In August 1918, with the southern homefront convulsed by the social and economic upheaval unleashed by US involvement in the First World War, the prominent South Carolina conservative William Watts Ball surveyed the disturbing scene taking shape in his beloved Dixieland. Rising wages brought on by wartime industrial demand had provided black female domestic workers with better-paid alternatives to cleaning the homes, cooking the meals, and rearing the children of propertied southern whites, and by Ball’s account these women were deserting their employers in droves. Experience in the ranks of the US military would ‘free African American soldiers,’ he worried, rendering black males poor material for a return to their assigned role as deferential and docile, menial laborers. Speaking more than a half century after the end of the American Civil War, a war that had ended, ostensibly, in slave emancipation, Ball fretted, “Ain’t it awful? Isn’t it frightful that the ‘niggers’ are soon to be really free?” Civil War, he suggested, had not “tremendously impair[ed] [[the] old relation between master and slave.” But now it seemed to this prominent conservative that Ball’s doomsday scenario was upon him. That fundamental relationship was now “to be impaired, remodelled, [and] largely wiped out.”

Ball’s candid appraisal of the true state of relations between New South elites and the region’s largely black workforce a half century after the formal end of slavery raises some intriguing problems for the way that we think about the history of the American South, and indeed for the way that Americans and others think about the meaning of freedom generally. Slavery ended in 1865, Americans are taught, and in a formal sense that is of course true. But Ball’s comments seem to suggest that the social relations that the slave system underpinned remained intact, or only cosmetically changed, well into the twentieth century. And anyone who sat, stunned by the compelling images emanating out of New Orleans just over a year ago, might be forgiven for wondering whether, another full century after Ball’s remarks, vestiges of that social order remain with us. In which case William Ball can rest easily in his grave: his doomsday scenario was never realized: the ‘niggers’ haven’t yet managed to become ‘really free.’ My talk today is really about
the social costs involved in the failure to realize a new society in the post-Civil War American South.

Slavery was ended in North America, after bloody civil war, nearly 150 years ago. “Stop talking about it,” snarl the pundits of the American Right. “Get over it.” “Move on.” But for historians, of course, it is difficult to ‘move on’ in the way we are being asked to. Partly because ‘moving on’ would mean that thousands of us all would immediately be left without work, and if the idea spilled out beyond American history, departments like the one at UCD would have to shut down. But more importantly we have to resist this call to ‘move on’ because ‘moving on’ in this case means intentionally evading the possibility that what has happened in the past has any bearing, or has left any enduring stamp, on American society today.

There are also social implications to ‘moving on’ in this way. It is partly through this deliberate refusal to consider the past that some academics, most but not all of them attached to the Republican Right in the United States, have churned out a series of books and articles deliberately constructed on the foundations of historical amnesia. Their ‘product,’ devoured and regurgitated by second-rate journalists and radio ‘shock jocks’ and, unfortunately, digested yet again by a substantial section of the American public, places the blame for any enduring—indeed growing—inequality squarely on those who have been unable to climb out of poverty, an almost classic ‘blame-the-victim’ operation. Ten years ago the Reaganite rising star Dinesh D’Souza declared ‘the end of racism’ in a best-selling book that rested on the extraordinary notion that there was no substantial economic element to ‘racism;’ indeed that the unregulated, ‘free market’ economy that he championed was the solution to the problem of racial inequality. Two years earlier, a pair of prominent conservative academics published The Bell Curve, another bestseller which fully embraced the spirit of ‘moving on’: the crux of their argument was that the causes of existing inequality are to be located not in structural problems—in the deficiencies of existing social or economic arrangements—but in differences in intelligence which can be traced to innate racial characteristics. The Bell Curve’s target audience, its authors declared, was the "huge number of well-meaning whites who fear that they are closet racists… [T]his book tells them they are not. It's going to make them feel better about things they already think but do not know how to say." It was a book intended, in other words, to give respectable, academic cover to popular prejudice.
My paper today is not intended as a policy document, and except for a few brief words in my conclusion, I won’t say anything further about current debates. I simply set out to demonstrate that a sense of what happened in the past is essential to any serious discussion about the ills besetting American society in our own time. I want to do this by exploring four key moments in the development of the modern American South: emancipation—the weeks and months that followed closely on the end of the Civil War, in which ex-master and ex-slave confronted one another on new terms (1863- late 1865); Reconstruction, the twelve-year period that followed the war, in which the federal government at Washington attempted to reconstruct the South on new, free-labor foundations (1865-1877); Redemption, as it came to be called by southern whites—the tumultuous years that saw the overthrow of the reconstructed state governments of the South and their replacement (or ‘redemption’) by governments openly committed to upholding ‘white supremacy’ (mid1870s- mid-1880s); and finally the inauguration of the new, ‘progressive,’ industrial South from the mid-1880s onward. I hope that by the end of this I will have been able to convince most of you that the relationship between the past and present is an important one, and that history can illuminate issues in a way that can contribute to a very different, more viable process of ‘moving on.’

Slavery crumbled bit by bit in the jagged tumble of the Civil War. In two key areas—the ‘sugar parishes’ in and around New Orleans in southern Louisiana, and the rice and cotton districts along the South Carolina coast—northern troops took command of territory from as early as 1862, and by the war’s end in April 1865 blacks in these areas had been exercising their new rights as freedpeople for more than two years. Final surrender brought a formal end to slavery across the region, and raised the question of what would replace it. The two principal adversaries battling to assert an answer to that question were the freedpeople and their former owners, who would be locked into a deadly confrontation for more than a decade to come. For the slaves’ part, emancipation would mean little if it did not deliver a clear break from the subordination they had experienced, in every area of life, under slavery. Their former masters, on the other hand, were determined to resurrect as much of the old regime as they possibly could. Early on some declared openly for restoration; many others hoped that they could fuse the spirit of slavery with the new letter of the law.

The depth of the antagonism between these two was obvious from the moment of emancipation. In many ways it is more useful to consider the end of the war as the beginning of a social revolution
than as having marked any definitive settlement of the key issues dividing blacks and whites. The prominent historian Eric Foner has written that in the charged context of early emancipation freedpeople ‘challenged the old order in both profound and trivial ways,” and it is this all-pervasive aspect of what they called ‘jubilee’ that confirms the revolutionary character of these events. A clash between the old order and the new permeated every aspect of relations between freedpeople and propertied whites.

Two examples: Christianity had been brought to the slave quarters in the early 19th century by their masters, who hoped that through selective instruction in the Bible they might instil obedience and respect for authority among the slaves. But the slaves themselves made something very different out of Christian doctrine, finding in the stories of the Old Testament (Moses) some hope for their own deliverance, their own liberation. Therefore it is not surprising that one of the first fruits of emancipation was the freedpeople’s mass desertion of white churches in favour of their own. [Two very different strands of southern Protestantism.]

Another seemingly trivial issue that takes on extraordinary importance in the context of emancipation: the diaries of ex-masters and their wives are filled with outrage that freedwomen seem to be developing a sense of fashion: where they can afford to, black women discard the coarse calico rags they had been compelled to wear under slavery for fine dresses and colourful clothes, gloves for their delicate hands, and even parasols. “The chief ambition of a [negro] wench seems to be to wear a veil and carry a parasol,” a ‘ladylike-appearing [white] woman’ was overheard to complain in the foyer of a North Carolina hotel. “The nasty niggers must have a parasol when they ha’n’t got no shoes,” the proprietor agreed. “Does this matter of veils and handkerchiefs seem a small one?” an English traveler to the South recorded in his diary. “[If so,] it is one of serious import to the bitter, spiteful [white] women whose passionate hearts nursed the [Southern] Rebellion.”

We could illustrate this running confrontation over the minutiae of race relations in a thousand different ways. But at the core of their dispute was a profound antagonism over two issues: land and labor. The slaves almost universally asserted their right to some of the property of their former owners. First, they argued, because it was their labor and the labor of their descendants that had made the land profitable, and they deserved some as a matter of justice; and secondly, they later asserted, because without land of their own they would be eventually be pushed back under the thumb of their former owners. “Gib us our own land and we can take care of ourselves,” one former
slave explained, with an acute grasp of political economy. “But wid out land, de ole massa can hire us or starve us out, as ‘dey please.”

In the absence of land reform and the independence that it promised, slaves were determined, at the very least, to shape for themselves the terms under which they would work for others. Many of them took to the roads, either hoping to reunite with family members who’d been sold off to distant plantations or simply seeking to find better wages and conditions elsewhere. Most refused to enter into any long-term contracts, regarding such arrangements as too reminiscent of slavery. The first months of emancipation saw a large proportion of black women and children withdraw from field labor completely, refusing to submit themselves to the sunup-to-sundown drudgery they had previously endured. Where they could, freedpeople organized strikes for better wages, and their organizations took steps to ensure that the whip would have no place in the new ‘free labor South.’ They aimed, in short, at putting as much distance between their new lives and their former condition as slaves.

Planters eyed all of this with intense bitterness, of course, and did what they could to contain the hopes of freedpeople. In many places this took the form of extreme brutality against any who dared to exercise their newfound freedom. The carnage related in a report submitted by a military field officer in Montgomery, Alabama, in the late summer of 1865 to his superiors in Washington was not untypical:

*List of colored people killed or maimed by white men and treated at post hospital*
1. Nancy, colored woman, ears cut off [after being fund by her overseer in the presence of northern troops]
2. Mary Steel, one side of her head scalped; died. She was with Nancy.
3. Jacob Steel, both ears cut off; was with same party.
4. Amanda Steel, ears cut off; was with same party.
5. Washington Booth, shot in the back…while returning from work…without any provocation.
6. Sutton Jones, beard and chin cut off…belonged to Nancy’s party.
7. six colored persons shot by persons in ambush in June and July.
8. Robert, stabbed at home by man wearing Confederate uniform, died seven days later.
9. Ida, young colored girl, struck on the head with a club by her overseer; died.
10. James Taylor, seven stabs that entered his lungs, two in his arms, two pistol-shots grazed him, and one arm cut one-third off.
11. James Monroe, cut across the throat while engaged in saddling a horse; no provocation.

[Expand]
In this volatile and sharply polarized situation, the disposition of the federal government at Washington was crucial. The German immigrant radical Carl Schurz, who had risen to the rank of Major General in the Union Army, captured the essence of this unique moment perfectly: “[The] government of the republic has, by proclaiming the emancipation of the slaves, commenced a great social revolution…but it is a revolution only half-accomplished…. The slaves are emancipated, in…form, but free labor has not yet been put in the place of slavery in point of fact….. The ex-masters “study, not how to…introduce [free labor], but how to avoid its introduction, and how to return as quickly as possible to…the old order of things.” The key question was whether the government would acquiesce, and allow the planters to proceed along these lines, or instead stand behind those freed by the war in their demand for a thoroughgoing revolution in southern society.

The federal government enjoyed one important advantage in the immediate post-emancipation period: widespread demoralization, and disorganization, among the planters. “The National Government could at that time have prescribed no conditions for the return of the Rebel States which they would not have promptly accepted,” journalist William Whitelaw Reid suggested. White Southerners “expected nothing; were prepared for the worst; would have been thankful for anything…” They were like “wax, [and] “needed but a firm hand to apply the seal.” But [beware],” Reid warned, “if that plastic moment were allowed to pass.” This was the situation from early 1865, when Lincoln’s assassination brought Andrew Johnson to the office of the Presidency—a plastic moment, a historical juncture marked by great flux, that had to be exploited if freedom was to be upheld.

Post-war Reconstruction commenced with a colossal misstep in this regard. A southern white born outside elite circles, Johnson brought to his office a deep, lifelong contempt for the haughtiness of the southern planter class, but in the end his even deeper racial hatred for the slaves overrode this antipathy, and in the early months of the peace he gave back to the planters much of the social power they had lost on the battlefield. He issued some 14,000 pardons for ex-Confederate officials, and under his watch southern whites returned to dominate state government across the South. With the state machinery back under their control, the planters set out to reconstruct the South with slavery intact in spirit, even if not in name. ‘Black Codes’ were introduced, pushing women and children back into the fields; imposing unfair labor contracts with provisions that laborers who broke them could be sold into virtual slavery; blacks were denied access to the courts; their travel was restricted and ‘pass systems’ resurrected. Negro subordination was back, and riding high.
But Johnson pushed too far, outraging northern public opinion, which had paid too heavy a cost in lives to see the gains of the war thus frittered away. More importantly, his policies infuriated the antislavery elements in the Republican party (Radicals), many of them long-time abolitionists who had been further radicalized by their experience in the war. They impeached him [first], transferred the power to direct southern Reconstruction to the Congress, and withdrew the legitimacy of the state governments that had been set up under Johnson, dividing the south into five districts and placing them under military rule. This marks the break between Presidential Reconstruction and Congressional, or Radical, Reconstruction.

The shift in high politics was reflected in, or coincided with, the rapid and widespread, grassroots mobilization of freedpeople across the region. The scattered and loosely coordinated agitations that had rolled across the South at emancipation underwent a qualitative transformation, and crucial to this was the temporary convergence of interests between the Radicals ascendant in the Republican party in Washington and the ex-slaves on the ground at the South. In some ways this convergence represents the most bizarre alliance in American political history. Let me explain by pointing out that the Republican party of 1867 and 1870 is to the RP of George Bush like fire and ice. The Republicans had been born out of the crucible of antislavery agitation, drawing to their ranks a core of committed abolitionists, but also a large constituency of northern workingmen and mechanics, and importantly, leading men of industry and commerce. [It would become the party of business over the next twenty years, but not yet.] When these Republicans looked South for a constituency after throwing Johnson overboard, there was only one potential source: freedmen. Radicals were committed to the franchise for blacks out of principle, and at the height of their powers after ditching Johnson they were able to sway Republican moderates around to the idea of extending the vote to freed slaves, eventually enshrined in the 15th Amendment (1869).

For their part, freedpeople—men and women—did not require orders from Washington to mobilize. The Republicans had set up ‘Union Leagues’ to bring out the vote in northern cities, and when they extended these to the South blacks flocked to them by the tens of thousands. And they transformed them from the staid, polite tea societies that they were in many northern cities into quasi-revolutionary organizations. The Union Leagues fulfilled a variety of functions: as political schools that would strive to imbue their largely illiterate memberships with a sense of their rights; as trade unions that would organize strikes for better wages and conditions and punish planters who
attempted to continue using the whip as an instrument of labor relations; as armed militias that would accompany black voters to the polling stations on election day. Let me read from a letter that I found in the papers of NC Governor William Holden, written to him by a Rev. Samuel Lewis, an ex-slave:

Dear Sir I take my pen in hand to drop you a few lines. [B]y the Benevolence of the people and by assistance of the omnipotent God we elected you as our Governor. we form our selves in Sosieties and Ligues and elected you…and all of the Radicals…and our Ligue has made a conclusion to write you. The[re] is a grate menny womens and childrens and boys going a bout working for people and don't know how to make a bargain and they is not giting theyr rites by a grate dail. That is going on in this section of the country to a full extence, and we want to know if some of the best men of our Ligue could stand as garddians for all such people in our reach not let them make a bargain them selfs but some of us go and make it for them and see that they git the money &c. Governor it is desspert the way some of our color is treated and we have a feeling for our race and color, and we want to stop some of this intreatment…. 12 of us made this agreement in the neighborhood of Beatties Pond hoping you will assist us in standing gardains for some of this Colord Race.

Lewis’s letter conveys the pathos, the desperation in freedpeople’s’ predicament, but it also conveys a sense of entitlement. He reminds Holden that it was the they that had elected him; he attests to the capacity for organization among the ex-slaves, and he demonstrates the freed community’s willingness to organize in defense of its most vulnerable members: “women, children and boys,” to stand between them and the former masters as ‘guardians.’

This was a state of affairs that white Conservatives could not tolerate, and they responded to the emergence of the League with organization of their own—most notoriously in the form of the Ku Klux Klan. Any discussion of the Klan must confront widespread public ignorance about its origins and power. Founded in 1866, it was not made up of a handful of rednecks on the fringes of southern society, as the stereotype suggests, but was founded and led by “the better class” of whites, as one contemporary put it, officered by experienced and highly trained ex-Confederates, and in a short period had mushroomed into a paramilitary army (the paramilitary wing of the Democratic party) with a membership in the tens, if not hundreds of thousands.

Throughout the late 1860s, the Klan and other white paramilitaries carried out atrocities, targeting Republican activists, black and white. They certainly could inflict demoralizing punishment on supporters of the Republican party, including especially grassroots black activists, but their activities could not, at this stage, pose a serious threat to the Reconstruction project. As long as the federal government remained committed to upholding black civil rights in the South, white
Conservatives, members of the Democratic party, had to bide their time and wait for a change in the political winds. Less than a decade after the founding of the Klan, the winds began to shift in their direction.

Northern support for Reconstruction began to wane in the early 1870s, as memory of the war receded and the public lost enthusiasm for what seemed like chronic, seasonal spasms of racial violence in the South. Economic depression—America’s first-ever industrial downturn—hit the North in the form of the Panic of 1873, and as hundreds of thousands were thrown out of work and northern cities teetered on the brink of industrial unrest, the apathy that had been gathering over several years began to harden into a positive determination among some that the federal government should cut and run, that it had other, more important priorities than upholding the rights of ‘southern darkies.’ This sentiment was especially strong among RP moderates, men of wealth alarmed by the challenge to the status quo now emerging among wage workers in northern society. Their fear of the lower orders in the north is what led them to reject land redistribution in the South—they worried that it would set a dangerous precedent in an increasingly unequal society.

Southern Conservatives were heartened by this shift in northern opinion, sensing that they would not have to bide their time much longer, and from 1873 onward we see an increasingly belligerent white reaction gathering force, its crosshairs set on those state governments that remain in Republican hands. A massacre of dozens of blacks at Colfax, Louisiana, on Easter Sunday of that year inaugurated a counterrevolution that would sweep across the region, targeting especially the South’s three black-majority states: Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. This counterrevolution white Southerners remembered as Redemption. Mississippi was ‘redeemed’ in 1875 under a strategy known as the “shotgun policy:” Democrats (Conservatives) determined to win ‘by the ballot if we can, by the bullet if we must.” In the end, they indulged in both electoral fraud and racial terror.

South Carolina’s turn came in 1876, and the elections in the autumn of that year marked one of the most significant turning points in American history. The state had been a hotbed of proslavery fanaticism all through the early nineteenth century, and its leading politicians—called ‘fire-eaters’ because of their pro-slavery militancy—had led the South out of the union after Lincoln’s election. The opening salvos of the Civil War had been fired in Charleston harbor, and under Reconstruction
the state’s once haughty slaveowner aristocracy bristled under the humiliation of black-majority rule.

But that majority was a problem for whites intent on counterrevolution. In any fair election, black South Carolinians could be counted on to vote the Republican ticket almost unanimously, and the conservatives thus had no chance of returning to power by purely peaceful means. As their campaign gathered momentum throughout the summer of 1876, Democrats resorted increasingly to paramilitary methods. By late summer, after white ‘rifle club’ members butchered fleeing, unarmed blacks at Hamburg, South Carolina, the Democrats openly adopted the ‘Mississippi Plan’ as their formula for success in the coming election.

By this time any reserves of northern resolve had been depleted, and even within the state of South Carolina itself, white officials in the upper ranks of the party stood paralyzed as their grassroots activists faced the full onslaught of a gathering counterrevolution. Republican activists in Georgetown warned the Governor that a steamship had tied up in port to offload a six-pound Howitzer and 10,000 rounds of ammunition. “Now Sir,” he wrote, “on behalf of the good loyal and true Republicans of this County who have…stood firm and unflinchingly by the Republican Party, we ask…your most considerate judgment…as to what course we should pursue. Can we get any Guns and ammunition?” The answer from Governor Chamberlain to this desperate request, and dozens like it, was “No.” And in the end this unwillingness to face up to the Redeemers meant the end of what W. E. B. DuBois called the negro’s ‘day in the sun.’

Haggling between the Republicans and the Democrats over the results of the most corrupt election in American history brought an end to Reconstruction in the South. The Republicans managed to hold onto the White House, but the cost of that prize was the abandonment of their black constituents to the not-so-tender mercies of the white South. [Expand] Conservatives openly committed to white supremacy began clawing back what they had lost since the war, and in many instances sought retribution against an African American population now demoralized and vulnerable, still destitute and landless, and with no dependable allies in Washington. The Radicals had been brought down; and it dawned upon the men of wealth now firmly in control of the Republican party that they had far more in common with white men of similar standing at the South than with the black rabble. The South, the nation was redeemed. The revolution, half-finished, had been rolled back.
And what was left of black freedom in the aftermath of this counterrevolution? Not very much at all. The ‘freedom’ to submit to whatever wages were on offer, under whatever conditions your employer deemed tolerable. The ‘right’ to education did not survive Redemption, nor did the right to literacy, and by the turn of the century even the right to vote, which had been enshrined in the constitution, had been removed from all but a handful of southern blacks. And the subordination of African Americans was kept in place by the threat of terror. Redemption ushered in what the historian Leon Litwack describes as “the most violent and repressive period in the history of American race relations.” The ritual public lynching of African Americans became common throughout the South, with 241 lynched in 1892 alone. But most importantly what Redemption accomplished was to sever completely the notion so loudly proclaimed by freedpeople in those early, hopeful days after Jubilee, that for freedom to mean anything it had to include an economic dimension: that the striking disparity in wealth so evident in the South, and later throughout the US, was corrosive, antithetical to any meaningful sense of democracy.

DuBois wrote that the intention of white elites who led the Redemption of the South had been to ‘reduce the colored laborer to a condition of unlimited exploitation,” and it is important to understand the relationship between the labor question and the system of racial apartheid they elites developed after Redemption. [Jim Crow] Segregation, a system designed to ensure that black Southerners ‘knew their place,’ played an important function in the vision of progress outlined by advocates of a New South after the mid-1880s. [A modern, industrial South]

One brief detour before we return to the final chapter in this story. I have said very little, thus far, about tensions and divisions within white society, but the fact is that whites themselves were at times sharply divided. In a slave society, politics were dominated by the large planters, and as the majority of whites did not own slaves, they had little say in shaping society to suit their needs. As a general rule, the more entrenched the large planters in any given state, the less democratic would be the system of government, and the less it offered to poor whites [Anti-democratic, SC].

The RP had managed to attract some support from poor whites in the early period of Reconstruction, but as the counterrevolution gathered force and Conservatives set out deliberately to polarize things around race, that support and the potential for an interracial party slipped away. It did not help that an increasingly conservative Republican leadership in Washington stepped back from policies like
land redistribution, which may have helped to drive a wedge between wealthy and poor whites. When Redeemers rode to power in 1877 under the banner of white supremacy, they could accurately claim to represent majority white opinion.

That makes it all the more remarkable that less than a decade after Redemption, the white alliance began to come apart at the seams. Hard-pressed white farmers organized against the dire situation they faced in a market-driven agricultural economy, and on the other side of the color line black farmers were doing the same. Eventually the two came together to organize the most significant third party challenge in American history: the Populists or People’s Party. The DP set out to defeat the Populists, and its in the course of trying to prize apart blacks and whites that they introduce segregation. The triumph over Populism ushers in an attempt to modernize the South: promoters argue that industrialization will help the region leave behind economic backwardness, bring prosperity, and serve as a solvent for racial antagonism.

The problem in their vision is that it rested on the super-exploitation of cheap black labor. The negro was, according to editors of the New South’s leading industrial journal, “the most important factor in the development of the great and varied resources of [the region]. [T]his same man is the iron mine laborer, the furnaceman and the mill man of the future that will yet aid his white friends of the South to take the lead in the cheapest production on this continent.”¹ This was the ‘slavery’ that WW Ball ws referring to in the comments I opened the talk with. The South enjoyed two advantages in the race to modernize, its leaders figured: cheap labor [here price of black controls price of white labor]; and untapped natural resources. Prison system, opposition to trade unions, denial of democratic rights [poll tax]. Whites suffer too, but thrown up against blacks repeatedly, with lots of antagonism.

Even in this new, market-driven, modern South, in other words, racism remained central to the Southern economy, with African Americans paying the price. We could abstract form this central feature, and measure the prevalence of single parent families, or low IQs on standardized test scores, or the levels of crime in the impoverished ghettos in every southern city, but in doing so we would miss the main point: that structural problems beyond the control of ordinary people, black and white, were the main culprits in imposing harsh inequality.
Genovese: “America’s great missed opportunity.” Reconstruction an opportunity squandered, and we can calculate the social costs—astronomical. Borne not only by southern blacks, but by poor whites, and in a wider sense by American society generally.

The issue comes alive again last year with Hurricane Katrina. The historian Mark Naison posed an important question about the state of race relations in the US, and a question that might bring us back to the relationship between political and economic issues. “Is this the society that the black civil rights movement fought for? He asked. One in which black Southerners are just as trapped by economic forces as they were by segregation laws?” In finding an answer to this urgent question, a sense of how and why attempts to do away with racism have fallen short in the past, in other words, a sense of history, is essential.

Thank you