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AUTHOR Fleming, Wanda; Schaffer, Howie
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ABSTRACT

The theme of the 1996 Public Education Network conference was "Examining the Intersections: Education and Race." From different points of view, speakers examined the need for an ongoing commitment to ensuring equal opportunity and access to learning in all public schools. The first selection is the report of a panel discussion about the role and impact of race on children, teachers, and staff. The following remarks from the panel are presented: (1) "Introductory Remarks" (Amanda Brown); (2) "Institutionalized Violence" (Helen Gym); (3) "Working It Out Together" (Christine Gutierrez); (4) "Please--Just Don't Call Me a Racist" (Beverly Daniel Tatum); (5) "Despair and Hope" (Craig Jerold); and (6) "Expectations and Reactions: Continuing Commentary and Conversation on Race" (panel). "Race: The Challenge for Public Education" by Joseph R. Feagin, the second selection, explores racism as the "fourth R" that must be addressed in building better schools. The next selection, "1996 Election Reflections" by Michael Cohen, considers the impact of the federal election and concludes that whatever the ultimate impact, the basic work of education reform must be done at the local level. The last address, "Race, Conflict and American Citizenship Defined" by Eric Foner, explores American history, the meaning of citizenship, and the importance of recognizing cultural pluralism in the public schools. (SLD)

REFLECTIONS ON EDUCATION AND RACE

EXAMINING THE INTERSECTIONS

Select addresses from the Public Education Network 1996 Annual Conference

a PEN Occasional Paper

EDUCATION & RACE

Public Education Network's 1996 Annual Conference

REFLECTIONS ON EDUCATION AND RACE

EXAMINING THE INTERSECTIONS

Select addresses from the
Public Education Network 1996 Annual Conference

A Note from the President . . .

The theme of the 1996 conference was *Examining the Intersections: Education and Race.* From powerfully different points of view, each of our brave speakers examined the critical need for an ongoing commitment to ensuring equal opportunity and equal access to learning in all public schools. The four presentations contained in this publication, from Joe Feagin, Eric Foner, Mike Cohen, and a distinguished panel of educators, form a challenging, united, and electrifying testimony to the continued need for a mobilized and caring public to create and demand a rich environment for lasting school change.

I am grateful to our speakers and all the conference attendees for their honesty, their courage, and their willingness to be, as President Clinton said in his recent second inaugural address, "repairers of the breach."

Wendy D. Puriefoy
President

PRESENTATIONS

A Candid Conversation
The Role and Impact of Race on Children, Teachers and Staff

The most critical relationship for successful learning is between the teacher and student. School reformers hoping to affect pedagogy must examine the effect of race on this key relationship. In this in-depth conversation among four educators and national media representatives, participants explore the impact race has on children's classroom achievement, and on professional relationships among teachers and staff. The following are select excerpts.

Participants

Helen Gym—is a bilingual elementary school teacher in the School District of Philadelphia (PA). She is also the co-president of Asian Americans United, a grassroots Asian community advocacy agency.

Christine Gutierrez—has taught, coached and advised young people in private and public schools throughout Los Angeles and San Mateo, CA. For the last nine years, she has taught social studies and English in South Central Los Angeles at a public high school college preparatory program.

Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum—is a professor of psychology and education at Mount Holyoke College. She is nationally recognized as an expert on the formation of racial identity in the classroom. Her teaching and research interests include racial identity development among black youth in predominately white settings, and the impact of anti-racist professional development on teacher attitudes and classroom practice.

Craig Jerold—is an assistant editor at *Education Week*. He taught for four years in a Long Beach, CA, middle school as part of the Teach for America program. He has also worked for the U.S. Department of Education and on the *Goals 2000 Initiative.*

Moderators

Michelle Norris—is the Education Correspondent to ABC News in Washington, D.C. She has covered topics as diverse as Patrick Buchanan's presidential campaign, the O.J. Simpson trial, the White House, and the lives of children affected by crack cocaine. An award winning journalist, she has worked for the *Education Tribune* and *The Washington Post.*

Ron Wolk—is the president of Editorial Projects in Education, of *Teacher Magazine* and *Education Week.* He is a member of the PEN Board of Directors and an advisor to many of the nation's largest foundations.

Introductory Remarks

Amanda Broun, vice president of PEN

Yesterday we heard from Joe Feagin as he outlined how people, both intentionally and unintentionally, get mired in the perpetuation and reproduction of racism. Many, including me, found his remarks both challenging and stimulating, I'm encouraged by the positive feedback that I've heard indicating that many of you are beginning to think about this intersection of education and race.

We asked Dr. Feagin to talk with us about his research findings because they reveal what so many of us are confronting as we work in the community. These attitudes—conscious and unconscious—and the behaviors that they generate, affect our ability to build support for public education.

Dr. Feagin told us that by the year 2,055, people of color will outnumber whites in this country. Our schools are already way ahead of that national trend. He also reported that white students will be a minority in schools by the year 2030, but in local education fund communities, we've already crossed that threshold. Our local education fund survey tells us that in 1995, in local education fund communities, 55 percent of children in school were children of color. Of course, in many districts the statistics are higher than that.

Dr. Feagin also talked about the many attitudes that people have about children of color and people of color, and we know that has an enormous impact on our ability to build support for public education.

Race affects every aspect of the work that we're doing: whether we're talking about school governance and who gets elected to the school board; finance and how scarce dollars are allocated between districts or among buildings within a district; curriculum and whether it is multicultural or culturally sensitive; assessment and whether student tests are biased, or teacher assignment and student assignment and how those determinations get made; early childhood programs and who has access; or comprehensive services and whether schools should have them at all. Most clearly, race affects teacher expectations and their impact on student performance.

All of these aspects of reform have issues of race which are embedded in them. It's the most difficult part of the package to untangle, but if we're not able to talk about race as a part of the school reform discussion, we're not going to be able to have any meaningful impact, no matter how much work we do on standards and assessment and professional development. We simply won't make the kind of progress that we need to in order to assure a high-quality education for all children.

Today's panel is going to provide some insight into these issues by taking us into the classroom, where the most important and sacred of all relationships takes hold: that between teacher and student. Our panelists are certainly experts on the subject of teaching and learning. Today, they join us in a facilitated conversation to examine two basic issues: how race affects teaching and learning in the classroom, and how it affects and influences the relationships among teachers and with administrators and other educators. Thank you all for joining us.

RACE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

INSTITUTIONALIZED VIOLENCE

— Helen Gym

I come here as a school district teacher but also as somebody who wears a different kind of hat. Asian Americans United tackles a lot of issues around anti-Asian violence, police abuse, and parent organizing. Those, I think, are fundamental to what I see as part of my work in the classroom, as my classroom is often an extension of community. And, community is an extension of what happens in the classroom. So, the incident that I share is from that perspective.

Three years ago a young man related to us an incident which happened to him. M. [not his real name] attended a high school in Philadelphia where incidents of violence against children were regular, and incidents of violence against Asian students, in particular, had become systematic. M. and a group of his friends had been jumped regularly for the past couple of weeks, and he and several students at the school decided to go see the principal about it.

The principal refused to see them privately in his office and kept asking M. why he had come, why he was there, and what was he doing. The principal decided, finally, as M. was trying to tell the story, to make a joke of it in the office, saying, "See, these people only know how to speak English when they want to pick up a welfare check."

M. was infuriated by this incident and jumped up. The principal moved then to suspend him. Thinking that M. was about to hit him, he told M. that he was on his way to being expelled.

This incident came to us from him, and we, unfortunately, had minimal things to say because we weren't sure whether it was one person's word against another. However, it happened that an African-American parent who was in the office at the time was so infuriated by this incident that she corroborated the story. Later, at a meeting with top district officials, she came forward, as did M. to tell his story.

My classroom is often an extension of community, and community is an extension of what happens in the classroom.

The story was reported in the newspapers, and yet nothing was done. The principal never had anything done against him. He eventually took a sick leave and a sabbatical. Then, he retired: which was possibly an admission of guilt. On the other hand, the school district never acknowledged it.

The other thing that's interesting about this incident is that it occurred at a school where they said incidents of violence had become systematic. Since 1983, a young Asian boy has been stabbed; a young Asian female

has had her fingers broken; a boy's neck was broken in a third floor hallway; and, three years ago a boy had his hair set on fire. Not only were these incidents never pursued, but issues of anti-Asian violence were never raised among the staff. So for the past 15 years, a system has been in place at this school where anti-Asian violence was institutionalized to the point that the principal could feel comfortable enough to say such things with impunity. And, he did get away with it.

This incident that I relate to you, possibly horribly egregious, is, as a matter of fact, what many Asian students can often face and what many of our children do face in our schools.

WORKING IT OUT TOGETHER

— Christine Gutierrez

My story is twofold: I have a story about myself and a story about the students. We already know that what we believe about human beings in general, and young people in particular, has a direct effect on how we structure things, whether consciously or unconsciously.

What we believe about human beings in general, and young people in particular, has a direct effect on how we structure things, whether consciously or unconsciously.

I have to talk about my first encounter with the students in South Central. I teach in the City of South Central. It is at the heart of what in the Los Angeles riots was called "South Central." In fact, my school was the first high school to close because of the 1991 riots.

When I went to teach there in 1988, I was very eager to teach in a different part of Los Angeles. I grew up on the west side, which was a rather affluent area, though I wasn't necessarily affluent. I remember taking the bus to South Central. At the time, I didn't have a car—and it was a really wonderful way to understand the community. Taking the bus there from the west side, 15 miles across town, one takes the express downtown, which I call the "Business Person's Special." Then, one gets on a regular city bus, which I called the "Third World Special." You take about another half an hour to get to school. It was really interesting to encounter new understandings for myself.

My first day there, I followed a group of students into the school. It was summer school for them, and I was eavesdropping on their conversation, because I had to ask myself, "Would this be an okay place for me to teach; would I really be okay here?"

I was very struck by my even wondering, because as I eavesdropped on this conversation of about six young women who maybe were 13 to 15. I discovered that they were talking about boys, and boyfriends, and parties, and the last night's homework they hadn't done. I really had to look at myself and bust myself, saying, "No, this is a community where these young people are just like anybody else, and they live here. Why, my goodness, couldn't I teach here, and be there however many hours a day?"

After that, it's been a really good opportunity for me to always question why I'm doing something, and how I'm doing it. It was the beginning of a personal transformation because I had always thought I was very open-minded and progressive.

That didn't carry forth four years later when the 1992 riots did occur. The day after we returned to school (we were back in school by that Monday with National Guard in the various places) we had to talk about what had happened, particularly because some of my students had gotten caught

up in the looting. I asked how their personal responsibility, which we had been working on, going to be rectified in this obviously structural dimension?

As we wrestled with this—and there were about 70 young people in the classroom because we had two groups of students—we really had some heated conversation. I needed to help them understand, from my point of view, why their standards had not been met.

At the end of the conversation, which was really very emotionally riveting for all of us, I said, "I know how hard these structural issues are, but for those people who feel that they need to at least own up to what they did and how they could rectify it in the future by making a community way of change for the system, I need you to come in some way. Either personally say or write something to at least honor your integrity and what you've done, and determine how can we go forward on this."

I admitted to them whatever problems I had. Another teacher was there with me, so I left the room. Because, obviously, it was very heated. Later that afternoon a couple of young men, Reuben and Nelson, came to me, one is Latino, one's African-American. They admitted that they had been arrested for looting. It was very private, this conversation, and I really appreciated their honesty.

I said, "You know that I know how hard this was for you. And, I know how hard it is for me to have to ask you to do this, but I don't think we're ever going to be able to move the structure, unless we start from the inside out. What can we do about this? What can you do, in return, as a community project?"

Well, what would it mean to you if someone called you a racist? If someone said that something you were doing was racist? This teacher said, "I would feel like I'd been punched in the stomach. I would feel like somebody had called me low-life scum."

They struggled with me, and later you'll actually see an AIDS public service announcement (PSA) from one of the young men. It wasn't that his answer was the PSA *per se*. But, it was a long process of his personal transformation of what he had to do differently. Not just in the classroom, but, most importantly, in the community. After all, the classroom is but a microcosm of what we were preparing him for.

So my two stories are meant to illustrate that it's all about me when I'm working for those students, and it's all about them when they're working on academic learning.

PLEASE—JUST DON'T CALL ME A RACIST

— Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum

I come to this conversation from the context of teaching, since 1980, a college level course called "Psychology of Racism," There's a lot I could share about student response to that course. But, what I want to talk about is slightly different: that is the work that I've been doing as a teacher educator in professional development. While I've been teaching, essentially, "Psychology of Racism for Teachers," I have been struck by is how much fear there is about what I call the "R" word. It generates a lot of anxiety to even talk about it.

When I'm invited to come to schools to give presentations, there is often a lot of discussion about whether the word "racism" will be in the title of the talk. You know, will it be called "Appreciating Diversity," or " Multiculturalizing Your School"? If there's enough courage on the part of the administrator, I like to have them put "racism" in the title.

Because, in fact, that is what I'm going to talk about.

Doing this kind of professional development, I had an interaction with a teacher who was very upset about her dilemma (and, I should say I'm coming from Massachusetts). While there are certainly schools in Massachusetts that have large numbers of children of color, many of the schools in which I'm invited to speak are predominantly white schools. Many of those schools are participating in a voluntary desegregation program known as the METCO program where black students as well as Latinos, from primarily Boston, are bused into a ring of affluent, white suburban schools.

Most of those school districts have largely white teaching staffs. They will often talk about their struggle to communicate to the parents of those nonresident children who are being bused into their communities. They are anxious about calling the parents; they are anxious about giving and receiving feedback, particularly if it is in any way negative around school performance or disciplinary issues. And when I ask, "Why are you so hesitant to call, or why are you so hesitant to talk to the kid about this issue?" I'm thinking now of a particular teacher who said, "Well, I'm afraid they'll say I'm being racist."

So I said, "Well, what will happen what would it mean to you if someone called you a racist? If someone said that something you were doing was racist?"

There's a lot of desensitization that we need to do to help people recognize that racism is a system of advantage. We are continually exposed to messages and, as a consequence, we all breathe in the smog of racism.

And this teacher said, "I would feel like I'd been punched in the stomach." She said, "I would feel like somebody had called me low-life scum." I think that fear, the anxiety that one's very status as a good person can be called into question by talk about issues that might be perceived as having to do with race or racism, is really paralyzing.

The irony in this story is, of course, that by not communicating with those parents, by not giving those students accurate feedback, she was, in fact, being racist. She was treating those students differently on the basis of their race.

That kind of fear and anxiety is rampant, and I think there's a lot of desensitization that we need to do as a consequence to help people recognize that racism is a system of advantage. We are continually exposed to messages and, as a consequence, we all breathe in the smog of racism. So we shouldn't be surprised when we occasionally cough them up.

That doesn't necessarily mean that we are bad people or even that she was necessarily being racist in terms of her perceptions. But we needn't be so fearful that the racism label might be attached to something that we do. We need to get beyond that fear in order to have productive dialogue.

DESPAIR AND HOPE

— Craig Jerold

Long Beach is a very diverse community, and my classroom over the course of my four years teaching there had Cambodian students, Vietnamese students, Laotian students, Somali students, African-American students, Latino students, and Anglo students. It's probably one of the most diverse places in the country, and therefore one of the most exciting places to teach.

When I was asked to speak today, two incidents popped into my head, and because they provide a nice contrast and really speak to the complexity of the issue of race in the classroom, I'd like to relate them both.

The first one happened during my first year of teaching, near the end of the year in the springtime, during a unit on Ancient Greece. To provide a little bit of context, this is after the Rodney King verdict, and it's aftermath, which had a very chilling effect on relations between students of different races in my middle school.

We were studying the ancient Olympics, and we were contrasting them to modern sporting events. The students were very interested in this, as you can imagine. Well, we were talking about the long jump, javelin: sports that they knew very little about, and about team sports that predominate today like basketball and football.

At one point during the conversation, a student raised his hand and said out of the blue, "Mr. Jerold, my brother tells me that black people play basketball better because they can run and they can jump better. You know, they're from the jungle." And, he didn't actually say "black people". Of course, the entire classroom was immediately silent. It was a very, very difficult moment for me, one of many my first year teaching.

So I took the student aside, and I said to him, "Kevin, why in the world would you say that? I know your best friend is John, and John is African-American."

And he said to me, "You know, Mr. Jerold, John is not a black person." Again he used the word that is a derogatory synonym for a black person . . . nigger.

I then realized that everything that I thought about race and about students' perceptions of race and how it plays into their lives and into the classroom was just completely oversimplified. This was a much more complex issue than I had ever imagined I realized that it would take a lot more understanding on my part to be able to do something about it. So, I left this incident with very little hope that I would be able to have an effect.

I then realized that everything that I thought about race and about students' perceptions of race and how it plays into their lives and into the classroom was just completely oversimplified. This was a much more complex issue than I had ever imagined.

The second incident took place my fourth year teaching. By that time I think I had become a better teacher. The classroom was much more collaborative. Kids were working together a lot more in mixed groups of four where they would study together, and help each other learn. They would complete projects and tasks together.

Every quarter I would move students around so that they'd be in different groups with different students. This gave each student an opportunity to work with as many different students in the classroom as possible. Well, I

thought this was a routine kind of housekeeping chore until one of the groups declined to move and said, "Mr. Jerold, we don't want to move out of our group,"

I took them aside and asked them what was the matter. This group had an African-American female, a Latino female, a white boy, and, I believe, a Cambodian boy. So it's very representative of the makeup of Long Beach and the community in general. And when I asked them why they didn't want to move, one of the girls said, "Mr. Jerold, you can't break us up. We're a family." And it was—it was again a revelation to me that these kids had been able to bond over the course of one quarter so that they did not want to move apart from each other. Again, I realized that this was a much more complex issue than I'd even thought after four years of teaching.

That incident, in contrast to the prior incident left me with great hope. Not that I could teach kids right from wrong, or teach them how to deal with the issue in their lives, but great hope that, given the tools and the opportunity to come together, we can believe in our kids. And, I do. I believe that if we approach students honestly, give them the chance to work together and to treat each other with respect, that the next generation can do better than my generation has been able to do.

EXPECTATIONS AND REACTIONS: CONTINUING COMMENTARY AND CONVERSATION ON RACE

Ms. Norris: When we talk about race and what we bring as individuals in our life experience into—in my case—my job as a corespondent—in your case as educators—there are certain expectations that we have. Sometimes they are conscious and sometimes subconscious. Perhaps, we could talk a little bit about that as we deal with race and racism. Because in Ms. Gym's story the principal clearly had a certain set of expectations for these students and categorized students in some way. How do teachers get beyond that? How do teachers wrestle with tough issues like that?

For teachers who try to operate in an anti-racist way, they often find that they are not supported by their colleagues or by their administrators. It becomes very isolating if you're the person who's always bringing these issues up.

BUILDING AN EVERYDAY CONSCIOUSNESS

Dr. Tatum: My experience working with professional development with teachers has been that many schools do professional development in a sort of one-shot fashion. There's a professional development day. I've been there for those days and I've given that talk and taken the questions. Then, there's no follow-up. I think that kind of professional development does little good.

But in the kind of ongoing opportunity for dialogue and reflection that has been happening in the semester-long professional development opportunities that I've been involved in, you do see teachers making changes. They do so both in their understanding of themselves as racial beings and in the impact of what it means to be a white teacher in a multiracial classroom who previously hasn't given much thought to these questions.

You know, one of my favorite quotes that comes from the interviews that we've done with teachers is the teacher who says, you know, "I'm 35 years old, and I never thought too much about race before now." You know. She said, "Nobody taught us." That's what I tell my students.

And the fact is, a lot of teachers don't really think of themselves as white, you know? They don't think of themselves even as racial beings. They're thinking: I'm just an individual, and I see my students as individuals. And, you know, I'm trying to be color-blind. Unfortunately, one of the consequences of that is that the stereotypes are there, because differential expectations are there, but they're not necessarily conscious of them.

So one of the things that I think has to happen is that people must be made more conscious, more aware. They need to see a videotape like "Ethnic Notions" to see what the African-American stereotypes are, or the stereotypes of Asian-Americans and Latino-Americans, and to say, "Gosh, you know, I've seen those programs all my life, and I never thought about those as stereotypes. I never thought about

the fact that it might impact my expectations for students of color." Then look very specifically at what is it that you're doing in the classroom, and who is being called on.

How do you respond to student answers, and what kinds of comments are you making? And did you call the mother when that paper didn't come in? As teachers start to look at their behaviors, they do see that, in fact, they make changes. They are able to make changes. But there is a need for some support in that process, such as, ongoing dialogue and reflection, and connecting with like-minded colleagues.

One of the challenges, I think, for teachers who try to operate in an anti-racist way, is that they often find that they are not supported by their colleagues or by their administrators. It becomes very isolating if you're the person who's always bringing these issues up. Then, you walk into the teachers' room, and people stop talking when you come in the room. That sense of becoming socially isolated is really a challenge.

So, I think it's really important to provide opportunities to look at these issues in a safe and supportive way so that people don't feel blamed, so that they're not so defensive that they can't receive any information. At the same time, give them the kind of support and information that they need in order to do things differently, because it hasn't been part of their teacher education.

I may have the best expectations and the best preparation for my students. But, it really amounts to a hill of beans because the reality is, when I send them out, they're going into a massively dysfunctional system.

Ms. Norris: You talk about professional development, but many times when we're dealing with these things, it's almost like crisis management. In the case of the school Ms. Gym mentioned, incidents become institutionalized if they're not dealt with. These are the crises that were obviously not dealt with: the student who had his neck broken; the student who had fingers broken, a whole series of serious incidents.

Do you think that those were seen as racial incidents, or do you think that they were seen as discipline problems? And, if they were seen as racial incidents, how do you think the school should have addressed that problem?

BATTLING RACISM'S EFFECT

Ms. Gym: Part of the problem is that these incidents were clearly not seen as meaningful. I mean, no one did anything about it, violent or not. The kid went to the hospital and then he stayed home for the rest of [the year]. He dropped out.

So part of it is, when we look at racism, don't look at it in terms of the intent or whether people intend to do this, or even taking a kind of a look at yourself as an individual. When we talk about racism, look at its general effect on what's happening to kids, because the effect is, in fact, what makes racism so insidious. Even if your personal intent isn't racist, it hurts.

When I look into M.'s face and tell him, "There is very little I can do for you, M.," and he looks back at me angry, frustrated, and ready to fight, I know that I can't do that much because the system has allowed this to happen. The principal, despite any ignorant intent was responsible. But, this would not have happened had there not been some kind of institutionalized system that was already in place.

So if you look at it, at racism, in terms of effect and not intent, then I think you can more clearly take a look at why it's happening. Why would these incidents at this high school

be allowed to perpetuate? Why weren't people challenging this? Why weren't students being allowed to stand up and say something?

Likewise, one of the realities I think is very difficult for me as a teacher, is that I may have the best expectations and the best preparation for my students. But, it really amounts to a hill of beans because the reality is, when I send them out, they're going into a massively dysfunctional system. It's a racist system, and my expectations—I love them to death—are not going to phase them in a lot of cases. That for me is something that I need to think about in the way I attack issues of race.

I'm not the best teacher in the world if I don't prepare my kids to be warriors for justice, to fight back. And, to deal with racism in a way that allows them to become passionate about it and not take it with a control your anger, deal with it, and move on kind of attitude. Ultimately, I do look at racism in terms of effect and not its intent Because, that's where it becomes possible and real.

RACISM AND PREJUDICE IN THE CLASSROOM

Mr. Wolk: I don't want to get metaphysical about this. But as I listen, I can't help wondering whether the dysfunctional racist society that you mentioned is really the human condition, because if that class is all white, the teacher is still going to have favorites.

There are still going to be kids who get called on and not. And you can have a black principal discriminating against or expressing racism against an Oriental or an Asian student. And you can be a Jew and have all of the stereotypical expectations. They're just different, but they're all based on stereotypical beliefs about that person.

It seems that if you could change the colors, change the faces things would be different. But, there is something in the human condition that puts us in the position of having to have somebody we can look down upon. Or maybe because we don't know each other well enough, we find ourselves reacting to stereotypes and not people.

In Craig's earlier account, four kids got to know each other well enough so that race didn't matter any more and religion didn't matter any more. As a kid growing up in a mixed neighborhood, we were all very close friends: a bunch of guys who called each other "Micks and Spics." We did it just as I hear black—groups of black kids over Capitol Hill call each other "nigger." Those words didn't mean anything in our close-knit group. They were almost jibes that we played with each other; it was not serious because we all knew each other and we knew who we were beyond these labels.

I think there's some danger in attributing things to racism which are not racism, which are a different kind of sin. You know, the Devil's face is in the mirror, and it's not always a racist face; sometimes it's just our own shortcomings as people.

Ms. Gym: I think that relates back to distinguishing between prejudice and race. I think that each of us has our own baggage that we carry. What makes it racism, as opposed to having individual prejudices that we need to work to overcome, is when it's in force in the system For example, when the Micks and Spics don't make it, not because you called them that, but because the system in place will prevent them from making it.

I think that's another thing to take a look at. Our kids aren't succeeding. Not only because we have our individual expectations, but because they are reflected in almost everything that we see and every single thing that the children see.

We have an explicit curriculum that we send to our children by what we transmit to them verbally in our classrooms It's a hidden curriculum that they know. The message is pounded home just as hard: Who's valued in our schools? Whose parents are allowed to come in? Whose

child is going to succeed? Are we going to track students? I think that our system shows that society says some kids are worth throwing away.

Mr. Wolk: So it's the chicken or the egg sort of situation. The people in the system make the system, or does the system make the people? If the majority calls the shots, then that system will institutionalize its own values. Somebody else will be discriminated against.

Ms. Gutierrez: Well, I think part of the problem is whichever way it goes. We build systems that don't allow us to go face to face and say: Why isn't that principal who was brought up on charges removed? Or why is it that 50 percent of African-American students are not succeeding?

To the degree that the system itself does not allow for that kind of honest confrontation, and what today in the reform movement is called accountability or responsibility, it only gets worse when it's issues of color or racism. We could take this question away from racism all together, but you'd still have the problem of how are young people dealt with in systems generally? And how are professionals dealt with?

In my understanding of it and what we're trying to cultivate within our young people now and even among our colleagues is that we have to be a different kind of professional: a leader. We have to make the system responsible for the concrete examples of racism. We have to see, to examine, where we contribute to the perpetuation of the system.

But that's a really thorny issue, because we can't even talk about it. In a democracy it's supposed to be about people deciding politics together. How many of us had the "Oh, let's not talk about politics around the dinner table" experience?

Who's valued in our schools? Whose parents are allowed to come in? Whose child is going to succeed? Are we going to track students? I think that our system shows that society says some kids are worth throwing away.

Now, for me, I play that right back (because I'm an American history teacher) to our Puritan ideologies and our understanding of, not race *per se*, but the human need to find a scapegoat. We humans need to find a way to demarcate our territory. It's so much a part of the foundation that later, it becomes racism. I need my colleagues to understand that so we can become warriors of justice on a daily basis.

RACE AND CREDENTIALING

Mr. Wolk: Let me give you a . . . specific thorny issue. We have the entry-level tests for teachers—California, for example—and prospective minority teachers do terribly. Of course, some people say the tests are racially biased and that is why there are large percentages failing. But the tests, have been looked at by objective experts. They've looked at the college records of the teachers who took the test and failed, and, as you know, it's now in court.

Is that a racial issue? Is it racist to even suggest that maybe these prospective teachers are not passing the tests because they are African-American? Is that a "no-no?" Is it politically incorrect? I mean that's a pretty thorny issue.

Ms. Gym: It's a very thorny—a very, very troubling issue. I think all those pieces have to be looked at. Now we see a problem that so many minority folks are not passing that test. So what is happening? Is it because of this or this?

My frustration in California with the way it's been framed is it hasn't been seen as, "This is the problem; let's look at what's happening." Instead, it's, "This is the problem, and it's racially biased." Now, racism is much of the problem,

because I have minority kids who do well in college. But, they suck on the SAT. They'll come out of University of California at Irvine with a 3.8 GPA and have received, before they recalibrated the test, 650 or a 700 total points on the SAT. And you say, "I know this child can write, and I know this child knows this stuff." So what is it about the assessment?

Then I have to ask why is this teacher assessment the only thing being used to decide, Is a person is capable of being a teacher? Are we really looking at the problem? The test may be one indicator that the skills in this area are okay. But, it's by far not the only thing to be using. I find it frustrating that we don't even have good discourse about objective criteria. I would like us to sort of depersonalize it and demystify it more readily.

When there is a well-known stereotype about your group, it impacts your performance because there is a certain amount of performance anxiety, "Will I prove this stereotype to be true?"

Dr. Tatum: I want to just share some information which is fairly recent in terms of its publication in the psychological literature. It's the work of Claude Steele as it relates to the concept of "stereotype vulnerability." I don't know if it directly speaks to your question about the assessment of teachers. But, this has been an ongoing discussion. For example, because of low African-American performance on standardized tests, and the SAT, people have asked, "Is it the test? Is it the student? What's the nature of the problem?"

Claude Steele is a social psychologist at Stanford University who's done some really interesting studies looking at this concept of what he called "stereotype vulnerability." It's the idea that when there is a well-known stereotype about your group, it impacts your performance because there is a certain amount of performance anxiety."

The tester asks herself, "Will I prove this stereotype to be true? Here I am in this testing situation. I know that people have the stereotype that African-Americans don't do so well on this test So, will it impact my performance?"

There was an article about Steele's research in *The New York Times* He compared the anxiety caused by stereotype vulnerability to the anxiety white people have when they're trying to prove they're not racists. In the process, they sort of put their foot in their mouth a thousand times because their anxiety interferes with their performance on that dimension.

To sort of summarize very briefly the research, one of the things that Steele found is that when you take African-American students and white students at Stanford, all undergraduates, and ask them to take a challenging test which is very similar to the SAT or GRE, he found that there were some conditions under which the white students would do much better. And, there were some conditions on which the performance was very much the same.

The condition on which the performance was very different was when there were racial cues at the beginning of the test. For example, even something as minimal as having to check off your racial group membership triggered enough anxiety to deflate the student performance. But when given a very similar test without any racial boxes to check off, and when the students were told that this is a challenging test but it's not a test of your ability. They found that the white students' and the black students' performance was essentially the same. The traditional disparity did not exist under those test conditions.

Steele's research, in my view, is very interesting, and he has conducted many replications. Other people have not yet replicated his work. But consistently when the test situation is one where anxiety about, "Am I going to fulfill this stereotype about my group?" is activated, the performance declines. When it's not there, the performance is much better, and equal to white students.

So I don't know what the test situations are for these teachers, but I would imagine that African-American teachers are as vulnerable to stereotype vulnerability as African-American undergraduates are.

DEFYING RACISM TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Mr. Jerold: If I could just go back a minute to something that we were talking about before. That is the difference between, addressing racism in the classroom, explicitly as a topic of knowledge by talking about it with kids and teaching them about it. Or using the other approach, which is "tending your own garden," as somebody put it. It's setting up the kind of context in which racism does not become a problem in schools and does not interfere with students' opportunities to learn.

Schools have not done a very good job explicitly defining a context, a climate for the school. There's a lot of evidence that when people within schools get together and talk about the kind of school they want, and set up a system in which everybody is expected to treat one another with respect, there's a lot of collaboration. There's honesty, there's integrity, and from the moment kids walk through the door, they understand that despite the world outside, this is the new context. It's as important, I think, to deal with that aspect of racism in schools as it is to deal with explicitly teaching about racism to students.

Mr. Wolk: That gets to the system question. Can you change the system from the bottom up?

Ms. Norris: Sure, we're all aware of the subtle and not so subtle efforts to try to relax students, and I don't think that we can talk about race in the classroom today without talking about the achievement gap that we see. Some of that we can probably attribute to stereotype vulnerability. But how do we address that, either in the context of race or outside of the context of race. What explains the fact that when you look at the bell curve in the classroom, you see many more students of color bringing up the rear in almost every index of achievement?

Dr. Tatum: One of the things that I wanted to speak about, relative to the last question, has been at the center of the professional development project that I've been involved in the Greater Boston area. Because the METCO program has been in place for about 30 years, historically the African-American students who are being bused into those districts have been at the bottom of the curve, or have not achieved to the levels that they and their parents might have hoped.

A group of seven districts came together to form what's known as the Eastern Massachusetts Initiative. The initiative really examined how we can affect African-American achievement in terms of the students' experience in our predominantly white school districts. What they have been doing in the last three or four years is focusing on anti-racist professional development. That has led to some strategies that have actually impacted positively student performance.

To give you a very specific example, I'm thinking of a middle school in which Boston students are bused into this predominantly white middle school and historically, again, the students were not doing well, getting Ds, Fs, and Cs. They were not represented in As and Bs; not being referred to the honors classes. A group of teachers and administrators in this particular school had participated in professional development around these issues. One of the things they

became aware of was the significance of racial identity as it impacts student understanding.

What does it mean to be a black student in a predominantly white school: as a 13 or 14-year-old starting to think about issues of racial identity? What does it mean if, perhaps, doing well in school is viewed as, quote, "trying to be white"? What are all those issues and how do we address them?

In this context, one of the things that the school decided to do was to set aside time periods each day for the black bused-in students to meet together as a group.

This would seem somewhat problematic in some ways, as we are bringing them together to integrate the school. Now we're going to segregate them again? But what happened in this particular school was the students were given the opportunity to meet one period a day with what's known as the METCO counselor, a black staff person who works with the program (and another teacher who was white), instead of going to physical education, home economics, or computer classes At the end, it became mandatory. Students didn't have a choice.

If you think about this, there were 10 sixth grade black students, 10 seventh grade black students, and 10 eighth grade black students coming from Boston into this much bigger school. They were a very small percentage of the population. But, what the students had the opportunity to do was to start to talk about issues that interfered with their learning. For example, what was it like for them to be in that school? What was it like to be the only black kid in the class? Did they ever want to ask a question, but maybe be afraid to, because of stereotype vulnerability, not wanting to look stupid? Were you doing your homework? Well, how come you weren't doing your homework? You know, what were the issues?

What they found was that those seventh graders who had collectively had Cs, Ds, and Fs, no As, no Bs, at the end of the '94–'95 academic year, they were doing much better. Some of them had As, some of them had Bs. There were occasional Cs, but there were no Ds, no Fs. The academic performance was dramatically better.

What does it mean to be a black student in a predominantly white school: as a 13- or 14-year-old starting to think about issues of racial identity? What does it mean if doing well in school is viewed as, quote, "trying to be white?"

When the students talked about why their performance was different, they talked about the collective support of their colleagues, and the other black students who were sharing this experience. They mentioned feeling the support of the school in a way that they hadn't felt before. They were doing their homework. Some of them had decided, "Gee, I could do my homework." The peer culture changed. So instead of feeling like, "I'm going to be isolated if I do well", there was support for this.

But ultimately, the real issue was that the school would have never thought about creating this space for students if they hadn't been looking at issues of race and racial identity and racism and how it plays itself out. Doing so allowed all parties to think differently about the problem.

Ms. Broun: I want to take just a second to thank our panelists, the panel of teachers: Craig, Beverly, Chris and Helen, and our moderators, Ron and Michelle, for the very provocative, instructive, and courageous stories that you've shared with us and the work that you do.

Thank you very much.

RACE: THE CHALLENGE FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

Joseph R. Feagin, Ph.D.

For over thirty years, Dr. Feagin has studied the structure of race and its impact on American society. A Graduate Research Professor of Sociology at the University of Florida, he has published over 30 books and numerous articles, primarily on racial and ethnic relations in America. Nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for his 1973 work, ***Ghetto Revolts: The Politics of Violence in American Cities,*** *Dr. Feagin has served as Scholar-in-Residence of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and has received honors from the Sociological Research Association. His most recent book,* ***The Agony of Education,*** *focuses on the experience of black students at predominately white colleges and universities. In this speech, Dr. Feagin addresses the challenge race presents in efforts to reform public education.*

First, let me say that I'm very pleased to be here, and I think you should honor yourselves for dealing with this crucial topic of education and race. There are far too many of us, particularly those of us who are white, and in leadership positions in this country, who are unwilling to face this question of education and race. We tend to run from it.

Let me also say that I admire your fine work in pressing for more support and resources across this country for public education. No country can long survive without focusing on, and supporting strongly, its public education system. I think your efforts in this regard are much needed in these troubled times for education. It is in a spirit of admiration for your work that I come today to speak with you.

RACISM: THE FOURTH "R"

As all of you know, there's much talk of educational reform across this country, and it focuses on things like privatization, charter schools, and what's, oddly enough, called "The 3 Rs." (I never quite understood that, reading, *writing* and *arithmetic.*) The sentiment expressed is that our children need more emphasis on these matters, and there are certainly many different kinds of proposals for enhancing our children's learning and their abilities in the areas of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

This attention is certainly much needed in this country. But today I want to talk about a fourth "R". This fourth "R" is one that we don't talk about, at least those of us who are white rarely

talk about. This fourth "R" is racism, and the racism I want to focus on today is white racism.

Clearly, white racism in this country today is not seen as a problem by the political, economic or educational leadership, at least the white leadership, of the United States. White racism is certainly not seen as a problem by the general white public. Indeed, most whites in this country are running as fast as they can from a candid, honest, open discussion of race and racism in the United States.

I sometimes think, if the whites who do not want to face the issue of racism were individuals with psychological problems of denying reality, we would suggest massive treatment for them. But today, most whites simply deny the reality of racism in the United States. This is a serious problem.

All of us who've grown up and live in a racist society can either partake of racism and not fight it, or we partake of racism and fight it. We really have no other choices.

Today, I want to explore the question of racism together with you. I want to work with you, to help you better understand what racism is, and what it's doing to our nation. Let me say, I'm not trying to accuse anyone of being racist. I will simply demonstrate that all of us who've grown up and live in a racist society can either partake of racism and not fight it, or we partake of racism and fight it. We really have no other choices.

We can be passive in the face of continuing racism in our society, or we can stand up and fight against it. If we're passive, we let racism define who we are, as white Americans, and other Americans. If we stand up and fight against it, we admit there is a racist society around us, that we have partaken of it in the past. But, in the future, we're going to do something about it. We're not going to let racism define who we are as human beings and as Americans.

THE PAIN AND PATTERNS OF RACISM

I've been researching this area for thirty-two years. I'm a native white Southerner, as one can see—and probably hear—from a little bit of my drawl and accent here and there. Everything I say, every interpretation I make, goes against my own vested group's interest. Every conclusion I've come to is on the basis of research and data, and I wish the data were not so.

Let us start with three bits of data from three research studies. I think these three incidents, from three different educational settings, will begin to illustrate how entrenched white racism is in the United States: how basic it is, how serious it is, and how much we need to start developing a plan for dealing with it in our public schools.

The first incident comes from research that one of my graduate students, Deborah Van Allsdale and I have been doing in a public pre-school in Florida. This first account occurred fairly recently in that preschool center.

Innocence Foregone

Carla, a white three-year-old, is preparing for resting time. She picks up her cot and starts to move it. "I need to move this," explains Carla to the teacher. "Why?" asks the teacher. "Because I can't sleep next to a nigger," Carla says, pointing to Nicole, a four-year-old African-American child on a nearby cot. "Niggers are stinky. I can't sleep next to one."

Later, after the children have been awakened, the Center's white director approaches the observer, the graduate student, and says, "I've called Carla's parents and asked them to come

to a meeting with me and the teacher." He also told her that she couldn't possibly have learned these nasty words at the Center, because they have an anti-bias curriculum and are strongly committed to multiculturalism.

Well, when the parents came in, they were both baffled. The father remarked, however, "Well, she certainly did not learn that sort of crap from us." The teacher and the director insisted Carla did not learn such words at the Center.

Carla's father finally offered this explanation. "I'll bet she got it—from Theresa," (another little girl). "Her Dad is really red. He's a redneck, a real redneck."

Then the director stepped into the conversation and said, "It's amazing what kids will pick up in the neighborhood."

Let me make three or four points about these comments:

Obviously, the first point is that children coming into our elementary and secondary schools already know a great deal about how to use racism. White children are not the innocents we parents often like to portray them as. They already know a great deal of harmful words and harmful ideas that can hurt children and adults of color.

I know the Piaget type theories in education often suggest that children learn racial and gender concepts only when they get older—five, six, seven and eight. Well, I'm afraid our research directly contradicts that general notion. We're finding in our research that three- and four-year-olds certainly know how to use racial and ethnic concepts negatively, and also positively. And I can tell you some positive stories, if you'd like, in the question period.

So first, notice that very young children already know racism and how to use it on other children and adults. Notice, too, in this account, that the adults are all pointing in other directions. "We didn't do it. We're not responsible." The Center is not, the teachers aren't, the administrator's not, the parents aren't. Well, who is responsible? Some poor guy down the hall—is implicated by the father, who uses a slur for poor whites: "redneck."

Adults must take responsibility for the racism that three- and four-year-olds already know when they appear in our public schools.

Adults must take responsibility for the racism that three- and four year-olds already know when they appear in our public schools. That's the first point I would like to make. You can see right in the middle of this story the educational challenge of race.

We not only need multicultural education to teach children about diversity, but we need a much better program. In fact, we need a program that deals with unlearning the racism they bring into the public schools. We focus too much on diversity and not enough on unlearning racist concepts and racist ideas. Note that in the case described, there was evidence of actual discrimination. The little white girl didn't just simply say a racist epithet, she did something. She rapidly moved her cot away from the black child. So this three-year-old not only knows racist epithets, she knows how to discriminate.

The Poison of Ignorance

The second account is from a black junior high school teacher who is a sponsor of *STOP*, a special program for minority kids who are on the verge of dropping out of school. This black teacher says, "I was the *STOP* program sponsor. These are kids who are on the verge of dropping out. So at school, we can volunteer to sponsor a couple of kids.

"One little girl I sponsored is very dark, very huge lips, very short hair, pleasant personality. Pretty, to me. Well, I

went to talk to her white biology teacher, because she was not doing well, and the teacher said—'Oh, I know, Aunt Jemima. Was she a *STOP* student? Aunt Jemima. You know, she's always chewing that gum and got all that red lipstick.'

"I called her aside. 'I need to talk to you.' I said, 'Do you call her Aunt Jemima in class?' "Yes,' the teacher replied, "But that child just smiled. She's such a sweet child.'

"I told her, 'Now maybe you don't know what connotation "Aunt Jemima" has for blacks. Maybe you don't mean any harm, but please don't call her that. It is very offensive to blacks.'

"Well, I talked to the student, and I asked her, 'How do you feel when she calls you Aunt Jemima?' The student said, 'Well, I'm trying to get out of that class, because I don't like it.'"

And no wonder.

Several items in this account suggest some dimensions of white racism in this country to which we very much need to attend.

First, is white ignorance. There is such profound ignorance of the harm we do. This white teacher sincerely felt that calling the black student "Aunt Jemima" was not doing any harm. She apparently thought it was something to smile about, something cute.

But of course, in the black community, "Aunt Jemima" is a racist epithet. It's an image created by whites of an African-American woman. It is a pejorative image of an African-American woman, and to call this child "Aunt Jemima" was to use a racial epithet.

Sometimes, we whites are clueless about the harm we do. From the white point of view, this may seem like a relatively subtle, and somewhat harmless thing for a white person to do. Wrong, but rather mild. From a black perspective, it has far more consequences. It's much more serious. It's blatant racism. And that, of course, is part of the divide in this country that makes racism so serious. Many of us who are white don't have a clue about what we're doing.

Notice, too, in this account, you get a sense of the pain and damage of racism. This is another issue we whites often have very little sense about. Racial discrimination of all kinds does great harm. It has tremendous costs for the African-Americans who are the targets of it, as well as for other people of color who are the targets of white racism.

You can see here, that the racist behavior of the white teacher not only does harm to the child and to the black teacher, causing them pain and frustration, but it also contributes to black children dropping out of the public schools. The black teacher here is working with an organization to try to stop kids from dropping out. One of the things she has to deal with—which doesn't get into much of the public discussion—is that white racism in the public schools is driving black children out.

That, of course, is part of the divide in this country that makes racism so serious. Many of us who are white don't have a clue about what we're doing.

Sanctioned Insensitivity

I just completed a book on black students at a predominantly white northern university. The black college students report feelings of being driven out regularly. They do it at my own school, the University of Florida. Black students say to me, "We're hanging on by our fingernails. You won't believe what that white professor said to me after class." And so forth.

The damage results in dropping out. Many of these black college students drop out. Almost all of them think about

dropping out. Not just because of the usual problems of college, but because of the extra layer of white racism. Such racism is encountered from white faculty, staff and students at the best colleges and universities in the United States.

Let me give you an example of that. The third account is from one of our best little liberal arts colleges. Now, this happens to be a private college, but I can give you incidents like this at many of our public colleges and universities. The white perpetrators in this account are from white high schools, public high schools, which is one reason I've picked it.

I interviewed this young woman myself. I know her well. She's a very talented young African-American woman who's now working on her doctorate. She tells about something that happened around 1989, and then a few years later in 1993. She says, "My freshman year, a mock slave auction was held in the cafeteria of this liberal arts college. This is one of the most painful racial experiences that I ever encountered.

"A group on campus decided to do a fundraiser which would allow professors to bid on students in a centralized location to do grunt work for them. In return, the students would use the money raised to do ministry. This was a group of white students engaged in religious missions on this campus.

"As staff and faculty began to jestingly poke and pick at students on the auction block, onlookers began to cheer and shout demeaning epithets that I interpreted as being characteristic of white masters toward black slaves. The few black students that were present in the cafeteria, looked on, as I did, in horror and disbelief.

"After stuffing down my lunch and trying to downplay my initial outrage, I questioned other students to get their perceptions of this recent event. I hoped that collectively we could confront the college president and participating staff with the grotesque display of the many improprieties suffered by persons of color and the poor.

"To my dismay, no one had much to say about it. The whites said, 'What was the big deal? The money was being used for a good cause.'

"Perhaps my voice of injustice was silenced because I was a newcomer, or maybe because I was so young. But whatever the case, my concern never went much further than my immediate colleagues."

Now, she goes on in the interview to say she graduated from that college, went out and got a master's degree, and the college administration invited her back to serve on their administrative staff. There she encountered the identical situation and recounts that:

"A close colleague of mine, a white female administrator, vivaciously announced at a staff meeting that her students were planning a slave auction as a fundraiser for outreach. Again, a religious group was planning to do a mock slave auction.

"As other staff members openly gave their approval, I braced myself for the confrontation that I knew had to take

The damage results in dropping out. Many of these black college students drop out. Almost all of them think about dropping out, not just because of the usual problems of college, but because of the extra layer of white racism they encounter from white faculty, staff and students at the best colleges and universities in the United States.

place. History would not repeat itself, at least not without some kicking and fighting by this black woman.

"As the flyer for the event displayed an African bound in chains on an auction block, I knew that my freshman feelings of outrage were not an exaggeration, nor was my rekindled hurt and anger unjustified. Confidently, I approached my colleague sponsoring the event, and conveyed the dehumanizing elements of such an event. My colleague hadn't been expecting any resistance. Nor did I anticipate what came next.

"She stared blankly into my face, as if to say, 'What's your problem?' As I tried to constructively share my personal encounter as a freshman, and the detrimental effects of such an event on everyone in the community, she retorted with, 'Slavery has been over for hundreds of years. No one thinks of it in terms of black and white any more, so why make a big deal of it?'

"Had she heard anything I said? And why didn't the man on the flyer have straight hair, instead of an Afro?

"After talking to her a few more minutes in vain, she finally agreed not to hold this profitable event, if it bothered me. *If it bothered me.* I could have hurt someone at that point. So I turned and walked away. I was at least pleased that the event would not take place, even if the people didn't understand why it shouldn't."

Now, this again is very revealing, I think, of certain dimensions of white racism that remain a challenge, a continuing challenge, for educators.

First, you note again the pain. Notice how many times she talks about anger, pain, and humiliation. This kind of event, this kind of incident, creates great pain in the people of color who are affected by it. It creates anger and frustration. Across this country, there are African-Americans, and Latinos, and Native Americans, who are full of rage and anger that they're suppressing because of incidents like this.

Notice her horror. She uses language like "horror," "disbelief," "frustration," "pain." The damage that discrimination does to people of color is at the heart of why we must face racism as a serious problem in the nation.

Notice, too, the people doing this include lots of people who are products of our public high schools. Most of the students at this college come from public high schools. The administrator who's involved with this religious group attended public schools.

As Senator Bill Bradley says, "The best a white American, who's been in this country very long, can be is a recovering racist." Because we've all grown up in a society that's racist.

So our public schools are putting out white Americans who, again, do not understand the damage they're doing in terms of racism. Or, perhaps they do understand.

Recognize the level of ignorance on the part of the white administrator. This is a woman who's working on her master's degree. Notice the level of ignorance. "Slavery has been over for hundreds of years."

I wish I had a nickel for every white person who said something like that because I have an interesting piece of reality for whites to confront here. When this was said, slavery had been over 128 years. One hundred twenty-eight years is *not* hundreds of years. Furthermore, there are still numerous African-Americans who are the grandchildren of slaves. Maybe even a few still alive, elderly folks, who are the children of slaves. For many of us in this nation, slavery is only a couple of generations back.

The second thing she says, is "No one thinks of it in terms of black and white any more." Now, this is a white woman

looking at a black woman. And no one thinks of this in terms of black and white any more?

Maybe no one white thinks of this in terms of black and white anymore. That, of course, is not true. But, certainly the black person she was talking to, like all African-Americans, certainly thinks of slavery as a black and white matter.

And then the third thing, "So why make a big deal of it? If it bothers you, we won't do it." Now, that may be the bottom line on white racism in this country. If it bothers you, we'll try not to do it. The problem is, it should bother us. White racism is not just a problem for its targets. It's a problem for us who have not recognized it as a problem, and who are trying to fight it, and deal with it.

As Senator Bill Bradley says, "The best a white American, who's been in this country very long, can be is a recovering racist. Because we've all grown up in a society that's racist."

There's nothing evil about this white woman. She grew up in a society which taught her to think in terms of "slavery's way back there. It's not relevant to the present." Having a mock slave auction is not going to offend anyone.

Racism is really mostly declining in significance. It's really not a moral problem for us whites, so we don't get too upset about it. And why should it bother you? Why make a big deal about it? We don't want to address it as a moral problem or an ethical problem that has deep, persisting, consequences for black, brown, white—all Americans.

So, we do need to make a big deal of it, and not just leave it up for people of color to make a big deal of it.

Now, notice these examples are all in school settings. They all have obvious implications for public school education. Before, during, and after our elementary and secondary school educations, we have serious problems with white racism in everyday life in the United States.

Now, white racism—and you can see it in these accounts—is more than white attitudes. White racism is not simply about white prejudices and stereotypes, although that's a big part of it. It's about discriminatory practices. It's about what we whites do when we act on the basis of prejudices and stereotypes that we picked up growing up in a racist society We pick that up from a racist media every day in this country.

Let me reiterate, I'm not trying to be melodramatic here. I'm not trying to be personally accusatory. I'm not interested in that. I'm interested in us, particularly as white Americans in this country, facing reality. The reality is not the one portrayed by most of our white leaders, political, economic, and educational. If we continue denying this reality, the country will face race war. We must face this reality.

DAILY DISCRIMINATION: RACISM'S ENDURANCE

Let me give you a few facts about white racism that you may not know. I base my judgment on these facts. For example, how do I know white racism is widespread? Aren't scholars writing books? Actually, there's one out on the shelves of most bookstores. The book was published by the Free Press, one of our most distinguished presses. The book

makes the racist argument that African-Americans benefitted greatly from slavery. Slavery was basically beneficial for African-Americans because it gave them a taste of white civilization that they didn't have in Africa. That's the straight-faced argument of that book.

Well, the evidence for white racism is overwhelming. I'll give you a few pieces of it. I can give you documentation by the dozens, if you'd like.

I'm Okay, You're Lazy

First, in 1992, the Anti-Defamation League did a nationwide random sample opinion survey of white Americans. Participants were given a list of eight racist stereotypes of African-Americans, eight stereotypes. For example, that black people are less intelligent than whites and that they prefer to receive welfare more than other racial groups, and so forth.

Three-quarters, 76 percent of whites admitted to the pollster, a stranger, that they thought one or more of those racist stereotypes were correct. Seventy-six percent of white Americans admitted that they were racist in their thinking about African-Americans. And, they admitted it to a stranger. I suspect if we'd interviewed them at the same time, and asked them, "Do you consider yourself a racist?" almost all of them would have said, "No."

Fifty-five percent agreed with two or more of the racist stereotypes. Thirty percent of the sample agreed with most of the racist stereotypes presented to them by this stranger, a pollster.

Now, plot that in terms of the population. There are about 150 million adult white Americans—they only polled adults. If you extrapolate from the poll to the 150 million adult white Americans, you can see that over 100 million white Americans are probably still racist in their thinking, and 45 million—30 percent of adult white American—are extremely racist in their thinking.

Forty-five million adult white Americans are very racist in their thinking, and there are only 35 million black men, women and children in the United States. The probability of a black person out in the white world encountering a very racist white person is quite high.

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Racism In Action

Many other surveys show this same pattern. It would be bad enough if racism were just a matter of white attitudes and stereotypes. But much more serious than the attitudes is the fact that we act on them.

Discrimination against African-American and other people of color is extremely widespread. Even today, in 1996, in the United States, our mass media gives discrimination little or no attention, except when a major incident like the Texaco incident, forces attention.

For example, in 1994, a researcher in Los Angeles—a fellow sociologist—surveyed 1,000 African-American employees in the Los Angeles area. Sixty percent of them said they had faced workplace discrimination in the last year.

Discrimination such as being refused a job because of their racial group, or refused a promotion.

The findings in this study get worse, because more than 90 percent of the best educated African-Americans reported employment discrimination. Ninety percent of those with graduate degrees reported having faced racial discrimination in the last year.

Another piece of evidence. In a 1989 federal survey—using 3,800 test audits—black, white, and Latino auditors were sent into rental and home buying situations to see if the white landlords and realtors would discriminate them, relative to the white tester.

That survey took place in 25 metropolitan areas. They did 3800 test audits. Fifty percent of the time, the black renters faced discriminatory treatment at the hands of white landlords. And 59 percent of the time, black home buyers faced discrimination at the hands of real estate sales people.

Now, that was 1989. We've come a long way, right? Wrong. Last week, I was looking at three 1996 housing audit studies conducted in Fresno, CA; Montgomery, AL; and New Orleans, LA. They also sent black and white testers out into the field to look at housing discrimination. The rate of discrimination was 70 to 80 percent in all three studies.

The black tester, relative to the white partner with a similar story and similar dress, suffered discrimination 70 to 80 percent of the time. "Sorry, the apartment's just been sold. Or sorry, it's just been rented." Then the white tester comes twenty minutes later, "Oh, yes. Let me show you that apartment."

It would be bad enough if racism were just a matter of white attitudes and stereotypes. But much more serious than the attitudes is the fact that we act on them.

Now, these were all in predominantly white areas, so African-Americans seeking rental housing in predominantly white areas will face discrimination at a very high rate. Or, to turn it around, 70 to 80 percent of whites with housing to rent will discriminate, if you give them a chance to do it. Seventy to 80 percent of white Americans will discriminate in housing if given the chance.

Now, the earlier study also had Latinos. The rate for dark-skinned Latinos was about the same for African-Americans.

Discrimination is pervasive. It's massive in this country. Discrimination occurs tens of millions of times a year just in housing alone. These are cases of discrimination against people of color, by white landlords and real estate people. Civil rights laws, equal access to housing laws, are largely unenforced.

Some of you may be familiar with the recent ACORN study in New York City, where they sent in trained testers, posing as parents, to the elementary schools in half of New York's districts. The white testers were treated much better than the black or Latino testers. White testers were able to speak with an educator much more often than the black and Latino testers. White testers were also two-and-a-half times more likely to get a school tour than testers of color. White testers were given much more information than testers of color.

Professor Ian Ayres, of The Yale School of Law, has been studying car dealerships. He recently set up white, black, male and female testers to go into 90 car dealerships in Chicago. The testers completed 180 transactions. They frequently found discrimination in transactions with women and blacks.

White women had to pay 40 percent higher markups on the same cars than did white men. Black men had to pay 100 percent higher markups than the white men. And, black women had to pay 300 percent markups compared to the white male testers.

Then what was it? This past Monday, we learned that the top corporate executives in this country —when they think they're off the record—talk about "nigger" this and "nigger" that. In the recent case of Texaco executives, they talk about "black jelly beans" clumping together at the bottom of the company. Executives also discuss destroying records that the six black employees who are suing the company need to prove discrimination in the company.

That was Monday. These, of course, were not the "rednecks" that the father in the latter account is blaming discrimination on. These are our most influential corporate leaders in the United States of America.

The bottom line, of course, is the fact that we white men still control most of the most powerful positions in the United States. I'm always amazed at public discussions of affirmative action, which don't point this out.

But a fellow social scientist—Tom Dye, of Florida State University—surveyed the 7,314 most powerful positions in U.S. society. These positions included: law partners, major judges, key members of Congress, top corporate executives . . . you name it.

Can you guess how many black folks there are in those 7314 positions? He found twenty. Twenty. Now, 10 percent of 7,314 is 731. One percent is 73. Twenty is a lot smaller than 73. So, African-Americans occupy about a third of one percent of the most powerful positions in our society.

Guess how many white women were in these positions. Three hundred and eighteen. So, if you put all the people of color and all the white women together, they make up five percent of the most powerful positions in U.S. society. Five percent.

Discrimination is pervasive. It's massive in this country. Discrimination occurs tens of millions of times a year just in housing alone.

Folks like me make up 95 percent. And that's after nearly thirty years of affirmative action. The most effective affirmative action program in this country is the one that sees to it that people like me get these jobs. That's the most effective affirmative action program in this country. Twenty African-Americans and 318 white women, after thirty years.

The last time I looked, we didn't have a single top corporate executive who was African-American. We may have one now that I don't know about, but I think it's zero or one, probably.

ENDING RACISM

Today, racism clearly presents a huge challenge for our educational system, at all levels—from pre-schools, to elementary schools, from secondary schools to colleges. The three examples in the data I've given show clearly that a significant part of the problem lies in the education, and re-education, of whites and other Americans about our society's racism, and about our own racism.

If we are to secure better futures for our children, whatever their racial or ethnic backgrounds, we must confront honestly and openly racist prejudices, racist discrimination, and the consequences of those prejudices and discrimination.

Well, my main job was to lay this problem out for you, I think. But I want to briefly suggest a few, if I may, solutions. These solutions are fairly obvious. The guts and will to implement them are the bigger problems.

Enforce Existing Civil Rights

First, we must enforce our civil rights laws in education, public accommodation, employment, and housing. Law and order must be restored in regard to racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination in this country.

Clearly, educators—those working in public education—have an obligation to push our leaders hard to enforce our nation's anti-discrimination and civil rights laws. For the most part, we do not enforce the anti-discrimination laws that pertain to race, ethnicity, or gender in this country.

If we are to secure better futures for our children, whatever their racial or ethnic backgrounds, we must confront honestly and openly racist prejudices, racist discrimination, and the consequences of those prejudices and discrimination.

Nurture Solutions in the Educational System

Second, public education is obviously critical to any program to root out racism in this society. The longer white denial of racism continues, the worse the problem will get. We in public education must work for educational solutions to white racism.

We must develop better multicultural curricula, courses, and programs that not only deal with teaching children to respect differences and diversity, but that also teach children to recognize and unlearn racism in their own thinking, feelings, and actions.

All children must be taught honestly about the racist history of this society, and about the continuing prejudices and racist discrimination in the late 1990s. We need the same educational programs for adult white Americans.

We must also work against, as most of you have, the attack on public schools which reflect a thinly veiled racist perspective among whites who fear truly integrated and multicultural education. This nation is not likely to long endure if privileged whites segregate themselves into private schools and gated communities. South Africa is a good example of that. You can create apartheid for a while, but it doesn't last forever.

Scrutinize Within

Finally, we must deal with racism in ourselves. This may be the place to start, and it's perhaps the toughest and hardest place.

Those of us who were raised in a racist society did not choose to do so. We were born into it. We've either been born into it or immigrated into it. And, we reside in a society which is still, in its society and its culture, quite racist. Racism is peddled to all of us on a regular basis in the mass media, and by some of our friends and relatives.

Our world still has very serious problems of racism. As individuals, we must examine our own thinking, our prejudices and racisms, and our minds and hearts. As one white anti-racist put it, as well as Senator Bradley, "We must strive to be the best recovering racists we can be."

Let me conclude by saying this: Change is coming to this society whether we like it or not. The future will definitely be more multicultural and multiracial than it is today. Those of you in public education know this as a fact. Today, whites of European background are becoming the minority in all of our major cities. And certainly children of European-American background are becoming a minority of most of our large public school systems.

Change is coming to this society whether we like it or not. The future will definitely be more multicultural and multiracial than it is today.

By the year 2005, white Americans will be the minority of the population in the state of California. They already are in parts of southern Florida, California, and Texas. In fact, demographers estimate that by the year 2055, whites will be the minority of the population in the United States. Additionally, by the year 2030, nationally, white children will be the minority of the school children of this country. That day is only thirty-four years away.

In the United States, an anti-racist, multicultural approach cuts to the heart of the democratic principles of liberty and justice. This nation can be proud of being founded on these principles: the recognition of human dignity and human worth. If these principles are to become more than a pipe dream, the contributions and qualities of people of color must be recognized as equal in importance to whites. Furthermore, the continuing oppression of people of color must be recognized and fully uprooted, wherever it appears.

I think today, all Americans can benefit from extricating this nation from the roots of racism. Thank you.

1996 Election Reflections

Michael Cohen

Mr. Cohen serves as Special Assistant to the President for Education at the White House. He has also worked as Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Education at the U.S. Department of Education, and has held various positions at other national education organizations, including the National Governors' Association and the National Institute of Education. In this speech, he offers a Washington insider's view of the recent presidential and congressional elections and their impact on education.

I am very pleased to be here. It is only a week after the election. I have to confess I'm not sure I fully understand the implications of the election, either for you, or more pointedly, I guess, for me. We're still all trying to figure that out.

A TIME OF TRANSITION

As I stand here, I guess, we're clearly in a period of transition. It's not quite the same kind of transition that we experienced four years ago, with literally . . . a new administration coming in and one going out. Nonetheless, it's very much a period of transition, as people try to sort out where we are and where we go.

The President is working very hard. He canceled his post-election vacation plans, or at least postponed them, to spend time now thinking through what these elections mean and how to move forward from here.

Anyone who's been reading the newspapers in the last couple of days, or watching the TV news, knows that we're in the early stages of fairly significant shifts in the Cabinet and in the White House staff. Those will take some time to reach their conclusion, and I suspect that the same kind of reflection, thinking, and planning that's going on in the White House and inside the administration is also going on in the Congress, and in the leadership of both parties.

So all of that is going to have to play itself out before we really know what the implications of the election are for you at the local level, and for people like you all over the country. Nonetheless, there are some things that are pretty clear, and I'm going to try to give you both a short and a long version of it all.

ELECTION GLEANINGS

First of all, the thing that is most evident is that the work of improving education at the local level is probably much the same today as it was last Tuesday and the Tuesday before that. The challenges that you face; the work you have to do; the coalitions you have to build; and the leadership you must provide all look much the same as it did before. That is, you have a great deal lot of hard work ahead of you.

The second thing that's fairly clear is that the federal government can, should, and must help you meet those

challenges. Even more important than that, President Clinton is convinced that the federal government can, must, and should help you meet those challenges. That's what he campaigned on, that's what he talked about a lot, that's what he's been trying to do over the last four years, and that's what he's going to try to continue to do over the next four years.

Now, a third thing is clear from the election is that the public didn't change many of the players here in Washington. As everyone has been saying—and they're right—the message is, "Stop fighting and start working together." The public really wants people in Washington to work on real, practical solutions to real, practical problems.

Time will tell if the major result of this election is that Democrats and Republicans in the administration and in the Congress work together on improving the quality of education and improving access to education for all kids. I don't think I know that with much certainty just one week after the election. But I do know that it's not only time that will tell. Indeed, this governing business, as you all know at the local level, doesn't work if it's a spectator sport, if we all sit back and say, "Well, time will tell. I guess we might as well see what's going to happen."

This governing business, as you all know at the local level, doesn't work if it's a spectator sport, if we all sit back and say, "Well, time will tell."

Ultimately, what happens, is going to depend on the actions that we take from this moment on, Certainly, for those of us in the administration, it will depend on how effectively we're able to reach out to members of our party and the other party in Congress; how effectively we're able to reach out to the education community, the business community, parents, and the religious community. Another key determinant of our success will be the effectiveness of our ability to build and strengthen a coalition that supports public education.

It's also going to depend on the actions that you all take, to the extent that you, and others like you around the country, hold us accountable for working together to solve problems, rather than simply debating with each other. It will rely upon the extent to which you model developing, building, and strengthening coalitions at the local level, and demonstrate that the way we get things done in education in this country is by rolling up our sleeves, coming together, and working on addressing those problems. And you must keep sending messages back to Washington, that this type of partnership is what you expect.

In some sense, I could probably stop there. Those are my keen insights on the election and what they mean. But let me try to elaborate on some of those points.

Education: A Critical Concern

First of all, think back to the campaign, and think back to last year. One key lesson, is that education was a very important issue in the campaign, and it has been an important issue for the public. Polling data over the last two years shows very consistently that education is a top priority for the public. The public ranks education high on the agenda and (whenever asked) they also rank federal government involvement in education rather high on their agenda.

As I said before, the President spoke regularly about education during the campaign. By now, I'm sure everyone has heard his sort of litany of wanting to make sure that every eight-year-old can read independently; every

twelve-year-old is connected to the Internet; and, every eighteen-year-old has access to college. Those sort of phrases summarize an awful lot about what he's trying to do in a very concise way by talked about that over and over again during the campaign.

Bob Dole also spoke about education during the campaign. He took a somewhat different view than we did. But at this moment, all I want to do is suggest that he, too, recognized that education was an important issue to people in the country.

Congress has also demonstrated that it understands the importance of education to the public. That's why, after two years of debate and fighting it completed work on an appropriations bill that gave us record increases in education spending from Pell grants to *Title I*, to increases in *Goals 2000* and other once-endangered programs, some of which are near and dear to my heart.

But there was other evidence as well. I don't know how many of you do the same thing that I do, which is periodically flip around, and see what's airing on C-SPAN. I sometimes do this very late at night, or very early in the morning, when I wake up and can't quite get back to sleep.

I remember one sort of three- or four-minute segment that just sort of struck me powerfully. I watched, believe it or not, a congressional debate for a congressional district in Idaho. I had no chance of voting in Idaho, but I watched incumbent freshman Republican Helen Chenoweth. She's not exactly a strong friend of the administration, and not exactly a strong supporter of what we try to do in education. In fact, if she had her way, the Department of Education would be eliminated, and most of what we do would be gone. Or so it seemed when she first arrived in Washington.

She was debating her opponent, who criticized her on the grounds that, among the things she had done was cut federal support for education in Idaho. To which she responded: "Why, what do you mean? Just two weeks ago, I voted to increase Head Start and increase *Title I* to get more money here in Idaho for our kids."

Congress has [also] demonstrated that it understands the importance of education to the public. That's why, after two years of debate and fighting it completed work on an appropriations bill that gave us record increases in education spending.

And I found myself thinking, "Well, that's odd. That's not the stance that she and others like her had taken before. I wonder where they'll be next year, when these matters come up for a vote again?

But it was a very different stance than, "The way to improve education is to cut federal education funding by a third, and eliminate the Department of Education." I kind of got the sense, in the middle of the night, that a message had, in fact, gotten through.

I saw a similar thing in a very fascinating gubernatorial race in New Hampshire, where the campaign partly hinged on education, and partly on the history of the state's battle over whether or not to be involved in *Goals 2000*. The Democratic candidate won, and she won, in part, because she beat up on her opponent, who had mightily resisted the state's involvement in that.

So education, again, was a pivotal issue, in not only federal campaigns, but in state and local ones as well. And, it's very clear that education's an issue that people care about. They

know that there are problems, and they want people to provide leadership in solving them. Related to that, the public wants the federal government to do more and better, not less in terms of providing expanded educational opportunities and improving the quality of education.

Just Work it Out—Together

Whether or not this view of what the public wants is widely shared around this town remains to be seen. Whether or not we are able to do what the public is telling us to do in education and in other areas—work together to solve problems—and do that in a bipartisan way, remains to be seen.

When you think about it, this kind of bipartisanship for education is not exactly a novel ideal. It's what you practice at the local level, as you work with the mayor of whatever party happens to be in office, city councils and other municipal officials. It's what you practice as you work to bring teacher's unions, the business community, the school board, and the school administration together.

Everybody who's ever done anything in education for any length of time knows that the way that you get things done is by working with people who may see the world somewhat differently than you, but who ultimately share a common goal of improving education for our kids.

Everybody who's ever done anything in education for any length of time knows that the way that you get things done is by working with people who may see the world somewhat differently than you, but who ultimately share a common goal of improving education for our kids.

It ought not be hard to rebuild and recapture that ground. While education has been more partisan than ever before, there is a long history of bipartisan work at the federal level in education. So we've got a precedent for that. We've got a track record for that, and we ought to be able to find ways of rebuilding public education.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Well, what's going to happen over the next couple of years? Now that I've said, "This is important. We're going to work on it?" What can you expect from the President, and from his administration? Well, let me just talk about a few things that we're going to be trying to do.

Making College a Reality

First of all, you can expect President Clinton to make a very strong push, perhaps as part of the budget process that will start soon after Congress comes back, to expand student aid for postsecondary education. This will take the form of refundable tax credits that are basically equivalent to the cost of tuition in community colleges In addition, the President will likely propose tax deductions of up to $10,000 for postsecondary education for virtually all but the highest income families.

This is the President's "Hope Scholarship" proposal. He really is committed to making a thirteenth and fourteenth year of education as universal (in the near future) as high school completion is now. That's because there's just overwhelming evidence that suggests that the real fault line

in American society between people who have better opportunities and people who don't, is whether they have an additional two years of education past high school.

For those of you who saw his interview with David Brinkley last Sunday morning, you will recall that the President was asked, if he could only do one thing, what would be his priority? He said, "Balance the budget and open the doors of college wider." So he sees this very much as part of the budget process, and something that can be done in the context of balancing the budget.

If we're able to do this, by the way, just to give you a sense of proportion, it would provide (over five years) about $42 billion more in student aid than we have now. This would be the largest single increase in federal aid to postsecondary education than we've ever seen.

There is one challenge that we're all going to face, if we're able to do this and something I'd ask you to think about: If we are able to pass this big increase in student financial aid, then one of the things we need to do is to help all students, particularly students from low-income backgrounds and students in urban areas understand that some kind of college is within their financial reach. If they're willing to work to get through high school, they can attend college.

That's not a message that most kids have now. And if we can make that a reality and deliver that message to students, then we will have taken one big important step towards improving the quality of education at the primary and secondary levels. In fact, we will change the motivation for many students. That's something important to think about.

One of the things we need to do is to help all students, particularly students from low-income backgrounds and students in urban areas understand that college is within their financial reach. If they're willing to work to get through high school they can attend college.

An Emphasis on Reading

A second thing that you can expect the President and members of his administration to vigorously pursue is a major emphasis on early reading. This is the "America Reads" initiative that the President announced in August. The new initiative seeks to assure that every child can read independently and well by the time they get to the fourth grade.

The National Assessment of Education Progress [NAEP] data shows that right now, approximately 40 percent of fourth graders don't even reach the basic level of proficiency. This is an unacceptably large number, and it turns out there are other significant percentages. Almost 25 percent of the students whose parents have college educations also fail to read at a basic level of proficiency in the fourth grade. So, this is a widespread problem.

However, there's considerable research that shows that we can, in fact, make a big dent in this. We can get all kids to read well by the third or fourth grade, if we provide them with the right kind of help. In many cases, this requires some one-on-one intensive tutoring or other kinds of intensive help.

There's also a lot of research that shows that reading by the third or fourth grade is really a critical factor in the future

education and life success of students. So improving reading is strategically a very important investment to make, and a critically important place to focus our attention.

If we're serious about raising standards for students there's probably no more important place to focus than on the most basic skill and standard of them all, reading.

Now, let me point out that, at least from the administration's point of view, the issue here is not that the schools haven't been doing their job on reading. Many have. Many have very good reading programs, and many teachers work very hard. We have a good knowledge base about effective reading practices that are in widespread use.

The fact is, however, that schools can't do this job alone, and there's also lots of evidence to suggest that fewer and fewer students spend much, if any, time outside of school reading. Their parents don't read to them. They don't read to their parents. There's very little support for many kids to spend more time reading.

Now, what the President has proposed to do is to mobilize an army of a million volunteers who will work with students and provide the kind of one-on-one tutoring that they need. The federal government would support this effort, principally by providing an infrastructure. This would include funding to support volunteer coordinators through the AmeriCorps Program to serve as reading specialists in the schools who can work with the volunteer tutors. So, what you get is a well-organized, well-managed, trained core of people who know how to work with kids on a one-on-one basis in an intensive way. This is one area that you can expect us to pay a lot of attention to. We will continue to try to obtain congressional support for the program and its funding.

If we're serious about raising standards for students there's probably no more important place to focus than on the most basic skill and standard of them all, reading.

The funding will provide a catalyst for people at the local level to come together. It will also provide an incentive and an impetus to recruit volunteers. These volunteers can come from the business community or students on work-study programs in institutions of higher education who can just as easily be paid to work off-campus, as they can to wash dishes in the cafeteria. In addition, we can involve those in the religious community, and other places that have a history of providing volunteers. This is an opportunity to tap new sources and bring people together to solve real problems in schools.

Boosting Bricks and Mortar

A third area that you can expect the administration to focus very seriously on is finding ways to help communities meet the enormous demand for school renovation and school construction. We propose to do this by essentially helping states and local communities reduce the cost of borrowing for capital improvements and capital expenses, by subsidizing the cost of interest on bonds.

I have to confess that the intricacies of this have, from time to time, escaped me. I can tell you what a school is, but I'm not sure I can always tell you what a bond is. Fortunately, the Treasury Department folks have been worrying about that side of it.

Promoting Higher Standards

You can expect to see continuing attention from us on an issue that we've been working very hard on in the first term of the Clinton administration. That is challenging and supporting communities and states in their efforts to raise standards for students.

Goals 2000, Title I, the *School-to-Work Act*, among others, have all been focused on supporting those efforts. There is real evidence that, while we are making a lot of progress in that area, we have a tremendous amount of work ahead of us. We need to work hard, to move from getting documents at the state level, or at the local level, that have the right words in them, to getting practices in classrooms that have the right content, and right instructional strategies. That's a much harder challenge than just getting the state or local committees to get the words right, although that has not always been easy.

The Third International Math and Science Study provides clear evidence that there remains a very large gap in the content that we expose students to in math, and the way in which we go about teaching them. There's a large gap between that, and either what the folks who wrote the standards expect, or what I expect to be the highest performing countries in the world. Again, it's a real signal of the continuing work that we've got to do, and we will be trying to support efforts along those lines.

You can expect the President to continue to challenge states and local communities to make standards mean something for students, schools, and teachers. He's talked a lot in the last six months about stronger accountability measures, both rewarding success and intervening in schools or classrooms that are not working. That's something that you'll continue to hear about in the future.

Well, I've talked about many different areas that are very high on the President's list of things to do. The Hope Scholarship, school construction, the reading initiative, technology and standards. That's not the entire list, but that's the top of the list.

Let me just note that in addition to these highlights, the

Congress is going to be busy with other things: the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act; the student financial aid programs; and reauthorizing IDEA, the Special Education Act. These will be a matter of some attention in the Congress.

Congress also did not complete work on reauthorizing either the *Vocational Education Act* or a myriad of job training programs, so those issues are also left to deal with. This is a lot of work to be done. This is a huge, huge agenda. And again, to return to an earlier point, the challenge that we face, is figuring out how to work together to deal with these issues. That is the challenge ahead of us.

Let me just close, if I can, by suggesting what all of this stuff means for you back home. I don't have anything profound here, but there are a couple of thoughts that kept hitting me. I kept searching for the really good ones, and they didn't come. So this is all that I was left with.

As I said at the outset, that after all the analysis is done of what the presidential and congressional elections mean, the most compelling fact remains that your work is still ahead of you at the local level. The challenges that you face next week are the same ones that you faced two weeks ago.

Not everything that we try to accomplish is going to be a legislative program with a dedicated funding stream. We're going to have to find ways to come together to use the resources that are already there, and to work together to meet these new challenges.

And, in the main, whether we make progress or not in education is going to depend heavily on your ability to deal with those challenges, and how successful you are at making the schools safer, at keeping drugs out of the schools, at raising standards, at promoting accountability, and helping to get teachers better trained and equipped. That's really what we've all got ahead of us. You're at the front lines on that. We're kind of somewhere back here on the supply lines.

Ultimately, what we're going to try to do is make your job easier, by providing the resources and the leadership that can bring people together and help you get the job done. I guess all I can say on that is you've got to keep, on one hand, both eyes focused squarely on your community, and the work ahead of you, but on the other hand, if you can, one eye back on what we do here. In the end, the more you can help us get things done here, the more that we can help you get things done in your community. I hope we can find ways to work together. There's hard work ahead for you and for the rest of us, and we might as well get on with the task. So thank you, very much.

RACE, CONFLICT AND AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP DEFINED

Eric Foner, Ph.D.

Eric Foner is an award-winning author and historian. He has written numerous books focusing on the history of American political ideology and social change in the 19th century. An eminent educator, Dr. Foner has been honored with the Great Teacher award by the Society of Columbia Graduates. He is the DeWitt Clinton professor of history at Columbia University. He has also held prestigious appointments at Cambridge and Oxford Universities, and Moscow State University, where he was a Fullbright lecturer. In this address, Dr. Foner offers reflections on how the definition of what is means to be an "American" has changed over time and how that has related to issues of race in America.

It's a great pleasure to be here at the end of this very important conference, and to be able to lend whatever insight I can to the work of this organization. We seem to live in a time when anything that has the word "public" attached to it is sort of considered to be somehow second-rate: public housing, public transportation, public hospitals, public schools. Privatization is the magical solution, supposedly, to all the problems of our institutions. So to be with a group that is so committed to public education is something that I certainly am very happy about.

HISTORY: FACTS VERSUS INTERPRETATION

As a historian, I should say that, we historians have been somewhat surprised over the past few years to find ourselves suddenly in the spotlight of a great deal of current political and cultural controversy.

Generally, what historians do is pretty much ignored by everybody but in the past few years, there have been all sorts of vigorous controversies about the public presentation of history. I'm sure some of you are aware of them. Debates, for example, over the proposed national history standards, which a group at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) proposed, and which were roundly condemned by conservatives and others.

Just here in Washington, the Smithsonian Institution last year was forced to basically cancel, or eviscerate, an exhibition on the 50th anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bomb. Veterans' organizations didn't like the way World War II was being portrayed, and the thought that the exhibition actually suggested that there was debate at the time as to whether the atomic bomb was necessary.

There seems to be a sense in these controversies that

visitors—ordinary people who go to these museums—don't like to encounter new ideas. But, isn't that what we call "education?" Encountering new ideas? To simply present what people already think doesn't seem like a very interesting enterprise. But that attitude, that there's a fixed set of facts out there, and historians are undermining faith in them, is very wide spread in our society today.

Last year, at a Senate hearing here in Washington on the Smithsonian controversy, Senator Diane Feinstein of California remarked that she had been a history major at Stanford University, and when she was a student, her professors confined themselves to presenting facts. Now, historians are presenting interpretations, and this seemed to be a real decline in standards, from her point of view.

Surely, Senator Feinstein's classes at Stanford must have introduced her to the writings half a century ago or more, of giants of the profession, like Carl Becker and Charles Beard. They demolished the idea that historical truth is fixed and permanent, or that there is a fixed line between fact and interpretation.

This whole controversy reminds me of a conversation that I had at that time when a young and eager reporter from *Newsweek* called me up and said, "Professor, when did historians stop relating facts and start all this revising of interpretations of the past." So I said, "Well, I think it was around the time of Thucydides." (460-400 B.C.) This didn't help much, because she said, "Well, where does he teach? I'd like to interview him."

Now, as I say, the whole controversy about history is surprising to us, because America sort of prides itself on being a very forward-looking country, and is much less interested in the past than in the future. Herman Melville wrote, back in the 19th century, "The past is the textbook of tyrants. The future is the Bible of the free."

But, like many other peoples, we have also looked to history for a sense of national cohesiveness, national identity, and national purpose. A lot of the controversy about history lately comes from the fact that, in the last generation, historians have tried to expand the study of American history to include the experience of many groups that previously had been neglected in the accepted historical narrative racial minorities, women, the history of labor, social history. We no longer study history as a procession of, or progression of, presidential administrations, great presidents, and generals although obviously they're still important to history. But there's been a broadening of the definition of what the subject of history is.

Many people, including the critics of the national history standards, complain that historians have fragmented, or taken apart, a sense of the common themes and common purposes of American history. Lynn Cheney, the former head of the National Endowment for the Humanities, has

criticized the national history standards. In fact, the high, or low, point of my career, came when I debated Lynn Cheney on Pat Buchanan's TV show "Crossfire."

She claims that historians are putting forward a depressing point of view about American history. The national history standards are too depressing. What we need is an uplifting view of American history, emphasizing freedom, progress, *et cetera.*

I said to Ms. Cheney she didn't like this very much I said, "Well, you are really the Afrocentrist of the right, because, just like the much criticized Afrocentric visions of history, you want history to just be uplift. You want people to feel better about themselves by studying history."

"In the case of Afrocentrists, it's (some) people who want black students to feel better by studying the greatness of ancient Africa. Similarly, you just want everyone to feel great by hearing how wonderful American history has been. But the premise is the same, that the purpose of studying history is to make people feel good."

Now, I'm not against people feeling good, but I think if they want to feel good, they should go to a psychologist, or go out and have a good time at a movie, and not to think that feeling good is the purpose of studying history.

Now, I'm not against people feeling good, but I think if they want to feel good, they should go to a psychologist, or go out and have a good time at a movie, and not to think that feeling good is the purpose of studying history.

FACING AMERICA'S RACIAL HISTORY

This is all by way of introduction to this issue of the history of race and racial identity and disputes about race in American history. Because, unfortunately, some of this history is a little bit depressing. And I'm not saying that in order to undermine national security, as Ms. Cheney seems to think, or to set Americans against each other, but to just simply point out that our history, like the history of any other nation, has many different facets to it. Some of them are worthy of praise, and some of them perhaps not so worthy.

Now, of course, as you're all well aware in your local communities, this contradiction between inclusion and exclusion, between a national creed emphasizing democracy and freedom as universal rights, and the reality of limiting those rights to certain groups of people over the course of our history, that contradiction is still alive today. And this debate over who is an American that is to say, how we define who is entitled to all the rights of American citizenship, and to the full equality of American citizenship still agitates our society, as we all know.

The Republican national platform this year has called for rescinding the 14th amendment to the Constitution, or at least that part of the 14th amendment granting what they call "birthright citizenship:" the principle that anybody born in the United States is a citizen of the United States.

But this goes way back. There is nothing new in American history there is nothing new in bitter debates as to who should, and should not be, an American citizen.

In a famous book about nationalism, the scholar Benedict Anderson, a political scientist, spoke about a nation as what he called "an imagined community," a state of mind. A nation is more than a political entity. The boundaries of a nation are not just physical boundaries, or lines on a map. The

boundaries are mental, intellectual, and legal. Moreover, those national identities are subject to continuing efforts to draw and redraw their imagined borders. There's never been a single answer to the question, "Who is an American?" but that issue has been debated over and over again in the more than 200 years since the ratification of our Constitution.

In a society resting on the premise not always the reality of equality among all citizens the boundaries of this imagined community are all the more important. Because within this border of nationality, we have long assumed, people ought to enjoy equal civil and political rights.

Indeed, the cry of "second-class citizenship" has long been a powerful language of protest. People don't think there should be second-class citizens. That makes it all the more important to determine who is a citizen, and who is not. The greater the rights of American citizenship, the more important the bases, or the boundaries, of inclusion and exclusion.

People don't think there should be second-class citizens. That makes it all the more important to determine who is a citizen, and who is not. The greater the rights of American citizenship, the more important the bases, or the boundaries, of inclusion and exclusion.

These battles at the boundary are going on today. For example, in California and other places, the battle is over immigration, and what immigrant rights should be. It's less widely recognized that those battles at the boundary have reshaped, at various points in our history, the meaning of freedom, of rights, and of citizenship. This is true for all Americans, not just those who may have been excluded.

American history is not just the story of a fixed set of rights to which one group after another gains admission. Instead the definition of those rights themselves have been transformed over and over again by the very struggle of excluded groups to be included.

For example, in the era of the Civil War and Reconstruction, or again in the 1950s and '60s, the demand for full citizenship by African-Americans changed the nature of citizenship for everybody. In the post-Civil War period, they wrote into the Constitution a new definition of what it was to be an American citizen. The definition didn't mention blacks at all. Although, it applied to everybody. But, it was the struggle against slavery which led to that broadening of the rights of everyone.

The protection of American civil liberties, such as Freedom of Speech, as a legal, constitutional issue originated in the 1920s in the struggle of immigrant groups against state laws that mandated that only English be used in public schools. And when the Supreme Court overturned those laws in the 1920s, it broadened the rights of everybody, not just those particular immigrant groups in Nebraska or other states from which those cases emerged.

WHO IS AN AMERICAN?

Historians who talk about nationality, and who is included and excluded, sometimes contrast America with countries like Germany. The idea is that there is a thing called "civic nationalism," in which membership in a community is based

on shared institutions, rights and values. Then there's "ethnic nationalism," such as in Germany, or Bosnia, where to be a full member, you have to be part of a group, whether defined by language, ethnicity, religion, and not even being born there.

It's much easier to become a German citizen, even if you were born in Russia, of people who lived in Russia for 200 years. As long as their ancestors are German, they can just become German citizens. The child of a Turkish person who's working in Germany, however, is not a German citizen, because they're not of that ethnic group.

The United States has long been considered an example of civic nationalism. To be a citizen of the United States, you basically just have to be part of the institutions of this country. Supposedly, it doesn't matter what your background is. The fact, however, is that for most of our history, American citizenship has been defined by both blood and political allegiance. And the reason for that, of course, can be traced right back to the beginning of our national existence, and the power of the institution of slavery.

Our Founding Fathers could speak, with great passion, about liberty, freedom, the universal rights of all mankind, and yet own slaves at the same time. They didn't think there was any contradiction.

Slavery: The Unbending Boundary

Slavery was here from the very beginning of the colonial period, as you all know. It was a powerful force at the time of the Revolution and Constitution. Slavery helped shape the sense of nationality of all Americans, giving American nationhood from the very beginning a powerful exclusionary dimension.

Slavery was an impenetrable boundary between different groups of people living within the physical boundary of the United States. "Slaves," said Edmund Randolph, at the time our Constitution was written, ". . . are not constituent members of our society."

Our founding fathers could speak, with great passion, about liberty, freedom, and the universal rights of all mankind, and yet own slaves at the same time. They didn't think there was any contradiction because, as Randolph said, slaves were not constituent members of our society. They were not within the boundary of Americanness, and therefore, all that language just didn't apply to them.

In fact, slavery rendered African-Americans, whether slave or free, invisible to white society. In the 1780s, Hector St. John Crevacoeur, a French writer and a master mythmaker of that period, in one of his writings posed a often-quoted question, "Who, then, is the American? This new man?" And he answered, "The American is a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, German, and Swede. He is a European, or the descendant of a European."

Now, this was at a time when fully one-fifth of the population of the United States was African-American. The highest percentage in our entire history. But Crevacoeur didn't mention them at all. The American, "is a descendant of the European. The 20 percent who were African-American just didn't exist, because the institution of slavery created that narrow boundary.

Defining "We the People"

Now, the original Constitution doesn't define who is a citizen. It uses the word "citizen" a few times rather few, actually: but it doesn't define who citizens are. It does say that

each state has to grant the same privileges and immunities to citizens of its own state, as to citizens of other states.

If you read the Constitution carefully, you will discover that there were three populations of people living within the physical borders of the United States. First, there were the "We, the people" who created the Constitution.

Now, who were those "We, the people"? One might, in commonsensical terms, say "We, the people" were the people living in the new United States. But, of course, that wasn't what they had in mind at all. If you read the document, you will soon discover there are large numbers of people living there who were not part of "the people."

First of all, there were the Indians, the Native Americans, still a substantial number at that time. They were dealt with as members of other political sovereignties. As parts of other Indian nations, they were dealt with by treaties. So, they're not part of the American system, they're part of some other system.

Then, of course, there is that vast population about 800,000 at the time of the Constitution who are referred to only as "other persons." There are "the people" and then there are "other persons."

The word "slavery" does not appear in the Constitution until the 13th amendment, which abolishes it. But those "other persons," of course, were slaves. They're not part of "We, the people" either. They are a different group within the physical borders of the country, but not the intellectual borders; not the imagined community of who is an American.

Now, who are those "We, the people?" One might say . . . the people who are living there. But, of course, that wasn't what [the framers of the Constitution] had in mind at all. Because if you read the document, you will soon discover there are large numbers of people living there who are not part of the people.

Naturalized Citizen: Naturally White?

That boundary was reinforced in the first naturalization law. In 1790, the first Congress passed a law to specify who could become a naturalized citizen of the United States. The founding fathers you read Tom Paine's *Common Sense*, it says this explicitly felt the purpose of the American revolution was to create a new nation as an asylum for liberty. This was not just a matter of thirteen little colonies on the Atlantic seaboard. This was a matter of significance for all mankind, because now there was going to be an asylum for liberty. Anybody in the world who was deprived of freedom could come and enjoy it in the United States. A wonderful universal principle.

The naturalization law of 1790 puts this into effect. It begins what many scholars have called the period of open immigration. Not until 1924 would the law set up nationality quotas. Not until the late 19th century would particular groups eventually many groups: anarchists, prostitutes, the illiterate, paupers, and criminals, and others start getting excluded.

But the 1790 naturalization law doesn't talk about them at all. It opens the door to everybody with one little exception, one little word in that naturalization law, which undermines everything I have just said.

"Any *white* person can become a naturalized citizen of the United States." In other words, what historians call the period of open immigration was not open at all. It excluded the vast majority of the population of the world from becoming

citizens of the United States. Nobody from Asia could become a naturalized citizen of the United States until well into the 20th century. No black person could become a naturalized citizen of the United States until after the Civil War.

In fact, what's interesting is that the only group of white people in the entire world who were barred from entering the United States and becoming citizens at this time were European aristocrats who would not renounce their titles. After all, this was a Republic and we did not have a hereditary aristocracy.

If you were, for example, the Earl of Norfolk and you wanted to migrate to the United States, you could not become a citizen unless you renounced your title. But other than that fairly small group, every other white person in the world was welcome to become a citizen here. But no non-white person was.

This is just another illustration of how race was such a boundary to the definition of American nationality in the conception of nationhood established by the Founding Fathers.

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So black people formed no part of this imagined community of Jefferson's Republic. And indeed, even those who were free which was a small, but important group before the Civil War found in the period going up to the Civil War their rights increasingly reduced and taken away.

The American Citizen as Voter

One of the most interesting examples of this is the right to vote, which, by the Jacksonian period, became the basic emblem of American citizenship. In fact, Noah Webster's *American Dictionary* in the 1820s defines "citizen" as a resident of a place, or someone who has allegiance to a sovereign. Then at the bottom, he says, "in the United States someone with the right to vote."

Not in Europe. In England, almost nobody had the right to vote, so you could be a citizen in England and not have the right to vote. But in common usage in the United States, to be a citizen meant to have the right to vote.

Now, of course, many groups were excluded from that. Women could not vote anywhere until after the Civil War, and then, state by state, little by little, they achieved that. Women occupied a position of sort of subordinate, or second-class citizenship, because of the assumption of the day that the man, the head of the household represented the whole family in the political realm.

More interesting (from the point of view of this particular issue of race) is the fact that increasingly, free black people lost the right to vote. In 1800, no Northern state restricted the right to vote on the basis of race. The vote was restricted on the basis of property ownership, but if a black person could meet the property qualification, he could vote.

As the 19th century wore on, property qualifications fell away and racial qualifications replaced them. So, for example, New York state instituted a property qualification for blacks in 1821, and eliminated it for whites. Meanwhile Pennsylvania, in 1837, which had allowed blacks to vote up to that time, eliminated the right to vote for black people.

In fact, in the entire history of the country, from 1800 to 1860, when many states entered the union, only one of those

new states allowed North or South allowed black people to vote, and that was the state of Maine.

What happens, is that race replaces class as the line of division between those who can vote and those who can't vote. It had been class, in the colonial period (along with gender, since women could not vote at all) as ownership of property determined voter eligibility. Now, property qualifications are eliminated and racial qualifications are introduced. Race, again, becomes the dividing line.

Now, of course, this line is very powerful, but it also generates tremendous opposition. I know, I hear Ms. Cheney saying, "Oh, this is so depressing. How can you talk about this?"

Actually, I find it very uplifting because there were many Americans, black and white, who did not accept this racial definition of Americanism. Abolitionists, black and white. People like Frederick Douglass. Like William Lloyd Garrison. Like Harriet Beecher Stowe.

With Liberty For Some

Abraham Lincoln himself, in the 1850s, although not a full believer in racial equality, absolutely insisted that membership in the United States derived, not from blood, as he said, but from moral sentiment, from devotion to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence. Anybody devoted to those ideals of liberty, he said, ought to be considered a citizen. The rights enumerated in the Declaration apply to everybody, said Lincoln, not merely Europeans and their descendants.

So the battle in this period was over whether the principles of liberty were racially restricted, or should truly be universal. And the crisis of the Union, the Civil War and Reconstruction, led to a redefinition of what it was to be an American.

Let me just say that coming out of the Civil War, the laws and Constitution were rewritten to eliminate race as a dividing line in this boundary of the imagined community. The Civil Rights Law of 1866 still on the books today for the first time declared who was an American citizen, and did it in nonracial terms. "All persons born in the United States," it said, except Indians, "were national citizens." Indians, of course, were citizens of their sovereignties.

All persons born in the United States with the exception of Indians in these tribal areas were national citizens who were to enjoy equal rights, regardless of race. This was the first time that a notion of equal rights before the law, regardless of race, was written in to the laws. Then the 14th Amendment put that principle into the Constitution, stating that all citizens should enjoy equal protection of the law and due process of law, regardless of race. And then the 15th Amendment said that race, or color, could not be a qualification for voting.

So this constitutional revolution of Reconstruction broadened the boundaries of citizenship, broadened the boundaries of freedom for all Americans, and really

represented a complete repudiation of the actual history of the country up to that point, which had defined American nationality as going along with whiteness, however that was defined.

Now, it's true, the universalism of Reconstruction itself had its limits, because, for example, Charles Sumner, the great radical Republican Senator from Massachusetts, tried to strike the word "white" from the naturalization law. Senators from the West Coast did not want to do that, however, because they did not want the Asian population which was concentrated in California, Nevada, and Oregon at that time to be able to become citizens.

Thus, because of their objections, the naturalization law was rewritten, not to eliminate the word "white," but to add the word "black." So after 1870, it said any white or black person can become a naturalized citizen, but still Asians could not. And, as I said, it's not until the World War II period that certain groups of Asians could become naturalized citizens.

Abraham Lincoln himself, in the 1850s, although not a full believer in racial equality, absolutely insisted that membership in the United States derived, not from blood . . . , but from moral sentiment, from devotion to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence.

Citizenship: More Rights, Less Access

From my point of view, Reconstruction is a little known and understood period. It is a wonderful example of the possibilities of moving beyond a racially-defined citizenship, to think about America in a civic sense, rather than an ethnic or racial sense.

But, of course, Reconstruction failed. It was overthrown. It was succeeded by a regime of rigid white supremacy in the South, and indeed, in the nation as a whole. By the turn of the century, the ideal of color-blind citizenship of the Civil War era had been eclipsed by a resurgence of xenophobia, Anglo-Saxonism, and ethnocultural definition of nationhood. [This] was reinforced by America's entry into the Spanish-American War in 1898, which put us onto the world stage as an imperial power ruling over non-white peoples.

In the Progressive Era in the early 20th century, this question of who is an American was again the subject of intense debate, particularly *vis-à-vis* the new immigrants who were flooding into the country from southern and eastern Europe.

Progressive leaders like Theodore Roosevelt, on the one hand, insisted that the rights of citizenship had expanded, that now, it wasn't just the political rights, the right to vote, but economic rights: the right to an education, the right to economic independence, the right to a guarantee against unemployment, and the right to what it meant to be an Americana living wage, as they said.

The rights of citizenship were being expanded, but again, the definition of who was entitled to them was being constricted. You know, we talk about race today as being equivalent to color, but in this period, Italians were a race. Jews were a race. Greeks were a race. So, when you read about the "race problem" in northern cities, it's the immigrants from eastern Europe they're talking about around 1900, not African-Americans, or Asian-Americans.

In fact, I'll give you an example of this from a report of the Wisconsin State Labor Commission in 1913, talking about railroad labor camps. It says, "Railroad laborers distinguish two kinds of camps" (places where these workers live while they're working on the railroad). "The white man's camp and the foreigners' camp. A white man is a laborer who speaks English, eats American food and travels alone. Foreigners are those who speak no English, and work in gangs."

In other words, "whiteness" was not color. Whiteness was language, food, and labor conditions. The immigrants were not yet white. However, they would become white over the course of the next fifty years, in terms of the society's definition of them and in terms of their own sense of themselves.

Instead of being Italian immigrants, and Greek immigrants, and Polish immigrants, they would eventually merge into that large, amorphous body of "white America," and part of the way of doing that was to distinguish themselves as different from non-white Americans.

In the early 20th century, however, the new immigrants were thought to be a threat to stability, and eventually, in 1921 and 1924, the immigration laws were rewritten to try and keep as many of those people out of the country as possible. Thus, in the first couple of decades of the 20th century, the boundaries of this imagined community had been drawn very, very tightly . . . Again, it was a subject of debate. It was not just completely accepted.

Cultural Pluralism: In the Name of All

Cultural pluralism, a term which was invented in this period, had its advocates. People like John Dewey and the anthropologists Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict, his student, insisted that what was essential to American culture, or quintessential, was not simply an Anglo-Saxon culture, but the multiplicity of groups contributing to the culture and institutions of our society.

Boas, Benedict, and others offered intellectual legitimacy to the idea that differences among social groups were not biological, but emerged out of history and culture and experience. Of course, anthropologists don't usually set public policy.

The rights of citizenship were expanded, but again, the definition of who was entitled to them was being constricted.

The celebration of diversity as an essential element of the American Way, which is so common today originated in World War II, fifty years ago, when it suddenly became the official definition of American nationality.

Partly in reaction against the Nazi horrors (and the Nazi idea of a master race) and partly to mobilize this vast nation for World War II, the idea was assiduously promoted by Roosevelt and his administration that the country's strength lay in tolerance and diversity; not in assimilation or a single definition of Americanism.

The official language of Americanism, was purged of the language of race during World War II. This was when (no longer identified as members of distinct races) Italians, Poles, Jews, and others, became "ethnics." Instead of being members of different races they became hyphenated Americans. They became members of "American ethnic groups:" Italian-Americans, Polish-Americans, Jewish-Americans. Or, as I say, merged into this general category of "white Americans."

As for the nonwhites, during World War II, the status of black Americans emerged again for the first time since Reconstruction as a major issue on the public agenda. The contradiction between the claim that America stood for

freedom and diversity and equality, and the reality of the direct second-class citizenship of blacks, forced that issue onto the public agenda.

The war even led to the inclusion of Chinese, for the first time, in the ranks of those eligible for naturalized citizenship, although the quota given to Chinese 105 a year didn't suggest a desire for a largescale immigration from Asia.

President Roosevelt said during World War II, "to be an American has always been a matter of heart and mind, never a matter of race or ancestry." This was a noble sentiment. It was historically false, but looking to the future, it set forward a new vision of America. This vision would then be further reinforced by the Cold War and the so-called battle for the hearts and minds of people all around the world. The status of nonwhite people in the Third World became a political football between the Soviet Union and the United States, and racial segregation and conscription increasingly became an embarrassment to the American government in the Cold War era. Then, of course, the civil rights movement further legitimized, and gave more reality, to this notion of America as a land of toleration and diversity.

Cultural pluralism . . . insisted that what was essential to American culture, or quintessential, was not simply an Anglo-Saxon definition, but the multiplicity of groups contributing to the culture and institutions of our society.

Now, to those of us who grew up, as I did, in the 1950s, it was second nature that America means cultural pluralism, diversity, and inclusiveness. This was the normal situation. We were taught this idea in school and the civil rights movement reinforced and reinvigorated those color blind ideals of the Civil War-Reconstruction era.

Future historians may well conclude that the widespread acceptance of civic nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s was not the normal status of American history, but the product of very specific historical circumstances, including the Cold War, an expanding economy which was capable of absorbing immigrants, and a broad national commitment, at that point, to eradicating racial inequality.

Many of those things have faded into history now. The Cold War is history. The sort of open, receptive attitude towards immigration no longer seems to exist. The commitment to eradicating racial inequality is certainly no longer a high national priority. Did anyone ever hear any presidential candidate mention it once during the recent presidential campaign? Not to my knowledge.

The current revival of scientific racism *The Bell Curve*, for example an overt hostility to immigrants, especially nonwhite immigrants, and the effort to draw tighter the boundaries of nationality, have all come as quite a shock to those of us who grew up in a different era. But it simply reflects the fact that, throughout American history, there have been these pendulum swings, and ongoing debates about where the boundary of Americanism ought to be drawn.

Let me just conclude by quoting the great British historian Eric Hobbsbawm. In his recent history of the 20th century, he says, "Historians are those who remember what their fellow citizens wish to forget."

Americans often forget that our history is not simply progress towards greater and greater freedom and equality Rather, our history is a much more complex and more interesting story in which gains are made, and then

sometimes lost, in which rights are expanded, and sometimes restricted. Ideas long since considered dead, rise like ghosts to harm subsequent generations.

If our history teaches anything, it is that there is no simple answer to the question, "Who is an American and should there be racial definitions of American nationality?" The only thing I think we can safely predict is that, in the 21st century, the boundaries of our imagined community will continue to be a source of political conflict and social struggle.

Thank you very much.

WHO WE ARE . . .

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