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**Abstract** In the wake of World War I a wave of racism and cultural xenophobia washed over Indianapolis, Indiana, fueled by an aspiration to create a host of new barriers to Black public rights. In some ways, this moment was the nadir of an undistinguished but otherwise commonplace record of local race tensions: By the early 1920s, elected representatives in city and state government frankly acknowledged their membership in the Ku Klux Klan, a newly elected School Board moved to segregate the schools across the color line, and racist neighborhood residency covenants were introduced into local law (Thornbrough, 2000). Paradoxically, though, African-American Indianapolis quietly thrived in the city's near-Westside as a network of African-American churches, school, and social institutions expanded, a local business community emerged, and an increasing number of Southern refugees settled in the community. On Camp Street, a modest corner grocery store reflected many African-Americans' ambitions even as the store owners' and consumers' experiences betrayed the contradictions of citizenship along the color line in Indianapolis. The archaeological assemblage from the store reveals the interesting potential insights of an archaeology of individuality, while it simultaneously provides a cautionary tale about how archaeologists might interpret such experiences.

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# Consuming Individuality: Collective Identity Along the Color Line

**Paul R. Mullins** 3

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The Indianapolis store was under the ownership of Martha Miller from 1911 21  
until 1928, a period that witnessed dramatic expansion of the African American 22  
community in the city. Miller was born in Canada in 1871, but, like many people, 23  
she left behind a frustratingly thin documentary trail that leaves unanswered the 24  
complex story of why she made her way to Indianapolis and decided to open a little 25  
grocery. Miller immigrated to the US in July 1909, arriving at Detroit from Harrow 26  
in nearby Ontario. She appeared on the alien manifest as a school teacher, indicating 27  
she had no relatives in Harrow and was bound for Indianapolis. The archaeological 28  
context makes a fine-grained archaeology of Miller's individual experience seem 29  
challenging if not infeasible – the store operated for nearly a century during which 30  
a steady succession of store owners and their families discarded goods into the lot 31

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32 alongside many more neighbors and customers, leaving behind a complex strati-  
33 graphic jumble like that facing many urban archaeologists. Nevertheless, the material  
34 culture left in her store paints an illuminating picture of Miller's story and provides  
35 interesting mechanisms to position her within the broader society that aimed to  
36 deny her and other African-Americans most citizen rights.

37 In summer 2000, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis conducted  
38 excavations at the 1890–1969 corner store that was both home and workplace for  
39 Martha Miller from 1911 until 1928. The 800-square foot store sold a range of  
40 foods and assorted goods such as coal, and comparable little stores dotted the  
41 surrounding neighborhoods with nearly every corner punctuated by a similar market.  
42 The neighborhoods surrounding Miller's store on Camp Street were dominated by  
43 modest residences that fanned off Indiana Avenue, the central thoroughfare, into the  
44 near-Westside and the city's Black business district from the late nineteenth century  
45 until the 1960s. Many near-Westside neighborhoods like Camp Street had been  
46 settled by White Hoosiers (the local term for Indiana-born residents) as well as a  
47 scatter of European immigrants, but in the late nineteenth century, the community  
48 became quickly segregated and predominately African-American. By the time  
49 Miller settled in Indianapolis around 1911, she found an overwhelmingly African-  
50 American neighborhood. Quite a few of Miller's neighbors along Camp Street were  
51 aspiring marketers, running all sorts of businesses including restaurants, bars,  
52 salons, and groceries. A scatter of coins at the Camp Street site provide particularly  
53 firm *terminus post quem* dating for yard deposits that are often notoriously difficult  
54 to date, and several features dating from the store's construction as well as its last  
55 moments long after Martha Miller's management provide archaeological material  
56 culture from most of the store's 80-year tenure.

57 The clearest insights into Miller's life come from some of the most apparently  
58 prosaic things in her assemblage. Among the items associated with her occupation  
59 of the store is an Afrocentric motif brooch depicting a woman of color in profile  
60 (Fig. 1). The brooch is rendered in a 1920's style that most clearly evokes the  
61 Harlem Renaissance's renewed interest in African cultural roots and aesthetics.  
62 However, jewelry like the Camp Street brooch also was popularized by African-  
63 American dancer Josephine Baker, and many Americans with no interest in African  
64 aesthetics consumed goods from the wave of pseudo-Egyptian King Tut material  
65 culture. Divining a consumer's motivation for wearing such a piece of jewelry is  
66 indeed complicated, as is attributing this particular brooch to Martha Miller, since  
67 it might have been discarded by any number of anonymous folks living in the  
68 neighborhood. Such challenges of attribution, though, are commonplace, and if an  
69 archaeology of individual agency is restricted simply to intentionality and absurdly  
70 well-preserved archaeological contexts, there will be very little historical archaeology  
71 can say about individual experiences. The challenges of attribution still allow for  
72 contextualization of the most likely symbolism for this object based on our  
73 understanding of the broader community in which that item was consumed.  
74 The brooch was a bold show of cultural distinction in any African-American consumer's  
75 hands, displaying conscious African roots while the likes of the Klan threatened  
76 residents' most basic citizen privileges. In Miller's hands, the brooch paints a picture

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**Fig. 1** Brooch depicting a woman of color in profile recovered at the Camp Street store

of her resisting marginalizing inequalities like racism and patriarchy, running a  
 neighborhood business for nearly 20 years when few labor opportunities were open  
 to women of color. Yet using a mass-produced trinket to embrace the Afrocentric  
 sentiments of the Harlem Renaissance was somewhat counter to the New Negro  
 movement's focus on folk art traditions, so seeing the brooch only as a symbol of  
 racist resistance ignores how its very consumption embedded Martha Miller in an  
 anti-Black consumer culture.

Contemporary historical archaeology paints a half-millennium canvas that is increas-  
 ingly peopled by individuals like Martha Miller. Variouslly portrayed as idiosyn-  
 cratic, thoughtful, goal-oriented, and self-empowered, archaeological subjects have  
 come to look like complicated beings in the midst of dynamic worlds. Scholars  
 have long contemplated individuals' positions and power within broader collectives,  
 and a wide range of social scientists have advocated various approaches to elevate  
 the prominence and interpretive visibility of individual agents (e.g., Ginzburg,  
 1993). It is not especially surprising that historical archaeology's fine-grained  
 insight into everyday life has likewise complicated monolithic social collectives

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93 and generalizations with the specificities of local and individual experience. Armed  
94 with detritus attributable to single households, assemblages that are often very  
95 tightly dated, and symbolically charged individual objects, historical archaeologists  
96 certainly have the capability to illuminate small-scale contexts and individual  
97 experiences. Much of the historical archaeology in this vein focuses on the interpretive  
98 force of things that seem inconsequential, like the Camp Street brooch (cf. Stewart-  
99 Abernathy, 1992; Orser, 1996; Mullins, 2001). Such scholarship typically aspires  
100 to counter deterministic interpretations that invest power in broadly defined  
101 processes or dominant collectives, placing more significance in social life at a local  
102 if not individual scale, rather than within an abstracted system (cf. Dornan,  
103 2002:318–319).

104 Archaeological data provide exceptionally powerful evidence to illuminate  
105 unseen everyday agency, potentially revealing the contradictions in dominant ideology,  
106 the complexity concealed by normative subjectivities, and the utter fragmentation  
107 and fluidity of social life. Yet individual experience and the notion of individuality  
108 bring with them some profound interpretive challenges that can energize or doom  
109 an examination of life along the color line. One challenge revolves around the  
110 elevation of agency in forms that risk ignoring structure or simply do not distinguish  
111 between deterministic structuring influences and individuals' experiences. An  
112 archaeology of individual subjectivity and experience can very productively defy  
113 analytically defined "objective" social patterns by painting life as it is lived through  
114 contextually specific experience. Nevertheless, archaeology has routinely sought to  
115 simultaneously define broad patterns, even if they had no especially coherent  
116 articulation in individual consciousness and even if such patterns were the reflection  
117 of structural continuities instead of surprisingly similar individual actions.

118 We are unlikely to ever divine the symbolism Martha Miller attributed to her  
119 brooch, but we risk approaching material meaning as an isolated entity emanating  
120 from individuals if the brooch and similar discards are not seen primarily as social  
121 mechanisms negotiating dominant social structures and patterns. An archaeology of  
122 individuals' experiences certainly harbors interesting insight into the everyday  
123 world and the sheer irrationality of human life that is often hidden within analyses  
124 of broad social patterns. Yet even the most data-rich examination of an individual's  
125 life or some material moments mean little or nothing anthropologically if they are  
126 not clearly positioned within and against dominant structural influences, regardless  
127 of how those structural influences registered in everyday experience. Martha  
128 Miller's brooch is meaningless if it is not positioned within and against racial  
129 subjectivity and the persistent structural continuities of racism that are invested in  
130 particular classes and social collectives.

131 The other challenge posed by an archaeology of the individual is the ambiguous  
132 social meaning of individuality and the ways in which people positioned along the  
133 color line defined individuality in distinct forms. Individuality can be defined in a  
134 vast range of contextually specific forms that have an equally vast range of historical  
135 and contemporary political implications. For African-American, racial subjectivity  
136 has profoundly impacted the social meanings of individual and collective identity  
137 alike. The genuine citizen privileges linked to individuality have routinely been

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denied to people of color through a variety of collective racist subjectifications that were persistently resisted. In 1933, for instance, African-American insurance executive and business champion C.C. Spaulding (1933:67) argued that “We must repel, with all our strength, the growing tendency to deny to the Negro individuality, to deny to us the right and privilege of rising, by force of character, personality, and intelligent application, above the average of our racial group.” Spaulding sounded a familiar refrain that racism’s monolithic caricatures of people of color hindered the advance of upwardly mobile Black individuals. For example, in 1902, a delegation of self-described “cultured, refined, and thrifty colored citizens” from Baltimore went to the Maryland General Assembly to protest the passage of a Jim Crow law segregating railroad cars. Their advocacy against racist codes was perhaps laudable, but they were clearly driven by their own self-interests. The group noted that the law seemed to unfairly wound “the more intelligent and self-respecting class of colored people” that they represented, instead of the “objectionable class” of African-Americans that needed such social disciplining (The Afro-American Ledger, 1902:4).

Class-interested complaints that collective racist identities held back individual progress were not always greeted with sympathy. Franklin Frazier (1957a) directed his ire toward social climbers and African-American business champions in his classic, *Black Bourgeoisie*. Frazier argued that over the twentieth century, the African-American middle class willingly distanced itself from those African-American masses that Spaulding derided as the “average of our racial group” and the Maryland delegation lumped within the “objectionable class.” Yet Frazier concluded that the African-American middle class ultimately remained unwelcome into broader White society as well as tragically alienated to their own heritage despite their embrace of dominant consumer ideals and social practices.

The complicated tension between individuality, citizen rights, and racial collectivity is a commonplace theme in African-American thought. Jeffersonian individualism held that rights were granted to individuals rather than groups, and at the end of the nineteenth century, W.E.B. Du Bois pondered Jeffersonian individuality and African-American collectivity and challenged how individuality was projected onto race. Du Bois (1897:6) argued that Africans had been brought to America as collective captives, concluding that, “the history of the world is the history, not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of races, and he who ignores or seeks to override the race idea in human history ignores and overrides the central thought of all history.” Yet, while Du Bois cleverly dissected the complexity of individual and group identities in a racialized society, he also saw people of color trapped within a racial consciousness that thwarted identities outside racial subjectivity. Du Bois’ famous notion of double consciousness examined the entrapment he believed was fostered by Black subjects’ positioning between White and Black worlds ensnared in a racialized identity.

A more systematic archaeological focus on individuals might well illuminate the impression of racial ideology on individuality, but it could just as well efface race or produce an archaeology that has little objective political force. Poet June Jordan

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183 (1992:15–16) raised the political effect of certain definitions of individuality when  
184 she argued that

185 Beloved, national myths about you and me as gloriously rugged, independent individuals  
186 pervade our consciousness. ... The flipside of this delusional disease, this infantile and  
187 apparently implacable trust in mass individuality, is equally absurd, and destructive.  
188 Because every American one of us is different and special, it follows that every problem or  
189 crisis is exclusively our own, or, conversely, your problem – not mine.

190 Jordan illuminated how a focus on individuality risked posing societal problems as  
191 aberrant reflections of individuals' lives, forsaking a collective antiracist politics  
192 that acknowledges racism as a socially shared, structural feature of contemporary  
193 life. Franklin Frazier (1957b:291) sounded a similar note when he observed that "in  
194 most discussions of desegregation, there is an implicit assumption that Negroes are  
195 merely atomized individuals who have been excluded from full participation in the  
196 life of the White society." For Frazier, it was essential to examine the cultural and  
197 social complexities of African-American communities in order to fathom the everyday  
198 impact of racism in various African-Americans' lives. The challenge facing an  
199 archaeology of individuals along the color line will lie in how the newly visible  
200 individual changes archaeological interpretation in some way that emphasizes  
201 agency without ignoring structure or lapsing into assuming a universal individual  
202 with rationality, intentionality, and self-consciousness.

203 Some archaeologists seem reluctant to elevate race to the heart of analysis, making  
204 it one of many dimensions of identity that we each merge through a life's experience.  
205 This perspective is in part a reflection that systemic analyses hazard ignoring the  
206 many ways people lived in opposition to race and racism. Yet it also seems to reflect  
207 a broader sentiment among archaeologists that grand-scale social histories spin a  
208 rather demoralizing story of long-term social processes that have shackled everyday  
209 people into centuries of marginalization. For instance, Lauren Cook, Rebecca  
210 Yamin, and John McCarthy (1996:55) champion a historical archaeology that will  
211 supplant "the simplistic idea that mass consumption is merely the manifestation of  
212 an alienated populace being manipulated by capitalist interests." Archaeologies of  
213 capitalism are indeed invested in large-scale if not worldwide analyses of patterns,  
214 and when local case studies are not cleverly written into those studies they risk  
215 overinflating the deterministic power of dominant socioeconomic processes. Still,  
216 it seems infeasible to separate the African-American experience of fashioning  
217 individual subjectivity from racial ideology that inevitably shaped all Black identity.  
218 Black individuality has been cast in many terms, but they rarely strip individualism  
219 from race. This has yielded many different senses of Black individuality and  
220 collective social identity alike, but few have ignored the complicated relationship  
221 between race, individuality, and collectivity.

222 Consumption scholarship often makes a strong case for the self-determination  
223 of shopping and the empowering implications of materiality, and this makes an inter-  
224 esting union with historical archaeology's focus on households and even individual  
225 scales. Since the 1980s, consumption theory has often stressed the symbolism of  
226 end users, a scholarly maneuver that de-emphasizes dominant economic processes  
227 and places newfound power in consumers. The first anthropological volley in this

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literature was fired by Mary Douglass and Baron Isherwood's 1978 study *The World of Goods*, which leveled a critique on economic determinism and argued for a systematic understanding of how objects created cultural order in the hands of consumers. As the interest in consumption spread across disciplinary boundaries, the freedom of consumers to fabricate the world in mundane and consequential forms alike became an increasingly prominent theme, but not all scholars have considered shopping especially emancipatory. Frederic Jameson (1984, 1991), for instance, focuses on the notion of pastiche in postmodernism and accords it a central role in contemporary consumption. In Jameson's vision, consumers cannibalize a range of historic styles and combine them in ever-unfolding ensembles. For Jameson these shifting postmodern styles are increasingly private and distinct to a group, mirroring a broader tendency toward social fragmentation in which style is utterly idiosyncratic. Jameson's analysis clearly foregrounds the individual variability in contemporary consumption, but he is not at all optimistic about the political impact of such consumption. Jameson argues that this sort of style cobbled together by small collectives and even individuals is divorced from its historical origins, rejecting any clear comparison to or critique of a broader social norm and absence of political import.

Yet where Jameson approaches this with somewhat dystopian sentiments, other scholars have seen this process of fabricating the material world in individually idiosyncratic ways as empowering if not liberating. For example, A. Fuat Firat and Allad Venkatesh (1995:254) argue that the postmodern fragmentation of consumer meaning should be interpreted as an emancipatory maneuver in opposition to the totalizing logic of the market. In the face of overwhelming global markets that aspire to define identity as unified, monolithic, and objectively real, consumers are constantly restructuring their identities and escaping totalizing identities (cf. Giesler and Pohlmann, 2003). However, most of the scholarship examining such decentered subjectivity examines contemporary consumption and is focused on especially sensational contexts like Las Vegas and Disneyland (Baudrillard, 1996) or distinctive social collectives like club cultures (e.g., Muggleton, 1997). The politics of early twenty-first century ravers and the crowds at Space Mountain make for a difficult parallel to most of the subjects of historical archaeology, and the postmodern individual being contested in contemporary consumption literature does not seem easily transportable to most historical contexts.

Historical archaeology has provided a receptive audience to the notion that consumption is empowering, and the identities painted in historical archaeology have fragmented subjectivity into increasingly dynamic forms that routinely resist or even ignore domination. What constitutes that "empowerment" can vary quite a lot from one study to the next, with self-determination and empowerment painted somewhat vaguely or implicitly, but it typically invokes conscious or at least unrecognized consumer defiance of dominant meanings. Throughout this archaeological scholarship, consumers typically favor alternative symbolisms for things that reflect their identities or contextually specific inequalities. This is construed as resistance to dominant norms by most archaeologists, though the specific dimensions of those norms – exactly what is being resisted and what

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273 constitutes the “authentic” material meanings that are being resisted – are often  
274 strategically ignored.

275 Most of the archaeological studies of empowerment tend to focus on small col-  
276 lectives or households, so it accommodates an archaeology of individuality quite  
277 neatly. Since excavations are often focused on discrete households, historical  
278 archaeologists have fashioned a rich scholarship focused on the finest everyday life  
279 details among otherwise anonymous households. In some ways, this follows the  
280 lead of microhistories that focus on previously unrecognized folks and intensively  
281 probe the details of their lives (cf. Ginzburg, 1993; Lepore, 2001:3). The scholarship  
282 that dubs itself or could be considered microhistory is reasonably broad, but it typically  
283 focuses on the most commonplace folks with the assumption that their lives provide  
284 a reflection of the broader issues shaping many other hitherto undocumented people.  
285 However, the degree to which a microhistorical study can persuasively illuminate  
286 broader social history can vary considerably from one context to the next depending  
287 on the case study data and the specific issues that scholars hope to indirectly examine  
288 (cf. Gregory, 1999:107). The same caveat would seem to hold true for an archaeology  
289 of individuality.

290 African-American thinkers have long celebrated the empowering potential of  
291 consumption, often arguing that African-America’s collective materialism could  
292 defuse racist stereotypes. In 1907, for instance, Booker T. Washington (1907:19–20)  
293 optimistically championed African-American marketing, arguing that “More and  
294 more thoughtful students of the race problem are beginning to see that business and  
295 industry constitute what we may call the strategic points in its solution. These  
296 fundamental professions we are able to occupy not only without resistance but even  
297 with encouragement, and from them we shall gradually advance to all the rights and  
298 privileges which any class of citizens enjoy. It is in business and industry that I see  
299 the brightest and most hopeful phases of the race situation to-day.” Washington  
300 believed that assuming the socially condoned roles of merchants, laborers, and  
301 consumers would demonstrate African-America’s suitability to full citizen rights  
302 and compel the end of racist exclusivity, and this sentiment was embraced in  
303 Indianapolis. Richard Pierce (1995) has referred to the city’s somewhat marked  
304 African-American conservatism as “polite protest,” arguing that African-Americans  
305 in Indianapolis favored civil discourse against racism that involved negotiation  
306 between Whites and African Americans within the city’s existing power structure.  
307 This civility and fulfillment of ordained social and labor roles was intended to  
308 prevent White antagonism that many African-Americans believed would come  
309 from confrontational protest.

310 A vast volume of historical archaeology confirms that many African-Americans  
311 were deeply invested in post-Emancipation consumer culture, at least in the sense  
312 that African-Americans were consumers, but archaeologists have rarely asked why  
313 African-Americans consciously embraced consumption. Jamie Brandon and James  
314 Davidson (2005:124–125) excavated an Ozarks site with both antebellum and  
315 postbellum features, and in comparing those features they found a distinct difference  
316 in the postbellum landscape and goods that suggested African-Americans saw  
317 consequential rights in post-Emancipation consumption. The antebellum feature

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was dominated by architectural artifacts and kitchen essentials, but the postbellum assemblage was graced by a significant volume of mass-produced goods, including a sizable sample of toys. Brandon and Davidson recognize that Reconstruction transformations delivered more goods to these and other Southern households, but this purely functional assessment of market availability does not address why African-American consumers purchased these specific things. Brandon and Davidson argue that these newly freed African-Americans saw consumption of apparent “nonessentials” as a mechanism to “assert their humanity and equality.” They argue that such consumption defied racism’s effort to deny goods and consumer rights to African-America.

An archaeology truly focused on individual experience would paint the most persuasive possible picture of the factors that moved these consumers to secure these specific things: Perhaps there is some evidence to illuminate the favor for toys and the effort to shield African-America’s first free generation from the material inequality of captivity, but this is a complicated question to resolve. However, just as with Martha Miller’s brooch, the most significant dimensions of consumption are not the conscious motivations behind purchase but instead the ways in which the consumption of particular things positioned specific consumers in relation to a broader social and material backdrop. An archaeology of individuality is potentially most powerful when it addresses the cumulative effects of otherwise isolated agency and does not stop at simply recognizing agency, illuminating idiosyncrasy, and acknowledging the symbolic power of things (cf. Lightfoot and Martinez, 1995:477). The African-American embrace of consumption was perhaps not primarily an embrace of the power of things in individual African-American consumers’ hands; rather, it was a recognition of the rights inherent in consumption and collectively denied to African-America. This paints consumption as resistance to racism in much the way Booker T. Washington envisioned. However, the political hope invested in consumption’s liberatory potential and its genuine capacity to secure an African-American citizen foothold were often overinflated and misplaced.

Perhaps the most articulate critic of African-American consumption was Franklin Frazier, whose 1957 classic *Black Bourgeoisie* virulently attacked African-American middle-class materialism. After World War II, Frazier hoped that wartime sentiments for class and color equity would encourage a new society-wide push for racial equality, but he was instead profoundly dismayed by a post-war assault on civil liberties and the role materialism and the middle class played in racial inequality. Frazier’s (1957a:234) *Black Bourgeoisie* launched a devastating critique of the hope African-Americans invested in entrepreneurialism, arguing that “‘Negro business,’ which has no significance in the American economy, has become a social myth embodying the aspirations of this [Black bourgeoisie] class.” *Black Bourgeoisie* directed much of Frazier’s vitriol toward African-American materialism, which he argued effaced cultural traditions and a long heritage of political struggle in the service of cultural as well as economic assimilation (Gaines, 2005:513). Frazier (1957a:81) argued that from the turn of the century onward an African-American middle class had embraced conspicuous consumption

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363 that saw respectability as “a matter of the external marks of a high standard of  
 364 living.” According to Frazier (1957a:83), the Black bourgeoisie’s “interest was in  
 365 automobiles, furniture, and household appliances, the same values as the rising  
 366 White middle class.” Frazier argued that in the utterly model embrace of dominant  
 367 materialist values, these African-Americans “gave the impression of being super-  
 368 Americans” (Frazier, 1957a:83).

369 Some African-Americans did advocate a sort of assimilation at the turn of the  
 370 century, with Washington perhaps the most visible proponent of an African-American  
 371 entrance into American society based on demonstrated contributions to that society.  
 372 At the end of the Civil War, African-America had been swept by optimism that  
 373 racism would be defeated through legislative fiat, but the collapse of Reconstruction  
 374 witnessed a renewed entrenchment of racism as it found its way into Jim Crow law  
 375 and a broader body of socially condoned racism. In the midst of increasing segregation,  
 376 many African-Americans directed their aspirations toward entrepreneurship as they  
 377 became increasingly disappointed by and suspicious of partisan politics.

378 In Indianapolis, many newcomers settled in neighborhoods around Indiana  
 379 Avenue, which became the central thoroughfare in African-American Indianapolis  
 380 and was home to an ever-expanding number of African-American enterprises ranging  
 381 from restaurants to theaters to grocery stores. None of these merchants was more  
 382 visible than C. J. Walker, whose beauty products and salons were the foundation for  
 383 one of nation’s most profitable and prominent African-American enterprises.  
 384 Walker is often celebrated as the prototypical American dream story, rising from  
 385 poverty and hardship to affluence with a combination of perseverance, ingenuity,  
 386 and hard work. Walker herself suggested in 1917 that “If I have accomplished anything  
 387 in life it is because I have been willing to work hard. .... I got my start by giving  
 388 myself a start” (New York Times, 1917:SM4).

389 Walker’s own clever appropriation of the ideological value of “hard work” belied  
 390 the structural challenges placed before her and other African-American entrepre-  
 391 neurs, especially women. While a network of local churches and social service agencies  
 392 lauded entrepreneurship and advocated genteel social discipline, about 60% of  
 393 Indianapolis’ African-American male heads of household were performing unskilled  
 394 manual labor on the eve of World War I, with most African-American women working  
 395 in domestic service through World War II (Pierce, 2005:93). Exasperated with everyday  
 396 inequality, Walker herself left Indianapolis in 1916 leaving behind her factory but  
 397 moving to New York where she remained until her death in 1919 (Bundles,  
 398 2001:169). Indianapolis had a nineteenth-century heritage of integration in many  
 399 public institutions, though, so even in the face of increasing, twentieth-century racism  
 400 some historically deep-seated social bonds reached across the color line and  
 401 provided genuine Indianapolis alliances between Whites and Blacks. In 1904, an  
 402 African-American businessman in Indianapolis even told journalist Ray Stannard  
 403 Baker (1973:228–229) that the absence of racism in Indianapolis actually *hurt*  
 404 African-American enterprise. This anonymous entrepreneur told Baker that  
 405 “The trouble here is ... that there is not enough prejudice against us.... We are still  
 406 clinging too much to the skirts of the White man. When you hate us more it will drive  
 407 us together and make us support coloured enterprises.”

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There were some significant similarities between the aspirations of African-American entrepreneurs and their neighbors that reflect the common social and material conditions marketers negotiated along and across the color line. Before Martha Miller managed the store on Camp Street, Mary and William Smith established and ran the same store, and their entrepreneurial route was much like those of many of the African-Americans who later followed them at the same corner business. Both Mary and William were born in Indiana and came to Indianapolis from rural Owen County in the 1880s. The Smiths settled on Camp Street and followed a typical entrepreneurial tactic of living on the premises of a small corner store with the hopes of saving enough money to move into a better location and secure a larger stock. The Smiths began managing the Camp Street store in 1892, which Mary likely ran on an everyday basis while William continued to sell goods on the streets as a huckster. Throughout the 1890s, William appeared in the city directory under a variety of descriptions for a street peddler, including salesman, traveling agent, and canvasser, while Mary appeared throughout the decade as a grocer. A metal city-issued license dated 1897 was recovered in archaeological excavation, providing an interesting confirmation that Smith was peddling goods on the street in the late-nineteenth century. Like most small grocers, when the Smiths secured some economic stability in 1899, they moved to a better location on Indiana Avenue, leaving the store to another small entrepreneur climbing the same mercantile ladder. Those later entrepreneurs, though, were African-Americans hoping to climb the marketing ladder even as they must have understood the profound barriers that were erected before them.

## Racialized Individuality

Seemingly suffocated by systemic models that ignore most small-scale agency and eager to defuse the specter of an all-encompassing capitalist economy, historical archaeologists have embraced a variety of conceptual frameworks meant to focus our interpretation on everyday life. Agency theories, consumption models, micro-historical scales, and individuality have all been deployed in an effort to stress the active roles of scattered people in shaping broad historical currents, defying domination, and blazing the path of their own lives. Yet individuality has often been posed in a rather mechanical formulation that stresses autonomy and intentionality, which risks ignoring profound social and structural influences on individual agency. Agency is essential to any interpretation of African-American experience, but consumers were positioned along lines of color, class, and region that provided many different structural experiences of materialism and agency, so it is critical to assess how individual agency was shaped within particular contexts (cf. Wurst and McGuire, 1999:192–193).

Archaeologists can develop thoughtful ways to interpret individual intentionality, but we risk ignoring how and why certain forms of individuality come into existence; in American historical archaeology, we hazard ignoring the racialization

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449 of all social and individual identity. If archaeology does not clearly confront the  
 450 impression of racism, it risks imposing an utterly ideological notion of individuality  
 451 that ignores genuine structural determinism in a misplaced effort to celebrate the  
 452 meaningfulness of everyday life. Racism is a fundamental structural element of  
 453 post-Columbian capitalist societies, so the question is how individual agents negotiated  
 454 this and comparable systemic ideologies that shaped their everyday lives. It does  
 455 not caricature the human condition to argue that these dominant systemic features  
 456 structured all life, and in fact in many ways the assertive and reflective linking of  
 457 individual lives and dominant structures makes diverse negotiations of persistent  
 458 racism that much more meaningful. Yet if we want to interpret objects like Martha  
 459 Miller's brooch, they must be consciously situated within a structural context that  
 460 does not simply approach Miller's motivations and decision-making as utterly inde-  
 461 pendent of class, color, and patriarchal ideologies.

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