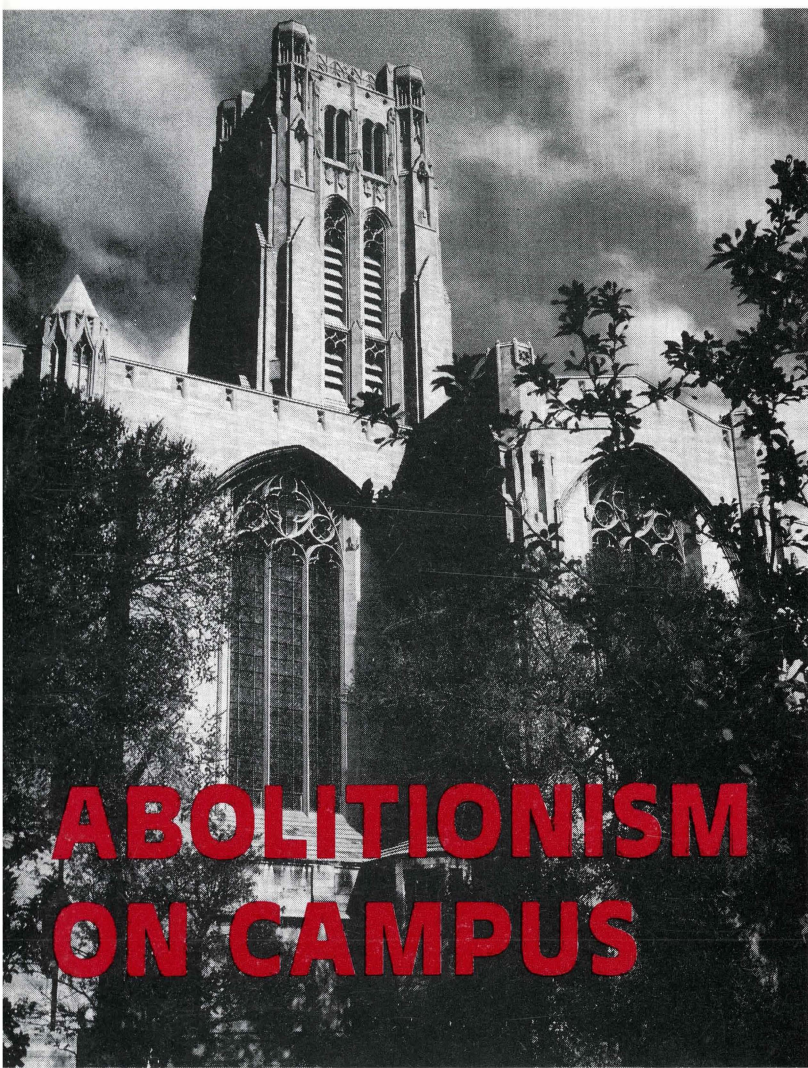


# RACE

# TRAITOR



## ABOLITIONISM ON CAMPUS

spring 1997 number 7 \$5

TREASON TO WHITENESS IS LOYALTY TO HUMANITY

# Race Traitor

*Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity*

NUMBER 7 / WINTER 1997

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# ABOLITIONISM ON THE CAMPUS

## STUDENTS FOR THE ABOLITION OF WHITENESS: CHICAGO

BY SOPHIA KELLEY, ROB SCHUWERK,  
PRASAD KRISHNAMURTHY, AND JAMES KAO

One of the few programs absolutely mandatory for first-year students during orientation week at the University of Chicago is the annual security forum. A Chicago police officer speaks about the dangerous aspects of living in Hyde Park. Freshmen are told that living in the gray city is nothing at all like living in the suburbs. They are told never to speak to strangers, to cross the street when a stranger approaches, and never to make eye contact with a stranger because “eye contact in Hyde Park is a form of aggression.” Even before their first class meets, freshmen at the University of Chicago are taught not only to avoid strangers, but to form a connection in their minds between black persons and strangers. All this occurs because, for the University of Chicago, black persons and strangers amount to the same thing: crime.

Our time at the University of Chicago has made us keenly aware of what it means to avoid “strangers.” The Chicago police officer could have made his message much more explicit if he had simply told us to avoid black persons whenever we walk around Hyde Park. But because we failed to heed this officer’s words, we were able to befriend certain “strangers” in Hyde Park. Instead of crossing the streets, we can chat with Cici, a member of Hyde Park’s poor, and we can exchange handshakes and smiles with Maude, a streetwise vendor on 57th Street. Our resistance to the University’s theory that black persons may be understood as criminals has been a primary force behind the formation of Students for the Abolition of Whiteness (SAW).

Chalkings on campus sidewalks announcing the first meeting of SAW generated much confusion and misunderstanding. We were bom-

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barded with questions regarding the name of our new organization. Everyone asked, "What does Students for the Abolition of Whiteness mean?" We chose this name because we wanted to be provocative and because we recognized a need to examine the reasons why our name would create such a stir. Our name reflects our understanding of how race functions in America and our desire to create a new racial discourse, where the often-ignored category of whiteness may be critically examined. Our plea for abolition signifies our rejection of the current racial discourse in America, which focuses on the equality of races.

Most responses to SAW on campus illustrate the problem. The *Maroon*, a campus newspaper, printed an editorial accusing SAW of "snake oil rhetoric" with no compelling approach to racial discrimination. A campus news group accused SAW of being a hate group out to kill white persons. Others attempted to defend an undefined, indeterminate white culture. These responses were attempts to reduce our dialogue on whiteness to the standard American discourse on race, a discourse that seeks racial equality while preserving racial distinction. They indicate the impoverished nature of the present racial discourse.

**W**HO WE ARE. SAW was founded by four persons. We believe that we are four diverse individuals. Because Sophia and Rob both have white skin, and because Prasad and James have brown and yellow skin, respectively, our individual and collective affinities are often compromised. Forms for the government, college applications, and standardized tests always group Sophia and Rob together. While Prasad and James are directed to distinct categories (i.e. Asian/Pacific Islander or Indian Subcontinent), they are both understood to be, and treated as, Asians.

Identifying Rob as white overlooks his interest in Korean culture. For the past two years, he has been an active member of the Korean Drum Troupe on campus. Labeling Sophia as white fails to recognize her interest in Polish culture. She is, in fact, fluent in Polish. Identifying Prasad and James as Asian assumes that their parents are also Asian. However, calling the Krishnamurthys and the Kaos all Asian does not adequately represent the different cultures of Prasad and his family and of James and his family. Prasad's parents speak Tamil much better than Prasad and James's parents speak Mandarin much better than James. And Prasad and James both speak English much better than their par-

ents. Moreover, James's family immigrated from China while Prasad's family immigrated from India. On top of that, both Prasad and James find that there is not always an affinity among Asians.

Our questioning of racial categories has led us to see their unfortunate consequences, which, in our view, can only be overcome by completely abandoning racial categorization.

**SAW MEETINGS.** Given the importance of "crime" in defining race in America, it is no surprise that our weekly meetings almost always involve some amount of discussion concerning crime in the Hyde Park area. Faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, and persons from the Hyde Park community regularly attend our meetings. Not all are necessarily in tune with our ideas. For example, many students who have heard about our efforts to open up the University of Chicago nighttime buses to all community members have come to voice their disbelief at what they understand to be appalling motives. These students cite economic and safety issues to justify their position against open ridership on the campus buses.

Other persons are baffled by our insistence that black persons in Hyde Park are unjustly criminalized. They cite numerous examples of crimes committed by black persons in Hyde Park. Many of these persons refer to the communities surrounding Hyde Park such as Woodlawn and Garfield. They provide personal accounts of abuses they suffered when they accidentally wound up in these neighborhoods either by getting off a bus too early or simply by wandering carelessly. Black persons in these neighborhoods, they say, don't like it when they see a white person. They relate stories about how black persons tell them, "This is not your neighborhood, white girl." These persons readily admit that skin color has no bearing on disposition for crime. Nonetheless, they feel these incidents justify their wariness of black persons in Hyde Park.

At any given SAW meeting, one is sure to find at least one person from the various campus journals sitting in the corner of our room taking notes. While most of the articles and editorials about our group have been negative, we welcome the publicity. We have found that these articles and editorials have given us a good way to engage in a public dialogue about how whiteness functions in Hyde Park specifically and America as a whole.

**P**OWER OF WHITENESS. We wish to emphasize the distinction that is contained in the choice of whiteness over race. Our understanding of whiteness includes two key points: first, whiteness is characterized by an absence of the participatory activities and practices that constitute what we traditionally consider an ethnic or cultural identity; second, the absence of these activities and practices allows us to recognize the defining feature of whiteness, that is, its power to determine the racial discourse in America. Through the exercise of this power, whiteness stakes out a realm of privilege for itself whereby its members have the freedom to not think about race. To speak of abolishing race involves the assumption that it is the idea of race that produces inequalities between racial groups. We maintain that whiteness not only produces these inequalities but the entire discursive field in which race is situated. To speak of abolishing whiteness does not constitute a partial solution to one of the problems posed by race; rather, it strikes at the very base of a racial edifice of power in America.

When the confusions and misunderstandings have been cleared away, we are still asked one question: How can you abolish whiteness? We want to make the phrase, "race is historically constructed," a little more meaningful by bringing white space to common consciousness. We understand white spaces as those instances where a white world view is invoked. Examples include stereotyping the south side of Chicago as a place where one doesn't go, acceptance of SAT scores as representative of "universal merit," believing redlining to be a legitimate banking policy, etc. These attitudes represent certain issues which allow race to continue to play a central role in American society. Collectively, they assert a white worldview from a seemingly objective perspective. Such a representation whitewashes the historical development of whites and whiteness and subverts the historical subjectivity inherent in all cultural, historical, social, and political forms.

Simply pointing out these issues in our weekly SAW meetings, however, is not enough. We assert that persons must take an active role through collective organization in groups such as SAW and New Abolitionist Students (our sister group at the University of Texas) as well as through their daily interaction with whiteness in order for whiteness to be questioned. Persons cannot simply disagree with the white worldview. They must reveal its subjectivity and oppressive nature. Whiteness, in order to survive, must be reproduced in local events. Whites can and

will exist passively as whites as long as they refuse to overthrow the label. Thus, thinking that one is not white will not do the trick.

Race and racial thinking will exist as long as race is understood as an ontological category. That is, we believe that race is not a category to which we are chained by birth. Only when participation in whiteness is understood as an active choice can we begin the real work of eliminating racial injustices. Abolishing whiteness is the only real way to translate the politics of race into the politics of class, because it is only through dissolving the historically situated birthrights of American history that we can come to a fair, honest discussion of class and other issues of fairness.

Abolishing whiteness means making whiteness a conscious choice. It means giving those who consider themselves to be liberal a new language for talking about themselves as human beings instead of as whites. It means actively contesting white spaces and white privilege by raising the stakes for those who wish to cling to whiteness. It means eliminating the necessary categories for the existence and perpetuation of racial abuses.

**A**ttacking White Space. This said, there is often much hesitation on the part of the audience. Attacking "white space" is a confusing and complicated issue. It often means being argumentative in situations where one never was before. This process is not painless. To make this final leap of faith, people need to believe that racial categories stigmatize. They need to see whiteness as a tragedy facing all Americans. Fundamentally, this is a question of identity. Oftentimes when people lament the hopelessness of ending racialism (a belief in the existence of race), they cite the impossibility of changing skin color or facial features. We acknowledge the existence of physical differences among people, but believe that these differences become significant only in a society that uses them to grant privileges to certain classes and oppress others. It is this application of significance to physical differences that we contest.

The basic goal of all SAW activities is to open up a new racial dialogue in the community and to focus this dialogue on the role of whiteness. SAW is currently a registered student organization at the University of Chicago. This permits us to receive funds from the university. We conduct meetings every Thursday evening in which these

issues are discussed in an open forum. We have been engaged in a dialogue with the editorial staff of the *Maroon* on issues of race and the ideas behind SAW. For the next academic quarter we are putting together a panel discussion in which faculty members will present various ideas about racial issues. We plan to designate one week in the upcoming quarter "Abolish Whiteness Week" and to use a series of workshops, films, and discussions to introduce our ideas of the destructive role of whiteness and white identity in history. We also seek to host a debate between visiting scholars on the role of whiteness in American history and its future place in our society. Since we are in our beginning stages as an organization, we plan to examine the relevant issues through both traditional and experimental means.

*SAW can be reached by email: [saw@uchicago.edu](mailto:saw@uchicago.edu). The group also has a website: <http://student-www/orgs/saw>.*

# NEW ABOLITIONIST STUDENTS: AUSTIN, TEXAS

BY ANTONIO GARZA

On the University of Texas campus there's a division between cultural groups, reading groups and political groups. In our first semester, New Abolitionist Students (NAS) has been trying to combine these elements in our meetings and discussions.

We have begun having NAS movie nights. This has been our easiest event to organize. Nothing complicated, nothing more than a 30-inch TV screen and VCR, and a room on campus. The plan is to have frequent showings of progressive films that discuss race. The first movie we presented was "Hate" by the French director Mathieu Kassovitz. We had announced that we would discuss the movie at our next meeting. Some other movie ideas being thrown around are: "Jungle Fever", "Café au Lait", "Do the Right Thing", "Zebrahead", and "I Can't Sleep."



We sponsored our first talk by a professor. This will be the first in a lecture series where professors, mostly from campus, will have a forum to discuss various topics about race. Some possibilities have been discussing Jews and whiteness, bi-racial identities, and Latinos, and Asians and whiteness. The first professor who came to talk was Lisa Sanchez Gonzalez who discussed the first few chapters of *Racial Fault Lines* by Tomas Almaguer. This led to a discussion of affirmative action programs in California and in Texas. (We lost all affirmative action programs at the University of Texas in an overly cautious and destructive decision by the president of the university). Through the lecture series we hope to bring arguments from different disciplines and attract students of various personal backgrounds to issues surrounding the fundamental critique of whiteness.

We have had one picketing of Texaco which had a small but effective turnout. We never had more than seven people picketing (at times we only had two) yet in two hours we managed to turn about 20 people away at the pump and convince countless other potential customers to not even pull in. We passed out flyers with articles explaining what was going on with the rally, and one article from the *New York Times* which asked how, in the face of obvious and well-publicized institutional racism, could reactionary, anti-affirmative action arguments of colorblindness and mere "historical" discrimination hold any water. The Saturday after our Friday boycott Jesse Jackson publicly called for a nationwide boycott of Texaco and demanded that Texaco settle the lawsuit out of court within two weeks.. Now even more motivated, we planned another boycott for two weeks from that date which promised to attract a larger following. Texaco settled, shelling out more money than any other corporation in history for a racial discrimination suit. Ironically, TV coverage of the NAS boycott aired on the day that Texaco settled. It was good to see that non-black members of NAS were aired picketing Texaco. The reaction from different political organizations was heavily racialized by the media. Most media portrayed the issue as an exclusively African-American issue, as if only black people would be concerned about being "black jelly beans at the bottom of the bag." The diversity of the NAS attack on Texaco helped counteract these images, at least for local watchers of the Austin Channel 7 Fox affiliate.

We have had a difficult time incorporating lengthy discussion about race and the group's ideology into the NAS meetings. We passed out a

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few short articles from *Race Traitor*, expecting to discuss them the next week. We did a little. The truth is that this has been the most difficult part about organizing the group. The one thing that has been talked about most productively in the group is the simple fact that we don't have to be academics to critique race in general and whiteness in particular. To join the group, individual NAS members just need to have an understanding of what it is to abolish whiteness and what whiteness is.

One of the most positive ways that race has been discussed has been through talking about our own personal lives. Our group is about half people of color, and half people not of color. Our members are not just liberal arts majors; NAS members study computer science, journalism, art. This diversity has been advantageous during discussions both in and out of NAS meetings. Our ethnic diversity has been a positive point when discussing whiteness and personal racial/racist incidents. People of color have been able to express feelings of discomfort when dealing with whiteness on a personal level. So-called whites have been able to show many of the people of color honest insider views of racial privilege and their own ambivalence towards it.

The NAS group in Austin and the Students for the Abolition of Whiteness (SAW) group in Chicago have been able to communicate frequently on group e-mail via a NAS list serve. We keep in touch with their happenings, and they with us. We are hoping that more student groups will start on other campuses.□

*Antonio Garza is an African-American Studies and Linguistics major at the University of Texas at Austin. NAS is also on-line: <http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~nas>.*

# WHITENESS IN EARLY VIRGINIA

BY TERRENCE W. EPPERSON

**A**ll the colors of the wind. According to the Disney Corporation's vision of Virginia history presented in the feature-length cartoon *Pocahontas*, whiteness was an innate, self-evident, physical attribute of the English invaders in 1607. Soon after meeting Captain John Smith, Pocahontas (the voice of Vanessa Williams) lilt, "For whether we are white or copperskinned / we can sing with all the voices of the mountain / and can paint with all the colors of the wind." Other Native American characters make frequent reference to "white men" and "white demons," and as the film approaches its climax the shaman chants, "They need that milky hide / there's emptiness inside." Similarly, Governor Ratcliffe, the buffoonish and greedy villain, is given to anachronistic pronouncements such as, "Here's what you get when the races are diverse," and commands his men to "destroy their evil race / until there's not a trace." When armed conflict appears inevitable, the film's uncritical multiculturalism manages to implicate the Native Americans as well as the English by having **both** sides chant, "Savages! Savages! They're barely even human."<sup>1</sup>

There are, of course, a few problems with this scenario. The concept of "race," in the sense used in the film, was not constructed or elaborated until nearly a century after the events depicted. Early settlers of European descent seldom referred to skin color when differentiating themselves from Native Americans. In fact, as Theodore W. Allen reminds us, there were no "white" people in Virginia until the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> Instead, we find people who referred to themselves as "Christians," or, less frequently, as "English," or "Irish." As readers of *Race Traitor* realize, the self-consciously racial designation "white" is a relatively recent invention. Although the cartoon *Pocahontas* represents a well-intentioned (and financially lucrative) attempt to provide a positive depiction of Native Americans, the ahistorical deployment of

race as a natural category presents whiteness as an unassailable fact of nature.

However, if we are to subvert, renounce, and eventually abolish whiteness we need to challenge the “naturalness” of this pernicious social construction and strive to understand its origins and history. Faye Harrison, who in the 1995 *Annual Review of Anthropology* encourages “a cultural critique of whiteness as the key site of racial domination,” calls for an approach which goes “against the convention of ignoring yet universalizing whiteness as an unspoken but naturalized norm presumed to be unaffected by racism.”<sup>3</sup>

In this paper I draw upon the insights of critical race theory—an outgrowth of the critical legal studies movement—to understand the legal institution of whiteness during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the time when Virginians of European origin first began to believe they were white. In *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*, Ian Haney López analyzes “race” as “a fluctuating, decentered complex of social meanings that are formed and transformed under the constant pressures of political struggle.” The Law, because of its status as a transcendent legitimizing ideology and “quasi-religious belief system,” plays a pivotal role in the institution of race and the naturalization of whiteness. I employ the term “institution” in both senses. Race is generally perceived as an “institution” in the noun sense, a static “thing” which appears to be external to, and autonomous from, social practice. Yet we should also keep in mind the verb sense of the phrase “institution of race.” As Barbara Jeanne Fields notes, race was, and continues to be, instituted, that is elaborated, formalized, imposed, re-enacted, and contested through on-going struggles.<sup>4</sup>

**N**ot being Negro, Mulatto or Indian. Despite some initial ambiguities, by the third quarter of the seventeenth century it was clear that perpetual servitude in Virginia would be restricted to people of non-European origin. However, this was not yet a “racially” segregated society, and in the legal realm the primary dichotomy was “Negro” versus “Christian.” Archaeological excavations in tidewater Virginia have recovered locally-made terra cotta tobacco pipes which apparently represent an amalgam of European manufacturing techniques and West African decorative motifs. These pipes were recovered from pre-1670 con-

texts where laborers of European and African origin were probably living under the same roof.<sup>5</sup>

In 1676 a peculiar coalition of frontier planters, poor tenants, indentured servants, and enslaved Africans overthrew the government of Virginia and torched Jamestown, the colony's capital. Bacon's Rebellion, described by historian Robert Brenner as "the greatest social conflict in pre-revolutionary North America," was thwarted only through the intervention of English naval power.<sup>6</sup> In a report recounting his role in suppressing the Rebellion, Captain Thomas Grantham vividly describes the insurrectionary cooperation between enslaved Africans and impoverished Englishmen:

I met about four Hundred English and Negroes in Arms, who were much dissatisfied at the Surrender of the Point, saying I had betrayed them, and thereupon some were for shooting me, and others for cutting me in pieces. Most of them I persuaded to go to their homes, which accordingly they did, except about Eighty Negroes and Twenty English which would not deliver their Arms.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps in response to Bacon's Rebellion, by the late 1680s, wealthy planters were imposing spatial segregation between enslaved and indentured workers. "Durand de Dauphine," a French Huguenot exile who traveled widely in Virginia in 1686-1687, provides this description of the spatial ordering of Chesapeake tobacco plantations:

Whatever their rank, and I know not why, they build only two rooms with some closets on the ground floor, and two rooms in the attic above; but they build several like this, according to their means. They build also a separate kitchen, a separate house for the Christian slaves, one for the Negro slaves, and several to dry the tobacco, so that when you come to the home of a person of some means, you think you are entering a fairly large village.<sup>8</sup>

Although Durand reports that he was accompanied by a "servant" during his voyage to America, he consistently referred to indentured servants in Virginia as "Christian slaves":

A difference exists between the slaves, to wit: a Christian twenty years

old or over, cannot be a slave for more than five years, whereas Negroes and other unbelievers are slaves all their lives.<sup>9</sup>

Durand's observations reflect an important transitional phase in the spatial ordering of Chesapeake plantations. The separation between master and laborers and the differentiation between plantation functions were well established by the late 1680s.<sup>10</sup> The primary dichotomy within the labor force was, however, between "Christians" and "Negroes and other unbelievers." "Racism," or even "race consciousness," is not the prior *cause* or motivation for this segregation. In fact, the construction of racial difference and the creation of "white" identity is, in large part, a *result* of these spatial processes.

The institution of white identity can also be traced with particular clarity in Virginia's evolving legal code. The first use of the term "white" does not occur until 1691, in a law designed to prevent "that abominable mixture and spurious issue" which would purportedly arise from intermarriage between any "English or other white man or woman" and any "Negro, mulatto, or Indian man or woman bond or free".<sup>11</sup> It is no coincidence that "white" first appears in miscegenation legislation, where the assertion of racial difference is particularly crucial. Note also that white is used here only in conjunction with English. Later in the act the phrase "English woman" is repeated twice without the modifier white. The first unambiguous legislative use of "white" without the modifier "English" does not occur until 1705, again in miscegenation legislation. This law levied a fine of ten thousand pounds of tobacco against any minister who might "presume to marry a white man with a Negro or mulatto woman; or to marry a white woman with a Negro or mulatto man."<sup>12</sup>

Even where "white" is not explicitly utilized, there is evidence of the juridical construction of racial difference. For example, note the differences between two statutes, the first enacted in 1680 and the second in 1705. The first law stipulates:

If any Negro or other slave shall presume to lift up his hand in opposition against any Christian, he shall for every such offense have and receive thirty lashes on his bare back well laid on.<sup>13</sup>

The 1705 slave code repeats the provision, punishment, and general

form of the earlier law, but quietly incorporates several significant alterations:

If any Negro, mulatto, or Indian, bond or free, shall at any time, lift his or her hand, in opposition against any Christian not being Negro, mulatto, or Indian, he or she so offending, shall receive on his or her bare back, thirty lashes, well laid on.<sup>14</sup>

While the 1680 act applied only to slaves, the 1705 law was explicitly racial and applied to all people of color. In 1680 “Christian” was an unproblematic category, but the 1705 law implicitly recognized that a “Negro, mulatto, or Indian” could be baptized; hence, they had to be specifically excluded from protection under this law. The language of the act was also expanded to explicitly criminalize acts of resistance committed by women of color.

**U**nto the Blacks as unto the Whites. Although the invention and elaboration of whiteness can be traced with some precision in the laws of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Virginia, the initial inspiration for this process is not readily apparent. In Volume I of *The Invention of the White Race*, Theodore W. Allen suggests a high degree of ruling class deliberateness and intentionality in the construction of whiteness. “[A] system of racial privileges for the propertyless ‘whites’ was deliberately instituted in order to align them on the side of the plantation bourgeois against the African-American bond-laborers.”<sup>15</sup> The anxiously-awaited second volume of Allen’s work will include further discussion of “the invention of the ‘white race’—the truly Peculiar Institution—as the solution to the problem of social control.”<sup>16</sup> However, the first sustained use of the term “white” occurs not in the writings of colonial governors or slave-owning tobacco and sugar planters, but in the writings of Society of Friends (Quaker) missionaries, a finding which certainly challenges the theory that whiteness was an intentional invention of the colonial ruling class(es).

During the English Revolution the Friends were among the most radical and militant religious sects and they were particularly prominent within Oliver Cromwell’s New Model Army. Their millenarian message included a strong emphasis on redistributive social justice, opposition to any form of tithes or state church, and an individualist emphasis on the presence of Christ’s spirit within each believer.<sup>17</sup> Although not yet

abolitionists, the Friends were certainly unwelcome in England's slave colonies. In March of 1660 the Virginia General Assembly passed "An Act for Suppressing the Quakers." According to the act's preamble the Quakers are "an unreasonable and turbulent sort of people" who are accused of attempting to destroy "religion, laws, communities and all bonds of civil society." Anyone bringing Quakers into the colony or hosting Quaker meetings was to be fined one hundred pounds sterling.<sup>18</sup>

As early as 1657, George Fox (1624-90), generally recognized as the "head Quaker" by 1656, was expressing concern for the spiritual well-being of slaves held by Friends in the English colonies. In a letter of caution addressed "To Friends Beyond Sea, that Have Blacks and Indian Slaves," Fox did not condemn slavery, but reminded Friends of the equality of all men in the eyes of God. He reminded them that the Gospel should be preached to all, because it is "the power that giveth liberty and freedom, and is glad tidings to every captivated creature under the whole heaven."<sup>19</sup>

In 1671-2, Fox and several companions conducted a missionary tour in the English Caribbean and mainland colonies, including Barbados and Virginia. The activities of the Quaker missionaries can be reconstructed from accounts recorded in George Fox's *Journal*, which also includes letters written by his companions to Friends in England. The *Journal* is noteworthy as one of the earliest sustained uses of the term "white." John Stubbs' December 2, 1671 letter to Margaret Fox indicates the trials and triumphs of missionary activity among slaves:

The Truth is freely preached both to white people & Black people: Solomon & I have had several Meetings among the Negroes in several plantations & its like must have more yet.

But thy Husband [George Fox] its Like hath had more than any of us; we feel the Lords presence & power in that service, as well as when we speak among the white people, & thats enough.<sup>20</sup>

A similar account is provided in a letter written by John Hull on January 12, 1672:

I question not but the Lord will Crown his [George Fox's] great Undertakings with blessed success That so the Iles may call him blessed of the Lord that the Lord hath & will make him a Choice Instrument in his



hand for much good unto them even unto the Blacks as unto the whites for the blacks (as tis said) expect some good by his Coming here.<sup>21</sup>

While attending a men's meeting in Barbados, Fox delivered an address that was published five years later (1676) as *Gospel Family Order, Being a Short Discourse Concerning the Ordering of Families, Both of Whites, Blacks and Indians*. The term "white" appears twice in text of this address; in both cases the usage is indicative of a relatively new and unfamiliar term:

And so now consider, do not slight them, to wit, the Etyhopyans, the Blacks now, neither any Man or Woman upon the Face of the Earth, in that Christ dyed for all, both Turks, Barbarians, Tartarians, and Etyhopyans; he dyed for the Tawnes and for the Blacks, as well as for you that are called Whites...<sup>22</sup>

So that you may see that there was a Church of God in Egypt in Babylon and Ethiopia, who were Christians, as well as among white People, so called by the Blacks.<sup>23</sup>

We should be wary of the tendency to anachronistically attribute abolitionist impulses to early Quaker missionaries. Despite minor spiritual misgivings, it is clear that George Fox accepted slavery as an institution which could be justified by the dualisms of body and soul, matter and spirit. Also, let us not forget that William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, bought and held African slaves.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the Friends were certainly not the vanguard of the pro-slavery forces during the late seventeenth century, and their elaboration of whiteness can not be viewed as a deliberate social control strategy. Furthermore, the realization that Quaker missionaries contributed to the initial elaboration of whiteness should help us understand both the pervasiveness of this construct and contradictions which emerged from the later abolitionist movement.

Although the Friends' missionary efforts among enslaved laborers had limited direct success, the indirect results of their efforts were indeed important. The decision by the Anglican Church to systematically and aggressively proselytize on colonial plantations, as well as the establishment of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in 1701, are direct responses to the threat posed by Quaker missionary efforts. This conflict is epitomized by the encounter between George Fox and the Rev. Morgan Godwyn (1640-1690?), an Anglican

cleric who preached in Virginia during the 1660s and in Barbados during the 1670s. While in Virginia, Godwyn successfully advocated passage of a 1667 law which assured that baptizing slaves did not result in their manumission.<sup>25</sup> Godwyn encountered George Fox in Barbados and was particularly anxious to counter the Friends' missionary efforts among enslaved Africans and Native Americans. Referring to Fox's 1672 pamphlet *To the Ministers, Teachers, and Priests, (So called, and so Stileing your Selves) in Barbados*, Godwyn later wrote:

A petty Reformado Pamphlet was put into my hand by an officious FRIEND, or Quaker of this Island, (I suppose, in order to my Conversion); upon the perusal whereof . . . I met with this malicious (but crafty) Invective, levelled against the Ministers . . . 'Who made you Ministers of the Gospel to the White People only, and not to the Tawneys and Blacks also?'<sup>26</sup>

Upon his return to England in 1680, Godwyn published *The Negro's and Indian's Advocate*. While reading this book, one is led to wonder, "With advocates like this, who needs enemies?" Godwyn argued for baptism of slaves on both spiritual and pragmatic grounds, with a definite emphasis upon the latter:

The benefit whereof is least to the slave, tho he gain heaven thereby; whilst his master . . . doth in this world also reap the desired fruit of his servants FIDELITY . . .<sup>27</sup>

For Insurrections and Revolts, nothing can be imagined a greater Security against them, than a sincere inward persuasion of the truths of Christianity . . .<sup>28</sup>

Finally, Godwyn argued that the baptism of slaves would improve planters' ability to surveil their labor force, an issue of particular importance when understanding the spatial ordering of the plantation: "Those who by their zeal for the Sabbath, do reap this great spiritual advantage of having their servants thereby always in their eye."<sup>29</sup>

Godwyn was responding to perceived threats on several fronts when he advocated the baptism of slaves. While expressing concern for the souls of enslaved human beings, he simultaneously reassured planters that slave conversion was in their own best interests. He was also attempting to define, control, and neutralize the meaning of slave reli-

gion in the face of Quaker missionary activity and the slaves' own demands and expectations. Like all forms of domination, colonial slavery was characterized by a fundamental contradiction, the tension between inclusion and exclusion, between the need to incorporate the oppressed people within a unified system of control and the need to create distance, difference, and otherness. Neither tendency could ever be total and they were in constant, shifting opposition.<sup>30</sup>

Godwyn saw baptism as a way to enhance the incorporative aspect of domination by improving surveillance, undermining African cultural traditions, inculcating purportedly shared values, and improving control through better knowledge of slaves' behavior and motivations. However, Godwyn's inclusive maneuver contributed to the elaboration of a virulently exclusionary, essentialist, and dehumanizing form of racism. By denying any linkage between spiritual equality and temporal condition, and by undermining the Christian/Negro dichotomy without fundamentally critiquing the social and economic institution of slavery, Godwyn--and to a lesser degree, George Fox--unwittingly contributed to the "need" for a new set of oppositions in plantation slavery: white versus Negro. Although the debates regarding the profits and pitfalls of using Christianity to control slaves were unusually reflective and forthright, the actual creation of whiteness was more an unintended consequence than a conscious class conspiracy.

**W**hat Is To Be Done? It is important to realize the extent to which capitalism is implicated in the institution of whiteness. In the French and Iberian colonies the doctrine of Aristotelian natural slavery had asserted an innate human hierarchy; yet, since humanity was gradational, there had been no particular need to deny the humanity of even the lowliest slave. But the continued operation of chattel slavery within a context where the emerging Lockean doctrine proclaimed that all people are born free and equal created a contradiction which could be resolved only by explicitly denying the humanity of the slave and, by implication, all people of color. While slaves in French and Iberian colonies were defined primarily as inferior subjects, the people enslaved in the English colonies were increasingly being defined exclusively as property. Once a slave is defined as private property there is little the state can do on his or her behalf because, as John Locke so succinctly states, "government has no other end but the preservation of property." The

institution of whiteness was therefore predicated upon, and developed in conjunction with, the systematic degradation of those classified as non-white.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, the philosophy of empiricism was providing the necessary theoretical foundation for the elaboration of whiteness. François Bernier was perhaps the first to use "race" in the modern sense while his protégé John Locke elaborated the doctrines of nominal essence and the absolute dichotomy between facts and values. Although proceeding from an avowedly anti-essentialist premise, empiricism provided the basis for selection of a single trait (such as skin color) as the criterion by which humanity, or the lack thereof, could be defined. The fact/value dichotomy also facilitated the reification of the social construction "whiteness" as a value-free fact of nature.<sup>32</sup>

As a social construction, "whiteness" has served--and continues to serve--quite effectively as a basis for the delineation and oppression of other "races" as well as a mechanism for obfuscating relations of domination within the "white race." From our perspective, the institution (in both senses) of whiteness in Virginia during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries is unusually and uncannily transparent. Yet the initial elaboration of whiteness emerged not from a conscious class conspiracy, but rather from contradictions arising out of the inclusive maneuver of slave baptism within the context of emergent English merchant capitalism. The Christian/Negro dichotomy was undermined, only to be replaced by a more essentialist and exclusionary opposition, "white" versus "Negro."

These findings have important political ramifications for modern-day abolitionists. If whiteness had been instituted and imposed as a deliberate ruling class strategy merely through the mechanisms of law and physical coercion, an argument could be made that efforts to abolish whiteness could be confined to struggles against and within the state apparatus. However, if whiteness did indeed emerge from inherent social contradictions, then the struggle must also encompass all aspects of civil society.

Although "modern" racism and the attendant concept of whiteness emerged from contradictions inherent in the capitalist mode of production, we must remember that this was--and is--a reciprocal relationship. The concept and practice of whiteness is an essential component of the continued reproduction of capitalism. As Cedric Robinson writes

in *Black Marxism*, the creation and persistence of distinctions, particularly between "races" within the working class, was "a critical aspect of the triumph of capitalism in the 19th century."<sup>33</sup> In view of this dialectical relationship, it is clear that the anti-racist struggle is inseparable from the anti-capitalist struggle. Whiteness is a resilient and pervasive social construct embedded in every facet of economic, social, political, and cultural practice, and its abolition will require a struggle which is equally wide-ranging. Those among us who would challenge whiteness must also realize that the very pervasiveness of this institution has the potential to domesticate and contain resistance. In the struggle to abolish whiteness we must strive to develop forms of analysis, resistance, and solidarity that do not reinforce and recapitulate existing forms of domination. The way will not be easy.

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# STATEMENT TO ANTI-RACIST NETWORK

BY AUTONOMOUS ZONE

**Note:** This past October, the Anti-Racist Action Network held its third annual conference in Columbus, Ohio. ARA-Net is a broad network of groups whose primary activities have been confronting and attempting to shut down public fascist events — klan rallies, nazi concerts, and so forth. The Network has primarily attracted young people, and includes large numbers of anarchists, socialists, punks, queers, and others. Unifying these various groups are four principles:

1) We go where they go. Whenever fascists are organizing or active in public, we're there. We don't believe in ignoring them or staying away from them. Never let the nazis have the streets.

2) Don't rely on the cops or the courts to do our work. This doesn't mean we don't ever go to court or work with police. But we must rely on ourselves to protect ourselves and to stop the fascists.

3) Non-sectarian defense of other anti-fascists. In ARA-Net we have lots of groups and individuals. We don't agree about everything, and we have a right to differ openly. But in this movement an attack on one is an attack on us all. We stand behind each other.

4) ARA-Net intends to do the hard work necessary to build a broad, strong movement against racism, sexism, anti-semitism, homophobia, discrimination against the disabled, the oldest, the youngest, and the weakest of our people. *We intend to win.*

This year's conference adopted a decision-making structure for the Network. Among other issues, it addressed the possibility of expanding ARA-Net's scope to encompass mainstream institutions that perpetuate white supremacy. What follows is a proposal for such an expansion, brought to the conference by members of the Autonomous Zone in Chicago. After some discussion of this and several similar suggestions, this paper became the basis for a proposal to be added to ARA's political statement. The proposal was tabled, to be discussed at subsequent conferences.

The Autonomous Zone is a collectively run anarchist community/activist/resource center and infoshop. They have been involved in a long struggle against gentrification in the West Town neighborhood of Chicago. Their current projects include operating a Free Skool, sponsoring an Anarchist Black Cross group doing anti-prison activism, helping build the Network of Anarchist Collectives, planning a community festival to commemorate May Day 1997, and attempting to help organize a Chicago ARA group." Following is their statement to the ARA-Net.

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## WHITE SUPREMACY, FASCISM & the MAINSTREAM

### A PROPOSAL FOR ARA-NET

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Note on terms: Throughout this, we use the terms “racism” and “white supremacy” interchangeably. This only works if “racism” is defined as “white supremacy,” so that an anti-racist stance cannot be used to criticize anti-white prejudice by people of color. Because of the frequency with which the term “racism” is used to mean any prejudice on the basis of race, we prefer the term “white supremacy,” which implies an analysis of white skin privilege. Nonetheless, AWSA doesn’t sound quite as good as ARA, so we retain the use of both terms. Also, we use the term “fascism” to describe specific forms of reactionary politics, those which attempt to build popular movements through “revolutionary” appeals to “common” or “working class” people while being focused ideologically on the far right; we *do not* use the term interchangeably with “reactionary,” “right-wing,” or “racist.”

Much of the organizing that takes place under the name Anti-Racist Action is focused on creating confrontations with fascists — protesting klan rallies, stopping nazi skinhead concerts and other events, and highlighting connections between the religious right and fascist elements. All of this work is important, since it heightens awareness of the real dangers of a fascist movement in North America, and actively works to stop the development of such a movement.

Nonetheless, we feel that such work should be done from a perspective which recognizes three things:

- 1) the peripheral and often adversarial nature of fascist elements in relation to the state, capital, and other mainstream institutions of white supremacy;

- 2) the necessity of refusing the assistance of the mainstream institutions in smashing the fascists, even if their help is tactically advantageous in the short term;

- 3) the need to focus anti-racist work on confronting the everyday imposition of white supremacy by and through non-fascist, mainstream institutions: cops, gentrification, the legal and prison systems, incinerators and other forms of environmental racism, most schools, health care and insurance systems, public assistance programs, etc.

Fascism and the mainstream exist in tension with each other, despite the superficial similarities in their politics. Fundamentally, the mainstream wants to suppress fascists in order to retain and consolidate



its hegemony in implementing white supremacy, while the fascists hope to implement their vision of white supremacy by overthrowing mainstream institutions. This means that there is no easy transition in which people who become politicized through opposition to fascism automatically expand their opposition to include mainstream, institutionalized white supremacy. This transition will only take place if anti-racists understand and respond to the complexities of the relationship between fascism and the mainstream. For example, fascists are constantly subject to manipulation by mainstream institutions which attempt to use them to repress us. But this manipulation is just that — manipulation — and does not reflect a lasting alliance between fascism and the mainstream. In exposing and opposing these connections, it is imperative that we understand their true nature.

Obviously, the close connection between some Copwatch programs and some ARA groups is one example of how this perspective and understanding is already being implemented within the ARA Network. It seems most of us already know that the police are not our friends; the trick is to remember that they are not our friends even when they do what we want. Arresting nazi bank robbers, shutting down skinhead shows, and police infiltration of the Klan may appear to serve our interests, but at the same time they reinforce the legitimacy of a mainstream that is just as invested in white supremacy as the fascists are. Without feeling sorry for the fascists, we need to oppose statist “solutions” to their racism, “solutions” that are also used against us.

None of this means we shouldn’t involve ourselves in struggles where state action is the only viable solution (freeing Mumia Abu-Jamal, etc.). If our direct action *forces* the mainstream to act against its own interests, we should be proud. But when the state acts to consolidate its vision of white supremacy by suppressing the fascists, there is little to be happy about. The enemy of our enemy is not necessarily our friend. This is as true for anti-mainstream actions by fascists as it is for anti-fascist actions by the mainstream: just because a klansman kills a cop, or a nazi identifies himself as a “revolutionary,” or the militias espouse an anti-government line, doesn’t make them potential allies. While tactics are important to consider, they must be consistent with an overall strategy of revolutionary opposition to white supremacy.

As a result, we propose that the Anti-Racist Action Network expand its focus to address the variety of more insidious forms of white

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supremacy in our society. Direct action campaigns can be organized against slumlords who yuppify neighborhoods, prison wardens that harrass or abuse (or kill) prisoners, trash companies that turn poor areas into toxic dumping grounds, and so on, and so on, and so on. These versions of white supremacy are no less vicious than nazis and the klan, and are far more common. It's not quite as much fun to develop long-term campaigns as it is to face off with the boneheads, but it is more important to building a comprehensive resistance to white supremacy. We can't be thoroughly anti-racist if we only oppose the most obvious forms of white supremacy, while ignoring, or even supporting, the others.

*The Autonomous Zone*  
1573 N. Milwaukee #420  
Chicago, IL 60622

# AMERICAN DREAMING

The following letters were forwarded from the charitable gifts division of a big-city bank. They are typical of the many that arrived every day, sometimes in multiples.

Dear Foundations.

I am a widowed and a individuals who are having trouble meeting large mortgage payments, car payments and house payments. it is not easy for me. all I need is someone to help me get on my foot. I want to opened up a business. I want a chance to be happy and to do good. I want this opportunity to have the things I need. to be successful in this business, to do this I have a financial need to opened up a clothes store. I need some merchandise to work with I need a computer. to help me get into this business this is my need. I need \$50,000.00. I hope you can help me to become successful in this business. I want a chance to do good.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

I was wondering, if your Foundation made grants, for the purpose of debt consolidation, if so please read on.

I,M a DISABLED PERSONED on SSDI insurance. And i.m finding it very tough ever touching the principle on my debts. I receive \$1172 per month in benifits, so if i make just the minimum of payments, which come to 1245 you can see how its a losing battle.

I would appreciate it greatly if your Foundation could help me in any way. I am not looking for a free way out.

Dear Foundation,

I'm 34 years old. Since adolescence I've been struggling with an eating disorder which was not diagnosed until two years ago. Nine years ago I was a victim of acquaintance rape which plunged me into a deep depression leaving me unable to work or continue with graduate school. I had a personal epiphany on November 11 and the depression broke. Now I want to get my life back.

Part of my illness has been a litany of addictive and compulsive behaviors including eating, lying and watching television. From June to November 1995 I became ensnared by a compulsive spending binge, running my Visa card to the limit and going through my modest savings.

Even though I'm feeling better, I'm continuing with therapy and proper medication. It would really help me to unload my financial burden so I am unencumbered before I start thinking about working again. Currently I'm on SSI and my parents pay my rent. I'm asking for a grant of \$5600 which will cover my debt. I'm normally cautious and frugal so once this money is repaid, there is little danger of it happening again. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Dear Sirs/Ma'am.

This is my *proposal* for a grant.

A. For a personal loan

B. To get out of debt, so I will be able to afford to go back to college and also pay for my daughter's entrance into the technical school she wants to attend following her graduation next year.

C. I'm one of the many individuals with children who need a fresh start and will use the rest to further my education and get my daughter into the technical school she wishes to attend next year.

D. I'm an Air Force retiree, recently divorced, which my ex-wife gets half of my retirement. I work to be able to pay my bills and there is no money left for me going back to college and a savings for my daughter's future.

E. I have four (4) credit cards, one (1) at \$4,0000.00, three (3) at 3,200.00 each and two (2) department store charges cards at \$5,200.00 and \$3,000.00.

F. I'm requesting a grant for the amount of \$25,000.00 from your foundation.

Dear Sirs:

It has been brought to my knowledge that your foundation helps individuals in need.

This past year we were plagued with financial difficulties. Due to these difficulties, my husband had to file bankruptcy. The bankruptcy payment comes out of my husband's pay checks so therefore, we can only pay our house payment and part of the utilities.

This past May, I fell and broke my foot and was unable to work for several months. Due to a wreck, our car was totalled. I work one day a week at a convenience store next to our home. I'm unable to get a fulltime job and pay my past due bills because I do not have a car.

I have enclosed documentation showing my husband's bankruptcy and our car accident. Also enclosed is my proof of my work schedule and medical record showing I broke my foot.

Dear Ms/Sir:

I'm writing you in regard to much needed assistance. I have been laid off work for almost a year and the company is constantly in the current process of downsizing and hasn't recalled many workers. My unemployment benefits exhausted the first part of this year and i have used entirely all of my savings to pay bills and expenditures.

I have zero income at this time. I have sought work and is still seeking work but work other than professional work is scarce in this area. The plant employees and myself really entrusted the company to recall us during the start of the busy season in late September, but there was disappointment.

I have always strived to be self-sufficient and please do believe me, I don't want a handout, but circumstance beyond my control has resulted in my present situation. This is my first experience of this sort - and it is agonizing at worse.

Dear Sir or Madam:

I need a grant because I need it for financial purposes. I am trying to invest my money in the futures market. I have enough for tuition, but now I need help on the investment. I will not have any money on hand for a long time and I am asking you to help me at this point. I want to start slow then gradually get up because I do not want it to go too fast. All that I am asking is just a thousand dollars for me to start out, but any amount is appreciated. My goal is to be successful and to succeed in life than to struggle in it. I hope you understand and thank you for your time that you spend on reading this letter.

Dear Sirs,

I need these taken care of by December 20 1995. I have tried to make other arrangements with them to no avail. I need your help please. I enclosed the things I need to have paid off. I can't afford to pay these. They plan to take it away from me. The total for these is \$26,729.00. I have worked so hard for these and when you lose your job that you have worked for 10 years and have nothing to show for it in the end. If you can help me right away I would appreciate it. THANK YOU.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I was told I might get some help from your organization. I don't know where to begin except to just tell it like it is. My husband of 35 years died back in Jan. leaving me with a job to get when I had not worked during our marriage and pay all the bills he had left me. I found a job making 5.00 an hour but have lost it because I began having bad headaches and missing work. Five weeks ago I started looking for another job, I have no money, I am staying with a friend but she is moving in Jan and then I'll be on the street. The law says I'm responsible for the debts my husband left because my name was on them also and I don't have the money for a cup of coffee much less 30,000.00 to pay these bills. And if I can find a job at 5.00 and at my age I'd have to work two shifts a day just to make it and try to pay them. My friend paid for me to go to the Doctor for my headaches and he is the one that gave me this address and told me to write. So if you people can help me and if I can get myself in a position I will try to help other people that end up like me and I know there are other women out there that do end up like me. It's 5 more years before I can draw S.S. so I have to work and try to live and try to pay these debts till then. If I can get the debts paid then I can live on 5.00 an

## Proposal:

I am a single female with no children. I went to work part-time while attending college and upon graduation went to work full time for the same company and have been here for 13 years. I have been loyal to my employer and co-workers. I was brought up in a good home where loyalty to family, friends, and the business world were instilled upon me at an early age. When I got a full time job, I moved out on my own showing my independence. I went to work in the construction industry, basically a man's world, but not a man's salary! When there was work to be done, I was right there ready, willing and able to see the task through to its completion. With the new job, new found freedom from being on my own, and having purchased a new car, the credit card offers started pouring in.

A good friend was having trouble at home and got kicked out by her mother, who was drinking heavily. My friend did not have a good paying job, and therefore could not afford to be out on her own. I thought that if she moved in with me, that she could help me by sharing rent, utilities, etc. It did not quite work that way. She kept going from one job to another job, most of them being part-time for minimum wage. So needless to say, there was no way she could help me out. She has lived with me for 8 years now. Since she is living with me, and I am carrying the burden of expenses, but she is not kin to me, I am unable to claim her as a dependent on my taxes. I am a very soft-hearted person, and I can't find it in me to just kick her out.

The company that I work for changed the way we do business. Instead of being an employee, we are all self-employed contractors. The transition seemed easy enough at the time, but when the time had arrived for the first estimated tax payment, the money just wasn't there. Once I got that far behind, I could just never catch up.

I have asked for \$35,000. This would allow me to pay all of my bills off, mostly to the IRS, and pay my parents back the money that I owe them for the down payment on my house.

I love God. I love this country. I am thankful that we are able to go and worship anywhere, anytime. I am an honest person who can take charge of anything and see that it gets done, and done right the first time around.

As a single female without any children, I can very well attest to the underpayment of female workers in a rural area. The jobs are hard to come by, benefits are usually poor, and pay is low. I've had to work 2 jobs most of my life just to try and make ends meet. Even then, it's usually not enough. The push these days is to help the minorities. Well, in our rural area, the whites ARE the minorities by at least 2 to 1 according to the census.

Dear Sir:

I am in need of a financial grant to pay for bills which made my credit in poor standing. My son was killed in an auto/pedestrian accident back in 1982. The following year I had a heart attack at the age of 40. It required open-heart surgery. From that date to now I have had 9 angiograms, 2 angioplasties. I had a massive heart attack in March which I went into cardiac arrest with. Fortunately, they were able to bring me back.

In 1992, I was injured when I fell on top of our car from the attic. I have had 2 back surgeries since that time and am totally disabled due to this. There is very little that I can do. They cannot operate on me again due to my heart.

And meanwhile, back at the Family Foundation....

*In August, M, R. and I took off for a little R&R at our second home on Bermuda. As usual, Bermuda was wonderful, R. was able to get in some scuba diving and we all came home with great tans.*

*After cruises to the Mediterranean, England (where R. was going to Cambridge), Europe and China during the past three years, we took a year off while settling Uncle Bob's estate. Now we are looking forward to our next cruise on the "Golden Symphony" to the South Pacific in January and February 1996*

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*H. entered his Ferrari in two concours, taking third place at the Maranello and another third place at the Fiorano.*

*M. got an early Christmas present after H. had a confrontation with a deer in her Seville. Didn't hurt the deer much, but it destroyed the front grille of the Seville! The next weekend we lost an irreplaceable hub cap so H. decided that it was about time to get M. a new Seville.*

*MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS!*

# **RACE & the ENLIGHTENMENT**

## **FROM ANTI-SEMITISM TO WHITE SUPREMACY, 1492-1676**

BY LOREN GOLDNER

### **Part I: Pre-Enlightenment Phase: Spain, Jews and Indians<sup>1</sup>**

**I**t is not often recognized that, prior to the 17th and 18th centuries, the period Western history calls the Enlightenment, the concept of race did not exist. It is still less often recognized that for centuries before the concept of race emerged, Europeans held another vision of Africans and New World Indians, which had to be eradicated before the concept of race could be invented.<sup>2</sup>

In the current climate, in which the Enlightenment is under attack from many specious viewpoints, it is important to make it clear from the outset that the thesis of this article is emphatically not that the Enlightenment was “racist,” still less that it has validity only for “white European males.” It is rather that the birth of the concept of race simultaneous with the Enlightenment was not accidental but that the Enlightenment’s “ontology,” rooted in the new science of the 17th century, created a vision of human beings in nature that inadvertently provided weapons to a new race-based ideology that would have been impossible without the Enlightenment. Prior to the Enlightenment, Europeans generally divided the known world between Christians, Jews, Moslems, and “heathens”; beginning around the 1670s, they began to speak of race, and color-coded hierarchies of races.<sup>3</sup>

What was the alternative “epistemological grid” through which, prior to the 1670s, the West encountered the “Other”? A part of the answer is to be found in the impact of late medieval heresy on the ways in which the West understood the New World, and its peoples, for more than one hundred fifty years after 1492.

One of the most important sources of the heretical ideas and movements that ultimately destroyed medieval Christianity was the Calabrian abbot, Joachim di Fiore, whose work resonated through centuries of heresy and is often decried by detractors as a forerunner of Marxism.

Writing at the end of the 12th century, and sponsored by three popes, Joachim wrote a prophetic vision of history consisting of three ages: the age of the Father, or the epoch of the Old Testament; the age of the Son, or the epoch of the New Testament (whose end was near); and the age of the Holy Spirit, in which all humanity would enjoy ever-lasting saintliness and bliss. The heretical potential of Joachim's historical scheme was that in the third era, mankind would transcend the institution of the Church itself.<sup>4</sup>

Joachim's particular relevance for the questions at hand is his impact on the so-called "Spiritual Franciscans." In the 13th century, in response to the popularity of the heresies, and particularly the Cathar heresy in southern France, the Church created two new monastic orders, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, with the aim of parrying heretical ideas through an appearance of reform. Important in the latter regard was the "apostolic poverty," the imitation of Christ among the poor, pursued by the Franciscans. When, after decades of success, the Franciscan order had in turn become wealthy and had begun to interpret the vow of "apostolic poverty" as an "inner state of mind," the Spiritual Franciscans broke away to return to the founding orthodoxy. Their relevance for the origins of the concept of race lies in their absorption of Joachimite ideas and their influence on Christopher Columbus.

Columbus's diaries and Book of Prophecies show messianic pretensions of the highest order. It was through Columbus, first of all, that the prophecies of Joachim di Fiore passed into the ideology of Spanish conquest in the New World. Prior to 1492, Columbus had lived for several years with the Franciscans of the monastery of La Rabida, near Huelva, in southwestern Spain. This group shared in the general crusader conception of the late Middle Ages that the millennium would be inaugurated by the reconquest of Jerusalem and the Holy Land from the Moslems. The idea of the unification of the world under Western Christendom had already inspired Franciscan missions to the Great Khan in China in the 13th century. A 14th-century navigator's guide called the Catalan Atlas showed "Ethiopia" (which meant Africa) under the rule of the legendary black monarch Prester John, who as a Christian was viewed as another potential ally against the Moslems, if only he could be found.<sup>5</sup> The Portuguese voyages along the African coast after 1415 were partially inspired by a mission to enlist Prester John in such a crusade. Columbus conceived his own expeditions as an attempt to

reach the court of the Great Khan for the same purpose, and he took along a sailor fluent in Arabic and Hebrew: Arabic for the Chinese court, and Hebrew for the Lost Tribes of Israel, believed to be living in Asia. Columbus may have heard of a prophecy, attributed to Joachim di Fiore and current among Spanish Franciscans, that the man who would recapture the Holy Land would come from Spain.<sup>6</sup> He did use the assertion of the Biblical apocrypha of Esdras that the world was six parts land to one part water to buttress his claim that Asia could be easily reached by sailing west. On the third voyage, off the mouth of the Pernambuco river on the (now) Venezuela coast, Columbus reported that such a large river must surely be one of the four rivers in the Garden of Eden, and was certain that the terrestrial paradise was close by.<sup>7</sup>

It is clear that the messianic ideas of Joachim and Columbus are, to put it mildly, from a different "cosmology" than our own. However, to see their implications for the appearance of the idea of race, some historical background is necessary.

In the 11th century, just before the medieval Christian West embarked upon the Crusades in its attempt to take the Holy Land from the Moslems, it would have been a daring observer indeed who foresaw the rise of the West to world hegemony. The West existed in the long shadow of Islamic civilization, which in the Eastern Mediterranean, North Africa and Spain was just reaching its apogee and elsewhere was still expanding vigorously, and of Byzantium (the Orthodox Christian East) which was arguably far more the heir of Greco-Roman antiquity than semi-barbaric western Europe. These civilizations in turn lived in the shadow of Sung China.

The 11th-century medieval West, however, was in fact already embarked on a social, economic and cultural recovery and expansion that would soon pose serious problems for its more powerful rivals. This recovery continued until the late 13th century, when a system of world trade already connected Venice, Barcelona, Flanders and the Baltic region with the Levant, India and China.<sup>8</sup> By the early 14th century, however, the medieval West (like much of the rest of the world) was in total crisis, culminating in the Black Death of 1348-49, from which it required more than a century to recover.<sup>9</sup> Between 1358 and 1381, in the aftermath of the Black Death, there were major popular uprisings in France, Flanders and England, weakening (or, in the case of England,

destroying) the old order of serfdom.<sup>10</sup> The 1378 Ciompi uprising in Florence was a proto-proletarian rebellion.

This 14th-century breakdown crisis created in Europe a situation of "interregnum," in which the institutions of the medieval period, the Papacy, the Holy Roman Empire, and feudal kingdoms such as France and England, sank into chaos and interminable war; the interregnum lasted until the consolidation of the absolutist states (above all in England, France and Spain) of the 16th and 17th centuries. Into this interregnum moved high medieval messianism, millenarianism and heresy.

Beginning during the 12th- and 13th-century phase of high medieval expansion, before the general breakdown crisis of feudalism, western Europe underwent a series of social explosions that continued until the middle of the 17th century. Heresies and millenarian movements extended from the Cathars in southern France beginning ca. 1146, to the English Lollards and Bohemian Hussites at the end of the 14th century and the Anabaptists of the German Reformation in the 1520s and 1530s, to the radical sects of the English Revolution in the 1640s. The Joachimite idea of the "third age" beyond the Church was only one of many theological sources of these movements.

The English Revolution, which reached its most radical phase in 1648-49, was the last major insurrection in which such ideologies played a role. Figures of the radical left of the revolution, such as the Digger Winstanley, saw private property as the result of the Fall from Paradise, and articulated a kind of Christian communism as the overcoming of the Fall. The English Revolution was the last act of the Reformation, and its radical wing, the Levellers, Diggers, Muggletonians, Ranters and Fifth Monarchy Men, was the last mass social movement in which Adamic ideas of the overcoming of the Fall came to the fore.<sup>11</sup> The coming of capitalist society was henceforth increasingly articulated in the new secular garb of the Enlightenment, which began to take hold in the 1670s.<sup>12</sup>

The second, "Glorious" Revolution of 1688-89 coincided with a large jump in England's participation in the new Atlantic slave economy. Prior to its takeover of Jamaica in 1655, England's New World presence, consisting only of Barbados, St. Kitt's, some smaller islands, and the new North American colonies (at a time when they represented less

of an economic prize than the West Indies) had been far overshadowed by Spain and Portugal.

A mere quarter century after the elimination by Cromwell of the radical wing of the English Revolution, the idea of race, and of Enlightenment generally, moved into the space created by the ebb of millenarian utopia. It is here that we see the final disappearance, ca. 1675, of the heretical imagination and its social program. With the consolidation of English constitutional monarchy and French absolutism, the post-medieval "interregnum," in which the radical social movements could still speak the language of religion, was over. This process ended just as England and France, the countries *par excellence* of the Enlightenment, were beginning to surpass Spain and Portugal in the Atlantic slave trade. To understand what the Enlightenment displaced, it is necessary to look more closely at the ideological world that produced Columbus and the Spanish world empire.

"Race," as blood consciousness, was unknown to antiquity and to the Middle Ages.<sup>13</sup> It first appeared in 15th-century anti-Semitism in Spain as a new phenomenon, but still entangled in the old "cosmology" of Christian, Jew, Moslem and heathen;<sup>14</sup> it then migrated to the New World in the Spanish subjugation of the ("heathen") native American population (and in the further actions of the Inquisition against Jews, both in Spain and the New World). One hundred fifty years later, it remigrated to the newly-emergent British empire, which was picking up the pieces of the decline of Spanish power (in part by posing as a humane alternative to the widely-believed, and largely true, "black legend" of Spanish cruelty). In the second half of the 17th century, with the defeat of the radical wing of the English Revolution, the triumph of the scientific revolution (above all in Newton, and theorized into a politics by Hobbes), the burgeoning British slave trade, and the revolution of 1688, this evolution culminated in the new idea of race.

The Enlightenment critique of religion was aimed first of all at the social power of the Church and, after the religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries, at religion generally. The collapse of the idea of Adam, the common ancestor of all human beings, was an unintended side effect.<sup>15</sup> But it was also the necessary "epistemological" prelude to the appearance, in the last quarter of the 17th century, of a color-coded hierarchy of races. Locke drove out Habakkuk, as Marx said, and Hobbes drove out Shem, Ham and Japhet.<sup>16</sup>

In the waning phase of more than two hundred years of Anglo-American dominance of world capitalism, it is easy to forget that England was a relative latecomer in the 500 years of Western hegemony, and the significance of that latecomer status for ideology. The impulse, conditioned by the Anglo-French Enlightenment, to overlook the entwining of the Enlightenment and race theory, is part of the same impulse that plays down the significance of pre-Enlightenment developments in Spain in shaping the modern world.

The initial European experience of proto-racism was the (re)appearance of anti-Semitism in the high Middle Ages; it had virtually disappeared in the previous 6th-11th centuries.<sup>17</sup> England expelled its Jews in 1290, France did the same in 1305, and Spain, where Jews had prospered for centuries under both Moslem and Christian rule, expelled them in 1492.<sup>18</sup> This new anti-Semitism came into existence at the time of incipient national consciousness and also on the eve of the feudal breakdown crisis; the accelerating transformation of "Christian kingdoms" into nations eroded the older, tolerated citizenship of Jews (and, in Spain, also Moslems) based on religious identification, often linked to relative self-administration within the confines of the ghetto.<sup>19</sup> In the cases of England, France and Spain (the three major European countries which consolidated national monarchies by the late 15th century and developed absolutisms in the 16th and 17th centuries), the expulsion of the Jews was also often a pretext for the confiscation of wealth by the heavily-indebted monarchies (often indebted to Jewish money-lenders, as Christians were at least theoretically proscribed from charging interest). In deeply-fragmented Germany and Italy, on the other hand, where early modern national unification was blocked by the medieval legacy of the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy, Jewish expulsion was a local and sporadic phenomenon, and Italy received many Jews expelled from Spain. Thus the correlation between anti-Semitism and the new national consciousness (the latter, like race itself, being unknown in the ancient or medieval worlds) is one compelling reason to see the appearance of racism as a by-product of early modern developments.<sup>20</sup>

In 15th-century Spain, anti-Semitism moved from a late-medieval "communal" phenomenon to a modern ideology of blood consciousness, and it is here that the difference between the one and the other is

clearest. But Spain (which until 1469 was divided between the two major kingdoms of Aragon and Castile) was preoccupied for centuries with the crusade to reconquer the Iberian peninsula from the Moslems, a crusade which was only completed with the fall of Granada in 1492. The Inquisition began its activities in Spain in 1478, and its targets were first of all Jews and suspected "marranos," or Jews converted to "new Christians" and engaged in clandestine practice of the old ways.

The foundations of the Spanish empire in the New World were laid under the so-called Catholic kings, Ferdinand and Isabel, the sponsors of Columbus. But in 1519, through dynastic marriage, the already powerful Spanish empire became the administrative center of the largest Western empire since Rome, the Holy Roman Empire of the Habsburg Charles V. To the already considerable Spanish lands were added the Habsburg domains in central Europe, and the Netherlands, and after 1527 two-thirds of Italy fell under Spanish dominion. The Habsburg world empire was the hegemon of European politics, involving itself directly in the internal affairs of all countries it did not directly control (including France, England, and Scotland). With the marriage of Henry VIII to Catherine of Aragon (aunt of Charles V), it appeared briefly that England as well might be integrated by dynastic alliances into the Habsburg sphere. With the marriage of Philip II to Mary Tudor, English queen from 1553 to 1558, this appeared even more likely. Habsburg influence in England expressed itself first of all in an exponential increase in the persecution of Protestants.

European power politics, including politics in the New World, for more than one hundred fifty years after 1492 revolved around the rivalry between Spain and France, a rivalry ultimately won by France by the middle of the 17th century. This history can hardly be sketched here, but it must be kept in mind that England, in 1492 and for a long time thereafter, was a second-tier power undergoing the social transformation that culminated, after 1688, in the overthrow of absolutism, and did not begin serious empire building until the 1620's, and really not until the 1650's, when the revolution had ebbed. The story of relations between Spain and England, from 1530 onward, became completely enmeshed in the international politics of the Protestant Reformation (which constantly reached into domestic politics), and remained into the 17th century the story of England's attempt to escape the orbit of the Spanish empire. Catholic monarchs such as Mary Tudor (1553-1558) and the



Stuarts after 1603 were considered "Spanish" and "Papist" and were the targets of popular resentment for that reason.<sup>21</sup> England raided Spanish shipping, sent explorations looking for the mythical Northwest Passage to Asia (and thereby began serious trade in the Baltic and with Russia), aided the Dutch rebellion against Spain after 1566 and fought off the Armada of Philip II in 1588, but England managed to avoid involvement in the ongoing Franco-Spanish wars on the continent, and only after emerging from the first phase of its revolution (1640-1649) was it able to intrude boldly into the scramble for empire with its massive repression in Ireland, in its three successful wars against the Dutch, and its capture of Jamaica.<sup>22</sup> Thus England's serious challenge to Spanish (and Dutch) power in the New World and in the slave trade began only in the mid-17th century, after the turmoil of its (first) revolution, when the slave trade, though already considerable, was nonetheless only one-fourth of the volume it reached in the 18th century, under Anglo-French ascendancy.<sup>23</sup> Only after the overthrow of the Stuarts in 1688 (by which time France had replaced Spain as the major Catholic power) and English successes in the Nine Years' War (1689-1697) and the war of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713, fought to prevent a united Franco-Spanish [and Catholic] dynasty under the control of Louis XIV), could England feel itself secure from Spanish and "Papist" interference in its internal politics.

It is this Anglo-Spanish entanglement, overlapping the Reformation and Counter-Reformation wars, the ultimate defeat of English absolutism, and the English, French, Dutch and Spanish rivalry for world domination which "mediate" between the appearance of the first ideas of racial purity and blood consciousness in 15th century Spanish anti-Semitism, their extension to the inhabitants of the New World, and the full articulation of a race theory in the Anglo-French Enlightenment. It is through this history that Jews, Indians and Africans are the successive "Others" in the development of a full-fledged Western racial doctrine.

The 1492 expulsion of the Jews from Spain created a massive Jewish diaspora in Portugal, North Africa, Italy, the Netherlands, the Ottoman empire, and ultimately in the New World.<sup>24</sup> But even more significant for our purposes were the large-scale conversions of Jews into so-called "New Christians," conversions which allowed Jews to remain in Spain and Portugal, while still leaving them vulnerable to the

Inquisition and the blood purity laws.<sup>25</sup> The New Christians were therefore able not only to arrive in the New World in different monastic orders such as the Franciscans, Dominicans and Jesuits; they were probably involved in the better part of the Spanish high culture of the 16th century *siglo de oro*.<sup>26</sup> Finally, Jewish messianic ideas, mixed with such currents as the Joachimite millenarianism discussed earlier, filtered into the Christian communist utopias which some religious orders, above all the Franciscans, attempted to build in the New World with the indigenous peoples subjugated by the Spanish and Portuguese empires.<sup>27</sup> The most notorious were the Spiritual Franciscans in Mexico, who came to the conclusion that Europe was too decadent for their ideal of "apostolic poverty," learned Nahuatl and planned a communist utopia with the Indians, until they were discovered and repressed by the Church, but similar messianic utopias were advocated or enacted by the Jesuits in Peru and Paraguay, or in the prophetic sermons of the Jesuit Antonio Vieira in Brazil.<sup>28</sup>

One should not idealize these currents, nor exaggerate their weight in the Spanish and Portuguese colonial empires, but neither should they be judged with anachronistic criteria of the present. They were all crushed, defeated or marginalized by the opposition of local colon elites with no scruples about massacre and forced labor.<sup>29</sup> They did not question the evangelization of the New World, nor the empires themselves, nor did they doubt that Christianity was the unique Truth; few thought they had anything to learn from indigenous cosmologies.<sup>30</sup> No one in the 16th century, from either the Christian or Moslem Mediterranean world, where slavery had been practiced (without a color code) for centuries, called slavery as an institution into question, and they were no different.<sup>31</sup> They sought the support of the monarchs to curb the cruelty of the local elites, a support which, when obtained, mainly remained a dead letter in practice. The point is rather that their messianic utopias did include Indians and Africans and that their ethnocentrism was universalist in the medieval monotheist sense of Christian/ Jewish/ Moslem vs. heathen, not yet a racial doctrine.

An important transition from the era of Spanish and Portuguese dominance in the 16th century to the emergence of northern European (English, French and Dutch) empires and control of the slave trade in the 17th century is the belief that the New World inhabitants were descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel. It is here that the connection is

made between the Spanish expulsion of the Jews, the diaspora of Jews and New Christians in different New World projects, and the ultimate appearance of the Enlightenment doctrine of race.

The encounter with the New World shook European culture after 1492 as profoundly as the Copernican revolution after 1543, if not more so. The flood of cosmography, travel accounts, new plants and animals, and above all previously unknown peoples and cultures stretched the doors of perception past the breaking point. Europe had notions, however fantastic, of the Old World civilizations such as Islam, India and China; it had notions, however fantastic, of ancient Egypt, and the empires of Alexander and the Caesars; it had within its own borders Celts, Slavs and other peoples whose existence converged on various current ideas of the "primitive." Even encountering peoples such as the Aztecs, Mayans and Incas, however exotic they may have seemed, still did not challenge a concept of "civilization" they knew from Old World experience.<sup>32</sup> But nothing they could mine from tradition quite prepared them for the encounter with "primitives," "peoples without the state," in the Caribbean, the Amazon or later in North America. To situate such peoples for themselves, they could only draw on the legacies of the two strands of Greco-Roman classicism and Judeo-Christian monotheism. Columbus, as was indicated earlier, knew at the mouth of the Pernambuco in 1498 that he was near the garden of Eden, and for more than 150 years Europeans would debate whether the New World peoples were the Lost Tribes of Israel, the descendants of Ham, the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the Biblical Ophir, descendants of a Phoenician voyage, the survivors of lost Atlantis, the descendants of Gog and Magog, or the peoples of King Arthur's island of Avalon.<sup>33</sup> The Renaissance had for half a century before the discoveries been excavating a vast lode of the lost or half-buried legacy of classical antiquity; the heretical currents which prepared the way for the Reformation had been reviving the idea (against the whole weight of the Church) of the "original community" and the "apostolic poverty" of Christ and the disciples, and this mass of cultural memory came rising to the surface, like a sunken cathedral, just in time to provide the "imagination" for the encounter with a previously unknown continent. When, one hundred fifty years later, the new tools of scientific and rational critique had turned the battle of the "ancients and the moderns" in favor of the latter, and had destroyed this "epistemo-

logical grid" provided by tradition, the West could invent the pseudo-scientific idea of race.

The theory that the inhabitants of the New World were descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel is, once again, the link between anti-Semitism in Spain and the beginnings of race theory in the rising English, French, and Dutch world empires of the 17th century. The Lost Tribes theory was first articulated by various Spanish writers on the New World in the 16th century, and, as indicated, some of the Franciscan New Christians were struck by Old Testament parallels in Aztec culture.<sup>34</sup> Europe had the historical experience of Africans; the new race theory first emerged out of the debate about the Indians. But the theory first created a sensation when systematized by the Amsterdam rabbi Menasseh ben Israel (a marrano and teacher of Spinoza) in his 1650 book *Esperanza de Israel* ("Hope of Israel").

Menasseh's book told of a Jewish traveler in South America who was convinced that there were Hebrew words in the language of his Indian guide, and who concluded from conversation with the guide that "a lost tribe of Israelites still lived in the South American highland," and therefore went to meet them. The traveller returned to Amsterdam and told his tale to Menasseh ben Israel, where its messianic overtones in 1648 fit into the overall apocalyptic climate of the end of the Thirty Years' War, the most radical phase of the English revolution, and a massive pogrom against Jews in the Ukraine.<sup>35</sup> Menasseh's book came to the attention of Cromwell, who met him in 1655 to consider the readmission of Jews to England, which began the following year.<sup>36</sup>

But in the very year of Menasseh's meeting with Cromwell, another book appeared in Europe that marked the final phase of the pre-Enlightenment debate on the meaning of the New World peoples. This was Isaac La Peyrere's *Pre-Adamitae* ("The Pre-Adamites").<sup>37</sup> Using the most advanced methods of the new Biblical criticism, La Peyrere's book seized on internal inconsistencies in scripture to argue that the Bible itself proves that there were people before Adam. For La Peyrere this meant the overthrow of the Bible's monogenecist explanation of the origins of humanity (and therefore of the peoples of the New World), and the truth of a polygenecist view of multiple origins. La Peyrere's book was denounced all over Europe by Catholics, Protestants and Jews. (No one dared to defend it publicly until Voltaire, a century later, and he was still an isolated voice). La Peyrere was arrested a few months after

*Pre-Adamitae* appeared, was threatened with the gravest consequences, and had to convert to Catholicism and go to Rome to personally apologize to the Pope to exculpate himself.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, his book became popular with the radical milieus of the period, such as the remnants of the defeated left wing of the English Revolution. The Digger Gerard Winstanley, like many others, saw in *Pre-Adamitae* support for a completely allegorical reading of the Bible.<sup>39</sup>

La Peyrere's book had been daringly radical Bible criticism in the mid-17th century, and he saw all peoples, Adamites and pre-Adamites, saved in the messianic recapture of Jerusalem. But others seized on his demolition of the authority of the monogenecist account in scripture and used it to justify the newly-emerging racist color code. In 1680, in Virginia, the minister Morgan Godwin, in a work called *Negro's and Indian's Advocate*, polemicized against people in the American colonies who were using polygenecist arguments influenced by La Peyrere to deny that blacks and Indians were human. In 1774, Edward Long's *History of Jamaica* used polygenecist theory to precisely this end. In 1844, Alexander von Humboldt, the German scientist, argued in the first volume of his book *Kosmos* that it was necessary to uphold the monogenecist theory against evidence "as the safe means of avoiding classifying people as superior and inferior."

The death of Adam, together with the defeat of the English radicals, had by the 1650s closed the Joachimite cycle, and ended the debate that had begun in 1492. The triumph of the moderns over the ancients meant that the models and the "epistemological grid" of both Greco-Roman classicism and Judeo-Christian messianism were exploded, either for interpreting new peoples or for interpreting the motion of bodies in space. The epicenter of the West was now the Anglo-French rivalry for world empire. The first phase of political economy began, and one of its first practitioners, Sir William Petty, wrote the first known treatises proposing a world hierarchy of races, *The Scale of Creatures* (1676). Petty groped toward the definition of an "intermediate stage" between man and animal, in which he could locate the "savage":

Of man itself there seems to be several species, To say nothing of Gyants & Pygmies or of that sort of small men who have little speech... For of these sorts of men, I venture to say nothing, but that 'tis very possible there may be Races and generations of such"<sup>40</sup> "...there be others [differ-

ences-*L.G.*] more considerable, that is, between the Guiny Negroes & the Middle Europeans; & of Negroes between those of Guiny and those who live about the Cape of Good Hope, which last are the Most beastlike of all the Souls [?Sorts] of Men whith whom our Travellers are well acquainted. I say that the Europeans do not only differ from the aforementioned Africans in Collour...but also...in Naturall Manners, & in the internall Qualities of their Minds.<sup>41</sup>

Here were the unanticipated extrapolations of LaPeyrere's radical Biblical criticism. Here is one of the founders of political economy also founding an unprecedented color-coded world hierarchy of races. A truly modern figure, indeed. Henceforth, as the Atlantic slave trade rose exponentially to its 18th-century peak, the naturalistic world view of the Enlightenment could impose itself, sadly tied in so many cases to such an "epistemological grid."<sup>42</sup> The New World Indian was no longer a possible descendant of the Lost Tribes; rather, as the Puritans said, "Satan had possessed the Indian until he became virtually a beast." Where there had once been the kingdom of Prester John, there now was only the Guinea coast, the Bight of Benin and the Middle Passage.

Henceforth, the concept of race could be invented.<sup>43</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This article will appear in two parts; Part One will treat the first appearance of racial ideas in the Spanish "blood purity" laws and the expulsion of Jews and Moslems after 1492, and the transition period up to the 1650s, in which Europeans debated whether the New World peoples were descended from the Lost Tribes of Israel; Part Two, in the next issue, will deal with the appearance of the new concept of race itself, beginning in the 1670s, in the first phase of the Anglo-French Enlightenment.

<sup>2</sup> To take only one example, the most important along with the legend of Prester John (cf. below): the Black Magus/King in depictions of the Nativity scene. "That the African Magus should have been adopted in all German regions by 1470 is by itself remarkable. Still more extraordinary is the fact that the black King was then borrowed by every other significant school of artists in Western Europe, sometimes almost immediately, and by ca. 1510 at the latest." (P. Kaplan, *The Rise of the Black Magus in Western Art* [Ann Arbor, 1985], 112). The social basis for this view is suggested by the black presence at the 13th century court of the Frederick II (Hohenstaufen), the last important Holy Roman Emperor of the medieval period: "The proclivity for blacks at Frederick's court was not merely a capricious idiosyncrasy, but a means of suggesting the Hohenstaufens' claim to a universal imperial sovereignty that might include the two Ethiopias, the country of the black Moors, the country of the Parthians, Syria, Persia...Arabia, Chaldea and even Egypt." (ibid., 10) These imperial pretensions may appear laughable, and are definitely part of a crusader ideology, but they indicate that the universal *ism* of the Holy Roman Empire was for *Christians*, not for a non-existent category of "whites."

<sup>3</sup> To say this is not to imply that the inhabitants of "Western Christendom" (a concept more appropriate than "Europe" for the medieval period) did not periodically find all kinds of reasons to hate, kill and oppress Jews, Moslems and "heathens"; it is merely to say that the division of the world between Christians and non-Christians was religious and was not race-based. In medieval Spain, for example (one of the most significant cases, for centuries, of co-habitation between the three monotheisms and also the country in which proto-racism first appeared, Christians and Moslem often converted back and forth as the front lines fluctuated. Moslems enslaved by Christians in the wars of reconquest could, in a generation or two, become serfs (C. Verlinden, *L'esclavage dans l'Europe medievale* [Ghent 1955] 139ff). Passage from slavery to serfdom varied widely around the Iberian peninsula, but it depended everywhere on the balance of forces between Christian masters and serfs, not on any race-based criterion.

<sup>4</sup> Joachim's ideas are briefly sketched in N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (Oxford, 1983), 108-110. For a fuller treatment, cf. M. Reeves, *Joachim di Fiore* (New York, 1977).

<sup>5</sup> The story of the Prester John legend is told in R. Sanders, *Lost Tribes and Promised Lands* (Boston, 1978) Ch. 3.

<sup>6</sup> A. Milhou, *Colón y su mentalidad mesiánica* (Valladolid, 1983) 217 refers to this prophecy.

<sup>7</sup> Columbus' letter reporting the proximity of paradise is quoted in V. Flint, *The Imaginative Landscape of Christopher Columbus* (Princeton, 1992), 149ff.

<sup>8</sup> J. Abu-Lughod, in *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350* (Oxford, 1989) sketches out this world *oikoumene*, whatever problems exist in her idea of what constitutes capitalism.

<sup>9</sup> It is not widely recognized that the breakup of the medieval world in Europe, the Middle East, India and China were relatively simultaneous phenomena, attended everywhere, from Japan to Poland, by the 13th and 14th century eruption of the Mongols, and by the Black Death. Of the four major Old World civilizations, western Europe suffered least from the Mongol invasions. (ibid)

<sup>10</sup> R. Hilton, ed., *The Brenner Debate* (London, 1985), discusses the impact of 14th century agrarian revolts on the end of serfdom and the triumph of wage labor in the English countryside.

<sup>11</sup> The many works of Christopher Hill, such as *The World Turned Upside Down* (London 1987), are the best introduction to these currents. An old classic, written in 1895, is Eduard Bernstein's *Cromwell and Communism* (New York, 1963).

<sup>12</sup> The radicals were repressed and ebbed away during Cromwell's Commonwealth and the Stuart restoration after 1660; only in the 1688 "Glorious Revolution" was absolutism defeated and constitutional monarchy finally consolidated, after which "Locke drove out Habakkuk" (as Marx put it in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, referring to the shift away from religion in the ideology of the bourgeoisie). It is not often pointed out in typical accounts of the Enlightenment that the British slave trade to the New World also expanded exponentially after the 1688 "Glorious Revolution" in England, often cited as the beginning of the English phase of the Enlightenment. As late as the 1680s, the Royal African Company, the government slave-trading monopoly (of which John Locke was a board member), transported approximately 5,000 slaves per year, whereas in the first nine years after 1688, Bristol alone handled 161,000 (E. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, [New York 1980], 32).

<sup>13</sup> It is an anachronistic mistake to see Greek, Roman, Moslem or Chinese attitudes toward the "Other" in the ancient and medieval periods as "racist." For the ancient Greeks, a "barbarian" was someone who did not participate in a *polis*; the Romans, also, throughout an enormous empire, thought of themselves as citizens of a city, and saw the "Other" in those

who were not (J.A. Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* [Chapel Hill, 1982], 134). F.M. Snowden's *Blacks in Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1970), Ch. VIII, documents the absence of "color prejudice" among Greeks and Romans. A more recent and powerful demonstration that the idea of race is a modern invention is I. Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore, 1996). "In Greece and Rome, the organizing idea of race was absent so long as the political idea flourished to reconcile the volatile blood relations (kinship)... with the wider demands of the community" (14).

<sup>14</sup> Significant conversion and inter-marriage made the "blood purity" laws necessary to distinguish between "Old" and "New" Christians, the latter being converted Jews.

<sup>15</sup> J. Greene, *The Death of Adam* (Ames, 1959), 39-54, describes some of the scientific debates in geology and paleontology of the late 7th century that called into question Biblical chronologies; similarly, P. Rossi, *The Dark Abyss of Time* (Chicago, 1984), particularly Ch. 36.

<sup>16</sup> The latter were the sons of Noah, from whom the different groups of humanity presumably descended after the flood.

<sup>17</sup> We say "proto-racism" because, even when a specific notion of "blood purity" — *limpieza de sangre* — underwriting an idea of "purity of (Christian) caste" — *lo castizo* — began to be implemented in Spain ca. 1450, its aim was still to distinguish Christians and Jews, and therefore remained enmeshed in the older medieval communal conceptions. Nevertheless, the Inquisition, which recognized *lo castizo* only for those who could prove they had no Jewish ancestry for three generations, thereby anticipated the Nazi Nuremberg laws by nearly 500 years.

<sup>18</sup> Spain also expelled many Moslems after the final conquest of the Arab kingdom of Granada. Those who remained, the so-called moriscos, were forcibly expelled between 1568 and 1609. Prior to the end of the 14th century and the end of "convivencia", the Spanish kings referred to themselves as the "kings of the three religions" (cf. S. Sharot, *Messianism, Mysticism, and Magic* [Chapel Hill, 1982, 72]. For the classic statement of Spain as the product of the mingling of the "three castes" cf. A. Castro, *The Spaniards* (Berkeley, 1971), Ch. III.

<sup>19</sup> This 15th century anti-Semitism was "new" in comparison with the anti-Semitism of the ancient world because it rested on a new biological definition of racial purity previously unknown. According to Yves Renouard, "...the boundary lines that determine to this day the frontiers of France, England and Spain were more or less definitively settled in a series of battles which occurred between 1212 and 1214." (cited in I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, vol. 1, (New York 1974), 32. The first large-scale outbreaks of anti-Semitism in Europe occurred at the beginning of the Crusades, in 1096, therefore coinciding with a major acceleration of Europe's recovery from the ebb point of the 9th and 10th centuries. Even worse outbreaks occurred in 1348-49, when the Jews were blamed in many locales for the outbreak of the Black Death. (A discussion of the evolution of anti-Semitism in the high Middle Ages is in K. Stow, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* [Cambridge, 1992], Ch. 11). Stow contrasts this with the lower Middle Ages: "...the early medieval period has always been considered a politically favorable one for Jews... Jews had a clearly demarcated and stable political status, which only in later centuries began to erode" (ibid. 43). Most observers date the beginning of economic slowdown in the high Middle Ages from ca. 1300 (cf., for example, G. Duby, *L'économie rurale et la vie des campagnes dans l'Occident medieval* [Paris 1962], vol. 2, part 4.) The first major pogrom in Spain began in Seville in 1391, and then spread to many other cities. The first laws of racial purity were enacted in 1449 and approved by the king in 1451. The Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, the same year as the completion of the reconquest. Jews who converted and remained



were persecuted by the Inquisition; after 1555 proof of blood purity was required for holders of public office. Cf. J. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain* (New York, 1992), 127-129. The early modern "pre-history" of racism in Spain is also covered in I. Geiss, *Geschichte des Rassismus* (Frankfurt, 1988), Ch. III.

<sup>20</sup> Greco-Roman antiquity divided the world between those who were of the city and those who were not; the medieval world, as indicated, divided the world into believers (of one of the three monotheisms) and "heathen." As Hannaford puts it: "Between the expulsion of the Jews and Moors from Spain and the landing of the first Negro in the North American colonies in 1619, the word 'race' entered Western languages." (op. cit. p. 147)

<sup>21</sup> English resistance to the major Catholic powers, first Habsburg Spain and then the France of Louis XIV, was Protestantism's first line of defense after 1558, when Protestant survival against the Counter-Reformation was anything but certain; this hostility to Catholicism went so deep into English popular culture that, three centuries later, it still survived in the American "Know Nothing" anti-immigrant (essentially anti-Irish) movement of the 1850's.

<sup>22</sup> The early (16th-century) English and French intrusions into the Spanish empire, in search of a passage to Asia which would allow them to circumvent the Spanish domains, at a time when England and France were capable of little more than exploratory missions and transient, failed colonies, is told in P. Hoffman, *A New Andalusia and a Way to the Orient* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press 1990).

<sup>23</sup> Figures on the New World slave trade from the 16th to the 19th century, broken down by colonial power and by century, are in A.M. Pescatello, ed., *The African in Latin America* (New York 1975), 47-48. These figures show Spain bringing 292,500 slaves to the New World in the 17th century, while Britain brought 263,000 to its (Caribbean) colonies; in the 18th century, i.e. after the Glorious Revolution (cf. footnote 12 above) and in the high tide of the Enlightenment, shipments of slaves into the British colonies in North America and the Caribbean increase nine times to almost 1.8 million, while Spain's share only doubles. The greater economic significance of the Caribbean, as compared to North America, is shown in P. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison 1969), 134; as late as the outbreak of the American Revolution, Jamaica and Barbados accounted for ca. 50% of all slaves sold in British colonies, while the southern colonies of North America accounted for only 20%.

<sup>24</sup> Estimates of total Jews expelled from Spain range between 800,000 and 2 million. They were expelled in turn from Portugal in 1497. Combined with the expulsion of the Moslems after 1492, and the "moriscos" (Moslems who initially remained) by 1609, the loss to Spanish society was a major factor in Spain's later economic decline. Expelled Jews were known as "marranos" (swine). Officially, the only Jews who went to the New World colonies of Spain and Portugal were the so-called "conversos," or New Christians; the Inquisition began tracking them there in 1522. Other Iberian (Sephardic) Jews went to the Netherlands and from there, two or three generations later, arrived in the New World colonies of Holland.

<sup>25</sup> H. Kamen, in *Inquisition and Society in Spain* (Bloomington, 1985), 41, shows that in the initial decades after 1492 the overwhelming majority of victims of the Inquisition were "conversos," i.e. New Christians; ca. 1530 the net was widened to suspected "Lutherans," and still later to Moslems (statistical table, 185).

<sup>26</sup> Serious evidence exists for the New Christian background of Vives, Vitoria, Luis de Leon, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, Gongora, Gracian, Cervantes, and Las Casas. On the Jewish and Arab elements in the work of one of these figures, cf. L. Lopez Baralt, *San Juan de la Cruz y el Islam* (Mexico City, 1985).

<sup>27</sup> The Spiritual Franciscans' view of "apostolic poverty" prepared them to see in New World inhabitants people easily won to Christianity.

<sup>28</sup> The Franciscan story is told in J.L. Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World* (Berkeley, 1970). The impact of Joachimite ideas in Mexico is also described in L. Weckmann, *La herencia medieval de México*, vol. 1 (Mexico D.F. 1983), 258-268. The meshing of messianic ideas taken from Jesuits, including New Christians, with Incan resistance to Spanish rule is described in A. Flores Galindo, *Buscando un Inca: Identidad y utopía en los Andes* (Lima, 1988). The Jesuit Vieira (1608-1697), drawing on the apocalyptic scheme of history in the Old Testament prophecy of Daniel, foresaw a Portuguese-led "fifth empire" of "saints," echoing the Fifth Monarchy Men of the English Revolution. In fact, Vieira was in both Paris and London in the 1640's.

<sup>29</sup> Although not directly in the Joachimite millenarian tradition, Bartolome de las Casas (1474-1566) challenged the forced labor of Indians more directly than the millenarians themselves. Las Casas was a Spanish priest (possibly of New Christian background) in Cuba who, for over 10 years, made his living off the encomienda, a system of Indian forced labor, but who in 1514 revolted against the Spanish New World system and devoted the rest of his life to agitation against it. His perspective was flawed from the beginning by his proposal to substitute African slaves for the Indians, a proposal he repudiated, but only later.

<sup>30</sup> Some of the Jesuits did study the indigenous cosmologies. They also claimed to find evidence that the apostle Thomas, after evangelizing in India, had continued on to Mexico; this was crucial to them because it overcame the embarrassing 16-century time lag in the arrival of the word of God in the New World. This is another demonstration of the religious belief in the unity of humanity which had to be overcome before any race theory was possible. "[The Spaniards']....world system, founded on revelation, and their very religion would collapse if the Bible had lied or simply omitted mention of America; ignorance, forgetfulness, and injustice on the part of God were all equally untenable. If there existed a positive truth independent of revealed truth, all European thought, from St. Augustine to Suarez, must go out the window." J. Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness* (Chicago, 1976), 186 and ch. 10 generally.

<sup>31</sup> 16th and 17th century attacks on slavery focused on excesses of cruelty and violence, not on the practice as such (D.B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* [Cornell UP, 1966], 189-196); as late as the 15th century, the Palermo slave market sold Greeks, Arabs, Slavs, Tartars, Turks, Circassians, Russians and Bulgarians (Verlinden, op. cit., 385); in the 16th century, the majority of the slaves in Spain and Portugal were what today would be called "white."

<sup>32</sup> Bernal Diaz, a companion of Cortes, describes the awe of the Spaniards upon first glimpsing Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital (which may have had as many as a million inhabitants in 1519), and how they instinctly reached for imagery of fantastic cities from the chivalric romance Amadis of Gaul (1505) to find parallels in their own culture. (cf. B. Diaz del Castillo, *Historia de la Conquista de Nueva España* [Mexico D.F., 1980], 159).

<sup>33</sup> A vast literature exists on this subject. Probably the best book, outrageously never translated into English, is G. Gliozzi's *Adamo e il nuovo mondo* ("Adam and the New World") (Florence, 1977) whose subtitle "From Biblical Genealogies to Racial Theories (1500-1700)" could not more concisely summarize the thesis of this article. Gliozzi shows that the concept of race could not exist until scientific critique, beginning with Biblical criticism, had swept away all the legacy of explanation in the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian streams of Western culture. A comparable but less comprehensive perspective is found in A. Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Cambridge, 1992). On the impact of New World biology and botany, cf. A. Gerbi, *Nature in the New World* (Pittsburgh, 1985).

<sup>34</sup> R. Sanders, op. cit., 187.

<sup>35</sup> See R. Wauchope, *Lost Tribes and Sunken Continents: Myth and Method in the Study of the American Indians* (Chicago, 1962), 53-59 for the history of the theory, which was still held in early 19th-century America. It had been supported by Roger Williams, John Eliot, William Penn, and the Mathers, and persuaded John Eliot, in Massachusetts, to translate the Bible into Algonquin. The theory is still held today by the Mormons. Sanders, *op. cit.*, ch. 30, tells the story of Menasseh's book.

<sup>36</sup> Sanders, *op. cit.*, 371. "It was an empire than the English were now inheriting from the Spaniards, by way of the Dutch, so why not inherit the services of their Jews as well?"

<sup>37</sup> In fact, LaPeyrere (1596-1676) knew Menasseh ben Israel personally. La Peyrere was from a Bordeaux Protestant family and, according to one major study, was probably yet another Marrano. (R. Popkin, *Isaac la Peyrere* [Leiden, 1987], 22-23). His early work was right in the line of Joachimite prophecy, except that, of course, it was the French king (and not, as Vieira asserted, the Portuguese) who would convert the Jews and lead them back to the recaptured Holy Land. Even after his repudiation of *Pre-Adamitae*, he continued to defend its theses privately.

<sup>38</sup> According to Popkin, (*op. cit.*, 14), both the Pope and the General of the Jesuit order, in private, had found La Peyrere's book quite entertaining.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 39. The complex fate of the theses of *Pre-Adamitae*, from the Enlightenment up to the present, is told on pp. 115-176, its immediate impact in England is described in Gliozzi, *op. cit.*, 565-621.

<sup>40</sup> Here, indeed, is a predecessor that contemporary "difference" theorists have overlooked.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in M. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia, 1964), 421-422.

<sup>42</sup> A. Gerbi, *The Dispute of the New World: The History of a Polemic 1750-1900* (Pittsburgh, 1973) is a remarkable survey of Enlightenment thinkers such as Buffon and de Pauw and their belief that not only humans, but also plants and animals, degenerated in the climate of the New World.

<sup>43</sup> As indicated earlier, the English Enlightenment phase of the origins of the concept of race will be the subject of Part Two. □

# BLACKFACE, JACKSTRAWS, & TIN PANELING

## (memoir as confession)

BY DAVID JOHN ZAIDO

*America is a land of masking jokers.*

— Ralph Ellison, 1958

They were a presence, but not physically. The flip side, as it were, of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* motif: centrally there but not seen. Out on the west side of the second largest city in the state, fifty miles inland from Boston, we lived and formed in a world devoid of Negroes. (*African-American* and *Black* were much later designations). They were eminently *other*. And they were eminently absent from our classrooms, from our churches, from our local stores, and our streets.

Our teachers, the trolley car and bus drivers, and the police, except for Gus, the stern Swede whose beat was the corner Square, all seemed Irish. Stopkeepers and clerks, deliverymen, carpenters and plumbers, truckdrivers, salesmen, insurance men, bakers — all — were “white”. In the reigning mindset of the place and time — nascent suburb, 40s and 50s — the closest the west side came to being any less “white” than the clichéd lily, wilting long since, brown-edged and limp, was the burgeoning new Jewish population emigrating out of poet Stanley Kunitz's east-side tenements, into single-family houses. My own name, something less than “white” itself, in the homes of boyhood chums could elicit from a parent a palpable draft, especially the Z part: “Zzzaido? What is that anyway?” For an impressionable kid, a gut-deep frost that lingers, even if the uttering lip is not literally curled. (Two and a half decades later it would blast in again for a moment when I introduced myself to my new next-door neighbor in rural Connecticut. Her first words were, “We’ve had a lot of names around heeyuh, but never one like thet!” as she looked me up and down from behind her screen door, establishing her ground. I knew she was hoping it wasn’t Jewish. When we hung our Christmas wreaths, she must have sighed with relief. And she was a good woman.)

The name struck a nerve back in that Republican bastion of Bennetts and Grahams and Calders and Clarks, Smiths and Joneses. The year after the War, I was twelve, and caddying at the aristocracy's west side golf course, for one Harry Stoddard, patriarch of possibly the most visibly powerful family the city has seen. Their ensnaring, controlling tendrils of grasp ran the one newspaper (and kept it the one, as well as under their thumb; it is to this day tropistically anti-union) and much of the major industry as well. At about the fourth fairway, he asked me my name. He wasn't much taller than I, thick white hair parted down the middle, clear, alert blue eyes. He paused for a second, smiled briefly and said, "Well, son, one day that name may be as well known as mine." There was a dismissiveness in his turning to address the ball, and he topped it for a hundred feet or so. At the end of the round, he tipped me twenty cents. I had liked the course, being out on rolling expanses of thick green grass, its newly cut smell, early morning sky, bird sound. But all I could see of it after that was Harry Stoddard's crinkly-eyed smile as he pronounced, "Well, son, one day . . . ." I knew he was wrong. I was nothing like him.

Until the 60s, Negroes were less than one per cent of the city, one of the northeast's more thriving, Republican-dominated industrial arenas — only 1,100 out of 125,000 plus. That was a shock to discover, in 1957, right out of the army. Until I mulled it over a bit, and then my own ignorance and naiveté were the jolt.

Downtown, in the city proper, virtually none of the "colored" kids my age were at the college-tracked Classical High. I saw them only at football games. In the three or so years I was there, studying ways to not study Virgil, and my brothers added another four years (much more diligently done), Classical High had but one or two black kids (a very light black) whose parents no doubt had college foremost in mind.

As a kid I saw Negroes only while on downtown shopping or movie trips, distant, *other*, as exotically *other* as the characters in my storybooks (where only Indians and Sambo and much-beleaguered horses and monstrous dragons were non-white). They were in bank lobbies, uniformed "guards" with brooms and dustpans, or at shoeshine stands, older men; they were elevator operators in department stores and office buildings, women. Their remoteness — forbidden? taboo? untouchable? — seemed to carry a wisdom with it. They were a deeply mysterious presence with gnomonic possibilities. How much more *other* can a people be?

But the American Negro was very much *here! now!*, in spite of their systematic exclusion. They were in our air by way of radio. We have forgotten the magic of radio, its power to induce thought, imagination, not at all like television, which has the singular capacity of sucking the magic out of almost everything, and substituting class-ridden brain-wash. The piss-for-blood exchange. Radio can convey spirit exalted, unaltered; TV cannot. The music of Black America was on late-night radio, from Baltimore ("The Harley Show," hosted out of sheer love for the music by the owner of a chain of sandwich shops in the city), Kansas City (Joe Turner and Pete Johnson out in the air before the War, all the way to the east coast), New York (Al "Jazzbo" Collins drawing valid parallels between Billie Holiday and Ernest Tubbs), Chicago, New Orleans, especially the car radio, if the atmospheric conditions were right. From the first, as though coming from some other planet because the sun had gone down, I heard — all the way into the nuclei of my cell structure I heard — a truth in black music only hinted at in others, an encompassing, exciting truth, clear and soaring, "like a blue flame in the dark," as Ralph Ellison describes his boyhood impression of the early Oklahoma voice of blues singer Jimmy Rushing. Early evening "family" radio had its moments too. As young as I was, fresh from "The Lone Ranger," "Captain Midnight," "Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy," the piano blues theme and background of radio's "Casey, Crime Photographer" — Teddy Wilson's and Herman Chittison's craft and art — was foreground for me, the characters and story were background. When I was thirteen, I heard Albert Ammons' romping keyboard power, sounding like a muscular emancipation proclamation celebrating, and I knew I had to have it for myself. Instantly, I understood the power of Billy Batson's "Shazam!" and the ensuing bolt of lightning transforming him to Captain Marvel. That sound was my Shazam! I wanted to be Captain Marvel. Piano blues as lightning bolt! Never again would I want anything quite as much, in quite that way, or work as devotedly at the details to get it (unless it's this belated drive to write reasonably well). Despite their recalcitrance, I trained the complexities of the magic into my hands, imagining them black to do it. It took about four years.

For over two generations now, white boys fascinated by black dance music have dabbled in it, learned a lick or two, and then moved off

into their real lives. I couldn't do that. Before Elvis, before Norman Mailer's *White Negro*, and decades before Wiggers and Wannabees, when I was sixteen — deep-voiced, dark, black hair cropped close, given to spontaneously singing verses of blues tunes and spirituals (!), from Bessie Smith to Josh White, to Louis Jordan and Slim Gaillard, absorbed, no, sponged, from my assiduously gathered record collection, addicted to testing keyboards for blues content wherever I found them — my friends called me “Black Man” or “Spade Man.” I liked it, what I thought it suggested (though there was a shade of discomfort when “Amos” and “Kingfish” and broad renderings of the vernacular from radio's “Amos 'n' Andy” crept into the array). The “recognition” stroked me to what seemed an identity. The music was powerful, therefore the people from whom it came must be powerful. Black speech inflections, their phrasing, their pacing, crept into my own, intonations gleaned from compulsive listening. (I hear subtle echoes of that in Sinatra; is that the superior “phrasing” for which he's so often lauded?) I even responded to the music's place names — Cottage Grove, South Side, Dearborn and Michigan, Hastings Street, 18th and Vine, the Brazos, Parchman Farm (Mose Allison seems to have heard what I heard). They harbored a romantic resonance the way remote locales can, until we've been there. I listened so closely it felt as though I *had* been there; and yet they were only blues-imbued phrases that felt good in the ear, the way *they* said them, sang them. A few years later, though, early 60s, after an afternoon in New Orleans of listening to Piano Alexander, then driving up through the lush green countryside northwest over to Texas, I knew the terrain, the woods, the shacks half-hidden back behind the trees. I had been there before. The same gut-recognition stirred in the black neighborhoods of Boston, Los Angeles. And when I was still negotiating high school and delivering ice on Saturdays and a summer or two to a couple of black families on the route, their neighborhood, their kitchens, the way the early morning sun hit their faded gray back porches, all felt familiar. The exact change always on the ice-box, I never encountered any people in those austere neat, sparsely furnished homes. That I was an alien from another planet in their houses bringing my own draft from another world vaguely flickered into consciousness, even in those callow, sweat-soaked few seconds a week.

**W**e learned early on, my buddies and I, how to convert my obsession to advantage. Adventure was always just a piano away. In

spite of the whirling neon orange, yellow, green, pink and red promise of the Wurlitzer, jukeboxes (*juke* n. “. . . disorderly, wicked, of West African origin”) were loaded with the aural equivilant of the Norman Rockwell treacle on the covers of *The Saturday Evening Post*: Patti Page, Perry Como, polka tunes, Spike Jones, Gordon Jenkins and Jo Stafford, Bing Crosby’s “White — (exactly!) — Christmas.” Sudden jump blues alive in that environment startled, incited, like Dionysian rites at a bingo game. Big Mike Noonan, wherever we had stumbled in out of the night, eventually, inevitably, yanked the juke box plug out of the wall, pointed to the then ubiquitous piano and announced, “Hey, Black Man, your turn.” Most protests — they were surprisingly few, though sometimes belligerent — quieted as soon as I started. “You from New York? You sound like The City, man,” could occasionally shift into, “Knock off the fucking Fats Waller!” accompanied by a thrown beer bottle. (So much for the perspicacity of the critic-at-large.) Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson, Meade Lux Lewis, Jimmy Yancey, Mary Lou Williams, Cleo Brown, others, were in my hands; it was almost like having them in the room, especially if the piano was good. These little corners of White America were primed for it. And the free beer would follow. No one ever asked how old we were, maybe because I seldom shaved, or maybe because the blues even then steadily rang the cash register changes — the White Nation’s reigning music.

I liked my buddies’ bantering allusions to my “racial” ambiguity of appearance and musical proclivity. They liked the music. There was a romantic appeal to the way they saw me. The historical possibilities of genetic heritage were certainly there, on my mother’s side of the family chemistry, from a couple of different directions. Many an Underground Railroad escapee from slavery had made it to Vermont and intermarried. And wasn’t there a story about Black Irish realized from escaping Spanish Armada Moors captured after shipwreck? Paternal and maternal valences on my mother’s side, the Underwoods and the Ryans respectively. And she and I, alone among my brothers, shared facial configurations which further supported possibility. All my adult life I’ve seen it in glances — quick little doubletakes — from black people. The other side of that bit of currency was, of course, that I wasn’t really black at all, so the allusions, the identification, were safe, okay. One wonders how the interlude would have played out had it been discovered that, “Hey! he really is Negro you know.” But that nucleus



of signifying high-school buddies and traveling companions, inciters to movement if not riot, Mike, Willie, BeeJay, had a powerful force of their own to contend with: they never let the alcohol go and they're gone now, long since, because of it. Two writers and a priest. Black Man's demise was much quicker.

Eighteen is release into forever. For a flashing moment. It was Saturday night, Labor Day weekend, Salisbury Beach, 1952. Like a pack of village dogs with freshly chewed ropes dragging, we angled through town, sniffing for action. The roller coaster was sundown quiet, a vast tangle of primary color on hold. We had hitched in from dry Hampton Beach to the north. No booze equaled no pianos. Girls in abundance, but no pianos to play. And no pianos meant no free beer. Jimmy Griffin, soon-to-be accounting major at Boston University, liked the roller coaster's undulating possibilities, a rickety-looking Mobius strip of a track that seemed to curl out on stilts over the darkening Atlantic behind us. "You guys, let's hit the slopes after slopping a few." But at the same moment, Big Mike, as alert to the promise of free beer as a Jack Russell terrier to rats, picked up on the piano sound even before I did.

"Hey, Spade Man! Beer Alert! Dead ahead!"

With the stumbling hesitancy of a neighborhood piano lesson, a tentative "Danny Boy" tinkled out onto the street like lightly tolling bells, from Horgan's Grove, a club on the corner across from Jenny's. Jenny's would be locally famous later for its R&B shows, especially Fat Man Robinson, who did his bit to set a standard for countless later bad-boy rock stars, gargling Jack Daniels from the bottle between numbers, throwing back his head and shouting a whisky-greased, "Everthin's coooool and foxyyyyy!" every few minutes, whether he was on stage, in the men's room or at the bar. Black Nation music. There was a new vitality surging just off-stage at the moment, like the night-rolling ocean behind us. Jenny's time, Fat Man Robinson's time, would soon be big for an Eisenhower moment. As we drifted in the direction of Horgan's Grove and the piano sound, White Nation music was shifting underfoot, tectonically.

For some obscure reason — an *in memoriam* tribute to Coconut Grove? — there were green palm trees on the Horgan's Grove sign over the sidewalk awning. Except for the bartender polishing glasses, the

piano player on a small raised stage to the right at the end of the bar, about where a large-screen TV would be today, the place was empty, with less Saturday-Night-Fish-Fry potential than a bridal shower. A lazily turning ceiling fan made the bar seem more movie-set southern than Labor Day beach resort. Impeccable white suit and hat, Joseph Cotton might have fit seamlessly into the scene, albeit briefly.

"Drafts, please," Willie said, "and one for the piano player." We poised ourselves at the bar for the usual take-over, though there was little potential resistance. Halfway through our second beer, the little man in a porkpie hat now belaboring the spinet with "Galway Bay," Big Mike — a.k.a. Tom's Idiot, for various behavioral characteristics (his father's name was Tom), pre-med at Dartmouth in the fall, on a football scholarship — walked up onto the stage, lifted the piano player off the stool by his elbows as though he were a child, and announced matter-of-factly, "My buddy plays better than you." Porkpie glanced over his shoulder, smiled up at the scholarship level of wild-man focus, grabbed his beer and sat at the bar. Broken-nosed, raw-boned Viking atavists have an edge about them that cancels denial, by beast or man. I'd seen Mike calm viciously hysterical dogs with a look and a touch, rolled over on their backs in submission. It never worked quite that way with women, one of his ongoing discomforts.

"Your turn, Black Man." If they had known the tune, they probably would have called me "Shine". The labels, however, all of them, would soon peel away like a soggy caseful of water-damaged Heinz soup cans', with pretty much the same results.

Salisbury Beach was wired for what followed.

By the time I looked up from the piano, at the closing notes of "Yancey's Bugle Call," the tune that invariably triggered Mike to fits of spasmodic air drums, there was a mob at the bar and growing, chanting the obligatory sing-along of the day, "Go, man, go! Go! Go!" Clapping and cheering, calling for more and sending oblations of beer.

Then midway through Albert Ammons' "Climbing and Screaming," one of the more intense blues piano works on record, a BU jersey was suddenly up and dancing on the bar, Jimmy with a girl, drinks kicking over, glasses smashing. The bartender shouted up to me that there was a better piano in the next room. And so there was, as well as a large dance floor, cocktail tables surrounding.

The upright grand against the far wall was a rare find, in tune, brimming with music, as some are, the just-right combination of cast-iron, steel, felt and wood. I could feel it immediately, feeding back through my hands as much as through my ears, as it happens only when everything is singing, inside and out. Someone quickly rolled up a long, overhead sidewalk door just to the right of the piano. The street flowed in, the chanting intensified. The whole town seemed to be dancing through the room, around and on the tables. All the elements were right. No matter what sort of blues I played, fast, medium or slow, it jumped and crackled in the air from me to them, then back again, arcing electricity.

Mike smashed a spoked chair back for its dowels, climbed atop the piano to sit semi-lotus fashion and do his Gene Krupa routine to my Black Man act. Eyes closed, tongue clamped in teeth, head rolling, eyebrows an inverted V to his hairline, he attempted paradiddles on the piano top just above my head. The row of beer offerings stretched across just over the keyboard like golden ambrosia. I tried to keep up with them, Mike competing, without stopping the playing. And to keep the ever-present Lucky Strikes going at the same time. Blues, beer and cigarettes seemed downright synergistic back then. They left behind all kinds of scars entwined.

Shielding me from interruption as though spreading protecting wings, a broad-shouldered blond girl about our age, in jeans and engineer boots, a studded black leather jacket over flannel shirt, with more muscular bulk than any of us, glasses thicker than mine (when I wore them), moved in and stationed herself at my right elbow. She looked like she might have had a Harley Davidson parked just outside. Her hair was ducktailed the way Elvis's would be, not quite as crewcut-flat on top as mine. "Don't stop now, man, don't stop now!" Hoarsely into my ear, it had the urgency of all cumulative, frustrated need. My attack pushed up a notch. Squinting against the smoke as the Luckies burned too short, I flicked them between phrases into the shadows on the far side of the opened doorway. So I wouldn't stop, she replaced them each time from the soggy green, red, and white pack wedged among the beer glasses. When my percussiveness split a fingertip, she saw the blood before I did. She lifted glasses and I kept the bass patterns moving while wiping the keyboard with damp cocktail napkins, readjusting hand position.

The playing was a deep-easy shout. Whatever I reached for worked, note, phrase, verse, shaping, building, climaxing, releasing. It seemed the breakthrough realization anticipated in those first fumbling attempts on the thumping, musically dead, heirloom living room piano at thirteen, hours and hours of listening and learning that followed, so slowly learning, despairing that I'd ever get it, exulting in little discoveries, all the while wanting my hands to be black, visualizing their transformation into supple, long-fingered, tawny grace. That Horgan's Grove moment was elevation, a levitation of sorts. For a flashing few minutes I was Captain Marvel.

Afterward, trying to get it back, that same full, effortless propulsion, I was to think I had done something remarkable enough to be irretrievable. Years later though, after hearing the 1956 Duke Ellington Newport recording on which Paul Gonsalves does extended blues choruses on "Diminuendo in Blue/Crescendo in Blue," the crowd's fervor rising beneath him, driving the rhythm section to rarely recorded hair-raising effect, I knew better. The Need had done it, not I. A great demanding maw alive at midnight in Freebody Park, the sound on the recording wells ominously through the limiting technology of the day, far beyond mere audience response. It is a spiritual hunger, up out of the deep. Specifically a White Nation hunger. Gonsalves later recalled its happening once before, same tune, at Birdland, listeners up on their chairs and tables in response, white listeners. The go-man-go crowd, Norman Granz's Jazz at the Philharmonic audience, for instance, was predominantly white. Gonsalves' playing is not the focus of the power of the Newport recording; his solo is competent, energetic, but much more imaginative and moving saxophone solos have been caught on record, his own for that matter, measurably better in many ways than that one. Few, however, have enjoyed the same level of notoriety. But it was the crowd that did it. The crowd and the Ellington band in wild consort, all barriers down, a recorded consummation. Take the crowd out and what's left? They heard their Need. The primal rawness rising, swelling, is scary. It has some of the properties of a true monster. The crowd behind me at Horgan's Grove that Saturday night, on a scale to fit the room, had some of the hungry sound of the recording. The Need had stroked me alive. It was better than sex.

Without The Need, Elvis, his odds that much better for survival, might now be just another grandfatherly pop/country-western singer with

arthritic hips; but in 1952, a few hundred miles southwest of Salisbury Beach, he was being created as he mounted that powerful hunger and rode it. And I thought I had achieved that night some new height of blues piano-playing for myself. It was just that a pale time was ripe for new blood. Just as long as the skin color didn't change. As "Colonel" Tom Parker understood full well.

By the time the bartender sang out "Last Call!" (how gleeful was he, with the evening's spontaneous combustion in the till?), a few lingerers had settled to quiet listening to what had relaxed into a loose, post-coital ramble. The Harley-Davidson Guardian Angel had disappeared into the night, after an unaccustomed pat on the shoulder (I felt the foreignness in it for her) and a breathy "Thanks, man, never stop, never ever stop!" The pack of Luckies was empty. The tumescence of my breakthrough blueshands would self-exalt for a time.

Monday rain, steady, cool and soft, adumbration of fall, canceled beachtime at Hampton, the perfect excuse to return to Horgan's Grove, to the good piano, its accompanying libation, to try to stretch a bit further what we all knew had ended. The extended summer of high school was over.

But Horgan's Grove had burned to the ground.

A loosely strewn jackstraw pile of acrid, blackened timbers, iridescent charcoal here and there in the sodden gray ashes, it was roped off from the street. Wooden horses lined the sidewalks along what had been the front and the overhead-door side. A yellow-slickered policeman waved traffic past, most of it headed out of town, summer's end now in the tire hiss and rain-doubled red taillights on wet blacktop. He said it had happened Sunday morning before daybreak. A fishing boat captain had spotted it on his way to work. Too much of a head start.

The scene was ripe for one-liners.

"It smells about like a pissed on campfire," Willie said.

With a fatalistic shrug Mike said, "Black Man, you brought the house down."

Jimmy's brother Glenn added from the corner of his mouth, after a long low whistle, "That was one hot piano."

I mumbled something about its having been the best one yet, and squinted through the rain to try to find a trace of it. Little curls of smoke broke through from the ashes now and then, and quickly died.

Overloaded youthful blood and self-preoccupation in the way, it took a while for awareness to move in. If early adolescence is a ready lightning rod for genius, the *daimon* manifesting, eighteen is overload. However long it lasts, it's a steambath of self. Pulsating tumescence dedicated to the moment. And it's where doubt gains a foothold, where fear starts to move into the room, chill the edges. Where Immortality becomes Self-Consciousness. The ultimate handicap.

The others of the village pack had scattered to college, an option far beyond my awareness or readiness. Classroom-alienated high school dropouts can be smug adventurers in their own mind, true romantics, if allowed. Severely delusional.

Looking for work beyond the summertime ice truck, back-stairs deliveries to third floor tenements, glimpses of other people's poverty, something more interesting than wintertime warehouse help, I drifted into a freightyard down behind lower Front Street — just around the corner from where I had watched Erroll Garner from the sidewalk, no money for admission, a year earlier, a Sunday afternoon, on the same bill at the Crusader Room of the Mayflower Hotel with an R&B group called The Sheiks, black men in business suits and turbans, a large red jewel in the center — the same freightyard from which I had heard since a kid lying in bed the rain or snow coming in the sound of the trains in the east wind. They hired me as a gandy dancer. The physical challenge kept introspection at bay. The closest I came to thinking, while swinging a hammer, driving spikes "all the week in the noonday sun," was, this is what John Henry was famous for, what Josh White and Leadbelly sing about. Or on days too wet to work the track, sitting in the work-car freight, waiting, with tall dignified Tim and short dignified Sal, the one from Ireland, the other Italy, both with sons and daughters older than I, some with families of their own, both able to work rings around me, I smoked and wondered about hoboeing, maybe carrying along a guitar, learning it as I went. And singing Josh White's "Fare Thee Well":

*If I had wings, like Noah's dove,  
I'd fly up the river, to the gal I love . . .*

Tim and Sal chewed tobacco, spat into the rain, and tried to let me know, fairly directly, that I ought to get my ass out of there and do

something more suitable for an eighteen year old with half a brain. But even if the Lone Ranger himself leads Silver to the water, to borrow an image from an obdurate former student, there's no guarantee he'll drink. And what's to keep him from pissing in it?

October idyll, the ache of longing in it, so much orange and red in the trees that they seemed full of flames for leaves. Sunday afternoon, playing the piano in the empty banquet room of the Tatnuck House, where Pete Klusky and his afternoon waitresses had let me indulge the passion that had displaced high school. (A bank branch has since displaced the restaurant, a history-laden tavern stop on the Boston-Hartford stagecoach run.) Trying to loosen hands stiffened from swinging a nine-pound sledge, I paused to light a cigarette, watch the smoke drift away. Distant kitchen sounds floated in. And then the obvious finally disentangled and floated to the surface. The body in the pond looking for justice.

*Those arcing cigarette butts into the shadows had burned down Horgan's Grove!*

*No — I! — had burned down Horgan's Grove.*

The bloated body rolled over and looked at me, black holes for eyes. I didn't know what to do with it. I couldn't play anymore.

I wandered out to the coffee bar, the usual end seat, to talk to the waitresses. But I was having trouble with my end of the usual banter.

"What, no music today? That was a short session. We're not paying you enough, or what?"

"No inspiration."

"Awww, babe, we're not enough?"

What right had I to play this stuff anyway? The music wasn't mine, it was *theirs*. *Their* music, *their* hands. *Their* imagination, not mine. And look what I had done with it! I was carrying around in my head album cover pictures, drawings of black hands and faces, *truly talented people* poised over keyboards, pen-and-ink artwork that belonged to *truly talented people* named David Stone Martin, Paul Bacon, Charles White. I had even accepted blackface names. Minstrel-show names. How phony can you get? I couldn't even read music. When they asked for "Stardust," I had to say, "Gee, I can't play that, never learned it, can't read music." So? Erroll Garner can't read music, look what he does with "Stardust," a million other tunes. What kind

of “talent” does someone have who can’t even play “Stardust?” Who has to have a bunch of beer before he’s close to loose enough to parrot someone else’s music? My destructive mimicry was about on a par with Tom’s Idiot doing Jerry Lewis or Gene Krupa. No, worse, much worse. His had been just for the moment, for laughs.

What else had been lost in that fire?

Then one more awareness slid in, as though onto the stool next to me, moved in and took hold like the latest flu virus. I felt it in my hands going cold: *I had no music of my own. None. Not a note. Nor had I the least notion of where to find any. If I hadn’t pretended my hands black . . . well . . . Horgan’s Grove would still be across the street from Jenny’s.*

Marge was a few years older than I, recently divorced. She hadn’t worked there long. Raven-black hair, full, thick and long, skin startlingly white against it. Large green eyes, “cool and limpid,” like the song says. Long legs. I asked her for another coffee, what she was doing later, maybe we could ride around and talk? “Okay,” she said. She had a car. A Chrysler Town and Country convertible, gray, simulated wood paneling on the sides. I checked my jacket pocket for my glasses, lighted another Lucky, wondered if I looked okay. If I was going to drive that baby, I’d have to wear them. Or we’d rack up a tree. All that tin paneling headlong into the real thing. □



## Suburbs

1.

At school, I practiced for WW3.  
Duck & cover: hit the deck, arms over head.  
First you'd see the flash: you'd know the gamma rays  
were slicing your chromosomes like scythes through butter.  
Then the shock wave'd hit, peeling your flesh from your bones  
like wrapping from a present.  
By high school I knew which library books  
had pictures of concentration camp or Hiroshima survivors.

2.

I heard the Civil Defense, Conelrad spiel so often  
I memorized it, hating it, loving it,  
even as the test whine froze my testicles to the chair.  
I couldn't turn away, I couldn't turn it off.  
It proved that I could be gone in a second.  
It lied that I could do something to protect myself.  
Atomic war was not survivable:  
it was an adventure that would bring out the indomitable,  
plus mutant dinosaurs.

3.

Atomic explosions invaded my mind, my cells.  
Atomic bombs like tethers to the world,  
because everyone knew — we shared the secret  
of the destiny of man: we were all going to blow up.  
Or be transformed to giant cockroaches.  
So we did: we blew up.  
The planet blew up inside us.  
Everything we believed blew up.  
Broiling, roiling molten plasmic fire with every experience.  
Above every landscape, everywhere we turned,

that test town from TV — Doom Town,  
 and every day Doom Town was blown to smithereens.  
 Doom Town had respectable, white mannequin families.  
 You're looking at the house, all American house,  
 two stories, 3 or 4 bedrooms,  
 then, in a split second, sucked away,  
 emptied to bits, disassembled, kicked down the drain.

4.

The neighbors built a bomb shelter at night.  
 I remember peeking through a window, spying the man  
 pushing a wheel barrow full of dirt from his basement.  
 A boy at school boasted his dad built a bomb shelter  
 and stocked it with a big bottle of sleeping pills.  
 When I went over to his house, he wouldn't let me see it,  
 and made his little sister show us her titties instead.

*Chris Dietz  
 Bisbee, Arizona*

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## Who's been burning . . .

Who's been burning  
 poor black churches?

Hoot-owl, come down  
 a branch,  
 help me name the fools

who don't give a hoot  
 despite bleeps and bytes.  
 Hoot-owl in the groin  
 of night, come down.

Woman, when you  
 touch me with  
 your fire,

Black fire on White fire,  
 O woman-word,  
 O home for the  
 homeless now

When you lick up  
my spire,  
O flame of hate  
in the darkness  
climbing...

O wage slave,  
do you feel a few  
links clinking?

I'll show you chains.

Do you think  
your work is heavy  
on your shoulders?

I'll show you labor  
older than Mamalujo  
and the Gospel  
of the 4 Directions,  
I'll show you  
thick of hold,  
I'll show you  
how we died  
one on top of the other  
so you can claim your  
heights of skyscraper,  
I'll show you  
bethels of wood

that have withstood  
the kine of satan  
and his clones  
and given you,  
in a homeless time,  
the genuine color  
of home.

Who's been burning  
poor black churches  
down?

State governments  
of fear and snitch,  
the legalized  
illegality of  
death-row terrorists,  
immigration cops  
and robot command,  
and whole damned  
federal klan.

*Jack Hirschman*  
*San Francisco, California*

# CHANGING RACE

Since its inception *Race Traitor* has wrestled with the relation between acts of renunciation by individual "whites" and the task of abolishing the white race. We are not the first to consider the problem. In September, 1947, the Rev. Kenneth Patton, a white minister in Madison, Wisconsin, announced to his congregation that thereafter he would be "a colored man." His announcement stimulated comment in the Afro-American press, including the two columns reprinted below. The first, by **Joseph D. Bibb**, was published in the *Pittsburgh Courier* of September 27, 1947. It has been slightly abridged. We thank Bruce Simon for bringing these documents to our attention.

their interest and sympathy in the welfare of colored people. Their early environments, the broken ties of blood, and their traditions have kept them thinking as colored people.

Occasionally, some person who seems to be white inadvertently reveals his leanings toward colored people. The world wonders why but students of genealogy know that the tinge of color still permeates his thinking.

The Rev. Mr. Patton, no doubt, will suffer and endure the miserable lot of colored Americans, but he will still think as a white man. He

A white man cannot change his race and become a colored person by merely renouncing white people and moving in with colored folks. It is well nigh impossible for a man to change his psychology and philosophy overnight.

The Rev. Kenneth Patton, the white minister from Madison, Wisconsin, who last week told his congregation that "hereafter he will be a colored man," has done a noble thing.

But the Rev. Mr. Patton cannot, despite his renunciation of the white race and his determination, think as a colored man.

The uncounted myriad of Americans with colored blood in their veins, who nevertheless have crossed over the color line and have ostensibly become white peoples, still think "colored." And no one denies "that as man thinketh so he be."

Octaroons, maroons and mulattos, who have renounced the colored race and identified themselves with white people, have generally retained

cannot renounce all his teachings and traditions with the wave of his mind. In truth no white man can think colored. And for that reason much ink and paper has been wasted by white people writing about what they would do if they were colored. We would like to know what they would do if they looked white but thought as colored people have been compelled to think.

Light-skinned colored people, taking advantage of their appearances, have made forays and excursions into charmed regions and exclusive realms with immunity and impunity, but almost all of them retain full consciousness of their racial identity.

Many of them yearn and long to have close friends of dark skin with them. When white-looking colored people palm themselves off as white, they still think as colored people.

Manifestly, then, white people who seek to pass for colored will still think as white people. This writer has been reminded time and time again, by white people engaged in racial uplift and social service, that, "After all, we are still white people." And the statement is supported by truth. White people think as white people and colored people who pass still think as colored.

American institutions and customs compel colored people to think in the vein of those who live upon the fringe of society. The arrogance of the white man has been superinduced by history and the systems of society. These institutions and systems will not and cannot be eradicated and eliminated by fortuitous decisions of altruistic white people like Dr. Patton.

The systems and institutions must be changed before the colored American can think as a free man. By his renunciation of the white race and by living among colored people, the Rev. Mr. Patton will be enabled to grasp the problem more intelligently. He may be equipped by the transition to interpret the minds of white and colored more accurately. But he will not become a colored man by mere declaration and intention.

A month later Mr. Patton admitted that he had become discouraged. He declared that "action, not words, is needed to wipe out racial discrimination." In the *Courier* of October 25, 1947 the famous columnist **George Schuyler** commented on the episode:

Aside from being congratulated for his decision to become a Negro, the Rev. Kenneth L. Patton of Madison, Wisconsin, has probably heard no more about it. This is a shame, because I can see great possibilities in the idea, which have probably escaped our astute leaders, who have been too busy howling professionally for succor in their accustomed and lucrative manner.

Anyone acquainted with American psychology knows that our people are quick to seize upon any crazy idea and make a fad of it. I can think of a lot that have swept the country in my time, such as chain letters, goldfish swallowing, the Confucious-say craze, and so forth. Now I can see where a clever individual or group could start a fad with this changing-into-a-Negro business, which in a short time could well reduce the whole nonsense to an absurdity.

The youngsters in the high schools and colleges could be recruited to launch the drive, and I predict that it would not be long before it would sweep the land from Portland, Maine to Portland, Oregon. There need be no membership fees (which would not commend it to our leaders), no papers to sign, no nothing.

All the members would have to do would be to declare themselves Negroes from thenceforward, go into Negro station entrances, sit in jim-crow cars, sign themselves on various forms calling for "race" as Negro, and generally play hob with the phony racial lines.

The YMCA, YWCA, American Youth for Democracy, Young Socialist League, NAACP, Youth Councils and numerous others could all enlist in the drive, and have a lot of fun upsetting a hallowed American tradition. I think there are just millions of young people who might join up just for the fun of it, to annoy and shock their parents and constituted authority.

I can see how simple it would be to organize, in numerous "white" schools, Patton Clubs of America, each with perhaps a charter with the pictures of Alexander Hamilton, President Harding and several other Americans of note reputed to be touched with the tarbrush.

Using "race" as a point of attraction, with records by all the eminent Senegambian jazz composers, clubs could meet at least once weekly to discuss the life of some outstanding voluntary Negro like Beethoven, Hayden or Du Chaillu, or some of the more obvious Africans like Hannibal, Sappho, or King John of Portugal.

At intervals spirituals might be sung. At least once a year a day could be set aside by the kids when they would all tan or black their skins, parade around town and otherwise just raise the Old Harry in tribute to their remote African ancestry.

Real clever chaps could work out some good punch lines that would bowl over the solid citizenry. For example, "Trace Your Ancestry Back to 1000 A.D. and You'll Find a Negro" or "Don't Worry About Your Daughter or Sister Marrying a Negro—She's Probably One Herself!" or "Don't Explore Your Family Tree, You Might Find Some Dark Leaves."

A great deal of good, clean fun could be had making up limericks about not caring beans about genes. Some youth better heeled than the average might offer a prize of a few hundred dollars for the best song on the subject, something tuneful and lilty that folks could sing and hum from Duluth to Dallas and from Youngstown to Yuma. Or the youngsters might popularize conundrums such as "How Deep is Pigment?", "What American Said, 'In the Dark All Cats Are Gray'?" or "What Color was Adam?"

These are just a few vagrant thoughts but you can see the possibilities. So much preliminary work has been done on race relations, and the understanding that the whole thing is nonsense is so widespread, that all we need is something like this to laugh the whole thing out of existence.

By beginning work in the "better" schools and colleges in the South and North simultaneously, the spread to the "lesser" educational department stores could be assured. What could anybody do about it? You couldn't put a couple million young folks in jail for proclaiming themselves Negroes and defying the jim-crow laws.

What would a restaurant proprietor in Atlanta, Georgia, or Jackson, Mississippi, do if several score young white students marched in with tanned faces and demanded service? Think of how things could be thrown out of joint in Washington, D.C. by a few hundred clever young devils.

Well, it may be a screwy idea, but I wish somebody would try it. After all, Rev. Mr. Patton's escape to Aframerica should not be in vain! □

# reviews

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*C.L.R. JAMES ON THE 'NEGRO QUESTION'*, edited by Scott McLemee. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996. 154 pp. PB \$16.95.

BY MARTY GLABERMAN

This collection of some of the writings of C.L.R. James fills an important gap in the availability of his work. James came to the United States in 1939 and stayed for 15 years, years which some say were the most productive of very productive life. Most of these years he spent as a leader in the Trotskyist movement. His legal status here was marginal — he was eventually expelled — and most of his writing was limited to the Trotskyist press and to internal documents of the movement with very limited circulation. One of the most significant aspects of his work here was to attempt to move the Marxist movement away from the traditional “Black and White Unite and Fight,” which invariably meant subordinating the African American movement to the labor movement.

These selections go from 1939 to 1950. There are articles on much of what was happening in that period in terms of black struggles, on the race riots, on the NAACP, on opposition to World War II and on the struggles of sharecroppers in Southeast Missouri, in which James was a participant. There is a section on the politics of culture, including a discussion of Richard Wright’s *Native Son* and an article of the heavyweight boxers, Joe Louis and Jack Johnson. There are also “historical sketches” on such subjects as the Civil War, Marcus Garvey, and “The Communist Party’s Zigsags on Negro Policy.” Binding all the shorter pieces together are three important theoretical documents.

The book opens with his discussions with Leon Trotsky in Mexico in 1939. In those discussions a break was made from the traditional socialist/Trotskyist attitude with emphasis on the need for an independent black organization. James wrote: “...that the Negro cannot struggle against [social and legal discrimination, etc.] unless he forms organizations predominantly white—is sectarian and stupid.” He understood the difficulty that the movement would have accepting this. The support of this independent Negro movement “should be frank, sincere, and unwavering. This is not as easy as it sounds. What the party must avoid at



all costs is looking upon such a movement as a recruiting ground for party members, something to be 'captured' or manipulated for the aims of the party, or something which it supports spasmodically at the time it needs something in return."

To convince the Trotskyist movement of this point of view, even with Trotsky's agreement, proved difficult. In the Workers Party wing of the movement it proved impossible. The center of the book contains a document entitled "The Historical Development of the Negroes in American Society," written in 1943 and submitted to the 1944 convention of the Workers party as the Resolution of the Minority. This, as well as the other material in the book, reflects the period in which it was written and the restraints placed on the author of being the leader of a minority in the party. There is an extraordinary emphasis on the importance of the labor movement. This has a dual importance. One is the fact that the big industrial unions were new and were still growing, both in size and militancy. Two is the situation created by the war and the March on Washington Movement in which large numbers of African Americans were entering the factories and the industrial unions and were playing an increasingly important role there. The resolution calls for closer ties between the black movement and organized labor but makes it clear that the party must sharply condemn "that distortion of Marxist truth which states or implies that the Negroes by their independent struggles cannot get to first base without the leadership of organized labor." James found in Trotsky and in Lenin theoretical support for these views. To the Workers Party they were anathema.

The book concludes with "The Revolutionary Answer to the Negro Problem in the United States." At the beginning of 1948, James's group, the "Johnson-Forest Tendency," returned to the Socialist Workers party. The SWP was having considerable trouble in its ranks over this question and James was welcomed with open arms. This was his defense of the resolution he presented to the 1948 party convention. It should be said that the acceptance of James's views was more verbal than practical and never really penetrated the SWP's political work. the dual emphasis on an independent black movement and on the importance of the labor movement is continued. James says "that the independent Negro movement that we see today and which we see growing before our eyes is nothing strange. It is nothing new. *It is something that has always appeared in the American movement at the first sign of*

*social crisis.*" [emphasis in original] but later on he adds: "The independent Negro movement, which is boiling and moving, must find its way to the proletariat. If the proletariat is not able to support it, the repression of past times when the revolutionary forces failed the Negroes will be infinitely, I repeat infinitely, more terrible today."

James was well aware of the racism of the American working class, as well as of the labor leadership and the society as a whole. He was concerned with objective social movement. After 1950 he would have written differently, and did write differently, about the labor movement. The union movement in decline, led by reactionary bureaucrats was not the same as the movement that emerged from the thirties and the war years. However, the connection between black struggles and the working class remains, as contradictory as it might be. One example of this reality is evident in the refusal of American and foreign corporations who move their plants or set up new plants in the anti-union South to enter areas with large African American populations. They believe, I think correctly, that African American workers would be more likely to join unions than white workers. That needs to be understood and respected.

The victories of the civil rights movement have led to a growing black middle and upper class and a small but growing conservative wing of the African American community. But the majority of the black population in the U.S. has always been and remains working class and has never ignored its class interests.

This new collection of C.L.R. James's writings provides valuable insights and theoretical guidance to anyone interested in racial struggles in the United States.

## "THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME"

BY SAM RIVERA

The touching Disney movie, "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," must be seen. It shows us demonstrations of race treason by the following characters:

Quasimodo, the hunchback, who is a slave to a minister/judge who lies and wants to kill all Gypsies and soon even the hunchback;

Esmeralda, a Gypsy woman, who hopes to soon be free with her friends and people;

the Captain of the Guards, Phoebus, who saw the truth in being nice to all human beings, including Gypsies;

the three gargoyles, who told Quasimodo when he was locked in chains, "We don't think it's these chains holding you back, we think it's something else," referring to the chains most people are locked in, which are really chains of capitalism that people don't believe they can break, but they can.

*PARISH BOUNDARIES: THE CATHOLIC ENCOUNTER WITH RACE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY URBAN NORTH*, John T. McGreevy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1996.

*Parish Boundaries* almost perfectly captures the social world of my childhood — pre-1960s urban Catholicism. In my particular case, under the leadership of Monsignor Nolan, the parishioners of St. Michael's were involved in a never-ending campaign to raise money for the church and school through raffles, bingo games and bazaars. Only gradually did I understand that the same thing was at work in many other parishes in Brooklyn.

By the time I was 13 or so and I looked at maps of Brooklyn, I could locate dozens of parishes. In many cases, I knew the exact street boundaries of those parishes. In the diocesan high school I attended, student slots were allocated to each parish and I got to know my new classmates, initially at least, on the basis of which parish they came from. McGreevy carefully chronicles how the characteristic parish—reflecting, in his estimate, elements of both community and fortress—of the post-war years developed out of a complicated inter-play of efforts by various immigrant communities to build their own churches and attempts by the hierarchy to replace such national churches with a geographically-organized parish system.

The eventual size and scope of the resulting parishes, built on the basis of a steady stream of contributions from the parishioners and the ability of the clergy to make its presence felt in all aspects of everyday life, gave the appearance of an institution that would last for the ages. At the same time, the all but total authority of the clergy appeared to

ensure the obedience of the laity to church directives. But, as is often the case, things were not exactly what they appeared to be.

The parish boundaries that I and others knew so well were also race boundaries and all too many of their parishioners would relatively easily become people who would fight tooth and nail to keep their churches white and their neighborhoods segregated. McGreevy's account is especially illuminating about the extent to which their support of race boundaries was in opposition to the formal teachings of the Church. Throughout the post-war years, the hierarchy issued statements reminding the faithful that the church's teachings endorsed racial equality and tolerance. In part, this formal endorsement of racial justice was intended to bolster the church's continuing efforts to win black converts. In any case, they didn't really amount to very much. Only a handful of committed clergy and laypeople, including black Catholics, were actively involved in efforts to integrate parishes or to secure the church's more active involvement in civil rights causes.

The still world of urban Catholicism was shattered by two developments—the eruption of the Civil Rights Movement and its eventual movement north and the convocation of the Second Vatican Council. All but overnight, nothing seemed as it was and was always intended to be. Priests were being arrested; nuns were marching; families were being “upset.” Perhaps worst of all, there were “traitors” in the family. Parents who had raised their children with the conviction that the priesthood and the sisterhood were among the highest achievements to dream of and to pray for were faced with ordained sons and professed daughters who seemed to delight in violating one more or less sacred custom after another.

McGreevy gets an awful lot of this right. By way of example, McGreevy describes what a Monsignor Burke of Chicago did in 1967:

Monsignor Edward Burke, the former chancellor of the archdiocese, a longtime supporter of Saul Alinsky and now the pastor of St. Bartholomew's parish on the Northwest Side, poured out his frustration in a parish bulletin article entitled “Let's Do Some Thinking for a Change.” “When we fight for the rights of the Negro,” Burke maintained, “we cannot overlook the rights of the white person. He has been forced to support, unaided, himself and his family. If he owns property, he purchased it by the sweat of his brow and is a true Christian when he asks that his possessions be not disturbed.” Burke readily conceded

that “the Negro has God-given rights—equal to the rights of the white” but he also argued that “My reasons for opposing integration are based on the conviction that proponents of civil rights possess a superficial viewpoint of what integration really is.” Integration, in Burke’s view, did not equal “physical proximity.” Why do “Catholic newspapers who continuously urge the whites to love the minorities, never fight the landlord, who [is] responsible for the slum[?]”

Burke’s comments provoked extensive criticism but also generated support. One woman wrote to Monsignor Daniel Cantwell of the Chicago Catholic Interracial Council:

I’m all for Monsignor Burke and I’m sure I can speak for all of Cicero and Berwyn. I have three cousins that are priests and two that are nuns and thank God none of them think like you do. How can anyone have respect for a priest when he makes a monkey of himself by marching down the street with a bunch of nitwits or sits on a curb to demonstrate[?] I tried living with them when they moved into our neighborhood in Chicago...I worked all my life and still have a mortgage for what I lost. Now I live in Cicero and Monsignor Burke knows exactly what he is talking about when he says Negroes must learn to accept obligations, including respect for property.

The world of Catholic America is not now the same as it was forty years ago—there are still many hundreds of dedicated clergy and laypeople who try to live out a life of commitment to the poor. They staff the churches and the schools in many city neighborhoods that were long ago abandoned by their relatives and childhood friends. But whereas they once were heretics who, by their every word and deed, challenged others to look straight at the world, they are now little more than missionaries (although, to their credit, they have no mission to convert) who can report back, safely, on the hardships and the struggles of those they work with. They, like other missionaries, are often viewed by many as too good to be true. It was, I think, more productive when their heresies caused other Catholics to shake their heads, question their faith and scream their disapproval.

At the end of the book, McGreevy balances his deeply critical assessment of the complicity of the parish world in the maintenance of race boundaries with an acknowledgement of the ways in which parishes sustained rich communities of faith and mutual support and ex-

presses a hope that parish communities might be reconstituted on a more inclusive basis. I'd like to talk to him about it.

J.G.

*BLACK WEALTH/WHITE WEALTH: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON RACIAL INEQUALITY*, Melvin L. Oliver & Thomas M. Shapiro. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Oliver and Shapiro have written a very fine book. They argue, convincingly, that the true extent of the discrepancy in life circumstances for blacks and whites in America is not revealed by the familiar comparisons of income—especially when those comparisons suggest that the gap in income is narrowing. Instead, they suggest that wealth (measured not only by savings account balances or stocks and bonds but, most important, by assets such as homes) reveals far more.

They use data collected through the federal Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and their own interviews with individuals on the west and east coasts to determine the extent of wealth differentials and the ways in which they have been produced and maintained. The statistical data are dramatic:

The black-to-white wealth ratio comes closest to equality among prosperous households earning \$50,000 or more. Even here where the wealth gap is narrowest, however, blacks possess barely one-half (0.52) the median net worth of their high-earning white counterparts. ... The highest earning black households possess twenty-three cents of median net financial assets for every dollar held by high-income white households. One startling comparison reveals that poverty-level whites control nearly as many mean net financial assets as the highest-earning blacks, \$26,683 to \$28,310.

Oliver and Shapiro review the possible explanations for the wealth disparity and find that several essential developments are involved—1) the effective elimination of a black business class, through violent assaults when necessary, that could compete in the open market, 2) a racialized state policy (including the legal enforcement of slavery, the homestead legislation of the nineteenth century, the Social Security law,

the federal housing law, and even AFDC regulations) that made the acquisition of wealth by blacks a perilously difficult matter, and 3) the sedimentation of racial inequality which passes on, more or less routinely through the operation of normal sound banking practices and inheritance laws, wealth differentials from the past to the present.

The experience of one of the interviewees makes this all quite understandable. Kevin, a seventy-five year old retired white naval shipyard worker at the time of the interview, estimated his assets at between \$200,000 and \$300,000. On top of that, he estimated the value of his house at about \$175,000. His son would inherit all of those assets upon the death of his parents. How did Kevin get so much money? Well, it turns out that he started out in the shipyard as an electronics mechanic. He didn't especially like the blue collar work and was jealous of his boss who went to work in a suit. One day, many years ago, he struck up a conversation about handball with the boss. As the conversation progressed, the boss told him an improbable tale about the exploits of his one-legged father who high jumped over a 5'7" crossbar.

Kevin responded by saying his father was obviously "a phenomenal man." His boss replied with a genuine "Do you really think so?" and Kevin then spoke these words of loyalty: "If you tell me that your father with one leg or no legs jumped over a 5'7" bar, I have no reason to disbelieve you." Right on the spot, Kevin was hired.

Later on, Kevin was asked to do a study of discrimination in the yard. His secret report concluded that it was pervasive but it was all too easily obscured by unspoken understandings among white workers and supervisors who knew about the value of one-legged high jumpers.

For Kevin and many other whites, casual conversations opened doors to secure employment. Secure employment allowed them to purchase homes. Favorable mortgage and tax policies enabled them to accumulate equity. And Kevin's son. We don't know what he thinks about all this. But he might very well be like the young people who, upon finding themselves at home plate, claim that they have hit a home run. They neglect to mention that they started at third base.

The book is indispensable.

J.G.

*STILL THE PROMISED CITY: AFRICAN-AMERICANS AND NEW IMMIGRANTS IN POSTINDUSTRIAL NEW YORK*, Roger Waldinger. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.

It is likely that many readers have heard about it—the skills mismatch that explains why it is that black workers have been unable to secure their share of the relatively well-paying jobs that the American economy has to offer. Black unemployment, under-employment and low wages result from the cruel coincidence that, at the point when the legal restrictions on employment were finally eliminated, the skills necessary for high paid work were enhanced by the normal workings of competitiveness and technological advance.

Since we all know that the education of black people has been and is unsatisfactory, the explanation makes sense. Except it's wrong. Waldinger points out the simple fact that, due to extensive discrimination, black workers had not been able to secure niches in New York's manufacturing sectors, such as the garment industry, which provided well-paying, but unskilled, jobs. Therefore, they couldn't lose jobs which they didn't have.

Waldinger writes cautiously but knows when he's got his opponents beat. In this finely detailed work, he illuminates the ways in which jobs are distributed in New York City. He asks and answers the questions: Who gets the Good Jobs? and Who gets the Lousy Jobs? People get good jobs and bad jobs in the same way—through the social networks they are part of. The only difference is that just about anyone can be part of the social network for bad jobs but only white men can be part of the social network for the good ones.

J.G.



# letters

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## OUTRAGED

We read and discussed the lead editorial to *Race Traitor* #5 and the cordial “Exchange with a National Socialist” in the same issue. We find each piece seriously disturbing and fundamentally misguided.

The editorial, entitled “Aux Armes! Formez Vos Bataillons!”, extols the militias as “a rebellion against the massive, faceless, soul-destroying system” and argues that they represent “a grassroots movement arming to defend individual liberties against federal encroachment.” Further, the editorial advocates the formation of armed paramilitary groups as the best way to defend civil liberties in the United States today. Meanwhile, *RT* attacks anti-militia organizations for their “law-and-order stance” and for “snooping and snitching.” Then, for reasons that are difficult to comprehend, one of the editors of the journal engages in an elaborate correspondence, on terms of “mutual respect”, with a Nazi. At the same time, the *RT* editor calls for an expansion of the death penalty. Thus, according to *RT*, we are to respectfully dialogue with fascists, actively defend and ally with racist militias, and form paramilitary battalions to prepare for war against the US state.

We are outraged by the praise given to the militias and reject *RT*’s irresponsible call to arms. The extraordinary lack of logical reasoning, the glib innuendo, and the endless posturing in the articles makes us wonder whether the pieces warrant a response. However, we write to outline our opposition because the articles appear to have generated serious interest.

First, *RT* has not done any analysis in this or any *RT* issue as to the militias’ history, class composition, organization, ideology, or relationship to the state and capital. Given *RT*’s conclusions, we find the omission to be severely problematic and emblematic of a lack of seriousness.

Second, *RT* accepts the militias’ benign and narrow self-definition of themselves as opponents of the state and defenders of individual liberties. For *RT*, they represent “angry whites who think nothing less than total change is worth fighting for.” *RT* also seems to presume that the militias are against capitalism. We see no evidence presented in the

pages of the journal to support any of these contentions and overwhelming evidence elsewhere to confirm just the opposite.

Third, *RT* seems to take the position that liberals or social democrats are more of an enemy than white supremacists and fascists when it comes to defending civil rights. We find it politically reckless and dangerous to see the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Oregon-based Communities Against Hate as more of a problem than pro-capitalist, racist armed groups.

Fourth, we fail to see why *RT* published the exchange with Arthur Pendragon of the National Socialist White People's Party. We do not see how publishing the exchange advances the anti-racist struggle. But we do see how Pendragon and his rantings are legitimized through publication in *RT*.

The militias represent an armed wing of the rightist assault on working class gains. They are the latest in a long line of armed paramilitary groups that have been unleashed by capital as a supplement to normalized repression and exploitation. They are nascent death squads, aiding expropriators of land, privatizers, slave-makers, strike-breakers, Indian killers, structural adjusters, Wall Street profiteers, and imperialists alike. They are akin to the White Guards now active in Chiapas against the Zapatistas or the FRAPH in Haiti. *RT* has not convinced us otherwise, and by ignoring these fundamental points, they've endangered and discredited the comrades around them.

*Midnight Notes Collective*  
Jamaica Plain, Mass.  
September 1996

**Editors' reply.** We see in your letter no evidence of the analysis of the militia movement you urge upon us, but we do see one obvious error: both the White Guards in Chiapas and the FRAPH in Haiti are arms of the state, whereas the militias are not. We do not, however, presume that because they are against the government they are for *us*. We never said that liberals are more of an enemy than fascists, but when they boast of sharing with state agencies the "intelligence" they have gathered on "extremist" movements, it is they and not the militias who are "supplement[ing] normalized repression and exploitation." If you know a better defender of civil liberties than an armed populace, tell us what it is. As we explained previously, we published the exchange between one of our editors and a National Socialist as a way of informing our readers about the worldview of National Socialism. We cannot imagine where you got the idea we favor capital punishment.

## MILITIAS

Recently I read your wonderful book, *Race Traitor*. As a practicing anarchist, student of American history and participant in the zine scene, I was inspired and enlightened by the compilation, the best radical piece of literature I've read since *TAZ* by Hakim Bey.

I admired your editorial piece on the Patriot/militia types. Since I live in Oklahoma, I have made myself well aware of their activities. I've been researching them for years now, listening to thousands of hours of short-wave radio, attending meetings, checking out internet sites, etc. I can assure you, most of what is written about them is rubbish. Few on the left (mainstream or underground) really have the information to critique them. More of them than you think are African or Native. The government has demonized the Patriots because they *are* a threat to the New World Order. It only shows the utterly bankrupt status of the radical left that they have believed this disinfo campaign. Didn't they learn anything in the sixties/seventies/eighties?

J. M.

Tulsa, Oklahoma

## SELF-IMPOSED MARGINALIZATION

*Race Traitor*, like much of the left, risks a fate of impotent irrelevance and social insignificance through the means of several passive and active displays of self-sabotage. The passive displays are manifest through inactivity, lack of concrete initiatives, and the failure to present an alternative. Concrete initiatives and socio-political activity usually come with time and may present themselves in any number of forms. One form was suggested in a *Race Traitor* editorial stating that we should form "armed paramilitary groups." The casual way in which it was mentioned, however, suggested that the reader should not take that statement seriously. One indication that supports this presumption is the general tone of the editorial and another is that *Race Traitor* gives no sign anywhere else that what was said was what was meant. There are no articles discussing militant *Race Traitor* struggle or tactics, nor fire-arms or survivalist information, not even a list of contacts for US POWs or left-wing paramilitary media/organizations. Nothing. One can only assume then that the statement was either a joke, a passing whim or radical posing. Tossing around such statements carelessly and insin-

cerely is easy but it does no one any good. You either believe it or you don't, if you do then you're obliged to stand for it and if you don't then you shouldn't say it. To fail to adhere to this basic social code is to contribute to an atmosphere of superficial ideology where the politics of our existence become a mere game, passing trend or lifelong hobby. This poisonous atmosphere brings us to the most destructive form of passive self-sabotage: failure to present an alternative.

Issue 5 contained a debate with a National Socialist which touched upon the subject of community and communitarianism. This is crucial. A strong, coherent community is a necessary ingredient in any society but becomes an urgent need when the larger society is falling apart — such as the United States today. There isn't a single perfect form of community that one must build but any number of options that create a healthy unit of people are possible to build out of our particular natures and circumstances. Surprisingly, if there's one thing that the Euro-American left has failed to create in all its years of existence, it's the creation of long-term, radical urban communities, and whereas the Euro-Americans have not provided a single model for sustainable radical life despite all of their resources, the lesser-privileged African-American people have provided several, such as the Nation of Islam, MOVE, and Rastafarians, to name a few. By critiquing capitalism and social constructs such as the "white" race, *Race Traitor*, along with the rest of the left, have placed themselves in the position of having to provide new forms of social grouping, new concepts of community, and a new vision of society.

Now with the issue of community comes the issue of reparations, justice, and compensation for unequal treatment. So-called white people have at least one thing in common: white-skin privilege. This privilege obviously pays off and as a result white people spend less time in jail, earn more money, and have more access to various resources and education, such as computer technology. So, for anyone interested in "setting the record straight," the question arises: How can treason to whiteness translate into the funnelling or transfer of resources from one community of privilege to another community in need? Some people believe that we should, at least for now, rely on the federal government. What is the position of *Race Traitor*?

Race Traitorism is a reasonable ideology based on reality and hence does not deserve the marginalization reserved for extremists and loon-

ies. Powerful institutions such as government, media and corporations are expected to try to marginalize any threats to their existence. *Race Traitor* shouldn't make their job easier. By professing that "*The* [italics added] key to solving the social problems of our age is to abolish the white race," *Race Traitor* relinquishes a holistic viewpoint in favor of simplistic dogmatism. If every race traitor is expected to disavow the fact that class, sex, race, and ecology are not only equally important parts of our struggle but intertwined as well, then race traitorism will remain on the shelf of extremism to rot in the company of other ideologies which also claim that their issue is *the* issue.

Troy  
Lund, Sweden  
November 1997

**Editors' reply.** It is a sign of how far things have slid back in two hundred years that our statement that people who love liberty should possess arms touched off such a storm. We hope that those who agree will devise many ways to discuss and implement the principle. To the extent we can help, we will do so.

We don't consider ourselves part of the white left and we do not want to build a "white" community. There is a lot to learn from MOVE, the Muslims, and the Rastas. As for transferring resources, all those struggling against white supremacy should share resources, but we think that in most cases the effort by "whites" to break up the white community will be more important than any direct material aid they can provide to black people. For us the test of a traitor to the white race is the willingness to confront white people and white institutions.

We would not say that white supremacy is more "important" in general than, say, patriarchy or class exploitation. We think abolishing the white race is the key to solving the social problems of our age, because people's willingness to identify as "white" prevents them from fighting against the evils you mention. This is a political judgement and the test will be its effectiveness.

### WHITES NEED HELP

I'm in the Planning Department of the City of Wilmington, Delaware. I'm also a Democratic committee person. Wilmington's population became sixty percent African-American and Hispanic within the last decade. The African-Americans have elected the first African-American mayor. The Irish-dominated Democratic Party is going through nasty, vicious throes of shame for having lost and then having to support a black.

Your approach to the problems of racism is unique and timely. I am extremely interested in the notion of “whiteness” as a social construct. I’ve met so many people who, in the course of our relationship, bump up against the “white or black” code of constructed reality. There has been such a volume of lies promulgated for so long that the contradictions begin to insult even the most ignorant.

White folks need a lot of help. That “super human” status is quite a burden. It makes them act in ways that destroy their souls. I have often said that there is much more “missionary” work to do outside of the “ghetto” than within it. If whites would relinquish their felt need to be superior to blacks and just be, a lot of issues would not materialize. I honestly feel that there are whites who are anxious for a vehicle to achieve this. I think we’re on our way to preparing a social transit for such folks. I’d like to publish material from *Race Traitor* in our local African-American newspaper, *Drumbeat*. I believe that we have a white readership that would appreciate the opportunity to engage the thoughts and perspectives of *Race Traitor*.

Emery C. Graham, Jr.  
Wilmington, Delaware  
November 11, 1996

#### PERMISSION TO REPRINT

Hi, I run a punk rock/political zine called *Dgokn Jbout*. I was wondering if it would be ok for me to run the “Free to be Me” article in my first issue. I would gladly send you a copy.

Jimmy  
July 1996

**Editors’ reply.** All persons are welcome to reprint anything from *Race Traitor*, provided they credit the source. And please send us a copy.

#### WANTS TO SHED LABEL

I have blonde hair and pale skin. However the term white is not one I identify with. I am a human being first and foremost and then I am a woman. My cultural heritage is far richer and more diverse than the term white implies and thus I find it offensive. I so often feel the cold hatred of others because I am perceived as “privileged” and assumed to be racist. I was born in Australia where no form I ever filled out required me to check a box stating my ethnicity. What am I supposed to

put? I do not know if I was ever awarded a job above somebody else because I was perceived white nor do I know how to shake off this uncomfortable label. Any suggestions?

*Lizzy Chase  
San Francisco  
November 24, 1996*

**Editors' reply.** Until the white race is abolished it will be difficult for any individual who looks white to escape the "white" label. See the next letter for an account of how one person dealt with the problem on one occasion.

### LET THEM DECIDE

The following occurred to me at a K-Mart here in Fairbanks: I was asked to fill out a form before purchasing a handgun. For height, weight, hair color, eye color, etc., I had no problem since these were objective criteria. When I came to the "race" box, I explained to the clerk that I really did not know what race meant since it was not an objective criterion.

She got the assistant manager. I explained again my problem to him — that I was almost sure that I was mostly of Northern European ancestry, but that I was equally sure that I had some African and Asian ancestry. He got mad — why was I being such a wise guy?

I said that I was far too uncertain of my race to fill in the race box but I had no problem with him filling it in. He said that he couldn't do that. "Well then," I said, "I guess you must just lose the sale."

Not wanting that, he allowed me to leave the box blank, but assured me that the Big, Bad, Boys from ATF would be calling me. Of course, they didn't.

I left with my handgun and felt wonderful. It was amusing to watch the reaction of the "black" sales clerk. Bagging my purchase, she was grinning.

*John Dailey  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
May 6, 1996*

### AFRAID TO JINX US

I just wanted to give my support to your publishing the exchange with Pendragon. I found it extremely valuable. I almost dare not say how valuable and excellent I find the journal, for fear of jinxing its quality. I

am amazed at the precision and clarity of the editors' stance, and how consistently it is applied, especially in a journal which seems to be successfully speaking with a broad spectrum of people.

*Daniel Hall  
Seattle, Washington  
September 11, 1996*

#### **WHITENESS: A MASTERFUL CONCEPT**

Thanks for sending the journal. I am very proud of my article [#6: "Latinos: The Indian Escape Hatch"]. However, I was even more thrilled by the passion and clarity with which you wrote the editor's response. Please do not sway from your convictions. They are right on the mark. Because I am bilingual and, to a certain extent, bicultural (US/Dominican), I am in a position to come across latinos of varying degrees of assimilation to this country. I have developed an ability to sense the level of assimilation of the latino by his addiction to the term "white" in describing himself as well as his desire to distance himself from "new arrivals." Whiteness is indeed a masterful concept. We Dominicans are not strangers to it either. The last Dominican election was decided in no small part by the insidiousness of the concept even in a country with as much West African ancestry as ours. Best of luck with the *Race Traitor*. May it continue to grow

*Javier Nelson  
Raleigh, North Carolina  
July 13, 1996*

#### **BLESSINGS AND PEACE**

Blessings and Peace: Props to *RT* for being visionary and setting forth dialogue and ideas for a better world. May the energy that you invest in your quest return to you one hundred fold, through increased wisdom and spiritual strength.

*In Service and Respect,  
Rafiki Cai  
July 13, 1996*

#### **LOVELY LOUISIANA**

On the question of "other races," the example of one public official in the New Orleans area may be relevant. Harry Lee is the Sheriff of suburban Jefferson Parish — David Duke's former home base. Sheriff



Lee is of Chinese descent. (His family operated a popular Chinese restaurant for many years.) He became a folk hero to local whites several years ago when he ordered his deputies to routinely stop and question black motorists who were driving through white neighborhoods. (I'm sure the deputies had been doing this without specific orders for a long time.)

Louisiana is admittedly an exceptional place in many respects. Even in the 1960's this was the only place in the United States where someone with the surname of Perez could be the leader of the most intransigent defenders of Jim Crow. Even so, this example could be a portent of things to come in the rest of the country.

Beth Henson's reminiscences were quite interesting. They highlighted the political significance of cultural disaffection among white youth which the Marxist left has traditionally either dismissed or ignored. But does this constitute race treason? There seems to be a thread running through some of the contributions to *Race Traitor* that any deviant behavior among so-called "whites" that attracts unfriendly attention from the police is ipso facto a form of race treason. I'm not so sure. I have vivid memories of being hassled by the cops while hitchhiking in my younger days, but even back then I was aware that the hassles would have been much more severe if I had been visibly of African ancestry.

These qualifications aside, I liked this issue. The discussion of the militia question was one of the better that I've seen in any forum. Keep up the good work,

Gary Modenbach  
New Orleans, Louisiana

**Henson replies.** You're right. I overstated the case.

#### ANOTHER "OTHER"

Thank you for your explanation of how I feel about myself. I am seventy years old, have lived through many aspects of racism in my life and have felt more akin to the black struggle than to my fellow whites.

My grandmother came from Ireland in the late 1800s and my family has gradually worked its way "up." I am now divorced, have a stable situation and realize that many women my age do not, even though they have worked hard at their job of reproduction and child rearing.

Did you know the federal government has removed "Other" from their classification form? White and Black are political designations,

while Asian/South Pacific is geographic. The labels are so illogical that I hate to pick one. I guess too many people picked "Other" so they eliminated it.

M.K.  
Akron, Ohio  
January 1997

### ADRENALIN RUSH

Last Sunday the anti-choicers held their annual "march for life." Two friends and I marched the whole way, heckling them and holding pro-choice signs. We had a great time — three against five hundred is a helluvan adrenalin rush. The little broadsheet I'm planning to publish is almost done — the top article with headline is "Abolish the White Race."

Joel Olson  
PO Box 1543  
Phoenix, Arizona 85001  
January 1997

### LIGHTNING BOLT

Wow, what a great idea! I read the interview with you in *Z Magazine* [January 1997] and laughed out loud at the genius of destroying people's confidence in our official currency of race.

I'm "so-called white," raised in the white suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia; my parents were both from Alabama, and their parents were from Mississippi and South Carolina. I'm from a long line of racists — although my mother did stand in another long line, to attend MLK Jr.'s funeral. I've been teaching African-American literature courses to white college kids here in New York and in Illinois for several years. I've always taught Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage*. Whatever else you want to say about it, that novel does a splendid job of illustrating the "twin souls in one body" W.E.B. Du Bois talked about. Leading a discussion about it at a college on Staten Island where the students are almost all Italian-Irish (another set of hyphens, products of parochial-school romances; but that's another story), at one point I was inspired to shout out to these white youths, "But we're *all* African-American!" They were unable to overcome their prejudices, but the notion had hit me like a lightning bolt. It reminded me of a dream I had around fifteen years ago when I was living near Auburn Avenue, taking the bus through Sweet Auburn to go to my job on Peachtree Street and to volunteer after

work as a copy editor at *The Atlanta Voice*, Atlanta's second-largest black newspaper; and reading Albert Murray at night, and listening to live jazz. I dreamed a spaceship zapped everybody in the country and made them black, and white people were going crazy and committing suicide, but I was happy.

Now I'm writing a book about literature and film, in which apolitical middle-class white women wean themselves from their privileges to find the joy of unifying their interests with the world's reviled lives. One of the great examples is Nadine Gordimer's novel, *None to Accompany Me*. I feel so glad I now have *Race Traitor* to accompany me.

Kim Worthy  
Brooklyn, N.Y.  
February 1997

### LIFE-AFFIRMING

I've been reading *RT* since you mailed a photocopied chapbook of excerpts for review in my zine, and I was thrilled to see Routledge publish the anthology. I always find *Race Traitor* to be an engaging, challenging and life-affirming read. It calls me on the carpet and makes me analyze my assumptions — something many journals, magazines and zines don't do. Thanks for the thoughtful pauses and heated discussions with friends and family.

Heath Row, Media Diet  
Somerville, MA  
January, 1997

### "PROGRESSIVE" WHITES

Whites in America are often confused as to what whiteness is and how white supremacy operates. All too often so-called "progressive" whites pay lip service to ending racism but when they are asked to reject their white-skin privilege they freeze in horror at the prospect of their lives without it and the reaction of the country to them.

Bob Monroe  
February 1997

### NETWORKS & COMMUNITY

I subscribed to *Race Traitor* after hearing a piece about it on National Public Radio. The first issue I received, number 3, was a wake-up call in more than one way. The first article, "Who Lost an American?" featured Joel Gilbert, a man I went to grade school with. Though we lived in the same small town, I had no idea of what he was going through.

Around the time I read this article, there was some action on our campus. A new African-American newspaper for students was just

starting up, and there were protests about the racist actions of a professor. Letters to the Editor flew back and forth. I was surprised to see that one of the most eloquent letters was written by a woman I went to high school with.

The three of us (and how many others?) were extremely dissatisfied with the way things were in our town. But none of us knew that others were so dissatisfied, or what to do about it, and so we were quiet. To paraphrase Margaret Mead, in this society we all remain shut up behind our Yale locks and don't know what our neighbors are doing or thinking, or what social pathologies are being elaborated.

Participating in networks of information and ideas and creating community among nascent race traitors is essential.

*Anna Naruta  
Kalamazoo, Michigan  
January 1997*

## **ZAPPATISTA**

I just finished your interview in *Z Magazine*. It really struck a chord of joy in me. You are right on, on this. Please subscribe me up to your publication. I'm a race traitor, too.

I work in a toll booth, with both "black" and "white" co-workers in a mixed area on the south side of Chicago. From destitution to stretch limousines, I see it all. Almost all adult white people are sickening to me in their prostituting themselves for the crumbs of being white. Racism is an everyday struggle to wipe the filth off your psyche. It's reinforced constantly.

I'm the union steward here, conscientious, cordial, diligent, easy to get along with, and an anarchist. The whites are weary of me and still they assume I'll agree to their cowardly racist claptrap (when blacks are out of earshot, of course). And the patrons! Ugh! Whites, when slightly delayed by a black motorist, pour forth the obscene language of conditioned racist reflex. Blacks are much more true to the reality of a situation, as are most foreigners.

Of course, it's much more than white people I consciously avoid contamination from. The whole consumer vacuous economic life we're mired in — with the entertainment being staged violence. It's all so repulsive. People are so fogged in confusion and even the more aware

ones can't seem to bring themselves to believe in the sick reality of this country. I feel like a prisoner in a sea of outwardly self-satisfied morons.

In 1966 Frank Zappa came out with his first album, *Freak Out!* In the song "Trouble Every Day," he says, "You know something people, I'm not black, but there's a whole lot of times I wish I could say I'm not white!" *We're only in it for the Money* is another brilliant album by him, detailing the baseness of white American culture. It's still oh-so-appropriate to today.

I listen to music, read serious works, and huddle out with my family -- and write propaganda that no one wants to print. Last year I was valedictorian at my junior college and pissed off the administrators by rewriting my address on the fly.

Sign me up!

Anthony Rawson  
Monee, Illinois  
January 1997

## OVERJOYED

I would like first to thank you for your efforts. When I finally found your book, I was overjoyed that someone could express so well what my spouse and I had been trying with difficulty to convey to others. As well as a sense of community, you provided us with a priceless vocabulary.

With your permission, I would like to reprint (with full credits and links back to you) various essays from your back issues for my websites. For my resource directory, *Todd's Progressive Launchpad*, an annotated link to you would suffice. But for our webzine, *The Examined Life*, it would make my formatting more uniform if I could adapt your essays to my structure.

Let me know what is permissible and visit us on the web if you have the time.

Todd Chas  
*Todd's Progressive Launchpad:* [www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2300/](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2300/)  
*The Examined Life:* [members.tripod.com/~jchas/](http://members.tripod.com/~jchas/)  
February 1997

## SHARPIE

I stumbled onto your page through a page on my own server filled with racist hate. I saw a link to anti-white pages and came across yours. I

applaud your page and its contents. I'd like to thank you for making this material available. I will be linking your page to mine.

I chuckled when I saw "racetractor" in your URL, because that is what the 100+ members of the nazi group Confederate Hammerskins called me for quite a few years before I left Jacksonville, Florida. The slur (as they would have like to believe it) was something I wore like a badge. I like that better than what they also used to call me (Sharpie, or SHARP), usually followed by, "You'll be hanging from a telephone pole when the race war comes." After having an entire hate group trying to kill me for four years, I still see a flash of red and feel disgust in my soul. As an actor, I spend my life attempting to break down walls between people, and here they are trying to perpetuate them.

Race war. What a scary thought. Do you think it could ever come to that?

*David Jenkins  
February 1997*

**Editors' reply.** Over the past two and a half decades, labor unions and other institutions that guaranteed white-skin privilege and shaped U.S. society since the New Deal have been weakened or dismantled, leaving many whites dissatisfied with the racial bargain currently being offered. Groups like the one you describe seek to channel that dissatisfaction into what they term "race war," and may succeed. But any general conflict that aligned the mass of black people on one side would be a war for the emancipation of labor, a *class* war. The only question then would be, which side would the rest of the country (and the world) be on?

## THANKS

Thanks for making my job easier. If you weren't there, I would have to to create you.

*Tom Metzger  
WAR*

## OVER-LENGTHY & BORING

I adored the Henson piece. Christ no, Henson wasn't a traitor, the government was the traitor. Henson, herself, was a misplaced tie-dyed hippie searching for the having-passed-by beat generation. I also enjoyed the in-your-face-motherfucker Copwatch piece. There were other intriguing pages, all undone by the over-lengthy and boring exchanges between letter writers and editors.

*Ben Susman  
Bisbee, Arizona*

"**Race Traitor** is the most revolutionary challenge to racism made by American-European intellectuals in my lifetime."

*Ishmael Reed*

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A simple navigation bar allows you to easily traverse the site. Text and image artwork in the margins illustrates the subtleties of issues involved. The example on this page refers to color and language; blackmail, whitewash, etc.



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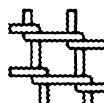
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# ROUTLEDGE

## Race Traitor

Edited by  
**Noel Ignatiev**  
and **John Garvey**

"*Race Traitor* is among the strongest, funniest and most politically charged critiques of whiteness to appear since slave storytellers spun out the "Master and John" tales. Throughout its brief existence as a just-above-ground journal, it has combined penetrating articles on the history and sociology of race with inspired manifest, telling cultural commentaries and frontline reports from the struggle to abolish whiteness."

— David R. Roediger, *University of Minnesota*, author of *The Wages of Whiteness*

Working from the premise that the white race has been socially constructed, *Race Traitor* is a call for the disruption of white conformity and the formation of a New Abolitionism to dissolve it. In a time when white supremacist thinking seems to be gaining momentum, *Race Traitor* brings together voices ranging from tenured university professors to skinheads and prison inmates to discuss the "white question" in America. Through popular culture, current events, history and personal life stories, the essays analyze the forces that hold the white race together and those that promise to tear it apart.

**256 pp**

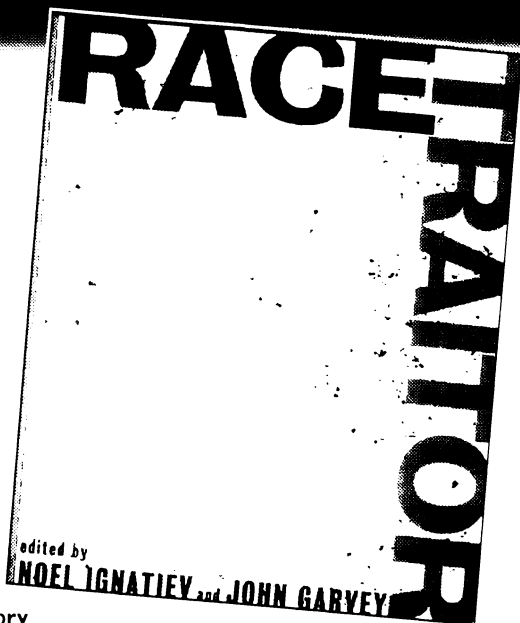
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