

Center for the Study of

White American Culture, Inc.

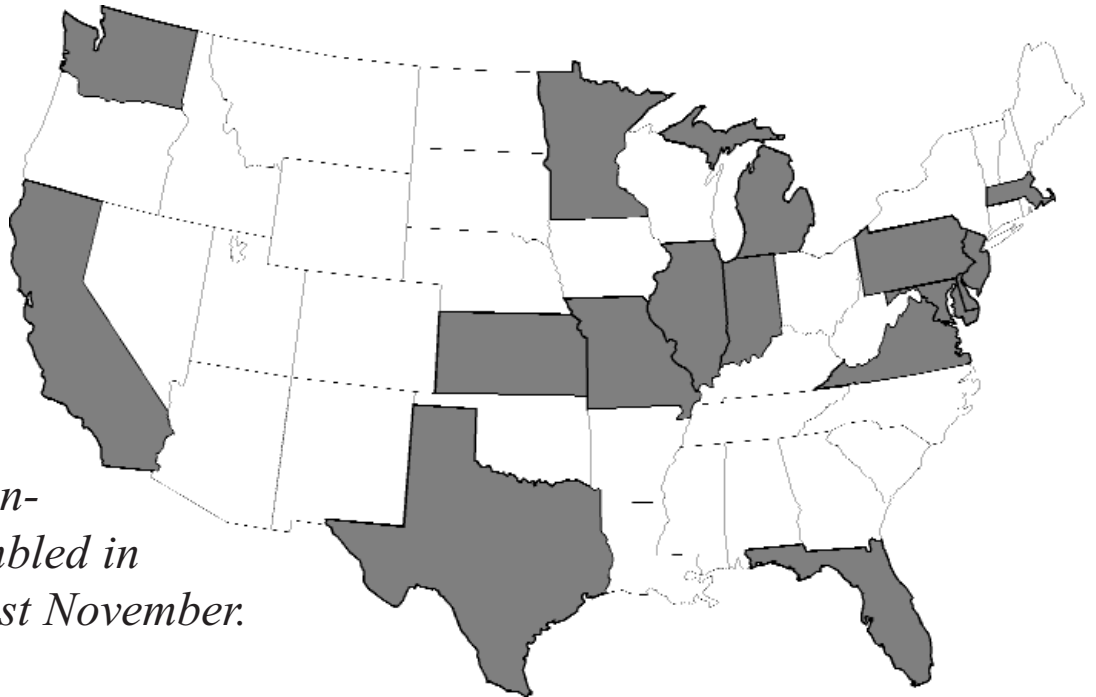
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

A multiracial organization

VOL. 3, NO. 1 WINTER 1997

ISSUE 5

First National Conference on Whiteness and White American Culture



What happened when over fifty people, from seventeen states, assembled in Burlington, NJ last November.

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Looking back and looking ahead

During the recently completed calendar year of 1996 we wanted to develop a presence and standing before the public by offering a basic set of programs.

The Center offered workshops at Columbia University, William Patterson College (Wayne, NJ), the Friends General Conference, and the Southern New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Conference.

We went on the Internet in May. By the end of the year our web site (www.euroamerican.org) had 3,300 visits. In October we launched the whiteness listserv, which now has about 50 members.

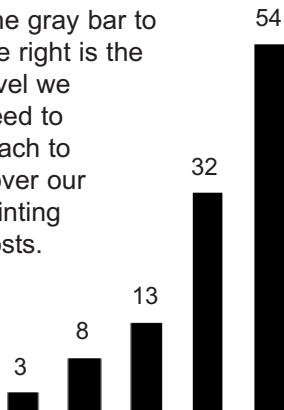
We organized the first National Conference on Whiteness, held in November (see story).

And we continued, with a Fall hiatus for the conference, to publish our newsletter. Past readers will note this issue, unlike others, includes more coverage on the Center itself. With the conference, at least, we were the news.

This year we plan to consolidate our activity, focusing on things a growing organization needs to do. We thank our subscribers, the conference participants, web site visitors, members of the listserv and others for working with us, and we hope to continue our relationship with you in 1997.

Our subscriber list is growing, but we have a ways to go. The solid black bars below show our first five issues.

The gray bar to the right is the level we need to reach to cover our printing costs.



Center Board seeks nominations for new members

The Center for the Study of White American Culture is growing, and we are in need of people who can foster that growth by serving on our Board of Trustees. The present board of five members has determined a need to expand its size in 1997, and it invites interested persons to contact the Center, or any present member of the board, to indicate their interest.

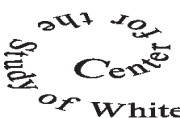
We wish to retain our multiracial character and to work as an active board. This means meeting face to face three times per year in the Northern New Jersey, NYC metropolitan area. Persons experienced in issues of governance, social and legal accountability, and financial and organizational development are desired. But, above all else, we are looking for concern and commitment.

Copyright policy under consideration

All materials produced by the Center for the Study of White American Culture are copyrighted, including the entire contents of each of our newsletters. We are hearing reports of people copying and using our materials without our explicit permission.

There are two sides to this. We want our material to be used, to raise consciousness, to evoke discussion of racial concerns, to create positive and progressive social change.

But we can't pay money to produce this stuff and then give it away free. Doesn't work, wish it did, but it don't. We need to get credit for what we do, so we can turn to funding sources and document our worth. For now, use of our material for classroom instruction or for training is okay, provided you let us know, and clearly cite us as the source.

 <p>Center for the Study of White American Culture, Inc.</p>	<p>QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER</p>	
<p><i>A multiracial organization</i></p>	<p>VOL. 3, NO. 1 WINTER 1997</p>	
<p>Editor: Jeff Hitchcock</p> <p>Contributors: Charley Flint, Daniel Hall, Jeff Hitchcock, Curtis Michelson, Lowell Thompson</p> <p>The <i>Quarterly Newsletter</i> (ISSN 1086-489X) is published by the Center for the Study of White American Culture, Inc., a New Jersey nonprofit corporation, established April 1995 and incorporated July 1995.</p> <p>Board of Trustees Charley Flint, Ph.D. Donna Gerhardt, M.A. Michael Gerhardt, M.P.A. Jeff Hitchcock, M.S., M.B.A. Susanna Tardi, Ph.D.</p> <p>The <i>Quarterly Newsletter</i> is dedicated to the Center's mission of exploring the role of white American culture in the context of the larger American culture.</p> <p>Copyright © Center for the Study of White American Culture, Inc., 1996. All rights reserved.</p>		<p>ISSUE 5</p> <p>The <i>Quarterly Newsletter</i> is distributed on a subscription basis four times a year. Rates for 4-issue subscription: corporate and university, \$35.00; individual, \$25.00; student, \$15.00. A limited number of copies of each issue are distributed without charge for publicity purposes.</p> <p>The Center welcomes comments and contributions to the newsletter. We will consider unsolicited submissions. Persons interested in guidelines for writing an article for the newsletter may call the Center or write the Center's office and request a copy.</p> <p>Phone: (908) 241-5439 (9-5 M-F)</p> <p>Write: Center for Study 245 West 4th Avenue Roselle, NJ 07203</p> <p>Email: contact@euroamerican.org</p>

Seeing Goblins

by Daniel Hall

Now, I want to tell you something and I don't want you calling me crazy, hear?

The other day I was walking down the street and I saw a white man—don't tell me they don't exist, now, I saw him ya' hear?

He was as real to me as you, sitting right there, sorta' crouched behind a low law. O, and he was enjoying himself too. Grinning to himself, enjoying himself in his mischief. I know he was white 'cause he wasn't looking direct at anyone, but instead out the side of his eye, until he saw me that is. Me, he thought I was white too. I know 'cause he looked at me straight, straightened his back, gave me a manly wave and a hullo; 'good fellow well met' kinda' thing.

But then another person walked between us and his grin turned poison. Don't tell me I didn't see it; the sight of it stays with me, sends shivers still to me. Kind of exciting, those shivers. If I were to be frank, that sinking head, side-stepping eyes and slow grin made me look at that passing person—who I hadn't really thought of one way or another, if you know what I mean—made me look at 'em with a shiver and a sideways grin myself. Like the song says: an-ti-ci-*pa*-tion. Yeah, I thought, they are a sexy people.

And that's when I knew. He'd got me. He'd made me white too.

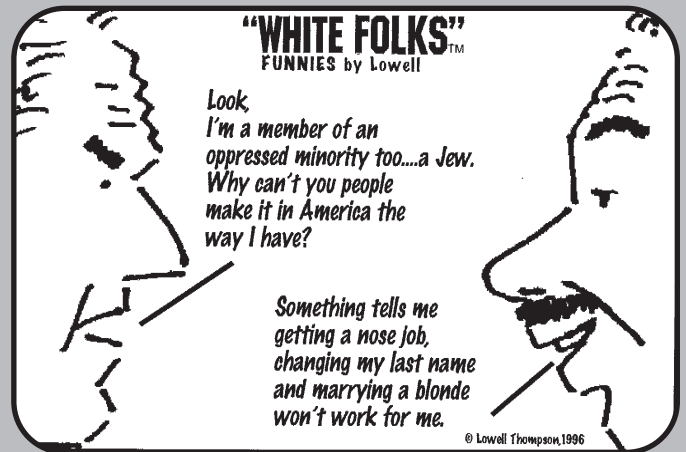
The Center for the Study of White American Culture will be appearing at:

**The National Conference on
Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution**

May 23-27, 1997
Duquesne University
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

This year the conference includes a Social Justice Day on Race Relations on Saturday, May 24.

For info, call NCPCR at (703) 993-2440 or visit their web site at:
<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/NCPCR/>



This is a test. I repeat. This is a test. "WHITE FOLKS™ FUNNIES is another of my attempts to use creativity and communications to deal with America's longest running...and most embarrassing, problem...institutionally created and perpetuated racial inequality and division.

I didn't say "racism" because I think it has lost most of its sting and most of its meaning.

Anyhow.

"WHITE FOLKS™ FUNNIES is my latest brainstorm. It uses what I hope is humor to point up some of the more ludicrous aspects of being "white" in America.

The way I see it, each "FUNNY" will feature some situation that allows me to then make some brilliant (don't laugh) observation that will impart new insight to even the most color blind among us. For instance:

The WFF above mocks the old cliché that most "black" folks have heard a few billion times by the time they reach the age of dissent. Some member of a "white" or premium "minority," like Jews or Asians, just don't understand why "black" Americans can't achieve his or her group's level of success in America.

It usually is a rhetorical question because as soon as the "black" mark begins actually answering it, starting with 250 years of chattel slavery, the erstwhile questioner usually quickly changes the subject to something more topical like, "Don't you think O.J. was guilty?"

Editor's note: "WHITE FOLKS™ FUNNIES promises to be a regular feature in the *Quarterly Newsletter*. First Mr. Thompson takes a shot, then you get a chance to shoot back. Letters and comments may be sent to our office, or directly to Lowell Thompson at 1507 E. 53rd Street, Unit 132, Chicago, IL 60615, or Email to lowellt@enteract.com. Also check out www.whitefolks.com, his web site.

Mr. Thompson is author of the recent, critically-acclaimed book, "**WHITE FOLKS™™: Seeing America Through Black Eyes**, available at the above address and/or web site for \$11.95.



WHITENESS

The Conference at Burlington, NJ November 1996

For weeks the anticipation had been building. Conversations had taken place on the whiteness list-serv. People had written the Center for Study for information. Notices were sent to various Internet addresses. People phoned the Center for Study, requesting details. Slowly the registrations had begun to come into the Center's office.

Now it was time to assemble, to put faces on names that had become familiar in some cases through Internet conversations. Then on the night of Thursday, November 7, the participants began to arrive, from Minnesota, Washington DC, Boston, converging on the semi-rural town of Burlington, New Jersey. They came to the Burlington Meeting House, a historic structure recently renovated as a conference center.

By Friday morning nearly 50 people assembled in the Worship Room on wooden benches more than 200 years old. The opening session was led by Jeff Hitchcock and Charley Flint of the Center for Study who made some introductory remarks orienting participants to the conference center. In the spirit of the conference, which was to be open-ended, participatory, and geared toward dialogue, Mahrya Monson of Bridge Builders in St. Louis volunteered to lead a session on ground rules. Participants voiced their expectations about the unfolding experience and very early the topic of safety arose. Some participants called for a safe atmosphere. Peggy McIntosh of Wellesley College raised a counterpoint, offering the example that Rex Reed (of the Christian Coalition) should not feel safe at the conference. Others agreed. Safety, it seemed, was not to be a norm.

Other norms developed. Participants knew that differences existed among them. Everyone wanted to bring these views out. Some came

from academic backgrounds, others from grass roots activism. For many it was not a matter of either one or the other, but rather both. Virtually every person at the conference had been involved in some sort of antiracist activity, as students, consultants, activists, professors, and sometimes all these roles at once.

With the preliminary remarks completed, Mr. Hitchcock suggested that participants begin a preplanned networking exercise that would have people locate themselves about the conference site to discuss topics of personal interest. Again participants expressed a readiness to create their own agenda and what emerged was an on-the-spot round robin discussion of people's interests and expectations. Every participant spoke briefly, sometimes movingly, about why they had come. Collectively, the conference had taken control of its own process.

Friday afternoon after lunch the scheduled presentations began. Gary Lemons of Eugene Lang College of the New School for Social Research led a well-attended presentation titled "Teaching the (Inter)racial Space that Has No Name" during which he read from his paper and facilitated discussion from moment to moment. Participants arrayed themselves on the carpeted floor of the upstairs Theater Room, some using throw pillows, others simply propping themselves up on elbows, sitting cross-legged, or finding more conventional seating in the rows of benches around the perimeter of the room. The discussion proceeded in a mix of reading and question-and-answer episodes that blended together as if somehow coordinated by some outside force. Mr. Lemons noted that whiteness and blackness are relative terms, not absolutes. A white person, for instance, who engages in antiracist activity will find she or he is "blackened" racially in the eyes of society.

Participant profile

DATA COLLECTION:

Participants were asked optional demographic questions on the conference registration form. Thirty-eight of the 57 registrants completed these questions. In the remaining cases, forms were not completed due to 1) a group registering together and not completing individual forms, 2) individuals choosing not to answer, or 3) walk-in registrations during which only name and address information were recorded. In some cases it was possible for us to "guess" the status of participants, as in the case of race and gender. In other cases information was known to us through personal acquaintance. Four of the 57 registrants could not attend the conference. When available, however, their data are included in the profiles.

Downstairs in the Ockanickon Room Linae Enockson began the first session of a two-part workshop titled "Sharpening Our Focus: Using the Lens of Identity to Construct a New Awareness of Race." About a dozen participants took part in the workshop. In the Worship Room philosopher Harry Brod presented a paper titled "Turn a Whiter Shade of Pale: The Search for an Alternate Albinity" in which he argued that to be antiracist and white one must fully claim white as an identity rather than as a background or normative status. He offered his ideas as a work in progress, drawing on his experience as a spokesperson for the profeminist men's movement. About ten participants listened and discussed his views. Not all were favorable and some raised objections to the notion that a positive white identity was either possible or desirable.

During the second afternoon session the workshop facilitated by Linae Enockson continued to meet. A seminar by social workers Cessie Alfonso of Alfonso Associates and Peggy O'Donoghue of the New York University School of Social Work was also scheduled. In the spirit of the conference, two participants, John S. Bilal II and Bill Reaves, organized a workshop titled "Racial Definitions" that presented the philosophy developed by Mr. Neely Fuller Jr. Due to the fact that Dr. Lemon's presenta-

tion was running past its scheduled time, the only available space was the Seminar Room. But the large number of participants who wanted to attend the workshop soon filled the room and flowed into the hallway. The presentation by Mr. Bilal and Mr. Reaves was moved to the larger Worship Room.

Ms. Alfonso and Ms. O'Donoghue, originally scheduled in the Worship Room, relocated to the Seminar Room where a smaller discussion ensued among a half-dozen participants. The conversation began with a critique of current curricula in social work programs that instruct social workers on all racial/cultural groups except white Americans. Ms. O'Donoghue spoke as a white doctoral student who immigrated to the United States as an adult from Ireland. Ms. Alfonso spoke from her perspective as an Afro/Cuban/Puerto Rican diversity consultant and trainer. Together they shared stories of the resistance they had encountered among white people when raising the issue of white culture. Later the presentation branched to issues of resistance to discussing white identity in other settings, such as undergraduate college courses and training of military personnel. Techniques for overcoming this resistance were shared, as were strategies for renewing one's own energies in the face of continued opposition to such discussions.

As the afternoon sessions drew to a close, a roundtable discussion began in the Ockanickon Room. Unlike many conferences, people didn't simply leave when the formal program ended. Rather they supple-



Laura Canty Swapp

Members of the University of Massachusetts class, the Social Construction of Whiteness and White Women, prepare to leave.

Participant profile

RACE:

The conference appeared to be entirely black and white, with no one indicating Native American or Asian as their race. One participant who was Hispanic identified racially as black. People identified themselves on the registration form variously as white, Caucasian, European American, Southern race traitor, none, non race, Black, and "Black." Based on appearance, 13 participants appeared black and 40 appeared white. This method, of course, does not allow for identification of persons of multiracial heritage, and may not agree with participants' own racial self-identification.



Laura Canty Swapp

As people began to leave the conference center, participants paused to say good-bye to one another.

Participant profile

AFFILIATION:

Institutions of Higher Education:

California State University - San Marcos;
 Eugene Lang College - New School for
 Social Research; Lehigh University;
 Indiana University; Michigan State
 University; New York University; University
 of Delaware; University of Massachusetts;
 University of Minnesota; Wellesley College
 (SEED Project); William Patterson College;
 Women's Theological Center. **Private**

organizations: Alfonso Associates; Bridge
 Builders; Bucks County Peace Center;
 Center for the Study of White American
 Culture; Cook Ross, Inc.; Cross-Cultural
 Consultation; Don Thompson
 Connections; New Perspectives;
 Partnership Against Racism; Process
 Work DC; The National Conference;
 Visions, Inc.; Washington - Beech
 Community Preschool Antibias
 Dissemination Project; White Women
 Challenging Racism. **Government orga-**
nizations: Department of Defense.

Religious organizations: Central States
 Synod - ELCA; General Conference of the
 Mennonite Church; Religious Society of
 Friends (Quakers); Unitarian Universalist
 Church.

mented the program with their own events. Throughout the conference the formal structure provided a framework. There were pre-selected presenters along with a program and schedule. But other than the stated purpose of dialogue, there was no single agenda on the part of the sponsors and participants. Against the backdrop of the formal structure, informal activity developed. The formal structure itself was flexible, being amended at times to suit the needs of the conference.

Literally held at a large round table, the afternoon roundtable discussion was joined by various persons off and on through the evening and into the night. Participants were often moved by the conversation. Agreement was not always present, nor did it seem to be the focus of concern. Rather, participants discussed ways in which their views and experiences differed, and even conflicted with each other. While often emotional and always intensely involving, the discussion was not heated. Participants listened, and allowed each other room to be heard. The discussion continued through the night, finally breaking up sometime close to midnight. To some participants this unplanned discussion was the highlight of the conference.

Following the dinner hour a presentation was given in the Worship Room by Cooper Thompson who discussed a work in progress which consisted of interviewing antiracist white men to see, basically, what made them tick. Mr. Thompson, a consultant for Visions, had compiled a list of 100 men and performed interviews on a couple dozen. Some of the stories were remarkable, detailing men who in the face of ongoing threats of death to themselves and their families worked in isolation and resistance to the police, correction-

al authorities, and other racist elements in their local surroundings. Mr. Thompson invited feedback from the 6 to 8 participants present. One suggestion was that he also examine the work of his subjects in the context of antisexism, or that he expand his scope to all white people, including white women, who engaged in antiracist activity. Another suggestion was offered that he include more commonplace examples of antiracism. The standard set by his subjects, though heroic, seemed too far beyond the normal range of experience to inspire others to action in more everyday circumstances.

Finally participants settled in for the night. Those with outside accommodations left and those staying on site retired to the sleeping areas. The first day had passed smoothly, without incident. The conference had managed itself very well.

It was hard to believe on Saturday morning that only a single day of conferencing had taken place. The quality of discussion had been so involving and the focus so intense it seemed longer. Many of the participants had formed new acquaintances born of sharing experiences they seldom had opportunity to discuss in "outside" settings. The multiracial character of the conference, coupled with the quality of the discussion and interaction, created an alternate sense of reality in which African Americans and European Americans might partake of genuine discussion directed toward solving, rather than rehashing, conflicts that arise from whiteness in our society. Doubtless participants realized that much was left to be said. Not all bridges could be built at once. Not all gaps in understanding could be filled. Agreement on issues could not be expected, and differences in experience based on differences in culture, power, domination and inequality remained. But for many participants this was the first time they had been exposed to a setting in which dialogue about racial difference, and particularly about whiteness, had been discussed so openly by a multiracial group. And it was hard to miss the fact that never, to anyone's knowledge, had such a large multiracial group purposefully assembled to discuss whiteness and white American culture for anything closely resembling the length of time that had already transpired. The ubiquitous taboos of white society, in which the mention of "white culture" is sometimes enough to kill a conversation, no longer applied. It was an experience that remained rooted firmly in the present.

The morning opened with three scheduled events. Patti DeRosa of Cross-Cultural Consultation and Angela Giudice of Visions led a discussion of their experiences and

During the remaining moments of the conference, several of the participants gathered in the Theater Room for one last period of reflection.



Laura Canty Swapp

findings as members of Hopeful Travelers: White Women Challenging Racism. The discussion was held in the Ockanickon Room amongst twelve to fifteen people. In the Worship Room a similar size group met with Laura Canty-Swapp and Sharon Elise, sociologists from California State University at San Marcos. Their workshop was titled "Understanding Dimensions of White Culture through the Prism of Race." Meanwhile upstairs in the Theater Room Jeff Hitchcock of the Center for Study met with a half-dozen participants. His presentation discussed the concept of internalized dominance, comparing it to internalized oppression and locating it in an overall structural framework.

Following the workshops, participants convened for a plenary "open microphone" session in the Ockanickon Room. Lowell Thompson of Partnership Against Racism was selected impromptu to act as Master of Ceremonies. About half the participants attended the session, the rest presumably being otherwise engaged in private conversations and activities. At this point the conference seemed to have taken a permanent footing as an ongoing dialogue. It was hard to distinguish who was presenter and who was audience. These distinctions had been blurred, with the general, though unspoken, agreement by all parties that such an arrangement was preferred.

During the plenary some statements were made by six to ten speakers. Some led question and answer periods, others simply voiced their concerns before the audience. The audience and atmosphere, however, remained very laid back, with people coming and going, some listening and others simply checking in or talking quietly among themselves.

Following a break for lunch, the final workshops began. Upstairs in the Theater Room the students, faculty and staff from the University of Massachusetts class titled "The Social Construction of White Women and Whiteness" led a workshop on their activity. This group, which did not want to identify a "person in charge," had raised enough funds to



Participant profile

EDUCATION:

At least 9 participants held doctorates. Several more had masters degrees; with some participants holding more than one. About half the conference consisted of students in undergraduate, masters level, and doctoral programs.



Participant profile

GENDER:

Forty women and 17 men were registered. Most participants simply identified their gender as male or female. Other responses were woman, queer-man, gay male, and female/lesbian.



Participant profile

ETHNICITY:

Very little data are available on ethnicities of black participants. Those that were listed or otherwise known are Afro/Cuban/ Puerto Rican, Afro American, Black person/non-white person, and African American. Most persons identifying their ethnicity were white. Many named various European or Middle Eastern nationalities, including Armenian, Cicilian, Dutch, English, French, German, Irish, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Russian, Scottish and Syrian. Some named European regions such as British, Anglo, Scandinavian. Other named ethnicities were American, Appalachian, Canadian, Christian, European, Jewish, Native American and Southern U.S. These ethnicities occasionally appeared alone but more frequently occurred in combinations of upwards to four for any given person.



Participant profile

SOCIAL CLASS:

Thirty-nine people identified their social class. Only six indicated they were something other than middle class, these responses being: working class educated, working class, powerless class, none, graduate student, and broke. Those identifying themselves as middle class often simply responded "middle," but others responded with upper middle or lower middle. One participant responded as "bohemian upper-middle" while another indicated "middle-class, born working class." It was not possible to guess the class status of participants who did not respond or complete a registration form. However, the conference seemed to be uniformly a middle class affair. Class was the demographic factor on which the least diversity was apparent.

Participant profile

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION:

California	3
District of Columbia	1
Delaware	1
Florida	1
Illinois	1
Indiana	1
Kansas	1
Massachusetts	23
Maryland	4
Michigan	1
Minnesota	1
Missouri	1
New Jersey	7
Pennsylvania	8
Texas	1
Virginia	1
Washington	1

Participant profile

PROFESSION:

Not everyone reported a profession. Several participants reported more than one. In order of frequency, participants were professionally involved in antiracism activism (9), diversity consulting (7), students (7), women's studies (6), sociology (5), religious practice (4), anthropology (3), social service program administration (3), counseling psychology (2), performance studies (2), social work (2), African American studies (1), English literature (1), health care (1), international relations (1), philosophy (1).

Participant profile

AGE:

Age range	No. of persons
0 - 20	1
21 - 30	14
31 - 40	6
41 - 50	14
51 - 60	4
61+	2

dialogue would have continued, probably well into the evening. Reluctantly the conference administrators brought the conference to a close. Many participants assembled in the Theater Room for a final collective acknowledgment of the process. A few brief words were said in the way of a formal closing by Mr. Hitchcock, followed by a moment of silence, and the conference officially ended.

It had been a very different kind of conference in content, context and process. Many conferences have implicitly discussed whiteness and white culture, but not under that name. Who has not heard a discussion of "the immigrant experience" in other settings for example, only to find it was really the European "immigrant experience" that was the real topic. Here for once whiteness had been explicitly named, and it was not presumed to be everyone's experience.

The context, an explicit discussion of whiteness from a nonracist viewpoint, stepped out of the name and blame pattern characteristic of discussions of race that take white people as the focus. Here participants considered what it meant to be white, and asked how matters of privilege and identity acted upon white people and influenced their approaches to antiracism.

The conference was not run by a process but rather became a process itself. People felt they could become a part of it and several actively took advantage of this sense of ownership to enhance the program with their own activities. Somehow, with no one in charge, there were fewer interruptions, more orderly discussions of point and counterpoint, and more examples of productive (as opposed to destructive) conflict than usually occur at the typical conference experience. Participants took responsibility for making the most of the limited time we had together. Collectively there was an awareness that an assemblage such as this had never happened. We each worked hard, taking the risks necessary to make the experience meaningful.

allow approximately 20 people from the class to attend the conference. Collectively their presence added much to the vitality and enthusiasm of the conference atmosphere. They conducted their workshop as if it were their class. Students read from their journals and used their backgrounds to explicitly interpret their experience. A woman raised in the South, for example, explained how this shaped her views. Assigned readings were discussed in terms of the authors' background. In one case, the fact that an author was lesbian was examined for the insight it might give to her writing. The audience and the workshop participants themselves were moved by the experience, leaving some with watery eyes as the boundaries between presenter and audience, between planned and extemporaneous experience, once again became blurred.

At the same time, Lowell Thompson met with a smaller group of a dozen persons in the Ockanickon Room. Mr. Thompson presented examples of print advertisements he had developed as founder of Partnership Against Racism, a nonprofit advertising agency similar in concept to Partnership for a Drug Free America. His agency had succeeded in placing ads in hundreds of media outlets, including radio, TV, and magazines. Mr. Thompson also discussed his recent book, "WHITE FOLKS" and some of the many public reactions to it by white people and people of color.

Finally the conference ran out of time. The facility was no longer available, and by arrangement needed to be vacated by late afternoon. Had this not been the case, the



Laura Canty Swapp

Conference administrators Charley Flint and Jeff Hitchcock, both of the Center for the Study of White American Culture take a moment to catch their breath between activities.

The conference was not without its pretenses. Participants invariably used the term “people of color” as a collective reference to any non-white people. One African American participant remarked late in the conference that this had become exasperating, and if the conversation was about African Americans, for instance, this should be said explicitly. And no one felt the conference had yielded solutions to the pressing problems of racial conflict and inequality in America. But in many ways the experience was more real than the everyday life participants encountered “outside.” For once we could say many things on our minds, and have them heard, in a give and take atmosphere that allowed us to clarify, modify, affirm and sometimes even change our point of view.

People began to filter out, making their good-byes, promising to remain in touch, to keep the process going. It was more than the November winds that made the prospect of returning to the outside world a cold one. Meanwhile the administrators recruited participants for the final clean up of the facility. People stacked chairs and tables, collected trash, swept floors and generally tidied up. Ninety minutes after the end of the conference, the final four participants left the facility. The first Conference on Whiteness and White American Culture was now history.



Laura Canty Swapp

View of the Burlington Meeting House from the grounds to the rear of the building. Headstones are part of a historic graveyard, with graves dating back to the seventeenth century.

Conference past; conference future

THE PAST

Back in May 1996 the conference seemed like an impossible dream. “Will anyone really take this seriously?” wondered conference founders and organizers, Jeff Hitchcock and Charley Flint. Still, “We knew it was time. This was something we had to do if the Center for the Study of White American Culture was to have an impact on decentering whiteness,” says Mr. Hitchcock. According to Dr. Flint, “I had some apprehensions about whether it would actually take off. I thought we’d put out all this money and it wouldn’t come to fruition. But it would be worthwhile to do some serious discussion on whiteness.”

So the Board of Trustees for the Center for Study, at the urging of Center Director Jeff Hitchcock, voted to proceed with conference plans. From the start an effort was made to minimize costs, both to the Center for Study and to potential participants, many of whom it was expected might be students. By mid-July the Center for Study had located a site. Burlington Meeting House had three advantages. It had a tranquil, historic, and spiritual atmosphere conducive to quiet and serious discussion. It had low-

cost but pleasant lodging arrangements on-site, and it offered a “per person” payment plan that did not require a large financial outlay by the Center for Study.

In August the Center began a full scale publicity effort on the Internet, the only way the Center could contact a geographically and racially diverse spectrum of people while on a modest budget. Publicity and recruitment of presenters and participants followed two guidelines. First, effort was made to recruit a diverse group. Second, no person was given special treatment as an invited speaker, presenter, keynote personality, or subsidized presenter. Either the conference was to be one for people who, by their personal commitment and concern, “had to” be there, or there would be no conference. The Center, unproven and unfunded, could not afford to pay anyone for their participation.

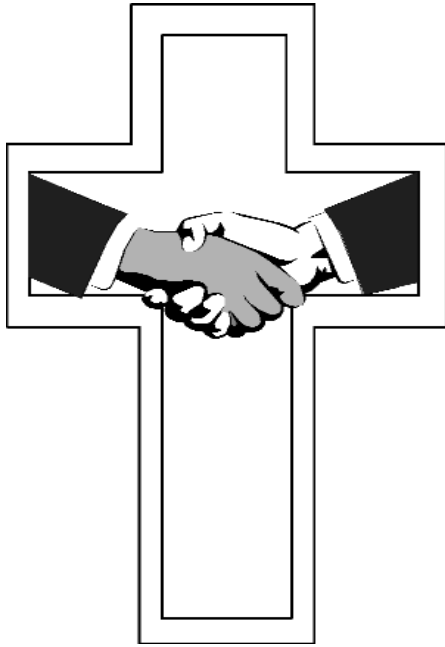
During September and October, people began to sign on. Many asked questions. Some registered. Still others answered the call for presentations. The Center for Study launched the whiteness listserv and potential participants began to network online. Lowell Thompson of Partnership Against Racism in Chicago contacted the Center. With untempered enthusiasm he jumped into the

process as a co-sponsor, presenter, listserv member and subscriber to the Center’s newsletter.

In October the Center for Study, along with some listserv members, launched Dialog on Whiteness, consisting of a statement and a call for dialog centering on the conference. Two additional organizations became co-sponsors: Bridge Builders in St. Louis and Cross-Cultural Consultation in Boston. Principles of these organizations, Mahrya Monson and Patti DeRosa, respectively, attended the conference. The Center for Study, under this expanded banner of sponsorship, took on the role of conference administrator. The conference then took on its own form.

THE FUTURE

Will there be another conference? Yes. The four organizations co-sponsoring the first conference are beginning discussion and plans for a second conference in the Boston area in the late October - early November 1997 time frame. Discussion is still preliminary. People wishing to participate in the process should contact Patti DeRosa, Charley Flint, Jeff Hitchcock, Mahrya Monson or Lowell Thompson.



Before there were “white” people in America, there were Christians. Sure they were European, but settlers from Europe in the early seventeenth century conceived of themselves as Christian, in contrast to heathens such as Africans and native Americans. Against this backdrop, the American notion of race emerged. All of this is to say, the white Christian church in America has long played a significant role in race relations.

Though it has often been said that 11 AM Sunday, when many Christian congregations hold services, is the most segregated hour in America, today that role is coming under question in many quarters. The white Christian community, like many other sectors of white American culture, is showing an increasing awareness of its own self-imposed isolation in the midst of a multiracial country.

Over the still brief period of its existence, the Center for Study has received several contacts from people working on multiracial community building as part of their involvement with traditionally white Christian congregations. While this may still be a minor trend in the midst of a highly conservative and racially exclusive institution, attempts by white congregations to reach beyond their monoracial outlook may hold promise for the future. It’s not hard to miss the fact that a significant portion of the antiracism involvement being carried out today by white Americans is coming from an explicit point of view that says to be white and to be Christian means confronting racism as a sin, and white privilege and complicity are a significant part of the problem.

Recognizing a problem exists is a start. In June 1995 the Southern Baptist Convention issued a remarkable admission of a racist history, saying in part:

Reconciliation - it's the Christian thing to do

“WHEREAS, Many of our Southern Baptist forbears defended the ‘right’ to own slaves, and either participated in, supported, or acquiesced in the particularly inhumane nature of American slavery...

“WHEREAS, In later years Southern Baptists failed, in many cases, to support, and in some cases opposed, legitimated initiatives to secure the civil rights of African-Americans...

“WHEREAS, Racism profoundly distorts our understanding of Christian morality, leading some Southern Baptists to believe that racial prejudice and discrimination are compatible with the Gospel...

“Therefore, be it RESOLVED, that we... unwaveringly denounce racism, in all its forms, as deplorable sin...

“Be it further RESOLVED, that we lament and repudiate historic acts of evil such as slavery from which we continue to reap a bitter harvest, and we recognize that the racism which yet plagues our culture today is inextricably tied to the past...

“Be it further RESOLVED, that we apologize to all African-Americans for condoning and/or perpetuating individual and systemic racism in our lifetime; and we genuinely repent of the racism of which we have been guilty, whether consciously (Psalm 19:13) or unconsciously (Leviticus 4:27)...

The statement by the Southern Baptist Convention has not been universally received as sincere. At least one critic pointed out the same group spent far more time and effort imposing sanctions against the “sin” of homosexuality than against racism. But in words, at least, it is a remarkable recognition and admission of the role the white Christian church has played.

Other denominations have, with less public attention, begun programs to create a multiracial membership. In 1993, for example, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America issued a statement recognizing themselves “to be in mission and ministry in a multicultural society,” and declaring specific goals, including “that within the first ten years of its existence, ten percent of this church’s membership would be African American, Asian, Hispanic, or Native American.” Other goals included “representation of cultural diversity on church-wide...decision-making bodies;” “encouragement of African American, Asian, Hispanic and Native American associations;” and “to empower pastoral leaders while honoring their

cultures.”

Promise Keepers, the group that has been filling stadiums around the country with men dedicating their lives to Christian principles has as one of its seven promises (Number 6) that “A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.”

Many Christian groups are quietly working on programs of racial reconciliation and racial healing, two terms which have come to denote multiracial efforts of community building within the Christian community. Some are quite advanced in their understanding of whiteness as a cultural force, the need to recognize other bases of power, and the need to acknowledge the pain among people of color and white people alike as they confront racial concerns.

However, even among those disposed to racial reconciliation, there are warnings that statements are hollow if power is not shared. Churches that remain culturally white at the center will have a hard time recruiting and retaining a multiracial following. The black Christian community, in particular, has provided one of the few places of safety for African Americans in an otherwise hostile society. Pleas from white churches—which have a history of taking on race as an issue during moments in history, only to abandon it when it becomes too difficult—are not always convincing.

Christian churches, of course, are not the only organizations concerned with reconciliation. In December 1995 the Anti-Defamation League, an organization dedicated to fighting anti-Semitism, and the National Urban League, an old guard civil rights organization announced a joint program of racial healing, “standing...together as a symbol of interracial cooperation.” The Baha’i, a worldwide faith distinct from Christianity, Judaism or Islam has long promoted interracial cooperation, including marriage, as a central part of its faith. But in America Christianity is still the dominant religion, and as it goes, so too goes the religious climate of the country. We now seem to be in a period of quiet, faith-based grassroots activity by the white community and communities of color. But whether the white Christian community will be able to surmount its historic isolation and its lack of multiracial community-building skills remains to be seen.



Hangin' Up On Diversity



*Diversity, Di-Verse-ities,
Two verses you see, two clefts
in the cultural palette,
two uncommon and all too common divides,
two ways of swinging a rhythm,
too many ways to collide.*

*On and on we hang up and hold
on to trinkets of white liberal gold,
until we encounter our true other,
my your essential and quintessential brother...*

*Yo my man, "diversity" you crave?
Tell me why so I can try too...*

*Oh, soul man, we need you.
a seed you are,
a bright and dark shining star,
to make our organization whole.*

*To guide you? To illuminate you,
to bring the wit and wisdom of our side,
or to serve you as a trophy to mount
on your mantle of white liberal pride?*

*No soul man, it's not that,
we're deepening diversity you see,
it's the rich tapestry of colors we need
We must, we should, we shall overcome,*

*I should know,
I know all too well
the Need.
But what I need is...*

*Soul man listen it's like this:
we like black people,
we like black music and food,
we celebrate your Kwanzaa, too.
we are open to you, tolerant you see...*

*Yes I see and
I feel,
But above all, I am a human being,
not a showpiece, not a token or your ticket to
racial harmony or peace of mind.*

*What are you saying soul man?
I'm not a racist, I'm of open mind.*

*The coffin of racist culture still stinks.
The beast has been buried but its flesh still reeks.
Or to put it simply, white liberal man...
I am not For you, or my people, or my race, I just
am
For Me.*

*I'm afraid I don't understand,
these pronouns are whirring into quicksand,
aren't we back to square one?
each of us banished to our own bantuland?*

*But that is how it is my white man.
We live in separate lands.
So let's start from something real o.k.?
My friends are black and yours
of complexion bland.*

*In fact, I may think Farrakhan's got it down pat,
But can you handle dat?*

Sooo, what can I say?

*Say not, do not.
for you cannot change, better or improve, what
you don't understand.*

*Listen, be quiet, listen long and strong,
And when the time comes, be not afraid to take a stand.
Cross the tracks, take a friend by the hand from my land,
Learn to love people for themselves and not for their brand.*



*by,
Curtis Michelson
12/10/96*





Video Review

Selling awareness of white privilege to white Americans is not an easy task. But that's just what the video, *Free*

Indeed, tries to do. Produced by the Mennonite Central Committee, this 23-minute film manages to introduce realistic examples of white privilege in a way that encourages thought and discussion.

The video begins with four young, and very white, adults talking about going to the poor, and black, side of town to fix and repair homes as a service project. One woman has contacted the minister of a church in the black community, who in turn asked that they suspend their plans until they have had a chance to talk to one of his "friends."

The friend, a grandmotherly white woman, arrives and soon engages them in a card game similar to Trivial Pursuit. The questions, however, invoke various examples of white privilege. As the game proceeds, the players express feelings of frustration, anger and denial, but remain with the process.

When one exasperated participant accuses Mrs. Hatfield, the game leader, of unnecessarily putting a guilt trip on them since they already know racism is a problem, she replies, "Jamie, this is hard work." Seeking simple solutions to racism is a white privilege, she adds, saying "I've chosen to keep myself accountable to people of color in my community."

Mrs. Hatfield tells the card players, "We won't get to lasting solutions without an understanding of white privilege, of what

racism has done to us, to white people." Perhaps this is where the video is most incomplete. Understanding "what racism has done to us" is key for white people, but the examples of harm offered in the video are brief and abstract. This stands in contrast to the many explicit examples of white privilege.

In a 23-minute script that tries to convey specific training content, finer points of character and plot are going to be secondary. Yet the film is remarkably realistic. Certainly the young game players act in a genuine way. But Mrs. Hatfield is overly-sweet and condescending, at times making one (white) reviewer want to wring her neck, and the other (black) reviewer express relief that the character was white and not black.

According to Towbin Miller Shearer, Director of the Racism Awareness Project of the Mennonite Central Committee and the moving force behind the video's production, it took several tries before the final product was ready. Initial efforts failed when the production team "just didn't get it." The final version resulted from many rounds of review by a multiracial (European American, African American, Hispanic) advisory committee. Released in January 1996, the video has been selling well.

The video is accompanied with a 16-page guide that identifies specific points of white privilege portrayed in the film, and lists resources for further study. It costs \$20.00, shipping included. To order, call (717) 859-1151, fax (717) 859-2171, send Email to mailbox@mcc.org, or write to MCC, PO Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500.

Call for Papers

American Italian Historical Association

30th Annual Conference

13-15 November 1997

Cleveland, Ohio

Shades of Black and White
Italy-Africa-U.S.: Conflict and Collaboration
between Two Communities

Deadline June 1, 1997

We invite presentations by researchers and scholars on any topic related to the general theme of the conference. **Papers which focus on the relationship between African Americans and Italian Americans, as well as on the peoples of Africa and Italy are encouraged.** Presenters are not limited to traditional forms of expressions or disciplines. Examining the varied relationships from artistic perspectives is encouraged. The conference is hosted by the Italian American Cultural Foundation (IACF) and will be held at a hotel (to be announced) in downtown Cleveland. Suggestions for entire sessions and panels are also welcomed. Those interested in serving as chairs of or respondents to panels, should notify the conference organizer before the June 1st deadline. Proposals for papers, presentations, panels and other participation should be submitted, along with a 200 word biography to:

Mr. Joseph Ventura
11418 Edgepark Drive
Garfield Heights, Ohio 44125
(216) 587-4973; fax (216) 663-1337

All participants must be pre-registered for the conference in order to appear on the final conference program.

Full conference Registration:
Early bird--before October 12, 1997 \$140
After October 12, 1997 \$160
Registration Costs include two lunches and the annual banquet
Full Conference without lunches \$120
Full Conference only \$100
Partial Conference Registration: 1 day \$60; 2 days, \$90; banquet only \$75.

Checks should be made payable to AIHA and sent to Dr. Salvatore LaGumina, Department of History, Geography and Political Science, Nassau Community College, One Education Drive, Garden City, NY 11530-6793.

Scholarships are limited. For more information call (216) 587-4973.

Email contact: Fred Gardaphe,
Fred.Gardaphe@mail.colum.edu

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If you care to make a difference in people's lives...

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Then dare to explore white culture in America.

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Take an issue with us!



ISSUE 1 - (Vol 1, No. 1)
Center opens for business • Center encourages cultural discovery • Diverse board governs center • Bibliography on whiteness: 1967-1993 • Scholars publish in emerging field • Training objectives for white Americans • Movie: *White Man's Burden* • Conference planning to begin • Center's name may be misinterpreted • Looking for hands-on experience • Reader response sought by newsletter. **8 pages.**

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ISSUE 2 - (Vol 2, No. 1)
Talking about whiteness... Why do we find it so difficult? • Letters to the Editor • Clipart Cartoon • Personal Shades • Clinton breaks code of silence • Training white Americans - Interview with Cessie Alfonso • On the phone • The phone scenario - A trainer's tool • What do you call a white American? It's not always easy to know • Commuting - A brief moment on the highway • Test yourself. **16 pages.**

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ISSUE 3 - (Vol 2, No. 2)
Culture in the Classroom - Are white teachers competent? • Conference plans • Clipart Cartoon • White habits - Three vignettes describing white culture • Acting white • Caring, sharing, daring - Reflections on a white awareness workshop • White teacher, rainbow classroom • White students on campus • Oppositional trickery • Does racism affect whites? • Why subscribe? • Video Review - *Crazy from the Heart*. **16 pages.**



ISSUE 4 - (Vol 2, No. 3)
White Ethnicity - Does it hide race? • Center launches web site • New conference date now firm • White man, tired • Personal Shades • There's a whole lotta mixin' going on • But we're all so different - the flight from white identity • Memories of oppression - Interview with Peggy O'Donoghue • The more things change • New term, old identity • Jewish American, white American • Test yourself. **16 pages.**

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Conference Announcement:

The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness

...a conference organized by graduate students and faculty at the University of California, Berkeley (UCB) will be held April 11- 13, 1997 at UCB.

Participants include, among others, Norma Alarcon, Allan Berube, Roxanne Dunbar, Michelle Fine, Shelly Fisher Fishkin, Ruth Frankenberg, John Hartigan, Saidya Hartman, Pat Hilden, Mike Hill, Noel Ignatiev, Caren Kaplan, Eric Lott, Walter Been Michaels, Michael Omi, Fred Pfiel, David Roediger, Michael Rogin, Alex Saxton, Mab Segrest, Howard Winant, and L. Mun Wong.

The conference is free and open to the public. For additional information, email whiteinfo@garnet.berkeley.edu, or call (510) 658-7584.

The conference is sponsored by the University of California Humanities Research Institute and the Department of Comparative Ethnic Studies, UCB.

Once again, here are the answers! To try the latest version of our test, look for the questions on the back cover.

1. (C) A nationwide study by the Harvard University Project on School Desegregation reviewed the racial distribution of students within school districts across the country during the 1991-92 school year. When looking at the number of black students who attended schools that were at least 90% minority, the states of New York and New Jersey ranked 3rd and 4th respectively in having the greatest proportion of black students attending almost entirely minority schools. The figures were 57.5% of all black students in New York and 55% in New Jersey. Only Illinois (59%) and Michigan (58.5%) were ranked higher in the findings. Alabama, Georgia, California and Kansas did not appear in the ten most segregated states.

When Hispanic students were examined, New York (58%) and New Jersey (44%) ranked first and second. Illinois ranked fifth (34%) and California ranked fourth (35%). Alabama, Georgia, Kansas and Michigan did not appear in the ten most segregated states for Hispanic students.

The study found segregation grew substantially between 1980 and 1990, including an increase in the South for the first time in 40 years. The nationwide figures for the proportions of both black and Hispanic students attending districts of at least 90% minority students were the same, 34%.

2. (C) The Celts, while indeed living in the British Isles, once inhabited most of Europe from the Baltic region to Italy, and eastward to Turkey. They were expert artisans and metal workers, creating weapons and household implements adorned with highly detailed engravings. They lived in tribal groups that reached 200,000 members and raised armies of similar size. And they were headhunters. Diodorus, a Greek historian, reported an eye witness account of Celtic warriors with a collec-

tion of their victims heads tied to the bridles of their horses. According to Herodotus, another Greek historian,

Each of them cuts off an enemy's head and takes it back home. He then skewers it on a long wooden stave and sets this up so that the head sticks up far above the house, often above the chimney.... With the heads of their worst enemies... once they have sawn off everything below the eyebrows, they carefully clean out the head. If the owner is poor he will merely stretch calf-leather around it and use it thus. But if he is rich, he will also line the inside with gold and use it as a drinking vessel.... When...guests arrive he will bring out these heads and say how they... attacked him, and how he defeated them.

An Irish saga, recorded in writing in 1160, told of far more ancient times when it was custom for the greatest warrior to cut the first portion of meat at communal feasts. Said Conall to Cet who claimed this right,

'I have the right to challenge you,' answered Conall, 'and by the gods of my people, I swear that since the time that I first took a spear in my hand, no day has gone by where I've not killed a man of Connaught, no night where I've not got one, and I've never slept without having the head of a man of Connaught under my knee.'

'Truly,' said Cet, 'you're a better man than I, but if my brother Auluan were here, he would be your match. It's too bad for us he's not here.'

'But he is,' said Conall, who took Auluan's head from his belt and hurled it at Cet's chest. Then Cet turned away from the pig, and Conall took his place.

SOURCE: *The Celts: The People Who Came out of the Darkness* by Gerhard Herm, New York: Barnes & Nobel Books, 1993.

3. (B) The case that established separate but equal in law, known as Plessy v. Ferguson, was tried before the U.S. Supreme Court in September 1896. Homer Plessy was a light-skinned man who could pass for white, but who answered affirmatively when asked by a train conductor if he was colored. Plessy, who was seated in the car designated for white people, refused to move to the car for colored people. In a prearranged scenario, he was arrested and appeared in the court of John Ferguson, where he was promptly convicted.

The original case took place in New Orleans in 1892. Segregated facilities were uncommon at the time. In slavery times through Reconstruction both whites and blacks used the same bathroom facilities. Interracial families were commonplace and persons of multiracial heritage often became prominent citizens.

When the legislation was enacted segregat-

ing train facilities in New Orleans, many people objected. The train companies were concerned about the added cost of supplying two cars when one had done just fine. Conductors were concerned about problems determining who was white and who was colored. The question of separating husbands and wives, some from prominent families, was disturbing to many.

Throughout the South, the roles of both people of color and white people were still very much in flux, with many local spots of enlightened equality like New Orleans appearing in the midst of concentrated activity by white racists. It was in this context that the New Orleans Picayune many years later lauded Judge Ferguson, who it credited for taking a key role "in the struggle for white supremacy."

4. (A) African Americans have fought in every war the United States has undertaken. For much of the country's history, troops have fought in segregated units. Segregation in the armed forces was officially ended by an Executive Order signed by President Truman in 1947 following the completion of World War II.

However, during the Revolutionary War over 5,000 African Americans and many hundred native Americans fought on the side of the United States. Although there were some exceptions, most served in integrated units side by side with white Americans in both land and naval engagements.

Many African Americans distinguished themselves in combat, receiving the recognition of Congress, and various civic celebrations and commemorations around the country. However, their story was later wiped from the face of American history—sometimes literally being removed from monuments—during the first part of the 19th century.

Characteristic of these times was James Forten, an African American who, when captured as part of the crew of an American warship, and then offered his freedom, said "No, I'm a prisoner for my country, and I'll not be a traitor to her." Forten was indeed imprisoned by the British on a prison ship where 10,000 other prisoners died during the war. He survived and became a successful and prominent businessman in Philadelphia, only to see his son later denied entry in the the powerful trade unions that were then forcing blacks from the free trades in favor of recent European immigrants. He died unable to provide his own family the freedom and opportunity he had so bravely fought for a few decades prior.

SCORE: None correct - worse than guessing; 1 correct - keep trying; 2 correct - good; 3 correct - excellent; 4 correct - expert.

ENDING RACISM

A WHITE PERSON'S JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY AND POLITICAL ACTION

To help us find our role in ending racism

Led by Antje Mattheus
February 28-March 1, 1997
Philadelphia, PA

FOR WHITE PEOPLE WHO WANT TO:

- understand the meaning and impact of race in the US
- enhance our understanding and acceptance of "being white"
- learn more about how we create enemies
- enhance our capacity and find our roles in working toward ending racism
- accept and not blame

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Cost: Sliding scale ranging from \$200 to \$100. Includes tuition and 3 meals.

More and more of my non-white friends express their frustration, sadness and tiredness about having to be the ones to do the work on race relations and racism. They say, "I am so tired of teaching white people about race; I have done it forever. It is time for white people to take leadership and responsibility."

This workshop is my answer to this request.

—Facilitator Antje Mattheus

Antje Mattheus, born in West Germany, trainer and organizational development consultant, former community organizer, has worked over 22 years on oppression and liberation issues, including German-Jewish, Black-White, and Chicano-White.

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Test Yourself:

Four questions that will never appear on the SAT

Answers appear on page 14.

1. Which state(s) has the most racially segregated school system?
 - a) Alabama
 - b) California
 - c) New York/New Jersey
 - d) Georgia
 - e) Kansas

2. Which of the following assertions is true of the Celtic people who lived in Europe around 2,000 years ago.
 - a) they lived in the British Isles and portions of France, but did not occupy much of the remaining continent of Europe.
 - b) they had no sense of artistic accomplishment. Artifacts from burial sites show a lack of artistic skill in their adornment.
 - c) they were headhunters who collected the heads of their victims to show their prowess.
 - d) while sharing common cultural characteristics, they lived in many small and separate tribes of a few hundred individuals at most.

3. In 1915, when he died at age 77 in New Orleans, John Ferguson was described by the *Times-Picayune* as having “allied himself with the Democratic reform element [where] he took part in the struggle...” What was John Ferguson’s role in history?
 - a) a formerly enslaved African American, he founded an academy for black youth, following Booker T. Washington’s call for African Americans to learn skilled trades.
 - b) he was the judge who ruled on the Homer Plessy case, thereby establishing in law the principle of separate but equal.
 - c) he was a local militia leader who, during the Civil War, mounted a defense that held off Union troops for 6 months.
 - d) he was one of the first African Americans elected to the U.S. Congress during Reconstruction, at which time he registered several thousand black voters.

4. Which of the following wars was fought by an integrated army and navy on the American side?
 - a) the Revolutionary War
 - b) the Civil War
 - c) the Spanish American War
 - d) World War I
 - e) World War II

Center for the Study of White American Culture, Inc.
A Multiracial Organization
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Roselle, NJ 07203