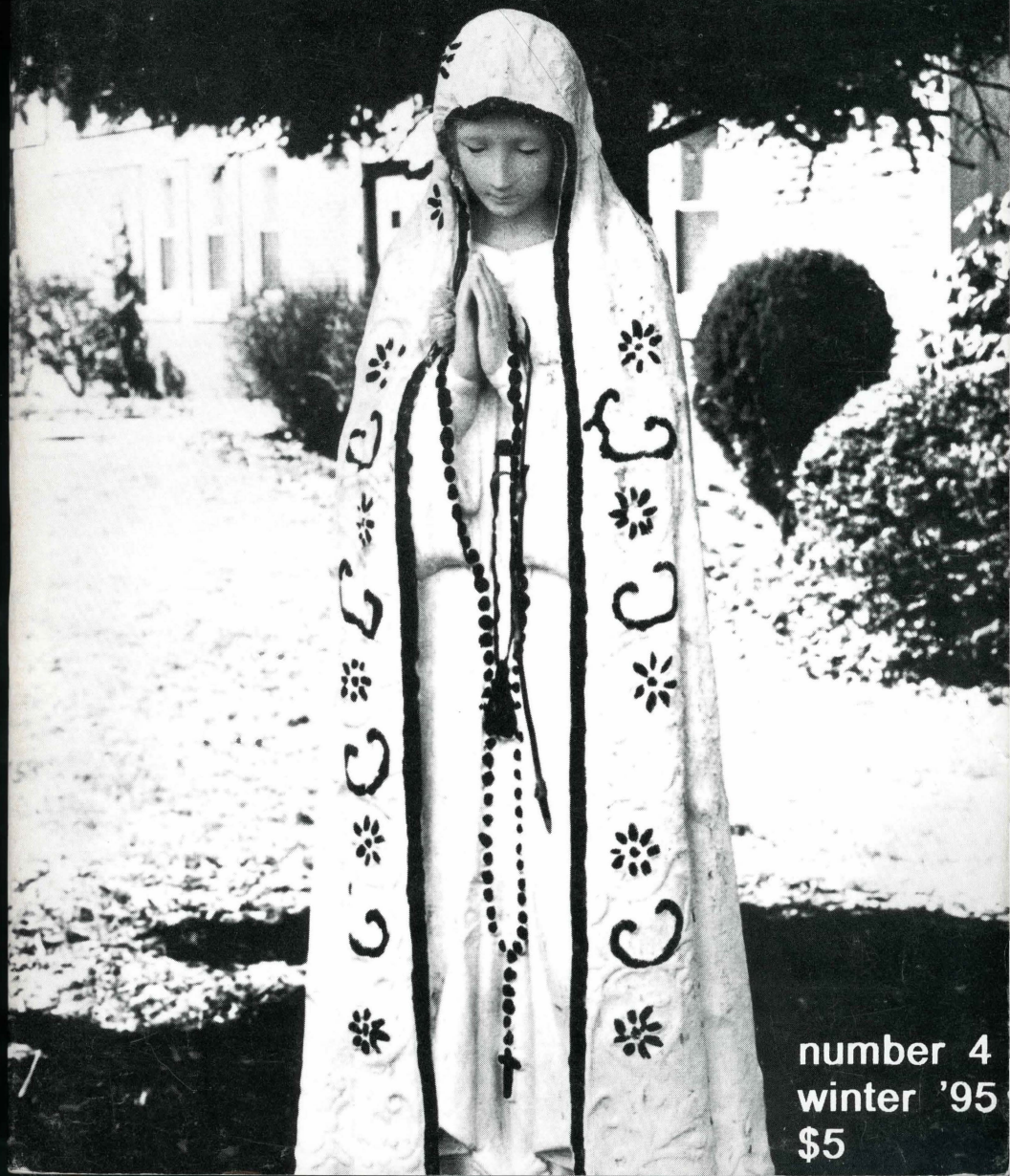


# RACE TRAITOR

*Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity*



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winter '95  
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Winter 1995

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# MANIFESTO OF A DEAD DAUGHTER

BY PATRICIA EAKINS

When I was a very young, very white girl, younger and whiter than I knew, and more privileged, I thought my parents, who had been generous with education, clothing, LP records, and bicycles, would permit me the free choice of a husband. That my selection fell on a black man whose experience of the world had been hard is not surprising, for I equated my suburban odd-girl-out suffering with that of the truly dispossessed. However good a girl I seemed to family and friends, I knew the helpless pain and rage that comes of feeling ostracized. The man I had chosen was a poet whose best lyrics transcended rage, fear and pain. His character seemed as noble to me as that of the heroine academics of the women's college I had attended; as noble as the character of my father, who had overcome poverty, a broken home, and alcoholism to head his own sales firm; or as noble as the character of my mother, who had worked her way through college, crocheting her clothes from crepe paper to save for her education, an imponderable and transcendent value, like freedom and poetry.

My new husband had been a burglar, a con man, a brawler. I was frightened when he tore down a young tree or bent a parking-meter pole in two. I was frightened when he put his fist through a plate-glass window in our apartment, then stayed up all night, drinking and brooding, going to work the next day with his arm,

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torn to the tendons, wrapped in a bloody towel. Yet his poems were richly musical, courtly and controlled in their rhythms. To me, the contrast, the complex relation of the work to the man, was moving. The contradictions that characterized his experience resonated with the contradictions that I savored in my secret heart where I was an artist disguised as a misfit, a person of intelligence and dignity cloaked in the disfiguring guise of a homely eccentric, who, with little grace to commend her, was given to know she had better be good.

Who defined me? Did I own myself or did my family own me? I don't think it's any accident that my struggle as a woman spoke back to the questions posed by the institution of slavery over which a war had been fought a century before. To this day many parents treat their children more as chattel than as the gift of the past to the future. The episodes of my opera radiate an antique melodrama that is hardly of this century--anguished meetings; a private detective that spied on me and reported to my father on my husband's past; a secret marriage; a disowning; my mother's repudiation of any future "nigger grandchildren"; my husband's mother's refusal to meet me on the grounds that I must be "white trash" ; my father's announcement that I was now a dead daughter; my husband's flight to join the urban guerillas who were about to mount a revolution; my father's last-ditch effort to retrieve me from a city that had taken up arms (Detroit under martial law after the assassination of Martin Luther King); my refusal to be rescued; my wish to die in the hip downtown milieu I had made my own. Yet the arias were real. The snipers on the rooftops were real. The soldiers and the tanks were real. The bullets were real.

I have never been a brave person. I feared some things more than others. It was painful to be the dead daughter in my father's eyes. I was terrified of the bullets and horrified by my father's grief and fear. Yet I understood that to capitulate to the authority he

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was claiming, to acknowledge his responsibility for the definition of my ultimate values, was to assent to my own moral death, to become as vacant as a doll that lives and breathes and has its being for others' sake. A more fearful death than bullets, a more fearful death than the social one of liminality my father would pronounce, is the empty death that grows from within, feeding on the moments an individual disowns himself. Maybe deaths are always all around us. Maybe we know ourselves by the deaths we choose.

There was no refuge for me in the suburbs, so resolutely "white," which had defined themselves by distance from pain and struggle and anger and vulnerability and loss, as well as from the injustice the very distancing created and creates. I faced possible death in the city with the bullets whizzing about; the suffocating sameness and cruel prosperity of the suburbs meant certain death.

The irony was that my husband had left me alone in a furnished room in that city under fire, with very little money, uncertain that he would return, with no substantial reason to trust him, yet still I was unwilling to opt for the anaesthetic security of the suburbs. And, over the years, what shaped me has been not so much the marriage as my having refused to renounce it when it did fail, to renounce my claim to the value of the self that had been a "bad girl."

I am an anxious person, full of apologies, afraid that if I breathe too hard I will suck up more than my share of the air. Certainly I have been aware that it was a source of tremendous grief to my family that I refused to return to the suburbs with my father when he drove through bullets to retrieve me. Yet it has always seemed to me that I had a right, a right given to each person, to claim the life and the death that has meaning for her. I am not the first to observe that the white woman who marries a Black man is guilty above all of flaunting female desire. She becomes thus

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the unspeakable gorgon. But that is a view from outside the body of the gorgon.

### CREDO

Every age generates inhuman opportunities for success within the terrible hierarchic engine whereby the strong, the enlightened, the educated, the rich, the shrewd, the fashionable extract sacrifice from those who are none of the above. The person who is alive to her own mortal essence must reject the claims of power for its own sake, power to ignore, to exclude, to oppress, to kill, in favor of power to grow, power to create, power to give life.

In our time and place, the notion of "whiteness" is a notion that arrogates unto itself the privileges of greed and dominion. Racism is by this definition the rigor mortis of the dead heart, the status quo that petrifies itself, excluding feeling--"I don't want any nigger grandchildren." Yet for life to be full, for the oppressor as well as the oppressed, it must include familiarity with the full range of human experience, all passion, all sorrow, all joy. Power insulates the privileged and keeps them from the world with its transformative possibilities and its ultimate redemption.

There was a time when I thought the ordeal of an out-of-caste marriage had catapulted me into a social realm beyond class, beyond gender, beyond historical conflict. I now see that the marriage and my subsequent claim to the culture of renunciation were but paradigms for the choice that I would struggle with again and again. I believe with Dietrich Bonhoeffer that action begins not with correct theory but with responsibility.

To me, "white" stood for and stands for not so much a degree of pigmentation as a set of attitudes that takes privilege as an exclusive right. We are all of us always members of some groups

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that can or do oppress others. To be "white" means to be insensitive to the possibilities for oppression within one's self, therefore out-of-touch, for opportunistic reasons, with who one is and who others are. If "white" meant all-inclusive, like white the color of light containing all colors, then "white" would be a term of love and life. But the "white" I am talking about is a whiteness of exclusion, an absence of color, an absence of responsibility and self-awareness. Whiteness is a death trip. And the attempt to break out of it is an attempt to gain life.

To be a person of color means to feel with one's heart that one is mortal among mortals; one takes one's place in a matrix that relationally defines and redefines one's place in one's culture. To be a person of color is to acknowledge that we are hurt as well as blessed in our vulnerability. No one was born to be victim, scape-goat, or mule. Together we grow toward the bright light that contains all color, the light that is wisdom. Each of us reflects a luster that is part of the full spectrum of human possibility, pleasure, creativity, generosity, faith and beauty. Or should I say each of us at each moment can choose to so grow and so reflect?

Hierarchy may always reassert itself, perhaps; but it is in the heart's refusal that hierarchy hardens into fixed and permanent categories. In the world, the triumph of hierarchy yields elaborate differences in how people work, some for the benefit of others. In the historical world, as well as in the heart, unresponsive and irresponsible hierarchy kills. And each of us must elect and re-elect to live.

*Patricia Eakins is the author of The Hungry Girls and Other Stories (San Francisco: Cadmus Editions, 1988). Her work has appeared in Vital Lines: Contemporary Fiction about Medicine (St. Martin's Press: 1990), Storia; Fiction International; Chicago Review; Central Park; Conjunctions, The Literary Review, and elsewhere.*

# POLICE-ASSISTED HOMICIDE

BY JOEL OLSON

I saw the cops kill a man the other day. It was around 8:00 PM and I was riding my bike through a poor part of south Minneapolis. As I approached the corner of 31st Avenue and Grand heading east, I saw a cluster of cop cars and a crowd of people on both sides of the street. A large church blocked my view to the right as I pedaled to the corner to see what the attraction was. I couldn't see that around the corner over a dozen cops, weapons drawn, had surrounded a 100-lb. man holding two kitchen knives.

As I approached the corner, my view still blocked by the church, I heard shots. I didn't count how many; a woman later told me she heard at least seven. The crowd screamed and rushed over to the scene. I turned the corner to see a white man lying flat on his back on the lawn. He looked dead. Guns still smoking, the cops were frantically trying to do two things at once: they closed in on the fallen man to make sure he would never get up again, but they also anxiously looked over their shoulders in fear of the angry crowd that quickly swelled around them.

An ambulance was parked a half block away. The cops had obviously called it in advance, anticipating some action. The ambulance rushed to the scene, scooped up the dead man, hustled him away and he was gone, less than five minutes after the cops brought him down. The pigs quickly began to move the angry crowd away and taped the area off. Many were nervously slapping their batons in the palms of their hands, wondering if they would



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have to fight to get out of this neighborhood. It was obvious that the cops wanted to clean up and defuse the scene as soon as possible. It was also obvious that they were damn scared.

There are conflicting reports about what started it all, but it seems the cops pulled over a car and, depending on who you talk to, a man either jumped out of the passenger door or ran out of the apartment and confronted the police. Either way, he held a kitchen knife in each hand. The driver quickly sped off, leaving one man, two knives, and a curious crowd. Oh yeah, and a bunch of armed, scared-shitless cops.

There was a standoff between the man and the police, but it lasted less than twenty minutes. Some witnesses told me the guy lunged at the cops, who then shot him. However, most witnesses I talked to said he didn't lunge at all. The cops just opened fire on him. In any case, people saw him get shot in the chest from close range, then get pumped three times when he was already flat on the ground. We knew he was dead before the ambulance packed him up and drove off. I found out in the papers the next day that his name was Steven Cole, 23, and that he was dying of AIDS. All we knew that night was that he was a white male, and that the Minneapolis police murdered him.

## THE MYTH OF POLICE-ASSISTED SUICIDE

Cole was the fourth man shot by Minneapolis cops in a six-week time span. He was the third to die. Many of the people in the crowd were complaining that the cops didn't have to kill Cole; they could have sicked the dogs on him or just wounded him. However, standard police policy is to shoot to kill. As the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* politely puts it, "Police procedure is not to fire warning shots, nor shots intended only to wound."

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There's a new excuse in town for cops to use after they blow a man away, and it's called police-assisted suicide. Because Cole had full-blown AIDS, cops claim he was suicidal and wanted to die. However, police argue, because he was too afraid to kill himself, Cole figured he'd do something rash so the cops would be forced to do the job for him. Hence the term "police-assisted suicide."

Police investigators have been furiously gathering evidence to prove that this is the explanation for Cole's murder. An anonymous "woman friend" of Cole's told the *Star Tribune* that Cole "has been consumed with death. He had talked about having the police shoot him." However, Cole's girlfriend Cathi Schmitt denied he would ever do such a thing. "He was a scared little rabbit," she told the *Star Tribune*.

According to the cops, "police-assisted suicides" are the new trend of the mentally deranged. Minneapolis Police Chief John Laux also claims people do it so their families can get insurance money. (Your family can't collect on life insurance policies if you commit suicide.) It's also a nice way to wrap up potentially sticky investigations that involve the police murdering someone. But of course cops don't mention *that*.

The implication of all this is that it's not the cops' fault when they kill people, which is why the theory of "police-assisted suicides" is fast becoming one of the favorite excuses of killer cops. As Laux explains, when the police kill someone it's that person's fault, not the officers': "It's something deeper, the way people are acting out there," he pines. "Maybe it's a matter of pride, that people can't back down when they are in a confrontation with the police." In Laux's new version of police homicide history, the blame now rests on the victim, who really "wanted to die." And the trigger-happy pigs roaming the streets of the inner city are only too happy to oblige such a wish. To protect and to serve, as they say.

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The crowd of about 80-100 people that witnessed the shooting was mostly Black and Chicano with a handful of whites, including myself. Almost everyone was poor. We were all furious. I have no doubt in my mind that if Cole had been Black and if this had happened in mid-summer, when it is warmer and when more people are outside, there would have been a riot.

However, there was no riot this night. That didn't mean people weren't angry at what the cops did, or that they didn't care that a white man was dead. "You didn't have to kill him, you fuckers!" a young Chicana woman screamed at two stonefaced cops behind the yellow tape. Still, Cole's whiteness affected the crowd's attitude. Many folks said that if it had been a Black guy who was holding those knives, the cops wouldn't have waited even twenty minutes to shoot him. "You see how long they wait to shoot a white guy, think how long they'd wait to shoot a Black guy," a woman yelled to no one in particular.

### WHITE COPS, WHITE MEDIA, WHITE BODY

As the anger began to subside (folks realized that if we tried to fight the cops, someone else would probably get shot), we waited for the media to show up so witnesses could tell what they saw. Two women in particular had seen the whole thing perfectly and were yelling how they wanted to tell the story to the news. Finally, a white guy with a news camera showed up a good twenty minutes after the body had been whisked away and everyone rushed over to him. We demanded he start filming so the women could tell their stories but he refused, saying he had to wait for the reporter to show up. Finally, after we harassed him enough (he was almost as scared as the cops), he agreed to film everyone looking angry (which was no pose). Some people got to tell their story. I don't know if it ever made it on TV.

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Cole's murder is a perfect example of why people of color don't trust whites. On the one hand, you have two institutions that many people of color rightly associate with the white establishment: the cops and the media. Everyone in the crowd knew what the role of the police is in their neighborhood. Even if they didn't, the cops' scared white suburban faces revealed them for what they truly are: an occupation force in the inner cities whose job is to harass, intimidate, and stomp out any potentially rebellious behavior, especially from people of color. For their part, the media made it painfully obvious that they were not interested in hearing what poor Blacks and Chicanos had to say about the incident. After all, filming angry poor folks doesn't help ratings in the white suburbs (although filming inner city "criminals" does).

### THE UNSTEADY NATURE OF WHITENESS

Because it was obvious that the cops and the media serve and protect the interests of whiteness and privilege, people hurled abuse at the cops not just for being cops, but also for being white. People were saying things like "Fuck white folks!" and "We hate white people." But this was not "reverse racism" nor even prejudiced behavior. For one thing, the whole crowd was standing up for a white man murdered senselessly by paranoid pigs. Further, there was absolutely no hostility shown to any of the whites in the crowd, including me. Outbursts of anti-white feelings were aimed at the cops and the media, not white folks in particular. This is because, I suddenly realized, most of the Black and Chicano folks in the crowd didn't hate white people, they hated white institutions like the police and the press.

As if to prove my revelation, one absolute jerk of a white man showed up after everything was calming down. He didn't see anything but a crowd of angry people, so he said with a nervous laugh, "I'm moving up to Franklin Avenue, it's safer up there." A

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young Black man quickly replied, to everyone's roaring approval, "I'm moving to Chicago, it's safer down there," referring to the fact that if cops shot a man in the Black neighborhoods of Chicago, those pigs would be dead, too. They felt safer in the projects of Chicago, several African Americans said, than in white and nice Minneapolis. But no one said anything threatening to this white guy. No one even told him to fuck off, which is what he certainly deserved.

As the evening wore on, people got more light-hearted and callous about the whole thing. Some were laughing and saying things like, "Oh, a white guy got shot? Big deal!" Still, people did not attack whites but white institutions, and it was only if you filled one of the roles of whiteness--the cop, the press, the frightened--that they mocked and ridiculed you. The cameraman, for example, received special treatment. Half the crowd was trying to tell their story to his camera, but the other half was making fun of the guy and saying nasty things about the cops into the camera's microphone, a game that both mocked the cameraman and ensured that at least part of what he filmed would be useless for TV. Even one of the women who told her story to the camera came up to me laughing afterwards, telling me she gave the reporters a fake name because she had a warrant out for her arrest! She wasn't about to give her right name to the cameraman, and in the process she mocked the media, too: she told the story straight, but she didn't tell them everything because, like the cops, the media can't be trusted.

Racism was rampant on the corner of Grand and 31st that night, but the crowd wasn't perpetuating it; the cops, the media, and "whiteness" were. The respect that whites like myself received depended on the extent to which we did not act "white"--that is, like a cop, a slimy reporter, or a scared moron. Cole, with his back on the grass, did not act white that night. He was in a primarily Black

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and Chicano neighborhood, he stood up to the cops, and he died for it. To be on the barrel end of a police revolver is to NOT be white in America. Therefore, people stood up for him. At least for those brief few moments when he stood against those white cops with big guns, Cole was not playing white. He had quit the "club" of white supremacy, exchanging his membership card for two kitchen knives and a last stand.

### MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES

To be the shooter, to be the cop, to be the reporter, to be the fancy car with the windows rolled up and the doors locked as you speed by the crowd, THAT is to be white. To be the shot is to be not white—at least for that moment--no matter what your skin color.

As the evening wore on, Cole (by now pronounced dead at the hospital) became white again, thus the jokes. However, there was still no hostility toward whites in the crowd. One white guy who saw the event took his turn to tell the reporters what the cops had done. No one shouted him down or called him names. We whites in the crowd were outraged at the police with everyone else, and although we were not Black or Chicano we were, for a moment, not really white, either.

Of course, abandoning one's white privilege to join the rest of humanity is usually a fleeting, temporary thing: as I left the scene and pedaled home, to the Black youth standing on the corner by my house I was again very white, not just because of my skin color but also because if the cops drove up, they would hassle him and not me. This distrust of whites is only natural: anti-white sentiment is not so much prejudice or "reverse racism" as it is a justified historical distrust of whites. Even when whites abandon white privilege it is always temporary or, as in the case of Cole,

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fatal. Throughout almost every moment in history we whites always eventually grab our white privilege back. As the Black guy on the bus told me a few weeks earlier, "I bet you're just like all white people, nice to me now, but you'll soon turn around and stab me in the back." The problem, of course, is not attitudes like that, because whites have given people of color in America no reason to feel any differently. The problem is whiteness and white privilege, and the task is to destroy it.

Because of this sad history of whiteness, there was respect but not much trust or solidarity between the few whites and the Black and Chicano folks in the crowd, (although telling a stranger you have a warrant out for your arrest is pretty trusting!). Nevertheless, it was a significant event: at that moment whites' loyalty to the club of white privilege was threatened. It earned us the cops' hatred, but it earned us some respect from the crowd, too. I'll take the crowd and the troubled but rebellious stand of Steven Cole over the cops any day.

*Joel Olson is a co-editor of The Blast! (PO Box 7075, Minneapolis, Minn. 55407), where this article first appeared.*

# WHITE SILENCE, WHITE SOLIDARITY

BY CHRISTINE E. SLEETER

I write this essay as an educator who works in the field of multicultural education. Multicultural education as a field is sometimes criticized as skirting around white racism, and celebrating the European ethnic immigrant experience (Garvey, 1993; Mattai, 1992; McCarthy, 1990). I believe this criticism is often well-founded, and results from the silence and acceptance people of European descent maintain about white supremacy. Ironically, as I was writing this essay I received a telephone call from a teacher wondering if I had information about ethnic food that he could use in his own multicultural teaching. When I replied that I view multicultural education as a critique of white supremacy, he was baffled--and not interested in pursuing that line of thinking.

We Euro-Americans avoid examining white supremacy to such a degree that we are often surprised when a discussion of multiculturalism focuses on it. Recently I was giving a talk about multicultural education to a predominantly white group of teachers. In my talk, I emphasized persistent racial, class, and gender disparities in access to various resources such as jobs and housing. I argued that we white educators need to engage directly in reciprocal dialog with people of color and poor people in our own communities, for the purpose of learning to collaborate on making schools work for all of us. I argued that whites cannot define a multicultural society by ourselves, although we often use our status as professionals to assume exactly that role. Afterward, a white teacher approached me with a very puzzled expression on her face,



and commented that she had never heard multicultural education discussed that way. At least she reacted verbally; most of the audience simply applauded politely, then moved to the next session.

At a women's studies conference in which I was participating, we were asked to divide into homogeneous groups to compile a list of concerns facing one's own group. (The array of groups to choose from was an interesting study in categorization: participants had to choose between groups such as Jewish, European-American, African American, Hispanic, working class, or lesbian. A Black Latina lesbian from a working class background would have had a difficult choice.) I was in the European-American group, and it floundered. The members discussed mainly family history and ethnic immigrant background. I suggested that we might address our common whiteness, but that theme was not taken up. The group tried to place itself on a parallel status with the other racial groups, defining our problems as comparable to theirs. We could discuss our religious, ethnic, and social class differences, and our ancestors' immigrant experiences, but not our common whiteness or the privileges we gain from white racism.

I believe that we screen out what people of color try to tell us about white supremacy and our own role in reproducing it, because we fear losing material and psychological advantages that we enjoy. For 500 years, Europeans and their descendants have taken huge amounts of land, wealth, labor, and other resources from peoples of color around the world. With the exceptions of small, sporadic attempts at restitution, such as that offered belatedly to Japanese American concentration camp survivors, and individual refusals to participate in this racialized system, white Americans have never seriously questioned, returned or repaid what we have taken. We seem to have agreed tacitly to continue to reap the benefits of racism, and not to talk about it except in ways that render the existing racial order as legitimate. Further, we have not

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yet collectively created a compelling self identity and sense of meaning that does not entail ravenous materialism and acquisition of power over others.

### DEFLECTING ATTENTION FROM WHITE RACISM

As we grow up, white people learn to talk about race-related issues in ways that render the status quo as "natural," remove ourselves from complicity, and secure approval from other whites. We learn to do this so well that it takes some effort to become aware of strategies we use to deflect attention from white racism. Below, I will describe some of these communication strategies.

One strategy is to equate racism with individual prejudice and personal ignorance, which allows us to assume that every group is racist, and to avoid acknowledging the differences in power and privileges between whites and groups of color. Consider the following passage from a children's book about racism: "Racism is the mistaken belief by some people that their group, or race, is better than others" (Grunsell, 1991, p. 7). I applaud the book's effort to help children understand racism, but it barely hints at the privileges white people confer on each other, and subsequent control a white elite maintains over most resources in the U.S. and world.

At least, however, discussing racism is less evasive than discussing diversity. Cultural differences do exist, of course, and ought to be discussed. However, whites transmute many issues of racism into depoliticized questions of cultural difference. Bowker (1993), for example, criticizes educators who believe that it is a cultural trait for multiple Indian families to live in one house, rather than recognizing this as an adaptation to poverty rooted in racism. Further, many whites define culture in a way that draws impermeable boundaries around groups, and that views culture as consisting

of flat and unchanging holdovers from the past. For example, a line of action whites could take viz a viz Indians, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, or Hawaiians is to return land and control over that land. But few of us take such action seriously. Instead, we show interest in such groups by learning about a limited array of certain cultural artifacts and practices, and paying homage to Indian, Latino, and Hawaiian heroes and contributions to white culture.

Equating ethnicity with race is a related strategy for evading racism. When whites conceptualize cultural diversity within the U.S., as my example from the women's studies conference illustrates, we usually subdivide Euro-American groups by ethnic origins, placing groups such as Germans, Poles, and Scots within the same conceptual plane as African Americans and Native Americans. This conceptual plane highlights cultural heritage; it denies whiteness as a phenomenon worth scrutiny, and with it, white racism (Dyer, 1988).

We semantically evade our own role in perpetuating white racism by constructing sentences that allow us to talk about racism while removing ourselves from discussion. One such semantic evasion is to personify racism, making it (rather than ourselves) the subject of sentences. This allows us to say, for example, "Racism causes poor education in inner-city schools." *Who* is responsible for the quality of education in inner-city schools? The sentence does not suggest that anyone holds responsibility. Another semantic evasion is to avoid use of a subject altogether by employing passive sentence constructions. For example, consider the following sentence: "Filipinos were brought to Hawaii to work as cheap laborers." *Who* brought them to Hawaii and underpaid them? The sentence does not say. Naming responsibility moves us toward a critique of institutionalized white supremacy and our own role in that institution, and toward actions *we* can take to make changes.

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In general, whites stick together on common definitions of issues that involve race relations, and behave accordingly. We live largely with other whites, socialize mainly with whites, consume white media, vote for whites, and so forth. Although today most whites profess colorblindness and support for equal opportunity, in fact we behave in a very race-conscious manner, and use a number of processes to police other whites and maintain racial solidarity. One of the more subtle of these is a process I call "white racial bonding."

### WHITE RACIAL BONDING

By "white racial bonding," I am referring to interactions that have the purpose of affirming a common stance on race-related issues, legitimating particular interpretations of oppressed groups, and drawing we-they boundaries. These communication patterns may consist of inserts into conversations, race-related "asides" in conversations, strategic eye-contact, and jokes. Often they are so short and subtle that they may seem harmless.

Inserts into conversations may go like this. Two white people are talking casually about various things. One comments, "Did you hear about the Black guy who tried to rape a woman near here yesterday?" This comment serves as an invitation to white bonding: it names race as something "they" have (the woman in the sentence is rendered raceless), it links Blacks with crime, and it highlights the historic fear whites have had of Black sex. The other person is being invited to respond in a way that legitimates a field of thinking in which these associations are accepted. The other person could respond very simply, "Yeah, how scary, I hate to go out at night now," affirming the first person's viewpoint; this could be the end of a successful exchange. Or, the other person could complain about Blacks, inviting the initiator to join in. In either case, both parties will have communicated agreement on a racial

worldview. Even silence can serve as tacit acquiescence for the purpose of winning approval.

Racial bonding exchanges sometimes use codewords for race-related issues. While I was taking a break from writing this essay, one of my neighbors tried to engage me in a white bonding exchange using the codeword of "welfare." I live in Wisconsin; people here hibernate all winter. It is common not to see neighbors until late spring, when everyone comes outdoors to plant flowers and clean up winter trash. Yesterday was such a day. I was out trimming bushes when a white neighbor with whom I had not exchanged more than a "Hello" since last summer strolled by. Normally first exchanges of the spring revolve around the weather, summer plans, and what we are planting in our gardens. This particular exchange began with the weather, but then my neighbor immediately launched into welfare reform, commenting that she is glad Donna Shalala will be sending welfare mothers to work since too many of them like to stay home and have babies to augment their welfare checks. My neighbor said that she was a single mother once and worked hard, as have her children; these welfare mothers ought to do the same. Further, the public should not be expected to pay for their childcare; her own daughter pays over \$500 per month for childcare, and other women can be expected to do the same. ("On minimum wage earnings that are barely over \$500 per month?" I asked, appalled.) I took issue with her perspective rather heatedly, trying to move to a consideration of the need for more childcare options, corporate greed, the huge military budget, the lack of jobs, and so forth. My argument was that I would make the same choices within a context of limited options, and rather than criticizing choices people make, we should support opening up options. While she did not dispute that "something should be done" about these other issues, she was mainly concerned about welfare mothers who abuse the system--*that* we can do something about by cutting welfare.

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Were I Black, would she have initiated the same conversation? Why did she initiate it in the first place, so out of context? I suspect she had just finished reading a newspaper article about welfare reform, and it resonated with her view that mothers on welfare are unmotivated and lazy--and not white. Race-laden issues are a part of our everyday lives. Currently welfare is one such issue, in which whites rarely mention race but usually mean "Black" or "Hispanic." Without directly saying it, my neighbor seemed to be drawing on the stereotype of the Black welfare queen, and wanted to make sure other whites support punitive measures toward this "lazy" segment of society.

How do I know this kind of exchange serves the purpose of racial bonding? If I do not give the desired response, the other person very often presses the issue much more explicitly; I also may never hear from the other person again. For example, if I change the subject, it usually reappears but more forcefully. Sometimes I give a response I know the other person is not seeking such as, "Is that the same neighborhood where two white men tried to rape a Black woman?" More often than not, the other person responds with a lecture on Black crime, and the misguidedness of my judgment. I am usually uncomfortable when people who do not know me well ask what I teach; the response "multicultural education" often provokes an uninvited lecture on race relations, or on their own beliefs as a white liberal, in order to seek validation that we share a common viewpoint.

These kinds of interactions seem to serve the purpose of defining racial lines, and inviting individuals to either declare their solidarity or mark themselves as deviant. Depending on degree of deviance, one runs the risk of losing the other individual's approval, friendship and company, and the privileges of acceptance whites confer on each other. (This usually occurs in the form of feeling "uncomfortable" around the deviant white person.) Many whites

who do not support racist beliefs, actions, or policies, but who also do not want to risk breaking bonds with other whites, simply remain silent. No white person is exempt from pressures from other white people to "fit in," with the price of non-conformity often being the loss of approval and friendship.

### TOWARD A BREAK WITH WHITENESS

To break with whiteness, I must first distinguish between being a person of European ancestry, and one who identifies as "white." My own European ancestry is sufficiently mixed that I do not identify with any particular ethnic community. I do, however, identify with communities of people who share similar interests with me, and I also take some pride in contributions my own ancestors made toward humanity, such as developments in medicine and creations of music and art. The important ideas here are "community," "share," and "humanity." Whiteness, on the other hand, has come to mean ravenous materialism, competitive individualism, and a way of living characterized by putting acquisition of possessions above humanity. One need not be of European descent to participate in such a way of living, but it is a way of living that people of European descent constructed and sell, and one that we are persistently socialized to identify with and support.

Recently when I was in South Africa, an Afrikaaner acquaintance wondered why so many Black South Africans have difficulty learning white culture, having been exposed to it for about three centuries. I turned the question around, asking why European South Africans have difficulty learning indigenous African ways of life, having been exposed to such ways of living for about three centuries. The same question holds true of European Americans' refusal to learn from indigenous Americans. My point is not that we choose one ethnic group's system as the perfect one. Rather, while I believe that people of European descent do have some good

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ideas to offer humanity, we also have created a way of living that is spiritually impoverished and in many ways destructive.

Breaking with whiteness would mean learning to share, listen, and learn from people who are not of European descent, with the aim of constructing (or rediscovering) ways of life that are healthy and sustainable for everyone. Practically speaking, this can mean putting more energy into connecting with people than acquiring things, refusing to move to the suburbs, refusing to climb the corporate ladder of success, and supporting policies and actions that would redistribute social resources more equally. And practically speaking, this is highly political work, since it means challenging systems that support vested interests.

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# FAMILY MATTERS

BY JOHN GARVEY

I live in Brooklyn but, since this is not only a Brooklyn story, let's start with New Jersey. Two developments catch my attention. The first is an effort by the state's Department of Education to "take over" the public schools in Newark, the state's largest city and home to its largest black population. A long report details evidence of mismanagement and poor performance. Perhaps most revealingly, the report concludes that the failures of the Newark public schools are not due to a lower level of funding than that provided to wealthier school districts. Indeed, the funding level for Newark is the same as that for Princeton, a town that is admired for the quality of its schools (it's also the home of a local university).

The second is a report from Montclair, a medium-sized suburban town about twenty minutes due west of Manhattan. Montclair, according to a report in *The New York Times* of August 11, 1994, has been celebrated as an integration success story: its population is recorded as being 48 percent white, 45 percent black and 7 percent Hispanic and Asian. Even its schools are integrated. That's the good news. The bad news is that the classrooms are not integrated. The contrasts are remarkable. More than 85 percent of the students enrolled in remedial classes are black or Hispanic. But 76 percent of students in an eighth grade gifted program are white. Similar patterns even existed in elementary schools; one class had 17 white students and 1 black child.

The question that I want to tackle is HOW. How can there be race without racism? How can there be race without racist funding? How can there be race without bad intentions? I'm

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especially interested in talking about the roles of many individuals who were active in politics during the 1960's but who now work in various professions.

More or less, I remember growing up with the idea of progress--although I have to admit that a lot of that idea was influenced by the advertising campaigns that were launched by Nelson Rockefeller in his efforts to remain governor of New York. I especially remember a TV ad where happy fish were jumping out of the water to tell about how he had cleaned up the river. If fish could be happy and a rich Republican like Rockefeller could want them to be happy, we surely must have been making progress.

I don't remember a single time when my parents tried to teach me anything of the sort. As I've written about previously, they mostly taught me to believe. And they also taught me to help people--without ever thinking that it made me a better person. I spent more than a few days of my childhood following my father around to houses of friends of his mother's to help out. Helping out meant things like washing windows--with buckets of water and newspapers (I guess it was before WINDEX--although, knowing my father, I'm not sure that he would have used WINDEX even if he could have). Lest I be misunderstood, I think that parents are not nearly as responsible for the ways in which their kids turn out as most everyday conversations suggest. I especially don't like it when other adults imply that I and/or my wife are to be congratulated for how well behaved our kids are.

No, I made of my parents' contributions what I would and they should not be held responsible for the outcome. By way of illustration--when I was a senior in high school, I applied to three Catholic colleges and to Brooklyn College, a part of the City University of New York (where I now work). I was accepted at all four. I remember my mother advising me that I couldn't go to Brooklyn College since, if I went there, I would become a

communist. I don't remember if I ever wanted to go to Brooklyn College, but, in any case, I went to Manhattan College (a Catholic men's college in the Bronx, and the alma mater of Rudolph Giuliani--the current mayor of New York) and you'll never guess what happened. I've teased my mother about this but it's hardly the most important thing on her mind. In fact, my politics don't matter so much to her at all. What does matter is how responsible I seem--in other words, how are the kids?

"How are the kids?" Such a good question. Because how the kids are is maybe how the world will be. I know a lot of people with kids. I work with them; I live in the same neighborhood as some of them, and I obviously send my kids to the same schools as some of them. And, of course, we talk about our kids. I like telling stories about mine--often enough that they wish I would stop.

But sadly, at a number of points in my conversations with other parents, a quiet enters into the encounter. It usually happens when the other parent says something about how hard they thought about some decision they're making about moving to the suburbs or about sending a child to private school, and about how hard it was (since, I often imagine, he or she interprets it as a surrender). The parent goes on to explain that, after all, he or she "wants the best" for the child and the alternatives (of staying in the city or sending the child to public school) were more or less awful. I hardly ever respond--that's why it's quiet. I don't really know what to say. I work hard with and for my kids--I bother them much too much. I too want the best for my kids. But what is this "best?"

I'm not ready to so narrowly define "the best" that I can leave out of the picture what's going on in the world as a whole. I still can't really believe that either my son or my two daughters have already learned that men rape women. I would have preferred it by far that they never had to learn it. I would love their childhoods to be innocent ones. But I don't control the world, do I? Since my

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wife and I are seldom inclined to shield them from the ugliness and pain that's out there, we and they suffer the consequences of them knowing how bad it is. But, to their constant amazement, I keep on insisting that it could be different.

I really do want them to live in a better world than the one I grew up in. But everywhere I look, I see signs that their world will be worse than mine. That's different, I know, from their "personal" lives. It's possible, I guess, that they will be able to carve out a respectable and comfortable life. They might even dedicate their lives to helping people; they might become nurses, teachers, loving parents, helpful neighbors and all that I might want. But the world will be worse. And that's not what I want to leave them.

Too many times in the past year, I have heard men who are my contemporaries laughingly recall the times when they were crazy. They are referring, not surprisingly, to the 1960's (a period of time that lasted from about 1954 to about 1972) and they are talking about their various political involvements in anti-war protests, in support of the black movements of the times, and so forth. I'm also usually silent during these conversations since those 1960's seem to me to be the time when at least some of us were never saner. We believed, with or without Nelson Rockefeller, that the world we would live in would be a better place. We dreamed dreams of new types of relationships, new types of homes, new types of cities, new ways of life. And we did so, most of all, because we had been prepared to challenge the most enduring reality of things as they are--RACE. But now these many years later, we are not nearly so prepared to challenge race and we most assuredly have abandoned all our dreams.

Worse still, we have become complicit in the reproduction of race as a way of organizing the society. And, in many ways, we do so because we want the best for our children. Several years ago, a battle of sorts erupted in the local school district where my kids

have gone to school concerning the operation of a special Gifted Program at the elementary school level. Norm Fruchter, a friend of mine, a school board member and a long-time education activist, was part of a minority of board members supporting a proposal that the district modify its program selection procedures. They did so on the basis of a report prepared by the Superintendent which had indicated that the composition of the Gifted Program was racially imbalanced.

The most striking indicator was that, in a district where only 22% of the kids were white, 81% of the students in the Gifted Program were. This resulted from the combined impact of many more white parents applying for the required pre-kindergarten screening (consisting of an IQ test) and of a higher qualifying rate among white kids. As a concession to those who were concerned about equity, the selection procedure did allow for preferential enrollment of non-white kids who scored above the required threshold 97th percentile on the IQ test. (Interestingly, a recent squabble on the same district school board developed when a new member challenged even this limited preference.)

To address the inequity, the Superintendent had made several modest proposals--that screening for the Gifted Program occur during rather than before kindergarten and that there be multiple criteria for acceptance rather than a single test score. In any case, the proposal was brought to the school board for consideration. At an open meeting, a couple of hundred overwhelmingly white parents, mostly parents of children in the Gifted Program, testified that they would have none of this. Eventually, the school board voted to reject the Superintendent's recommendations. It's not clear whether the members did so because they agreed with the opposing viewpoint or merely because they appreciated the political clout of the parents present. Their public explanations of their position consisted, largely, of protestations that they wished to respond to the wishes of parents.

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Fruchter has written of how the evening affected him:

Though I'd expected strong opposition, by the evening's conclusion I was disheartened. I knew many of the parents opposing the change as neighbors, friends and supporters of district-wide educational improvement. I'd counted on their backing during my years on the board, particularly for changes in those schools serving, inadequately, the needs of the district's majority of Hispanic and Black students. Yet even so small a proposed change in our Gifted Program seemed to force such parents to choose between their perceptions of what their children needed and their commitment to district-wide equity. (Unpublished Essay)

In the same essay, Norm went on to speculate about the reasons for the parents' attitudes. He suggested that, from his own perspective of someone whose children were somewhat older and who had attended the district's schools fifteen years earlier, many of the parents appeared to be much more worried about the economic prospects of their kids and that, as a result, they felt they couldn't afford to take any chances with mediocre schooling. The irony is that the quality of the schooling offered in the Gifted Program varies from acceptable to awful. In almost no case is the program a center of innovation or imaginative educational practice. Instead, it is a place where kids who, for the most part, do very well on school-like tasks get to go to school with other kids who also do very well on school-like tasks. What this suggests is that what the parents were looking for was not so much good education but rather a guarantee that their children would eventually find themselves in a good middle school program and a good high school.

Keep in mind that the issue before the school board that evening was not the elimination of the Gifted Program, but rather only a change in the selection procedure. Of course, there were probably some, although apparently quite few, Gifted Program parents who were prepared to endorse the changes in the selection procedure. Unfortunately, they would likely be the parents who, if their child was not selected under the new procedures, would (if they could) opt to send their child to a private school instead.

In any case, I attended a school board meeting held soon after the meeting described above. I asked a long-time board member about the extent of his commitment to giving parents the options they wanted for their kids. I asked if he would be in favor of establishing a whites-only program if parents requested it. He, of course, dismissed the question and said no.

That exchange was immediately followed by a tense, and impassioned, presentation by another board member (this time, a supporter of the proposed changes). She argued that the statistics demonstrated a clear pattern of segregated education in the Gifted Program. She also argued that the pattern reflected a clear failure of the district's outreach efforts to non-white parents and a profoundly flawed testing procedure--unless one was prepared to accept the idea that non-white children were less intelligent than their white counterparts. She made no converts. Those who wished to maintain the status quo insisted, for the most part, that they harbored no such racist assumptions. The regrettable outcome, they insisted, was not the result of anyone acting in a way to preserve racial advantages. It just happened that way.

But it is no accident that it happened that way. We don't have to go into a long explanation of the ways in which IQ tests

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work to understand that they routinely favor some and discriminate against others. We don't have to go into long explanations of why some folks distrust official mechanisms and are less inclined to apply for special programs. The application process and the test just provide a veneer of neutral objectivity to social practices which systematically structure and reproduce inequality. And both the process and the test are themselves obscured just enough so that it is difficult to understand the ways in which they actually work. As a result, the unfortunate outcomes appear not to have reasons and certainly not reasons that could lead to assigning responsibility to parents, teachers or school board members.

The key to understanding this remarkable lack of responsibility is that most current popular social analysis on the left reduces responsibility to intentionality. So long as no one intends something to be so, he or she has no responsibility for it turning out that way. This type of analysis severs any relationship between our activities in what might be called, in an old-fashioned kind of way, civil society and in the affairs of the state--as voters, advocates or professional workers. Thus, gentrification in a neighborhood like Park Slope, a Brooklyn neighborhood included in the school district discussed above, and its sure-fire accompaniment of homelessness for some, has nothing to do with the movement into the neighborhood of numerous ex-members of the movement of the 1960's. We can live where we want and be advocates for the homeless and critics of governmental inaction. In the case of the schools, we can send our children to elite programs within the public schools or to private schools and be teachers of non-white students in schools and colleges and lamenters of the poor quality of education.

When we do not act forthrightly in the sphere of civil



society, that wavering will have consequences that some of us will then be trying to undo in the state sphere--except that our own social class interests will be left untampered with. Class interests, for those with children, have a lot to do with ensuring that children do at least as well as parents--in other words, that the more or less existing pattern of class relations is reproduced. But the reproduction of classes in the United States, for all but the highest reaches of the elite, is inextricably bound up with the reproduction of race. Those who doubt this should read the story on Montclair or visit the Gifted Program in my district. Or they should look at the schools their children attend.

I think that Norm Fruchter touched on something quite important when he tried to get at some of the social insecurity experienced by the cohort of adults who have had children since the mid-1970's. But, he neglected to mention that the insecurity coincided with a fairly consistent retreat of the left across a broad field of personal and political issues. People who no longer have any hope of changing the world instead try to do the best they can for their children and to help make the world a little bit better for those who suffer from its everyday workings.

The work that they do, given the pervasive character of race discrimination, is often intended to be for the benefit of non-white folks. But, in spite of many thousands of hours of work, all that such work seems capable of producing is the need for more such work. But what it produces at the same time is an ever more powerful conviction that the problem is somehow located in the characteristics of those who are being helped. In spite of dropout prevention programs, black kids still leave school. In spite of teenage pregnancy prevention programs, young black women keep having babies. In spite of job training programs, black people still

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don't get jobs. And on and on. Each new solution, ever more cleverly engineered by those who have studied the matter, reproduces the problem. Ironically enough, much of this work results in the accumulation of evidence that the predicament of black folks is really their fault. After all, look at how much help they keep getting and look how far behind they stay. Contrast that with the all but universal conviction that Jim Crow was responsible for the misery of black people in the South rather than any shortcomings on the part of those individuals.

How does it work? Or, better still, how can we get it not to work? For starters, I'd like to suggest that individual responsibility is more complex than the recording of personal intention. If we know that an accumulation of decisions results in certain characteristic patterns--like, for example, racially divided school classrooms or programs, it would not seem to much to ask that we re-examine our own possible contribution to the perpetuation of the pattern. But many times, we do not. Our reasoning, which easily becomes pretty defensive, will often result in a determined insistence that we are not prepared to sacrifice our children's well-being or future for some other not very tangible goal.

I remember years ago being told by a friend that having children was the most radicalizing event in her life. In comparison, having children is among the most conservatizing events in my own. I don't think there's any inevitable rule at work here. A lot depends on circumstances and possibilities. If you feel your children's future is bleak, perhaps you will be emboldened to take some chances on their behalf. If you believe that profound social change is on the agenda, you might be willing to take some chances even if your children's prospects look reasonably good given the current state of affairs. If you believe that the predicament of others is horrible

enough, you might be moved to take some chances. (Right now, the only folks ready to do this in this country are the anti-abortion protesters). But, if things are not quite that bad and if you're skeptical about fundamental social change and your children's prospects are uncertain but amenable to improvement if they attend the right schools and so forth, you're far less likely to take chances.

Which, I guess, brings us back to some pretty basic issues. There was, as many hopefully still remember, a way in which those 1960's had of putting things on the table. Some might recall the slogan, "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem." That simple slogan embodied the wisdom that society was not only something that was done to us but was also the product of what we did to and with each other.

Race is very much one of the things that we do to and with each other. So long as we do not challenge what we do to and with each other, we will be stuck with it. Challenges to race need not always be of grand significance, but they will probably always involve some measure of risk. If we are prepared to take no risks, we should be prepared to accept the consequences. Those consequences will hardly be "the best" for our children unless we can imagine that a world with more suffering can be endured better than a world with less.

Our children will one day know what we did. They will one day see the world as it is. They might ask us all some tough questions.

*John Garvey is one of the editors of Race Traitor.*

# ABOLISH THE JEWISH CASTE IN PALESTINE

BY ADAM SABRA

The development of a Zionist state in Palestine has presented a number of problems of interpretation, especially for theorists of the left. The Zionist movement combines elements of "laborism" and colonialism at the same time. This apparent paradox has led observers to classify Israel as anything from settler-colonialist to social democratic. Clearly, the traditional modes of analysis, while shedding some light on the problem, have failed to provide a sufficient framework for the task at hand.

It will be argued in what follows that the best way of understanding the development of Zionism is through the use of the concept of a Jewish "caste" or "race."<sup>1</sup> This caste does not represent a prior existing social form, but rather refers to the historical construction, even invention, of a Jewish caste, calling itself a nation, which excludes the indigenous Palestinian Arab population. The invention of this caste has had a profound effect on the politics, economy, and culture of Palestine. This article will attempt to frame these effects in their historical development. Only once the development of the Jewish caste is understood can efforts be directed towards its abolition. In this light, the fatal weaknesses of

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<sup>1</sup> The author regards the terms "caste" and "race" as synonymous. Both refer to non-biological, historically constructed entities. In view of the long-standing use of the term "Jewish Race" in Anti-Semitic rhetoric, the author prefers to use the term "caste" in order to avoid any form of misunderstanding.

the current attempts at repartitioning Palestine become brutally apparent.

The Zionist movement originated in the late 19th century as a response to the changes then occurring in European societies. As these changes proceeded, European Jews found themselves caught up in the rapid shifts of social and political order. The crumbling of old institutions and ideas sometimes gave them unparalleled opportunities for social advancement and integration, but often resulted in the destruction of traditional communities, either through response to social change or through the rise of Anti-Semitism.

The experiences of European Jews differed from most other Europeans in two important aspects: class and nation. Since these two concepts were the basis of the new political order, it is worth taking a closer look at these questions.

Jews had differed from their neighbors for some time when it came to class.<sup>2</sup> While most of their neighbors were peasants, Jews were overwhelmingly non-agricultural. They were concentrated in the trades and in "middle man" jobs such as commerce and tax collecting. These positions often left them stranded between the aristocracy, which made use of them when possible, and the peasantry, for whom they were often the face of oppression in the form of tax men and usurers.

As feudalism collapsed in eastern Europe, the tensions between Jews and their neighbors increased, and the Jews were increasingly impoverished. Anti-Semitism reached new heights, and many Jews thought they could do better in the West, where their

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<sup>2</sup> See Abram Leon, *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation* (New York 1970).

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co-religionists were better integrated into society. As these East European Jews moved westward, Anti-Semitism gained currency in the West, much as modern European rightists have responded to the rise of immigrant labor by appealing to racism.

Here the question of nation became paramount.<sup>3</sup> The rise of the nation-state had made natural the idea that each "people," a term for which there is no consistent definition, had to have a state of its own. Jews, having always considered themselves a "people" in a religious sense, became a people without a state. As racial nationalism became increasingly popular, Jews came to be seen as not only religious outsiders, but also national and racial outsiders.

### RACIAL THINKING: ZIONISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM

Zionism grew precisely out of these dilemmas of class and nation. One early Zionist, Leo Pinsker, responded to Russian pogroms by writing, "Judeo-phobia is a psychic aberration. As a psychic aberration, it is hereditary, and as a disease transmitted for two thousand years it is incurable."<sup>4</sup> Thus, the specific historical and political problem of Anti-Semitism was converted into an existential dilemma. Like any good nationalist of his era, Pinsker knew the solution for his embattled people: a state of their own. Such speculations were not limited to East Europeans. Theodor Herzl, popularly known as the father of Zionism, reacted to the Dreyfuss Affair in France by adopting the slogan of a Jewish state as the solution to the problem of Anti-Semitism. That an assimilated French Jew could be convicted of treason on flimsy charges had

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<sup>3</sup> For an overview of this question, see Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York 1951).

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Nathan Weinstock, *Zionism: False Messiah* (London 1979), p. 44.

a great effect on Herzl's vision of the future of European Jewry. He wrote, "Every nation in whose midst Jews live is, either covertly or openly, Anti-Semitic."<sup>5</sup> Rejecting the attempts of assimilated Jews to solve the problem of Anti-Semitism within their own societies, Herzl concluded that the Jewish Question (as it was then called) could only be solved along national lines, that is, by the creation of a Jewish state.

In this defeatist attitude towards bigotry, and in the adoption of a nationalist program for a religious group lacking the geographic basis for a national state, Herzl, like many who were to follow him, simply adopted many of the claims made by Anti-Semites against Jews. First, he rejected any attempt to solve the problem experienced by Jews within their own European societies. Second, he accepted the view that Jews were strangers within these societies, and could only liberate themselves by leaving these societies and establishing a separate state elsewhere, preferably in Palestine.

Labor Zionists, such as David Ben Gurion, would go even further than this in responding to the claims of the Anti-Semites. Where Herzl treated Jewish emancipation solely as a national question, they attempted to address the class aspects of the question as well. Thus, for Ben Gurion, it was not the immigration of Jewish capitalists that would make Palestine a Jewish society, but rather the influx of Jewish workers.<sup>6</sup> In one sense, the "normalization" of Jewish social existence was a response, therefore, to ideological conditions.

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<sup>5</sup> Theodor Herzl, *A Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question* (New York 1917), p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Mitchell Cohen, *Zion and State: Nation, Class, and the Shaping of Modern Israel* (Oxford 1987), p. 125.

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The early Zionists were in constant debate with Anti-Semitic demagogues, even adopting the picture these demagogues drew of the Jews as their model of what had gone wrong. The most damning case of such a convergence of views occurred in Nazi-Occupied Hungary. Dr. Rudolf Kastner, representing Zionist interests, negotiated the immigration of some of Hungary's most prominent Jews to Palestine in exchange for his help in arranging the orderly deportation of the remainder of Hungarian Jewry to the concentration camps.<sup>7</sup> The Nazi functionary Adolf Eichmann saw this agreement as more than just an opportunistic political arrangement. He saw Kastner as an "idealist," like himself, dedicated to national ideals, without regard to the suffering of lesser people.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the congruence of racist and Zionist ideals was more than just coincidence, it was the consequence of the assimilation of nation and race.

Ultimately, however, the development of Zionist ideology was determined by the relationship of the Zionists to one factor that had nothing to do with the ongoing debates about Anti-Semitism within the Jewish communities of Europe, and in Europe in general. The proponents of the Jewish "new man" found themselves face to face with the Palestinian Arabs.

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<sup>7</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York 1963), p. 42. The similarities in Zionist and Anti-Semitic thinking are clear with regard to "Diaspora" Jews, including survivors of the Nazi concentration camps. See, for example, Ben Gurion's statement, "Among the survivors of the German concentration camps, there were those who, had they not been what they were--harsh, evil, and egotistical people--would not have survived, and all they endured rooted out every good part of their souls." Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York 1993), pp. 118-9.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 42, p. 60.



When the first Jewish immigrants began to arrive in Palestine in the 1880s, the task of setting up a purely Jewish society must have seemed absurd to any outside observer. As late as 1907, Arthur Ruppin, an official of the World Zionist Organization, reported that Jews only made up approximately 80,000 out of a population of 700,000 inhabitants.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the indigenous Arab population was growing due to a rise in life expectancy. At the same time, Jews owned only 1.5 percent of the land.<sup>10</sup> Massive Jewish immigration, which began in the 1920s and accelerated during the 1930s due to the rise of Nazism, raised the Jewish population to approximately one-third of the total population, owning seven percent of the land by 1948, when the State of Israel was declared.<sup>11</sup> How then could a purely Jewish society be constructed in Palestine?

### BUILDING THE JEWISH CASTE

The Zionists had one major factor working in their favor. After the defeat and collapse of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, Britain occupied and received a League of Nations mandate for Palestine. Despite the success of other Arab nations in achieving independence during the 1920s, the British, often with help from the Zionists, continued to maintain control over Palestine until after the

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<sup>9</sup> Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Cambridge 1989), p. 43.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Exact figures are impossible to come by due to the prevalence of illegal immigration and land purchase through third parties. For the best available figures see Walid Khalidi (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem Until 1948* (Washington 1971), pp. 841-3.

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Second World War, when the Zionist-Arab conflict made British rule impossible. Despite the later falling out of these erstwhile allies, a process that began in 1939 when Britain tried to limit Jewish immigration to placate Arab opinion during the war, the success of the Zionist colonization project depended on the British umbrella. Without the presence of an imperial power committed to the building of a "Jewish national home" in Palestine, the indigenous population could never have been forced to accept continued Zionist colonization.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, the Zionists had been experimenting with different forms of colonization. Beginning in 1882, Zionist settlers coming from Eastern Europe were receiving financial support from Baron Rothschild to build a plantation system in Palestine along the model used by the French in Algeria. The idea was to use cheap local labor to establish areas of commercial agricultural production. While the settlers borrowed techniques from local Arab farmers, who had much more experience in farming the lands, the new settlements were based on totally different agricultural relations from those of the Arab peasants, which were primarily oriented towards subsistence agriculture.<sup>13</sup> Capitalist agriculture replaced a subsistence economy.

The result was predictable. While some Jews worked in the plantations, the overall effect was to equate class and caste. Jews managed the property, while Arabs worked it. While this pattern was not uncommon in other colonial societies, in Palestine the

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<sup>12</sup> Britain committed itself to supporting the Zionist movement in the Balfour Declaration of 1917. The British were so apprehensive about the Arab reaction to this document that they did not allow it to be published in Palestine.

<sup>13</sup> Shafir, pp. 50-52.

colonizers sought to found a society based on colonized labor. When later immigrants influenced by socialist ideas arrived, they were disgusted by the maintenance of Jews as a nonworking minority in Palestine. More to the point, it became clear that a specifically Jewish society could not be based on Arab labor. Jews would have to create their own institutions if they were to build a state in Palestine. The Arabs would have to be excluded.<sup>14</sup>

The problem of building a Jewish society among an overwhelming Arab majority came to be known as the "conquest of land and labor." In effect, in order to build Jewish institutions, the normal relations of capitalist production had to be circumvented. Land, once purchased, had to remain in Jewish hands. No offer made by an Arab could be allowed to break up the acquisition of land for the "Jewish people." This point was of particular importance since the other half of this project, known as Labor Zionism, was the exclusive use of Jewish labor on the land acquired by the Jews in Palestine. The Labor Zionists maintained this dual exclusionism (or apartheid, as we would now call it) in order to build up purely Jewish institutions.

In the case of the conquest of the land, the Zionists formed a very powerful instrument to force compliance on Jewish landholders. Land was not acquired by individuals, but by a corporation, known as the Jewish National Fund (JNF). The JNF acquired land and leased it only to Jews, who were not allowed to sublet it.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> As early as 1906, David Ben Gurion insisted on the need to organize Jewish labor, while at the same time excluding Arab labor. This position was opposed by more conventional left wing Jews who wanted to organize all labor in Palestine. Weinstock, p. 87.

<sup>15</sup> Walter Lehn with Uri Davis, *The Jewish National Fund* (London 1988), p. 27.

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Thus land was acquired in the name of "the Jewish people," held for their use, and not subject to market conditions. The idea was for the JNF to gradually acquire as much land as possible as the basis for the expected Jewish state.

Naturally, in order for the land to serve this function, Arab labor had to be excluded. Thus, leases from the JNF specifically prohibited the use of non-Jewish labor on JNF plots.<sup>16</sup> One way to achieve this goal was to lease land only to those Jews who intended to work the land themselves. In some cases, when land was bought from Arab absentee landlords, the peasants who resided on and worked the land were expelled. Jewish landholders who refused to exclude Arab labor could lose their leases or be faced with a boycott.

The conquest of labor not only pertained to agriculture, but also to industry. The Labor Zionists formed an institution to organize Jewish labor and exclude Arabs: the Histadrut. The Histadrut was (and largely is) an all-Jewish trade union providing its members with a number of services. More importantly, the Histadrut was a means of segregating Arab and Jewish labor, and especially of protecting the latter from competition in the labor market. Since the Arab workers were accustomed to a lower wage scale and standard of living, competition from them threatened to lower the wages of Jewish laborers. Furthermore, if the wage markets for Arab and Jewish workers were equalized, employers would employ both indiscriminately.

The Histadrut aimed at forcing Jewish employers to hire only Jewish labor to the exclusion of Arab labor. Thus, Jewish wages would remain high, and a strictly Jewish economic sector would come into being. Even when Arab and Jewish laborers

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 59.

performed precisely the same job, Jewish workers were paid significantly higher salaries.<sup>17</sup> These policies not only alienated Arab laborers, some of whom had already been displaced by Jewish land purchases, they also were the death knell for any attempt to organize labor on a non-racial basis. The "laborism" of Labor Zionism killed and continues to kill any and all efforts at building a unified labor movement based on the premise that Arab and Jewish workers both suffer from capitalist exploitation. In exchange for the privileges of membership in the Jewish caste, Jewish workers turn their back on the possibilities of unified struggle.

It should be emphasized that the depredations of Labor Zionism are not merely matters of work conditions or salary. For example, the demand for exclusively Jewish labor on Jewish-owned property led to the expulsion of Arab watchmen in Jewish-owned vineyards in Palestine. The paramilitary Jewish forces who replaced them became the basis for the construction of the Haganah, the main Jewish military force which participated in the establishment of the Israeli state and the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians from their homes. The descendent of the Haganah, the Israeli Defense Forces, continues its occupation of Palestine and other lands to this day. It should be clear from this sequence of events that what is at stake is not merely inter-ethnic competition over jobs and wages, but a struggle to control and direct the building of a nation-state. The invention of the Jewish caste from the different immigrant groups has always fundamentally been based on the subjugation of the Palestinian Arabs.

The establishment of the "Jewish" society was not accomplished peacefully. As Jewish immigration into Palestine increased, so did Palestinian resistance. Open civil war broke out in the years

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<sup>17</sup> Shafir, p. 64 shows pay ratios approaching 2 to 1.

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1936-39, and the British were only able to defeat the Arab revolt by using brutal measures in collaboration with Zionist forces. When the Zionists were ready to make their bid for statehood in 1948, the British were only too happy to escape from Palestine, while the Arabs were defeated and demoralized by years of oppression.

### STATE AND CASTE

The Zionists were not satisfied with the construction of a state; they knew they had to rid themselves of the Arab majority in order to have a specifically Jewish state. More than half a million Arabs fled their homes in 1948-49, either to escape the war zone, or else due to pressure from the Israeli forces. Some went to neighboring Arab countries, others became refugees in their own country.

At this point, the brazenly racist policies of the Israeli state became apparent. As Uri Davis has pointed out, these policies were contained in two laws passed in 1950. The first, the Law of Return, permitted any Jew, anywhere in the world, the right to "return" to Israel. This right did not apply to non-Jews, including the Palestinian Arabs who had recently become refugees.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the Absentee Property Law confiscated the property of Arab "absentees," and turned it over to the Custodian of Absentee Property.<sup>19</sup> Arab refugees within their own country were termed "present absentees" (what a phrase!), but not allowed to return to their property. A number of refugees who attempted to do so were termed "infiltrators," and some were shot in the attempt. Confiscated property accounted for as much as 95 percent of all agricul-

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<sup>18</sup> Uri Davis, *Israel: An Apartheid State* (London 1987), p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 18.

tural land in Israel, and the vast majority of new settlements.<sup>20</sup>

These confiscated lands, in accordance with the procedures that were established in the Mandate period by the JNF, have become Israel Lands, with their own administration. This administration, controlling 92.6 percent of all of the lands in Israel, only leases these lands to Jews.<sup>21</sup> Apartheid is thus practiced by dividing lands between those belonging to the state, and only available for Jews, and those in private ownership, primarily in the hands of Arabs.

This situation has only been aggravated by the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1967. Along with the usual land confiscations and streams of refugees that accompanied the war and the subsequent military administration, the Palestinian labor force of the territories has become increasingly tied to Israeli capital. While Israeli Arabs have increasingly moved from unskilled to semi-skilled positions (still at the bottom of the Israeli ladder), the Arab residents of the "Occupied Territories" have remained stuck in the lowest skill level jobs.<sup>22</sup> In 1982, 35.9 percent of European Jews had professional or managerial jobs, as opposed to 13.1 percent of Asian-African Jews, 11.4 percent of Israeli Arabs, and 0.8 percent of Non-Citizen Arabs.<sup>23</sup> The con-

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid, p. 20.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pp. 58-60.

<sup>22</sup> Moshe Semyonov and Noah Lewin-Epstein, *Hewers of Wood and Drawers of Water: Noncitizen Arabs in the Israeli Labor Market* (Ithaca 1987), pp. 22-3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, pp. 22-3. The question of stratification within the Jewish caste is discussed below.

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tinued exploitation of Arab laborers in construction, agriculture, service industries, and menial labor indicates the caste nature of the labor market. This exploitation continues despite the massive increase in levels of education among Palestinian Arabs as a whole. Young people trained as engineers and computer scientists must find work abroad (and perhaps never come back), or submit to exclusion from their chosen fields and work in whatever jobs they can find available.

As the above statistics reveal, however, all is not well within the Jewish caste either. Jews have been divided into two ethnic groups: Ashkenazi and Sephardi. These terms are composites for Jews of European and Asian or African origins, respectively. While each term originally stood for a specific Jewish community (in Central and Eastern Europe or Spain), they have become terms for groups within Israeli society which are largely mutually exclusive. The European Jews have consistently treated their Oriental co-religionists with racist contempt. Jews who arrived from Iraq in the early days of the Israeli state were sprayed with DDT to kill whatever insects they might have brought with them.<sup>24</sup> Similar contempt has been shown for the persons and cultures of Moroccan and Yemeni Jews, and, more recently, for Ethiopians.

The Oriental Jews have also found themselves discriminated against in the labor market. Few are in professional or managerial jobs, while many are concentrated in the agricultural, construction, textile, and metal industries.<sup>25</sup> They are generally concentrated in working class development towns, many of which are located near

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<sup>24</sup> Ilan Halevi, *A History of the Jews: Ancient and Modern* (London 1987), p. 204.

<sup>25</sup> Shlomo Swirsky, *Israel: the Oriental Majority* (London 1989), pp. 9-16.



Israel's disputed borders with its Arab neighbors. Consequently, they are very security-conscious. Questions of security in addition to competition with cheaper Arab labor make them quite hawkish on military issues, a classic "poor white" mentality. Like poor whites in other racist societies, the Oriental Jews are found in disproportionate numbers in the police and military services, jobs which offer some opportunity for advancement. While most of the Israeli political elite is Ashkenazi, a few Oriental Jews, such as former Likud minister David Levy, have made places for themselves in the Israeli political structure. Large numbers of Oriental Jews vote regularly for the "religious parties," many of which make ethnic gains a priority.

Oriental Jews are doubly discriminated against in the schools. First, they are given distinctly inferior schools, within their local communities. Fewer of them obtain higher, or even high school, education, and many drop out.<sup>26</sup> Second, a concerted effort has been made by the Ashkenazi officials to defame non-European Jewish culture. Given the hostility of the Jewish caste towards the Palestinian Arabs, it is not surprising that Arab Jews, that is, Jews from Arab countries, are never referred to as such. But the school authorities have gone further than that. Speaking of "cultural deprivation," they have tried to force a "modern," i. e. Ashkenazi identity, on the Oriental children.<sup>27</sup>

In the early 1970s, young Oriental Jews responded to this degradation by forming a protest group called the Black Panthers, based on the example set by the Black Power group in the United States. They likened their condition to that of racially oppressed minorities elsewhere and called for changes in government policy.

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<sup>26</sup> Halevi, pp. 24-6.

<sup>27</sup> Swirsky, pp. 26-8.

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Eventually, the protests broke down, and the leaders were co-opted by the government. Furthermore, during the last twenty-five years, the political fate of the Oriental Jews has improved somewhat.

The exclusion of the Oriental Jews was in no small part due to their being blocked out of the solidly Ashkenazi Labor alliance. In 1977, a Likud government came to power for the first time, largely on the back of Oriental votes. While outside observers primarily noted the hawkish politics of Menachim Begin and his cohorts, many of their followers were more interested in breaking out of their exclusion from power than they were in foreign policy.

In fact, the two positions are closely connected. The seizure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (which the Likud still vows to keep) has made it necessary to further secure the loyalty of Oriental Jews. Some have made their way into the entrepreneurial class, especially in the service industries. Land east of Jerusalem has been used to build comparatively cheap housing which has proved a boon to many young families. While the current Israeli government is happy to turn over the administration of the Gaza Strip to the Palestine Liberation Organization, it has little incentive to do the same with other territories on which Jewish settlement is more dense. In addition, free access for Israelis to Palestinian labor and markets has been a prerequisite of any Israeli agreement to the extension of Palestinian authority in Gaza and Jericho.

## THE IDEOLOGY OF CASTE AND ITS ABOLITION

As we have seen in the case of the Jewish National Fund's campaign to acquire land in Palestine, the basic ideological precondition of Zionist settlement has been the notion that the state is the property of the Jewish people. Whether in immigration law, housing, or political rights, being a Jew in Israel means having a certain set of privileges which signify one's membership in the caste

that possesses the state.<sup>28</sup> Naturally, there are cracks in the foundation of the unity of this caste. The Oriental Jews, as victims of discrimination and members of the Jewish caste, illustrate the contradictions inherent in the mythical unity of the Jewish people. Despite these contradictions, the Zionist leadership must maintain the illusion, if not always the reality, of shared interests and opinions.

Perhaps the best example of this attempt to speak for the entirety of the Jewish people, whether in Israel or elsewhere, was the Israeli response to the Nazi atrocities against the Jews during World War II. The Israeli government not only set up "the" Holocaust memorial, they managed to obtain millions of dollars in compensation from the West German government. Israel's greatest claim to inherit the grievances of the Jewish victims of the Nazis came, however, in the abduction and trial of the Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in 1961.

As the philosopher Karl Jaspers pointed out at the time of the trial, Eichmann, who was charged with "crimes against the Jewish people," should have been charged with crimes against humanity, and tried before an international tribunal.<sup>29</sup> Instead, the Israeli state chose to carry out the trial in the name of the Jewish people. While many explanations have been given for this choice, one can only conclude that it was of a fundamentally political nature. Israel needed to establish itself in the eyes of the world, and

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<sup>28</sup> It is worth noting that Israeli ID cards do not list "Israeli" as a nationality. Religion and nationality are listed together, as either "Jewish", or, for example, "Sunni Muslim Arab". Thus, no legal barrier prevents the denial of citizenship rights to non-Jews or, for that matter, to Jews whose credentials are rejected by the Israeli state. See Davis, pp. 26-32.

<sup>29</sup> Arendt, *Eichmann*, pp. 269-70.

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of world Jewry, as the sole representative of the Jewish people. The constant references to the Nazi atrocities are less the product of the needs of a particular constituency (the majority of Israelis are not of European descent and have no direct connection with those events), than of the desire of the Israeli state to present the unified face of world Jewry in a Zionist guise. Calls for the defense of Israel are carried out with the slogan "never again!," as if the defense of Zionism were the only alternative to Anti-Semitic genocide.

This attempt by the Israeli leadership to represent world Jewry also takes other forms. One form is the fetish of history, that is, Jewish history. As G. W. Bowersock, an expert on the Near East in the classical period, has noted, "the politics of archaeology are everywhere."<sup>30</sup> Biblical archaeology is regularly used to buttress "Jewish" claims to the land (i. e. to a historical presence on it), while archaeology of the Arab periods is slighted, and finds that bring into question the historical authenticity of the biblical account are suitably reinterpreted. The history of the land of Israel is the history of the Jewish people exclusively. *[Editors' interjection: the Israeli state's effort to establish itself as the sole representative of world Jewry produces strange results. In December 1991, forty-three Soviet Jewish immigrants who had sought asylum in Holland were captured and, with the assistance of dogs, forcibly put on a plane back to Israel. About fifty more remained hiding in the town of Eindhoven, evoking memories of World War II, when the Dutch hid Jews from the Nazis. (Dec. 20, 1992 Jewish weekly Forward, cited in Middle East LABOR BULLETIN, Winter-Spring 1992.) The spectacle of police in Europe setting dogs on Jews, at the behest of the Israeli government, must chill the blood of any opponent of Anti-Semitism.]*

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<sup>30</sup> G. W. Bowersock, "Palestine: Ancient History and Modern Politics," Edward W. Said and Christopher Hitchens (eds.), *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question* (London 1988), p. 185.

It should be noted, however, that the ideological veneer is not unbroken. One major controversy that has shaken attempts to homogenize Jewish life in Israel is the "who is a Jew?" controversy. While this controversy has a long and complicated history, what is basically at stake is citizenship rights in Israel, that is, membership in the Jewish caste. Secularists treat the essence of Jewishness as a national question, while religious Jews treat the subject as a religious question. As the matter stands, no solution has been found. Religious Jews have increasingly managed to have religious definitions incorporated into the Law of Return, and civil law in areas such as marriage are only accepted if they conform to Orthodox Jewish law.<sup>31</sup> This confusion has led to some bizarre attempts to find some historical unity for the Jewish people. For example, some Israeli scientists have attempted to prove that Jews have genetically distinct features, the result of a common genetic origin. As Roselle Tekiner has pointed out, these efforts, of dubious scientific validity, are nothing more than an attempt to reconstruct the idea of a Jewish "race," the old weapon of the anti-Semites.<sup>32</sup> The fact that Israelis are driven to such extremes to justify their own existence as a national group is the product of extreme insecurity about their constructed identity.

One does not have to look far to find the basis for this insecurity. While the Zionists have succeeded in dividing Arabs and Jews in Palestine, such divisions can never really be permanent. The two groups of people inhabit the same land, work together (if unequally), and cannot actually exist independently of one another,

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<sup>31</sup> Roselle Tekiner, "The 'Who is a Jew?' Controversy in Israel: a Product of Political Zionism," Roselle Tekiner, Samir Abed-Rabbo, and Norton Mezvinsky (eds.), *Anti-Zionism: Analytical Reflections* (Brattleboro, 1989), p. 75.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, pp. 80-1.

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at least not anymore. Furthermore, the attempts to divide them culturally are under constant attack. The Zionist state must do everything in its power to maintain the illusion of irreconcilable difference.

One example of this breakdown of difference has come about in the use of Hebrew in Israel. Until the beginning of Zionist settlement in Palestine, Hebrew was largely a liturgical language with a smaller secular cultural audience. It was not the mother tongue of any living Jewish community. The Zionist leadership established Hebrew as the mother tongue of the Jewish community in Palestine, both as a device to unify the disparate Jewish immigrants into a single national community and to prevent the cultural assimilation of the immigrants into the indigenous Arab population. The creation of Hebrew as a national language has been one of the great successes of the Zionist movement, but not without some contradictions being raised. For one, Hebrew was insufficient on its own. Words have had to be borrowed from other languages, including Arabic. More importantly, Arab writers within Israel have begun to express themselves in Hebrew. One writer of extraordinary talent, Anton Shammas, has written what some consider to be the greatest novel yet produced in the Hebrew language.<sup>33</sup> While some Israeli Jewish authors have welcomed this phenomenon as proof of the success of Hebrew literature, one cannot help but wonder what this trend (if it becomes such) will mean for the future of Arab-Jewish separation in Palestine.

Of even greater significance to this question, much of what is called "Israeli" culture is clearly copied or directly expropriated from the Palestinian Arabs. Israeli restaurants serve traditional Arab food, Arab handicrafts are sold as "Israeli"; the list is enormous. While Israelis have tried to refuse to face the consequences

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<sup>33</sup> The English translation was published under the title *Arabesques*.

of such borrowing by denying its Arab origins, this charade cannot go on forever.

Indeed, the Israeli public is constantly faced with cultural objects of Arab origin aimed at Oriental Jews of Arab origin. Films, concerts, and other cultural artifacts emanating from the Arab world continue to be popular with Oriental (we should properly say "Arab") Jews. One example of this trend can be seen in popular music. One of the reigning stars of "worldbeat" is the *rai* singer Cheb Khaled. Of Algerian origin, Cheb Khaled is the best known of a group of North African singers who have popularized a culturally mixed (Arab, Berber, European) form of music that addresses the aspirations and frustrations of the youth and the oppressed. Besides his native North Africa, Cheb Khaled has attained considerable popularity in France, with its large North African immigrant population, and in Israel, where he was the first Arab singer to attain "number one" status. While much of his audience no doubt is among Oriental Jews, other Israelis could not help but be impressed by his success. What is particularly intriguing about the success now enjoyed by *rai* singers is that for the first time the whole Middle East is listening to the same music. To some degree this fact can be attributed to aggressive marketing on the part of the French, but it speaks of a greater potential for cultural mixing and the creation of common tastes.

One should not, however, blow this cultural mixing out of proportion. The barriers remain in place, and the current attempts to repartition Palestine into Arab and Jewish sectors will only increase the alienation of the two groups from one another without actually removing any of the economic or social impediments to real solidarity. Indeed, this is just what the Zionist leadership wants.

A perfect example can be taken from the recent Knesset decision to support the negotiation of some form of withdrawal

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from the Gaza Strip and the area around Jericho. When the Labor-led coalition was in danger of collapsing, it received the support of the few Arab legislators in the Knesset. However, Labor made it clear that no Labor-Arab coalition would be acceptable to them, and Labor leaders spoke of the need for a "Jewish majority" to make any such important decisions about the future of the country. Clearly, the granting of voting rights to Arabs living inside Israel has not changed the character of the Israeli state. Israeli Jews consider the state to be their property, and only they have the right to determine its future. The state of the Jewish people continues to be run by a caste which has no intentions of allowing full democracy for all of its residents, even within Israel's official borders.

This fact reinforces the need to construct an alternative to Zionism and Palestinian Arab nationalism. It is clear that the current plan to redivide Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab bantustan will not bring an end to the suffering of the excluded Arab population. Nor will such a solution compensate for the failures of Zionism to solve the "Jewish Question," since the creation of a Jewish caste in Palestine has only inflamed the growth of Anti-Semitism in the Middle East and led to recurrent wars and atrocities.

The failure of the current Israeli-PLO agreement could also foreshadow more ominous events. The Labor government has already sustained significant criticism from the Likud opposition which promises its supporters a big Israel. As the inability of the parties to solve the basic problems of Arab-Israeli relations becomes clear, the Likud, or those to its right, may push for sterner measures, including the removal of the Arab population. The recent political activism of Ariel Sharon, the Butcher of Lebanon, is a sign of this rightward turn. If a movement that combines the political aspirations of Arabs and Jews cannot be built, an Israeli demagogue may find a willing audience among Oriental and Russian Jews who are locked out of the Labor establishment.



At the moment, neither the Arab nor Jewish political spheres have much to offer. The Palestinian Arabs are caught between the opportunism of the PLO and the fanaticism of Hamas. While individual Israelis have made clear their opposition to the Zionist government, none has succeeded in working with like-minded Arabs to create the necessary political movement. What is needed is a movement of Arab and Hebrew workers that is dedicated not only to formal equality, but also to tearing down the borders between one another, and between Palestine and its neighbors. Such a movement would undoubtedly meet with the enmity not only of the Israeli state, but also of all of the surrounding Arab dictatorships.

However such a movement is formed, one point cannot be subject to negotiation or compromise. Any claim by the current members of the Jewish caste to nationhood, and thus to self-determination, must be rejected. Palestinians, whether they are Arabic or Hebrew speakers, are members of one, indivisible nation. All attempts to partition or repartition the country and the nation in the name of "two peoples" must be rejected as mere modifications in the terms of an apartheid system. Only the abolition of the Jewish caste can prevent the continuation of the ongoing race war in Palestine by building a society free of race and caste.

*Adam Sabra is an Egyptian-American student of Islamic history.*

# LUCASVILLE UPDATE

To the Editors:

I received your June 7, 1994 letter which was the first received by me. Apparently your previous letters have been intercepted by prisoncrats. Enclosed are documents relating to *Race Traitor* #3, which was censored and subsequently destroyed because it was deemed inflammatory.

As a result of the article, several guards have been harassing me with threats, etc. I recently was informed by guards that they would kill me if I ever speak in opposition to them. So I would assume you could understand how things are going here.

In any event, *Race Traitor* is and will be banned at Southern Ohio Correctional Facility because of the article as well as it being in direct conflict with the 'master-slave' mentality of the prisoncrats.

In closing, I appreciate your letter and hope *Race Traitor* becomes a success.

Chryztof Knecht  
SOCF R142749  
PO Box 45699  
Lucasville, Ohio 45699  
June 13, 1994

**Editors' note.** Issue #3 of *Race Traitor* ran a story by Knecht on the uprising at Lucasville in April of 1993. We have heard from Knecht since the above. We ask that letters of support be sent to him, as well as letters of protest to the warden at SOCF. See back cover.

# WHITE BLUES

BY PAUL GARON

Phil Rubio's article "Crossover Dreams...." (*Race Traitor* No. 2, Summer 1993) provides an interesting perspective on the confrontation between white performers and black art forms. In many cases, he writes, white musicians are motivated by admiration and envy for the black performers they emulate. And he continues, we are seeing the "use of African-American culture by whites to find the spirit, and hence the humanity, they feel they've lost." But I would like to emphasize a totally different perspective. I will argue that for those interested in the support and study of African-American culture, blues as purveyed by whites appears unauthentic and deeply impoverished; further, it too often represents an appropriation of black culture of a type sadly familiar. Finally, it can be economically crippling to black artists through loss of jobs and critical attention.

Whites have been playing black music for decades, and the tail-end of a constant source of friction--and interchange--should not be seen as the beginning. But the phenomenon of whites taking up the blues in great numbers is a fairly modern spectacle, indeed, one that finds its beginnings in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. We make no attempt to locate the first white blues imitator, or performer, but one of the first objections to this phenomenon was raised by Charles Radcliffe (writing as Ben Covington) in the UK publication *Anarchy* in 1965. ("The Blues in Archway Road," *Anarchy* 5, 1965. pp. 129-133.)

Many publications on the blues soon found themselves compelled to comment on what was an obviously growing artifact,

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and I found myself drawn into the ring in the early 1970s when *Living Blues*, a magazine I helped found with Jim O'Neal, Amy van Singel, Bruce Iglauer, Diane Allmen, André Souffront, and Tim Zorn, was accused of racist policies for its ignoring of white performers. When jazz columnist Harriet Choice challenged our policies in the *Chicago Tribune*, I was the one who hammered out our reply. Our position was articulated in her column and two *Living Blues* editorials, as well as in the introduction to the special section "Surrealism & Blues" in *Living Blues* No. 25 (Jan/Feb 1976).

When my own *Blues and the Poetic Spirit* was published in 1975, I devoted a lengthy section of it to "the psychological relevance of the black man to the white man and what effect this has on the evolution of the blues." (p. 53.) I also analyzed the effects of white participants on black artists and suggested that this usually results in some form of *dilution* of the blues. I wrote little about the blues in the next fifteen years, but the controversy was bubbling along rapidly, hardly needing my attention, and soon it exploded on the pages of *Guitar Player* magazine (August, 1990) in a guest editorial by Lawrence Hoffman, a white professor/-composer and blues critic, who noted that it was "absurd to think that the lifeblood of blues could be extended by anyone who, in essence, could never be anything more than a convincing, expressive copyist." (p. 18)

His position--that white players could bring little authenticity to their blues performances and that they took jobs that should go to blacks--brought mountains of vituperative abuse from *Guitar Player* readers, most of whom took one of four positions: 1) It's racist to hold such positions as Hoffman's; 2) Suffering is universal and whites suffer, too; as former *Guitar Player* editor Dan Forte wrote, mightn't the white Eric Clapton have suffered more than the black Robert Cray? Others wrote that their grandparents died in concentration camps, or that they were Native Americans and had

therefore fulfilled some sort of suffering quota; 3) Ability is beyond racial barriers; many whites, like Stevie Ray Vaughan, are great musicians; 4) History speaks in the form of white artists, i.e. blues *was* the expression of black cultural life, but now it *is* the expression of white as well as black feeling. This was expressed especially fervently by one defender of white rights who was apparently a specialist in reassessing whether blacks had a right to any heritage of their own, once whites decided to seize it. No doubt he was thrilled when the nearly all-white Grammy jury singled out white artists as recipients in both the traditional and modern blues categories.

Needless to say, Hoffman had his supporters (Paul Oliver, Jim O'Neal, and myself, among others), and several, like Karima Wicks and Michael Hill, published replies in *Guitar Player*, addressing among other notions, the dreadful lacunae in the background of several correspondents that led them to believe that the white role in the evolution of the blues was identical to that of blacks. As it turned out, some of the newer blues fans had no idea that blacks actually "started" the blues. Most interesting, however, is the fact that the tide was about 95% against Hoffman and 5% in favor.

Because it could no longer resist the current without comment, in 1993 *Living Blues* asked me to re-articulate the magazine's position in a Guest Editorial feature that they were inaugurating in the May/June, 1993, issue. In that column I emphasized that the magazine's policy was simply the manifestation of its purpose: to analyze, chart, review and celebrate African-American musical culture in the U.S. From such a perspective, I underscored, the magazine's covering of R & B artists like Ruth Brown or LaVern Baker was more natural than its covering of "blues" artists like Stevie Ray Vaughan. While I thought this supremely clear and natural, a large part of the readership did not.

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Once again an avalanche of mail descended, most of it against the magazine's policy and my editorial. A few subscriptions were cancelled. "It's the music, stupid," wrote one long-time reader. We'll return to this phrase in a moment, but first let us try, once again, to analyze the issues that make up the controversy.

Perhaps we've come far enough to not raise the two false issues of suffering and ability. Plainly pain and suffering are not *directly* transmuted in the blues, and they are not essential to technical proficiency. Indeed, even non-technical, (metaphysical?) aspects of performance seem to ultimately resist being inserted into any equation involving suffering, although for some, it has always been axiomatic that one had to suffer to play or sing the blues. Our knowledge and experience of technique, however, suggests otherwise. Some apparently quite privileged whites have demonstrably played guitar as well as some less privileged ones, and from the vantage point of the 1990s, this hardly seems worth disagreement. Further--and suffering aside--it seems obvious that anyone of any race can, technically speaking, *play* the blues. Neither genes nor race-differentiated experience seems to affect one's ability to form certain chords or play certain melodies or passages. (Note that granting that whites can (physically) play the blues grants the "suffering" issue as part of its argument, or leaves it in a metaphysical realm.)

Whether or not one has to have suffered to *sing* the blues remains a metaphysical issue, although interestingly enough, it draws supporters from both sides of the white blues controversy. Many black blues artists think that suffering is an essential component of blues singing, and many backers of white blues feel that many whites have suffered sufficiently to qualify. On the other hand, Muddy Waters--often quoted as a great supporter of white blues--has remarked that whites can *play* but *not sing* the blues. Such remarks are so subjective that they resist analysis. If singing

in a "black vocal style", or being distinctively "Negroid" in performance--to quote the dated parlance of the blues discographers Dixon and Godrich--is a requirement, one can say that only blacks can sing the blues. If one considers singing in a black vocal style to be part and parcel of blues performance, one rarely hears such singing by whites, outside of a few embarrassing imitations of black accents.

This brings up the whole question of singing (or playing) with *feeling*, and J. B. Lenoir's remark that one couldn't sing the blues unless he had been *blued*. While this seems agreeable to most commentators, the sad fact is that there is no agreement whatsoever on how to quantify or measure this quality. Saying, "If you have to ask, you'll never know," no longer passes muster, since everyone is willing to grant the quality of soul and feeling to *only those performers that they like*, regardless of race, regardless of skill, and--if truth be known--regardless of feeling, whatever it may signify to the listener. I was astounded to hear an ardent fan of cocktail piano comment that a particular virtuoso of superficial inanities played with "such remarkable feeling." Such a comment reveals, if nothing else, the hopelessness of invoking such a vague criterion as "feeling".

Of course, many people don't consider singing in a black vocal style to be part and parcel of blues performance, and among these, many feel that whites who have suffered--such as Hank Williams--sing in their own suffering-suffused manner, in a distinctively non-black style. To think that country and western performers have their own way of singing the blues seems entirely correct to me, and these performers have existed since music was first recorded. This is another issue, however.

While these ideas seem clear, dismissers of white blues performance are often accused of holding the position that whites

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"do not have a right" to play the blues. The right to play and sing the blues is never at issue. An important factor that is at issue is that white performers have so much coverage and such high record sales (compared to blacks) that their notion of being victims of discrimination because *Living Blues* doesn't cover them is quite laughable. As if Bonnie Raitt or Stevie Ray Vaughan were drowned in obscurity because of *Living Blues'* "racist" policies! The real truth is that with white performers, the opinion of *Living Blues* is a drop in the bucket compared to the critical establishment that does care about them, that does cover them, that does give out Grammy awards, and that does decide whether they make it or not (insofar as any critical establishment can do these things.)

And it *is* a matter of the critical establishment, after all. The fact that this particular critical establishment is white is very important. Black music critics have bigger fish to fry, preferring to concentrate on rap and more popular artists. But their positions on these questions would be worth knowing. We cannot assume that black critics and black blues musicians feel the same in this matter. Indeed, why black blues performers don't object to white performers is far more than a question of tolerance. For black blues artists, the existence of white performers often leads them to greater financial success. As Rubio noted, Aretha Franklin credits her appearance in *The Blues Brothers* with revitalizing her career. Of course it recharged her career. We are protesting the racist conditions that made that possible, not its happening. Likewise, Bonnie Raitt made John Lee Hooker's LP such a fantastic seller, and not vice versa, (although by the time of their joint venture, Hooker was already incredibly popular for a blues artist.) But the argument over stars and "coverage" has an interesting dimension.

What many of the critics of magazine coverage are driving at is that they and their accomplices would like to receive coverage in *Living Blues*, principally because it is the pioneering magazine



that covers *black artists*, i.e. "real" blues artists. They know, however, that they can't raise this as an issue without revealing that they, too, believe that white blues are somehow inferior. In truth, the white artists receive considerable coverage in *Blues Access*, *Blues Revue Quarterly*, and other magazines, but these magazines don't carry the stamp of approval that *Living Blues* does, for strictly racial reasons. It seems as if those white blues aficionados who profess to be "color-blind" are quite the opposite. But before discussing this color-blindness, let's approach the question from another perspective.

*Blues Revue Quarterly* has seized on the phrase, "It's the music, stupid." The editor has written that he's made it into a poster and has it on his wall, just to remind him of "what the blues is really about." I keep it in mind, too, along with "Hitler will never invade Europe," and "you'll fall off the edge of the earth." Because just "the music" is a much more-splendored thing than he acknowledges, something vastly more complex than mere "sounds." After all, if "sound" were all there were to it, no one would ever go to a live performance, concerts and clubs would be identical, rock fans wouldn't watch MTV (they'd just listen to it), performers wouldn't think about costume or stage acts or presence, etc. One just prefers to think that "the music is all that counts."

Most readers of *Race Traitor* realize that the complex psychodynamics of race make it a subject impossible to ignore, but we also pretend to ignore it, too. Can you imagine living in a world where 1) a nearly all-white jury comes in with a racist verdict about the officers who beat Rodney King; 2) 50% of any blues audience is ready to argue over the merits and demerits of Telecasters vs. Stratocasters or Martin D-45s vs. Gibson whatever, as if these preoccupations were "the music"; but 3) the same audience is ready to pretend that the race of the performer doesn't play a role in their hearing of the blues! It's just the music, stupid? Whooooee.

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Indeed, if we did start talking about race and the way we hear the blues, we'd find out that many (white) people *like* to hear the blues played by whites more than they like to hear it played by blacks; many blacks vastly prefer to hear the blues played by blacks; many, many, people lie and say they don't care who plays it; and a very, very few people aren't lying when they say they don't care who plays it. (But don't worry. You and I aren't one of *them*.)

Who are these people for whom race doesn't matter? Not the average white blues artist. In fact, many white blues performers who, we are told, bring their own "authenticity" to their craft, display a mad craving for approval from black listeners and black artists, (not to mention black-oriented blues magazines like *Living Blues*). Whenever the battle is enjoined, in person or in the letters and editorial columns of *Living Blues*, *Guitar Player*, or *Blues Revue Quarterly*, a white blues performer writes a pseudo-palliative "brotherhood" letter and just happens to mention all the black artists with whom he's performed, with the plain intention of proving that he must be acceptable or all of these obviously authentic artists wouldn't have welcomed his company. In itself this attitude embodies the entire contradiction of the existence of white blues. If white blues is autonomous and self-authenticating, why is black approval needed? If it is not autonomous and self-authenticating, and the craving for black approval seems to suggest this, why is it not the weak and imitative form its detractors claim? This question remains with us.

One of my points in the book on Memphis Minnie, *Woman with Guitar*, and in *Blues And The Poetic Spirit*, was to offer new ways to hear the blues, so that the old songs and their embedded value systems would be meaningful to modern listeners. There is great resistance to this on the part of many listeners, however, and this relates to the race controversy among modern blues fans. Indeed, one reason so many white listeners prefer white performers

of their own age is that their interest in the values embedded in the blues is nil, whereas they identify quite easily with other young whites. But are they hearing the same thing? Is it the same when a black man like Chuck Berry sings that he went "across Mississippi clean," as when a white man like Elvis Presley sings the same lyrics in the same song? Hardly! Getting "across Mississippi clean" has a whole accumulation of meanings when sung by a black, meanings that just don't exist for a white performer. And listeners of different races must hear it and identify with it differentially, based on their experience...and based on their interpretation of the experience of the singer.

It is often forgotten that a large proportion of the (white) blues' current performers (and their following) was inspired by the popular white comedians Dan Ackroyd and John Belushi, doing their characterization of Jake and Elwood Blues, *The Blues Brothers*. The LP and the movie ignited a trend--based on a *joke*, mind you--that went beyond the wildest dreams of any of the participants. For many new white performers the notion of the blues' "black heritage" is indeed a mystery; the only "heritage" they know is sun glasses, black suits and fedoras, which have become one of the classic new white blues uniforms. Combined, they form the logo of one of the new blues clubs. While the proliferation of white performers who play at these clubs may seem to be a harmless aberration to some, its ill effects can be quite insidious and go beyond the economic.

I am reminded of a blues magazine photograph of a white male performer playing the blues for a group of school children, most of whom seemed to be very young black males. While many probably thought this was an extraordinary moment of cross-racial understanding and achievement, I was struck much more by the sadness of a lost opportunity. Here was a group of children for whom the presence of an artistic black male performance model

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would have been a major encouragement in the development of their own self-confidence, but instead they were given a lesson in pseudo-multiculturalism and the blues by a white performer. "Heritage," anyone?

Defenders of such events are often proponents of "color-blindness" as the ultimate weapon of anti-racism, but many of these color-blind whites are really resisting the importance of *consciousness of race* and race matters, with all the nagging reminders of racism contained therein. They believe that by refusing to use race as a criterion for anything, they are being the ultimate non-racists, but they are actually blinding themselves to the complexity of racial issues. If we may return to the event of the Grammy winners, isn't it clear that what may seem like color-blindness is simply an event that allows racism to return to the podium? Whites didn't win in the blues category because it was open to all and the best performers won; they won because whites are the vast majority in a country where racism distorts almost every move. The Grammy awards were simply more racism, not the exercise in color-blindness that so many pretend. Color-blindness, in too many cases, is simply the granting of control to white rule.

How ironic if the white blues performers, who so reputedly respect their black mentors, are only another instrument aiding and abetting white rule.

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# UNLETTERED

BY IRVING IGNATIN

The flashlight beams came to a rest on two men asleep on the wooden benches. The man in the doorway, playing the light on their faces, spoke in a commanding voice, "Come on, now, you'll have to beat it!" The two roused and looked at him, but they were only half awake, so he had to repeat the words. This time they were more threatening, and the man waved his light impatiently.

The men finally understood and arose, mumbling. The taller spoke out, "I thought this was a church. Isn't that all right?" His voice was sleepy and resentful.

The invisible man behind the light said, shortly, "It's a church, but it ain't a hotel. Come on, get moving!"

The shorter man nudged his companion to keep quiet. "Shut up, Bill, let's get out," he whispered.

Their muscles stiff from the cold and the pressure of the wooden benches, they stumbled through the aisle towards the man in the doorway, and followed him down the steps. "Well, now, you fellows will have to keep out of here," he said. "That's orders. Can't have you in the church." He strode off to the other side of the railroad tracks, leaving them alone.

One hundred yards away along the tracks was the station they had noticed earlier in the night. They walked towards it. The sky was full of stars, but there was no moon. Frost lay on the ground and a freezing wind whistled through the surrounding skeleton of a forest. They stumbled over cinders and swore. A

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small platform on one side, facing the tracks, was lighted by a dim overhead bulb. Searchlights from an iron tower threw a revealing circle of light on a large tank about fifty yards off to the side. All around it was pitch black. The village's dozen houses were distinguishable only by the darker outlines of their sloping roofs against the dark sky.

"That bastard," chattered Bill. "Why couldn't he let us stay there? Christ, it was cold in there. I was about froze, anyway." His tone changed. "How long before the freights start running, Jim?"

The smaller man only grunted and shivered and concentrated on the ground before him, over which his feet were moving with difficulty.

"Think we can stay there till they start?" asked Bill again, indicating the station.

Jim's teeth were clenched, his face blue with cold. He was intensely cold. He shook his head and shoulders, movements that the cold aggravated. He would have run if he had been able, but he walked stiffly as though his knees would not bend.

Bill laughed at him.

"Boy, you look cold," he said. "I never knew it got so cold in Florida."

"Neither did I," said Jim. "We want to get a freight and get out of here. Maybe it's warm in New Orleans."

The station was looming up before them. It was of plain boards. From a crack under a door marked "WHITE" a golden glow was escaping. They mounted two rickety steps to the plat-

form. A dozen pairs of tracks were visible from this spot. Long lines of freight cars, motionless, dark masses, stood on the tracks. In the distance, they heard grinding noises of moving cars: freights starting to make up. The fagged end of an engine's headlight rested for a moment on a dark blotch of trees, on the other side of a curve.

They opened the door and entered a small, rough room, dimly lighted by a worn-out bulb. Along one side was a bench running the length of the room, large enough for two men to lie upon. In the corner was a little stove with a pipe going up through the roof. There was a pile of wood near it and a chair. Bill carefully closed the door behind him. A middle-aged man was standing near the stove, looking thoughtfully down at it. A young fellow paced a side of the room slowly. His face was clean and he wore a mackinaw and felt hat. Neither seemed to look up as they came in.

They sat down on the bench opposite the stove, side by side. The warmth reddened their cold faces and showed up dark circles of sleeplessness deep under their eyes. Their faces were dirty but clean-shaven. They rubbed their palms together and shook themselves. The two men had been talking, but were now silent. The two lit cigarettes and sat smoking and looking into the stove. The middle-aged man standing near it rubbed his hands slowly. "It's a cold night out," he said.

Bill leaned closer to the warmth. "Hell, ain't it," he said. Jim sat silent, half-asleep, seeming to be unconscious of everything. He dangled his cigarette and stared glumly at the floor. The stove was making his face redder. His eyes were glazed. The two standing men exchanged words. The man near the stove said, "You've still got an hour, haven't you?" The young man looked at his watch. "Hour and ten minutes if it's on time." "Oh, she'll be on time," said the other. Bill stepped on his cigarette and took a turn down the room.

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"Do passenger trains run through here?" he asked.

The older man said, "Yes, they come through here about four times a day. But they only run up to Macon, the ones that stop here. They come up from Tampa. You have to change at Macon to go any other place. The rest don't stop here."

"Not much use for a station, is there?" said Bill.

"Well, they either go west here or north. It's a junction."

"How about the freights?" asked Jim, waking up. "They run here through Tallahassee, don't they?"

"Yes, oh, yes. They run west along the coast here to Pensacola."

"When do they start?" asked Jim, looking at him.

The other looked off. "'Bout six," he said.

"What time is it now?" asked Bill, addressing the young fellow.

He took out a silver watch. "Half past one," he said.

There was a silence for a few minutes while the wind beat against the walls outside. It was fairly warm in the room. Jim stretched out on the wooden bench, using his coat for a pillow, and shut his eyes. Bill sat near his feet and smoked continuously, keeping his eyes open. He seemed to be interested in the place. Once he walked to the door and looked out. The other two men were mainly silent. Nobody had much to say.

Jim was asleep, and faintly snoring, when a man came in the



door, carrying a lantern and a little lunch-box. He nodded to the men standing near the stove and merely looked at the others. He rubbed his hand before the fire before sitting down on the chair and opening his box. He took out several cuts of fried pork and some biscuits. He cut the biscuits open with a pocket knife and made sandwiches of the pork, and started eating.

"This weather makes you hungry," said the middle-aged man.

The other nodded. He threw an occasional unquiet glance at the sleeping Jim. He spoke to the younger man. "Your train will be along soon, Charlie," he said.

"It should be," said Charlie. He was wide-awake as though it were noon. He was a husky chap.

"How's your mother?"

"She's all right," answered Charlie. "I left her sleeping. She couldn't stay up."

"Didn't want you to go, did she?"

"No. Hell! But I can't turn down this chance. There's nothing doing around here. That's a good job in Atlanta."

"Sure. That your bag?" he asked.

"Yes."

Bill was listening to the conversation. He wanted to say something, but the newcomer's attitude was forbidding. The three men knew each other and excluded him rather pointedly.

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"How's everything going?" the middle-aged man asked.

"Awright," he said, with a mouthful of pork and biscuit. He was looking at Jim. "Is that your friend?" he asked Bill, nodding to Jim.

"Yes, we're together," said Bill.

"Wake him up. He can't sleep here."

Bill felt devilish. "Who are you?" he said.

"I'm the stationmaster, wake him up." He started to rise. There was a sudden hostility in the air.

Bill prodded Jim. "Get up," he said. The other sank back and watched.

Jim opened his eyes and closed them immediately. Bill pushed him again. "You have to get up, Jim," he said.

Jim sat up, his eyes bleary, looking around uncertainly. The stationmaster eyed him. "You can't sleep here," he said to him.

Jim gave him an ugly look, but managed to sit up. He stared at the man for a moment, and as the other casually continued eating, he looked away, tried to awaken. The others acted as if nothing had taken place, but they gave the stationmaster a quick smile.

The latter finished eating, took out a pipe and ignited the remains of the tobacco inside. He lounged in the chair, puffing at his pipe.

"Some cold spell," he said, comfortably.

"Sure is," said Charlie. "Be warmer in Atlanta, maybe."

"Yes," said the other, standing near the stove, "it might be warmer there. We're getting the tail end of something down here."

"Well, it's warm in here," said the stationmaster.

"A nice bottle of corn'd go good tonight, eh, Ed?" said Charlie.

"Yes, suh," said Ed. "Got a little if you want some," he offered. They were all warmer to each other since the little episode.

"Not on my job," said the stationmaster. "I have to wait till I get done."

"Then you'll hit it, boy," said Charlie.

"Yeh, need a crack or two after a night like this, checking up those babies." He nodded towards the outside. "You don't look so happy to be going," he said to Charlie.

"I am all right. It's just funny to leave this place at night like this. Might be months before I get back. Feels funny."

"Oh, don't mind that, kid," said Ed, "we all have to get out and make our way in the world."

"Can't get nowhere around here," said the stationmaster. "I know that. They got me out all day long nearly."

He put his pipe away and went to the door. He gave Jim a last look, nodded to his friends, and vanished. Charlie walked the room and looked at his watch every five minutes. Ed clasped his hands behind him and seemed to be deep in thought.

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The creaking and grinding of moving freights was becoming more frequent, but still distant. The room was half filled with tobacco smoke. It was getting colder; the fire was going out. Ed refilled the stove with fresh wood, and it started blazing up again. Jim was smoking. Suddenly he spoke, addressing Ed.

"What's the matter with him?" he asked, looking towards the door.

"Who, George?" said Ed. "I don't know." He laughed and avoided his eyes.

Charlie spoke up. "He don't want you fellows taking up his station, that's all. I don't blame him, either."

"What's it to you?" asked Jim, getting angry.

Charlie started forward. "I'll show you." Jim tried to stand up, but Bill held him down. Ed tried to quiet Charlie.

"Come on, don't start anything. You have to be going soon," he said.

"Lay low, Jim," said Bill.

Jim was still trying to get up, making Bill fight to hold him. Just then a whistle sounded.

"There's your train, Charlie," said Ed. "Drop it."

Charlie ignored the sound. "I'll show this bastard," he said. "Why don't you lousy bums go to work?"

Jim was calmer. "Go on, screw," he said.

"Come on, get your bag, here's your train," said Ed. He drew Charlie towards the door. Charlie picked up his bag and followed him out the door. They could be heard talking outside. Jim was silent now and Bill was talking to him.

"I guess we got to get out, now," he said.

"I ain't getting out till these babies start running, and west, too," said Jim viciously.

They had the place to themselves now. Jim sat down on the chair beside the stove. Bill remained on the bench, looking at him anxiously. The noise of the approaching train was louder. It was jamming its brakes, slowing up and making a fearful racket. Bill went to the door to watch it pull in. It came roaring up and stopped with a screech. He saw Charlie and Ed talking to the stationmaster. They were shaking hands and Charlie got on the train. It stopped only half a minute, then started forward. Bill closed the door and turned to Jim.

"He was telling the other fellow about it," he said.

Jim glowered at the floor and said nothing, hugging the stove and smoking a cigarette. There was silence for a while, then they heard steps coming. The door opened, and Ed and the stationmaster, George, appeared. George walked straight for Jim and stood over the chair.

"You're one of these tough ones," he said. "Come on, beat it. You're in here long enough, anyway." The southern drawl was particularly ugly.

"I'm waiting for a train," said Jim, with a provoking half smile.

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Ed grunted something. The stationmaster was incensed. He grabbed Jim's collar and tried to lift him and throw him towards the door. Bill took a step forward, but whatever he wanted to do, he wasn't quick enough. Jim pulled savagely out of the other's grip and stood up quickly. He let fly with one of his fists, a hard punch, catching the stationmaster on the chin and staggering him against the wall. He sprang at him and struck again with a left and right to the body. The stationmaster started to slump to the floor. Ed ran to the door, yelling for help. Bill grabbed him and shoved him hard against the farther wall. As he reeled past, Jim caught him on the eye, and he fell, striking his head against the stove. The stove teetered, and the pipe coming out of it was dislocated and soot fell to the floor. Red light came from the hole it had filled.

"Come on, Bill!" shouted Jim.

They ran through the door and headed towards the church, their feet flying off the gravel. Two brakemen came running up to the station, yelling. One looked inside. "They killed George. He's dead," he shouted. "There they go." The fugitives were plainly visible in the wide ribbon of light from an engine's spotlight. The brakemen stood on the platform and drew revolvers, and aimed. Eight shots were fired. First, Bill staggered and hit the frozen ground. Then Jim went down, as he noticed Bill's downfall and turned to see. The streaming light showed up their curiously still bodies. In the distance, the freights were still making up.

*This story was found in the author's papers after his death. It was written around 1934.*

# TWO POEMS

BY JOHN STRUCKER

## Accident Report

One day Ana the sister of Little Dave the Gypsy  
she was stumpy with orange hair but  
walked like a *femme fatale* anyway one hand  
on her hip rolling  
her eyes coquettishly back  
from the coffee machine  
lost her finger in the merry-go-round  
which is what they used to call this little  
punchpress the girls ran.

It must of repeated they said later well naturally  
she fainted and Jumbo the  
supervisor who walked swaying heavy like  
a circus elephant because of ruptures  
he got lifting too many 75-pound pans too fast  
saw her fall  
and ran to get the folding canvas wheelchair.

Kenny Ristig 60-looked-like-70  
went to college got his girl pregnant and started  
running the Davenport automatic screw machines  
that look like Gatling guns during the Depression  
(died the next year of lung cancer)  
and Louise the weepy drunk Jumbo  
used to cover for because everybody said  
they once were lovers  
helped Jumbo wheel her down to the infirmary where the

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washedup alky doctor's first words were  
always  
you didn't do that here did you?  
with waste rags wrapped around her bloody hand.

Five minutes later Jumbo came running back and  
went down on his hands and knees crawling  
around in the oil-dri next to the merry-go-round  
and John the Robot came over too  
who seldom spoke and worked fast all the time  
eating while he worked through the break  
so Orville the Jester said  
if John could get away with it  
he would shit while he was working just like a horse;  
he had a heartattack on the crapper  
two months later and the pretty young nurse  
with high breasts had to go into the stall  
to see if he was dead and  
they took him out wearing an oxygen mask  
but who were they kidding?

In a few seconds we were all on the floor  
looking for the finger hoping somebody else  
would find it,  
even little Dave her brother the five-foot one inch  
Mighty Mouse  
blinky bald fuzzy-haired and couldn't read a lick  
so he all the time sent the parts to the wrong departments;  
Tom the Organizer who tried  
to teach him to read said Dave was like a little pitpony;  
Chester the Hillbilly said if Dave kept  
lifting those heavy pans every day  
his whole asshole would fall out.

Eventually Jumbo found Ana's finger and carried it



down to the infirmary in a coffee cup  
all wrapped up in a piece of brown paper towel  
and everything went back to normal.

Ana came back two months later  
still walking like a coquette  
but for some reason  
they never did sew that finger back on.

## Superhighway of compassion

The city of Cambridge, Mass. and public television station WGBH have received a federal grant to provide free public access to the Internet and other advanced telecommunications technology. Among the "target populations" for these services are the homeless.

For all the lonely  
crazy homeless folk  
we bear the gift  
of Internet access -

Hi-rez monitors  
flashing  
pictures of safe apartments  
warm friends  
and perhaps (as needed)  
an E-mail therapist

With this virtual housing,  
and virtual love  
we lavish our virtual concern

*John Strucker teaches adult literacy in Cambridge. His poems have appeared in atelier.*

# REVIEWS

Vron Ware. *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History*. London and New York: Verso Books, 1992. 263 pp. \$18.95 paper.

BY SUSAN PENNYBACKER

Nothing confounds contemporary feminism more than the problems posed by racial politics. If it was once fashionable to pronounce that 'socialism never answered the woman question,' now feminism's inadequacy in confronting racism is commonly if quietly asserted. Many of the same fractious anxieties that plagued white-dominated historical feminist movements and organizations in the British, imperial, and American contexts, and accompanied the earliest efforts to redress racial and sexual grievance, persist and survive. They hover menacingly over all of the present American discourses on crime, abortion, education, sexuality and religion while Europe continues to witness deep and increasing racial antagonism existing cheek by jowl with ardent (and often socialist) feminisms. In an effort to address this dilemma, Vron Ware's book surveys and comments upon a vast historical literature centered in the nineteenth-century British context. Her essays explore "histories ....that take full account of race as well as gender and class--in order to raise questions that are relevant to contemporary feminism." (229)

A forthright memoir of her own English middle-class, educated

girlhood and of her evolution as a feminist and anti-racist activist and writer is the most convincing and unique component of the book. She tells her story with candor and earnestness; exposed to view is the thorny political culture in which a large part of white post-war British leftism grew. Ware describes her explorations of community work, journalism, and woman's groups, and the inevitable embarrassments, fissures and confrontations over racial and sexual politics, so familiar and yet so little-recorded. In its own right this is a provocative and trenchant contribution to social history. English family life of Ware's era brought the issues of the empire home to the provinces; the subtlety and contradictions of the renditions of politics and morality that were offered at the breakfast table and in the garden, illuminate and evoke. The shock of the urban, of the cosmopolitan, and of the squabbling and wrenching debate that characterized a self-righteous and heady Vietnam-era activism is recognizably and compellingly rendered.

The remaining narrative pursues several broad themes of historical precedent, principally through accounts of the lives and work of several women. Abolitionism, anti-imperialism, anti-lynching and the implications of their histories for present concerns are the subjects of the rest of the text. An unorthodox use of a mixture of primary and scholarly sources offers the reader a rich bibliography of a hidden history of white British women and racism, and much else. Simply for this compilation of both detail and *expose*, the text is worth reading. For students and the committed activist/reader, this is both introduction and a new theoretical contribution.

The anti-slavery campaigns and the travels of women in the empire deployed rhetorics of both fierce racial prejudice and a mission of racial uplift. Over and over, Ware emphasizes the philanthropic and charitable motives of the reformers who were well-placed in the feminist canon--like Barbara Bodichon--or less prominent, like Ware's most lauded subject, Catherine Impey,

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editor of the turn-of-the-century journal, *Anti-Caste*, a pioneering publication dedicated to racial harmony and equality. The foibles and excesses of racial intolerance are recounted as well. Annette Ackroyd's forays in India resulted in a sympathy for Indian women and a deep and blinding disgust with Indian men. Josephine Butler is revealed as a fervent participant in the debates about the regulation of contagious diseases in India; her diatribes add a great deal of perspective to the complexities of the positions she took in the domestic debates and struggles about the Acts, presented in more limited terms by Judith Walkowitz in *Prostitution and Victorian Society* (Cambridge 1980).

A riveting closing vignette concerning Ida B. Wells completes Ware's survey of women who sought to address racial issues and the paradoxes of their speech and actions. Wells, Impey, and Isabella Mayo began as comrades in the founding of an anti-lynching campaign in Britain. As an African-American opponent of the renewed surge of racial terror in the American South, Wells traveled to England to educate potential supporters about conditions on this side of the waters. She rather unwittingly became involved in a feud between the two white activists--Impey and Mayo--sparked by what was seen by Mayo as a bizarre and impertinent offer of marriage on Impey's part, made to a mutual West Indian friend. The reader can explore the implications of this suspenseful tale of sexual and racial intrigue; for Wells, who remained loyal to Impey, the result was years of destructive bickering in the small support network, followed by an even uglier and more momentous breach with temperance advocate Frances Willard, whose smug northern racism helped to foster the kind of divisions that had accompanied the splits between women suffragists and advocates of black male voting rights during Reconstruction.

In her retelling of these stories and her interpretations of her subjects' language and sentiment, Ware repeatedly points to the imposition of an imperialist rhetoric upon rhetorics of women's

rights. She pleads for a politics that will allow these contradictions to subside in the 1990s. She seeks a clear confrontation with the past in order to inform the gaps between a white British feminism that purports to speak for all women and anti-racist or "black liberation" struggles that "prioritize" another set of issues. There is no contest drawn with "women's history" *per se*, but by implication, and through her interrogation of the numerous references that accompany the text, many existing attempts at telling a history of progressive women's achievement at home and abroad are brought into question. Ware's material and arguments are highly suggestive and map out a great deal of territory that will undoubtedly be rethought and reinvestigated by future commentators, who will work very much in Ware's debt.

The richness of her essays prompts some very large questions. This is a book, as Ware defines it, exclusively about whiteness and about the historical production of the white, English middle and upper class reformer/feminist. Mary Prince does not appear; the indigenous African, Asian and West Indian population of Britain is absent as the story focuses only on the encounters of her feminist subjects with the peoples out in the empire, and with African-Americans. English white working-class men and women too are absent, for reasons clear from the design of this work--neither sector was engaged in the formative moments of British feminism, though there was considerable labour support for anti-slavery. Only a committed minority of those who traveled in the empire did even as Ackroyd did in attempting to found a school for Indian women, in antagonism to the more common women missionaries. As the best work in women's labor history documents, the suffrage movement did not touch most of the working class; the struggle for 'votes for women' in Britain was *not* a struggle for universal suffrage but for the extension of the property franchise (which excluded a majority of urban working class males from the vote before 1918 and certainly almost all black males) to those women who could meet it. Ware might have pointed out the symmetry between this class and

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racial exclusivity and the failure of many American women's suffrage advocates to go over to support the struggle for black male voting rights.

Similarly, little space is devoted in the text to black figures other than Wells and a few Indian and African-American male activists. They are not the central movers of Ware's story. The challenge to her subjects is to have responded appropriately to the demands of anti-racism as posed in their given historical moments, *while* maintaining a "progressive" stand on feminist issues as posed in their time. Most failed. Instead, they employed a patronizing vocabulary of victimization. In the discursive norms of the middle and end of the nineteenth century, they repeatedly commented upon the helplessness of the dark races, especially in instances in which they saw racial justice as desirable. Though few men are depicted here, this was the era of Twain's ostensible anti-imperialism and of Du Bois's initial stab at a pan-African alliance in the form of the Pan-African Conference of 1900 held in London. Jane Cobden-Unwin, in attendance at the Conference, fell heir to the patterning that Ware outlines for the preceding decades. The embrace of black brothers and sisters continued in London's Liberal and Labour circles as the War of 1914-18 approached, and thereafter. Yet mainstream white feminism would never give primacy to anti-racism or anti-imperialism. Forms of intolerance and prejudice of the preceding century continue.

Ware's work admirably suggests that feminism occasionally unraveled in the face of the history of racial oppression and terror that in the main it comfortably co-existed with. But *Beyond the Pale* is at its most unsettling when it repeatedly employs the invidious phrasing, "women and black people"--these categories *too* need unraveling. In the process of doing so, the exclusivity of a 'feminist' investigation may be superceded. Ware's own ambivalent conclusion can be tested further: "Political unity between women across race and class is potentially one of the greatest forces for

change in the world...but there is nothing about being a woman which necessarily guarantees that unity." (254)

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Theodore W. Allen. *The Invention of the White Race, Volume One. Racial Oppression and Social Control.* London and New York: Verso Books, 1994. 310 pp. \$19.95 paper.

BY DAVID ROEDIGER

Although it deserves and promises to sell by the thousands, this is a rare book. It is the product of deep reflection, patient research and passionate political commitment. It speaks authoritatively to a thousand-year sweep of the history of Britain, Ireland, West Africa, the colonized Americas and the United States. Its origins outside professionalized history--Allen has worked as a miner, mailhandler, draftsman and librarian--lend an urgency and clarity usually absent in academic writings, but without even a whiff of anti-intellectualism.

Allen, who learned long ago from a fellow proletarian intellectual to say "I am not white," is making a decisive contribution to the demystifying and dismantling of what he terms the "quintessential Peculiar Institution"--that is, the "so-called 'White Race.'" His 1975 pamphlet, *Class Struggle and the Origins of Racial Slavery* brilliantly posed the issue of the "invention of the white race" within a materialist framework. (It is worth noting,

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discomfiting as it might be to liberals, and to many marxists as well, that the historicizing of whiteness in U.S. history has occurred almost exclusively in a marxist framework). Since *Class Struggle*, Allen has spent two more decades researching and writing a huge, two-volume history of whiteness invention. His task has involved not only monumental archival research and secondary reading but also a constant struggle to find new and fresh angles from which to view racial formation. Following W.E.B. DuBois, Allen realizes that a "White Blindspot" has robbed U.S. historians of critical distance necessary to see whiteness as an invention, as an historical phenomenon, and as a problem. In Volume One, Allen uses Irish history as a "mirror" to generate new angles of vision regarding race in the U.S. Since, as he argues, "Irish history presents a case of *racial oppression without reference to alleged skin color*," it offers a sharp challenge to easy assumptions that racism is a natural, color-based "phytogenic" phenomenon.

Allen begins with the debate among U.S. historians over the origins of slavery in British North American colonies, especially in Virginia and Maryland. He sets the "psycho-cultural argument," associated with Winthrop Jordan and Carl Degler, against the "socio-economic argument," associated with Eric Williams, Oscar and Mary Handlin and Edmund Morgan. While clearly identifying with the latter group, Allen notes that the existing socioeconomic wisdom gives far too little attention to African American resistance, "white" poverty and conscious ruling class policymaking to fully capture the dynamics of race, past or present. Allen's criticism of the psycho-culturalists is nothing short of withering. Puncturing Jordan's view of early Virginians as driven by the "need to know they were 'white,'" he observes that the word 'white' was not used to name people in the colony until 1680. Moreover, he adds, the anti-Irish racism of the English can hardly be explained by a need, instinctual or otherwise, for whiteness.

In turning to the Irish case, Allen posits a definition of



racism which hinges on a "pattern of oppression." The "hallmark of racial oppression," established in its colonial origins and persisting subsequently, was the reduction of "all members of the oppressed group to one undifferentiated social status, a status beneath that of any member of any social class within the colonizing population." Although varying degrees and durations of enslavement occurred, this racial subordination characterized English treatment of the Irish, of native Americans and of African Americans alike. Indeed the "religio-racial" oppression of the Irish served as a precedent for racism in the American colonies. In both locales "declassing legislation" directed at the propertied among the oppressed, deprivation of civil rights, illegalization of literacy and assaults on the family of the racialized implemented racial oppression.

The timing of the development of racial oppression of the Irish by the English is not fully clear from Allen's account, which is true to a very messy set of historical facts. *Invention of the White Race* suggests that an "assault on Irish tribal relationships" began with the Anglo-Norman invasion of the island in 1169. By the early thirteenth century, Irish tribal law went unrecognized by the invaders, who meanwhile refused to extend protections of English law. Granting, as Allen puts it, "political economy its dominion," English-Irish differences were structured around very different attitudes toward private ownership of land, born of England's widespread practice of settled agriculture versus Ireland's concentration on herding. Anglo-Norman lords likely adopted "racial oppression," rather than the Scotland-based model of overlordship, in the context of high thirteenth century grain prices, which made a transition from herding to tillage seem urgent.

On the other hand, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, "Anglo-Irish and native Irish had coexisted in a 'nonracial symbiosis'" as the exigencies of English rule required retreats from unmitigated racism. It was during the seventeenth century that

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attitudes which "had fed primarily on simple xenophobia now, as religio-racism, drank at eternal springs of private feelings about 'man and God.'" In the context of Irish resistance, a rising British capitalism, a much more aggressive colonialism, the Protestant Reformation, and a Puritan revolution, as the historian Thomas Babington Macaulay remarked, the seventeenth century "revived the dying animosities of race." It created what Allen calls "a classic case of racial oppression," and laid the basis for the racial rule of the "Protestant Ascendancy" in the subsequent centuries, right down to ours in the Ulster case. As Allen rightly remarks, the timing and causes of racial rule in Ireland are properly matters of urgent debate among Irish historians. Those debates deserve careful attention, especially insofar as to whether the thirteenth or the seventeenth century receives emphasis, as they bear greatly on how we conceptualize the relationship between capitalism and racial oppression, and even the transition from feudalism to capitalism.

No brief summary can begin to do justice to Allen's sections on Ireland. Small insights abound, as for example, in the discussion of the utility of "religio-racism" in destroying Irish holidays and on the role of the introduction of the death penalty in civilizing and subduing Ireland. The ongoing theme of the several chapters on Ireland is, however, the difficulty of sustaining profitable racial rule without cultivating an "intermediate social control stratum." England's long rule of Ireland saw a shifting variety of attempts to find such a stratum, whether in a small layer of Anglicized elites or in a larger mass of Protestant immigrant planters. Rule by famine and terror, and the persistent failure to quell Irish freedom struggles, bespoke the weakness of British strategies, which were particularly threatened by possible alliances of the peasantry and Catholic and Protestant middle classes in the era of the great bourgeois revolutions. In this context, Daniel O'Connell, whom Allen suggestively compares to Gandhi as a national liberation leader mobilizing hundreds of thousands of oppressed in coordinated protests, successfully forced a nineteenth-century retreat by the

British from racial oppression to national oppression in Ireland, outside Ulster. No longer were all members of the Irish Catholic "religio-race" civilly subordinated to all Protestants. Indeed some elements of the Catholic bourgeoisie, including O'Connell, sat in Parliament. The "besiegers" became a part of the "garrison" of national oppression and British imperialism.

Allen's brilliant account of O'Connell also introduces the superb final section of *Invention of the White Race*, a penetrating reconstruction of the causes and results of the rejection by Irish-Americans of O'Connell's attempts to merge abolitionist antiracism with national liberation in Ireland. Allen offers the best account yet of the process by which the Irish "became white" in the U.S. and of the roles of the Democratic Party, the unions, the labor market and the Catholic Church in ensuring that the nineteenth-century immigrants best "prepared by tradition and experience to empathize with the African-Americans" would become a critical component of the "intermediate stratum" of "whites" perpetuating a system of racial oppression and class privilege in the U.S. In describing this tragic transformation, Allen provides a model for the consideration of "white skin privilege," which is seen as material and real but also as part of a larger system of oppression, including white working class oppression.

Inevitably, a work such as Allen's raises as many questions as it answers. The question of the impact that centuries of "racial" oppression have after a transition to national oppression is a particularly vital one in Ireland and in the U.S. But what is most striking in *Invention of the White Race* is the quality of searching questions and clear answers on offer already, with the promise of much more to come in a second volume.

*David Roediger is the author of Wages of Whiteness (1991) and Towards the Abolition of Whiteness (1994), both published by Verso.*

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Mab Segrest. *Memoir of a Race Traitor*. Boston: South End Press, 1994. 274 pp. \$15 paper

BY MARYON GRAY

Mab Segrest, a lesbian born and raised in Alabama, was a leader in the fight against the Klu Klux Klan and other white supremacist movements in North Carolina during the 1980s. This book is her memoir of that time. But more than that it is a sharing of her search to discover who she is and how she came to believe and act as she does. I recommend it as both a personal and a political memoir.

However, interweaving a memoir of personal discovery and a memoir of political action is difficult. At first I found the book disappointing because it did not tell a clear "story." Segrest explains the problem in the Epilogue:

Writing autobiography, if nothing else, has deepened my appreciation of why people write fiction... There are some character's stories and themes that just did not get developed as neatly as if I were writing fiction, or writing autobiography about something less dangerous than a white supremacist movement that still operates around the book's "Characters." There are also shifts in tone between the "personal" and the "organizing" chapters that are determined, more than anything else, by libel laws and my own concerns about people's privacy and safety...[The] requirements [of documentary writing are different from the confessional requirements of the more personal parts.

Segrest also understood my other difficulty in reading the book. This was the intensity of both the personal and the political subject matter and its interwoven nature. Because of her desire to tell the

personal and political parts of the story differently, Segrest attempts to separate them. She compares this to a ball of fishing worms: "if you try to pick one out of the ball, it hangs on for dear life, stretches, breaks in your hand. That's what I feel like now, trying to separate out the strands of my story: worm guts on my hands." Once the strands are separated it is difficult for the reader to put them together. But it is in doing so that we come to see, to paraphrase James Baldwin, the lie of being white in North America.

Segrest began working in an ad-hoc anti-Klan group in the summer of 1983. A year later the group formalized itself as "North Carolinians Against Racist and Religious Violence" (NCARRV). Segrest was asked to be its executive director. She attempts to describe the cumulative effect of the next three years. The material in brackets is mine.

In the spring of 1985 Chris and I first went into Statesville [where crosses had been burned and Blacks threatened with guns]. We drove over to Shelby that summer when the White Patriots marched around the town square. That November we were down in Robeson when Joyce Sinclair [a black woman] was killed. Carl [a gay male friend] died [of AIDS] in January 1986 at the height of White Patriot power. Jimmy Earl Cummings [a Black man] was killed [by a white Robeson county narcotics agent] in November 1986, the month my daughter was born. NCARRV began working with the Concerned Citizens of Robeson County the next January, the month of the bookstore murders [of three young men perceived to be gay], a year after Carl's death. [Six weeks after the bookstore murders Segrest's mother died.] Reverend Lee [a leader of the Black community in Statesville] died in 1988, while Billy McKellar was in the Robeson County Jail [Billy, a young Black man, died of asthma because of the neglect of his jailers.] *It's the accumulated effect I am trying to get you to comprehend.* What

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does it mean--about North Carolina and about the United States--that all these things happened in one state in so short a time?

With candor rarely found in a political memoir she speaks of the difficulties, not just of the organizing itself, but of working together with her Black staff person, of the balancing of work and personal relationships, of the deterioration of her health.

Segrest and her Black co-worker Cristina had developed a respect and a closeness that would see them through six years of working together. But their partnership unraveled as a combination of white assumed superiority alternating with white guilt, lack of money, the difficulties of administration, fund raising and supervision and the physical dangers of the work led to intense fights at the office.

Segrest's personal life also suffered from the stresses and physical dangers of her work. She and her partner Barb recently discussed the effects of her work. Segrest recalled:

I would come in late at night, the stories rushing out compulsively, filling up all the space. She often reacted with an angry silence that made me talk even faster, or withdraw.

"I was angry at you for putting yourself and us in so much danger for so long, without caring" she (Barb) began.

"Without seeming to care," I corrected.

"Without stopping, taking us out of danger," Barb replied. "You might have cared, but you didn't stop. Something was worth more than our well-being. You were a driven woman, Mab."

... I *was* driven. The white supremacists had already had too much time to grow. I was drawn to people who felt the same urgency.

But finally Segrest's physical debilitation forced her to cut back. She first recognized her health problems when she stayed up all night "puking [her] guts out" after two young Indian men took hostages in the *Robesonian* newspaper office to draw attention to problems in Robeson County. All that year she got well and got sick again. Things always seems so urgent that she never had time to recover completely. Barb let her know that if she did not change the way she did her work, she would leave her. The compromise was to continue the work on a part-time basis.

An important theme of the book is Segrest's examination of her own background to try to understand how she became who she is. She was born in Tuskegee, Alabama in 1949 and raised there. Her father was a postmaster, working long hours to make less than the family spent. He was a withdrawn and taciturn man during most of Segrest's childhood, but came into his own as an organizer of a network of segregated private schools all over Alabama.

Her mother had an incurable skin disease which left her "tearing at her arms and face with a constant, nervous and sometimes savage movement that left her bleeding and raw. Then she started taking cures every two or three years" (which took her away from the family). Segrest found that

There was a metaphor in the itching and inflamed skin that I learned too well, this sensitivity to environment that left our mother tearing at her own flesh, like she was allergic to life itself. When racist violence in Alabama erupted like the lesions on my mother's arms, I was not surprised when it all came down to skin.

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Segrest says of her search for herself:

Three breaches in identity underlie the preoccupation of my life: race (my own and others), my gayness and my mother's sickness. I search each one for clues to meanings of the others. They constantly bleed into one another, like water colors on wet paper.

In addition to her father's role as an organizer of segregated schools, Segrest's family background included a cousin who murdered Sammy Younge, a Black student activist, when Younge refused to use the Jim Crow bathroom in the gas station where Segrest worked.

Segrest was led to make peace with her family because of an African-American friend who advised her that activists need the support of their families. As Segrest wrestled with this advice, she recalled Alice Walker's essay on her relationship with her neighbor Flannery O'Connor. Although respecting O'Connor's writing, Walker suffered from the bitterness of knowing her own psyche had suffered from the injustice of the difference race had made in the lives of white and Black artists. Walker resolved her Flannery O'Connor dilemma by applying the expression "Take what you need and let the rest rot."<sup>1</sup> Segrest began to apply this to her background as well as she began to look for the things she loved as well as those she hated.

Segrest gives some credit to her lesbianism for her open-mindedness to Black people. Public schools were integrated in

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<sup>1</sup> Alice Walker, "Beyond the Peacock: The Reconstruction of Flannery O'Connor," *In Search of our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose by Alice Walker* (San Diego: Harcourt Bruce Jovanovich, 1983), 58- 59. Quoted in Segrest, p. 134.



Tuskegee as Segrest prepared to enter the ninth grade. As she watched thirteen Black students enter the high school she felt "as if I were outside myself, looking down on (myself) and the Negro children, and the ring of policemen with their guns and the white people with their hate. I know how they felt then. They looked lonesome. They could be me. It was as if my heart went out of my body... toward those small human figures crossing the school breezeway." Later in re-reading her early correspondence with her first lesbian lover Segrest concluded that it was the feeling of "*there is something wrong [with me]. I do not belong.*" that gave her empathy with the Black children the day they integrated her school.

But she does not credit the "outcast status" of either gay people or women with bringing automatic empathy toward people of color. Long before her involvement with the anti-Klan movement she learned, along with other women who edited *Feminary*, a journal for southern lesbians, that she could not:

accept a "sisterhood" as segregated as that of my Alabama girlhood, where it had been enforced by police dogs, fire hoses, firebombs and the deaths of children. The more I read of history, the more I saw the bitter legacy from the splits in the Woman's Rights Movement in the late 19th century in which white women leaders such as Susan B. Anthony attacked Black men in racist ways because they had been given the vote and white women had not.

The second section of the book "On Being White and Other Lies: A History of Racism in the United States," is Segrest's attempt to understand the history of the violence which sickened her. It is a far reaching essay which should be read as the writer's attempt not so much to elucidate but to *understand*, to get her hands and thoughts around the history of racism. A critique of the history essay is beyond the scope of this review. It serves well Segrest's stated goal of being "a place for beginning students and activists to understand

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the extensive and cruel history of institutional racism."

Segrest's history shows her understanding of the "invention" of the white race as a means to justify the subjugation and genocide of the "other" Black, red, brown and yellow races. Segrest quotes James Baldwin's piece "On Being White and Other Lies":

America became white--the people who, as they claim, "settled" the country became white--because of the necessity of denying the Black presence and justifying the Black subjugation. No community can be based on such a principle--in other words, no community can be established on so genocidal a lie.<sup>2</sup>

Segrest incorporates into this history genealogical material on her own family beginning with their emigration from England in 1613 and placing them very specifically within the context of the development of capitalism and white supremacy in this country.

The book concludes with a third part, "A Bridge, Not a Wedge" which is an elaboration on Segrest's keynote address at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's *Creating Change* Conference in Durham, North Carolina, in November, 1993. That address was published in the last issue of *Race Traitor* and will not be reviewed here.

I have attempted in this review, not to critique Segrest's book but to give my readers a sense of its breadth and hopefully a desire to read it. But I would like to conclude with two critical questions which the book raised in my mind.

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<sup>2</sup> James Baldwin, "On Being White and Other Lies," *Essence*, April 1984, 90-92, quoted in Segrest, 183-184.

First, what is a race traitor? Segrest details how white people were invented by the ruling class of the colonies to give Europeans a common identity against Africans. She appreciates the role of the state and of capital in preserving and extending white skin privilege to maintain this racial division. Yet her work in the anti-Klan and anti-white supremacist movement was largely devoted to attempts to make the state respond to the atrocities of the far right. She speaks of the White Patriot Party being "unraveled in a series of indictments and trials." When I read this phrase I could not help but think of the Black Panther Party being decimated by the murder of its leaders by law enforcement officers. As race traitors we must not get so caught up in the urgency of working against far-right extremists that we fail to work against the state and other institutions that reproduce white supremacy.

The second question is: how do people become anti-racist activists? Although a main theme of Segrest's book is her search for the roots of her anti-racist activism, I felt that she failed to articulate a significant element in her transformation. Growing up in Alabama in the fifties and early sixties put her at the center of the Civil Rights Movement. She discusses these desegregation struggles from the viewpoint of a young white girl questioning the reactions of the whites around her, but she fails to note the impact which the strength and determination of the Black people engaging in these struggles must have had on her. Although in her history of racism Segrest credits the militancy of the Black movement with inspiring the student, anti-war and women's movements, surprisingly she does not incorporate this insight into her own history. The legacy of Black resistance in this country is an important inspiration for each of us who seek to be race traitors.

*Maryon Gray is a long-time movement activist.*

# EXCHANGE WITH A SOCIALIST CRITIC: Socialism without abolition isn't worth a bucket of warm piss

"Less moralistic approach" needed

To the Editors:

The idea of dismantling the white race can be a good *tactic*. The originality of *Race Traitor* lies in identifying and amplifying this idea and its historical examples and prospects, illustrating cases where it is a fit means. Your thesis appeals to those concerned with moral identity: anti-racist intellectuals, white youth, recovering skinheads. But a less moralistic, more eudaimonian approach would not only give a livelier edge to your essays on art and culture but improve your estimate of the ethical life of white people of modest income. The race treason tactic, born more from the obligation of rightness than politics or the good, aims to excise evil rather than to bring about human flourishing, and convinces me that I am a socialist rather than an abolitionist.

Principled racism is a fool's creed. Opportunist racism, which you build in (even though you say "the majority of so-called whites in this country are neither deeply nor consciously committed to white supremacy") to the position of the white worker, is rather a contextual tool of the capitalist. The foxy powers that be do not limit themselves, hedge-hog style, to one tactic, nor should you. A

means writ large is still a means. One tactic can neither reveal nor remove our troubles. Take your story about the longhair and the shuttle bus in issue #2, in which you admit that his countercultural trait had "exactly the same function as color for Afro-Americans." It follows that the reality which determines the functional equivalence is the social universal at work in the situation--not necessarily color, which is a contingent example of that.

I am a white West Virginian. I grew up in a working-class family, teach now, and have worked on pro-union, anti-racist causes much of my life. Both my political gurus, Ernie Mynatt and the late Don West, were staunchly and actively anti-racist, sometimes in the face of physical violence.

I was first president of United Appalachian Cincinnati. I ask you and your readers to think about this quote from a Cincinnati police manual on Appalachians, from the period when I was in the urban Appalachian movement there:

He is cruel, takes a delight in the suffering of others, yet he himself will suffer pain and illness without expression.

This is a *carte blanche* for beating people up, a practice not held in reserve for blacks. Being "treated like a nigger" or "worse than a nigger" was a common complaint, of which the logical interpretation is that *no one* deserves such. It depends on what groups the cops see as a problem: a fair sampling of lower-class teenagers, Hispanic males and others would reveal similar facts. Your claim here, as I understand it, is that the suffering of white ethnics arises from their own choice to allow racism to keep them from organizing.

You overstate the constructedness of race. Black and white people exist. Their genes and genealogies tell historical stories, not

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necessarily the ugly fiction the racist exploits, but their own. People have identifiable physical characteristics and are roughly identifiable (by whatever words we wish to use) into groups, for all the hard cases. The idealist ploy of word magic, or rattling off ingenious historical accounts for the invention of race, does not abolish this core of biological and common sense fact, which is independent of anyone's will, even the most determined wigger, and which does not depend on whites deciding to place racial interests (how would you know what your racial interests are if you aren't conscious or committed?) above class or other standard appositions. The kernel of fact at the bottom of such grouping cuts both ways, sprouts revolutionary as well as reactionary contradictions, since the racist cannot manipulate group identities at will. As a 19th-century pamphlet by a now unfashionable German sage puts it: "A Negro is a Negro. He only becomes a slave in certain relations." (*Wage Labor and Capital*)

Whiteworkers should--and sometimes do--renounce racism where the situation offers the devil's promise of an advantageous deal. Seeking to foil the devil once and for all, you make a categorical moral demand for treason and suicide qua white; that is, a kind of bone marrow transplant of the essential metaphysical essence of the white worker--not, I notice, any equivalent fanshen by radical intellectuals (thank you for scheduling me for only one transplant operation), blacks, women, gays, or other groups. To which the answer, in today's labor market, is: "Hunh? What deal? What advantage?" The idea that whiteskin privilege inhibits the revolutionary activity of the worker entices you into the "What else could it be" stage of explanation. The current low level of labor militancy you see as one monocausal peculative drought.

A fuller inventory of capitalist strategy and historical development leads me to smell rain. The squeeze now in money, jobs, and social position is palpable. To believe that the road to

humanity lies in rejecting whiteness is a fetish. Poor and working-class people are already human: what they would like to reject is the economic crimping of their human needs. These are currently defined by un- and under-employment. People can and do organize along those lines.

While I am happy to see that Loren Goldner's accusation of Post-Modernist thinking [see *RT* #3] bothers you, you agree with its key assumption as to the present impotence of the working class to act on economic issues. I hope you resist the Kvetch-Politik of victimization cliches from Post-Modernist blacks, feminists, gays, and so forth, where the personal overwhelms the political--"being political" coming to mean "having a spoken or written complaint"--and resentment thrives on the infinite culpability which radiates from the Platonic universals of whiteness and maleness. This sort of quackian or cowbird pseudo-radicalism paralyzes action by loading up any clear-headed agenda with an endless set of riders. I am not reassured in this hope by Christopher Day's claim in your pages that heterosexuality is a socially constructed capitalist plot. (Ooops, another transplant operation!)

Abolitionism in 1994 cannot have the single focus of slavery and does not have a practical goal of equivalent clarity. Failing to distinguish morals from politics, and therefore in danger of making all moral issues equivalent (hence your vulnerability to cowbird radicalism), it is premised on abstract imperatives to rightness rather than a fuller picture of what is self-interested, good, and humanly effective. These fundamentals, my upbringing and experience tell me, are realities to which most Americans are deeply and consciously committed. Farther along, we'll understand why.

Bob Snyder  
Somerville, Mass.  
April 11, 1994

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**Editors reply.** In spite of your dismissal of our view as mere "word magic," we intend to keep insisting that once different populations come into regular contact, all groups, without exception, are socially constructed. The history of "black" and "white" in this country is a history of segregation, oppression, and privilege, and there is nothing "biological" or "common sense" about it.

"A Negro is a Negro," saith the sage. "He only becomes a slave in certain relations." You could not have chosen a more fitting text for our sermon. What are English, Scots, or Appalachians? They are English, Scottish, or Appalachian. They only become *white* in certain relations, when the "white" skin confers a social status superior to that of people otherwise identified.

You describe yourself as white. If you say so. What do you mean by it? We are pretty sure you don't mean it as a simple physical description, like "tall." You can't mean that you are culturally white, because while there is Appalachian culture, and Yiddish and German culture and so forth (and they are all valued parts of the human heritage), we have yet to see anything that can be called white culture. So what can it mean to be white except that you take part in certain opportunities and are exempt from certain penalties because you happened to be born into a private club?

But perhaps, as you suggest, the white skin used to confer advantages on the possessor, but no longer does so. "What deal? What advantage?" you ask. Let us see.

A study published in the *Wall Street Journal* of September 14, 1993 on the effects of the recession of 1990-91 stated that among companies reporting to the EEOC "Blacks were the only racial group to suffer a net loss of jobs.... Whites, Hispanics and Asians, meanwhile, gained thousands of jobs.... Black workers were especially hard hit in blue-collar jobs, losing nearly one-third of the



net 180,210 such slots lost. They were the only group to lose service-worker positions, dropping 16,630 such jobs while businesses added 53,548 new ones. They were the only group to lose sales jobs. Blacks did show some progress in several highly prized white-collar job categories," the study reported. But it added, "they held such a small percentage of these jobs before the recession began that their actual gains were meager." Executives interviewed from several companies denied any discrimination. "At W.R. Grace, for instance, where blacks lost jobs at more than twice the rate of overall work-force cuts, officials say the drop was due entirely to Grace's extensive restructuring." The article quoted Carol Massey, president of the Los Angeles chapter of the National Black MBA Association: "The recession in America means depression in the black community."

From top to bottom: according to a press release from the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown, Census figures and estimates derived from publications of the Bureau of Justice indicate that black people are 7.8 times as likely to go to prison as whites. The only functioning affirmative-action program in the country!

Those who hope (or fear) that hard times will undermine the race differential can relax: hard times have the opposite effect, as capitalist rule comes to rely on the white-skin privilege system even more than in times of relative prosperity. As we write these lines, experts in the White House and on Capitol Hill are debating a health plan; we predict that they will not introduce comprehensive health care until they can figure out how to exclude the masses of black poor from coverage. *The color line will never be abolished without the intervention of abolitionists.*

We never said that possession of a white skin guaranteed the owner a stress-free life. We know that the cops can be pretty rough

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on some categories of European-Americans, especially hillbillies and youth (as well as some labeled "un-white" for specific reasons: see "Police-Assisted Homicide" elsewhere in this issue). But they don't routinely backshoot them, or suicide them in their cells, or kill their children. And the "whites" know the difference, and react accordingly.

You write that the complaint of being treated worse than a "nigger" implies opposition to mistreatment of anyone. We doubt it: more commonly that complaint has meant, You can't treat me that way, I'm white. Before the Civil War, white labor radicals insisted that the conditions of the cotton mill worker were worse than those of the slave. Maybe they were; who can say? Frederick Douglass used to remind them that his old position on the plantation was open since he had left, and invite them to apply for it. None ever did, and we never heard of any white worker trying to pass for black in order to elevate his social position.

How would we know which interpretation is right, yours or ours? Easy--if people get out and march, picket, and riot along with black people, in a context that challenges white supremacy, then we could say that you were right. Did the Appalachians you worked with in Cincinnati do that? Well, occasionally they did, as in the 1967 Detroit rebellion (honor to them), but mostly they didn't. Mostly they, like all the others who like to think of themselves as white, do what they can to take advantage of an accident of birth, or else pity themselves because it doesn't do as much for them as they think it should. If you think we are being too harsh, ask yourself what it means when a so-called white person, on witnessing some racial outrage, whispers a prayer of thanks that he or she is not black, instead of leaping at the throat of the perpetrator.

What you call moralism, and dismiss as a luxury only for those with money, is working-class *morality*, which the German

sage said the working class needs more than its daily bread. What is working-class morality? Solidarity. The conviction that an injury to one is an injury to all. Whiteness is the exact opposite of solidarity. It is an attempt by a part of the working class to cut a separate deal with capital. Working-class solidarity demands race treason on the part of white workers; they must commit suicide as whites in order to come alive as workers.

We are not anti-English, or anti-Appalachian, or anti-anybody else, but *we are anti-white*, because we are opposed to all exclusive clubs. It is unfortunate that you cannot imagine yourself parting with your white identity except through surgical transplant. James Baldwin said, "As long as you think you are white, there's no hope for you." We agree with him, and we think his remark applies as much to well-meaning whites as to the other sort.

You say you are a socialist, not an abolitionist. *In that case, what is your Socialism but a scheme to advance the racial interests of white workers at the expense of black people (and white workers' own class interests)?*

We do not claim that the white race represents the totality of capitalist strategy, or that the struggle against it encompasses all that is needed by those who seek to overthrow capitalist rule. But it is an important part, a crucial part of the struggle for a better world, the part we have chosen to focus on in *Race Traitor*. We think that waging that struggle opens up many possibilities.

Finally, your swipe at Christopher Day is plain gay-baiting, undignified and unworthy of you. In his article in the last issue, Day argued that the categories of "straight" and "gay" (*not* hetero- or homosexual behavior) were social constructs. If you disagree with him and write a serious letter, we will publish it, and give him space to reply.

# CORRESPONDENCE

## DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

To the Editors:

In a very short time *Race Traitor* has acted as a catalyst in much of the political community I participate in, shaping how this community is going to proceed on matters of race. It is undeniable that race as we know it has been a result of developments and programs in history, so with this I don't take issue. In fact, I have been thinking in these terms for some time, as have others; what *Race Traitor* seems to have done is give us a common language and way to organize our thoughts. Again, groups are citing *RT*'s ideas literally; recent issues of *Love and Rage, a Revolutionary Anarchist Newspaper* have adopted the ideas verbatim; also see the recently published political statement for the new collective Agitator Index out of Twin Cities, who cite *RT* directly under their heading "Abolish the White Race."

I am also proceeding here knowing that in the last issue of *RT* it spelled out how the project relates (or doesn't) to "anti-racism/fascism" and in the editorial "When does the unreasonable act make sense?" it elaborated exactly how "race treason" might be applied. Despite the editorial's clear assertions I felt a need to flesh these out more (no pun intended). I have some concerns and for now I want to play the devil's advocate.

You could say that in my community "all we have in common is our misery!" In apartment blocks largely made up of immigrants, when the pigs come to make arrests everyone is to remain in their apartments. When some don't, the pigs are known

to tell them how they hate them all. But the pigs aren't talking to or about immigrants of colour or even immigrants in general, but the occupants of notorious buildings as a whole. The makeup of my city has been largely white and largely poor, but it is on the border with the Six Nations' Confederacy, so it is common to see lifetime partners in homeless/roominghouse circles being native/white. (Those familiar with the homeless superpoor community know that people often "partner up," sometimes for decades.)

In fact, in my neighborhood "race treason," as I understand it and as it has been defined historically by the racist right, is rampant. Young women and couples can be seen carrying babies more often than books, and in recent memory I can't remember when one of those babies *wasn't* mixed. This is the most real example I can offer, the most tangible. Yet I would be lost to tell you how we could organize this, even if it's appropriate to do so (and I think it's not). I believe it's safe to say that this is *not* being called for by *Race Traitor* and that this doesn't even touch on the understanding of *RT*, but it does touch a great many of my community. There is a historic "race treason" that's being practiced. It can't be organized because it either happens or it doesn't (I'm talking specifically about mixed couples), but this isn't even being addressed by "race traitors." Mixed child-rearing/coupleism is even very conscious, at times, in my neighborhood. An example: I arrived at the drop-in center I worked at to find the place up in arms. The focus of everyone's rage was a woman whose way of dealing with her days is deep christianity, usually tolerated. That day she stepped on the wrong toes. She had apparently made her feelings on mixed couples known to the mixed couple sitting beside her and by the time I arrived the young black woman--one half of the couple she was referring to--was ready to tear the christian's head off. This sentiment spread to everyone there, the single native father and the kid, who this week was hip-hop looking, was screaming bloody murder and something about his black grandma.

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Another person worth mentioning was a regular there, a guy who was known only as Irish Mohawk. Ever since the Mohawk uprising at Oka he wears nothing but combat gear and has "Mohawk" printed on everything, and occasionally "Irish." Obviously proud of who he is he never referred to himself as white. While he looked more Irish than native he chose the look of the warrior society, not the provos. We often talked of class war, but talking about it didn't make it so! When I reflect on the role of *Race Traitor* I can't help but wonder why I am in on a secret that in reality at this time affects seemingly everyone in my community *except* me!?

We should look at the possibility that what *RT* is doing at this moment is an abstract form of anti-racism, or a more sophisticated and deeper one. Now I realize that this is precisely what the editors would take issue with. It is stated quite clearly that *RT* is not "anti-racist" but "abolitionist." Some might say my confusion stems from the fact the concept of "abolitionism" is so new, so untried, that there is nothing to compare it to except old tired "anti-racist" models. Sure, there's truth in that, and in recent issues more and more of the contributors are using the common terms I mentioned earlier and drawing similar conclusions as a result. However, there are still many things in *RT* that would find a place in "anti-racist" works. In the first issue particularly there are examples that have been encouraged for years in the "anti-racist" press.

John Brown is the best example. Without ignoring his particular place in history I feel safe in saying he has been used as often as a deflection by white activists faced with criticism of their organizing methods as he has as an example of genuine white alignment against white supremacy. "Anti-racists" and "abolitionists" have to look at this example thoroughly: John has been dead for 134 years! My concerns here are two-fold: (1) In that his raid on

Harpers Ferry was disastrous he was more a fundamentalist than guerilla strategist or anti-racist organizer; the majority of his band were black not white; (2) Where the potential lies for his misuse is seen in examples of the statue of Brown (I'm not sure where) in which he's looking confidently into the distance, pointing with one hand and grasping the shoulder of a small black kid with the other. Now progressive whites didn't erect this statue (to my knowledge) and there are streets named after Black anti-slavery heroes like Harriet Tubman, but there are no statues of Harriet shouldering middle-class white northern abolitionists.

There's the question of numbers, too. More than once in *RT* writers have asserted that "abolitionism" isn't for everyone (who's white), that only a small number are needed to turn on its ass the reliance of whites on other whites, and consequently the system of white supremacy itself. I think it will take considerably more!

The wishes or even the clarity of a few alone simply won't change the character of the white-skinned population. I want race attacks and reliance on skin privilege to cease on the initiative of those who would otherwise use these outlets, or have it taken from them. If we're going to throw in our lot with humanity, then I think we're going to have to throw in our lot with whites more broadly, and not the towel. *Race Traitor* will have to open up its pages more to questions of anti-racism/fascism, no matter how assured its editorials, especially when so much of *RT*'s contents share considerations with the "anti-racist" press (granted in a changed context).

To take you to where I'm at again, briefly: during a heat wave when I was a kid friends and I would look for ways to get something to drink. I lived in an apartment block, and the building next door housed newly arrived Chinese immigrants. We saw them as an opportunity to get something to drink, and so we used to

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enter their apartments when we thought they weren't there. Often times they were just in another room. We went in intending to rip them off and ended up learning about their culture, even writing some Chinese. I can't help feeling there's an analogy there.

It's true you have to make little ripples in the water before you make waves, but we must make waves! In the wading pool, *not* the gene pool.

Bigby  
Hamilton, Ontario  
Jan. 26, 1994

**Editors' reply.** We don't want to quarrel over terms; in our observation, the "anti-racist" movement focuses largely on educating people on why race hatred is wrong, and combating the "racists" and the "right," instead of confronting the mainstream institutions that reproduce race, and challenging the system of race privilege. Our aim is to break up the unnatural alliance of antagonistic social classes held together by "whiteness." The stories you tell about race treason in your community are great. It is those things that make it a center of rebelliousness. If *RT* can give voice to that tendency, so much the better. We agree that even John Brown can be used to deflect a movement--just like all the mixed coupling in your community can, if it is not linked to a larger plan. But we disagree that his raid on Harpers Ferry was disastrous. It failed militarily, but it made the South lose its head and do things that *compelled* the north to resist. A similar process can break apart the white monolith. If the cop starts doubting his ability to recognize a loyal person by color, then he is going to be less selective in beating heads, and that is going to make a lot of so-called whites think and act differently. Isn't that what happens in your community, where the cops treat everyone to some extent as enemies of the state, whatever color they are? Well, let those conditions spread and the



white race will crumble. That is our strategy. Capital has to do its part in turning whites against it. The job of the abolitionists is to provoke it to do that. How many it will take, we don't know. We never said a "small number"--just enough to make the ruling class worry that whiteness is losing its grip. You say it will take "considerably more." How many is that?

### THIS IS ME

To the Editors:

I was very shocked on reading *Race Traitor*. This is me. I couldn't believe it. I grew up in Detroit where I attended high school in an all-white school, then a school where I graduated the only white in my class. I was inter-racially married for six years and have one son from that union. I will not date whites. It must be a racially mixed relationship for me. I used to be more open-minded and would consider dating all races--however the racist ideology of other whites pushed me to a conclusion of exclusion of the white race for me. I read everything I can on Third World countries, especially Africa and the Caribbean. My ex-wife was Jamaican. So I say my son is Ja-merican. I received a "best wishes" card from Nelson Mandela since I've been incarcerated.

I've been called a Negrophile, n----- lover, n----- jimmy, etc. I experience a lot of animosity in prison from whites because I don't hang with the whites here. A white inmate called me over and said to me, "You know, if anything ever happens here, you will really be in a mess because the whites won't help you and neither will the blacks." I told him that I am the way I am and cannot change because I'm in prison. I have to be me--the same as I was on the outside. There is one reason that I'm glad my skin is white and that is because the whites who don't know of my outlook freely expound their racial ideology, assuming that I think in the same terms as they

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do. This way I know where they're coming from.

I am a first-time inmate serving my time in a new institution that is still in the construction phase. There is nothing here for the intellectually inclined other than a small room that is the temporary "library." They only allow six inmates at a time to visit it. With a 1,000-inmate population, you can imagine the accessibility. There are no educational programs and hobbycraft is not allowed. Incarceration has made me indigent, I regret to say. I was hoping you would consider sending me *Race Traitor* because I truly am one and have been all my life. I never would've imagined such a publication existed.

I spend a lot of my free time writing in hopes of receiving various reports, newsletters, zines, etc. Often my letters are returned or go unanswered; however, upon occasion I am fortunate enough to get something to read and occupy my time for a spell. Every day I look forward to mail call to see if I'll be lucky on that day.

James R. Demick #785220  
Columbia Correctional Institution  
Rt. 7 Box 376 (EB/29)  
Lake City, FL 32055-8767  
April 24, 1994

### TWENTY-TWO YEARS IN PRISON AND STILL MEMBER OF A SUPERIOR RACE

To the Editors:

*Race Traitor* seems to be *grossly delusional*. *Technically*, there is not "The White Race." *Caucasians* are a white complexion people, originally with black hair and black eyes; *Aryans* are a

... I *was* driven. The white supremacists had already had too much time to grow. I was drawn to people who felt the same urgency.

But finally Segrest's physical debilitation forced her to cut back. She first recognized her health problems when she stayed up all night "puking [her] guts out" after two young Indian men took hostages in the *Robesonian* newspaper office to draw attention to problems in Robeson County. All that year she got well and got sick again. Things always seems so urgent that she never had time to recover completely. Barb let her know that if she did not change the way she did her work, she would leave her. The compromise was to continue the work on a part-time basis.

An important theme of the book is Segrest's examination of her own background to try to understand how she became who she is. She was born in Tuskegee, Alabama in 1949 and raised there. Her father was a postmaster, working long hours to make less than the family spent. He was a withdrawn and taciturn man during most of Segrest's childhood, but came into his own as an organizer of a network of segregated private schools all over Alabama.

Her mother had an incurable skin disease which left her "tearing at her arms and face with a constant, nervous and sometimes savage movement that left her bleeding and raw. Then she started taking cures every two or three years" (which took her away from the family). Segrest found that

There was a metaphor in the itching and inflamed skin that I learned too well, this sensitivity to environment that left our mother tearing at her own flesh, like she was allergic to life itself. When racist violence in Alabama erupted like the lesions on my mother's arms, I was not surprised when it all came down to skin.

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do. This way I know where they're coming from.

I am a first-time inmate serving my time in a new institution that is still in the construction phase. There is nothing here for the intellectually inclined other than a small room that is the temporary "library." They only allow six inmates at a time to visit it. With a 1,000-inmate population, you can imagine the accessibility. There are no educational programs and hobbycraft is not allowed. Incarceration has made me indigent, I regret to say. I was hoping you would consider sending me *Race Traitor* because I truly am one and have been all my life. I never would've imagined such a publication existed.

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*Race Traitor* seems to be *grossly delusional*. *Technically*, there is not "The White Race." *Caucasians* are a white complexion people, originally with black hair and black eyes; *Aryans* are a

white complexion people, originally with blond hair and blue eyes. *Miscegenation* and *rape* now produce *Caucasians* with blond hair and blue eyes, and *Aryans* with black hair and black eyes: or both races having *unoriginal* hair and eye colors today. Since BC time, the Aryan Race and the Caucasian Race are mortal enemies. *Because the Aryan Race was defeated as WWII by the Caucasian Race, today the misnomer "White Race" prevails as all white complexion people.*

You probably are a Caucasian person. Good advice is that you distinguish the Aryan and Caucasian races; that you speak either as a Caucasian or as an Aryan, and *not* as a "white person," and that you respect the right of the Aryan people, or *any other race*, not to miscegenate.

Do you believe that the Aryans of WWII were inferior people, and consequently *racist*? Either you have a *guilt complex* about "white racism," or a delusion of inferiority. Only an *inferior person* can hate a person who is a different racial composition. I assume that the Aryans of WWII were *superior people*.

My true name is *oou*. As *Paul Coppolla* I have by New York State been falsely and illegally imprisoned since *May 2, 1972*: 22 years, 1 month, and 28 days now. I am a reincarnationist, vegi, animal rights advocate, and an advocate of (a modified) homosexuality. I am 47 years old, and can expect to be released from false and illegal imprisonment on July 27, 1995, if not before.

*oou*  
6/30/94 Aryan World Calendar  
Attica, New York

**Editors' reply.** The above letter has been abridged. The writer is not alone in accusing the editors of *Race Traitor* of suffering from

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a "guilt complex." Like oou, many of those who so accuse us also deny that they are "racists."

### AN ALTERNATE VERSION OF THE ABOVE

To the Editors:

This company published and promoted what has been called the Pace Amendment, an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would restrict citizenship to whites only and effect the repatriation of nonwhites from America.

We are undertaking the publication of a monthly periodical to promote our views. This newsletter will address the race issue in a forthright manner. While it will primarily promote the views of racial separatists, I would like to include articles from the other point of view as well.

Accordingly, I would like to request your permission to reprint certain articles from your magazine in this publication. As compensation, I could clearly publish the source of the article, including your mailing address and cost of subscription. (I am not sure, however, that you could anticipate subscriptions from our readership.)

I am contacting the publishers of various periodicals with the same request, and I hope to be able to offer a type of "Reader's Digest" for the racial nationalist movement.

Your prompt reply will be greatly appreciated. If you will grant me permission, I would also like to purchase back copies of your journal for source materials.

Daniel Johnson

Johnson, Pace, Simmons & Fennell  
350 South Figueroa Street, Suite 190  
Los Angeles, CA 90071  
May 18, 1994

P.S. I attended Harvard Law School, but I haven't been back to Cambridge for over a decade. How is it?

**Editors' reply.** You may reprint material from *Race Traitor*, provided you credit the source; if you abridge, please indicate that you have done so. For articles whose copyright has been assigned to the author, you will have to obtain permission directly. Cambridge is about the same as when you were last there: still the capitol of granola totalitarianism.

### EVER-LOVIN' LIGHT

To the Editors:

I never saw a black person in A&J's honky tonk at 63rd and Harlem in Summit, Illinois. Patrons bragged about killing Mexicans and being acquitted in the local court system. The bar was popular with local truckers laying over in this industrial area just southwest of Chicago. The truckers yelled "Texas" to request a song, any song, about Texas: anything from "The Yellow Rose of Texas" to "All My Ex-es Live in Texas." At the word "Texas" in a particular lyric they whooped in delighted validation. One Saturday night at the open mike, a singer-guitar player said, "Here's a song about Texas, by Leadbelly, a man you have to know about, a black man who sang his way out of prison. That was not an easy thing for a black man to do in Texas in the early part of this century." He sang:

If you ever go to Houston,

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Boy you better walk right,  
Well, you better not squabble  
And you better not fight.  
Bason an' Brock will arrest you.  
Payton an' Boone will take you down;  
The judge will sentence you,  
And you're Sugar Land bound.

Let the Midnight Special  
Shine its light on me;  
Let the Midnight Special  
Shine its ever-lovin' light on me.

The singer left the mike in silence. There was little applause and no whooping. I made my way through the bar and congratulated the singer for his courage. I never saw him again.

Kingsley Clarke  
Chicago  
July 13, 1994

## THROUGH THE EYES OF A VILLAIN

To the Editors:

I am one of the writers of the Chicago-based publication "Through the Eyes of a Villain." I read the piece by Joel Gilbert, "Who Lost an American?" I kept waiting for it to go somewhere but it never did. It just seemed like some guy telling his life story.

After further thought I have to really give Joel his props. Joel's battle is similar to one I face in my own life, whether or not to trust white people. I recognize that you are God's children and



I love you for that but I've always believed that you have been so tricked by the devil that you would never, at least in my lifetime, see any black person--*any* black person--as being equal, not even one of you. When I saw *Race Traitor*, I was like, "Daaaamn. White people wrote this?" I read almost the entire book in one sitting.

Your magazine is totally contradictory to my beliefs about white people. I showed the book to my friends and they could not believe it either. White people with black eyes? Please continue your publication. The Lord put your book in my hands. Please tell Joel I thank him for writing his piece. I can only hope to be as open-minded as he has come to be. I will not even attempt to stress the importance and potential of your book in black neighborhoods as well as white.

In all honesty I am still watching you. Peace, and I look forward to your next issue.

Joe Oliver  
Chicago  
February, 1994

## RACE TREASON IN FRANCE? A CORRECTION

To the Editors:

In *Race Traitor* no. 3 Phil Rubio mentions in passing that in 1961 a regiment of the French Foreign Legion defected to the side of the Algerian FLN. The standard literature of the Algerian war of independence makes no mention of such a stupendous act. The First Foreign Parachutists Regiment [1ère Régiment Etrangère des Parachutistes or 1ère REP] did indeed revolt against deGaulle, but not in support of the FLN. They were participants in a military coup that attempted to overthrow the Gaullist Fifth Republic, then

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three years old, because it was trying to withdraw from Algeria and leave the white settlers under majority rule. It began in the Algiers region and failed after five days because the conscripts, who resented risking their lives for the settlers while the elite "paras" hogged the glory and the girls (so to speak), went on strike against their officers and refused to leave their barracks. If it had succeeded, the revolt would have put the settlers and most genocidal element in the army in charge of the war against the FLN. The 1st REP was responsible for many massacres of rural villagers; a million Algerians died in the eight year war. It also carried out the infamous repression of the Battle of Algiers in 1957 and other vicious *ratonnades* or "rat-catching expeditions" in the cities.

On 27 April 1961, the 1st REP was indeed carted away in disgrace from its base in Zéralda, Algeria, and disbanded. Many Legionnaires at that time were Nazis, SS men who took advantage of the "anonymat" [the Foreign Legion allowed enlistment under a false name, no questions asked] to escape justice in Europe and to perpetrate the same crimes in Algeria. As their trucks passed through Algiers, they sang Edith Piaf's "Je ne regrette rien," which, ironically, had been popular with the French Resistance in WW2. The *pieds noirs*, the white settlers, wept hopelessly as the last best chance of preserving the white supremacist regime they had run for seventy years was carted off to France.<sup>1</sup>

The French Third Republic created that regime, forty years after the initial 1830 conquest of Algeria, and it resembled the post-Reconstruction Southern United States with laws very much like the Black Codes. The Code de l'Indigénat restricted the movements and behavior of all native Algerians of Muslim origin. The legalized inequalities of status invented a white race out of the mixed bag of settlers from France, Spain, southern Italy and Malta. They called themselves "Algerians" and denied indigenous people, who they called Arabs, natives or blacks, that identity.

Rubio's point is valid in one sense. The "revolt of the paras" inadvertently aided the FLN. Douglas Porch says, "The coup attempt had several unfortunate [sic] results. The first was that, as in December 1961 [when the *pied noir* ultra's secret army, the OAS, carried out a wave of terrorist bombings in Paris], efforts by partisans of *Algérie française* to secure their future merely served to hasten their defeat, because they had seriously weakened the French negotiating position [in talks with the FLN] and...divided and demoralized the army."<sup>2</sup>

The Algerian war experience lends credence to the idea that the left in the metropole was white supremacy with a human face. The socialists actually ran the government that conducted the war from 1954-1957. The communists demonstrated loyalty to the 900,000 "white" settlers, not the ten million Algerian Arabs and Berbers, and defended the socialist government because they saw Algeria, not the Algerians, as an integral part of France. The FLN program, like that of the ANC, was non-racial; it called for majority rule and rejected the idea of pushing the settlers into the sea. It was the settlers, projecting their own arrogance and fears, who coined the slogan "the suitcase or the coffin" as part of their effort to force DeGaulle to break off his negotiations with the FLN and to justify the extreme violence of their terrorist wing.

DeGaulle played a key role in disentangling France from Algeria. Like Nixon with detente and China, he had the freedom of action that was not available to the left. Although the left as a whole played an execrable role, handfuls of leftists, including some settlers, sided with the FLN. Some who were caught by the army and police were tortured to death. Sartre and deBeauvoir wrote eloquently and lent credibility to the John Browns but were not directly involved with them. The race traitors who aided draft resisters, acted as couriers and participated in the FLN's terrorism were at one and the same time courageous beyond words and

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without a popular base of support in France. Yet, because they were "whites" who testified to army torture, they pricked the French conscience and sense of shame and helped to turn public opinion against the settlers and the war. In this case, the answer to Rubio's question, "Can I get a witness?" came mainly from rank and file communists who rejected the party line.<sup>3</sup>

Why the error? It was a minor point in Rubio's thoughtful essay, but both writer and editors seemed to have slipped. His point would be as astounding as finding that an SS batallion had defected to the Red Army during the battle of Stalingrad.

The French Communist Party (PCF) was neither passive observer nor innocent bystander to Algerian events; it organized Algerian workers. Less than 5% of the Algerian socialists were Muslims, but almost all the *pied noir* socialists joined the PCF after the split at the 1920 Tours party congress. Impoverished descendants of "shoeless" poor peasants of southern France (hence the name black feet), Spain and Italy, they were militant anti-capitalists. But they leaped for the PCF before the 8th of the Comintern's 21 Points (on the responsibility of the workers of the imperialist countries to defend the colonial peoples' right of self-determination) had been clearly translated or understood. When the Executive Committee of the Comintern passed a resolution in 1922 calling for the independence of Algeria, these Algerian PCF sections responded with a manifesto of Menshevik-like sophistries about the atavistic and "feudal" nature of Algerian nationalism. As for "native" self-government, the tract remarked that "a dominion of cannibals is not desirable."<sup>4</sup>

After two years of prodding from the Comintern the PCF Central Committee expelled the leaders, but made no effort to re-educate the "rednecks" in the rank and file. When the PCF supported the Riffian Berbers' uprising across the border in Spanish

Morocco in the mid-1920s, the Algerian PCF sections evaporated. They re-emerged and grew as the 1929 economic crisis deepened. In 1935 the PCF converted its Algerian sections to a semi-autonomous PCA and courted the moderate wing of Algerian nationalism, those agitating for full French citizenship. As the assimilationists entered the PCA, "rednecks" left in droves. The PCF and PCA attacked the radical nationalist-separatist movement as agents of fascism. They approved the arrest of its leader, Messali Hajj, and banning its organization, Etoile Nord Africain (North African Star) by the Popular Front government of socialist Leon Blum. Ironically, the PCF had helped Messali found the ENA in 1927 and financed its early organizing among North African migrant workers in Paris. In the 1938 local elections, ENA candidates won every contest they entered, but since they were banned their candidates were denied seats. The PCF remained indifferent to these violations of civil rights. As voiced by Maurice Thorez, the PCF's line in 1939 was that French Algeria "represented the fusion of 20 races," similar to the CPUSA's equality-for-all, "black and white unite and fight" line. None of the 20 so-called races bought it. The PCF links to both the poor whites and the separatists were broken.<sup>5</sup>

After the war, ENA cadres became the backbone of the armed resistance independence movement, with no love lost between them and the PCF. The political situation polarized into a struggle between white power and black power, and the PCF lost all influence in the working class *pied noir* community. The legacy was the party's rotten stand on the Vietnam and Algerian wars of national liberation and wishy-washy prevarications on LePen and the Front National. Diana Johnstone, European correspondent for *In These Times* who lived in Paris during the 1980s, told me that the PCF's biggest electoral losses in the "Red Belt" working class suburbs around Paris came as the welfare system had to support growing numbers of non-white immigrants. The "white" workers

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turned away from the party and unions to any political group that excluded newcomers from the benefits of the welfare state. The French left's ambivalent response to the Front National's program of privileged access to citizenship and hence to social services has allowed the ruling elite to undermine the social safety net for the whole society, it seems. Laurent Fabius, socialist prime minister in the mid-80s who is Jewish and forcefully opposed the FN's anti-Semitism, said LePen gave "bad answers to good questions" on issues like immigration, welfare.<sup>6</sup>

There are now 1.5 million French citizens from North Africa (the Maghreb), an equal number of "Beurs" (a name coined by the second-generation French-speaking youth of Maghrebbin parents), and a quarter million illegal immigrants; 800,000 Portuguese, 300,000 Spanish and 300,000 Italians live in France, joined by 165,000 Turks, 150,000 Asians and 125,000 Africans. Citizens from Martinique, Guyana, Guadeloupe and Réunion bring the total to 7% of France's total population of nearly 60 million. While the proportion of immigrants has remained around 7% since the 1920s, the proportion of non-whites--people from former colonies, spheres of influence or dependencies--has increased. How significant are numbers versus historical predispositions from slave trading, anti-Semitism and imperialism?

More investigation will find answers and generate more questions. In *Race Traitor* no. 1 Louis Kushnick pointed out that white supremacy is on the rise all over Europe. In the British case, he makes the point that it is not simply immigration, restricted since 1971, but the presence of Black people that has aroused the dogs of white supremacy. Does this rise signal a shift in the form of rule in Western Europe? Social democracy had played the leading role in social control, and after 1945 communist parties became the main form of social democracy, negotiating reforms while at the same time making sure that reformist struggles remained within the limits

of the capitalist system. In the last decade a sea change seems under way in Europe towards a racial, i.e. "American," form of rule which has made the left parties obsolete anachronisms as agents of social control. In the face of this "Americanization," leftists like Daniel Singer, European correspondent for *The Nation*, are mystified. Like the Bourbons of Voltaire's aphorism, they learn nothing and forget nothing.

David H. Slavin  
Gulph Mills, Pa.  
18 June, 1994

## NOTES

1. Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-62* (London 1979), 459-60.
2. Douglas Porch, *The French Foreign Legion* (New York 1991), 614.
3. Herve Hamon and Patrick Rotman, *Les Porteurs des valises: La resistance francaise a la guerre d'Algerie* (Paris 1979).
4. The manifesto is quoted in Charles-Robert Ageron, *Histoire de l'Algerie contemporaine* (Paris 2 vols.) II:379; the statement is in English in Carriere d'Encausse and Stuart Schram, *Marxism and Asia* (London 1969), 196-97; David Slavin, "The French Left and the Rif War 1924-25: Racism and the Limits of Internationalism," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Jan. 1991.
5. See works by Ageron, Emmanuel Sivan, Benjamin Stora and Georges Oved cited in Slavin, *ibid*.
6. Talk with Diana Johnstone, August 1989; Denis MacShane, "Extreme rightists move ex-Nazi to political front," *In These Times* 18-24 March 1992, 9; Ronald Koven, "The French Melting Pot, Preventing Boil-Over" (a revealing title), *France Magazine* Fall 1991 (French government journal published by La Maison Francaise, 4101 Reservoir Rd. NW, Wash. DC 20007).

**Editors' reply.** Phil Rubio and the editors apologize for the error.

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### LUCASVILLE

To the Editors:

Situated in the southernmost tip of Ohio, in Scioto "Klan" County, rural all-white Lucasville is a grim reminder of Alabama and Mississippi of many years gone by. Southern Ohio Correctional Facility, Lucasville prison, opened its doors in 1972. It was a savior for some in an economically depressed area, and greedy whites wanted the whole hog.

Blacks lucky enough to get hired were met in the parking lot and on the roads and told to seek employment elsewhere: "niggers ain't welcome here." Threats, slashed car tires, broken windshields convinced the more stubborn.

Those years were the foundation upon which SOCF Lucasville was built--corruption and race hatred. Everything from drugs, guns, and sex could be had for a price. During the early and mid-80s a few Blacks were hired and allowed to remain, after pressures from "up north." For the prisoners, 70 percent of whom were Black, nothing changed.

Black prisoners have been routinely beaten, several have been beaten to death by guards, and others have been murdered by white prisoners. A white prisoner coming through SOCF's cage doors for the first time is immediately targeted for recruitment into the white bigots' school of hate. Guards tell him, "Don't cell with no niggers," as they proudly display their racist tattoos and encourage him to brand his body similarly. SOCF employees supply drugs, tattoo material, literature, and weapons.

Blacks moved into supervisory positions in the late 80s. This curbed the routine beatings of Black prisoners, slackened the invidious discrimination against both Black prisoners and Black



employees, toppled state-employed drug lords and sent others into hiding. It wasn't enough to change a way of life. The bigots stepped up their promotion of white supremacy, until years of accumulated hate, corruption, and oppression exploded in rebellion, ending with the death toll at ten. Scioto "Klan" County residents and SOCF bigots blamed "them niggers and them nigger-lovin' white trash. Kill 'em all, hang 'em, execute 'em, lock 'em down and throw away the key." For now, they settle for "Special Housing Units" and "Super Max," where incentives for self-improvement are totally replaced with a deliberate oppression, such as goon squads, total lockdown, and sadistic chain bondage.

What will they eventually unleash upon society when these offenders have served their time and are released? We seek ways to turn the tide. I would very much like to study your Journal of the New Abolitionism. I am currently on lockdown and funds are scarce, but I'd like to be placed on your mailing list. Perhaps I could pay sometime later.

Edward Harris #171-525  
 SOCF, PO Box 45699  
 Lucasville, Ohio 45699-0001  
 March 21, 1994

**Editors' reply.** *Race Traitor* #3 ran a story on Lucasville. As a result, the journal has been banned from the prison. We frequently receive requests from prisoners for copies. We try to meet these requests. Readers are invited to contribute money to help us do so.

## WHITE LIBERAL/PROGRESSIVE TYPES

To the Editors:

I found your journal extremely interesting. Never have I

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come across a "white" person who has dealt honestly and firmly with the artificial concept of "race." As an African-American activist, I have been frustrated to no end with so-called white liberal/progressive types claiming solidarity with people of color while at the same time refusing to acknowledge and renounce the many degrees of white privilege that they continue to reap the benefits from. To reject "whiteness" as a badge of distinction is not something that is done lightly. I applaud your courage in making the effort as well as encouraging others to do the same.

Ronnie Brown  
Los Angeles  
January 12, 1994

## AGAIN, OUR NAME

To the Editors:

We are having a hard time selling the journal up here. A lot of people are turned off by the name.

Arm the Spirit  
Toronto, Ontario  
July, 1994

To the Editors:

Just what I needed--sign me up. By the way, I wrote for a copy strictly on account of the excellent title. Beats n-lover by a mile, at least. I want it as a T-shirt. The shirt I have on now says ANCESTOR WORSHIP NOT DEAD YET--HONOR THE SOURCE. I found out most human ancestors are African. Spirits of place around here seem to be mostly black and/or native American. I honor them and they do not disdain to work with me although they laugh at me a lot, and even worse, shake their heads

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and snicker among themselves without (ever) telling me why. But then they arrange lessons for me and take care of me too. The simple act of saying 'thank you' is very powerful, as almost anybody's granny would have told us. So thanks for working and thinking hard enough to come up with RT.

Rebecca Randall Gilbert  
Chilmark (Martha's Vineyard), Mass.  
Cae Clyd 1994

## SEND FREE SAMPLE

To the Editors:

Please send me a free sample copy of *Race Traitor*, and any other publications, reports, etc. I do research in the areas of prejudice, race, etc. Thank you.

Russell Eisenman, Ph.D.  
Psychology Dept., McNeese State University  
Lake Charles, Louisiana  
August 1, 1994

**Editors' reply.** RT is paid for entirely by sales and individual contributions, with no grants or institutional support of any kind, so we do not send free copies to anyone (except prisoners). You will have to support your research as we do ours, by purchasing what you need or getting it from the library. Perhaps you can get the university library to subscribe.

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Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Verso 1990), \$22.95

# WHAT WE BELIEVE

**The white race is a historically constructed social formation.** It consists of all those who partake of the privileges of the white skin in this society. Its most wretched members share a status higher, in certain respects, than that of the most exalted persons excluded from it, in return for which they give their support to a system that degrades them.

**The key to solving the social problems of our age is to abolish the white race, which means no more and no less than abolishing the privileges of the white skin.** Until that task is accomplished, even partial reform will prove elusive, because white influence permeates every issue, domestic and foreign, in U.S. society.

The existence of the white race depends on the willingness of those assigned to it to place their racial interests above class, gender, or any other interests they hold. The defection of enough of its members to make it unreliable as a predictor of behavior will lead to its collapse.

**Race Traitor** aims to serve as an intellectual center for those seeking to abolish the white race. It will encourage dissent from the conformity that maintains it and popularize examples of defection from its ranks, analyze the forces that hold it together and those that promise to tear it apart. Part of its task will be to promote debate among abolitionists. When possible, it will support practical measures, guided by the principle, **Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity.**

**The editors publish things in Race Traitor because they think that publishing them will help build a community of readers. Editorial opinions are expressed in editorials and unsigned replies to letters.**

# journal of the new abolitionism

## DECISION ON WITHHOLDING: PRINTED MATERIAL

INSTITUTION: Southern Ohio Correctional Facility DATE: 2-8-94

TO: [REDACTED]  
Inmate [REDACTED] Number [REDACTED]

The following printed material have been reviewed at your request: Race Traitor Number 3 Spring of 1994

Administrative Regulation 5129-9-19 allows the institution to withhold printed material sent to an inmate if the material determined to be obscene or inflammatory, as defined in that rule. The above materials have been determined to be:

☒ Inflammatory:

☒ Incites, aids or abets criminal activity;

☒ Incites, aids or abets "violence" against others;

States Rascist Guards supply weapons, distribute contracts & look the other way  
on killings. Pages 20, 21 & 22

[Signature]  
MANAGING OFFICER/DESIGNEE