Transcript
Woodrow Wilson: Legacy, Memory and Achievement
Faculty Lecture Series
April 14, 2016

Dr. Veit: Hello. I'm Richard Veit, chair of the department of History and Anthropology here at Monmouth University. I'm here with two good friends and colleagues this evening, Dr. Walter Greason and Professor Melissa Ziobro.

This is the second in our faculty lecture series. This one focuses on Woodrow Wilson, and is titled: Woodrow Wilson: Legacy, Memory and Achievement.

Each of us is going to speak for about 15 minutes about an aspect of Wilson and his life, and we will also discuss commemoration and race relations. Then, we will open it up to the audience for questions and discussion.

This event is part of an ongoing discussion of Wilson and his legacy. In the spirit of full disclosure, I also want to tell you that I am not a presidential historian. In fact, I'm an archaeologist, about the furthest thing from a presidential historian.

[laughter]

Dr. Veit: I've done a lot of work on New Jersey history. I serve on the New Jersey Historical Commission and I am deeply interested in New Jersey history. I'm going to emphasize Wilson in New Jersey more than Wilson as a president. Let's talk.

Woodrow Wilson was a one-term governor of New Jersey and the 28th president of the United States. He was also the architect of the League of Nations, which was a precursor to the United Nations.

More recently, Wilson has been in the news for his racist views and his anti-immigrant stance. In fact, I remember when I was doing my dissertation research and I came across his history of the American people.

I read it, and I read his description of new immigrants coming to the United States. It was the antithesis of Emma Lazarus. It was really pretty harsh stuff.

Wilson is also the namesake of Monmouth University's Wilson Hall, this building where we are right now.

I'll focus my remarks on Wilson before he became president, and also talk a little bit about the rather majestic building where we're holding this event.

Wilson was a southerner. He was born in Staunton, Virginia. His father was a Presbyterian minister. He attended Princeton University and the University of Virginia Law School. He briefly practiced law.

He found out that he really didn't like practicing law and he decided to go back to school for a doctorate in history. That was a fabulous idea.

[laughter]

He studied history and political science at Johns Hopkins University. There, he wrote a dissertation that's a very important work even today called "Congressional Government: A Study of American Politics."

He went on to teach at a number of distinguished institutions. He taught at Cornell, Bryn Mawr, Wesleyan University, New York University, and Princeton. He became president of Princeton in 1902.

He helped transform what had been in the words of one of his contemporaries, and I quote: "A backward college with aging traditions" almost overnight into one of the leading educational laboratories in the nation.

He's very much in the news for reforming Princeton. While he was at Princeton, he ran afoul of Andrew West, dean of the graduate school and West's close friend and ally, Grover Cleveland.

Grover Cleveland is someone we don't think that much about today. He was our only president born in New Jersey. Wilson spent a lot of time here, but Cleveland was actually born up in Caldwell. West and Cleveland won the fight with Wilson. Some of this stuff may ring true today.

It was about where to put a graduate school. West and Cleveland wanted a separate campus. Wilson wanted it on campus. They decided for a separate campus, and it is still there today. It's quite beautiful. Wilson was a little bit frustrated by his time at Princeton.

By 1910, a new opportunity had come along. It had to do with New Jersey politics. This is an interesting time in New Jersey politics. I don't know if you know this, but New Jersey has had three constitutions.

The first one written in 1776 was really brief. It was written as a British invasion was coming.

The second one was written in 1844. It wasn't a very good constitution, not that I'm a constitutional scholar. Under it, our governor served a three-year term. There were essentially very few sources of revenue for the state. The state was often bankrupt. There were other challenges as well.

We had large numbers of new immigrants coming to the United States, especially to New Jersey. There weren't a lot of services. Industrialization was growing. This was a really interesting time. In fact, Newark was the state's biggest city. They thought they were going to be the next big thing.

They thought they were going to eclipse New York City. They also had an unfortunate nickname, "the nation's unhealthiest city," because there we so many industries there. This is also the height of a time period that historians call the Progressive Era.

A Progressive can be a Republican or a Democrat. You don't have to be one or the other. Progressives generally wanted to improve the political systems of state and improve the quality of life for everyday people.

New Jersey had a lot of famous Progressives. They're mostly forgotten today. There were people like Mark Fagan, Franklin Murphy, and Cornelia Bradford. Wilson would ultimately become a Progressive. He doesn't really start out as one.

At the time, New Jersey politics -- both Democrat and Republican -- were dominated by well-organized political machines generally owned by large corporations, especially railroads and utilities.

Let's talk about Big Jim Smith. He was leader of the state's Democratic Party in Newark; Essex County's major political boss. He knew that he was unelectable as governor. He could not become governor. He thought that maybe he could get someone into the governor's office, and he could control that individual. It would be a perfect situation.

Working together with the editor of "Harper's Weekly," a fellow with the strange name of George Brinton McClellan Harvey, they decided that the perfect candidate would be Woodrow Wilson.

He was well known, didn't seem to have any political baggage. In fact, he didn't really seem to be that much of a political animal. He was a professor. How dangerous is a professor?

[laughter]

Dr. Veit: Smith thought he could control him. Smith facilitated Wilson's nomination. Wilson proved to be a great vote getter. People loved him on both sides of the aisle.

Soon after his election, Wilson surprised everyone. He broke with Smith. Smith thought that he would become New Jersey's next state senator. He went to Wilson and said, "I'd like to be the next state senator."

Wilson asked a very curious question. He said, "Didn't we have a primary election for that already?" Smith said, "Yes, I didn't run. This other guy ran." Wilson said, "Then how can I support you if someone else won?" Smith said, "Of course you'll support me. I made you governor!"

Wilson didn't support Smith. Instead, he supported James E. Martine, who was a senator for one term. By doing this, Wilson showed himself to be independent of the political bosses. This gave him a lot of political clout in the state.

He moved to pass a wide variety of progressive reforms: the Corrupt Practices Law, Workmen's Compensation, Regulation of Public Utilities, and bills that benefited schools

and labor. He also did some strange things. He made voting requirements much more stringent, which made it harder for new immigrants to vote.

In fact, we think he did this because he saw many new immigrants as illiterate, ignorant and uneducated. As a governor, he was becoming frustrated. There's a pattern here. As early as 1911, it was clear that he was thinking about the White House.

This is funny because we're in a political season right now. There are many interesting candidates. The Republican legislature criticized Wilson in 1911 and 1912 for spending too much time out of state campaigning, they thought. Sometimes, things work in cycles.

Wilson runs. This is a map I wanted to throw up to show the ethnic diversity of the state. This is from 1911, during Wilson's time in the state. This is Newark. You can see all the different ethnic groups that are moving into the city.

Today, Newark has the fabulous Ironbound -- big Portuguese population. We have Germans, Irish, African Americans, Chinese, you name it, Italians, eastern Europeans, and Greeks. Many different people in the state. It was a diverse state, even then.

This is Wilson in 1911 when he's already on the campaign trail for the presidency. The election of 1911 -- again, we're living in a really interesting time. This is a fascinating election season. 1912 was really interesting, too.

We have Wilson running as a Democrat. We have William Howard Taft over there to the right running as a Republican. We have Theodore Roosevelt, who had been a Republican but hadn't gotten a Republican nomination, running as a Bull Moose candidate. We also have Eugene V. Debs down at the bottom left who's running as a Socialist candidate.

What happens is the vote gets split. Wilson ends up in the White House. If he had run head-to-head against either Taft or Roosevelt, one of them might have beaten him, but the vote is split, so he gets in. Before he leaves New Jersey, he gets seven laws passed. He's a big legislator.

They are sometimes called the "Seven Sisters," which was named after a popular hair tonic of the day -- these girls with very long, curly hair. The Seven Sisters laws were supposed to restrict the power of corporations in the state. They are all repealed almost immediately after he leaves New Jersey.

He does say, and I love the quote, as he left Trenton that serving the people of New Jersey had been the greatest privilege of his life. You might say that he did some good things. He also did some things that weren't so good.

Let's change gears.

What about Wilson Hall? Woodrow Wilson never actually saw this fabulous building, our Wilson Hall. During his 1916 reelection campaign, Wilson was invited to summer at an estate named Shadow Lawn that stood essentially where today's Wilson Hall is. This is Shadow Lawn. It's pretty cool.

It was built by John McCall, who was president of the New York Life Insurance Company. McCall had sold the house to Captain HB Greenhut, a millionaire businessman who owned department stores in New York City. Greenhut invited Wilson to come. Wilson really moved in.

He spent much of the fall of 1916 here campaigning. Here's a 1916 New York Times news article showing him on the porch speaking to a group of young Democrats. Here he is again making a speech from the porch. As you know, his election bid is successful.

I want to be clear. He first runs right for president in 1912. His second election, 1916, his reelection campaign is the one he's running from our campus. Not from this building, because this building does not yet exist.

I should also point out that Teddy Roosevelt, one of the founders and great supporters of the American Museum of Natural History, and a founder of the conservation movement, wrote a poem -- you might not think of him as a poet -- about Wilson, which he called, "Shadows on the Lawn at Shadow Lawn."

I know it's not the best title. It criticized Wilson for not getting the United States involved in World War I earlier. Roosevelt really thought that we should be interventionists on the side of the allies. Wilson is successful in his reelection campaign.

There is a brief attempt to turn Shadow Lawn into the summer White House, maybe like a Camp David. A bill comes to the senate, but it's not passed. Ultimately, the property is sold to Hubert T. Parsons, the president of the FW Woolworth Company.

As president, Wilson passes some important legislation again, including the Federal Income Tax, which many of us are dealing with right now.

He helps establish the Federal Reserve, which was probably a good thing, and the Federal Trade Commission, and he works to eliminate child labor. He also re-segregates most of the offices that he is in charge of. He's this very mixed character. He does bring us into the First World War in 1917.

When the war ends, he wants to prevent other wars like it in the future. He presents, they're sometimes called the ‘14 points’ at the negotiations, ending the war with the Axis powers and allies.

The 14 points would have established a general association of nations affording mutual guarantees of political independence, territorial integrity to great and small states alike, essentially the League of Nations. Congress will not pass it.

The other nations have come together. Ultimately, the senate will not ratify the Versailles Treaty.

Wilson goes on the road to try and get people to support his ideas. He suffers a debilitating stroke. His second wife, Edith Bolling Galt, nurses him back to health and helps make decisions during his illness.

Someone already asked me earlier this evening, "Who's actually running the country during that period?" The answer is, "We don't really know." Edith didn't allow very much access to Wilson.

She always claimed that he was making the decisions, but it's hard to say because there really was a profound lack of access to the president.

Now, back to the Parsons.

Hubert Parsons and his wife, Maysie Woolworth, purchased Shadow Lawn -- the building that Wilson had stayed in -- and suffered through a terrible tragedy. In 1927, the house they acquired was destroyed by a fire. It is reduced to ashes with great loss of possessions.

There are stories about how the bathroom fixtures were gold plated and people were sifting through the ashes looking for them. It's a terrible tragedy, but Parsons and Maysie have a pretty significant income. They decide to rebuild.

They hire these two individuals. I like to think of them as the architectural dynamic duo of the 1920s. The fellow on the left is Horace Trumbauer. You probably haven't seen him before, but you've probably seen his buildings, like the Philadelphia Museum of Art. He's one of the best known architects of this time period.

The fellow on the right is his closest business associate, and his right hand man, and the fellow who's responsible for all the interior design that we see in Wilson Hall, Julian Abele. Abele is the first African American graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's architecture department, and he is the chief designer for Trumbauer.

They design this magnificent building in the beaux arts style. The Parsons spend, people estimate, about seven million dollars on the building. They suffer their own tragedy. They lose their fortune during the Depression. The building is sold for about $100 to cover a tax lean.

The property is ultimately acquired in 1955 by Monmouth University. Here is how it would have looked when new. It doesn't look all that different today. It is incredibly well maintained. Monmouth acquires it in 1955. The building is rededicated as Woodrow Wilson Hall on May 7, 1966.

In 1978 along with the Monmouth University library, sometimes called the Guggenheim Library, Wilson Hall is entered on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1985, it becomes a National Historic Landmark, and that is a really significant designation.

There are only about 2,000 buildings in the entire United States that are National Historic Landmarks. It was designated under its historic name, which is Shadow Lawn, and that is the highest level, the federal designation, that can be accorded to a building.

That is my brief introduction to Woodrow Wilson, and to Shadow Lawn or Wilson Hall. Now we will go to my colleague, Walter Greason.

[applause]

Dr. Greason: Thank you so much, Rich. Good evening, everyone. It's a pleasure to be here with all of you. My name's Walter Greason. I'm in the Department of History and Anthropology, and I do most of my work in the Hess Business School, teaching economic history.

It is important for me to start by saying how long I've been a part of the Monmouth University community. I came here, first, as a nine-year-old boy, filled with wonder, going into Thomas Edison Hall and receiving an orientation about how I would learn algebra in the fourth grade.

This program was a Saturday morning program. It runs to this day, actually. My two sons are currently enrolled in the program and we come to it every Saturday morning.

It really changed my life.

For six years, I came through the program for acceleration in computers, and learned computer science, algebra, and calculus – and, then went on to believe that I could actually go to college.

I had my doubts, going into my senior year. I didn't know where I would go, or what school might accept me. I was admitted to an extraordinary program that ran here called the Governor School for Public Issues. There were two students from every county in the state admitted to the program.

They convinced me that I could compete. It was hosted here, I lived in Beechwood Hall, and it was the month that really showed me that I could do whatever I imagined. Monmouth is very important to who I am today. I am deeply honored to be back here on the faculty.

My main point in discussing Woodrow Wilson and his work with you tonight is to fill in some of the forgotten chapters that have stirred the controversy recently, particularly what moved the protesters at Princeton University to ask that his name be removed from their school for international relations.

The core of this discussion, for Monmouth University, is that we consider doing a year-long study of segregation. Not just here at the university, but segregation in Long Branch, segregation in Monmouth County, and segregation in New Jersey.

I say this because other, distinguished institutions of higher learning have studied their history in relationship to racial slavery. No one in the country has considered the role of segregation and its impact on higher education, and we can blaze a trail by taking on that project.

I have to disclose that I frequently teach about Wilson in my classes. My co-editor, Professor Ziobro, we both teach the Business History class. We produced a book to help the students learn more effectively this year.

At the start of that book, I wrote the introduction to talk about the paramount role that Woodrow Wilson played in shaping the world society that we now inhabit. His visionary leadership coming out of the First World War, focused on the fundamental principle that empire was incompatible with human freedom.

The principle of national self-determination should be the guiding idea of how nations rise, trade, and compete for resources in world society.

That's the key to my introduction of Wilson. If we look at any events across the remainder of the 20th century, things would have been very different, had Woodrow Wilson not been President. At the core of Wilson's politics is his political progressivism.

Dr. Veit is very correct in emphasizing that this crossed party lines. In fact, progressivism initially grows in the late 19th century as Republicans begin to try and peel away the populist sentiment that animated the Democratic Party.

There's a political competition over which party would do more to build a better society for everyone. That process is what transforms Wilson through the first decade of the 20th century. It's the combination of that impulse for the public good, along with these ideas about local government that shaped him as a young person.

He believed strongly in the idea of states' rights. States, at the core of the democratic project, are what made the United States distinct in the world. Now, why are states' rights really important?

This ideology had animated the Democratic Party before the Civil War. The essential causes of this conflict that tore the nation apart in the 1860s. It is essentially resulted in Republican dominance after 1865.

Lincoln's assassination, ironically enough, galvanizes federal political opinion to support the Republican Party, with the exception of the election of Grover Cleveland twice. But, even he gives into the Republican hegemony of the time, by supporting the idea that the federal government should be supreme.

States must comply with federal law, particularly economically. This combination of reasserting states as the core of national authority and the political impulse to improve the kinds of infrastructure that exists within each community for everyday people became Wilson's platform.

It's what made him a compelling politician. He galvanized popular support behind him. Although he narrowly wins in 1912, he remains strong enough, mainly by promising in 1916 to stay out of the First World War, to maintain a resilient, popular majority.

He frustrated millions of his opponents. It comes back to bite him by the time he leaves office. Tonight, I want to focus on the way his opponents framed him, and particularly those who struggled and disagreed on how his he transformed domestic policy within the executive branch.

In many ways, you have to see him as the antithesis to Abraham Lincoln. Where Lincoln won office in 1860 due to the fragmentation of the Democratic Party, Dr. Veit talked about what happened in 1912. In 1860, the Democrats were in a similarly dominant position, yet they couldn't choose one candidate to run.

Thus, Lincoln very narrowly squeaks into the White House, and this is the backlash that drives South Carolina to secede. It is very similar with what we see happen with Wilson in 1912. Had it not been for the fragmentation of the Republican Party, he would not have won.

In the public mind, we have come to re-imagine Lincoln as a great emancipator. We can certainly take apart the symbols and the accomplishments and understand Lincoln's role; not as a man and as a president, but as a symbol of what an American is.

We still train young people to hold people like Lincoln close to our hearts as who we aspire to be, in our best circumstances. In a similar way, his opponents take Wilson apart. One of the key notes for this process is to see him as the great segregator, the man who re-imposes racial inequality within the federal government.

He affirmed that there are fundamental, God-designed, scientifically reinforced, separations between different types of human beings that are immutable and that can never be changed. Where does he say this?

Wilson writes about this point, most directly, in the same dissertation that Dr. Veit had mentioned. It's published as a book, "The History of the American People," in 1918. In writing the book, the most direct piece of evidence speaks to Wilson's sense that there are different kinds of people that should serve different roles. There really isn't human equality. It is the idea that the Ku Klux Klan restored democratic civilization for the Americas.

In fact, the experiment in Reconstruction, to try and restore the idea of African humanity, that there was a role, politically for Africans and African-Americans to serve in the public sphere, was completely wrongheaded. Reconstruction was a perversion of freedom.

The Klan was essential, from 1865 to 1872, in restoring white supremacy, the true function of what the American republic was designed to be. The explicit message in the book was that African Americans were not human beings; that, instead, whites had to exercise enormous patience and paternalism.

He pursued a racial condescension to allow them to gradually grow, decade by decade, century by century, until they might learn to be more civilized. This paternalism is the key to what is animating his sense of how the government should run, and what the society should be in the 20th century.

Three years prior to publishing the dissertation, he had hosted an early screening of the film "The Birth of a Nation” by D.W. Griffith. This film transforms American cinema.

It is known for its technical sophistication of fading in and out of scenes, of scripting great drama with close-ups on particular characters. It is a sophisticated story that is built on a long series of historiography that Wilson advanced.

Essentially, Birth of a Nation visually conveys the same message that Wilson's “The History of the American People” had done. It demonstrated the horrors of Reconstruction, that electing African Americans to office turned loose their most violent and base behavior.

They destroyed property, they killed white landowners, they tortured, and in the climactic scene, attempted to rape a young, white woman who jumps from a cliff in order to avoid being destroyed and ravaged by these terrible animals.

All of this narrative is driven to enrage a sense of how wrong the time period was for trying to create racial equality. In the film, the Klan triumphs in restoring civilization by terrorizing the black population and its Republican allies into submission. This portrayal is very true to history.

You see the Democratic Party reassert itself through the Klan in the late 1860s and early 1870s, and virtually expel all Republicans. It was very nearly a death sentence to attempt to be a Republican in the South until the late 1950s. The Klan does politically change the character of the country, very successfully.

However, the important part for us today is that, in March of 1915, Wilson praises the film. He praises the film in March and says, "This is wonderful. This is history writ with lightning. The only shame is that it’s all so true."

Six months later, in September, a new form of the Ku Klux Klan emerges, and it is by far the largest and most dangerous version of the Ku Klux Klan. By 1923, it grows to over 11 million members, nationwide, and basically becomes -- not what had been a paramilitary or terrorist political organization in the 1860s and 70s -- a social club in the 1920s.

If you were to be considered a responsible citizen, you had to belong to the Ku Klux Klan. New Jersey actually had one of the largest versions of the state chapter of the second Ku Klux Klan, although they were present across the United States. It was not a southern phenomenon.

The state Klan in New Jersey was led by a man named Arthur Bell. I write about him at length in my previous book, "Suburban Erasure." Bell basically believes in the idea that white Anglo Saxon Protestant character was the key to America's success. Bell chooses Long Branch as the headquarters for the New Jersey Ku Klux Klan.

Each year, tens of thousands of Klan members from all over the region descended on this beach. They came to Seven Presidents Park -- what we call Seven Presidents Park now. They took the July Fourth weekend to come out and celebrate.

It was not to scare local immigrants and drive out or suppress black populations. They hosted spelling bees. They brought children out and taught them how to read and write. A lot of the Scripps spelling bee tradition that we see on television started in these initial celebrations.

There were quilting bees where grandmothers and mothers come out and show their knitting and stitching skills, and how they care for their families, and how being part of the Klan was part of being family.

The most enduring aspect for me that struck me as I wrote the book was that they hosted beauty pageants. Prior to the Atlantic City tradition of Miss America, the Klan formed beauty pageants to celebrate and then praise youth, beauty, fertility, and the growth of young women as the foundation of a good society.

The winner was named ‘Miss 100 Percent America.’ It was about this particular purity that these women embodied.

From 1921 to 1928, there were weekly Klan parades to the local Methodist churches here at the shore. People in full regalia would get together and march into church. The piece about believing in Anglo Saxon superiority was the key to Protestant Christianity, and then national patriotism.

That's the heart of Woodrow Wilson as a national political figure. That's his most effective appeal to potential voters and to political allies. These ideas were the key to his rise.

They were central to the most violent period of racial unrest in American history. In 1896, you probably have heard about the Plessy vs. Ferguson decision at the Supreme Court that established racial segregation as national policy.

You had pockets of racial segregation across the South prior to that case. Plessy vs. Ferguson makes segregation a national phenomenon. Over the following decade, from 1896 to 1904 especially, lynchings and race riots destroyed dozens of black communities and thousands of African American and immigrant lives.

This bloody tide rose to its peak in 1919 in what most historians refer to as the Red Summer. Dozens of cities experienced explicit, open, racial warfare. There were white mobs moving from neighborhood to neighborhood and purging Catholics, Jews, Chinese, Mexicans and African Americans.

These events were explicitly dedicated to restoring white supremacy in the United States after the First World War. These actions continued into the 1920s with the wholesale destruction of black middle class towns in places like Florida and Oklahoma.

Between 1896 and 1935, Woodrow Wilson stood at the center of some of the worst domestic policy in the nation's history. His accomplishments are significant and deserve serious consideration. His flaws, however, are not merely personal failings like private opinions.

They are significantly at odds with the generations of progress toward equality that had happened before he rose to power. A lengthy consideration of his symbolic role within and beyond our university is clearly in order.

As we pursue a diverse, global community here at Monmouth that is defined by its intellectual excellence, the best decisions are made with full and careful awareness of the key historical figures that we choose to uplift.

As I close, I hope that we can move forward together with a year-long study of segregation, modeled on the extraordinary work that Brown University has done looking back to their origins in slavery and the slave trade.

The University of Maryland has also gone further and said how slavery and plantations built their educational mission. We can do more to show the country that this was not just about slavery. It was also about grappling with, and hopefully escaping, the traditions of segregation.

Thank you.

[applause]

Melissa Ziobro: Good evening. My name is Melissa Ziobro. I am our public historian here on campus. Like Dr. Veit, I will confess to not being a presidential historian, but I have a constructive role to fulfill here this evening. Before coming to Monmouth University full-time, I was the chief historian at Fort Monmouth from 2004 to 2011.

One of my responsibilities there was to serve as a memorialization officer -- to maintain the records of what buildings and streets were named for whom and why, to recommend individuals for memorialization as needed, and to vet individuals proposed for memorialization by others.

One of my last actions in that capacity was recommending individuals for memorialization in the multi-billion dollar campus they built, Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, to save money when they closed Fort Monmouth.

I did not get to decide what would be named and for whom, but I was supposed to provide all of the information so that the people higher up in the food chain could make the decisions. Let me tell you, I did not want to be the individual who let someone get through without being properly vetted.

I would have to try to exhaustively compile all the pros and cons of any potential memorialization in order to allow the decision makers to make the most informed possible choice. That's what I'd like to do with you tonight. That's the way that I can contribute most authentically to this panel.

I don't intend to give you answers, unfortunately, if you are looking for some easy answers. I do not have them stored up here in my binder for you. Instead, I'd like to provide some food for thought as you grapple with your own thoughts on Wilson's legacy.

It is fitting that I go last, as I hope that the rhetorical questions I pose here will contribute to some meaningful discussion as we move into that portion of the evening. I'd also like to -- time permitting -- place our discussions about Wilson in the context of similar discussions going on around the country.

Those in favor of memorializing Woodrow Wilson in various ways since his death, have historically pointed out that he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1919 as the leading architect behind the League of Nations, a predecessor to the UN meant to ensure that we'd never again see the slaughter of millions as we did in the First World War.

As president, he also maneuvered through Congress several major pieces of legislation to include a graduated federal income tax, the passage of the Federal Reserve Act, antitrust legislation, laws against child labor, and another limiting the workday of railroad workers to eight hours a day.

He was generally seen at the time, and has historically since been seen, as a Progressive president. While all this is true, we must also recognize as my colleagues have done tonight that as president of Princeton, Wilson prevented the enrollment of African American students.

Later, as president of the United States, he introduced segregation into federal government agencies. African American employees were separated from other workers in agencies, restrooms and cafeterias.

Some were demoted, others fired on fictitious grounds. This prompted the NAACP to release the open letter that you see the cover of here, in protest to the press. Segregation in the Federal Government after reinstated by Wilson would persist for the next three administrations.

This is certainly not the Progressive side of Wilson. These are certainly not actions motivated by values that we want to emulate. How do we weigh these pieces of Wilson? Do we applaud the good that he did, saying that it outweighs the bad?

If we do that, does it then compromise our values? Or, do we overlook the good, saying that we must do so to disavow the bad?

I warned you that I would have tough questions.

Some who defend Wilson's memory will say, "Racism was a part of society then. Wilson was a product of his time. You cannot judge people through the prism of 100 years. You cannot judge people by the value of present day."

I've observed two counterarguments to this. While maybe racism was the norm then, that wouldn't we prefer to honor someone who bucked trends, who stood up for what was right?

The second counterargument posed to the, "Well, racism was normal then," argument would be, "Wilson was by some accounts more than normally racist for the day. He wasn't passively racist. He was someone who actively set back the cause of civil rights."

Another argument you often see when debating the legacy of historical figures like Wilson is that you can dive into the historical record and you can declare historical figures "good" or "bad," or "worthy" or "unworthy," of commemoration based on what you find and what you look for.

For example, I have read articles by more than one reputable scholar about Abraham Lincoln's racism. Look at somebody like Lyndon B. Johnson. He pushed through massive Civil Rights reform but regularly used racist language that I cannot repeat up here. The question becomes then, "Who can be commemorated? Who can we memorialize?"

It is often noted when revisiting the legacy of historic figures like Wilson that many of our founding fathers owned slaves. Here, you can see a list of the 12 slave-owning presidents. This should absolutely offend our conscience today. It is not something to be proud of.

The line of questioning one will hear then is, "Isn't this a slippery slope? Will we remove their names and their likenesses from our public places next?" Some say, "Sure, we should." Some say, "No, that's ridiculous." Some say, "That's irrelevant to our discussion of Wilson." It is, again, food for thought.

A lot of people complain that conversations like the one we are having tonight represent the PC police run amok. I've heard people ask, "What's next? Are we going to sandblast Mount Rushmore?" Why Mount Rushmore? Do you see here?

As you saw in the previous slide, founding fathers George Washington and Jefferson, as we've already addressed, were slave owners. Lincoln, sometimes called the "Great Emancipator," also had a complicated legacy as far as his views on racial equality go.

Teddy Roosevelt, who we've not gotten to yet, scandalized many by having Booker T. Washington to dinner at the White House, and yet he was most certainly by today's standards, a white supremacist, based on his jingoistic views.

Another argument I've heard often from students is, "Why is this an issue? There were no big protests getting national news coverage here like there were at Princeton. Nobody cares." I might hear an individual say, "Most people want to keep the name."

The counterpoints to that -- we're looking to weigh all sides of these arguments -- are if even one person on campus is offended by the presence of Wilson's name, is that one too many? Consider this -- do we as an institution have a responsibility to make people care, to take a stand, even if it is not popular?

We've been focused thus far on this panel on Wilson's racism. What about Wilson and women? This is another argument that is often brought up. In 1917, as you can see here, suffragettes picketed outside the White House, demanding Wilson's support for their cause.

While they're at first largely peaceful, the protest soon turned violent. The women are arrested. They are detained. Some of them are force fed. It's a very ugly period. Wilson finally does step in and throw his weight behind women's enfranchisement.

In a 1918 speech before Congress, Wilson, for the first time in office, publicly endorses women's rights to vote. He asked Congress, "We have made partners of the women in this war. Shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering, and sacrifice, and toil; and, not a partnership of privilege and right?"

Wilson's words don't get the necessary votes to pass women's suffrage at that point, but he is persistent from then on in his lobbying for this cause. On June 4, 1919, the 19th Amendment finally received the votes necessary in the house. It is sent to the states for ratification. It takes another year before the 19th Amendment is passed.

Wilson later said, "I deem it one of the greatest honors of my life that this great event so stoutly fought for, for so many years should have occurred during my administration."

You have people who will take credit away from Wilson for not supporting the cause of suffrage soon enough, saying that he was weak on women's rights and he should have been supportive of the suffragettes.

You will have others who say, "Ultimately, he was the one that was before Congress lobbying for women to have the vote -- these multifaceted arguments to which there are no easy answers.

Another important point when considering historical figures legacies -- how do we combat the issue of misinformation? I have had several people say, "We must rename Wilson Hall," for example, "because Wilson owned slaves. That's not right." That's factually inaccurate. Wilson was a racist, most likely, but he didn't own slaves.

I've heard people say on the flip side of the coin, "You couldn't possibly rename Wilson Hall because that was Woodrow Wilson's house. It's idiotic to rename the guy's house. He lived there. You can't rewrite history. That too is faulty information. We know now from earlier panelists that Wilson never actually even set foot in this structure.

How do we weigh what is motivating people's feelings, people's arguments? Another argument pertaining to Monmouth's connection to Wilson -- some have said, "Well, since he has indeed never set foot in this building, why would we commemorate it after him?"

There's something to be said for that point. There are a good deal many structures that are named for individuals with whom they have no physical relationship. When a historical figure's legacy or a commemoration of a historical figure like Wilson is contested, we're faced with a lot of very difficult questions.

What is the criteria that make someone "worthy of commemoration?" What does "worthy" even mean? Who are the stakeholders? Who gets to have a say in how we interpret and remember our past?

If you remove a memorial or rename a building, are you whitewashing history, or are you not whitewashing, but simply seeking to address past wrongdoing? What do our commemorations say about our present day values?

If we commemorate someone who lived over a hundred years ago, are we implicitly saying that we admire them and wish to emulate them, warts and all? How do we determine what motivates someone views on legacy?

Very quickly, I'd like to place our discussions in a greater national context. We at Monmouth have been talking about Woodrow Wilson's legacy and about inclusiveness on our beautiful campus. Similar discussions are taking place around the country.

I've a few headlines for you. These are ones from the past few weeks. Here's Virginia debating removing a statue of Robert E. Lee. The same state here is wrestling with legislation to prevent the removal of Confederate war memorials. Here is Louisiana wrestling with the same.

Here's an excerpt for you from an article in December, 2015, in which Alan Singer, historian from Hofstra University advocates for mass revisiting of memorializations in New York because so many schools, streets, parks, etc., are named for those who owned slaves or profited from the slave trade.

Some students at Harvard Law School recently demanded that the institutions' official seal be changed, because of references to the slave-holding family that founded the school. Harvard actually did decide to change their seal.

Yale University's debate centers on Calhoun College, named after John C. Calhoun, a Yale alum, who was a southern slaveholder, and a chief advocate for slavery. (Yale decided to keep the name)

I wanted to point out that these tough conversations are taking place around the country. We would be remiss in our obligations to our constituents if we were not at least having this conversation, no matter what our final outcomes are, no matter what our path forward might be.

We will note, of course, that Princeton University has been struggling with this same issue -- their relation to Woodrow Wilson. They recently decided to keep the name. I say this not to argue that we too should. For one thing, Princeton's relationship with Wilson is much different than ours.

He was an alum. He was their president. We're comparing apples to oranges here. We, as a Monmouth University community, need to take the time to ponder these difficult questions, and grapple with our feelings, and come to our own conclusions. With that, I will hand it back to our moderator. Thank you.