Multiculturalism, "Political Correctness" and the Politics of Identity

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ABSTRACT

American society, in the course of its earlier history, was shaped by the competing visions of nativism and cosmopolitan liberalism. The first defined the American identity in restrictive fashion, and sought to curtail naturalization and immigration, and the second, taking an expansive view of American identity, pressed opposing politicies. In the period following WWII

new visions of American society have developed in the course of the struggles of People of Color to overcome their historical exclusion from the American cultural identity. The latest of these visions are expressed in the movements of multiculturalism and political correctness, which are seen here as facets of a new, and morally assertive, view of American society, revolving around the efforts of previously excluded groups to construct new identities. All of these forms of consciousness, nativism, cosmopolitan liberalism, and multiculturalism now compete on the American scene in the politics of identity.

Multiculturalism, Political Correctness, and the Politics of Identity

The movement that is called "multiculturalism" is a significant and recent reflection of the long-continuing politics of identity in America. This was evident, for example, in the report that was presented to Thomas Sobol, New York State's Commissioner of Education, which called for a multicultural curriculum that would raise such questions as "What is an American?", "Who am I?", and "What is/are my cultural heritage(s)?"[1]. It also appears in a <u>Time</u> magazine story on the multicultural movement that is titled, "Whose

America?", and that asks:

"What kind of people do Americans now think they are, and what will they tell their children about that?"[2]

The politics of identity in its relationship to multiculturalism is also exhibited in the movement launched by Jesse Jackson to designate Black Americans as "African Americans". This represented the <u>third</u> shift in the self-designation of Black Americans -- from "Negro" to "Black", to "African American" -- and each of these shifts can be understood as a matter of the choice of an identity, as signified by the choice of a name, which is the most fundamental act of self-identification that a group can engage in. In calling for this shift, Jackson explicitly referred to what he regarded as the inadequacy of the designation "Black" to describe the historical location of the African American community[3].

To complete the linkage of the terms in the title, Multiculturalism can be seen as a specific aspect of the broader movement of "Political Correctness", which is itself a product of the dynamics of the collective construction and reconstruction of identity in America.

The Early Phase of the Politics of Identity in America:
The Vicissitudes of Nativism (Americanism), and
Cosmopolitan Liberalism

At the time of the Revolution three-quarters of the American population consisted of White, English-speaking Protestants, who traced their origins to the British Isles[4]. There was, from the beginning, a strong religious consciousness of an American community, based on a common Protestant

identity that had earlier developed from the Great Awakening of the 1740's, and that had subsequently matured into what has been described as a "civil millenialism" that infused the American colonies with a sense of their providential significance in the scheme of world history[5].

The struggle over the American identity focused at this time on the issue of immigration and naturalization, a focus it was destined to retain well into the 20th Century. The two positions on this issue -- the nativist, or nationalist, and that which we shall call the "cosmopolitan liberal" -- also emerged in the early days of the republic. The nativists and cosmopolitan liberals shared the assumption that an American cultural identity existed, which comprised religion, language, manners, customs, and principles of government. The idea of a Protestant religious identity was established, as was the use of the English language as the language of public discourse, i.e., as a <u>lingua franca</u>[6].

The nativist position was that immigrants would be 1) unassimilable, and that 2) their customs and manners would be inimical to maintaining the political institutions of the country, and that they would constitute a threat to the American cultural identity:

"Why should the Palatine boors be suffered to swarm into our settlements, and, by herding together, establish their language and manners to the exclusion of ours? Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a colony of aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us, instead of our Anglifying them...?" (Benjamin Franklin, 1751)[7]

"But are there no inconveniences to be thrown into the scale against the advantage expected from a multiplication of numbers by the importation of foreigners?...They will bring with them the principles of the governments they leave, imbibed in their early youth; or, if able to throw them off, it will be in exchange for an unbounded licentiousness, passing, as is usual, from one extreme to another....In proportion to their numbers, they will share with us the legislation. They will infuse into it their spirit, warp and bias its directions, and render it a heterogenous, incoherent distracted mass." (Thomas

Jefferson, 1782)[8]

"To admit foreigners indiscriminately to the rights of citizens, the moment they put foot into our country, as recommended in the message, would be nothing less than to admit the Grecian horse into the citadel of our liberty and sovereignty" (Alexander Hamilton, 1802)[9]

Despite these fears, immigration was considered necessary for the nation's economic development at this time, and there was therefore a consensus among nativists and liberals that it should be encouraged. A division of opinion arose over the conditions to be attached to naturalization to citizenship. On this point the nativists advocated longer periods before citizenship could be achieved, while the liberals favored shorter periods. Between 1790 and 1802 various naturalization measures were passed that reflected the tension between these positions, and that shifted the naturalization period to between two and fourteen years, until 1802, when it was fixed at five years[10].

The fundamental division between nativists (who later came to designate their persuasion as "Americanism") and liberals was between the fear of the former, and the confidence of the latter concerning the sturdiness of the national identity. The nativists developed their position of hostility to immigrants as an expression of their fears concerning the survival of an American identity, conceptualized in cultural, political, or racial dimensions[11]. The first expressed itself most powerfully as an anti-Catholicism that appeared in the form of the "Know-nothing" agitation of the 1830's, in response to Irish Catholic Immigration. The second first appeared following the French Revolution as the fear that "radicals" would overthrow the American political system, and experienced its most recent celebrated spasm in the

"McCarthyism" of the 1950's. The third developed after the rise of an American racial nationalism in the 19th Century and enjoyed its most infamous epiphany in Madison Grant's <u>The Passing of the Great Race</u>[12]. In all three of its incarnations nativism was the expression of an identity-anxiety, which was the fear that the "American" identity -- however this might be conceptualized -- was in jeopardy.

What I have here labelled "cosmopolitan liberalism" was propounded on the diametrically opposite position that there was no reason to fear the loss of the American identity, because immigration would not threaten it. This position implied, most fundamentally, a different conception of the American identity and a different attitude towards it. Cosmopolitan Liberalism was based on what Higham described as "A cosmopolitan and democratic ideal of nationality" that was expansive and inclusive, rather than exclusive and restrictive, as was the nativist idea. It was grounded on Christian and secular democratic ideals of equality and brotherhood, and an optimistic Enlightenment view of the perfectibility of human nature. In this cosmopolitan liberal view of the American identity to be an "American" was to be loyal to these values, and an American nationality could therefore be claimed by those who so adhered, irrespective of accidents of race, culture, and origins. Thus cosmopolitan liberals, self-confident in their belief in the capacity of an inclusive American identity to absorb immigrants, could face the prospect of immigration with the equanimity of an Oliver Wendell Holmes, who said: "We are the Romans of the modern world....the great assimilating people"[13].

It is important to note, however, that, for some, the ideal of the cosmopolitan liberals was <u>amalgamation</u> rather than <u>assimilation</u>. This was

reflected in the remarks of Crevecoeur, who in his <u>Letters From an American Farmer</u>, spoke of a "new man", who emerges from the <u>blend</u> of many races[14]. This was expressed in the motto, <u>E Pluribus Unum</u>, and later in the celebrated "melting pot" metaphor, that was anticipated by Emerson when he wrote that in America, "....the energy of Irish, Germans, Swedes, Poles, & Cossacks & all of the European tribes -- of the Africans, & of the Polynesians, will contribute a new race....as vigorous as the new Europe which came out of the smelting pot of the Dark Ages."[15]. It would perhaps be more accurate to say that cosmopolitan liberals at this time, more-or-less unwittingly, adhered to one or both of these views, i.e., to the ideal of assimilation to the majority American culture, and/or to the creation of a synthetic new American cultural identity that would be a blend of its constituent elements. In either case, as cosmopolitan liberals they expressed confidence that immigration would not threaten the American identity, but would reinforce it by assimilation, or enhance it by amalgamation.

Nativist anxiety waxed and waned in response to economic conditions and to immigrant flows. It was quiescent in the period following the Civil War, but developed greater intensity in the economic crises of the 1880's that accompanied economic modernization, and that were further aggravated by social disorganization. The first anti-immigration act, that of 1882, developed in this period. Nativism appeared in those strata most threatened by modernization, i.e., among the petit bourgeoisie, and unorganized workers, whose place in society, that is to say whose social identity, was most placed in jeopardy by the currents of the times. It was the religious strain of nativism that now appeared, as manifested in a resurgent anti-Catholicism that

responded to a percieved threat to the native Protestant identity from the Church hierarchy.

In the latter period of the 1880's nativism turned in the direction of the Anglo-Saxon racial idea. This had already been fermenting in the period after the Civil War, as a response to both modernization, and to the "New Immigration" from Eastern and Southern Europe[16]. New England at this time was particularly gripped by a fear of the decline of an Anglo-Saxon native American stock, and of a way of life governed by patricians who felt that they were born to rule. This led to a feeling of profound identity-pessimism, of being overwhelmed by the lesser-breeds, who were present in ever-increasing and threatening numbers:

"John Fiske lamented that New England was passing into the hands of "proprietors of an inferior type." Owen Wister recorded that a short story of his about a sleazy Jewish student at Harvard who is contrasted unfavorably with other students who are of native American stock brought him a letter of approval from William James. Henry Cabot Lodge recalled the gloomy turn of the tide of events when as a boy he and his fellow students at the Boston Latin School began to be overwhelmed by their more numerous Irish enemies in street fights. Barret Wendell lamented the passing of the New Englander of native stock and lashed out at the immigrants. To an Englishman he wrote of his resentment against Mary Antin, a Jewish immigrant from Russia who had written books favorable to immigration. "She has developed an irritating habit of describing herself and her people as Americans" he complained, "in distinction from such folks as Edith and me, who have been here for three hundred years.""[17]

One response to these developments was Theodore Roosevelt's

campaign against birth control, which:

"....was probably a reflection of the fears of certain old Americans that the native stock would be supplanted by the immigrants. In a letter to Cecil Spring-Rice, Roosevelt declared that of all the evil in America the worst was

"the diminishing birth rate among the old native American stock." Roosevelt could scarcely find words to express his detestation of a person who deliberately chose not to have children. "Such a creature merits contempt as hearty as any visited upon the soldier who runs away from battle.." [18]

These sentiments led to the formation of the Immigration Restriction League in Boston in 1894, recruited from among aristocratic New Englanders[19]. The feeling of being besieged by barbarians at the gates, threatening the native racial identity, was vividly expressed in a much-discussed poem of the time by Thomas Bailey Aldrich, "Unguarded Gates", which was published in the <u>Atlantic</u>:

""Wide open and unguarded stand our gates,
And through them presses a wild motley throng --
Men from the Volga and the Tartar steppes,
Featureless figures of the Hoana-Ho,
Malayan, Scythian, Teuton, Kelt, and Slav,
Flying the Old World's poverty and scorn;
These bringing with them unknown gods and rites,
Those, tiger passions, here to stretch their claws.
In streets and alley, what strange tongues are loud,
Accents of menace alien to our air,
Voices that once the Tower of Babel knew!

"O Liberty, white Goddess! Is it well
To leave the gates unguarded? On thy breast
Fold Sorrow's children, soothe the hurts of fate,
Lift the down-trodden, but with hand of steel
Stay those who to thy sacred portals come
To waste the gifts of freedom. Have a care
Lest from thy brow the clustered stars be torn
And trampled in the dust. For so of old
The thronging Goth and Vandal trampled Rome,
And where the temples of the Caesars stood
The lean wolf unmolested made her lair.""[20]

And the same idea was voiced in academic circles by John W.

Burgess, a Columbia professor, who wrote in the pages of the

Political Science Quarterly:

> **""What folly, on the part of the ignorant, what wickedness on the part of the intelligent, are involved in the attempts....to pollute [the United States] with non-Aryan elements...We must preserve our Aryan nationality in the state, and admit to its membership only such non-Aryan race-elements as shall have become Aryanized in spirit and in genius by contact with it, if we would build the superstructure of the ideal American commonwealth.""[21]**

After a period of Anglo-Saxon racial optimism which was reflected in the waxing imperialistic sentiments associated with the Spanish-American War[22] racial pessimism returned with a vengeance, with fears of "race suicide"[23]. This was concomitant with the rise in the "New Immigration", which in the period from the Spanish-American War to the World War was three-and-a-half times more than the old[24]. Of particular significance at this time was that the shift of focus of the nativist conception of the American identity in the direction of the Anglo-Saxon racial identity now <u>expanded</u> that identity to include <u>Northern Europeans</u>, i.e., "Aryans", as well as the more limited group of "Anglo-Saxons"[25].

There was also at this time a noteworthy shift in the ideas of cosmopolitan liberalism concerning the nature of the American identity. This was a shift from assimilation and amalgamation to an inchoate idea of cultural pluralism. This was propagated by settlement workers who believed that assimilation inspired among immigrants a contempt for their own culture, and fostered social disorganization caused by a schism between the immigrant generation and its native-born progeny[26]. The immigrants were encouraged

by the settlement workers to preserve the best of their own traditions, with the expectation that this might lead to a more authentically cosmopolitan American society. This idea was not carried to its logical conclusion of cultural pluralism at the time, but stood as a tempering of the melting pot thesis. Cultural pluralism would have to wait for its full maturation until after WWII.

During WWI the emphasis of the nativist movement shifted in the direction of cultural nationalism, in the form of "100 per cent Americanism", and this took a turn towards anti-radicalism in the "Red Scares" of the Twenties[27]. Anti-Catholicism was also intensified after the war, as was racial nationalism, as evidenced by the popularity of Madison Grant's, <u>The Passing of the Great Race</u>, in the Twenties.

World War II had a profound effect on both nativism and cosmopolitan liberalism, and this effect could be considered the product of yet deeper tendencies, of which the war itself was but a singular manifestation. The war was fought explicitly against the racial ideology of the Axis regimes, and this made the rhetoric of Anglo-Saxon racism insupportable in the context of the war effort. There was also the consideration that the American army now included large numbers of second-generation Americans descended from the "New Immigration" of the Post-Civil War period. This excluded the possibility of admitting the legitimacy of religious nativism as a component of the American cultural nationalism. To this was added the fact that American social science, strongly influenced by European trends, had waged a war against "scientific racism", and had by this time largely discredited it[28].

These tendencies led to a war propaganda that celebrated a new and more inclusive concept of an American cultural nationalism that embraced the

descendants of the most recent immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. This was evidenced in the war-time propaganda films that prominently featured the "All-American" platoon, which consisted of WASPS, and descendants of Swedes, Germans, Irish, Italians, Poles, Jews, Greeks, etc., all with unmistakably "ethnic" names. This sense of unity in the war effort was a powerful impetus to the fusion of the "ethnics" into the American cultural identity.

In the post-war period this process of cultural inclusion was facilitated by the economic upswing that followed the war, and was further advanced by sense of American triumphalism, owing to the victory in the war, and the position of economic hegemony that America enjoyed at this time. The only shadow on the horizon was the Soviet Communist threat, that gave rise to a resurgence of anti-radical nativism, but this could no longer be easily directed against the White Ethnics, who had long since ceased to be identifiable as new immigrants bearing subversive doctrines. Some of the White Ethnics from Eastern Europe were, in fact, rabidly anti-communist because their homelands were occupied by Soviet troops, i.e., Poles and Hungarians, and the latter especially became anti-communist heroes after the aborted Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Another factor that worked to include the Ethnics in anti-communist nativism was the anti-religious bias of communism. Thus it was seemly that Irish-Americans were among the most vigorous of the anti-communists, thus joining the nativist mainstream, and although they disavowed the unsavory methods of the anti-communist Irish-American Senator Joe McCarthy, they were not inclined to disavow his objectives.

This sea-change in American cultural nationalism, now inclusive of the

European diaspora of the New Immigration, was certified politically by the election of the Catholic John Kennedy to the presidency in 1960. Second and third generations of descendants of the New Immigrants, albeit often living in ethnic enclaves, were now in cultural terms virtually indistinguishable from other "Euro-Americans". They commingled in veteran's organizations, they followed the sports with equal avidity, they consumed hot-dogs and soft drinks at the ball park, they saw the same films, and watched the same programs on network television, and they thought of the religious tradition of America in either "Judeo-Christian", or "Christian" terms. The ambiguity of the latter point left the status of Jewish-Americans as still problematic in the eyes of some nativists.

The Era of the Civil Rights Revolution

This process of the progressive fusion of previously excluded Americans into the image of American cultural nationalism notably failed to include "People of Color". This was most clearly indicated in the fact that the American military was segregated throughout WWII, and that Japanese-Americans were herded into camps, in flagrant denial of their ostensible rights as citizens. Both Japanese and Chinese had earlier been subject to immigration barriers that were clearly based on racial criteria.

The largest community of color that was excluded from the new expanded American national cultural identity, that was now in effect a White "Euro-American" identity was that of Black Americans. Its significance lay not only in its size, but also in the particular conditions of its history as a community that had suffered the experience of slavery, and whose presence in America was coerced.

African Americans were legally excluded from the American identity at the founding of the republic by their status as slaves, and the community of Free Blacks bore the stigma of the exclusion of the larger number of slaves. After the Civil War the legal fact of emancipation was not translated into inclusion into the American cultural identity. The fact of legal emancipation was also nullified in short order by the "Bargain of '76", which allowed federal troops to be withdrawn from the South, and the adoption of "Black Codes" and "Jim Crow" legislation, which was certified by the "Separate but Equal" decision of the Supreme Court in the Plessy v. Ferguson decision of 1896.

The _de jure_ exclusion in the South was complemented by a _de facto_ exclusion in the North. The latter was effected by informal segregation in housing and schooling, racial discrimination in employment, and a cultural image of subordinated exclusion that was promulgated by the White-controlled media. This continued up until the end of the Second World War, as has been indicated above. By the end of the war, the currents of liberalization that had waged the battle against "Scientific Racism" had matured into what Gunnar Myrdal referred to as the "American Dilemma"[29]. This was the palpable tension between the rhetorical and official ideal of equality in America, and the _de facto_ failure to apply this idea to African Americans. De Tocqueville had once predicted that America would have to resolve this tension, and his prediction was now coming to pass. After the war, and before the famous school desegregation decision of 1954, a number of events clearly pointed in the direction of coming to terms with the contradiction between the legal status of Black Americans and the American Creed.

A war-time Fair Employment Practices Commission had been established, and after the war many states and cities had created similar agencies. Truman established a committee on civil rights in 1946, and integrated the armed forces shortly thereafter. The Supreme Court, clearly anticipating the Brown decision, reflected the trend of the time in a series of liberal rulings. In Smith v. Allright (1944) the court prohibited exclusion from primary elections on the basis of race. In Morgan v. Virginia (1948) the court ruled against discrimination in interstate commerce. In Shelly v. Kraemer (1948) the court prohibited state enforcement of restrictive covenants. In 1950 the court attacked the separate-but-equal concept in higher education in Sweat v. Painter, and McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents. In these decisions the court in effect invalidated the separate but equal concept by specifying that equality of education should include such intangibles as reputation of faculty, influence of alumni, and the prestige of the school in the community. In states outside of the South the same moral pressures led to the integration of schools where segregated systems had previously existed. In 1947 New Jersey adopted an anti-segregation provision in its new constitution. In 1949 Indiana repealed its permissive segregation law and substituted for it a statute outlawing racial distinctions in its public schools. In the same year Illinois strengthened its existing anti-segregation law in 1949. In 1951, Arizona made segregation optional instead of mandatory in the grade schools.

The Brown v. Board of Education decision of 1954 was thus the culmination of this maturing trend that reflected the "Zeitgeist", and unleashed the "Civil Rights Revolution" that extended from 1954 to 1965. The politics of this period involved a grass-roots protest movement in the South

against the various institutions of segregation in the South, which included schools, public facilities, such as restaurants and buses, and voting arrangements. The political dynamic began with Black protests which were met with Southern brutality, which was recorded by the witness of the national media. The resulting publicity occasioned a revulsion in the North that generated the political force that propelled federal intervention in the South to implement the principle of desegregation that had now become "the law of the land". The civil rights legislation of 1964 and 1965 completed the legal and political revolution.

The ideals that animated the Civil Rights Revolution of this period were exactly the liberal ideals of the American Creed. The Black activists, led by Martin Luther King, and the White liberals who lent political muscle in these developments, both shared the egalitarian ideal of a "color blind society", in which Black Americans would be integrated into the American identity, just as the White Ethnics had been earlier. This was eloquently expressed in his "I have a dream" speech, in which he stated the hope that one day his progeny would be judged for the "content of their character" rather than the "color of their skin". The shared goal was then for an integrated American Society as an ideal, as well as a matter of social justice. The wide resonance of this appeal to the American Creed among the American public-at-large was the secret weapon of the Civil Rights Movement.

From Civil Rights and Equality to the Politics of Identity:
Black Power and "Afro-centrism"

The thrust of the Civil Rights Movement, as we have argued above, was to seek inclusion in the American identity by way of an appeal to the values of

liberal egalitarianism. Both the goal and the spirit of this movement was accomodationist and White liberals played a significant role in the movement, without significant signs of tensions with their Black co-workers. These were the halcyon days of Whites and Blacks working together to create an integrationist ideal of the American identity. Their common enemy was an American racial nationalism that was driven to ground by the resurgent ideal of the American Creed, in the circumstances of the global liberal <u>Zeitgeist</u> of the period that immediately followed the end of WWII.

This changed subsequent to the achievement of the legal goals of the Civil Rights Movement, and the death of Martin Luther King. The change was signalled by the campaign to change the name of "Negro" to "Black", and was accompanied by a new kind of Black politics which pursued a new objective.

The movement from "Negro" to "Black" symbolized a rejection of the ideal of assimilation, represented by the middle-class "Negro" striving to be assimilated into the White mainstream, in favor of the indigenous ghetto culture of the street, which was affirmatively separatist and "Black"[30]. Black Power was a nation-building movement that stressed Black pride and militancy: it was an <u>identity-building</u> movement that sought to promote a "Black is beautiful" self-image among Black Americans. It's goals, as far as its vision of American Society was concerned, were initially ambiguous, but they emphatically rejected the earlier assimilationist-integrationist ideal of the Civil Rights Movement. At first it was presented in the style of American pluralistic, interest-group politics[31], but it became subsequently transmuted into something quite different. In place of a politics of moral supplication there

now appeared an aggressive politics of confrontation and "non-negotiable demands". In place of assimilation into a White culture there was to be a prideful emphasis on separatism. Criticism was directed against those middle-class Blacks who mixed with Whites, and/or who sought to emulate White middle-class culture[32]. With the rise of the Black Muslim movement some Blacks, e.g., Cassius Clay (Mohammed Ali) and the playright Le Roi Jones shed their "slave names" to adopt Muslim names.

The rise of Black Power and the rejection of the integrationist ideal was attended by a shift in the direction of Black politics from "equality of opportunity" to "equality of result", which translated into affirmative action. It was no longer considered sufficient to remove the legal barriers to Black advancement. It was now necessary to overcome social barriers that were regarded to be a legacy of racism, and this could only be assured by guaranteeing Blacks a "piece of the action", i.e., assigning to them a pre-determined portion of the rewards and privileges of society. In practice, this meant assigning numerical goals for Black participation in sectors of employment and education. The painful debate over "quotas" was one product of this policy. Beneath the polemics and technicalities of the controversy over quotas were divergent views of what affirmative action actually was intended to be. "Affirmative action" was a name for a policy that acquired its specific meaning within the context of three different visions of society.

Affirmative action, as supported by liberals, and later by some pragmatic conservatives, meant a temporary policy of racial preference, as a way of overcoming past injustice. In the context of this liberal ideal affirmative

action was intended to bring about the integrationist goal of a color-blind society. After a temporary period of racial preference, affirmative action could be discarded when the inequities and infirmities caused by past racial discrimination would be completely effaced. Thus affirmative action, from this point of view, would be a policy arrangement designed to facilitate the achievement of the goals of the original Civil Rights movement under M. L. King.

A second view of affirmative action acquires its meaning within the context of an ethnically and racially pluralist society, in which each group is allotted power and privilege in proportion to the percentages of that group in the total population. It is this view that was reflected in the argument that, whereas Blacks constituted a certain percentage of society, they were not found in corresponding percentages in the desirable positions in society. The implication here is clearly that <u>they should</u> be so represented in proportional fashion, <u>not because that is the way it would work out</u>, if opportunity were equal, but because a distribution of that kind would constitute the <u>sine qua non</u> of social justice in an ethnically and racially pluralistic society. This idea of proportional racial representation was advanced in the early phase of the Black Power movement when Black demands were presented in the model of American pressure group politics[33].

The third phase of racial politics is that of African Americanism, in the context of which affirmative action acquires yet a different connotation. The new vision of society is neither that of equal opportunity in a color blind society, nor of proportionality in a pluralistic society. It is rather that of racial preference in a society in which African-Americans constitute a group that is

morally entitled to superior privilege. This is justified in historical terms by the experience of slavery, which therefore merits morally legitimate demands for reparations. The African American summit meeting in New Orleans in 1989 called for reparations from Whites for slavery, recalling earlier demands of SNCC's James Forman for billions of dollars of reparations from White churches, and CORE'S Roy Innis' call for $6 billion dollars from the banking industry. In April 1989 the Detroit city council called upon Congress to establish a $40 billion dollar educational fund for the descendants of slaves, and Representative John Conyers submitted a bill to Congress for reparations[34]. Thus, in this version, the demand for affirmative action transcends the demand for group equality with a claim to special preference based on past suffering, rather than of present inequality. This is a claim for a moral primacy of entitlement with respect to the group distribution of privileges in society.

This last-mentioned version of affirmative action is a feature of the same complex of consciousness from which emanates the self-designation "African-American", and the species of multiculturalism that is referred to as "Afrocentrism". This formation of consciousness addresses itself to the construction of an identity, which has been an especially difficult problem for the Black community. This has been symbolized by the shifting, and sometimes contentious history of the way in which the Black-Negro-Colored-African American community has defined and identified itself:

"Blacks called themselves Africans until after 1816, when the American Colonization Society was founded to help them back to Africa; but neither then nor since have very many black Americans been interested in Africa. However, several black organizations have retained the reference, for example the African Methodist Episcopal Church. After the Civil War, freedman came

into use, succeeded by Afro-American, even Afraamerican, tan, colored, negro, and Negro. Announcing the switch to African American, Jesse Jackson said, "Just as we were called colored, but were not that, and then Negro, but not that, to be called Black is just as baseless," though he led in establishing Black two decades earlier. To portray blacks again as objects of manipulation, he implied wrongly that earlier racial terms were imposed on his race by its oppressors. Each of the previous shifts from colored to Negro to black emerged from within the group and won gradual and often grudging acceptance in the larger society. Colored was the preferred term when the NAACP was founded in 1909, but Negro became popular among avant-garde blacks in New York in the 1920's. These shifts in usage were accompanied by arguments over the ideological and political implications of names that reappeared later in the 1960's. Negro was opposed by militant radicals like Adam Clayton Powell and nationalists like Elijah Muhammad, who preferred black even then. But Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, and W.E.B. DuBois used Negro, and DuBois defended the term against charges that it was a white man's word. The New York Times agreed to capitalize Negro in 1930, and the term was common in polite society until radicals spread black in the 1960's. However, Afro-American and African American were also politically acceptable to Black Power militants and preferred by many separatists, as in Malcolm X's organization of Afro-American Unity. Those terms had been used for decades, and their cultural nationalist flavor has continued to be favored especially in artistic, literary, and academic nomenclature.

Though the cultural offensive to use African American in 1989 revived many of the ideological themes of the Black Power movement, the latest effort has lacked the confrontational intensity, the intraracial class-based and generational hostility, and the intimidation tactics of the Black Power movement."[35]

Thus the politics of naming has been nothing other than a politics of identity creation, and this has especially marked the appearance of Afrocentrism. The latter has been for African Americans the identity-building, nation-creating work of fashioning a national history and staking out the hallmarks of a national culture. This is seen, for example, in such works as Martin Bernal's Black Athena, and Anta Diop's, Civilization or Barbarism[36],

which argue for the Black African roots of Western Civilization, propounded on the dual notions of the Black racial character of Egyptian Civilization, and on the influence of that civilization on the development of Western Civilization. This has become a central feature of Afrocentrism, which also discovers other significant influences of Black Africa on world civilization[37].

This construction, or reconstruction of history is a familiar part of the process of nation-building, and has the purpose of locating the nation-people in a prideful history. What some observers characterize as the excessive distortions of this history construction should be understood as a response to the needs of nation-building. Indeed, the same route that is being traced here was earlier traced by other enterprises of this nature[38].

The evolution from Afrocentrism to multiculturalism follows logically. It is through the process of education that the nation creates its identity -- in both the cultural and political senses -- in the minds of its citizens[39]. Seen in this way, multiculturalism, as we consider it here from the African American perspective, is minority nationalism. American nationalism repudiates multiculturalism as competing forms of nationalism, a dynamic that follows from the ethnocentric logic of all nationalisms, whether majority or minority. The difference between American nationalism and African American nationalism is in their respective power positions, not in their philosophies of education. Nationalism as an exclusive form of identity seeks to indoctrinate the young with its nationalistic worldviews. If American nationalism were in the deprived power position of African American nationalism it would advocate multiculturalism, and vice-versa. The analogy can be made here between the political and rhetorical positions of religions. When religions are

able to do so they repress other religions, as competing forms of belief, in the name of the "one true faith". However, when they are politically weak, and are themselves the victims of repression, they call for toleration and religious freedom, which is the religious equivalent of multiculturalism. The rhetoric of multiculturalism, which advances its cause in the name of "diversity" and "inclusiveness", must therefore be suspect. The observable dynamics of the minority nationalisms that advance under this rhetorical cover raise the question as to whether these values are authentic, or whether they are artifacts of the power relationship between competing nationalisms.

The Other Multiculturalisms

The foregoing analysis traces the origins of multiculturalism to the identity search of African Americans who were historically excluded from the American national identity. African Americans have played the most prominent role in this movement because of their unique historical experiences and their unique position in American society. Latinos (Hispanic Americans), Native Americans, and Asian Americans have also joined in the multicultural movement, albeit in less prominent ways. Something should also be said in this connection with respect to the position of the "White Ethnics", whose situation -- as concerns the politics of identity -- has yet a different and unique dynamic.

As in the case of the African American community, labels are important, because they indicate a stage of collective identity-development. The emergence of the label "Native American" is therefore significant because it indicates an emerging identity-awareness on the part of Native Americans, i.e., "Indians", that transcends tribal identity. The development of a Native

American nationalism is not yet as fulsome as is that of African American nationalism, but it promises to move in that direction because of the common history shared by Native Americans, and their common present circumstances. The common history is their experience with White settlers, which has, admittedly, been a most unsavory one that included treachery, genocide, and eviction from their homelands. Their present common circumstance is, most importantly, the fact that they are excluded from the collective American national identity. In addition they face, in common, the problems of reservation life, and a distinctive legal identity in their relationships with the national state. Their nation-building prospects actually come closer to that of the African Americans than any other group in American society. The fact that the latter have been impelled to create a national identity, and that they have been able to do so, suggests that Native Americans may be able to do the same.

We should also note the tensions, or differences, between the "old" and the "new" national identities that might be involved here. The Native Americans have thus far continued to identity themselves in terms of their tribal identities, as Mohawks, Cree, Oneida, etc.. These old identities have long been the only identity for the Native Americans, and the threat to these identities from the de-tribalizing tendencies of modern culture has often intensified the urgency felt by these groups to preserve and revitalize these old tribal identities. This can be seen, for example, in the struggle over specific lands, which are regarded by the Native Americans as essential components of their tribal identities, and which are often threatened by the encroaching American society. The development of a fully articulated identity as Native

Americans, if it should ever occur, would involve a dialectical tension with the old tribal identities.

It is predicted that the Latinos, or Hispanics, will shortly displace the African Americans as the largest non-Euroamerican group. The full significance of this must be evaluated in terms of the dynamics of identity politics. The comment is often made that Latin Americans will not fuse into a collective "Latino" identity, because of the many differences that separate them. The logic of this observation is, however, suspect because <u>every</u> group that has forged a national identity has done so from the same position of existing initially as disparate, and often contending, communities. The proper question to ask of the prospects for the emergence of a Latino identity concern the circumstances and commonalities that might lead to such a transformation. In the case of the Latino community these prospects look promising, although this by no means guarantees that the transformation from the old national identities of Mexican, Cuban, Dominican, Columbian, etc., to a collective identity of Latino, or Hispanic will inevitably occur.

The possession of both a common language and a common religious culture powerfully facilitates the development of a distinctive national consciousness among Hispanics. They also share the common situation of having to deal with the special problems of the use of Spanish in schools, at work, and in their dealings with government. Their numbers in the United States have created a special Spanish-speaking market of radio, television, and film. Against these commonalities, are their distinctive national identities, which are "old" identities, brought as memories from the lands of their origin. But these old identities are less significant for second and third-generation

Hispanics, who find themselves with a common culture, facing non-Hispanics as an "out-group", and experience a common situation of dealing with an "Anglo" culture as Hispanics. In sum, their prospects of acquiring a new collective national identity as Latinos, or Hispanics, appears favorable.

The Asian Americans appear least likely of all of these groups to acquire a new collective identity in the United States. They are widely separated by barriers of language, religion, and situation. Thus the situation of Japanese and Chinese Americans differs considerably from those of Cambodians, Vietnamese, and Asian Indians. Whether or not they will retain their old national identities will depend on whether, and to what extent, they will be incorporated into an American cultural identity. If they continue to be excluded from an American national cultural identity they will have a substantial basis for retaining -- in a highly modified form -- their sense of distinct national identities, as "ethnicities", on the American scene.

Thus it should be clear that the identity-forming prospects of the various minority groups of color differ widely. The fact that the African Americans have moved furthest in this direction is a consequence of their special history, and the identity deficits that they have suffered because of this. Removed from their old tribal identities, they have been denied entry into the American national identity, and have shared a common experience of enslavement, followed by subordination and discrimination. Segregation has enabled them to form a distinct African American culture that embraces "Black English", a distinctive emotional religious style, a highly inventive musical culture, and cuisine and styles of family life.

The situation of the "White Ethnics" is instructive by contrast. The

assimilation of the White Euroamericans into the Anglo-Christian American culture, and into American economic life, has removed the raw materials for the maintenance of the old indentities in the new country[40]. Gunnar Myrdal ascribed the movement of second-and-third generation Ethnics to develop identities of their own as an "...upper-class intellectual fanaticism.." and a quest for a "symbolic identity". Both of these descriptions may be understood to describe the insubstantiality of such affiliations with the old identities, but they do not do justice to the dynamics that have impelled this identity-search. Although the Ethnics were absorbed into the American cultural identity, as we have seen above, they were not fully integrated into the <u>historical</u> aspects of that identity, i.e., they could not see themselves reflected in American colonial history, and in the history of the America of the Founding Fathers. Thus, although they were <u>culturally and politically</u> Americans, and were accepted as such, there was a gap in their identities, in the sense of being able to locate themselves in history. This was their motive in seeking to construct a "symbolic" ethnic identity, however insubstantial this may have been in a cultural sense.

Multiculturalism and "Political Correctness"

Political Correctness resulted from a confluence of other streams of liberation, including those of the other Peoples of Color, flowing into the post-Civil Rights movement of Black Power, and subsequently the development of "African Americanism", i.e., the identity of African American, and the cultural movement of Afrocentrism. These other movements included Feminism, Gay Liberation, and the movement for the interests of the handicapped. These movements joined, in an informal way, to generate a

common political mood of victimization, moral indignation, and a self-righteous hostility against the common enemy -- the White Male. All of these groups felt oppressed by the ruling White Male elite of American society or, in some cases, by Western Civilization in general.

This pervasive sense of victimization has led to an emphasis on the sufferings of the group that have been inflicted by evil powers. This is rhetorically captured in the use of the politically potent epithets, "Racism" and "Sexism", which are unanswerable indictments of blame, levelled by innocent victims against malevolent ruling elites. Political Correctness has sometimes imaginatively extended the array of victims, e.g., at Smith College in Mass.:

"Smith's office of student affairs distributes a sheet to all students listing proscribed attitudes including "Ableism -- oppressors of the differently abled by the temporarily able", "Ageism", and "Lookism", defined as, among other things, "the construction of a standard for beauty/attractiveness"[41]

and:

"Perhaps it was inevitable, but the latest minority to join the plethora of ethnic, sexual, and cultural groups now seeking the status of victimhood are, yes, witches. According to the Anti-Bias Curriculum, a publication of the National Association for the Education of Young Children that is gaining prestige in teacher's colleges, they have suffered too long from disparaging prejudice. The book advises teachers to explain that Halloween witches are not evil hags who like to eat children, like the one in Hansel and Gretel, but actually good women who use herbal remedies to "really help people".[42]

Political Correctness then produces a politics of moral drama, involving the oppressed and the oppressor in which the oppressed demand recognition of their suffering. Thus in hearings before the California State Board of Education concerning textbook revision, with the aims of multiculturalism in

mind, this theme of victimization and suffering was made clear:

"At issue were textbooks responsive to the new curriculum. Polish-Americans demanded that any reference to Hitler's Holocaust must be accompanied by accounts of equivalent genocide suffered by Polish Christians. Armenian-Americans sought coverage of Turkish massacres; Turkish-Americans objected. Though Black historians testified that the treatment of Black history was exemplary, Afrocentrists said the textbooks would lead to "textbook genocide". Moslems complained that an illustration of an Islamic warrior with a raised scimitar stereotyped Moslems as "terrorists".

"One group after another....insisted that its forebears had suffered more than anyone else in history"".[43]

In this moral dialogue the victims are morally superior to their oppressors, who are generally White, and often particularly White Males, depending on the group levelling the charge. This is seen in the definition of "Racism" according to the lexicon of Political Correctness. Only Whites <u>can</u> be racist, and <u>are</u> intrinsically so, whether they are prepared to acknowledge this fact or not:

"It is important to recognize how scholastic and self-serving the definition of racism that holds sway at Oberlin is: "people of color" cannot be racist because they lack power. Because they do have power Whites are intrinsically racist."[44]

The corollary to this is White Guilt, which is often effectively induced by the pressures of Political Correctness. The author of the above-cited article also explores this matter:

"While on campus, I participated in an anti-racism seminar required for the fifty or so upper-classmen who serve as counselors in dorms. The session, called "Fighting Oppression and Celebrating Diversity" was sponsored by the dean's office and led by Bill Shipton, a dean of diversity education at Indiana

University. Through films, discussion, and role-playing games, Shipton reiterated the litany I heard constantly while I was at Oberlin: All Whites are racist, and only they can be racist. Shipton instructs participants to "unlearn" racism not through efforts at colorblindness, but through heightened consciousness of race. To admit one's racism is a sign of strength and growth. According to Shipton's "onion theory", Whites must continue to strip off layers of inherited racism through their whole lives."

And this instruction is evidently effective in causing Whites

to internalize their guilt in the rhetoric of Political

Correctness:

"At a brown rice and beans dinner to discuss the college's policy on hate crimes, I asked a group of white students whether they were racists. All acknowledged that they were, because of their "white skin privilege". One said that those of his peers who couldn't admit their racism were "in denial".[45]

Once Whites have mastered this rhetoric they are equipped to enter into a moral dialogue with victimized groups in which they present themselves as culpable for the sins which have afflicted the oppressed. Thus Thomas Sobol, Education Commissioner of New York State in presenting himself at the Second National Conference on the Infusion of African and African-American Content in the High School Curriculum in Atlanta, Georgia, pleaded that:

"He'd fought a lonely battle, as he portrayed it, to support the conference's objectives as education commissioner in New York State. But he realized his limits: "I'm a White middle-aged male, I can't help that"[46]

Mr. Sobol's reference to his being a "white male" is a key focus of the guilt rhetoric of Political Correctness. The University of Texas at Austin, for example, has institutionalized this theme in its course of English instruction by

organizing a remedial writing course around the theme of "white male racism", one of materials for which was a tract listing "forty-six varieties of white male privilege."[47]

Political Correctness appears simultaneously with multiculturalism on the scene of ethnic and racial politics, and the latter reflects the ethos of blame and guilt that characterizes the former. Thus multiculturalism does not place all cultural traditions on an equal moral plane. The cultures of the People of Color, crushed by six hundred years of Western conquest and imperial exploitation, are morally superior to the Western culture of the Euroamericans. This animus is seen clearly in Afrocentrism, which devalues Western culture by claiming it to be derivative from the putatively African culture of Egypt. The further implication is that Westerners have long been aware of this fact, but have deliberately distorted the truth because of their desire to be preeminent. It also appears in the stated unwillingness of the Afrocentrists to rely on the testimony of Western historians concerning the facts of history. Politically Correct multiculturalism therefore develops a counter-history in place of a Western history that is regarded as mendacious and morally defective. This aspect of multiculturalism appeared symbolically in the objection of Native Americans to a Philadelphia plan to rename a street in honor of Columbus:

"George Hines, an Apache indian who is active in the coalition opposing the renaming, Stop the Name Change, said, "Even if it were one block or a half block we would not want to honor Christopher Columbus for what he stood for -- the enslavement of people of color".

Mr. Hines and other American Indians here say it is an insult to honor the man who they assert encouraged the rape, torture, and enslavement of the Indians. "I just think it was done in blatant disregard of another people's heritage", said Janice Mongelli Cauley, who is from the Lenni Lenape tribe

and a member of the coalition. "He's offensive to me as a human being."[48]

This moral devaluation of the West also appears in the counter-historical view of Afrocentrism that repudiates the Constitution because of its recognition of slavery, and its revisionist view of the Founding Fathers as slaveholders, or as racists who were tolerant of slaveholding.

When the moral animus of Political Correctness is added to the character of multiculturalism as minority nationalism the rhetorical claims of multiculturalism to speak in the name of "diversity", of a "curriculum of inclusion", and the broadening of the ethnocentrism of Eurocentrism become suspect. A respectable case could be made for the proposition that this is, in fact, a reversal of the actual truth of the situation, which is that it is multiculturalism that is ethnocentric and disinclined to accept diversity, in the name of the liberal value of tolerance, and that it is Eurocentrism that is cosmopolitan and inclusive.

This is manifest, first of all, in the forthright ethnocentrism of Afrocentrism, which explicitly endeavors to view history and culture from an exclusively Afrocentric perspective. In contradistinction to this, it is precisely Western culture that has shown itself to be most cosmopolitan, and most eager to absorb the contributions of other cultures into its own, and to attempt to view the world from the perspectives of other cultures, e.g.,:

"Far from being "insular" Western Civilization has always been a pushover for anything considered even remotely foreign. And I'm not just referring to the influence of the ancient Greeks on Renaissance and post-Renaissance Europe. Think of the impact of Chinese culture on eighteenth-century France and England, where chinoiserie was all the rage, or of French culture on the customs, fashion, and language of nineteenth-century Russian aristocrats. Or try to imagine Ezra Pound's poetry without the writings of Confucius and Lao-tzu, the plays of Yeats and Brecht without the theatrical

conventions of the Noh drama, the paintings of Picasso or the novels Conrad without the influence of Africa. George Gershwin's music is heavily dependent on blues and jazz, as are the rhythmic innovations of Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein on the music of Latin America.[49]

"...the multiculturalist account of Western high culture has it backward. Despite the disintegrating folk traditions and the impact of colonialism on world musics, a survey of the expanse of the Western musical tradition -- the music of the medieval church, the love songs of the trouveres, the dances of the village square, the baroque fugue, the classical sonata, the Romantic symphony, the twentieth-century exploration of systems and sound -- fails to reveal a constant oppposition to the Other. It gives evidence, instead, of a constant curiosity about, and fascination with, the Other.

The early Christian church used the figures of the Jewish synagogue in its chants. The rhythms and the phrasings of folk dances (the music of the internal Other) made their way into the courts and the Baroque suite. Contact with Eastern cultures yielded dozens of classical operas with Eastern (Turkish, Indian, Chinese) characters and dance rhythms....This cannot be dismissed as "Orientalism" in music; the folk musics of the Slavic countries, the rhythms of Spain and Gypsy cultures flourished on the opera stage and in the concert hall as well. And in this century Japanese music influenced the development of Impressionism, jazz and blues became part of the musical vocabulary of European and American music of the 1920s, Indian ragas and African rhythms found their way into the compositions of the 1960s.

One reason for this cross-fertilization is that Western musical culture, far from condemning the Other to some netherworld of untouchable sound, has cultivated an impassioned interest in the music of different cultures. It has done so in order to gain a new perspective on its own music, and in order to explore the possibilities and the powers of music itself.....The non-Western has been as much a part of the phenomenon of music for many Western composers and writers as native works."[50]

To the above should be added the cosmopolitan elements of university curriculums. The charge of "Eurocentrism" levelled at the curriculum is at least suspect when measured against the multicultural elements that are discernibly present, e.g., area studies, programs in non-Western languages --

such as Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic -- that are cultural as well as linguistic in orientation; studies in comparative literature, art and religion; studies in anthropology, comparative politics and the histories of non-Western cultures, etc.. The Western curriculum has been famously cosmopolitan ever since it was attended by an open-minded fascination with the cultures that it colonized. That this Western cosmopolitanism was the work of Western scholars does not alter the fact that it has long been pursued in a spirit of "inclusion", notwithstanding the unpardonable and regrettable exploitation of the peoples who were the authors of these cultures.

The three forms of consciousness that are presently contending on the American scene; American nationalism, multiculturalism as minority nationalism, and cosmopolitan liberalism, each contain their own distinct visions of American society, with distinct implications for the direction of that society. American nationalism defines American society in terms of an American identity that elevates a White Christian culture to the status of a majority culture. This culture excludes Peoples of Color on racial grounds, and relegates them to an inferior political, economic, and social status.

Minority nationalist multiculturalism presents a vision of a multinational society whose distinct national elements have no common bond of identity among them that would link them into a single supranational entity. This is separatist pluralism with a vengeance, to which is added the moral animus of political correctness. This establishes a moral inequality between the White Euroamericans and the Peoples of Color, reversing the historical status relationships that previously prevailed. Now the "first shall be the last, and the last shall be the first", i.e., the minority nationalist vision would create a society

in which privilege would be distributed on a racial basis, such that the Peoples of Color would receive varieties of racial preference in employment, the redistribution of wealth through government action, education, and political representation.

The cosmopolitan vision can accommodate either a society in which there is a majority culture, or a society in which an extensive pluralism prevails. In both cases the American identity is established by an affiliation with the democratic political values of a state that is based on the consent of the governed, the rule of law, human rights, and free association. The liberal vision thus devalues <u>cultural identity</u>, as being irrelevant to the essence of the American identity. In place of cultural nationalism it advocates tolerance, and in place of a cultural national identity it values allegiance to the universal values of liberal cosmopolitanism. The latter could thus easily accommodate an "integrationist pluralism"[51] characterized by a tolerant cohabitation of identities, all of which would be fused into an overarching American political identity.

These tendencies of national identity and society have competed with each other in the course of American history, and are doing so now, and at various times they have had more-or-less success in actualizing portions of their respective visions into the institutional arrangements of American society. Thus, American nativism has pursued its aspirations in anti-immigration legislation, in legal and <u>de facto</u> institutionalized segregation, in increased naturalization requirements, and in creating a mythic American history, e.g. along the lines of Parson Weems' biography of Washington, that celebrated the virtues of WASP America. Cosmopolitan liberalism has stoutly

resisted these pressures from American nativism by campaigning for open immigration, liberal naturalization procedures, and respect for the indigenous cultures of immigrant communities. The abolitionist movement against slavery should also be credited to the spirit of cosmopolitan liberalism.

In the post-WWII period the minority nationalisms of Peoples of Color have made their presence felt in the liberal atmosphere of decolonization and anti-fascism that followed the war, with the dissolution of the European Empires that occurred at that time. The early, purely liberal, phase of the Civil Rights movement matured into the more aggressive varieties of minority nationalisms, with Black Power and Afrocentrism in the vanguard. The admixture of the moral politics of Political Correctness has led to an incipient institutional transformation of American life that reflects the ethos of this morally assertive multiculturalism.

This appears in the form of what Glazer refers to as a "Western" pattern of the organization of society in which <u>groups</u> enjoy legally defined statuses -- in the manner analogous to that which once prevailed in European estate societies -- in which certain groups are legally privileged with respect to others[52]. The most discussed of these arrangements is, of course, that of "affirmative action", with its controversial implications of "racial preferences" and "quotas". Although quotas are not legally called for, the "disparate impact" doctrine of the Griggs vs. Duke Power decision (1971) implicitly mandated quotas in a practical sense, because the <u>de facto</u> existence of disparities became grounds for a suit, in which the burden of proof was placed on the employer as defendant. To avoid such suits, employers would have to avoid the occurrence of such disparities, and such action necessarily implies

the adoption of a <u>quota</u>, i.e., of a set of employment practices that guarantees that disparities will not appear. Moreover, in a subsequent controversy over a civil rights bill in 1990-1991, to return to the standard of Griggs after its reversal by a later decision, <u>both</u> Republicans and Democrats supported the return to the "disparate impact" standard, differing only in the specifics of the standards of proof.

The Future of Identity-Politics in America

Two commentators on these matters, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and Nathan Glazer, speaking from different points of view, have expressed faith that the divisive tendencies of multiculturalism will eventually be overcome. Thus Schlesinger points to tendencies of "Blacks" (who, he argues, prefer this designation to "African-American"), Hispanics, and Asian-Americans to desire assimilation into the (White) mainstream American culture[53]. And Glazer is similarly optimistic about the assimilative power of American society[54].

This optimism that foresees the decline of adversary identity-politics in American society is a well-meaning extrapolation of the American past into the American future, and it may well be that these prognostications will turn out to be correct. But if this is the case it will not be because the future will be like the past, but because the cohesive forces in American society will prevail, notwithstanding the fact that circumstances have profoundly changed. In several important respects American society will face novel problems in attempting to forge a common American identity from a diverse racial and ethnic raw material. The "new, new immigration" of the latter decades of the 20th century differs significantly from the original "new immigration" of the

post-Civil War period, that posed an earlier crisis of identity-building for America. Never before has America received a stream of immigration from a single linguistic and religious group, as homogenous in these respects as is the present Latino immigration to the United States. The Mexican portion of this immigration is also unique in that the homeland lies just across the border, over which it is able to exercise a continuing cultural influence on the immigrants. This "new new immigration" differs also in that it emanates from non-European cultures whose linguistic and religious traditions -- in the case of the Asian immigrants -- are further removed from those of the old settlers than were those of earlier streams of immigration.

The present patterns of identity-politics in America also differs from that of the past in that the threat to an inclusive American identity comes from the creation of <u>new identities</u>, rather than the unwillingness to surrender <u>old identities</u>. During WWI, and the period that immediately followed, the nativists campaigned against "Hyphenated-Americans", and called for "100 per cent Americanism"[55], and were thus dealing with the reluctance of the new immigrants to shed their old identities from their native lands. In the case of the Latinos, African Americans, and Native-Americans, it is the synthesis of new identities that is at issue, in response to the particular circumstances that these groups face in contemporary American society. Both the "Beyond the Melting Pot" thesis, and the resurgent melting pot thesis, that extols the assimilative power of American society with respect to the <u>old identities</u>, miss the mark here.

This observation applies with particular force to the African Americans, for whom the construction of a new identity is most advanced. The patterns of

segregation and identity-construction that are visible now differ from those that occurred in the past. There are indications of a self-segregation developing now on the heels of the "resegregation" that followed the massive upheavals of school integration in the 60's and 70's[56], and the segregation of the inner-cities also represents a new phenomenon in that it is accompanied by the development of an aggressive youthful ghetto culture that competes for primacy with assimilating tendencies of the Black middle-classes. This, in turn, is linked to the sharpening class divisions of American society between a diminishing class of wealthy Americans who repudiate redistributive taxation, and a swelling class of poor Americans who have, in recent presidential politics, been successfully beguiled by the conflict of social liberalism and social conservatism into ignoring the tendency for the concentration of wealth that works so profoundly to their disadvantage.

These and other factors must be evaluated in the unique historical configuration of the moment in considering the prospects for the American identity. Demographics will play an important role here in affecting the "pushes" and "pulls" of immigration, and the ethnic and racial balance of that immigration. From the horizon of the present moment we see expanding population trends among peoples of color abroad, and declining fertility rates of White Americans in relation to both Third World populations abroad, and Hispanic and Black populations in America. Crucial in this complex mix of elements will also be America's economic future. In American history, and in the history of other nations, the severest tensions of identity politics have been exacerbated by moods of economic pessimism, and -- conversely -- have been mitigated by economic moods of expansive self-confidence.

The Structural Dynamics of Identity-Formation

The movements of identity-formation alluded to above will be shaped by the structures that affect identity-formation. This involves three distinct types of identity-forming contexts that operate in modern society. The first, and most familiar of these, is the social community of family, village, and neighborhood, in which identity is transmitted and certified by face-to-face interaction in the intimate spheres of life, i.e., this is Tonnies familiar "gemeinschaft". The second, which is distinctive to large-scale societies, is the public community of workplace, school, the military, and theaters, parks, and other public places. Although these are face-to-face communities, the general exclusion of intimate relationships from these spheres lends to them more of a "gesellschaft" character, in comparison to the aforementioned social communities. Perhaps the most complex, and difficult to conceptualize identity-forming context is that of the symbolic communities. These are mediated by television, newspaper, radio, film, literature, and -- most recently -- computer networks. The symbolically-mediated communities of greatest importance here are those of the news-of-the-day, culture, history, and the state. The news-of-the-day comprises the circuits of information that relate a chronicle that locates us in a sphere of events that transcend those that are visible in the face-to-face social and public communities. The sphere of culture comprises the realms of literature, music, dress, and life-style that are symbolically mediated to us, and that also transcend the face-to-face communities. The sphere of history comprises our vision of the past, and the sphere of the state is our image of the nation and its government as a corporate entity, i.e., as a single person writ-large. This corporate conception

of the modern state is reflected in the commonplace writing and reporting that refers to "Washington", "Moscow", "Beijing", "Iraq", etc., as if these were collective entities that possessed a single brain and body, and whose behavior could be conceptualized in the same way as the behavior of a single person.

It is from this amalgam of identity-forming contexts that individual, collective, and national identities are formed in the peculiar circumstances of the modern world. In the American context we are concerned as to how these identity-forming contexts operate to promote the unity or divergence of identities. Even a cursory glance at the identity-forming landscape so imperfectly sketched above reveals some discernible trends in both directions. In terms of social communities, it has been well-known, from the very beginnings of modern society, that ethnic identities have been sustained by ethnic concentrations in regions, cities, neighborhoods, and villages. These tendencies towards identity-divergence, i.e., of resistance to the "melting pot" of assimilation, have co-existed with the integration of Americans into a fairly homogenous set of public communities with a common public culture, characterized by use of the English language, rules of comportment, address, interpersonal style, and a code of civility, i.e., the avoidance of behavior that would give offence. An important ingredient of this American public culture has been its pervasive secularization, which has enabled Americans of different religious persuasions to mingle without taking precise cognizance of the religious identity of the other. Thus with respect to the two most significant hallmarks of ethnicity -- language and religion -- the structure of the American sphere of public communities has enabled Americans to

accomplish the practical business of society in an arena that strips them of the ethnic affiliations cultivated by their segregated social communities. The most important homogenizing public communities in this regard have been those of the public school, corporate and public bureaucracies, and the military.

The symbolic communities operate on identities in ways that are not yet completely clear. The integrative and segregative tendencies of identity-formation with respect to these communities can, however, be evaluated in some measure. Thus the development of native language newspapers was a significant cohesive factor for immigrant communities in the United States. At a later time, the development of native language radio and television carried this still further. The development at the present time of a distinct Spanish-language network of media, that includes newspapers, magazines, film, radio, and television is of singular importance in advancing the new identity of Latino, or Hispanic in the United States. Whatever the differences may be that keep apart Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Cuban, Dominicans, Nicuaraguans, and Salvadoreans, and other Spanish-speaking groups, they all partake of a common <u>American</u> Latino culture that is promulgated by these Spanish language media.

A somewhat similar development is discernible in the Black community, where a distinctly Black-oriented media network has emerged, consisting of newspapers, magazines, and radio stations. In the case of Asian Americans the development of distinct symbolic communities is, as yet, principally restricted to discrete Asian groups, such as Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Indians, etc., but has not reached the level of a synthetic Asian-American symbolic sphere. These segregated media communities stand apart from the

mainstream national media of newspapers, magazines, radio, television, film, and sports. The latter occupies a distinctive niche, in that it involves the unique format of a public event that is simultaneously communicated by the media, i.e., baseball, football, and basketball games. The phenomenon of sports as "national pastimes" is a powerfully integrating force in American Culture, because it incorporates minority groups into the national consciousness by way of their prominent participation in these activities.

The existence of the media networks is thus integrating, in the case of the mainstream networks that sustain "All-American" symbolic communities, and segregating in the case of the minority media. Another element of this web of identity-forming contexts is that of the national rituals, e.g., the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas as national holidays. These are unique in blending the activities of the social and symbolic communities. It is interesting in this regard that the Jewish community has integrated itself into the national ritual celebration of the Christmas season by elevating the status of the Jewish holiday of Chanukah, which occurs at the same time. It is also interesting that the African American community has created the new ritual of "First Fruits" as a step in the creation of an African American identity.

It can be seen in this context that multiculturalism moves in the direction of a dis-integration of the American identity by appropriating the symbolic community of education for the cultivation and promulgation of different communal histories. This, however, does not necessarily augur the collapse of the integrated American identity. The future course of American identity-formation will depend upon the balance and interaction of the identity-forming contexts discussed above. In the past, the public communities

have done the yeoman work in assimilating immigrants into the American mainstream identity. They have been less successful in this respect with regard to the Peoples of Color, and especially with regard to the uniquely situated African American community. With the progressive integration of African American communities this may change, and there are already signs of this in the emergence of a sizable Black middle class, whose espousal of a middle-class American culture marks them as "conservative" Blacks, and a corps of Black army professionals, who have found in the military perhaps the most accommodating public community in American life[57]. At the moment, all we can do -- in lieu of being able to predict where this identity-struggle will eventually go -- is to focus on the present dynamics of the identity-forming contexts, and observe the tendencies that are manifested in these towards the integration and disintegration of the American national identity. In conclusion, I catalogue here some of the dangers towards the survival of such an identity, beyond the manifest mischief that might be caused by multiculturalism. These include:

1) The development of a demographic imbalance by way of the immigration of substantial numbers of persons from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and South American countries. This may create a pressure to linguistically rupture the public culture, a tendency that is already evident in Florida and elsewhere, and thus precipitate a struggle over the public culture of the type that has been seen in Quebec, Belgium, India, and Spain. Early signs of this are the controversy over bilingual education and the movement to make the English language the official language of the United States (e.g., the movement known as "U.S. English").

2) The segregation of symbolic communities, such as indicated above, in the cases of Latinos and African Americans. Because these are directed at the creation of new identities they may prove to be more enduring than were superficially similar symbolic communities that were created to preserve the old identities of earlier immigrants.

3) The concentration of immigrant Mexican populations in the Southwest, such as to give rise to an irredentist movement in those areas, conjoined with such a movement in Mexico.

4) The segregation of an "underclass" of African Americans in the inner-cities, accelerating and intensifying the process of creating an African American counter-identity to an American identity. The danger of this may be intensified by the flight of the middle-classes, both Black and White, away from these areas, thus shrinking the tax base and impoverishing the web of public communities that are indispensable to the integrating process.

5) The failure of the economic integration of the Peoples of Color, such that inequities are perceived in racial and ethnic terms, thus aggravating the sense of social injustice on the basis of group membership.

6) A decline in the economic optimism of all groups, thus intensifying all of the baleful tendencies of identity-politics.

7) The loss of the liberal rhetoric of civility and tolerance that has softened the sharp edges of intergroup conflict in America. This would be marked by the failure of leaders from <u>all groups</u> to speak out publicly and forcefully against outrages and incivilities practiced against members of <u>groups other than their own</u>. The danger here is that the spirit of political correctness may persuade the leaders of the Peoples of Color that such an

obligation falls only upon the leadership of the culpable White males, and that the chronicle of their own suffering exempts them from moral responsibility in this regard.

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36. See: Martin Bernal, <u>Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization</u>, Vol. Two: <u>The Archaelogical and Documentary Evidence</u> **(Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey), and Anta Diop, <u>Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology</u>, Translated by Yaa-Yengi Meema Ngemi**

(Lawrence Hill Books/ Chicago Review Press). I include Bernal's work here, even though he is white, because of its scholarly importance in making the case for the Egyptian origins of Classical Civilization.

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38.E.g., concerning the mythological character of these national histories, Boyd C. Shafer observes:

"The legends are indeed fabulous. A Martin O'Brennan believed Celtic was spoken in the Garden of Eden, and Greeks, at any rate since Byron, have connected their modern nation with the ancient Greece of Athens and Sparta. The Turks have been pictured by Turkish historians as the creators of the world's first great civilization, the inventors of the first written language of literary value. The Japanese myth of the founding of Japan by Amaterasu, goddess of the sun, has been mentioned, as has the belief of the Indian patriot, Bal Gangadar Tilak, that his "Aryan" forefathers were "not merely the first people to attain a high level of civilization" but had "planted the seed of civilization in the world." For an Arab, Sami Shawkat, who was director-general of education of Iraq and a belligerent nationalist in the 1930's, the history of the "illustrious Arab nation" extended over thousands of years, back to the high civilization of Hammurabi at a time when the peoples of Europe were still savages living in forests and swamps."
    Boyd C. Shafer, <u>Faces of Nationalism: New Realities and Old Myths</u>, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., N. Y., 1972, p.335.

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