level but have an unexpectedly positive sign. Prize money is insignificant. These results, however, are likely to be spurious, as most of the variables trend upward or downward over the time period.

To account for the non-stationarity of the variables, we take first-differences and re-run the regressions. The results, in the second column of Table 2, are much less significant. Only first-place prize money is statistically significant at the 10 percent level. The impact, however, is as expected, indicating that the representation of African American jockeys declined as the potential rewards increased.

## **6. Conclusion**

Before the Civil War many of America's most famous jockeys were slaves; After the Civil War, African Americans continued to play a major role in American racing. Between 1890 and 1899, African American jockeys won 8 of 10 Kentucky Derbies, 1 of 7 Preakness Stakes, and 3 of 10 Belmont Stakes. Beginning in about 1900, however, White jockeys began a concerted and successful effort to force African American jockeys out of racing. Their method was violence. African American jockeys were boxed out, run into the rail, hit with riding crops, and so on. Soon after the attack on the African American jockeys began, they could not get rides. Owners, at the very least, gave their tacit consent to the expulsion of the African Americans jockeys. It was another example of the wave of racism that engulfed America at the end of the nineteenth century and ended in Jim Crow.

The process that produced Jim Crow had important political, cultural, psychological and economic causes that interacted with one another. Understanding a particular aspect of Jim Crow often requires stressing one or another of these forces. To understand the wave of disfranchisement in the South in the late 1890s requires that an historian delve into the complexities of

Southern politics. Understanding the physical separation of the races – on railroad cars, in music halls, at drinking fountains, and so on – may require a stress on cultural or psychological factors.

Understanding the expulsion of the African American jockeys, however, brings economic conditions to the fore. It was, first of all, an economic period much like our own. In 1900 the United States was finally returning to full employment after the long depression caused by the Panic of 1893. The market for low skilled labor was subjected to further stress by the flow of low skilled immigrants from Europe. Racing also faced a growing anti-gambling movement that attacked one of the main reasons why people attended the races. White jockeys and the trainers that had long standing relationships with them had to be concerned about finding rides. Forcing out African Americans created jobs for White jockeys.

Fear about finding rides is not a sufficient explanation. There is always an incentive in a competitive market for one group of workers to push for the exclusion of another. In the case of racing, there were also risks. Violence might be punished by track authorities. Violence, moreover, often required sacrificing oneself for the “common good.” A White jockey who forced an African American rider into the rail might finish out of the money, and African American jockeys might retaliate as they did during the “race war” at the Cicero track referred to above. The tide of racism that was sweeping the country lowered the risks of using violence to exclude African Americans. Track authorities were less likely to punish White jockeys who resorted to rough riding tactics if the authorities put

more weight on avoiding trouble or simply shared the prejudices of the White jockeys. White jockeys would be less afraid of finishing out of the money if they could rely on their comrades to take turns in going after the African American jockeys.

Empirical analysis provides some, but not uniform, support for these conclusions. We find that African American jockeys were displaced when the reward was higher. This had echoes about 75 years later, when women who coached women's sports in American colleges were displaced by men after the passage of Title IX made coaching women's sports more prestigious and lucrative.

However, we do not find that macroeconomic conditions, in the form of unemployment rates, affected the presence of black jockeys. Similarly, prevailing racial attitudes (the number of lynchings) did not affect the racial make-up of the Kentucky Derby. Nor did the presence of ready substitutes, as measured by the arrival of new immigrants.

We did find strong support for racial prejudice by the betting public, as betting on a horse ridden by an African American jockey systematically "beat the odds". Taken together, these results support – but do not conclusively prove – the hypothesis that racial prejudice led to the disappearance of African American jockeys. In sum, although horse racing was only a sport – albeit at the time the most important professional sport – its history illuminates the causes of the rise in racism at the turn of the century and the "strange career of Jim Crow."



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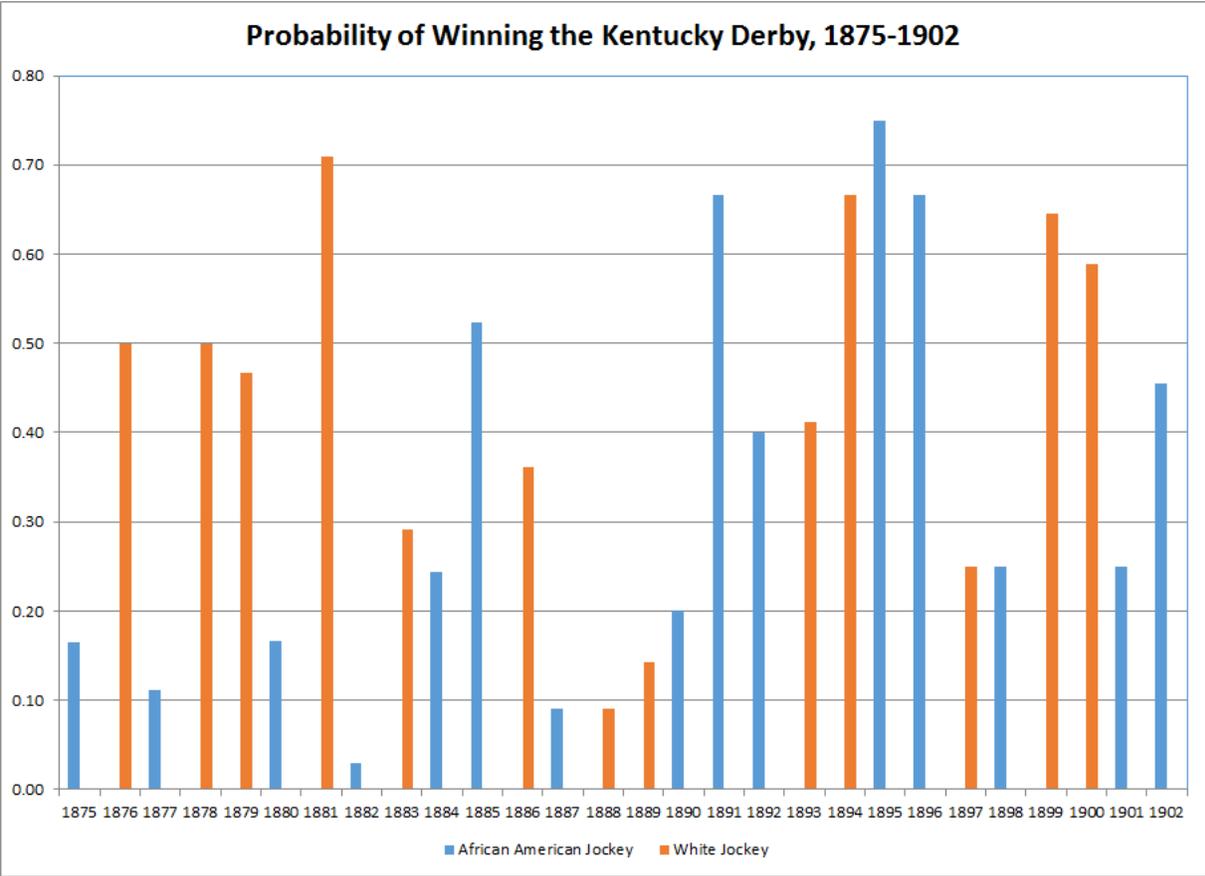


Chart 1.

Sources: O'Connor (1921) and Sowers (2014, 414-15).

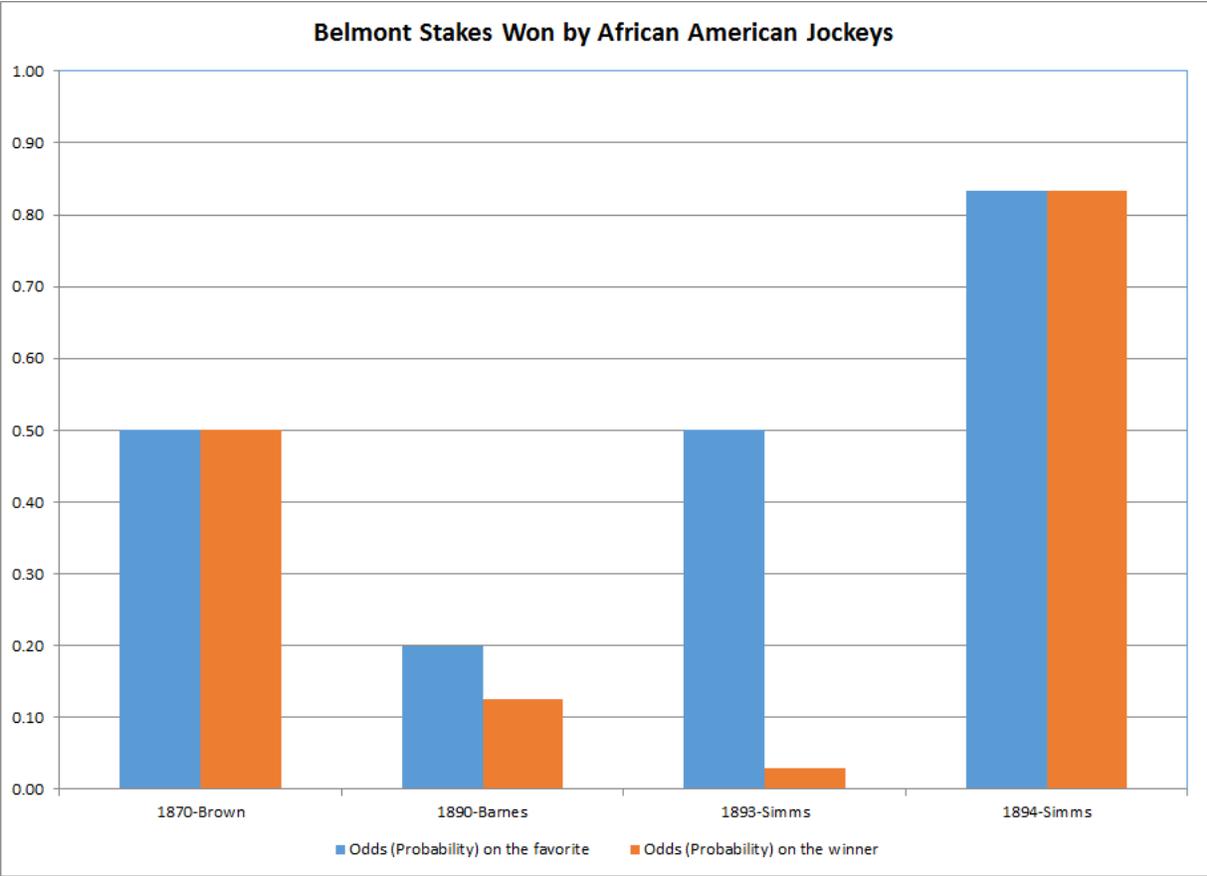


Chart 2.

Sources: Sowers (2014, 414-15), and race reports in the *New York Times* and other newspapers.

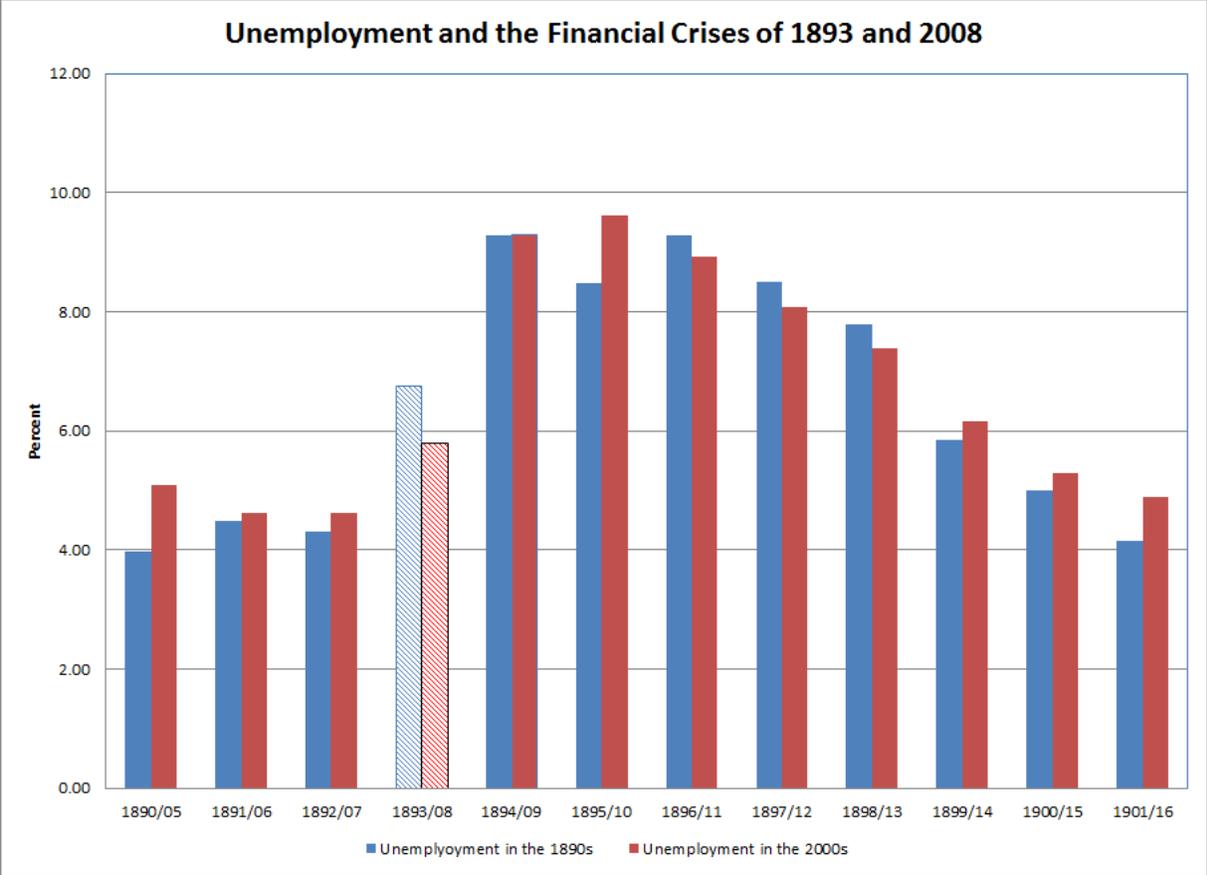


Chart 3

Sources: Unemployment 1890-1901, *Historical Statistics* (2006, series Ba475); Unemployment 2005-20016, Bureau of Labor Statistics, at <http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000000>, accessed December 2, 2016.

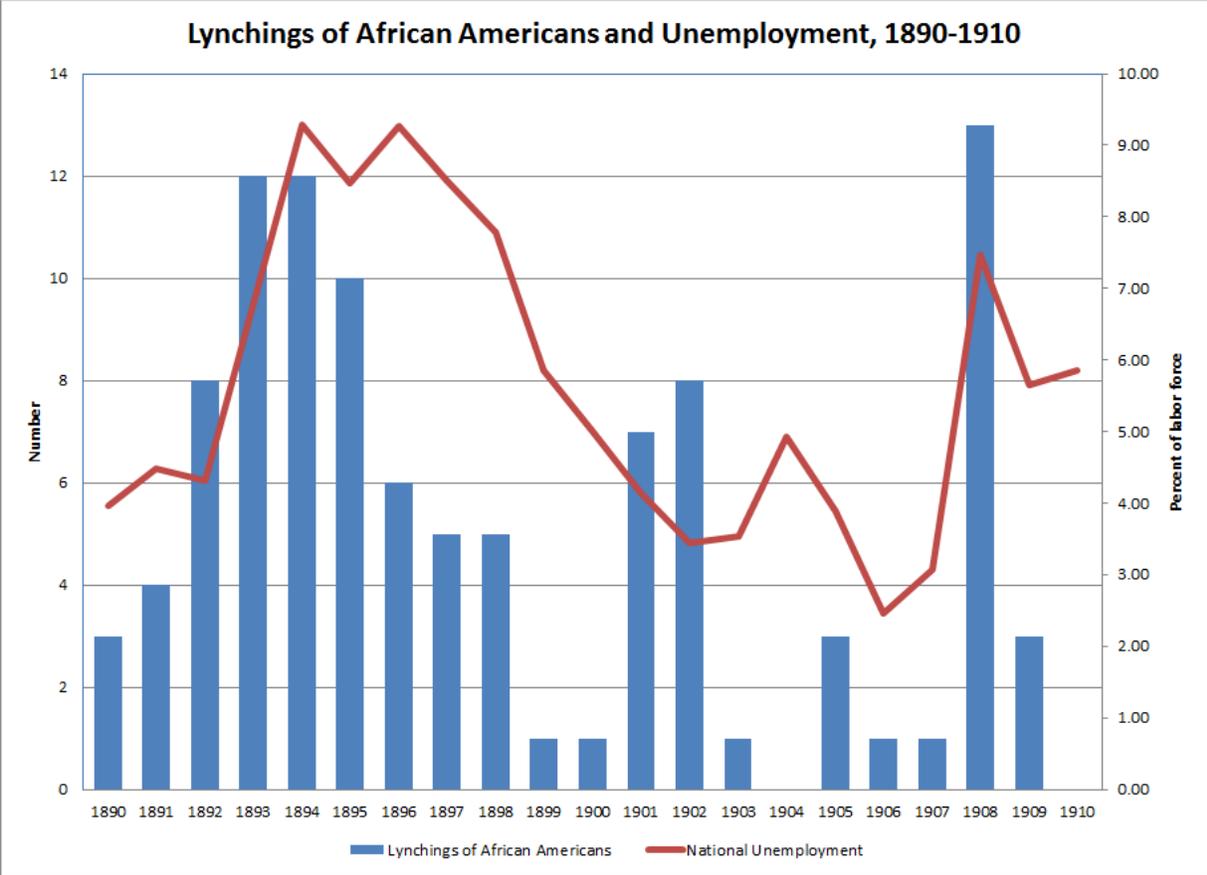


Chart 5.

Sources: Lynchings: Wright (1990, Appendix A). Unemployment: Historical Statistics, series Ba475.

Table 1: Performance Relative to Expectations in the Kentucky Derby

Variable	Coefficient
Probability of Winning the Race	0.0064 (1.38)
Black Jockey	0.2841 (1.86)
Likelihood Ratio $\chi^2$	5.37
Number of Observations	219

*t-statistics in parentheses*

Table 2: Determinants of the Presence of Black Jockeys in the Kentucky Derby

Variable	Levels	First Differences
Lynchings	0.0246 (2.07)	.0037 (0.29)
First-place prize money (\$000)	-0.0746 (-1.61)	-0.1507 (1.81)
National unemployment rate	-0.0488 (-1.76)	0.0180 (0.55)
Immigration level (MM)	-0.766 (3.76)	-0.126 (0.45)
Constant	1.2215 (4.69)	-0.0404 (-0.76)
Likelihood Ratio $\chi^2$	32.80	5.46
Number of Observations	41	40

*t-statistics in parentheses*