

# Center opens for business

The Center for the Study of White American Culture, a New Jersey nonprofit corporation established in April 1995, is now open for business. According to the Center's director, Jeff Hitchcock, "Our mission is to raise consciousness of the presence and impact of white American culture within the greater cultural milieu that comprises America."

The Center is governed by a five-person Board of Trustees (see *Board takes pride in its diversity*, page 3). Together the board members bring to the Center a pool of experience from the higher education, private business and non-profit sectors, with special expertise in behavioral sciences, human resource management, business and nonprofit administration, human relations training and organizational development.

"We envision a Center that has one hand in the academic world, and the other hand in the applied world of business and nonprofit organizations," said Mr. Hitchcock.

In the academic world, the Center intends to promote the understanding that research on whiteness is necessary and long overdue when compared to research on other cultural groups in America. Specific activities the Center will sponsor are bibliographic research, a journal, and a conference on white American culture.

In the applied world of non-profits and business the Center intends to offer training and consultation to organizations. For example, the Center will help organizations manage issues of "being white" in a diverse world. "Often white managers and administrators intuitively realize

that being white is a limitation when working with various peoples of color, but these same managers can not see how or why their own culture produces these limitations," Mr. Hitchcock explained. As a result, well-intentioned and sincere managers are frustrated. They end up blaming people of color for problems, when the responsibility for solutions must come from both sides.

The Center also plans to provide supportive services to white professionals who work with clients of color, and to professionals of color who work with white clients. In the former case, many white professionals do not realize how lack of awareness of their own cultural background affects their ability to assist their client. In the latter case, many professionals of color might benefit by developing greater insight into the experience and consciousness of white Americans.

"Unfortunately," says Mr. Hitchcock, "this [white] experience is often a product of a long history of racism." Many white Americans, as clients, maintain beliefs regarding professionals of color. These beliefs make it more difficult for the professional of color to meet the white client's need. Likewise, white professionals need to examine their own beliefs regarding clients of color.

The Center believes that racism is still a pervasive force in America. As a result, it hopes to work closely with programs designed to address issues of racism and race relations.

But there is another side to white American culture, and being white, according to Mr. Hitchcock. "I've attended many events where conscientious and con-

cerned white Americans have discussed race and race relations. But when white people discuss how it feels to be white, I hear feelings of shame, guilt and self-hatred. People don't feel good about being white. I think that's sad."

During the initial stage of its operation, the Center's Board of Trustees has provided the guidance, funding and volunteer assistance to carry out activities. Over the next six months, the Center plans to get the word out about its operation through a (this) newsletter, by attending conferences, and by word of

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## Welcome, reader,..

...to the first issue of our quarterly newsletter. It's been difficult deciding what to include in our eight pages. We had enough to fill another eight. Producing a finished newsletter, though, takes time and incurs costs, and for these two reasons we had to limit our format.

Among the audiences we hope to reach are academics, human relations trainers, managers, administrators, human resource professionals, counselors, educators, clergy and social workers. To cover items of interest to them all, we need a flexible format.

Academics, for instance, expect objectivity, rigor, evidence, and references. Contrast this with human relations trainers, who favor scenarios, exercises, and attention-grabbing presentations that convey ideas to training participants.

We plan to publish different types of articles, appropriate to one audience or another, side by side in a magazine style. In our first issue we have featured a bibliography on whiteness. Ostensibly of interest to academics, the bibliography helps convey a sense of current thought and activity on whiteness. As such, it should interest our other readers as well.

We've included various descriptive articles about the Center, some announcements and reports of three other sources of information on whiteness: a movie, a trade journal article, and a professional paper.

In upcoming issues we'd like to publish contributions from many different people on topics surrounding our mission (see our statement under the masthead, here on Page Two). Writer's guideline: articles in the 250 - 750 word range. Librarians, we expect to have an ISSN by next issue. We are upgrading our typesetting as well.

Though we've been a little somber in our first issue, we believe that people need a sense of humor, and so do publications. We hope to reach a wide audience and tap the mainstream culture of America. Sometimes that's best done by seeing the lighter side of things as well.

**Happy reading.**

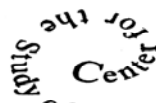
## Center takes multiracial approach, encourages cultural discovery

The Center for the Study of White American Culture supports cultural exploration and self-discovery among and about white Americans. We believe the task of building genuine and authentic relationships across racial and cultural lines is crucial to the well-being of America. Awareness of white American culture is an essential step to racial self-awareness by white Americans, and a necessary step to fully realize genuine relationships with people from other racial backgrounds.

We feel that Americans of color, though often quite aware of the presence and impact of white American culture, nonetheless may not be aware of

some of the nuances of the experiences of white Americans. The experience of white Americans as racial beings has not been sufficiently explored and described in public dialog.

Toward these ends the Center actively encourages participation by white Americans and Americans of color, women and men alike. The Center maintains that the views of both insiders and outsiders contribute to understanding a culture. The Center also acknowledges that gender, class and ethnic differences are intertwined with racial ones, and must be explored as part of a complete study of racial and cultural difference.



White American Culture, Inc.

**A multiracial organization**

**QUARTERLY  
NEWSLETTER**

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The Quarterly Newsletter is dedicated to the Center's mission of exploring the role of white American culture in the context of the larger American culture.

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The Center welcomes comments and contributions to the newsletter. We will consider unsolicited submissions.

# Board takes pride in its diversity

The Center for the Study of White American Culture is governed by a five-member Board of Trustees that takes pride in its multidisciplinary and multicultural character, viewing it as an essential asset to the Center's purpose.

Activist, educator, and scholar, **Charley Flint, Ph.D.**, is Associate Professor of Sociology at William Patterson College, Wayne, New Jersey. Dr. Flint is also on the Women's Studies Faculty, serves as Director of the Race and Gender Project, and is the founder of ALANA, a program of and for women of color in higher education in New Jersey.

Following her position in the corporate human resource department, **Donna Gerhardt, M.A.**, is presently an Associate with 10 years experience and broad responsibilities in the private banking division of J.P. Morgan & Co. Ms. Gerhardt has served on the firm's corporate-level diversity task force, where she conducted an industry-wide survey of best practices. She, along with Michael Gerhardt, has designed and conducted diver-

sity training sessions for religious congregations.

Formerly Director of Training for a national youth service agency, and later Executive Director of a community service agency, **Michael Gerhardt, M.P.A.**, has 20 years experience in non-profit management. He presently is a student in the seminary at Drew University, and is serving a pastoral internship at Christ Episcopal Church in Ridgewood, NJ. Mr. Gerhardt also maintains a private practice as a trainer and organizational development consultant.

**Jeff Hitchcock, M.S., M.B.A.**, has fifteen years managerial experience in the nonprofit and private sectors, ranging from small organizations to Fortune 100 companies. For the past four years he has been Vice President of Alfonso Associates, a diversity and organizational development consulting firm. He is also Vice President of GIFT (Getting Interracial/Intercultural Families Together), a social organization for interracial families and multiracial individuals.

**Susanna Tardi, Ph.D.**, is Assistant Professor of Sociology at

William Paterson College, Wayne, New Jersey where she serves on the College Multicultural Awareness Committee. Dr. Tardi's fields of expertise include research methods, racial and ethnic relations, criminology, and family. Her interests include the study of Italian Americans. Dr. Tardi has applied research experience in the corporate world as well, conducting market research for Digital Equipment Corporation, J.P. Morgan, and MasterCard International.

## Center opens for business

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mouth. The Center wants to hear from professionals involved in issues of white American culture. Examples are academicians involved in research on whiteness; human relations trainers and diversity practitioners; managers, administrators and human resource professionals; and counselors and social workers.

In the past few years an increasing number of people have become involved with issues of white American culture. These people might still be described as pioneers. The Center has made contact with several, but there are still others who have not yet heard about it. The Center hopes to contact leaders in the field, as well as people whose work is presently unrecognized. "We'd like to hear about them, and for them to hear about us," relates Mr. Hitchcock.

Aside from getting the word out, during the next few months the Center is planning to prepare working papers and publications, to develop a speaker's bureau, and to develop prototypes for training programs.

The Center plans to cultivate a broader means of support and assistance for its developing operations. "We're ready to talk to anyone," says Mr. Hitchcock. "This is a subject whose time has come. We want to see it get the attention it deserves."

## With your help, Center can grow

We see a glaring need and we believe our purpose is important. But seeing and believing are limited if we can not engage a broader base of support. So we are asking for your help. We need financial support, and the best support we can obtain is through the individual contributions of our readers.

Why is this so important? Why don't we just get a foundation grant? Even if that were simple, it still would not contain the power of your individual contributions. When you make a contribution to us, you make a statement with your dollars. You say unequivocally the mission of the Center is important to you, a living, breathing person to be counted.

We plan to expand, to produce a longer newsletter, to offer new programs and services, to reach

new audiences, and yes, to pursue institutional funding sources. But first and foremost, we want to reach people who share our vision and concern. Together we want to build on that vision. Without you, we can not thrive.

To help us grow, please support the Center as a:

|                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Student</b> | <b>\$15.00</b>  |
| <b>Sponsor</b> | <b>\$25.00</b>  |
| <b>Friend</b>  | <b>\$50.00</b>  |
| <b>Patron</b>  | <b>\$100.00</b> |

If you would like to help the Center, send your check or money order, (payable to the Center for the Study of White American Culture) to 245 W. 4th Avenue, Roselle, NJ 07203.

# Bibliography on whiteness: 1967 -1993

The bibliography, listed below and on the following pages, contains references located in the Psychology, Sociology, Education, and Social Work abstracts. Part of a larger bibliographic study whose findings are now being compiled by the Center, the references were gleaned by computer searches conducted during the winter of 1993-94.

The online abstracts were searched using a number of "keywords" formed by concatenating racial identifiers with the topics AWARENESS, CONSCIOUSNESS, IDENTITY and EXPERIENCE.

The racial identifiers were WHITE, CAUCASIAN, ANGLO, WHITE RACIAL, WHITE AMERICAN, CAUCASIAN AMERICAN, ANGLO AMERICAN, EUROPEAN AMERICAN, and EURO AMERICAN.

Each racial term was paired alternately with all four topics to form keywords. Examples of keywords are WHITE IDENTITY, ANGLO AWARENESS, and CAUCASIAN EXPERIENCE. Altogether, 36 keywords were used. A thirty-seventh, the term WHITENESS, was included as

well. A scan was done for each keyword in each of the four abstracts, 148 scans in all.

The complete text of each entry in the abstracts was scanned. Thus references that did not include the keyword in their titles might still be included if the keyword appeared in the description of the article.

The racial term EUROPEAN was also used, but generated references that did not apply to white Americans, or even necessarily white people in a racial context. Consequently these references were excluded from the study. Additional articles were eliminated when scans on the term WHITENESS uncovered articles of visual perception in which the term WHITENESS was a chromatic reference, not a racial one.

All other references are included in the bibliography. It is apparent in some cases that whiteness was mentioned as context for discussion of other racial groups. In other cases, whiteness is clearly the focus of study.

The larger study identified references for each of five racial groups. Eighty-five references

were found for white Americans. Black Americans lead the list with 777 references. Native Americans were a distant second with 105 references. Hispanics and Asians had 58 and 22 references respectively.

| Racial Group    | No. of Studies |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Black           | 777            |
| Native American | 105            |
| White           | 85             |
| Hispanic        | 58             |
| Asian           | 22             |

The data reflect a bias toward the study of black Americans and, to a lesser degree, native Americans relative their numbers in the American population. It was not possible to identify the race of the authors of each reference, by it is likely most studies were conducted by white Americans. The bias toward studying black and native Americans, relative to white Americans, is thus likely due to a preference by white Americans toward studying these groups rather than their own.

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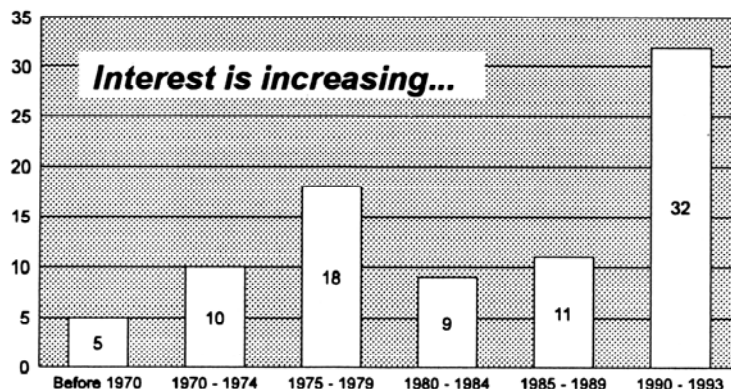
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## Trade paper identifies whiteness as issue

It was at a cocktail party during a national conference when, according to Center board member, Charley Flint, "I happened to mention [to a colleague] that we were doing this thing about race in terms of whiteness." Her colleague replied, "Oh, you can't do that," explaining there is no such thing as white culture.

Dr. Flint is not the only person to encounter this reaction. Indeed, it is common. So it is refreshing when an alternative view comes about. Such a view was expressed in a recent article in the September 8, 1995 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* titled "Lifting the Veil from Whiteness: Growing Body of Scholarship Challenges a Racial 'Norm'."

According to the article, written by Liz McMillen, "a group of scholars are working in a new and growing field.... [c]hallenging the idea that only blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and American Indians have racial identities." The article names fifteen scholars from around the country presently engaged in research on whiteness. Several have published, or will soon publish, books on the topic. The scholars, the article explains, "seek to understand what it means to be white, and how white identity came into being."

Dr. Flint, a sociologist, noted that *The Chronicle of Higher Education* is widely read among people in the scholarly community, and as such, it "tends to legitimate certain issues, or at least legitimate the point of discussing these issues." Commenting on how people often react to the notion of whiteness, Dr. Flint observed, "People don't want to use the word white. Especially white people. They're much more comfortable saying whatever their ethnicity is, without realizing they also are white."

She offers the opinion that many scholars do not know what is meant by the term "white culture." People need to know how to operationalize the term. The language for acknowledging and discussing whiteness, she suggests, still needs to emerge in the broader academic community.

# Training objectives suggested for white Americans

Over the last fifteen years the field of counseling psychology has done much to advance understanding of the experience of white Americans in the larger multicultural context of America.

One recent example is a paper by Mark S. Kiselica titled "Preparing Anglos for the Joys and Challenges of Multicultural Counseling." The paper, presented at the August meeting of the American Psychological Association, lists five objectives for Anglos ("non-Hispanic, White, and of European ancestry") training as multicultural counselors.

Dr. Kiselica, Assistant Professor in the Department of Counseling and Personnel Services at Trenton State College, Trenton, NJ, has by his account "trained hundreds of Anglo graduate students in multicultural counseling." He offers the following objectives:

1. Anglo trainees will recognize that they are likely to make mistakes in multicultural encounters and will remain devoted to multiculturalism in spite of those mistakes.

2. Anglo trainees will expect to be challenged by ethnic-minority colleagues and clients and will remain devoted to multiculturalism in spite of those challenges.

3. Anglo trainees will overcome the tendency to avoid cross-cultural encounters because of preconceived notions of the culturally different.

4. Anglo trainees will understand that racism hurts them, as well as others.

5. Anglo trainees will discover the joys inherent in multicultural counseling.

Though Dr. Kiselica formulated his objectives specifically for Anglos training as multicultural counselors, diversity trainers may want to take note of them. The objectives capture several of the key issues that white Americans experience when coming into contact with multicultural settings.

Many experienced diversity trainers do incorporate material in their presentations that speaks to one or another of the five objectives. Effective trainers, for example, often emphasize that people make mistakes

in multicultural encounters. Some offer the advice that they, despite years of multicultural involvement, may "say something wrong" or otherwise offend or hurt someone inadvertently.

However, it is common for white Americans to have less multicultural contact and experience due to the racially insular lifestyles white Americans often find themselves living, and the lack of need for white Americans to learn the patterns and practices of an alternative culture when interacting with social institutions such as schools and employers.

Using Dr. Kiselica's objectives, diversity trainers can assess the potential impact of their training designs on white Americans. Those designs that do not address the suggested issues may be less effective in producing change.

## Planning to begin for conference

The Center for the Study of White American Culture is seeking persons and organizations interested in co-sponsoring a conference on white American culture. Tentatively scheduled for October 1996, the conference will offer papers, discussions and workshops by researchers and practitioners involved with this newly emerging area.

While the Center is committed to making it happen (by our own efforts if need be), a conference will be more effective if a broader group of individuals and organizations are involved in the process. We would like to hear from interested persons and professionals who would like to join us in the planning process.

If you or your organization would like to join us in planning the conference, we would welcome your support and co-sponsorship. Undoubtedly with an emerging topic that can generate a lot of attention, the conference can help create an agenda for research and practice in the coming years. Contact us if you like the idea.

## New Movie Explores Whiteness

In a roundabout way, the soon to be released movie, *White Man's Burden*, explores the implications of being white in America. So reports the August/September 1995 issue of *A. Magazine: Inside Asian America* in an interview with Japanese American director Desmond Nakano. Nakano has created a drama in which the principal characters, played by Harry Belafonte and John Travolta, make each other's acquaintance in a society where African American culture is dominant and white American culture is subordinate.

Nakano intends the movie to have an impact on the consciousness of white Americans, suggesting that viewers might "walk out of the theater and realize, 'My God! John Travolta was really a black man. That's how a minority person feels like.'" Nakano continues to add that "for a white person to experience that, I

think, is very important."

Although we have not yet seen the movie, and thus can not comment on its artistic merit, the premise sounds interesting. Such a premise, where traditional roles are inverted, is quite likely to be effective in raising the consciousness of white Americans to the experience of white American culture, or at least the dominant aspects of it, from an outsider's point of view.

We hope the film is successful and available to a wide audience, though we fear, as often happens with films about race relations, you may have to search it out among the more mundane theater offerings. It's one of three films starring Travolta this season.

The film is distributed by Rysher Entertainment and, according to *A. Magazine*, scheduled for release "nationwide next month."

# Center's name subject to misinterpretation

We know it sounds racist. So why did we pick a name like *Center for the Study of White American Culture*? The answer is simple. It says who we are and what we do, with no code words, hidden phrases or meanings.

Before saying more, let us state that we are an avowedly multiracial organization. We conceive the Center as an enterprise involving people of all races. This means we have white people and people of color serving jointly on our Board of Trustees, and on our mailing list of interested professionals, practitioners and students. We plan to offer activities, services, publishing outlets and training that recognizes racial differences and promotes ways to value them.

So why the name? Isn't it likely to be a distraction, leading to misguided inquiries by authorities, and claims of shared goals with white nationalists, separatists, and/or supremacists? We don't know, though we hope whatever misunderstanding our name invites is minimal.

## Material sought for newsletter

Do you find our newsletter interesting? Does it provoke ideas, reactions, feelings? Do you share similar concerns and want to express them?

We are looking for reaction and feedback from our readers. We'd like to hear from you and we plan to share selected portions of our readers' responses in our next issue.

If you are interested in writing us a letter, please do. If you would like to report a news item, highlight some research, or announce an event that touches on issues of white American culture, we would like to see it. If we feel it is newsworthy within the context of our theme, space permitting, we will publish it.

If you are interested in writing a longer piece, a commentary, review, survey, or personal account, send us a copy. Let us, and others, hear from you.

Saying who we are and what we do is an important statement. It is a phenomenon of white American culture that our organization's name, or any naming of white American culture, is usually heard by white Americans as racist. Some time in the future we may look at this phenomenon and try to interpret it in light of our history.

But for now we will simply say we believe that white American culture is real and can be described in the same terms as African American, Asian American, Hispanic American and native American cultures. None of these cultures are simple or monolithic. All have had roots in North America for centuries.

Race relations have always been a sore spot here in the United States. In today's world we might ask a simple question. If race relations are a problem, and that problem exists between white people and various peoples of color, then who should change? White people, people of color, or both? We are inclined, ourselves, to say "both."

We feel, in a country where 75% of the population is classed as "white" by the U.S. Census, and where white people, in the course of history, have always controlled the course of national events, that maybe white culture might be an appropriate point of focus for those who would like to produce change.

## We're looking for trainers with hands-on experience

From time to time we hear rumors about a person, a project, or an organization that has done work on issues of white awareness, identity and culture. The references are few and far between, and frequently details of the work are missing.

We would like to hear the details, and then report it to a wider audience. If you are a trainer, a consultant or a manager who is working with issues of white awareness and white American culture, we would like to hear from you.

The Center hopes to serve a clearinghouse role in which persons designing and implementing consciousness-raising programs for white Americans can contact us to share their experiences. Other persons and organizations who do not have programs, but who are considering them, can look to the Center as a source of referral to trainers, consultants and managers who have hands-on experience.

We are interested in developing materials to support training programs. One of the best ways of doing this, we believe, is

by consulting with people already engaged in doing the work, to see what you need, what you have found effective, and what pitfalls you have encountered.

We would like to foster trainer-to-trainer communication and development. One project we are considering is a workshop for trainers in which we can share our experiences first hand, and create a product of use to the broader community of human relations professionals.

Trainers who have working experience with issues of white American culture may wish to inform us of their availability and interest in doing training for organizations. We plan to sponsor training as part of our services, but we believe the need is greater than our immediate resources. Thus we are interested in people who might work for us directly, as well as people we might refer independently to organizations in need.

So, send us your resume. Drop us a note. Give us a call. Help us, and let us help you, become visible.