

# U.S. SOCIETY & VALUES

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## *Toward One America: A National Conversation on*

# RACE



— AUGUST 1997 —

# FROM THE EDITORS

## THE UNITED STATES AS A MULTIRACIAL SOCIETY

President Clinton recently delivered a major university commencement address in which he focused on the status of race in the United States. Now is the time, he maintained, for “a great and unprecedented conversation” on this theme. This Electronic Journal addresses race, its place and changing meaning in America today, in order to provide our overseas readers with a context for understanding this conversation.

For many, America’s annals of race are written in black and white. Certainly United States history since the great civil rights initiatives of the 1950s and 1960s has been framed largely from that point of view. This bipolar perspective, however, is challenged by some critics as inaccurate and inadequate, given the historic presence of other groups in our nation, and their growing numbers on the American landscape. Indeed, many observers believe a more comprehensive view of history and a more equitable shaping of effective public policy will result from a refined concept of race embracing this broader view of the roles of culture and ethnicity.

In a sense, the term “race” suffers from a lack of meanings, or from too many meanings. For some, race is that distinctive combination of hereditary physical traits by which groups of people are characterized. At the extreme, race becomes a shorthand used to talk about ethnic and even religious identifications. But whether it is understood in terms of color, ethnicity or cultural grouping, race is very much a part of the human experience.

Race has played a pivotal, often confrontational role in the history of the United States, and the struggle to achieve racial justice, variously defined, parallels, inexorably, the achievement of the nation’s promise and national goals in general. Thus, discussions of race frequently become linked to politics and political issues — for instance, affirmative action. This term originated during the Kennedy Administration (1961-63). At that time, the U.S. government directed federal contractors to take “positive steps” to ensure that the workplace was racially representative. It has grown to include active legal and social efforts to improve educational and social opportunities for minorities. Proponents and opponents continue to discuss the desirability of affirmative action policies, and this journal includes President Clinton’s thoughts as well as the views of several distinguished commentators.

The President’s call for a dialogue has stimulated a lively response, and the conversation will continue. This is an expansive topic. This journal will not provide a comprehensive historic overview, nor will we attempt to answer all of the great, lingering questions. We will provide a context for an appreciation of the complexity of the theme, with articles reflecting different, and even contradictory, views. The articles, and the extensive bibliography of print and electronic sources, should assist the reader in understanding this peculiarly American conversation, and perhaps suggest ways in which the American experience has relevance for other nations and peoples. ■

(This corrected edition replaces all earlier editions. [Sept. 8, 1997] )

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Managing Editors.....Charlotte Astor  
.....Michael J. Bandler  
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# ONE AMERICA IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

BY

**PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON**

*(Abridged from an address June 14, 1997, to the graduating class of the University of California at San Diego)*

I want to thank you for offering our nation a shining example of excellence rooted in the many backgrounds that make up this great land. You have blazed new paths in science and technology, explored the new horizons of the Pacific Rim and Latin America. This is a great university for the 21st century.

Today we celebrate your achievements at a truly golden moment for America. The Cold War is over and freedom is now ascendant around the globe, with more than half of the people in this whole world living under governments of their own choosing for the very first time.

Our economy is the healthiest in a generation and the strongest in the world. Our culture, our science, our technology, promise unimagined advances and exciting new careers. Our social problems, from crime to poverty, are finally bending to our efforts.

Of course, there are still challenges for you out there. Beyond our borders, we must battle terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, the prospect of new diseases and environmental disaster.

Here at home, we must ensure that every child has the chance you have had to develop your God-given capacities. We cannot wait for them to get in

trouble to notice them.

We must continue to fight the scourge of gangs and crime and drugs. We must prepare for the retirement of the baby boom generation [and] reduce the child poverty rate ... We must harness the forces of science and technology for the public good, the entire American public.

But I believe the greatest challenge we face is also our greatest opportunity. Of all the questions of discrimination and prejudice that still exist in our society, the most perplexing one is the oldest, and in some ways today, the newest: the problem of race. Can we fulfill the promise of America by embracing all our citizens of all races, not just at a university where people have the benefit of enlightened teachers and the time to think and grow, and get to know each other within the daily life of every American community? In short, can we become one America in the 21st century?

I know, and I've said before, that money cannot buy this goal, power cannot compel it, technology cannot create it. This is something that can come only from the human spirit — the spirit we saw [here today] when the choir of many races sang as a gospel choir.

Today, the state of Hawaii, which has a senator and a congresswoman present here, has no majority racial or ethnic group. It is a wonderful place of exuberance and friendship and patriotism. Within

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the next three years, here in California no single race or ethnic group will make up a majority of the state's population. Already, five of our largest school districts draw students from over 100 different racial and ethnic groups. Twelve Nobel Prize winners from nine different countries have studied or taught at this campus. A half-century from now, when your own grandchildren are in college, there will be no majority race in America.

**N**ow we know what we will look like, but what will we be like? Can we be one America respecting, even celebrating, our differences, but embracing even more what we have in common? Can we define what it means to be an American, not just in terms of the hyphen showing our ethnic origins but in terms of our primary allegiance to the values America stands for and values we really live by? Our hearts long to answer yes, but our history reminds us that it will be hard. The ideals that bind us together are as old as our nation, but so are the forces that pull us apart. Our founders sought to form "a more perfect union"; the humility and hope of that phrase is the story of America and it is our mission today.

Consider this: We were born with a Declaration of Independence which asserted that we were all created equal and a Constitution that enshrined slavery. We fought a bloody civil war to abolish slavery and preserve the union, but we remained a house divided and unequal by law for another century. We advanced across the continent in the name of freedom, yet in so doing we pushed Native Americans off their land, often crushing their culture and their livelihood. Our Statue of Liberty welcomes poor, tired, huddled masses of immigrants to our borders, but each new wave has felt the sting of discrimination.

In World War II, Japanese-Americans fought valiantly for freedom in Europe, taking great casualties, while at home their families were herded into internment camps. The famed Tuskegee Airmen lost none of the bombers they guarded during the war, but their African-American heritage cost them many rights when they came back home in peace.

Though minorities have more opportunities than ever today, we still see evidence of bigotry — from the desecration of houses of worship, whether they be churches, synagogues or mosques, to demeaning talk in corporate suites. There is still much work to be done by you, the members of the class of 1997.

But those who say we cannot transform the problem of prejudice into the promise of unity forget how far we have come, and I cannot believe they have ever seen a crowd like you.

When I look at you, it is almost impossible for me even to remember my own life. I grew up in the high drama of the Cold War, in the patriotic South. Black and white southerners alike wore our nation's uniform in defense of freedom against communism. They fought and died together, from Korea to Vietnam. But back home, I went to segregated schools, swam in segregated public pools, sat in all-white sections at the movies, and traveled through small towns in my state that still marked restrooms and water fountains "white" and "colored."

By the grace of God, I had a grandfather with just a grade school education but the heart of a true American, who taught me that it [segregation] was wrong. And by the grace of God, there were brave African-Americans like Congressman John Lewis, who risked their lives time and time again to make it right. And there were white Americans like Congressman Bob Filner, a freedom rider on the bus with John Lewis, in the long, noble struggle for civil rights, who knew that it was a struggle to free white people, too.

**T**o be sure, there is old, unfinished business between black and white Americans, but the classic American dilemma has now become many dilemmas of race and ethnicity. We see it in the tension between black and Hispanic customers and their Korean or Arab grocers; in a resurgent anti-Semitism even on some college campuses; in a hostility toward new immigrants from Asia to the Middle East to the former communist countries to Latin America and the Caribbean — even those whose hard work and strong families have brought them success in the American Way.

We see a disturbing tendency to wrongly attribute to entire groups, including the white majority, the objectionable conduct of a few members. If a black American commits a crime, condemn the act — but

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remember that most African-Americans are hard-working, law-abiding citizens. If a Latino gang member deals drugs, condemn the act — but remember the vast majority of Hispanics are responsible citizens who also deplore the scourge of drugs in our life. If white teenagers beat a young African-American boy almost to death just because of his race, for God's sake condemn the act — but remember the overwhelming majority of white people will find it just as hateful. If an Asian merchant discriminates against her customers of another minority group, call her on it — but remember, too, that many, many Asians have borne the burden of prejudice and do not want anyone else to feel it.

Remember too, in spite of the persistence of prejudice, we are more integrated than ever. More of us share neighborhoods and work and school and social activities, religious life, even love and marriage across racial lines than ever before. More of us enjoy each other's company and distinctive cultures than ever before. And more than ever, we understand the benefits of our racial, linguistic and cultural diversity in a global society, where networks of commerce and communications draw us closer and bring rich rewards to those who truly understand life beyond their nation's borders.

With just a twentieth of the world's population, but a fifth of the world's income, we in America simply have to sell to the other 95 percent of the world's consumers just to maintain our standard of living. Because we are drawn from every culture on Earth, we are uniquely positioned to do it. Beyond commerce, the diverse backgrounds and talents of our citizens can help America to light the globe, showing nations deeply divided by race, religion and tribe that there is a better way.

Finally, as you have shown us today, our diversity will enrich our lives in non-material ways — deepening our understanding of human nature and human differences, making our communities more exciting, more enjoyable, more meaningful. That is why I have come here today to ask the American people to join me in a great national effort to perfect the promise of America for this new time as we seek to build our more perfect union.

Now, when there is more cause for hope than fear, when we are not driven to it by some emergency or

social cataclysm, now is the time we should learn together, talk together and act together to build one America.

Let me say that I know that for many white Americans, this conversation may seem to exclude them or threaten them. That must not be so. I believe white Americans have just as much to gain as anybody else from being a part of this endeavor — as much to gain from an America where we finally take responsibility for all our children so that they, at last, can be judged as Martin Luther King hoped, “not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”

**W**hat is it that we must do? For four and one-half years now, I have worked to prepare America for the 21st century with a strategy of opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and an American community of all our citizens. To succeed in each of these areas, we must deal with the realities and the perceptions affecting all racial groups in America.

First, we must continue to expand opportunity. Full participation in our strong and growing economy is the best antidote to envy, despair and racism. We must press forward to move millions more from poverty and welfare to work; to bring the spark of enterprise to inner cities; to redouble our efforts to reach those rural communities prosperity has passed by. And most important of all, we simply must give our young people the finest education in the world.

There are no children who, because of their ethnic or racial background, cannot meet the highest academic standards if we set them and measure our students against them, if we give them well-trained teachers and well-equipped classrooms, and if we continue to support reasoned reforms to achieve excellence, like the charter school movement.

At a time when college education means stability, a good job, a passport to the middle class, we must open the doors of college to all Americans and we must make at least two years of college as universal at the dawn of the next century as a high school diploma is today.

In our efforts to extend economic and educational opportunity to all our citizens, we must consider the role of affirmative action. I know affirmative action has not been perfect in America — that's why two

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years ago we began an effort to fix the things that are wrong with it — but when used in the right way, it has worked.

It has given us a whole generation of professionals in fields that used to be exclusive clubs — where people like me got the benefit of 100 percent affirmative action. There are now more women-owned businesses than ever before. There are more African-American, Latino and Asian-American lawyers and judges, scientists and engineers, accountants and executives than ever before.

But the best example of successful affirmative action is our military. Our armed forces are diverse from top to bottom — perhaps the most integrated institution in our society and certainly the most integrated military in the world. And, more important, no one questions that they are the best in the world. So much for the argument that excellence and diversity do not go hand in hand.

There are those who argue that scores on standardized tests should be the sole measure of qualification for admissions to colleges and universities. But many would not apply the same standard to the children of alumni or those with athletic ability.

**I** believe a student body that reflects the excellence and the diversity of the people we will live and work with has independent educational value. Look around this crowd today. Don't you think you have learned a lot more than you would have if everybody sitting around you looked just like you? I think you have.

And beyond the educational value to you, it has a public interest because you will learn to live and work better in the world that you will live in. When young people sit side by side with people of many different backgrounds, they do learn something that they can take out into the world. And they will be more effective citizens.

Many affirmative action students excel. They work hard, they achieve, they go out and serve the communities that need them for their expertise and as a role model. If [we] close the door on them, we will weaken our greatest universities and it will be

more difficult to build the society we need in the 21st century.

Let me say, I know that the people of California voted to repeal affirmative action without any ill motive. The vast majority of them simply did it with a conviction that discrimination and isolation are no longer barriers to achievement. But consider the results. Minority enrollments in law school and other graduate programs are plummeting for the first time in decades. The same will likely happen in undergraduate education. We must not resegregate higher education or leave it to the private universities to do the public's work.

At the very time when we need to do a better job of living and learning together, we should not stop trying to equalize economic opportunity. To those who oppose affirmative action, I ask you to come up with an alternative. I would embrace it [that alternative] if I could find a better way. And to those of us who still support affirmative action, I say we should continue to stand for it, we should reach out to those who disagree or are uncertain and talk about the practical impact of these issues, and we should never be thought unwilling to work with those who disagree with us, so that we will find new ways to lift people up and bring people together.

Beyond *opportunity*, we must demand *responsibility* from every American. Our strength as a society depends upon both ... upon people taking responsibility for themselves and their families, teaching their children good values, working hard and obeying the law, and giving back to those around us. The new economy offers fewer guarantees, more risks and more rewards. It calls upon all of us to take even greater responsibility for our education than ever before.

In the current economic boom, only one racial or ethnic group in America has actually experienced a decline in income — Hispanic-Americans. One big reason is that Hispanic high school drop-out rates are well above — indeed, far above — those of whites and blacks. Some of the drop-outs actually reflect a strong commitment to work. We admire the legendary willingness to take the hard job at long hours for low pay. In the old economy, that was a responsible thing to do. But in the new economy, where education is the key, responsibility means staying in school.



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No responsibility is more fundamental than obeying the law. It is not racist to insist that every American do so. The fight against crime and drugs is a fight for the freedom of all our people, including those — perhaps especially those — minorities living in our poorest neighborhoods. But respect for the law must run both ways. The shocking difference in perceptions of the fairness of our criminal justice system grows out of the real experiences that too many minorities have had with law enforcement officers. Part of the answer is to have all our citizens respect the law, but the basic rule must be that the law must respect all our citizens.

And that applies, too, to the enforcement of our civil rights laws. For example, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has a huge backlog of cases of discrimination claims — though we have reduced the backlog by 25 percent over the last four years. We cannot do much better without more resources. It is imperative that Congress — especially those members who say they're for civil rights but against affirmative action — at least give us the money necessary to enforce the law of the land, and they must do it soon.

Our third imperative is perhaps the most difficult of all. We must build one American community based on respect for one another and our shared values. We must begin with a candid conversation on the state of race relations today and the implications of Americans of so many different races living and working together as we approach a new century. We must be honest with each other. We have talked *at* each other and *about* each other for a long time. It's high time we all began talking *with* each other.

Over the coming year I want to lead the American people in a great and unprecedented conversation about race. In community efforts from Lima, Ohio, to Billings, Montana, in remarkable experiments in cross-racial communications like the uniquely named ERACISM, I have seen what Americans can do if they let down their guards and reach out their hands.

I have asked one of America's greatest scholars, Dr. John Hope Franklin, to chair an advisory panel of seven distinguished Americans to help me in this endeavor. He will be joined by former Governors Thomas Kean of New Jersey and William Winter of Mississippi, both great champions of civil rights; by Linda Chavez-Thompson, the Executive Vice President of the AFL-CIO; by Reverend Suzan Johnson Cook, a minister from the Bronx and former White House Fellow; by Angela Oh, an attorney and Los Angeles community leader; and Robert Thompson, the CEO [chief executive officer] of Nissan U.S.A. — distinguished leaders, leaders in their community.

I want this panel to help educate Americans about the facts surrounding issues of race; to promote a dialogue in every community of the land to confront and work through these issues; to recruit and encourage leadership at all levels to help breach racial divides, and to find, develop and recommend how to implement concrete solutions to our problems — solutions that will involve all of us in government, business and communities, and as individual citizens.

I will make periodic reports to the American people about our findings and what actions we all have to take to move America forward. This board will seek out and listen to Americans from all races and all walks of life. They are performing a great citizen service, but in the cause of building one America all citizens must serve.

As I said at the President's Summit on Service in Philadelphia, in our new era such acts of service are basic acts of citizenship. Government must play its role, but much of the work must be done by the American people as citizen service. The very effort will strengthen us and bring us closer together.

Honest dialogue will not be easy at first. We'll all have to get past defensiveness and fear and political correctness and other barriers to honesty. Emotions may be rubbed raw, but we must begin.

What do I really hope we will achieve as a country? If we do nothing more than talk, it will be interesting but it won't be enough. If we do nothing more than propose disconnected acts of policy, it would be helpful, but it won't be enough.

But if 10 years from now people can look back and see that this year of honest dialogue and concerted action helped to lift the heavy burden of race from

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our children's future, we will have given a precious gift to America.

I ask you all to remember just for a moment, as we have come through the difficult trial on the Oklahoma City bombing, remember that terrible day when we saw and wept for Americans and forgot for a moment that there were a lot of them from different races....

**R**emember the many faces and races of the Americans who did not sleep and put their lives at risk to engage in the rescue, the helping and the healing. Remember how you have seen things like that in the natural disasters here in California. That is the face of the real America. That is the face I have seen over and over again. That is the America, somehow, some way, we have to make real in daily American life.

Members of the graduating class, you will have a greater opportunity to live your dreams than any generation in our history, if we can make of our many different strands one America — a nation at peace with itself, bound together by shared values and aspirations and opportunities and real respect for our differences.

I am a Scotch-Irish Southern Baptist, and I'm proud of it. But my life has been immeasurably enriched by the power of the Torah, the beauty of the Koran, the piercing wisdom of the religions of East and South Asia — all embraced by my fellow Americans. I have felt indescribable joy and peace in black and Pentecostal churches. I have come to love the intensity and selflessness of my Hispanic fellow Americans toward *la familia*. As a Southerner, I grew up on country music and county fairs and I still like them. But I have also reveled in the festivals and the food, the music and the art and the culture of Native Americans and Americans from every region in the world.

In each land I have visited as your President, I have

felt more at home because some of their people have found a home in America. For two centuries, wave upon wave of immigrants have come to our shores to build a new life, drawn by the promise of freedom and a fair chance. Whatever else they found, even bigotry and violence, most of them never gave up on America. Even African-Americans, the first of whom we brought here in chains, never gave up on America.

It is up to you to prove that their abiding faith was well-placed. Living in islands of isolation — some splendid and some sordid — is not the American way. Basing our self-esteem on the ability to look down on others is not the American way. Being satisfied if we have what we want and heedless of others who don't even have what they need and deserve is not the American way. We have torn down the barriers in our laws. Now we must break down the barriers in our lives, our minds and our hearts.

More than 30 years ago, at the high tide of the civil rights movement, the Kerner Commission said we were becoming two Americas, one white, one black, separate and unequal. Today, we face a different choice: Will we become not two, but many Americas, separate, unequal and isolated? Or will we draw strength from all our people and our ancient faith in the quality of human dignity, to become the world's first truly multi-racial democracy? That is the unfinished work of our time, to lift the burden of race and redeem the promise of America.

Class of 1997, I grew up in the shadows of a divided America, but I have seen glimpses of one America. You have shown me [such a glimpse] today. That is the America you must make. It begins with your dreams. So dream large, live your dreams, challenge your parents, and teach your children well. ■

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# RACE IN AMERICA: PERCEPTIONS



# PARAMETERS

*Our consideration of issues suggested by the U.S. national dialogue begins with some basic questions regarding race and diversity and the degree to which progress has been made in achieving social justice. Perceptions differ; still, each of the presentations in this section is relevant. Ronald Takaki points to a racial framework that goes beyond a black-white boundary, and notes the climate of unfinished business within which President Clinton delivered his “One America” address in June 1997. Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom stress the gains of the past 40 years, particularly within black America, that frequently are overshadowed by flashpoints of crisis. Ronald Ferguson examines the pivotal role economics has played in the struggle for equality. Finally, a recent survey by the Gallup Organization indicates the evolution of attitudes over the past four decades, and a selection of current statistical data provides a snapshot of the challenges that persist.*

## A DIFFERENT MIRROR: TO SEE THE UNITED STATES AS A MULTIRACIAL SOCIETY

BY RONALD TAKAKI

**W**hen President Bill Clinton described U.S. society as “multiracial” in his June 14 speech in San Diego, he was not only telling us what we will be in the coming century but also what we have been since our beginnings on the shores of Virginia and Massachusetts in the 17th century.

Within 50 years, he noted, there will be “no majority race” in America. In other words, we will

all be minorities. Projections indicate that by 2050, the U.S. population will be about 50 percent white (down from the current 73 percent), 24 percent Hispanic (more than double the current 11 percent), 14 percent African-American (slightly up from today’s 12 percent), and 10 percent Asian-American (more than double the present 4 percent). This demographic transformation will occur in California within a few years, and has already taken place in

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many major cities across the country.

This changing face of America can be feared as a “disuniting of America.” But we can also welcome it as an opportunity to acknowledge our diversity and accept a more inclusive view of who we are as Americans.

A history of ourselves as viewed in “a different mirror” reveals that America has a long history as a multiracial society. Both the monolithic view of Americans as white or European in origin and the binary view of Americans as white and black do not accurately reflect our diversity, as it will be in the future or as it has been in the past.

When the first English arrived on the continent’s eastern shores in the 17th century, the original peoples had already been here for thousands of years. Then, in 1619, a year before the arrival of the Mayflower in Massachusetts, Africans landed in Virginia, brought here by a Dutch slave ship. Africans continued to be brought to the colonies in subsequent years to meet the labor needs of the tobacco plantation economy.

Still, among the colonists, there was the view that this new society should be racially homogeneous — a New England and a Virginia (named after Queen Elizabeth, the “Virgin Queen”) which mirrored the population of the old country. Soon after the American Revolution established an independent republic, the U.S. Congress passed a law specifying that only “white” persons were eligible for naturalized citizenship. Several years later, shortly before President Thomas Jefferson negotiated the Louisiana Purchase, he told James Monroe that he looked forward to future times when this continent would be covered with “a people speaking the same language, governed in similar forms, and by similar laws.” But the “people” whom Jefferson saw on the continent were whites only.

Jefferson’s acquisition of this western territory, however, opened the way to an expansion that led to the annexation of the Southwest and the inclusion of its Indian and Mexican populations, and also the migrations from China and Japan east to America. By the end of the 19th century, our modern multiracial society had been forged in the crucible of westward expansion and industrialization. Immigrant laborers from China and Ireland had built the transcontinental railroad, the steel ribbon across the

face of America that provided the transportation system for the development of agriculture as well as manufacturing, connecting cities and towns from coast to coast. Irish immigrants worked in New England factories producing textiles from cotton cultivated by enslaved blacks on lands taken from Indians and Mexicans. This reality of our ethnic and racial diversity led 19th-century American author Herman Melville to observe: “The blood of the world flows through the veins of Americans. We are not a narrow tribe.”

In addition to the economy that integrated our different groups, there was something deeper, more profound, that united us as Americans. When Jefferson wrote those powerful words, “all men are created equal,” he was not extending that “unalienable right” to blacks. The author of the Declaration of Independence was the owner of 200 slaves. But, four score and seven years later, during the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln redefined equality as a right for everyone, regardless of race. Equality was our nation’s central “proposition,” he declared, and Americans had an obligation to carry forward this “unfinished work.” At Gettysburg, Lincoln reflected on the meaning of the great crisis and also recognized the contributions of 186,000 black soldiers in helping to preserve this Union. Urging his fellow blacks to join the fighting, Frederick Douglass had pointed out that the Constitution stated, “We the People,” not “we the white people.”

Chinese immigrants also understood this truth. They had initially rushed to the gold fields of California in the 1850s, but those seekers of “golden America” were followed by tens of thousands who came as agricultural and industrial workers. In 1882, however, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act which cut off further Chinese immigration. An immigrant angrily protested against what he saw as unfaithfulness to America’s founding principles. “No nation can afford to let go its high ideals,” Yan Phou Lee wrote in the *North American Review*. “The founders of the American Republic asserted the principle that all men are created equal, and made this fair land a refuge for the world. Its manifest destiny, therefore, is to be the teacher and leader of nations in liberty. . . . How far this Republic has departed from its high ideal and reversed its

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traditional policy may be seen in the laws passed against the Chinese.”

Lee’s protest was undoubtedly dismissed by most Americans, but the struggle to make this republic live up to its ideals continued as waves of other immigrants flowed into the country. Many of these groups met with prejudice based on perceptions of cultural and ethnic inferiority, but most found enough opportunity to continue the struggle for a more equal society. A turning point occurred during World War II. The fight against Nazi Germany, with its ideology of Aryan supremacy, forced us as citizens of a democracy to face the inconsistency between our ideals and our treatment of racial and ethnic minorities.

**T**his contradiction became the conceptual framework for Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, published in 1944. While waging this “ideological war” against Nazism, he declared, Americans must apply the principle of democracy more explicitly to race. “Fascism and Nazism are based on a racial superiority dogma ... and those governments came to power by means of racial persecution and oppression.” Therefore, Americans must stand before the whole world in support of racial tolerance and equality. “This country,” Myrdal wrote, “has a national experience of uniting racial and cultural diversities and a national theory, if not a consistent practice, of freedom and equality for all. The main trend in [this country’s] history is the gradual realization of the American Creed.”

Affirming this creed, President Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized the need to confront Nazism ideologically in order to rally Americans to the war effort. We were fighting, he declared, for the “four freedoms” — freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. Our commitment to these ideals, he explained, condemned racism: “The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of mind and heart. Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry.”

Americans of all ethnicities and races fought to defend this democracy. Blacks left the farms of the South and the ghettos of the North, Latinos their *barrios*, the Chinese their Chinatowns, the Indians

their reservations, and some Japanese-Americans even left the internment camps. All those minority members made sacrifices for what they called the “war for double victory” — the fight against fascism abroad and racism at home. What Lincoln had described as “the mystic chords of memory” stretching from battlefields to patriot graves had become multiracial.

This national reaffirmation of our diversity and our dedication to the “proposition” of equality, forged in the fury of World War II, opened the way for the Civil Rights era of the 1960s. At the 1963 March on Washington, Martin Luther King shared his vision of America’s true manifest destiny: “I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal.’”

The Civil Rights movement stirred the nation and spurred Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964. A year later, President Lyndon Johnson went beyond this prohibition of discrimination when he issued Executive Order 11246. Aiming at “the full realization of equal employment opportunity,” this law required firms conducting business with the federal government to take “affirmative action.” Companies had to set “good faith goals and timetables” for employing “underutilized” qualified minority workers. In his 1966 speech at Howard University, Johnson explained why affirmative action was necessary: “You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race, and then say, ‘You are free to compete with all others,’ and still justly believe that you have been completely fair.... Thus it is not enough to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates. This is the next and more profound stage of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity — not just legal equity but human ability — not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result.”

Thirty years later, however, equality as a fact still remains a dream deferred for millions of Americans.

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We have still to address the overriding issue that W.E.B. Du Bois identified when he predicted that the problem of the 20th century will be the problem of the color line. In the twilight of this era, this problem has become increasingly perplexing. Work in inner-cities across America has “disappeared,” to use the grim description by scholar William Julius Wilson. The disturbingly disproportionate numbers of young black men in prisons confirm the correlation between crime and poverty, while forcing many states to spend more money for prisons than for universities. What Myrdal termed the “American dilemma” has indeed become many dilemmas. The tensions and clashes of race have reached beyond blacks and whites to include Latinos and Asians. The 1992 Los Angeles upheaval seemed to preview a new era of multiracial conflicts.

Within this context of a deepening racial divide and a widening backlash against affirmative action and immigrants, President Bill Clinton gave his speech, “One America in the 21st Century,” at the University of California, San Diego, on June 14, 1997. In this historic speech, Clinton was the first president to describe American society as “multiracial.” He also urged us to carry forward our nation’s “unfinished

work,” an implicit reference to Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.

Can we work it out? Can we get along in the 21st century? Though to many the prospects do not appear promising, we have reason to be hopeful. The history of multicultural America as seen in “a different mirror” offers us reassurances: The stories of our diverse racial and ethnic groups are different but they are not disparate. Throughout our history, we have been connected to each other as Walt Whitman’s “vast, surging, hopeful army of workers” in the building of our country’s economy. From the very founding of our nation, we have also struggled in the realization of our political ideals of democracy and equality. This “larger memory” of our varied selves constantly urges us to carry forward our “unfinished work” toward “a more perfect Union.” ■

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*Professor Ronald Takaki, of the University of California, Berkeley, is the author of A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America (1993). His next book, A Larger Memory: Voices of Multicultural America, will be published in 1998 by Little, Brown and Company.*

## THE OVERLOOKED STORY

BY ABIGAIL THERNSTROM AND STEPHAN THERNSTROM

**B**lacks and whites apart: Is that an accurate picture of American society in the 1990s? We argue that it is not.

The issue of increasing segregation was raised forcefully by the much-quoted 1968 Kerner Commission, which sought to explain three years of terrible urban riots that began in 1965. The United States was “moving towards two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal,” the report concluded.

The Kerner report captured headlines, and in succeeding years its central finding has become a civil rights mantra. And yet the picture it drew — never subject to critical scrutiny — was quite wrong.

Perhaps its authors were traumatized by the ghetto riots; whatever the reason, they deluded themselves into believing that the condition of

African-Americans had been deteriorating rather than improving since World War II.

To have argued that the overall direction of racial change was toward greater separation and heightened inequality was to ignore an altered racial landscape. The authors were blind to two decades of amazing, unprecedented change. They overlooked:

- The abolition of segregation in the armed forces in the late 1940s, during the administration of President Truman.
- The revolution in the legal landscape that was the consequence of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court’s 1954 decision outlawing state-imposed separation of the races in public schools, and other landmark constitutional rulings.

- The astonishing effectiveness of the mass movement on behalf of civil rights that swept the South in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The movement began with the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott in 1955, gathered steam with the sit-ins at restaurant counters and other private and public facilities, and culminated in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, outlawing discrimination in education, employment, public accommodations, and voting.
- A dramatic rise in the educational level of the African-American population, a steep decline in black poverty, and a surge in black home ownership rates.

No ethnic group in American history had ever improved its position so dramatically in so short a period (although admittedly none had so far to go).

The Kerner report had depicted a nation experiencing “deepening racial division.” Its pessimism was largely derived from a misreading of the urban scene. The commission saw a growing racial gulf on the metropolitan map — one society (black) in the central city, and another (white) outside the core. The “accelerating segregation of low-income, disadvantaged Negroes within the ghettos of the largest American cities,” the report noted ominously, was the “most basic” of the “underlying forces” that menaced the nation’s future. The black urban concentration might well blow the country apart, it warned.

That menacing future never came to pass. Most of the very large American cities in the 1960s did not become “mainly black” within two decades, as predicted. Moreover, San Diego (California), Phoenix (Arizona), and San Antonio (Texas) are among a crop of new urban giants, but the black population in these booming western cities has remained a healthy mix of whites, blacks and other minorities.

In fact, in the more dynamic corners of urban America, the Kerner Commission’s simple two-tone black-and-white portrait is as outmoded as an old-fashioned black-and-white movie. The report somehow overlooked the Immigration Act of 1965, the result of which was a flood of newcomers — now chiefly from Asia and Latin America — into the nation’s central cities. Today, a city like Los Angeles

is a metropolis that has acquired a multiracial complexity of which the Kerner Commission never dreamed. Hispanics outnumber African-Americans in five other major “Sunbelt” cities as well.

The 1968 report was wrong on two other counts. It never envisioned the black suburbanization that would outpace that of whites in the coming decades. In the last quarter century the proportion of African-Americans living in suburban communities nearly doubled, with the change in some cities even greater. An astonishing 64 percent of metropolitan Atlanta’s black population lives outside the central city. The figure for Washington, D.C., is almost as high; by 1990, 61 percent of the African-American population in the D.C. metropolitan area were suburbanites.

**T**he Kerner Commission envisioned blacks not only trapped in cities but confined to all-black neighborhoods. But here, too, it was wrong. By 1994, five out of six African-Americans said they had white neighbors, and three out of five whites reported having blacks living nearby. That makes sense. Neighborhoods have become more racially mixed in recent decades in most of the 15 metropolitan areas with the largest black populations. And the drop has been even more pronounced in smaller cities. In fact, between 1970 and 1980, the level of segregation dropped in 90 percent of the metropolitan areas recognized by the Census Bureau. In subsequent years the trend has continued. Moreover, if we ask what proportion of African-Americans in major metropolitan centers live in a true ghetto — clusters of city blocks that are at least 90 percent black — the answer is only a minority.

Residential patterns are only one aspect of a larger picture of heartening change that began to take shape in the immediate post-World War II years, before the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. That process of change was in part the result of key decisions made by President Truman and other political and legal authorities, but more fundamental were the impersonal economic and demographic forces that transferred so many blacks from the southern countryside to northern cities in which racial prejudice was much weaker. Furthermore, white attitudes were gradually becoming more tolerant and liberal throughout American society, in the South as well as the North.

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As a consequence, almost three-quarters of African-American families today have incomes above the poverty line. The black college population has grown from 45,000 in 1940 to more than 1.4 million today. Sixty percent of employed black women were domestic servants in 1940; today a majority hold white-collar jobs. The number of African-Americans in the professions has also risen impressively.

Indeed, one of the best kept secrets of American life today is that more than 40 percent of the nation's black citizens consider themselves members of the middle class. The black unemployment rate has gotten much publicity, but of those who are in the labor force (defined by the U.S. Department of Labor as working or looking for work), 93 percent of those aged 25 to 64 had jobs in 1995. Too many journalists and scholars have let the underclass define black America; it is a very misleading picture.

In addition, contact between the races has increased enormously. By 1989, five out of six African-Americans could name a white person whom they considered a friend, while two out of three whites said their social circle included someone who was black. By 1994, it had become not the least bit unusual for blacks and whites to visit each other's homes on social occasions and even increasingly attend the same church.

That's some of the good news — too little acknowledged or even understood. But there is bad

news as well — evident, for instance, when one compares African-Americans and whites either living in poverty or unemployed, or when one looks at the homicide rate. On the educational front, too, there are troubling signs. Black students are now as likely to graduate from high school as whites, but, on average, they are four years behind whites in reading skills and 3.4 years behind in math. This is a major barrier in the way of the black quest for greater economic equality.

The quest continues — and should continue. In fact, it is now joined by civil rights activists among Asians and Hispanics as well. But if the drive for equality among members of all racial and ethnic groups does not acknowledge the remarkable degree to which citizens of every color have come to realize the American dream, future efforts are likely to fail. The pessimistic stress on ongoing exclusion so often expressed by the civil rights community is a self-fulfilling prophecy: The picture of helplessness encourages paralysis. If blacks, whites, Asians and Hispanics all think nothing has changed, then the hard work yet needed will be stymied. The American dream has not been for whites only. That should be a matter of deep national pride. ■

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*Abigail Thernstrom is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute in New York City. Stephan Thernstrom is Winthrop Professor of History at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. They are co-authors of America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible (Simon & Schuster, September 1997).*

## SHIFTING CHALLENGES: FIFTY YEARS OF ECONOMIC CHANGE TOWARD BLACK-WHITE EARNINGS EQUALITY

BY RONALD P. FERGUSON

When Gunnar Myrdal published *An American Dilemma* in 1944, three of every four Negroes in the United States lived in the South. The reigning ideology in the South, mirrored to a substantial degree in the nation at large, was white supremacy. Decade after decade, the leading proponents of white supremacy decreed that Negroes had neither the right nor the human potential to participate on a par with whites in the economic and political life of the nation. White citizens broadly subscribed to this dictum, as did

many blacks. Consequently, a full eight decades after the final abolition of slavery, social, political and economic opportunity for black Americans remained severely circumscribed.

Thus limited, blacks in the early 1940s trailed far behind whites on virtually every important social and economic indicator. Blacks attended poorly equipped schools and for only half as many years as did whites. The average black male earned less than half as much as his white contemporary. He labored, more often than not, in the most menial



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and low-wage jobs and received less pay than comparable whites, even when doing the same work. Such was the custom in 1944.

Fifty years later, in 1994, remnants of white supremacist ideology continue to color the thoughts and behaviors of whites and blacks alike, but the most pernicious customs are largely outdated and most are violations of federal law. Further, beyond formal legal structures, the civil rights and black power movements have achieved for African Americans a presence in public affairs and elective offices that few could have conceived of at the time that Myrdal wrote.

Still, legacies from three centuries of enforced social and economic subordination abound: Economic advantage and disadvantage still correlate with race much more than might happen by chance; social relations between the races remain clumsy, suspicious and fragile. Moreover, tenets of conventional wisdom regarding the causes of racial economic inequality, some of which are increasingly obsolete as contemporary explanations, are legacies of the past as well.

Measurable racial disparities in skills and apparent commitment to work are complex manifestations of deep-rooted historical and contemporary social forces that produce self-fulfilling prophecies of poor performance for many African-American youth and adults alike. These forces include the demeaning and discouraging messages that society delivers to black males as a group and the long tradition of excluding black workers from many positions for which they have had the qualifications. Discouraging messages that communicate lack of welcome and low expectations to black male youth, buttressed by inadequate schools and talk "on the street" that the economic game is "rigged," foster skeptical and often half-hearted engagement by many black youth, and some adults as well, in mainstream activities that purport to prepare them for expanded opportunity.

Substantially reducing racial disparity among young adults in the labor market requires supporting and holding accountable the institutions that should inspire, educate and nurture African-American children. In addition, it requires continued vigilance against racial bias in the world of work which, when it happens, serves to validate young people's

expectations that the game is rigged against them even when they do their part to prepare and perform. Given the complexity of the social forces that affect the acquisition of skill and success in labor markets, and given that social forces are malleable, I reject any assertion that the remaining differences in skill among blacks and whites are genetically predetermined (as some pundits are again suggesting) or that society should acquiesce and be content to tolerate them.

World War II opened new employment opportunities for African-Americans. It brought growth in earnings that did not disappear when the war was over. While the causes shifted, the positive momentum of progress continued from the 1940s through the 1960s as younger blacks led a mass migration away from the rural South. Some settled in southern cities; others migrated farther to the cities of the North where, until the mid-1970s, economic opportunities were far superior.

Thanks to the civil rights movement, economic progress for blacks accelerated in the South after the mid-1960s. For the first time, more blacks returned to the South than left it during the 1970s. In addition to its many other achievements, the civil rights movement was a major force behind decisions by Congress and President Lyndon B. Johnson to enact Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 11246. Both of these measures apparently helped to sustain income growth for blacks relative to whites well into the mid-1970s. These civil rights measures helped to ensure, for example, that blacks would receive the growth in earnings that they deserved, commensurate with the gains that they were achieving in academic attainment.

Blacks gained on whites in educational attainment and in various measures of school quality through the entire period after 1940. Researchers agree that this probably accounts for between one-quarter and one-half of the progress that blacks achieved in closing the gap in earnings, even without explicitly accounting for civil rights pressures. After the mid-1970s, progress toward closing the gap in earnings stopped. In fact, for younger blacks, the trend reversed. Disparity grew.

A number of economic shifts have been identified as contributing factors by other authors. They

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include racially disparate shifts in industry and occupational employment patterns, among others, that contributed to growth in racial disparity among young workers after 1975. Several may have common roots in the growing value of skill and in reduced federal pressure for affirmative action. Several, such as changing technology, the falling minimum wage, declining unionism and increased immigration help to account for why the value of skill has grown both within and across racial groups.

**T**he National Assessment of Educational Progress shows that basic skills for black high school students have been rising relative to those for whites since at least the early 1970s. Hence, the increase from minus 6 percent for 1975 to minus 16 percent for 1989 in the disparity in wage rates between young blacks and whites (as measured without controlling for test scores) is probably not because blacks' skills have deteriorated. Instead, either the value of skill rose after 1975 faster than the black-white gap in skill closed — thus inflating the financial significance of remaining skill differences — or blacks in 1975 were earning more than whites who had similar qualifications and the apparent erosion of earnings after 1975 was simply bringing them back in line. Either or both explanations may have some merit.

Based on the evidence, these explanations for what happened after 1975 seem more plausible than one that relies on an increase in discrimination.

Therefore, while we note the continuing importance of discrimination and endorse the vigorous enforcement of civil rights laws, our findings point to other explanations for the increase in disparity after 1975. Similarly, black-white differences in employment levels for men with 13 or fewer years of schooling reflect various skill and behavioral differences, including a greater propensity to resign from occupations that require more skill. The latter pattern may be a response to racial bias in the social relations of work for more complex occupations. It warrants further investigation.

## CONCLUSION

Most important, disparities in opportunity may occur before young people even enter the labor market — in the provision of schooling and other resources that influence skill-building and the socialization of youth. These include not only the current disparity in the quality of schooling and recreation and discouraging messages from society at large, but also racial inequities in past generations of institutions that prepared parents and grandparents for their roles as teachers and care givers. Certainly, efforts to fight unfair racial bias in hiring and promotion must continue.

However, interventions to strengthen schools, families and other institutions that prepare children for adulthood must take center stage in responding to the economic disparities that remain among young adults in the 1990s.

These are different times from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. The job now is to utilize more effectively the legal and institutional resources that the civil rights and black power movements helped to put in place. The dream that inspired these movements was that African-Americans might lead more healthy, happy, and productive lives, free from the hardships and degradations of social and economic subordination. The dream has not fully come true. Indeed, America may never cast off completely the ideology of white supremacy. Similarly, social class interests that align with wealth and privilege will remain challenges to many visions of social fairness and equity. Nevertheless, the evidence demonstrates that progress for black Americans over the past 50 years has been remarkable. In the face of resistance, discipline, courage and perseverance have paid dividends. The same will be true in the future. As African-Americans whose parents and grandparents taught this lesson to us, we must teach it to our children and insist that they put it into practice. ■

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*Ronald F. Ferguson is a professor of government at the John F. Kennedy School of Public Policy, Harvard University.*

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# GALLUP POLL: PROGRESS IN BLACK/WHITE RELATIONS, BUT RACE IS STILL AN ISSUE

PREPARED BY CHARLOTTE ASTOR

**A** new survey of black/white relations in the United States indicates a substantial improvement over time in blacks' satisfaction with their lives.

The Jan. 4-Feb. 28, 1997 poll by the Gallup Organization also indicated a significant decrease, over time, in white expression of unfavorable attitudes towards African-Americans and towards such situations as interracial marriage and voting for a black presidential candidate. Whites said they have little prejudice against blacks, that they desire mixed race environments and don't object to mixed-race settings to live in and for their children's schools.

In addition, the survey indicated that a majority of African-Americans do not live, work or send their children to school in segregated environments, and that whites and blacks have close friends of the other race.

The Gallup survey was designed to provide a baseline for a continuing and regular audit of Americans' perceptions of race relations in the United States. It was based on telephone interviews with 3,036 adults. Of these, 1,269 identified themselves as black and 1,680 identified themselves as white.

## SATISFACTION

The survey suggests that while differences still exist between black and white satisfaction with a number of aspects of their personal lives — including income, standard of living and housing — the gaps in some instances have narrowed substantially since the 1960s. Gallup officials called this development “one of the more significant findings of the study.”

For example, in 1965, some 28 percent of blacks and 77 percent of whites said they were satisfied with their housing; in 1997, 75 percent of blacks and 90 percent of whites said they were satisfied. In 1963, 45 percent of blacks and 82 percent of whites were satisfied with their standard of living.

In 1997, 74 percent of blacks and 87 percent of whites said they were satisfied. Only 28 percent of blacks, and 69 percent of whites, were satisfied with household income in 1965. By 1997, satisfaction had increased to 53 percent of blacks and 72 percent of whites.

## PERSONAL PREJUDICE

Another major finding was in the area of personal prejudice. Whites expressed tolerant racial views across a variety of measures and gave little indication that they have strong prejudice against African-Americans. The tolerance expressed by whites in poll responses has increased markedly over the past 30 to 40 years, and whites are now much less likely to object to several racial situations that they disapproved of in the past. On a “0 to 10” scale, both average whites and average African-Americans place themselves close to the no “prejudice whatsoever” end of the scale. Only a moderate percentage (22 percent of blacks and 14 percent of whites) admit to even a mid-point level of prejudice against members of the opposite race. At the same time, however, blacks and whites perceive that other whites in their area have much higher levels of prejudice against African-Americans.

In one of the most substantial race-related changes ever noted in a Gallup poll, a majority of members of both races, especially those less than 50 years old, now say they approve of interracial marriage between blacks and whites. In 1972, only 25 percent of whites and 61 percent of blacks approved of black-white marriages. The number who approve in 1997 is 61 percent of whites and 77 percent of blacks. Gallup officials said the major predictor of a positive reaction to marriage between blacks and whites is age, not race, with high approval noted among younger Americans and lower approval among older Americans. The age effect is found among both whites and blacks.

A majority of both races (83 percent of blacks and

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61 percent of whites) say they would prefer to live in a neighborhood containing about 50 percent white and 50 percent African-American residents.

In what Gallup called a significant and profound change from previous years, less than a majority of whites say they would object even if African-Americans in great numbers moved into their neighborhood. In 1958, 80 percent of whites said they would move if African-Americans moved in great numbers into the neighborhood; in 1997, only 18 percent said they would move. A majority of both races say they would not object to sending their child to a school in which more than 50 percent of the children were of the opposite race. The percent of white parents who object to sending their child to a school with a "half" African-American population has fallen steadily since the 1960s; dropped to a low of 5 percent in 1980, and remains low (12 percent) in 1997. Objections to a "more than half black" setting have declined from 63 percent in 1958 to 41 percent in 1997. A high percentage of working Americans of both races (88 percent of African-Americans and 82 percent of whites) say their preferred work environment would include both white and black colleagues. In addition, almost no whites would object to voting for a qualified black candidate for president. This represents what Gallup calls "a highly significant change in attitude" since 1958. At that time, only 35 percent of whites said they would vote for an African-American president. As recently as 10 years ago, only about three-quarters of whites said they would vote for a well-qualified African-American candidate for president.

## **DIFFERING PERCEPTIONS OF RACE RELATIONS**

The survey indicated major differences in the perceptions of blacks and whites about the status of race relations in the United States. Whites are more optimistic than blacks on several perceptual measures of how African-Americans are faring both nationally and in their local communities. However, these gaps in some instances have narrowed since the 1960s.

In assessing their local communities in 1997, blacks are more likely than whites to perceive unfair treatment and discrimination. Seventy-six percent

of whites say that blacks are treated the same as whites, while only 49 percent of blacks perceive equal treatment. In 1968, only 26 percent of blacks (compared with 73 percent of whites) felt that both races were treated equally in their community.

Perceptions of blacks and whites regarding equality of employment education and housing opportunities in their communities show similar gaps between blacks and whites. African-Americans are most positive about equal opportunity for themselves in terms of education (63 percent) and least positive about equal opportunities to get jobs (46 percent). These numbers still represent progress.

As far back as 1962, more than eight out of 10 whites said black children had as good a chance as white children to get a good education in the local community, but that year, only about half of blacks said black children had the same opportunity. Gallup noted that the gap between whites and blacks on this perception has narrowed over the years, from 32 percent in 1962 to 16 percent in 1997.

In 1989, when Gallup first asked blacks and whites about their perceptions of black housing opportunity, 51 percent of blacks and 71 percent of whites felt opportunities were equal for both races. In 1997, 58 percent of blacks and 86 percent of whites perceive equal housing opportunities for both races.

While about six out of 10 whites say the quality of life for blacks has improved over the past 10 years, only about one-third of blacks agree. At the same time, African-Americans are more likely than whites to say that the quality of life for whites has improved. Each racial group thinks things have improved more for the other racial group. Both blacks and whites were more optimistic about improvements in the quality of life for blacks in 1980 than during the past seven years.

When asked about "relations between blacks and whites over the past year," however, both whites and blacks split roughly into thirds, saying race relations have improved, stayed the same or gotten worse. Looking to the future, whites and blacks appear equally pessimistic about the future of race relations in America. Between 54 and 58 percent of members of both racial groups say that race relations will continue to be a problem.

Whites (46 percent) and blacks (72 percent) say

that blacks are treated more harshly by the criminal justice system than whites —but the degree of perception differs by 26 points.

## GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN ADDRESSING RACIAL ISSUES

Whites and blacks have different views on the role of the U.S. Government in dealing with the racial situation. Blacks (53 percent) are twice as likely as whites (22 percent) to say the government should increase affirmative action programs. Some 37 percent of whites, compared with 12 percent of blacks, want affirmative action decreased.

Still, when asked if blacks should try to change the system or improve themselves, a majority of both blacks and whites supported the “improve themselves” option.

## CONTACT BETWEEN THE RACES

The survey made clear that the notion of a separate America for African-Americans is no longer valid. Blacks have relatively high levels of daily contact with whites across a variety of settings. Seventy-five percent of blacks say they have a close friend who is white. Thirty percent live in a neighborhood which is half black and half white, and another 20 percent live in a mostly white neighborhood. Forty-one percent live in mostly or all black neighborhoods.

Sixty-one percent of blacks say they send their oldest child to a school which is at least half white, compared with only 25 percent who send their children to mostly black schools. Blacks with higher education and income levels are least likely to live in mostly or all black neighborhoods, or to send their children to mostly or all black schools.

African-Americans are also overwhelmingly likely to work with whites. Seventy-six percent report that their workplace is at least half white, and 47 percent work with mostly or all whites. Only 15 percent work with mostly or all blacks.

One aspect of life which remains very segregated is worship. Seventy-one percent of blacks and 73

percent of whites worship almost exclusively with members of their own race.

## EXPERIENCING DISCRIMINATION

Between 6 and 30 percent of blacks say they have been unfairly treated because of their race over the last 30 days in each of a series of everyday life settings: shopping, at work, dining out, using public transportation, with police. Forty-five percent of blacks report discrimination in at least one of those settings. The highest level of perceived discrimination (30 percent) is in terms of shopping; the lowest, 6 percent, is occurs when using public transportation. Gallup noted that despite the negative attention that encounters between blacks and police have received in recent years, the reported incidence by blacks of perceived discrimination in dealing with police is one of the lowest at 15 percent. On the other hand, the experience of young black males (ages 18-34) is distinctly different. Seventy percent of them — more than any other segment of America's black population, including young black females — are likely to say they have encountered discrimination, particularly in terms of shopping (45 percent) and interactions with police (34 percent).

## CONCLUSIONS

The numbers tell a story of important differences in perception between whites and African-Americans, but overall find fewer race problems, less discrimination, more opportunity for African-Americans and diminishing personal prejudice. These attitudes represent a significant change over 30 years, a comparatively short time when measuring important changes in behavior and belief. On the other hand, significant race problems, everyday incidences of discrimination, inequality of opportunity and prejudice against blacks remain. Despite the persistence of these attitudes, however, black satisfaction levels have risen steadily over the years. ■

## A STATISTICAL SNAPSHOT

The charts below provide a brief glimpse in economic terms of the situation of whites, African-Americans, Hispanics (persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race) and the society as a whole. As is clear from the Gallup data, the situation of the groups in both real and perceptual term is improving. The information below demonstrates why there is still concern.

While the first chart on income distribution shows that within each designated group the proportion of people in each income quintile is roughly equal, the second chart shows that in absolute dollars, there are substantial disparities between groups. The third and fourth charts document disparities between groups in poverty and employment.

### DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL U.S. INCOME BY POPULATION FIFTHS - IN PERCENTAGE TERMS

The U.S. Census Bureau looks at the distribution of total income in the U.S. by quintiles or fifths (0-20% of the total U.S. population receives 4.4 percent of all income, 21-40%, etc). Based on 1995 figures, we see the following distribution in percentage terms:

	lowest fifth	second fifth	third fifth	fourth fifth	highest fifth
TOTAL U.S. POPULATION	4.4 %	10.1 %	15.8 %	23.2 %	46.5 %
WHITE	4.8 %	10.4 %	16.0 %	23.0 %	45.8 %
AFRICAN-AMERICAN	3.3 %	8.7 %	15.2 %	24.1 %	48.7 %
HISPANIC*	4.1 %	9.5 %	15.1 %	23.2 %	48.1 %*

*\*Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race*

THE CHART BELOW SHOWS INCOME DISTRIBUTION BY FIFTHS IN 1995 DOLLAR TERMS.  
THE DOLLAR FIGURES SHOWN MARK THE UPPER LIMIT OF EACH FIFTH.

	lowest fifth	second fifth	third fifth	fourth fifth	highest fifth
TOTAL U.S. POPULATION	\$19,070	\$32,985	\$48,985	\$72,260	Not Applicable
WHITE	\$20,916	\$35,046	\$51,000	\$75,000	N.A.
AFRICAN-AMERICAN	\$10,200	\$20,000	\$32,296	\$51,016	N.A.
HISPANIC*	\$11,479	\$19,677	\$30,022	\$48,492	N.A.

### PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION LIVING IN POVERTY - 1993

Total U.S. Population	White	African-American	Hispanic*
15.1 %	12.2 %	33.1 %	30.6 %

### U.S. UNEMPLOYMENT - AVERAGE FIGURES FOR 1994

Total U.S. Population	White	African- American	Hispanic*
6.1 %	5.3 %	11.5 %	10 %

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# AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: A PIVOTAL DISCUSSION

*Few subjects within the framework of race and diversity spark as much debate as affirmative action. Some of its defenders or detractors have held consistent positions on the matter since the days of the civil rights movement; others' points of view have evolved as times and circumstances have changed. President Clinton urges, "mend it, don't end it." In his article that follows, Ricardo R. Fernandez argues that affirmative action has brought Americans closer to a truly inclusive society, and therefore should be continued. Glenn C. Loury suggests a developmental, rather than a preferential, approach to affirmative action that would realize present-day aspirations. And William A. Galston presents some policy proposals to take affirmative action beyond the current system and the ongoing debate.*

## EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION: THE IMPACT OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

BY RICARDO R. FERNANDEZ

The most striking characteristic of the recently-escalating debate over affirmative action is that it is seldom begun with any agreement as to what the term actually means, nor with any attempt to define common ground before arguing over differences. Examining the subject in its historical context can be helpful in understanding exactly what is being discussed as well as in making sense of opposing views and of the values underlying them.

Fundamentally, affirmative action is a global term applied to any one of a number of strategies whose purpose is to promote and ultimately achieve equality of opportunity. Thus, it is applicable to employment, education, housing, voting — in sum, to every facet of life.

When President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order in 1941 ordering defense plants to open up jobs to black workers, he was acting more out of necessity than altruism. The pool of available white male workers was limited because of the war effort and although women — white and black — assumed some of the available positions, it wasn't enough. Therefore, black men who previously had been excluded, or in the best of cases severely limited in getting these jobs, were able to enter the labor force and contribute in a major way to America's wartime production. Roosevelt's order also created an oversight and enforcement entity, the Fair Employment Practices Committee, which continued into the 1960s when Congress gave it expanded authority and renamed it the Equal

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Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

Once World War II ended, however, so did many of the job opportunities it had opened up for minorities. In addition, the intense pro-democracy and pro-equality campaign which had been waged by the U.S. government to encourage support for the war effort served to heighten post-war public awareness of the contradictions between professed ideals and actual practices regarding minorities. Pressure grew to improve the rate of inclusion of blacks and other minorities in every aspect of the life of the nation.

Andrew Hacker, in *Two Nations*, points out that the actual phrase “affirmative action” was coined by the Kennedy Administration [1961-1963], which directed federal [U.S. Government] contractors to take “positive steps” to have a racially representative workforce. Later, under a Republican administration, the U.S. Office of Education’s Office for Civil Rights took the same approach with regard to language standards for minority students by requiring school districts receiving federal funds to take “affirmative steps” to rectify “language deficiencies” in order to open up their instructional programs to all children.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was approved by a bipartisan majority of the U.S. Congress, prohibited discrimination based on race, religion, sex or national origin. Title VII of the act specifically banned discrimination in employment. Evidence of the need for this legislation, which was not endorsed by a significant sector of the American public, was based on a long and documented history of exclusion of blacks (and others) from occupations of prestige and power. Proponents of the legislation argued that native ability and talent are spread relatively equally among all groups, so that the absence (or very low numbers) of blacks in certain professions, along with certain other indicators (low educational attainment, high poverty levels) was sufficient proof that they had been discriminated against. Race, which for nearly a century after [President Abraham Lincoln’s 1863] Emancipation Proclamation had been used to discriminate against blacks and other minorities, was finally banned as a criterion to be used in judging the qualifications of an individual for employment.

However, the prohibition against the use of race as a criterion to exclude blacks did not lead in the years that followed to their inclusion in greater numbers in

jobs, professions or housing. Let us recall, to use just one example, the various strategies devised by state legislatures and boards of education in the late 1960s to avoid the dismantling of a dual system of education that had been ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954. The resistance of whites to desegregation, initially in the South but later in the West and in the North in the 1970s, led to the federal courts becoming involved in enforcing the constitutional mandate through “affirmative” strategies such as busing (moving students of one race by bus to schools where the population was from a different race). In the field of employment where the numbers of blacks hired had not increased significantly in the years following the Civil Rights Act, numerical goals first appeared as part of the Nixon Administration’s [1969-1974] “Philadelphia Plan.” In 1972, Title VII was amended to enable the Federal government (the EEOC and the courts) to require specific measures as a way of compensating for past discriminatory practices. Race, banned earlier as a criterion for exclusion, now became the basis for determining the extent to which inclusion had been accomplished.

**T**his results-based strategy created an apparent contradiction: Race, which could not be used to exclude anyone, became the yardstick to assess how well blacks and other under represented groups (Latinos, Asians) were being integrated into American life. Some employers began to protest the “quotas” of specific groups included in compliance plans negotiated with the EEOC or imposed by court order. Resistance against busing led Congress in 1974 to enact the Equal Educational Opportunity Act, which in truth was an effort to resist desegregation. The enforcement of affirmative action continued through the Carter Administration (1977-1981), but with the arrival of Ronald Reagan in the White House in 1981, a clear message went out that this “affirmative” initiative had run its course. Enforcement of civil rights laws and regulations was de-emphasized throughout the 1980s and critics of affirmative action efforts began to question the wisdom of a policy which they considered to be a form of “reverse discrimination.”

The term “reverse discrimination” suggests that minorities have enjoyed such advantages over whites that now they are better off than whites or, at least,



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have achieved parity proportionate to their numbers in society. The facts do not support this suggestion. Affirmative steps to include minorities in the workforce appear to have produced minimal or quite modest gains. For example, a carefully controlled study of the impact of affirmative action on 68,000 firms that had contracts with the Federal government revealed that between 1974 and 1980, the employment of black men in these firms went up 6.5 percent while that of black women rose by 11 percent. In higher education, the Tomas Rivera Center reports that between 1981 and 1993, the number of Latino faculty in the University of California system went up 1.4 percent and black faculty increased 0.6 percent, from 1.8 percent to 2.4 percent. Arguably, without these affirmative measures, there would have been little or no progress in black and Latino hiring, and possibly even some erosion of earlier gains.

In the current debate, the principle of equal opportunity does not seem to be in question. Even the most ardent opponents of affirmative action support the notion that no one should be discriminated against because of race. What then is the real problem?

Undoubtedly, more than a few politicians have seized upon affirmative action as an opportunity to create problems for which they can propose easy and cheap solutions and thus win the hearts and votes of the uninformed. They rail against unqualified or less qualified minority persons being handed jobs for which qualified non-minority applicants are rejected. They complain about the injustice of admitting minorities to universities when majority applicants with better grades and higher scores are left on the outside.

The real problem vexing voters, that of increased competition for a shrinking pool of largely low-skill jobs, is not so easily addressed. Nor is the fact that our public education system needs to be brought into the 21st century in terms of facilities, curriculum and teacher preparation if we are to turn out educated citizens with the ability to address the problems that will confront us in the future.

One reason universities sometimes admit certain students with marginal grades and achievement test scores is that they recognize the potential of many who have been poorly prepared but nonetheless have

the ability and motivation to do well in higher education. Once admitted, those students compete on an equal basis with everyone else. Our political leadership is going to have to face the reality of inadequate educational preparation with more than simplistic slogans.

While the continuation of affirmative action policies will not, by itself, lead to improvement in public schools, the abolition of those policies will serve only to distract attention from the most important problems facing us. Politicians are not the only ones to find it expedient to avoid responsibility for improving our public educational system (especially in large urban areas) and to resist facing our economic problems. Among the critics of affirmative action are also those who believe minorities create their own problems, thus relieving the majority of the necessity of finding a way to include minorities in the economic life of the nation.

Dinesh D'Souza, in *The End of Racism*, attributes the problems faced by minorities, particularly blacks, to "destructive and pathological cultural patterns of behavior" and "a resistance to academic achievement." At least his theory implies the recognition that these blacks are not out snatching all the good jobs at the expense of deserving whites. However, he misses the point. Although some individuals can be found with the traits D'Souza describes, the conclusions he draws ignore the obvious. Whether their students would be found socially or culturally worthy by D'Souza, the fact is that many elementary and secondary schools serving minority populations are not only inadequate, they are counter-productive, serving as little else than gathering grounds for disaffected students, mandated by law to endure the sham which purports to be their education. Graduates of these schools, by and large, are not prepared for jobs other than the most menial and most are not even minimally prepared for higher education. Yet critics of affirmative action would deny even the few students who manage to maintain close-to-competitive grades, in spite of their schools, the chance to fulfill their potential. It is not rational to pretend that all can compete on an equal basis for college admission when we know that many are at a disadvantage from the beginning, not by any lack of ability, but by reason of unequal school preparation.

The future of affirmative action is now being

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debated in legal and political arenas.

In 1995 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Adarand v. Peña* that any governmental action based on race awarding Federal contracts must be subjected to strict scrutiny. Although this decision changed little regarding the lawfulness of affirmative action, it was an indication of things to come. Later that same year the Regents of the University of California voted to end the use of affirmative action in the admissions process to the UC System. President Clinton's response to the Regents' action was to advocate the modification of affirmative action procedures, not their outright elimination, when he proclaimed: "Mend it; don't end it!" This was followed by the approval (in California) of Proposition 209, which ended preferential treatment of women and minorities by government agencies, including colleges and universities. Earlier in 1996, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit ruled in *Texas v. Hopwood* that the University of Texas Law School could not apply significantly different criteria when judging minority and non-minority applicants, thus appearing to reject the rationale used in the 1978 U.S. Supreme Court *Regents of University of California v. Bakke* decision. The immediate result of these actions has been a precipitous drop in the number of minority applicants and enrollees in both the UC System and at the University of Texas Law School. The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to

review the principles and practices of affirmative action in *Taxman v. Board of Education of the Township of Piscataway*. Its opinion is due in mid-1998.

But even if affirmative action loses popular favor, we must not fail to stress the need for the implementation of some other positive strategies to increase the participation of all groups into our national life. It is in the self-interest of all Americans to ensure that inequality is reduced and economic and social benefits are distributed more fairly among the groups that make up our society. Not to do so will lead to increased conflict between the well-to-do and the have-nots, with the attendant social and economic costs to the nation. The United States cannot afford a large population of unprepared, underprepared and excluded workers and expect its economy to prosper in direct competition with other countries.

This is a national problem, not just a problem for minorities. Whatever faults may be attributed to its implementation, affirmative action has moved us closer to the American ideal of a truly inclusive society. ■

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*Ricardo Fernandez is the President of Lehman College in the Bronx, New York, a part of the City University of New York. A version of this article appeared in the Latino Review of Books, Volume 2, Spring 1996.*

## HOW TO MEND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

BY GLENN C. LOURY

**A**re affirmative action policies necessary and justified? I believe consciousness of race is useful and appropriate for some policy purposes. How can we measure the degree of fairness and the need for remedy in education, employment, housing and a range of public objectives, if we insist upon "color-blind absolutism" — the notion that the Constitution requires the U.S. Government to ignore the racial identity of citizens?

On the other hand, I believe that the study of affirmative action has been too much the preserve of lawyers and philosophers, and has too little engaged the interests of economists and other social scientists. For although departures from color-blind

absolutism are both legitimate and desirable in some circumstances, there are compelling reasons to question the wisdom of relying as heavily as we now do on racial preferences to bring about civic inclusion for African-Americans.

To begin with, the widespread use of preferences can logically be expected to erode the perception of black competence. This argument is not a speculation about the feelings of persons who may or may not be the beneficiaries of affirmative action. Rather, it turns on the rational, statistical inferences that neutral observers are entitled to make about the unknown qualifications of persons who may have been preferred, or rejected, in a selection process.

Another reason for skepticism about affirmative action is that it can undercut the incentives for blacks to develop their competitive abilities. For instance, preferential treatment can lead to the patronization of black workers and students — that is, the setting of a lower standard of expected accomplishment for blacks than whites because of the belief that blacks are not as capable of meeting a higher, common standard. Behavior of this kind can be based on a self-fulfilling prophecy. In other words, observed performance among blacks may be lower precisely because blacks are being patronized — a policy undertaken because of the requirement for an employer, admissions officer or personnel manager to meet affirmative action guidelines.

Consider a workplace in which a supervisor operating under such guidelines must recommend subordinate workers for promotion. Let's presume he seeks to promote blacks where possible, monitors workers' performances and bases his recommendations upon these observations. Pressure to promote blacks might lead him to de-emphasize deficiencies in the performance of black subordinates, recommending them for promotion when he would not have done so for whites with similar ratings. But his behavior could undermine the ability of black workers to identify and correct their deficiencies — encouraging them to think they can get ahead without reaching the same level of proficiency as their white co-workers.

A similar situation can arise among applicants for admission to professional graduate schools. If most institutions of higher learning — eager to admit a certain percentage of blacks — accept black applicants with test scores and grades below those of some whites whom they reject, the message to black students is that the level of performance needed to gain admission is lower than that which whites know they must attain. If black and white students turn out to be responsive to these differing expectations, they might, as a result, achieve grades and test scores reflective of the expectation gap. In this way, the schools' belief that different admissions standards are necessary becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The common theme in these two cases is that the desire to see greater black representation is achieved by using different criteria that reflect racial distinctions. This utilization, however, reduces

incentives for blacks. I do not presume that blacks are less capable than whites in a given situation, but rather that an individual's responsibility to make use of his or her abilities is undermined by a policy of patronization by an employer or admissions panel.

One way to resolve or avoid this dilemma is for employers or schools to meet their desired level of black participation through a concerted effort to enhance performance while maintaining common standards of evaluation. Call it "developmental," rather than "preferential" affirmative action. Such a targeted effort at performance enhancement among black workers or students is definitely not color-blind behavior. On the contrary, it presumes a direct concern about equality of opportunity for all races and involves allocating benefits to people on the basis of race. What distinguishes it from preferential treatment, though, is that it takes seriously the reality of differential performance and seeks to reverse it directly, rather than trying to hide from that fact by setting a different level of expectation for blacks' performance.

**F**or example, black students are far scarcer than white and Asian students in advanced studies in math and science. Encouraging their entry into these areas through summer workshops, support for curriculum development at historically black colleges, or the financing of research assistant grants for promising graduate students would be consistent with my distinction between the "preferential" and "developmental" approaches to affirmative action.

Also consistent would be the provision of management assistance to new black-owned businesses, which would then be expected to bid competitively for government contracts, or the provisional admission of black students to the state university — conditional on a rise in their academic scores to competitive levels after a year or two of study at a local community college. The key is that the racially targeted assistance be short-lived, and preparatory to the entry of its recipients into an arena of competition where they would be assessed by the same standards as everyone else.

Unfortunately, economists seem to be the only people persuaded by, or even interested in, this kind of technical argument about affirmative action. So let me address a range of moral and political considerations that may be of broader popular

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interest yet still point in the same direction.

Let's begin with an obvious point: The plight of the inner-city underclass — the most intractable aspect of the racial inequality problem today — has not been mitigated by affirmative action policies, not even after a quarter-century of trying. Defenders of racial preferences respond by claiming this was never the intent of such policies. But this only leads to my second point:

The persistent demand for preferential treatment as necessary to black achievement amounts, over a period of time, to a concession of defeat by middle-class blacks in our struggle for civic equality.

The political discourse over affirmative action harbors a paradoxical subtext: Middle-class blacks seek equality of status with whites by calling attention to their own limited achievements, thereby establishing the need for preferential policies. At the same time, sympathetic white elites, by granting black demands, thereby acknowledge that without their patronage, black penetration of the upper reaches of U.S. society would be impossible. The paradox is that although equality is the goal of the enterprise, this manifestly is not an exchange among equals, and can never be.

Members of the black middle class who argue that without some special dispensation, they cannot compete with whites are really flattering those whites while confirming their own weakness. And whites who think that societal wrongs mandate giving blacks the benefit of the doubt about their qualifications are exercising a *noblesse oblige* available only to the powerful.

**T**his exchange between black weakness and white power has become a basic paradigm for “progressive” race relations in contemporary America. Blacks from privileged backgrounds now routinely engage in displaying non-achievement, mournfully citing the higher success rates of whites in one endeavor or another in order to gain leverage for their advocacy of preferential treatment. The fact that Asians from more modest backgrounds often achieve higher rates of success is not mentioned. But the limited ability of these more fortunate blacks to make inroads on their own can hardly go unnoticed.

It is morally unjustified — and, to this African-American, humiliating — that preferential treatment

based on race should become institutionalized for those of us now enjoying all of the advantages of middle-class life. The thought that my sons would come to see themselves as presumptively disadvantaged because of their race is unbearable to me. They are, in fact, among the richest young people of African descent anywhere on the globe. There is no achievement to which they cannot legitimately aspire. Whatever degree of success they attain in life, the fact that some of their ancestors were slaves and others faced outrageous bigotry will have little to do with it.

Indeed, those ancestors, with only a fraction of the opportunity, and with much of the power structure of the society arrayed against them, managed to educate their children, acquire land, found communal institutions, and mount a successful struggle for equal rights. The generation coming of age during the 1960s, now ensconced in the burgeoning black middle class, enjoy their status primarily because their parents and grandparents faithfully discharged their responsibilities. The benefits of affirmative action, whatever they may have been, pale in comparison to this inheritance.

My grandparents, with their siblings and cousins, left rural Mississippi for Chicago in the years after World War I. Facing incredible racial hostility, they nevertheless carved out a place for their children, who went on to acquire property and gain a toehold in the professions. For most middle-class blacks, this is a familiar story. Our forebears, from slavery onward, performed magnificently under harsh circumstances. It is time now that we and our children begin to do the same. It desecrates the memory of our enslaved ancestors to assert that, with our far greater freedoms, we middle-class blacks should now look to whites, of whatever political persuasion, to ensure that our dreams are realized.

The children of today's black middle class will live their lives in an era of equal opportunity. I recognize that merely by stating this simple fact I will enrage many people. I do not mean to assert that racial discrimination has disappeared. But I insist that the historic barriers to black participation in the political, social and economic life of the nation have been lowered dramatically over the past four decades, especially for the wealthiest 20 percent of the black population. Arguably, the time has now come for us

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to let go of the ready-made excuse that racism provides.

So too, it is time to accept responsibility for what we and our children do, and do not, achieve. ■

*Glenn C. Loury is University Professor, Professor of Economics, and Director of the Institution on Race and Social Division at Boston University. This article was excerpted from The Public Interest, Number 127, Spring 1997, and is used by permission of the author.*

## BEYOND THE CURRENT SYSTEM: SOME POLICY OPTIONS FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

BY WILLIAM A. GALSTON

Recent developments in constitutional law, public opinion and the political arena have made significant changes in existing affirmative action programs all but inevitable.

This does not necessarily mean abandoning the goals of antidiscrimination and equal opportunity. A case could be made that we have asked affirmative action programs to bear too much practical and symbolic weight — that we have neglected other ways of fighting discrimination, and relied excessively on affirmative action at the expense of a broader equal opportunity agenda.

Still, we must acknowledge that there are permanent impediments to realizing the dream of equal opportunity — limitations not just of resources and will, but stemming also from values deeply rooted in the ethos of liberal democracy. Achieving fully equal opportunity would require equalizing all factors that affect the development of talents. As philosophers since Plato have observed, this would imply (among other things) highly intrusive and coercive government action to correct for the differential impact of such variables as family background and culture. The history of the affirmative action debate confirms that we can neither avoid nor fully erase the tension between equal opportunity and personal liberty.

In that light, I would suggest some policy options, based on legal and social realities, to take us beyond the current system and the ensuing debate.

1. Alter current federal programs to conform with recent Supreme Court decisions. This would require the elimination of quotas, set-asides [the practice of reserving a specific number of places in a program, or a percentage of economic activity, for persons of a particular minority status] racially

exclusive programs and those with pure diversity rationales. A range of preference programs would probably survive this test.

2. Screen out programs where the burdens of racial and ethnic classifications are borne too heavily by specific individuals. This would mean, at a minimum, prohibiting race-conscious firings or reductions-in-force.

3. Restrict affirmative action programs to “opportunity-enhancing assistance.” Under this option, efforts such as race-conscious outreach and recruiting, compensatory education and training before and after recruitment, technical assistance and mentoring would continue. Racial and ethnic preferences would be discontinued along with quotas and set-asides.

4. Use the test of class as either a substitute for, or supplement to, race and ethnicity. Class disadvantage restricts the ability of many young people to attain equal formal credentials and qualifications for employment and higher education.

5. Return to the original understanding of affirmative action as transitional rather than permanent. One version of this option would be to establish fixed phase-out or termination dates for affirmative action programs. Another version would establish time limits and mandatory public review prior to reauthorization of these programs.

6. Distinguish between social goods that are more like opportunities (such as higher education) and those that are more like results (government

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contracts). Under this approach, the more controversial affirmative action tools such as preferences would be reserved for social goods that expand opportunity.

7. Re-examine and revise standards of merit. Standards of merit should be defined relative to the capacity for high-quality future performance. It is not necessarily “preferential” treatment for universities to be open to the possibility that a young person from public housing with average test scores may have demonstrated as much potential for success as has a suburbanite with higher test scores.

8. Strengthen enforcement of discrimination statutes. The number of job discrimination cases and complaints reportedly has soared this decade. Bolster the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and other U.S. Government agencies, and significantly increase penalties for discrimination.

9. Intensify efforts towards equal opportunity. The full equal opportunity agenda is tremendously challenging, encompassing a wide variety of programs and goals. In addition to continuing parenting education, child care, Head Start, reform of public education, college loans, advanced technical training, job search and job linkage, and the promotion of entrepreneurship and home ownership, a new equal opportunity agenda might aim at strengthening the institutions of civil society within minority communities. One suggestion: The creation of a National Endowment for Black America that could receive capital contributions for a variety of social and cultural organizations, and foster both nonprofit and business entrepreneurship. ■

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*William A. Galston is director of the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy at the University of Maryland School of Public Affairs. The Institute was established in 1976 to conduct research into the values and concepts that underlie public policy. This article was excerpted from the Report from the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy, Winter/Spring 1997, pp. 2-9.*

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# PERSPECTIVES ON RACE

PREPARED BY CHARLOTTE ASTOR

**T**he subject of race in America continues to inspire a lively and intense expression of opinion across the American social and political landscape. What follows is a sampling of recent commentary from a variety of sources.

## NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON RACE

*The New York Times:*

President Clinton's June 14 call for a national conversation on race evoked skepticism and criticism from partisans on both sides of the racial divide. Foes of affirmative action were disappointed that he did not reject what they consider to be the failed path of quotas and racial preferences. Advocates of more aggressive action on race and poverty were disappointed that he did not commit more resources for job-training and education. ... The President focused on the future, however, and encouraged his newly appointed advisory panel, with the historian John Hope Franklin as its chairman, to listen before making recommendations.

The issues of race, affirmative action and diversity can be discussed candidly. If Mr. Clinton's speech starts such a process, and leads to concrete actions, it could be remembered as a turning point.... (Excerpted from a June 16, 1997, editorial.)

DR. JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN:

Ours is a rare and unique opportunity to make a significant contribution to the resolution of the virtually intractable problem of race that has plagued this country for more than three centuries. I say

virtually intractable because the problem was created and nurtured by gifted human beings, but that which man has created can indeed be put asunder. ...

The task with which this advisory board is assigned is daunting, even awesome ... We have the advantage of undertaking the task in an atmosphere of peace ... We must therefore seize the present and use the present to promote a significant improvement in the racial climate and racial contacts, and race relations in general.

If black-white relations became the hallmark of race relations in general, they served in turn to influence inter-ethnic, inter-religious, inter-racial relations in subsequent years in many places and in many ways:

"More damn Jews," xenophobic European-Americans complained as they watched some Eastern Europeans disembark in New York City in 1890. "Restrict Asians in every possible way," Western Americans demanded toward the end of the 19th-century. "Build mile-high fences," Southwestern Americans commanded, as Mexicans and others from south of the border entered the United States in increasing numbers in the middle of the 20th century.

I do not know how many Americans, of whatever color or race or national origin, are familiar with these old, old stories. Some cannot see the relevance ... To them and to all of us, I would say that the beginning of wisdom is knowledge, and without knowledge of the past we cannot wisely chart our course for the future.

The President has called for a national dialogue, and I hope that all of us will answer his call. If we

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speak frankly and honestly about matters in which feelings are deep and long-held, the conversations will not always be painless. ... The road to racial peace is not without its problems and even pain. But the journey is worth taking, for in the end we can forge institutions and adopt practices that will help us build communities ...

We've only a short time to have an impact on certain courses in our society that are not only old and powerful but resourceful as well. We will not be intimidated by their strength and their resources, for we enjoy support and good will of millions of American citizens ... So let the dialogue begin. (From remarks to the July 14, 1997, meeting of the Advisory Board to the President's Initiative on Race and Reconciliation. Franklin is chairman of the Advisory Board.)

RANDALL KENNEDY:

Promise and peril surround President Clinton's initiative on race relations.

The promise is a focused examination of racial issues that will clarify dilemmas so that at least we can know where and why we disagree with one another. This is a precondition for sensible reform. Nearly everyone recognizes, as the President recently said, that "we have a long way to go." What precisely, however, is our aim? ...

Do we want a society governed by racial demography, in which presidential cabinets, criminal juries and editorial offices must "look like America"? Or do we want a society governed by an anti-discrimination principle that requires citizens to look beyond looks? To understand the ramifications of the choice ... requires considerable thought and discussion. That is why the public should eschew the objections of those who contend that we have had too much "mere" talk about racial matters. We have not had too much talk; we have had too much

rhetoric and spectacle ...

If Clinton's initiative is to amount to anything memorable it must create forums in which knowledgeable, thoughtful people address their fellow citizens about the racial matters that touch them most intimately.

We need to hear about and from people who live in the nation's black and brown ghettos. Do they have reason to believe that if they 'play by the rules' their lives and the lives of their children will become more prosperous, secure and enjoyable? ... We need to hear from white women who view race as a signal that a black male stranger poses more of a threat to them than a white male stranger. Is their calculation sensible? ... We need to hear about and from Latinos, Asian-Americans and blacks, who view one another with racial resentment and discord. What is the basis of their discord? ....

**T**o pose these and even more pointed questions, and to permit and consider a range of divergent responses, might help to create the thought-provoking conversation that many Americans would like to have about their racial dilemmas. (Excerpted from *The Washington Post*, June 15, 1997, pp. C1-2. Randall Kennedy is a professor at Harvard Law School and the author of *Race, Crime and the Law*, New York: Pantheon, 1997.)

ROBERT JOHNSON:

First, and most important, is that the President, the leader of this country, is saying that race is a top issue for America and giving it the highest visibility. Second, it is at the black/white level that race has to be addressed first and foremost, and I hope that the President's task force addresses it as the major conflict, the primary issue. (Excerpted from *The Washington Post*, June 15, 1997, p. C2. Robert Johnson is president and chief executive officer of Black Entertainment Television.)

ANITA ALLEN:

I see encouraging evidence in my family, neighborhood and workplace of the possibility of a kind of racial unity that transcends mere integration (which tends toward assimilation) and



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multiculturalism (which tends toward balkanization). But President Clinton is right that there is work to be done. As a nation we need to accept the moral responsibility for the inequalities and animosities that are the legacies of slavery, legally enforced segregation and prejudice. We need to design creative, politically-viable new approaches to addressing economic, educational and social inequalities. (Excerpted from *The Washington Post*, June 15, 1997, p. C2. Anita Allen is associate dean and professor at Georgetown University Law Center, Washington, D.C.)

ANGELA OH:

You cannot legislate attitudes and gut reactions. But the federal government has the capacity to set a tone, to get some thoughts out there for the nation to consider. This initiative comes at a time when we are poised to consider some other possibilities only because we are going into the year 2000....

When we talk of race relations, one thing we are going to become conscious of as a nation is that we're a very young nation. Yes, we've made mistakes ... but we have maintained a strength and leadership role that no one in this country wants to give up. As a nation we have an interest in coming together, and this President is visionary in asking this diverse set of folks and communities to come to the table and seriously consider where we are....

We're a country that is quite unique in that we tend to put things in terms of race. I know several Asian-Americans who grew up in Latin-America ... they identified culturally as Brazilian, Panamanian, Chilean, not by race. Then, when they came here ... their face ... put them in the category of Asian. So then they had to struggle with what that means in this context.

This country has always been segmented, based on skin color or race. Asian-Americans because of how we look. ... Our susceptibility or vulnerability to being called foreigner is never going to go away. I have had people ask me, how does it feel to always be viewed as a foreigner? African-Americans actually have said to me, "At least we know we

belong here. ..." That is a very unsettling question when it is put to you. African-Americans are never told, "Go back to your own country." ...

We have this wonderful heritage in the instrument that provides the basis of building this nation [U.S. Constitution]. When our forefathers drafted the instrument, they certainly didn't expect people like Angela Oh to be part of the picture. But the extraordinary thing about this nation is people have interpreted these rights to mean we do want to include the Angela Ohs, the Linda Chavez-Thompsons [advisory board member] and the John Hope Franklins ... . (Excerpted from the *Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 1997, p. M3. Angela Oh, a Los-Angeles-based lawyer, is a member of President Clinton's advisory panel on race relations. She serves on the Los Angeles City Human Relations Commission and the Korean American Family Service Center.)

#### EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

CHRISTOPHER EDLEY, JR.:

Whether Asians or any other particular group should be targeted for affirmative action depends on the context and on the justification for affirmative action.... I suggest that some of the central choices are whether group-based discrimination still exists and requires either remedy or preventive measures, and whether a particular institution or organization needs diversity in order to be excellent and fulfill its mission.

For new immigrants generally, I don't think the question is whether they or their forebears have suffered discrimination. That reasoning assumes that the moral justification for affirmative action has to do with reparations for historical wrongs. It doesn't, in my view. I ask, what are the risks today of discrimination, and how potent are the lingering effects of recent discrimination? What are the benefits today of special efforts to be inclusive and diverse in a given setting? To me, the historical wrong is most relevant because it powerfully compounds the moral imperative to adopt effective measures that bring about racial and gender justice.

If an immigrant group, based on our history, is likely to overcome obstacles in relatively short order,

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within the ordinary operation of America's mechanisms of opportunity, then the extraordinary justification for race-conscious affirmative action is missing. But if we see a new group in all likelihood is becoming just another generation of victims to familiar patterns of discrimination and injustice, then something must be done. Affirmative action, done the right way, can be helpful. (From an Oct. 5, 1996, Internet Forum submission on Proposition 209. Christopher Edley, Jr., a law professor at Harvard University, worked on the July 19, 1995 Report to the President on affirmative action.)

JACK KEMP AND J.C. WATTS JR.:

In [his June 14 speech in] San Diego ... when [the President] turned to affirmative action, he offered no improvement over the current system of race-based quotas, set-asides and preferences. He issued the following challenge: "I ask you to come up with an alternative. I would embrace it if I could find a better way." Well, Mr. President, there is a better way ...

Our "better way" replaces discrimination with opportunity, poverty with jobs and despair with education. We offer more than the simplistic and absolutist version of "affirmative action."

A new approach must focus not only on equality and strong enforcement of our existing civil rights laws but also on the expansion of opportunity. Instead of deliberating over fair ways to mete out educational acceptances, job openings, contract agreements and program slots, we should be looking for ways to multiply and extend them.

**T**he "better way" we offer can be summed up in five policy prescriptions ... Establish renewal communities and enterprise zones to draw businesses and jobs into distressed urban areas; open up the educational system to the influence of parental and community choice; reverse federal and state welfare provisions to reward rather than punish recipients for working, saving and investing toward an independent future; implement privatization of

public housing and other efforts to bring home ownership and property ownership into low-income neighborhoods; and embrace strategies that will get our national economy growing at a pace that will accommodate the talent of all Americans.

The legislation that could help achieve all five of our desired goals is already here before Congress in the Community Renewal Project. This bill ... would expand opportunity in our cities by removing tax and regulatory barriers to job creation and entrepreneurship and by expanding access to capital and credit.

Expansion of opportunity requires expanding the overall economy so that it has plenty of room for the effort and enterprise of all Americans, including minorities and women. On principle, we should not accept the idea that a job gained by one American equals unemployment for another, or that a contract won by one qualified bidder spells disaster for an equally qualified contractor.

Finally, we must move to a place of real racial reconciliation ... We must begin the dialogue that President Clinton and others have called for ... As a great African-American abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, said, "When we are noted for enterprise, industry and success, we shall no longer have any trouble in the matter of civil and political rights." (Excerpted from *The Washington Post*, July 8, 1997, p. A15. Former Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Jack Kemp, who also served as a Republican Member of the U.S. Congress, is co-director of Empower America, a nonpartisan public policy and political advocacy organization which promotes progressive-conservative policies. J.C. Watts is a Republican Member of the U.S. Congress from Oklahoma.)

WARD CONNERLY:

Today, I believe we are saying to young black kids, if at first you don't succeed, redefine success, because your failure must have been the result of culturally-biased exams, the lack of role models and a racist society. Our kids have come to believe that they cannot survive in a world without special consideration. Their competitive spirit has been

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weakened by this dependency on affirmative action. We owe it to them to better prepare them for the rigors of a highly competitive world. And we owe it to all that is good about America to not let them sink into the debilitating mentality of believing that our nation is racist at its core ...

There are those who defend racial preferences who often speak in glowing terms about “diversity.” Let me be clear: Today’s vote was not a rejection of diversity. It was a rejection of using diversity as an excuse to discriminate. (Excerpted from a November 1996 speech by Connerly, a University of California official and chief proponent of the California Civil Rights Initiative, Proposition 209, which largely prohibits discrimination or use of preference programs by California state or local governments.)

#### ASPECTS OF DIVERSITY

JOE R. HICKS:

Clearly, black political power and influence, particularly in U.S. cities, must be re-conceptualized in the context of an America that is far more diverse than white and black people. What then does racial integration mean in the context of an American population in flux?....

**T**he shifts in the racial mix of U.S. cities, with the percentage of African-Americans falling, and growing black skepticism toward the value of integration, both undercut traditional notions of “integration” and “assimilation.” In the 1960s, “integration” meant inclusion in an America largely defined by European-Americans. Today, integration must mean inclusion, involvement and participation in a nation that has evolved far beyond the black-white paradigm.

(Excerpted from the *Los Angeles Times*, July 20, 1997. Joe R. Hicks is former executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, a civil rights organization that strives for full equality and equal opportunity through political and economic action.)

RAUL YZAGUIRRE:

Our nation is truly at a crossroads and Latinos are [at] the proverbial “fork in the road.” What is crucial for us as a nation is to come to terms with how we will respond to the difficult challenges that lie before us. If we, as a nation, choose to continue separating our interests — as well as our communities — based on which are more powerful, more clever, or more “deserving,” we will surely perish. The healing that President Clinton so eloquently spoke about in his second inaugural speech cannot and will not happen unless we take affirmative and proactive steps to be inclusive and honest about who we are and what we are all about as a people. (Excerpted from a June 1997 forum in *Hispanic* magazine, page 40. Raul Yzaguirre is president of the National Council of La Raza, a private, nonprofit organization which strives to improve life opportunities for Hispanic-Americans.)

DR. SAMUEL BETANCES AND DR. LAURA M. TORRES  
SOUDER:

To discriminate is deadly. To be inclusive is just plain good for business. The future is screaming at us with new demographic trends which announce a new world reality in which to do business. ... Harnessing the rainbow of the total workforce — its diverse ways of knowing, world views, insights, passions and talents — will in fact add value to the organization and its goals.

African-Americans, together with numerous other interest groups, will reap the rewards of a non-racist system since, as an interest group, they have struggled most consistently to eliminate discrimination. Their struggle has proved a blessing to every group seeking to be included, respected and rewarded for their work. All groups, therefore, must take a strong position against racism. (From a July 11, 1997, speech, “New and Improved Workplace Diversity Initiatives for the Bottom Line,” at Agway Technical Center, Ithaca, New York. The authors respectively are senior consultant and chief executive officer of Souder, Betances and Associates, Inc., Chicago, Ill.) ■

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# GLOSSARY

## OF TERMS USED IN THIS JOURNAL

*The terms below are drawn from the articles contained in this journal and do not reflect the much broader issue of race in the U.S. in all its complexity.*

**Affirmative action** — A term coined during the Kennedy Administration. At that time, the U.S. government directed federal contractors to take “positive steps” to ensure a racially representative workplace. It has grown to include legal and social efforts to improve educational and economic opportunities for members of minority groups.

**An American Dilemma** — Classic 1944 work on the status of blacks in American society, written by Swedish social scientist Gunnar Myrdal. Interweaving economics and sociology, the book suggested that widespread discrimination was responsible for the low status of blacks in the United States, and attacked racial segregation. Sparking national debate when it appeared, it helped define race relations for the half-century and more thereafter. (See Myrdal, Gunnar)

**Black Power** — A movement among African-Americans, begun in the mid-1960s, that emphasized racial pride and called for the creation of black political and cultural organizations.

**Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954)** — U.S. Supreme Court decision that prohibited segregation in public schools and unanimously declared that “separate facilities are inherently unequal.”

**Bus boycott** (See Montgomery Bus Boycott)

**Busing** — The transportation of children by bus to schools outside the neighborhoods in which they live to achieve racial integration.

**California Civil Rights Initiative (Proposition 209)** — A California state law that largely prohibits discrimination or use of preference programs by state and local governments in California. No individual or group defined by race, gender, color, ethnicity or national origin may receive special treatment in public employment, public education or public contracting.

**Civil Rights Act of 1964** — National legislation that prohibits discrimination in voting, employment, public accommodations and facilities, and public schools, and provides for enforcement of desegregation.

**Civil rights movement** — The use of boycotts, sit-ins, marches, and other forms of nonviolent protest in the 1950s and 1960s to demand equal treatment under the law and an end to racial prejudice.

**Color-blind** — Used in this sense to describe a society that does not form opinions or take actions based on the color of people’s skin.

**Douglass, Frederick (c.1818-1895)** — Escaped slave, author and orator who devoted his life to the abolition of slavery and the fight for equal rights for African-Americans and women. Douglass founded the antislavery newspaper *The North Star* in Rochester, New York, in 1847. During the American Civil War (1861-65) he urged blacks to serve in Union Army, and he discussed the problems of slavery with President Abraham Lincoln.

**DuBois, W.E.B. (1868-1963)** — Historian and sociologist who used scholarly research to advance the political status of African-Americans. DuBois was a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and an early proponent of Pan-Africanism, the belief that all people of African descent have common interests and should work together to advance those interests.

**Emancipation** — Refers to the Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, which freed all slaves in states that had seceded from the Union.

**Enterprise zones** — Designated areas that receive tax incentives and direct funding to stimulate economic development.

**Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)** — An agency of the U.S. government established by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to enforce nondiscrimination in employment.

**Equal opportunity** — The principle that no person should be discriminated against because of race, gender, religion, or other inherent attributes.

**Executive Order No. 11246** — On September 24, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed an order requiring federal agencies to contract only with companies that take affirmative action in the hiring and advancement of their minority employees. The Secretary of Labor was charged with enforcing the order. (An executive order is a rule, regulation, or instruction issued by the President of the United States that has the binding force of law upon federal agencies.)

**Freedom Riders** — Nonviolent black and white protesters who traveled by bus through the American South in 1961 to challenge race-based separation of facilities at bus and rail terminals. In November of that year, the U.S. Interstate Commerce Commission prohibited segregated public accommodations.

**Head Start** — A government-sponsored program established in 1964 that helps preschool children from low-income families prepare for school by offering social, educational, and mental and physical health services.

**Immigration Act of 1965** — National law that abolished the “national origins” quota system for granting immigrant visas. Under “national origins,” the number of people from a given country already living in the United States determined the number of future immigrants. The new law established allocation of immigrant visas on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to certain exceptions. As a result, the U.S. immigrant population since 1965 has been much more diverse than it was previously.

**Kerner Commission** (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders) — An 11-member bipartisan commission created by President Lyndon B. Johnson in July 1967 to advise his administration following race riots that had erupted in cities across the United States. In March 1968, the Kerner Commission reported that the United States was “moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal,” and it recommended massive government intervention against unemployment, poor housing and poverty. The commission was chaired by Governor Otto Kerner of Illinois.

**King, Jr., Martin Luther** (1929-1968) — A Baptist minister and leader of the civil rights movement, he was influenced by the philosophy of non-violence of the famous Indian activist Mahatma Gandhi. When King was assassinated in 1968, citizens in many major cities reacted violently — while others held vigils and peaceful gatherings. Americans, black and white, wondered what would happen to the vision he articulated in his landmark “I Have a Dream” speech delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., in 1963.

**Million Man March** — A gathering of upwards of one million African-American men that took place in Washington, D.C., on October 16, 1995. Participants came to the rally to pledge themselves to self-reliance, self-improvement, and respect for women, and to demonstrate unity and a commitment to support each other. The initiative for the event came from Louis Farrakhan, Leader of the Black Muslim “Nation of Islam.”

**Montgomery Bus Boycott** — Boycott of the public bus system in Montgomery, Alabama, in protest of the general requirement in the southern United States that African-Americans sit in the back of buses. The boycott lasted 381 days from December 1955 until December 1956, when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a lower court decision that such segregation violated the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

**Myrdal, Gunnar** (1898-1987) — Swedish social scientist, economist, educator, statesman, author. A double Nobel laureate, he was co-recipient of the 1974 Economics Prize, and, with his wife Alva, a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1982. (See *An American Dilemma*)

**Preference program** — A program, designed to achieve a social objective, in which certain participants identified by race, gender or other primary characteristic are granted an advantage or “preference.”

**Proposition 209** (See California Civil Rights Initiative)

**Racial preference** — The practice of granting advantageous treatment to a person or group based on considerations of race.

**Renewal communities** — Under legislation that is pending in the U.S. Congress, up to 100 of the poorest communities in the United States would be designated “renewal communities.” They would receive aid in the forms of tax relief, regulatory reform, savings incentives, and scholarships.

**Reservations** — Areas of land set aside by the government for Native Americans (American Indians). Reservations were established originally to allow Indians to preserve their own life styles without conflict with European Americans. In the 19th century Indians were often confined to reservations. Indians who today choose to live on reservations often do so to preserve their particular culture, including forms of Indian self-governance.

**Reverse discrimination** — Charges of unfair treatment often made by those believed to have benefitted from past discrimination. Thus some white males, who as a class historically have benefitted by their race and gender in previous years, may believe they have been denied access to education or employment because of preferences given to members of minority groups or women.

**Set-aside** — The practice of reserving a specific number of places in a program, or a percentage of economic activity, for persons of a particular (minority) status.

**Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964** — Provision of national law that specifically bans discrimination in employment. Because the number of African-Americans hired did not increase significantly, Title VII was amended in 1972 to require employers to take active measures (affirmative action) to compensate for past discriminatory practices.

**Tuskegee Airmen** — The first black aviators in the U.S. military. Their training in 1941 at facilities in Tuskegee, Alabama, and subsequent service, was separate from other U.S. military pilots. The Tuskegee Airmen, who numbered almost one thousand before the end of World War II, achieved an exceptional combat record.

**Voting Rights Act of 1965** — National law that made illegal a variety of practices used by local authorities to keep blacks from exercising their right to vote. It outlawed educational requirements, including literacy tests, and authorized federal supervision of voter registration. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 strengthened the voting provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

**Young, Andrew** (1932- ) — A clergyman and civil rights leader who gained prominence as one of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s lieutenants in the civil rights movement. Andrew Young served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1972 until 1977; he was the first African-American to serve as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations (1977-79). Young was mayor of Atlanta, Georgia, from 1981 to 1989 and co-chair of the Atlanta Committee for the 1996 Olympic Games.

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# ARTICLE ALERT

SOME RECENT ARTICLES OF SPECIAL INTEREST  
OFFERING INSIGHTS INTO U.S. SOCIETY AND VALUES

Cahn, Steven M., and others. RACIAL AND ETHNIC PREFERENCES: A NEW ERA? (*Academe*, January/February 1997, pp. 12-37)

This journal (published by the American Association of University Professors) takes a close look at the question of diversity in America's universities. In a series of articles, scholars present various positions, some treading carefully through a miasma of controversy, some firing defiant broadsides. The discussion is especially timely in view of California's recent decision to abolish affirmative action programs that promote diversity. No solution is offered here, but scholars do define and defend their positions. Cahn remarks that what was championed by President Johnson in 1965 as an effort to recruit students and faculty without regard to race, religion, or national origin has turned into an effort to admit students and hire faculty because of ethnic diversity.

Early, Gerald. UNDERSTANDING INTEGRATION (*Civilization*, vol. 3, no. 5, October/November 1996, pp. 51-59)

Early, of Washington University in St. Louis, traces the history of integration in the United States, from Jackie Robinson's pivotal 1947 breakthrough into professional baseball's major leagues to the 1995 Million Man March. He says both blacks and whites "sentimentalize, even romanticize, the communal power of black life before integration, in large measure because they feel that integration has been a disappointment and has run its course."

Edley, Christopher, Jr. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ANGST (*Change*, vol. 28, no. 5, September/October 1996, pp. 13-15)

The use of affirmative action programs to redress past racial and ethnic injustices, or to move toward greater institutional diversity, continues to be an issue of disagreement in the United States. As is the case with many issues which come before U.S. appellate courts and the Supreme Court, its use involves competing and conflicting guarantees or

objectives derived directly or indirectly from the U.S. Constitution. The author, a Harvard Law School professor and director of the task force which defined Clinton administration policy in this difficult area, looks at the impact of recent lower court rulings and the campaign rhetoric. He argues that what continues to be needed is not retreat from the principle, but adjustment and good sense, exactly what President Clinton called for when he declared that "affirmative action has always been good for America... Mend it, don't end it."

Etzioni, Amitai. NEW ISSUES: RETHINKING RACE (*The Public Perspective*, vol. 8, no. 4, June/July 1997, pp. 39-41)

Every ten years, the American government is required to count its citizens. This census provides an array of information in addition to determining the number of members of Congress from each state, and how the congressional districts are defined. One of the categories the census currently measures is race. In this article, Professor Etzioni argues that the introduction of a new racial category, "all-American" or "multi-racial," would emphasize unity rather than difference, and thus soften racial lines which now divide America. Opponents are concerned that blurring racial differences could damage important cultural richness and weaken the commitment to wider racial justice.

Fullinwider, Robert K. CIVIL RIGHTS AND RACIAL PREFERENCES: A LEGAL HISTORY OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION (*Report from the Institute for Philosophy & Public Policy*, vol. 17, nos. 1 & 2, Winter/Spring 1997, pp. 9-20)

A review of the history of affirmative action since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 suggests that

what began as nonpreferential actions to offset the consequences of racial discrimination moved toward a range of preferential actions that visited discrimination on non-minority citizens. Recent legal decisions suggest that American society does not favor the use of racial preferences.

Galston, William A. AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION STATUS REPORT: EVIDENCE AND OPTIONS (*Report from the Institute for Philosophy & Public Policy*, vol. 17, nos. 1 & 2, Winter/Spring 1997, pp. 2-9)

This history of affirmative-action policies in American society, with particular focus on programs in the U.S. military and the University of California system, highlights several key areas of contemporary debate concerning this approach to racial justice. These include conflicts between means and ends, the question of whether transitional measures should become permanent, and the public's voice in affirmative-action policies. The author, director of the University of Maryland's Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy, offers a number of policy options that would address shortcomings of current affirmative-action programs and also provide alternatives — both aimed at increasing opportunity rather than mandating results.

Graglia, Lino A., and others. THE LONG HYPHEN: BLACK SEPARATION VS. AMERICAN INTEGRATION (*Society*, vol. 33, no. 3, March/April 1996, pp. 7-47)

This symposium contains nine articles by U.S. scholars on the effects of the Supreme Court's 1954 landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the intent of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the continuing debate about affirmative action.

Hendrie, Caroline. WITHOUT COURT ORDERS, SCHOOLS PONDER HOW TO PURSUE DIVERSITY (*Education Week*, vol. 16, no. 31, April 30, 1997, pp. 1, 36)

For many years, attempts to achieve racial progress in public school education in the United States have centered on integration. Segregation based on law (*de jure*) was outlawed in the 1950s. The 1970s and 1980s saw a variety of attempts to repair actual (*de facto*) segregation — separation reflecting different

neighborhoods and living patterns. The most extreme solution was court-ordered busing of students in substantial numbers from local schools to more distant institutions so as to achieve some "racial balance" or "diversity." In recent years, courts and school administrators in some areas have been discarding the perception that *de facto* segregation reflects a substantial social ill. This article examines the major reasons for this reassessment, and reviews some of the current educational alternatives.

Johnson, Roy, and others. THE NEW BLACK POWER (*Fortune*, vol. 136, no. 3, August 4, 1997, pp. 46-82)

In a special section of articles, the magazine focuses on the ascent of African Americans in the U.S. business sector, with particular emphasis on Wall Street, the global economy and the computer industry. Included are portraits of key new "agents of change" in the power structure — "entrepreneurs, executives and community leaders ... forthright in their pursuit of influence and unfazed by obstacles." In the words of Hugh Price, president of the National Urban League, "there is opportunity and there is action — right now."

Kennedy, Randall. MY RACE PROBLEM — AND OURS (*The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 279, no. 5, May 1997, pp. 55-66)

Expressing his belief that racial pride must be linked to accomplishment and not simply to kinship, the author, a Harvard Law School professor, argues against racially stratified loyalty. This does not mean he supports a racially-blind perspective, observing that it is "bad policy to blind oneself to any potentially useful knowledge." But outreach of any kind to one group or another should be based "not on racial kinship but on distributive justice." Ultimately, he proposes a "shoe-on-the-other-foot test" for the propriety of racial sentiment. "If a sentiment or practice would be judged offensive when voiced or implemented by anyone, it should be viewed as *prima-facie* offensive generally."

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Loury, Glenn C. HOW TO MEND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION (*The Public Interest*, no. 127, Spring 1997, pp. 33-43)

Boston University economist Glenn C. Loury writes that lowering standards in order to hire or admit blacks is harmful to both black and white Americans. Loury argues that family nurturing and developmental opportunities are more important in the long run than “quotas” or affirmative action policies that do everyone (employer/employee, school/student) a disservice. He concludes that “it is morally unjustified — and to this African-American, humiliating — that preferential treatment based on race should become institutionalized for those of us who are now enjoying all the advantages of middle-class life.”

Salins, Peter D. ASSIMILATION, AMERICAN STYLE (*Reason*, vol. 28, no. 9, February 1997, pp. 20-26)

In America, unlike many other societies, assimilation has not meant repudiating immigrant culture, the author says. “Assimilation, American style, has always been much more flexible and accommodating and, consequently, much more effective in achieving its purpose — to allow the United States to preserve its national unity in the face of the influx of hordes of persons of scores of different nationalities,” in the words of the sociologist Henry Fairchild.”

Santiago, Roberto. CRITICAL CONDITION (*Hispanic*, vol. 9, no. 8, August 1996, pp. 19-22)

According to the author, Hispanic experts on affirmative action say the policy is under attack not because the majority of Americans are against it but because conservative critics have effectively distorted its definition. Santiago reports on the concerns of the Hispanic community, noting that although there may be little hope to save this “staple of the civil rights movement,” there is much Hispanics can do to preserve it by debunking conservative myths, writing to their elected representatives and supporting political action committees.

Skerry, Peter. THE STRANGE POLITICS OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION (*Wilson Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 1, Winter 1997, pp. 39-46)

The author cites sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset’s

point of view that in recent years, affirmative action policies have brought two core American values — egalitarianism and individualism — into sharp conflict. Skerry argues that the conflict can and does coexist in the same individual. This leads to the inevitable corollary question, “how do members of minority groups reconcile the benefits they receive from affirmative action with their own individualist values?” The answer to this and other questions on the subject “has as much to do with the nature of contemporary American politics as with the state of race relations. And while some comfort can be had in this finding, it also suggests that the controversy will be all the more difficult to resolve.”

White, Jack E. I’M JUST WHO I AM (*Time*, vol. 149, no. 18, May 5, 1997, pp. 32-36)

The United States is “fast becoming the most polyglot society in history,” according to the author. “If current demographic trends persist, midway through the 21st century, whites will no longer make up a majority of the U.S. population. Blacks will have been overtaken as the largest minority group by Hispanics ... and Asians and Pacific Islanders will more than double their number....” Increasing intermarriage has led to a proliferation of racial combinations. This article explains what is happening and how this has led to a debate as to whether the term “multiracial” should be added to census forms.



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IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT. . .

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## SELECTED INTERNET RESOURCES

*Please note that USIS assumes no responsibility for the content and availability of the sources listed below, which resides solely with the providers.*

*Affirmative Action and Diversity Project: A Web Page for Research*

(<http://humanitas.ucsb.edu/aa.html>)

A comprehensive academic resource that seeks to present diverse opinions regarding affirmative action topics. Contains policy documents, current legislative updates, articles and analyses, and an annotated bibliography as well as a substantial amount of information on California politics and the recent Proposition 209.

*Affirmative Action Review: Report to the President*  
(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/EOP/OP/html/aa/a-a-index.html>)

Published on July 19, 1995, this key Administration document is a comprehensive review of Federal Affirmative Action Programs.

*DLC PPI*

(<http://www.dlcppi.org/>)

Electronic publications from *The New Democrat*, a bi-monthly magazine from the Democratic Leadership Council. They include:

*Race in America*, a reader in PDF format that contains articles from the individual issues below:  
(<http://www.dlcppi.org/adobe/tndrdrs/racerdr.pdf>)

“Beyond Affirmative Action,” May-June 1995, vol. 7, no. 5

(<http://www.dlcppi.org/tnd/9505.htm>)

“The Future of Integration,” July-August

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(<http://www.dlcppi.org/tnd/9607/default.htm>)

*CCRI: The California Civil Rights Initiative*

(<http://www.publicaffairsweb.com/ccri/>)

This site by proponents of Proposition 209 contains current news, facts, and official texts concerning the CCRI campaign to end racial and gender preferences, quotas and set-asides.

*Chronicle of Higher Education: Information in Depth*

(<http://chronicle.com/che-data/indepth.dir/indepth.htm>)

Affirmative action and desegregation are among the topics explored in detail. A password is required. Free to print subscribers.

*DiversityWeb*

(<http://www.inform.umd.edu/Diversityweb/>)

Part of the Diversity Works family of projects, this Web site includes institutional profiles of over 200 universities and colleges with diversity programs. Also links to the University of Maryland at College Park's *Diversity Database*, a comprehensive index of multicultural and cultural diversity resources.

(<http://www.inform.und.edu/EdRes/Topic/Diversity>)

*It's US: A Celebration of Who We Are in America Today*

(<http://www.pathfinder.com/@@/d18ZvQYA2ekCLvPc/corp/itsus>)

This Time-Warner, Inc., photo essay “explores through words and pictures who we Americans really are” and “depicts the richness of the different cultures and backgrounds that we come from.”

*Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies*

(<http://www.jointctr.org/>)

Highlights the research, publications, and outreach programs of the Joint Center, a national, nonprofit institution, which focuses on public policy issues of special concern to black Americans.

*One America for the 21st Century: The President's Initiative on Race*

(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/Initiatives/america.html>)

Official site of President Clinton's year-long initiative “to present to the nation his vision of a stronger,

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more just and more united American community — one offering opportunity and fairness for all Americans.” Links to major presidential addresses on racial issues include:

Liz Sutherland Carpenter Distinguished Lectureship in the Humanities and Science at the Erwin Center, University of Texas at Austin, October 16, 1995 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/Initiatives/19970610-839.html>)

Affirmative Action Remarks at the National Archives, July 19, 1995 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/Initiatives/19970610-1444.html>)

Remarks at the National Association of Black Journalists, July 17, 1997 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/Initiatives/nabj.html>)

#### *Race and Ethnicity Online*

(<http://www.providence.edu/polisci/rep>)  
Created by the American Political Science Association’s Section on Race, Ethnicity, and Politics, this site focuses on research related to Native-, African-, Latino and Asian Pacific Americans.

#### *Race Data*

(<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/race.html>)  
Official statistics from the U.S. Census.

#### *Race Relations*

([http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/race\\_relations/race\\_relations.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/race_relations/race_relations.html))

This Online Backgrounder provides a list of recent PBS interviews and programs on racial issues. Transcripts are available online.

#### *School Desegregation*

(<http://www.edweek.org/context/topics/deseg.htm>)  
An Issues Page from the periodical *Education Week*. Links to archival stories, Web sites, and related organizations.

#### *U.S. Commission on Civil Rights*

(<http://www.usccr.gov/index.html>)

Source of numerous publications discussing discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws because of race, national origin, and other factors.

#### *U.S. Dept. of Justice. Civil Rights Division*

(<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/crt-home.html>)

Includes key speeches, special issues publications, texts of cases, and a newsletter.

#### *U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*

(<http://www.eeoc.gov/>)

This site provides facts about employment discrimination, enforcement, litigation, and technical assistance.

# U.S. SOCIETY & VALUES

VOLUME 2

ELECTRONIC JOURNALS OF THE U.S. INFORMATION AGENCY

NUMBER 3

## *Toward One America: A National Conversation on*

# RACE

