

Study
Center
for the

of White American Culture, Inc.

QUARTERLY
NEWSLETTER

A multiracial organization

VOL. 3, NO. 2 SUMMER 1997

ISSUE 6

White Antiracism

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to our
own
kind...*



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Makeover looms

Issue 6 is here. It's taken a while and the Center has gone through some changes. We're now coming to the attention of the public. Media coverage of the center has increased substantially.

We've made progress in many other areas as well.

The Quarterly Newsletter, this publication, seems to be growing slowly but steadily. Even more encouraging, sales of back issues have become a source of income.

Still, we want to build subscribership a little more quickly. As one recent subscriber remarked, "You should have ten or a hundred times the subscribers you do." We agree.

But The Quarterly Newsletter of the Center for the Study of White American Culture, as a title, is a little bit staid.

Somehow it doesn't capture the imagination.

That's not the least of it. We're not really quarterly. Some of you may have noticed, I'm sure. The Center's resources only allow us to publish about three times per year, and our publication deadlines are a little loose. It's partly money. It takes time to sell subscriptions and build readership. It's partly generating the written source material. We still have a long ways to go in developing a stable base of contributors. Many small journals have a similar situation.

Look for a makeover by the start of 1998. Instead of the Quarterly Newsletter, maybe we'll come up with a nifty name. As we grow in other parts of our operation, maybe we will begin to attract serious contributors as well.

Subscribers please note, we ask you to subscribe to either 4 or 8 issues. If we only produce 3 issues in one year, you still receive your fourth issue the next year. If you subscribe for 8 issues, the same idea applies.

This issue is on white antiracism, a theme we planned back in March. That followed our issue on white ethnicity. Our next issue will feature whiteness in the interracial community.

When will it come out? Some time this year.

Then look for us in a new form in 1998. We'll bring you the same quality content, but in a more exciting package.

Center for Study gains IRS 501(c)3 status

As of this spring, the Center for the Study of White American Culture has been granted provisional status as a 501(c)3 "tax exempt" organization dedicated to educational services. The provisional standing applies to any organization applying for 501(c)3 status.

The Center is now able to receive funds from donors who require tax-exempt status by the receiving organization. This includes foundation and corporate giving.

It also allows the Center to purchase materials without paying sales tax.

Purchases of products and services from the Center are not tax deductible, but gifts and contributions are.

In the near future, the Center will begin exploring options the acquisition of this new status brings upon us.

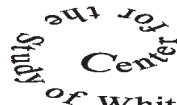
Board to hold annual meeting, August 2

The Board of Trustees of the Center for the Study of White American Culture, Inc. will meet on August 2, 1997.

Members of the public wishing to raise issues with the Center are invited to contact Jeff Hitchcock prior to the meeting.

The Board presently consists of five members. Three additional candidates have been nominated as trustees. Pending the outcome of the August meeting, the Board of Trustees should number eight persons for the coming year.

Trustees plan to engage in a review of the Center and reconsider how the Center is approaching its mission. In all likelihood, the Center will not depart radically from its present course of action, but various products and services may come under revision. Suggestions from the public are welcome.



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Editor: Jeff Hitchcock

Contributors:

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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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ISSUE 6
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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.

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Center spokespersons take time on the air

One purpose of the Center is to reach out to white Americans who have not thought of the implications of being white. Whether it be personal discussions about race, discussion of "whiteness studies" as a field of study, or discussion of social change agendas, the Center for Study works to create forums for discussing whiteness.

Over the past year, this purpose has been realized, in part, through media appearances by Center spokespersons Jeff Hitchcock and Charley Flint.

They and the Center have been featured in the Los Angeles Times, the Wall Street Journal (twice), the Home News (NJ) and the Boston Phoenix. The Associated Press released an article about the Center on the national wire in March 1997. Based on reports to the Center, readers spotted the article in Atlanta; New Jersey (several papers); Orlando; Las Vegas; Tampa; Salt Lake City; Schenectady NY; Cleveland; and papers in Arizona, Michigan and Montana.

Television coverage has been limited to Fox News Channel. Other television media inquiries have been looking for filmable stories, with people actively doing things. Much of our work is office, phone and computer activities, or workshops and meetings in which the media would be intrusive. However, we hope the television media put the upcoming Cambridge conference on their calendars.

Radio stations that have featured Center spokespersons are KVMR in Sacramento, CA; KTKK in Salt Lake City; WAEB in Allentown, PA; The Tom Lykis Show, syndicated nationally to 225 stations; KPIX in San Francisco; WVLK in Lexington, KY; and WKEW in Greensboro, NC.

The Center continues to draw an audience on the World Wide Web. Its web site has tallied 7,500 visits. Several sites have now linked to the Center's site, and recently Slate Magazine, Microsoft's online news magazine, pointed to the Center's work online.

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

The Second... Multiracial Solidarity March

August 9, 1997
Griffith Park, 10 am - 1 pm
Los Angeles, California

March colors are red, white and blue.

For info, check Interracial Voice at
<http://www.webcom.com/intvoice/>



I was sitting there watching the Pathfinder Mars probe landing when it hit me like a ton of moon rocks. Although I was still trying to figure out what all the names and initials mean - Pathfinder, Mir, JPL, Sojourner, Mars Rover (even NASA is a little fuzzy). - I started getting a funny feeling of dejavu ...yeah, you got it....all over again.

So, at the risk of seeming paranoid, I asked myself..., self "What if there actually is intelligent life on Mars?" (I'll worry about who will give them the IQ test later). And what if they've been watching as Earthlings (White Americans, to be more specific) get closer and closer to actually reaching their planet? What would they be thinking? How would they feel if they knew the history of other "White" explorations?

Which led me to start the next book in my "WHITE FOLKS" series. Right now I'm calling it "WHITE FOLKS" IN SPACE. Although it will take the form of a novel, which is supposed to be a work of fiction....I see its purpose as, like my first book, "WHITE FOLKS": Seeing America Through Black Eyes, to get "white" Americans to finally face and understand their real history.

I see the book as asking a series of questions: What if some "alien" power outside of the hegemony of "white" power that presently reigns on Earth had to decide whether a visit from the States is something to welcome or dread. And when does the seemingly benign, knowledge-for-knowledge-sake work of lovable nerds at NASA kick in to the conquerors and colonizers mode of the Pentagon and their multi-national-hoping-to-be-multi-galactic cohorts? When does that cute little Sojourner Mars probe start carrying a space gun?

Would Martians see an upside or a downside to a closer encounter? What if they could go back in history and see what Americans have done in the past to other cultures they've..er, uh, explored? And if our newfound neighbors were intelligent enough to do some sort of an intergalactic background check how much credit do we get for being a society that knows how to coexist with others in the universe?

Please stay tuned.

Mr. Thompson is author of the recent, critically-acclaimed book, "**WHITE FOLKS**"™: **Seeing America Through Black Eyes**. 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.

Berkeley conference scores first

The April 11-13, 1997 conference, titled *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness* and sponsored by the Berkeley Ethnic Studies Department, has put whiteness studies before the awareness of the nation.

Not the first conference on whiteness—that distinction goes to the Center’s own conference last November—the Berkeley conference was the first scholarly conference, and by virtue of its credentialled assembly, the first conference to receive coast-to-coast coverage.

Notably, the *Wall St. Journal* ran an April 24 Page-1 story discussing the conference. The story found its way into newsrooms nationwide.

According to unofficial reports, the conference planners, a group which included several Berkeley graduate students, expected a small turnout. But nearly all the invited presenters accepted, and word of the conference spread among grassroots activists, swelling attendance to 300 people.

According to one observer, the conference lacked opportunities for dialogue between audience and presenters. Held in typically academic fashion, the panelists presented their ideas didactically. This observer, an African American man, noted a lack of people of color among presenters.

Another African American observer took the conference to be encouraging, to

*Before the Race Traitor conference...
Before the Berkeley conference...*

there was

The National Conference on Whiteness and White American Culture

meeting in annual session this November,

Friday nite, November 7
Saturday, all day, November 8
Sunday, until 5 PM, November 9

Episcopal Divinity School
Cambridge, Mass.

For information, contact:

Meck Groot - Women’s Theological Center, (617) 536-8782,
Email: WTC@world.std.com

Jeff Hitchcock- Center for Study, (908) 241-5439,
Email: contact@euroamerican.org.

finally see white people discussing issues of whiteness.

The press, having initially been attracted to the conference because it sounded to them like a white supremacist gathering, soon found there was another story. Since the conference, mainstream publications and radio talk shows have fea-

tured discussions of “white studies.”

The Berkeley conference has become an important step in gaining the country’s attention. People from Lexington, KY to Salt Lake City, along with sizeable portions of the East and West coasts, are scratching their heads and asking “What have they come up with now?”

Opening Pandora’s box in “the white issue”

This spring has seen publication of “the white issue” of *the minnesota review*; itself “a journal of committed writing.” With contributions from 36 authors, many who have published articles on whiteness in other settings, “the white issue” captures and exemplifies the scholarly core of whiteness studies.

Edited by Mike Hill, “the white issue” contains poetry, book reviews and original articles. In one example of the latter, Annalee Newitz and Matthew Wray discuss “white trash,” suggesting that the middle and upper classes wield notions of racism against the white working class. “This is... the case when poor whites are stereotyped as virulently racist as compared to their wealthier

white counterparts. As long as the poor are said to possess such traits, people can convince themselves that the poor ought to be cast out of mainstream society—they deserve what they get.”

Several books are reviewed, including works by Frankenberg, Roediger, Pfeil, Lopez, Allen, Ignatiev, Feagin and Vera, and Segrest.

Leading the issue are several thought-provoking poems. “Everything’s white,” by Warren Lehrer complains of the constricted, tightly-reigned features of whiteness, and longs to let go to a more primordial state. The poem makes its points visually with typefaces ranging from fine to extra large.

Also thought-provoking is the transcript of a 1995 symposium at Carnegie Mellon University, moderated by Mike Hill, during which he states, “The explicit goal of this work, of course, is to move whiteness from the center.”

Unapologetically postmodern and explicitly oriented toward the academy, “the white issue” demonstrates that whiteness studies, as a discipline, is here.

Despite its fears, which are many, whiteness studies will probably grow into a productive area of inquiry for those interested in fostering multiracial processes.

Aside from Mike Hill’s statement about moving whiteness out of the center, the scholars shy away from suggestions for change. But remaining disinterested is what the academy does, and that is its value.

To obtain a copy of “the white issue,” n.s. 47, Fall 1996 (series date), send \$7.50 to *the minnesota review*; Jeffrey Williams, Department of English, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27858-4353.

Don't be caught sleeping. Times are changing!
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Newsletter.



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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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RACE TRAITOR: The conference New York, May 2-3, 1997.

"We know what to do."

So spoke Noel Ignatiev on the night of Friday, May 2, before a group of 170 people packed within the meeting space of the Learning Alliance in New York City. Leading a slate of three speakers, Dr. Ignatiev's remarks opened the first Race Traitor conference. The predominantly white audience contained people of color, about a third of the people there. Many participants had traveled from a distance, from Michigan and Washington, D.C., where, according to Dr. Ignatiev, some prior discussions in support of the conference had been held.

The left, Dr. Ignatiev said, is demoralized. Citing conversations at a recent party of progressive people as an example, Dr. Ignatiev observed people wondering how to oppose the massive shifts of the Reagan-Bush years.

Race Traitor asks no such questions. Whiteness must be abolished. It's not a matter of finding what needs to be done; it's finding the will to do it.

Dr. Ignatiev continued for roughly fifteen minutes, outlining the Race Traitor perspective. The white race is a social, historical and political construction. What has been constructed can be undone. Whiteness has nothing to do with culture. In fact, Southern blacks and whites share the same culture. Case in point, he once visited a restaurant that advertised "Home Cooking" on one side of the room and "Soul Food" on the other. Patrons, it turned out, were served out of the same pot.

For those familiar with the Race Traitor position, the talk was familiar. The Race Traitor perspective draws clear ideological lines and Dr. Ignatiev did not stray from its central tenets. The conference, however, was something new. Previously a journal publisher and nothing more, Race Traitor was inaugurating a more active approach to social change.

Following Dr. Ignatiev, the Reverend Dr. Mary Foulke, a white American and Protestant chaplain of Wellesley College, spoke of the need to "abolish white racist

identities and structures." The barriers, she noted, were twofold. First, white people fear without whiteness there is nothing else. Second, and more important, we keep one another in check.

According to Rev. Foulke, "it's not a choice between the benefits of whiteness and suffering for the movement. We are suffering now." Reading from a long list of symptoms documented by psychologists, Rev. Foulke observed that we pay a price for our complicity with white racist identity. Referring briefly to Janet Helm's white racial identity model (though not actually using Dr. Helm's name), Rev. Foulke noted that whites who mature in their racial identity only begin to feel positive about themselves in the last two of six developmental stages.

Rounding out the evening, Dr. Robin D.G. Kelley, an African American and professor from New York University, spoke of the need for a truly multiracial class-based movement. A proponent of liberation movements by people of color, Dr. Kelley expressed suspicion of class-based movements that typically ask people to transcend race and gender-based identities to join the class movement. These same people, unnamed by Dr. Kelley but presumably white men, "never ask women and people of color to lead the class movement."

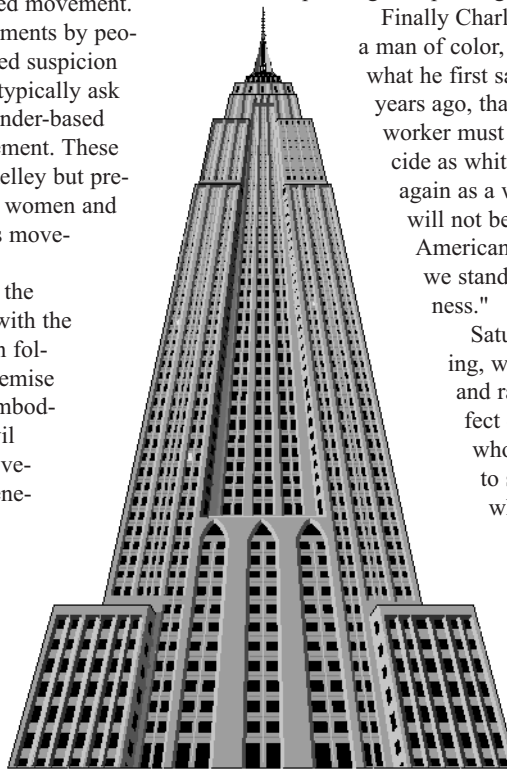
Dr. Kelley told the audience the nation lost a great opportunity with the death of the first Reconstruction following the Civil War, and the demise of the second Reconstruction embodied in the post World War II civil rights movement. Antiracist movements led by people of color benefit whites. The Fifteenth Amendment not only gave the vote to black men, but also to many poor white men who were disenfranchised before that time. Recently in Los Angeles civil

action was taken by inner city bus riders, predominantly people of color. White middle class suburban train riders were being subsidized by fares collected from working class and poor bus riders. The resulting redistribution of fare receipts benefited a substantially large group of white poor and working class bus riders as well. "Will white workers realize that the liberation of the ghetto is fundamental to their own freedom?" he asked rhetorically.

Following the speakers, questions were taken from the audience. When asked how he, a white person, could presume to lead people of color, Dr. Ignatiev replied he was not asking anyone to follow him. Nor, he added, was he interested in eliminating cultural difference. He simply wished to eliminate whiteness. What might happen to blackness as a result was not a matter he was addressing. Later during the question and answer session John Garvey, co-editor of Race Traitor and also white, explained that "the principle task of abolitionists is to make themselves pests against privilege."

Finally Charles Johnson, a man of color, repeated what he first said thirty years ago, that "the white worker must commit suicide as white to be born again as a worker. We will not be an American people until we stand up to whiteness."

Saturday morning, wet, windy and rainy—a perfect day to see who was ready to stand up to whiteness. By



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Website:
<http://www.postfun.com/racetraitor>

Book: *Race Traitor*, Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey (Eds.). New York: Routledge, 1996.

9:30 a.m. a total of thirty-five people had arrived. The crowd, much smaller, was considerably whiter than the night before. Only four people obviously of color had come. Men comprised the majority, though women were well represented at roughly 40 percent of those present. By day's end participants numbered around fifty people, though the racial and gender makeup remained more or less the same.

John Garvey began the morning plenary. *Race Traitor*, he explained, did not want people to leave the conference without some means of furthering the struggle against whiteness. They were considering how the movement might best be supported. Creating a network of activists, starting a newsletter, establishing a clearinghouse and encouraging local abolitionist collectives were all options he raised. *Race Traitor* did not envision itself sending out directives or creating a central authority. Rather, they hoped to see local efforts where people were free to exercise their tactical creativity. These ideas were floated before the participants, but no public action was taken toward their implementation.

The major portion of the day was given to discussion groups, of which there were four: education; criminal justice and prisons; culture and counter culture; campus affairs. The groups met through the morning, adjourning at lunch.

Following the lunch period, Patricia Eakins read her autobiographical account, "Manifesto of a Dead Daughter." Originally published in *Race Traitor*,¹ Dr. Ignatiev found this to be his favorite of all *Race Traitor* articles so far. Representatives from the various discussion groups then reported summaries of their discussions. Finally, the closing plenary began.

Participants expressed a feeling of comfort and satisfaction to finally have found themselves among like-minded people. John

Garvey, who was leading the plenary, mentioned the possibility of starting a New Abolitionist Society.

Participants spoke of various concerns from the audience. A few minutes later Charles Johnson moved that a New Abolitionist Society be created. Another participant spoke of armed struggle in Mexico and Peru. Claiming to be an admirer of Ghandi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he nonetheless asked why the question of armed struggle seemed to be off the table in America. Did people feel cur-

rent social processes were adequate for attacking white supremacy?

Another participant later seconded Charles Johnson's motion that a New Abolitionist Society be created. The audience seemed ready. There was a sense of excitement, contained but ready to express itself in collective action. Perhaps a historic moment was at hand. Mr. Garvey, however, did not call a vote.

Later, when asked, Dr. Ignatiev said there was no need to call a vote on something they had already decided to do.

Participants moved to other matters, expressing opinions, voicing concerns. "How could white people sit around and talk about

destroying whiteness without making themselves accountable to people of color?" asked a white woman who said two years ago she was part of the *Race Traitor* team. Now she is part of the National People's Democratic Uhuru Movement and the African People's Solidarity Committee. "Discussing white privilege without accountability to people of color is simply an expression of that privilege," she said. True treason is to subordinate oneself to African liberation movements.

The conference ended. *Race Traitor* continues to grow. Mr. Garvey raised perhaps the best point of summary. You don't always have a clear road map on how to create change. But you start. There's no shortage of things to do. There's a lack of will to step out and put oneself in jeopardy. Now is the time to do it. Start a struggle. In the process, new opportunities, new approaches will emerge.

¹ *Race Traitor*, Issue 4, Winter 1995, pp. 1-5. This compelling account portrays the impact of oppressive racial structures on a white woman interracially married in the 1960s. Many white people in interracial relationships have suffered harm at the hands of white culture. Nonetheless, many white people in the interracial community maintain favorable relationships with both sides of their families. The interracial community sometimes comments on being singularly characterized as "tragic." See "Black-White Interracial Marriages: A Critical Look at Theories About Motivations of the Partners" by Jeannette R. Davidson in the *Journal of Intergroup Relations*, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 14-19. Also, "Mixed Couples: Popular Myths about Interracial Couples" by Candy Mills in *Interrace*, No. 15, May/June 1992.

Living Our Lives in Color(s): Seeing White

Friday, October 24, 1997

Robeson Center, Rutgers Newark
Newark, New Jersey

Plenary presentations by:

Jane Lazarre, author of *Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness - Memoir of a White Mother of Black Sons*

Maureen Reddy, author of *Crossing the Color Line - Race, Parenting, and Culture*

Afternoon workshops

For information, contact:

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Email: nj-project@wpc.wilpaterson.edu

**Trapped
within a racist
society, aided
and advised by
people of color,
white people work to
free their own people.**



Undoing the “white problem”

Antiracism is a practice that includes white people. So says Paul Kivel, co-founder of the Oakland Men’s Project and author of *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice*. Mr. Kivel began practicing antiracism 33 years ago, protesting de facto segregation in Los Angeles schools via a sit-in at the Board of Education. According to Mr. Kivel, “white antiracism” as a singular practice or perspective does not exist. Many people of all races are involved with points of view that include religion, social justice, even “gut level” approaches.

Of course not everyone has heard the term antiracism. Basically it means working against racism, but in the diffuse, grassroots, activist world of antiracist practice the term is given vitality and depth through a thousand local variations and models. One person’s antiracist practice may not be the same as another. Contradictions arise. Most practition-

ers acknowledge that a variety of approaches are needed.

For Mr. Kivel, self-reflection and activism go hand in hand. Historically, he observes, white people were passionately involved in activist movements, at sit-ins, protests, and in supportive roles to liberation movements by people of color. In the last 15 or 20 years white people have been involved in a wave of consciousness raising activities such as “undoing racism” workshops. The focus has been more educational. Both approaches, activism and education, are important and should not be separated. One informs the other.

Also, Mr. Kivel believes, it’s “real important as white people that we be accountable to people of color in the community who are doing this work.” On the personal level, among colleagues, and on a political level white people need to be in touch with grassroots efforts by people of color to resist

racism. Furthermore, we should seek the advice of activist people of color, and make our own efforts answerable to them in some meaningful way. According to Mr. Kivel, “it’s very significant, the difference between people of color experiencing the effects of racism and white people’s privileged position within racism. It makes a difference in motivation and even strategic thinking. We stand in different places in society.”

Psychologist Joycelyn Landrum-Brown now at the University of California at Santa Barbara stands in a place more than 90% white. “Even in the black studies classes where I teach, it’s primarily white students,” says Dr. Landrum-Brown, an African American who believes white people need to acknowledge white privilege and white supremacy. She is more trusting of white people who are able to do so, taking it as a sign of their openness. Describing herself as light-skinned, she testifies to her experience of

light-skin privilege, telling white people "If I have skin privilege, there's no way you can tell me you don't have it."

In the early 1980s, Dr. Landrum-Brown helped develop the model used by Visions, Inc., a national consulting firm. The model places emphasis on the personal, interpersonal, cultural and institutional sectors of society where racism operates. White people generally understand racism in personal terms, but not cultural or institutional ones. People of color are more attuned to institutional and cultural manifestations of racism. Though she'd much rather be helping people of color overcome the internalized effects of racial oppression, Dr. Landrum-Brown finds herself constantly pulled toward working with white people.

The last time Dr. Landrum-Brown taught her Group Exploration of Racism class, she included a lot more articles on white privilege. "But whites still have a hard time getting it," she says. That's one reason why she does training, to develop new ways to teach white people about power, difference and privilege. She leads a 3-week intensive diversity awareness course for student teachers going into classrooms, often in inner city schools where they are needed, but where they have had no contact. Dr. Landrum-Brown helps them examine their stereotypes. Students, she notes, "don't like it first, but then they come back and say, 'You know, that really made a difference.'"

Using the analogy of planting seeds, Dr. Landrum-Brown says "I may not ever see this person change, but if there's something I said that maybe someone can water down the line, eventually it will make a difference." Even though she is good at her work, Dr. Landrum-Brown wishes more white people would do it. She found the recent Berkeley conference on whiteness encouraging, to finally "hear whites say things we've been saying all along."

Cooper Thompson is doing some of the work. "I don't get real hung up in nomenclature," he says. A white senior consultant for Visions, Inc., education coordinator for the Campaign to End Homophobia, Inc. and resident of Cambridge, Mass., Mr. Thompson takes the position that "we need more people doing [antiracist activity] in a lot of different ways. I'm trying to avoid getting into debate or conflict about what's the right way." In the past, white people were involved in protests, demonstrations and revolutionary movements. Now white activity has broadened to include educational settings, middle class settings, and "so called" diversity training that takes place in organizations. It may be, too, that white women have become more involved in contrast to white men.

It's important to distinguish between working on racism in white communities and focusing on racist acts committed against people and communities of color, explains Mr. Thompson. White people can not set the agenda for people of color. The affected communities must guide efforts to alleviate the harm racism has done. "There's no way we can go in [to a community of color], even with the best of intentions and try to fix what we think is wrong," says Mr. Thompson. But in the case of white-on-white activity, Mr. Thompson adds, "I really do support white people meeting and working alone and struggling with each other, and taking action independently, because we believe it's important." White people might want some advice or dialogue with people of color but, Mr. Thompson suggests, white people have "a much freer hand" among their own.

There's no shortage of things they can do with that free hand. Reading about and studying racism, historically and currently; learning about personal experiences of white people and people of color with racism; doing introspective work on one's own stereotypes and prejudices; making contact with people of color; engaging white people in conversations about racism; bringing up the question of race in work settings and asking how it impacts work; joining organizations, ad hoc groups and coalitions working on racism; writing about one's experience with race; joining demonstrations and protests; and writing government officials are all appropriate and helpful activities according to Mr. Thompson.

White people differ regarding what they need to do. In a recent workshop Mr. Thompson found one man for whom it would be a momentous step to make personal contact with people of color, overcoming some deeply-rooted fears. A second participant, a woman, needed to meet with other white people and struggle with the question of developing a positive white identity. The first person wasn't ready to do that. Another man who headed a unit in an agency where racist incidents had occurred among staff needed to raise the issue of race in the workplace, and look at his own behavior in that context.

"I agree we develop through those stages, the white identity model, you know, Janet Helms." So says Diana Dunn, Administrative Director of the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, a multiracial organization founded 18 years ago in New Orleans, and led by people of color. She continues, "we have to recognize first that there is a white mainstream normative culture and how that culture keeps us from developing authentic relationships with people of color. It's one of the hardest things for us to see as whites

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Several people we interviewed for this story actively consult, train and do workshops. To reach them...

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because one of the most important values in white culture is individualism. It's hard to view ourselves as a collective. Until we view ourselves as a collective, we can't begin to change that collective."

The People's Institute provides antiracism and leadership development training around the country. They've been instrumental in promoting the concept of accountability to people of color. Notably, in the St. Thomas community, predominantly black and one of the poorest housing projects in the country, Institute organizers have worked for 20 years developing leadership.

Eight years ago leaders from the St. Thomas community wrote the 16 service agencies providing social services to the community, all of which were white-led and culturally white. These agencies all received money "in the name of" the people of St. Thomas. Grant proposals were written using statistics on the people of St. Thomas in their justification. The St. Thomas leadership told the service agencies they could no longer use the community as a statistic unless they sat down with the community and formed a collaborative relationship. Ms. Dunn describes the effect, "Their services are becoming much more effective. There's not as much competition for the grants. It means that the health care clinic is so responsive to the community that people aren't dying as quick from diabetes and high blood pressure. The change is dramatic."

Change didn't come without a little savvy. The St. Thomas leadership told each agency they would write directly to that agency's funders if the agency did not want to work with the community leadership. When one agency balked, the community wrote the funders. Now all the agencies are working with the community leadership.

The media has a hard time "seeing" white people in organizations like the People's Institute. All over the country, when Institute personnel do workshops, the media will show people of color but not the whites. According to Ms. Dunn, "The press will call here all the time and ask to talk to Ron or Jim, you know the African American people here, and I'll say I've been doing antiracism work for 15 years. Why aren't you interviewing me? And they say, 'Okay, tell me what you think.' And then it doesn't get in the paper."

Ms. Dunn feels there's more to it. When the media simply show people of color, white people can discount the activity as insignificant and removed from their own experience.

When white people are visible as part of the process, then the mainstream cannot simply discard the issue as black thing, a Latino thing, etc. It was frustration with this media-induced invisibility that led to the formation of European Descent a dozen years ago.

From the start, the People's Institute has told white activists 'You've got to go back to the white community and do your work.'



*we quickly tell
them it's about
saving your
babies and your
children*

European Descent, a group of white antiracist activists, does that. After twelve years, Ms. Dunn warns, "we've found that whites should never be meeting totally alone without accountability to people of color because we have a tendency to get tied back up in our own self-interest, our own racism." European Descent meets independently but, when planning action, consults with the People's Institute and other groups from the black community.

Years ago when David Duke first ran for the Louisiana Legislature, European Descent

wanted to take on both Duke and racism as public issues. But the People's Institute and other sectors of the black community felt it would give too much attention to him. He ran, and won. When later Duke ran for governor, European Descent felt it essential to oppose his campaign. The black community agreed. Over time, this process of consultation and willingness to share direction has helped European Descent develop authentic relationships with people of color. As Ms.

Dunn says, "We don't always agree, but we must have a relationship that they feel empowered enough to step in at any time and take a look at what we're doing. That's antiracism work." Now when the black community experiences problems with whites, they call on European Descent for support.

But it's not just about helping black people. Deeper issues are at stake according to Ron Chisom, co-founder and present Executive Director of the People's Institute. Mr. Chisom, an African American, feels white people are issue-oriented. Some are quite astute. They know their focus should be working in the white community rather than among people of color. They'll talk about workshops, conferences, learning to love a white identity, working in partnership in a respectful and accountable way with people of color and not taking a leadership role when doing so. They talk about activism. They work on every issue in the world, but they never talk about their humanity.

According to Mr. Chisom, "When whites come to our workshop, we quickly tell them it's about saving your babies and your children, and they think about it differently." Racism has dehumanized white people. To really appreciate white culture, Chisom feels, white people must confront racism. That helps bring your humanity back. It's not about issues; it's about life.

Regaining one's humanity doesn't come cheap. Mr. Chisom acknowledges that whites who take chances and confront the white power structure pay a serious price. But they need to do it. Even activist whites waiver at the prospect, sitting and talking but not acting. Action means risk. You need to become deviant. In learning to love white culture, it seems, you may have to leave it.

The who, what, when, where and why are clear. White people (who) need to confront racism (what) today (when) in the white community (where). The stakes are high. Life, humanity, children (why). It's the how that's a little cloudy, as Mr. Chisom will admit. People of color don't have all the

answers either, he says. In black communities confusion exists. Black people know about being victims but don't understand power dynamics. White people need to connect to a multiracial process that understands power, racism, and the need to develop leaders.

At some level, white people seem to have a growing understanding of their task. Across the country there's a grassroots flowering of white antiracist activism directed toward the white community. Whether it be Angry White Men for Affirmative Action, a group Paul Kivel helped organize in San Francisco, a new group named Sparking Powerful Anti-Racist Collaboration in Boston, or older groups like Crossroads Ministry of Chicago, Community Change in Boston, or the aforementioned European Descent, white people are beginning to take it to their own kind.

Thirty years ago the Kerner Commission, convened to study the cause of race riots across the United States, concluded publicly in its report that racism was a "white problem." White people, or perhaps more appropriately white culture, were the cause and thus should be the focus of change. Horace Seldon took that message to heart.

Now in his 70s, Mr. Seldon recently retired from Community Change, the organization he founded and directed for 29 years. Originally begun in the white suburbs of Massachusetts, Community Change has always been aware of the need for white people to address racism in the white community. Over time the arena of activity for Community Change moved from the suburbs to the city of Boston, but its antiracist mission has remained constant. In the 3 decade span of its existence, Community Change has become a multiracial organization working with many other groups in the black, Latino, Asian and native communities on issues these communities define as important.

When asked about accountability to people of color, Mr. Seldon replied he's never thought much about it, though he feels confi-

dent people of color in the Boston area would tell you he's done it. "I get that feedback constantly," he adds. Running the term over in his mind, he muses, "accountable, accountable...I account for...myself, my condition, my being...how does one account for? It's a terrible financial term, isn't it? I don't know if I like it."

One thing Mr. Seldon is certain he doesn't like, or at least he has little patience for, is white people who wonder what to do. Give him 10 people on Monday morning and he'll put them to work opposing the death penalty. Give him another 10 and he'll put them to work on another issue. Indeed, 50 or even 500 people are not a challenge. "All you have to do is look around. And go to the Asian community, go to the native American community. They'll tell you what to do. It's no mystery."

To Mr. Seldon, it's not simply issues. It's more personal. "I feel accountable to myself, to my sense of justice. I feel that strongly. I get very angry at times at the injustices I see, and I'm glad I do. I make no apology for that."

To be true to one's self is surely important. But as Mr. Chisom suggested, there's a price to be paid. Like a story Horace Seldon told. Last summer he went to his 55th high school reunion. It was all white. He couldn't take it, and left before it was halfway through. If he tried to explain his feelings to his high school buddies, he's pretty sure they would say he's lost it. Some of his antiracist white friends probably understand. "It's a terrible feeling," he says, "to feel alienated from my own people."

Whether the unfolding of white-on-white activism will develop into a broader social phenomenon is not yet clear. It may simply represent a periodic heightening of interest in race relations that white Americans have expressed throughout their history. There's much the movement, if it can be called such, still needs to learn. Surely white people

working in white communities is important, but how does one approach their own people when the "people" often don't acknowledge their common racial foundation?

There must be a way. In a day and age when the term "white leader" is associated with white supremacists like David Duke, it's reassuring to know white leaders like Horace Seldon, Diana Dunn, Cooper Thompson and Paul Kivel exist, regardless of how the media may like to hide the fact. Many more are out there. In a project to interview antiracist white men and figure out what makes them tick, Cooper Thompson has identified over 100 interviewees. Often working locally, unsung and unappreciated by their own people, these leaders, both women and men, are laying the groundwork for a multiracial society, helping white people learn how to simply be one people among many.

There's nothing to learn by not trying. Way down there in New Orleans, in the middle of David Dukedom, another generation of white youth have grown up. Some are involved in European Descent. On Martin Luther King Day one of the local fraternities had a watermelon, fried chicken, 40 oz. party. "It was a real mockery of African Americans in the city," says Ms. Dunn. The youth component of European Descent wanted to hold a press conference, pulling together people at the university. They were fearful, asking "What if we say the wrong thing? What if we do the wrong thing?"

It didn't matter, Diana Dunn told them. Take a chance. Take a risk. What mattered is that they as a core group got stronger. Work together. Cover each other's backs and then it doesn't matter if it doesn't work. You build yourself. Then the next time you go to a press conference, you'll be better at it. But if you just go into it trying to make the perfect press conference, the whole organization might fall apart.

It's a matter of building leadership.

READING LIST

We asked some of the people in the story to recommend books that would be helpful for white people exploring the topic of race.

Joycelyn Landrum-Brown

Off White: Readings on Race, Power, and Society, by Michelle Fine, Lois Weis and Linda C. Powell (Eds.). Routledge, 1996.
Uprooting Racism: How White People

Can Work for Racial Justice, by Paul Kivel. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1996.

Ron Chisom

A People's History of the United States, by Howard Zinn. New York: Harper Colophon, 1980.

Dismantling Racism: The Continuing Challenge to White America, by Joseph Barndt. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1991.

LOOK FOR NEW BOOK FROM THE PEOPLE'S INSTITUTE, NOW AT THE PRINTERS!

Horace Seldon

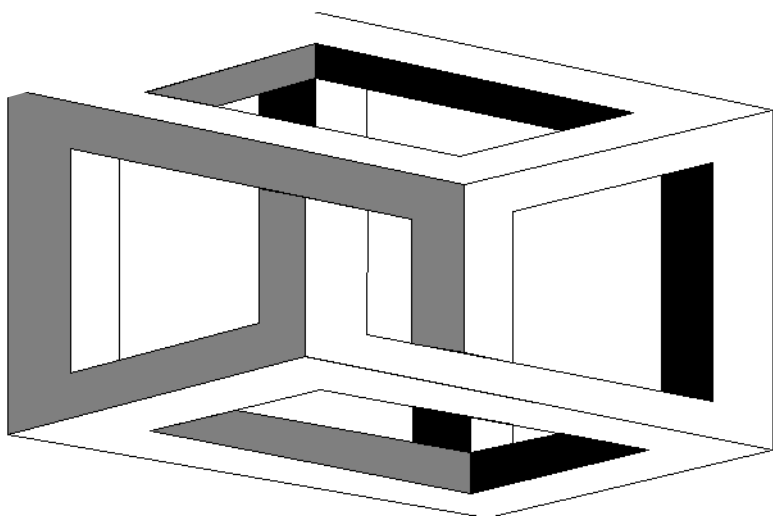
Authors: James Baldwin, Maya Angelou,

Derrick Bell, Marable Manning, W.E.B. DuBois. Books: *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1912*, by Winthrop Jordan. Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1968. *For Whites Only*, by Robert Terry. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970.

Diana Dunn

Black Children: Their Roots, Culture, and Learning Styles, by Janice Hale-Benson. Johns-Hopkins Univ. Pr., 1986. *Black and White Styles in Conflict*, by Thomas Kochman. Univ. of Chicago Pr., 1983. *A Race is a Nice Thing to Have*, by Janet Helms. Content Communications, 1992.

INSIDERS WITHOUT



Living and working in multiracial settings, white antiracists experience the world from many angles.

by *Jeff Hitchcock*

Sometimes I find it hard to love my people. Sometimes I love them deeply. We often don't connect and that makes me sad. But we connect more than we used to. That's the love part of it.

The low spots bring pain and loneliness. In my low moments, I assuage my feelings in the comfort of the multiracial community. Many of us do this.

Other people, also white, find their own places where whiteness becomes a smaller, more privileged group beyond the reach of their own. Be you gay, a woman, lower, middle or upper class, whiteness is seen as something that does not include you. Even straight, middle class white men living in monoracial communities feel excluded, in some strange way, as the only group left included.

Now I linger within the white community more often, and I do it as a white person. This is a little unusual because most white people this side of white nationalist groups do not live public lives as white people.

There are other white people like me. How many, I couldn't say. True to our culture, we are individuals. Multiracial life is not for everyone. Some white people remain locked in their whiteness, and that's okay.

White people in the multiracial community often practice antiracism. Antiracist white people may also live in monoracially white

families and communities. Probably all white antiracists work in multiracial networks and communities, regardless.

Those of us who are white, who are antiracist, and who live and work multiracially tend to share some common reactions to our people, and I mean white people. Here's my list:

Getting angry at other white people.

Getting pissed off at other white people for doing racist things. But racism is a collective process. In getting angry at other whites, in some respects we are getting angry at ourselves. White on white anger can be associated with self-hatred.

Feeling isolated. Feeling cut off from one's community, often from one's friends, from one's family. Having a racial awareness, frame of reference, or perspective which is no longer shared by people who in the past you did share this with.

Lacking trust. Learning in a convincing fashion that some of our ideas about others and ourselves are wrong. Seeing that our own culture has misinformed and misled us on these ideas. Taking a skeptical, cautious and critical attitude toward the images and lessons our culture seeks to impart in the mainstream imagery of America.



Experiencing "insider-without" status.

Patricia Hill Collins has written of the "outsider-within" perspective African American women occupy as domestic workers in service to white people. Maids, cooks and nannies (mammies) saw white culture close up. Knowing themselves to remain outside, this position created "a peculiar marginality that stimulated a special Black women's perspective."¹

White people, both men and women, who are antiracist often occupy a marginal status of "insider-without." Insiders to white culture, and capable of passing within that culture, they nonetheless are forced to the margin when practicing their antiracist beliefs and/or pursuing a multiracial lifestyle.²

Experiencing the impersonal nature of race.

Sometimes it doesn't matter who you are as an individual. White privilege is one example. Seeing and understanding its operation does not remove one from it. It's impersonal. You have no choice in its application to you. Other things we can't do. White people can't substitute for positive role models from within cultures of color. Again, it's impersonal.



Accepting the leadership of people of color. When you live or work multiracially you will find yourself at times under the leadership of a person of color or an organization pursuing the interests of a community of color. Whites often learn new skills in this situation, acknowledging the competence of people of color, and one's visceral willingness to follow.

Facing Contradictions. We are a rational people. We value logic and contradictions trouble us. Nonetheless, life is contradictory and we've never quite settled all its dilemmas. White antiracist people are told on the one hand they should take responsibility for educating other white people on racism. White antiracist people are also told it is presumptive and even racist for a white person to teach about racism alone or without the contribution of people of color. Both of these ring true. Both are true. So what. For a people that also prides themselves as individuals, using individual judgement is more important than learning a set of rules.

Lacking Community. We do not experience ourselves as a race, as a people. When it comes to race relations, we are unable to talk or act in a collective way. Rather we create internal barriers between one another, divided by our racial philosophies and practices.

Sorting out what's good and what's not. You can't be simplistic about cross-racial experiences. If you are naive to a culture, you are open to manipulation by people versed in that culture. But to understand a culture, you need to retain some openness. Wisely sorting out what's manipulation and what is genuine is key.

Processing white on white baggage. We have oppressed each other ruthlessly. Whiteness has existed as a gradient from a white, Anglo-Saxon center to marginal groups. Groups moving toward the center have oppressed newly entering groups. As white people we have hurt each other in this process. We remember the hurts in a cultural/historical way and they still have not fully healed.

Wanting to be around other white people. Dealing with another culture tires you out. Among loving and supportive people, living and/or working multiracially can be wonderful. But sometimes it wears thin, you have a bad day, or people you know less well stereotype you. All you want to do is get back in a setting where you don't have to deal with racial differences. For white people this means going to a setting where there are all white people, maybe a big supermarket in a well-to-do suburb, something like that.

Thirsting for multiracial experience. Once you have lived and worked in a multiracial setting in a cooperative and genuine way, in contrast to a socially conflicted way, you develop a taste for it. It becomes an exciting, alluring, challenging experience. After time this develops to a sense of satisfaction and completeness. When in a monoracial setting, one tends to miss the multiracial experience.

Avoiding all-white settings. Being in an all-white setting on an involuntary basis, or being in a setting where there is little or no understanding of multiracial settings, can be painful and alienating. Whites who have little multiracial experience often say and do things that contradict our reality. It appears they do this from ignorance, and it's hard to excuse or accept.

Suspecting other whites of being racist. Prejudice toward one's own racial group is real and can create injustices. I sometimes look at other white men and, not knowing them, assume they are racist. I've been on the receiving end of this stereotype as well. Often I have been proven wrong in my assumptions. Nonetheless, it colors my thinking and I have to watch for it.

Seeing white people as both racist and non-racist. Many white people classify whites into racist and nonracist groups. This is divisive. It does not recognize the collective nature of racism, which is a burden shared by the "nonracists" and "racists" alike. Nor does it affirm the goodness in those labeled "racist." Almost always the person assigning the labels names himself or herself "nonracist." A division like this creates barriers to a multiracial society as we, a people, point fingers among ourselves.

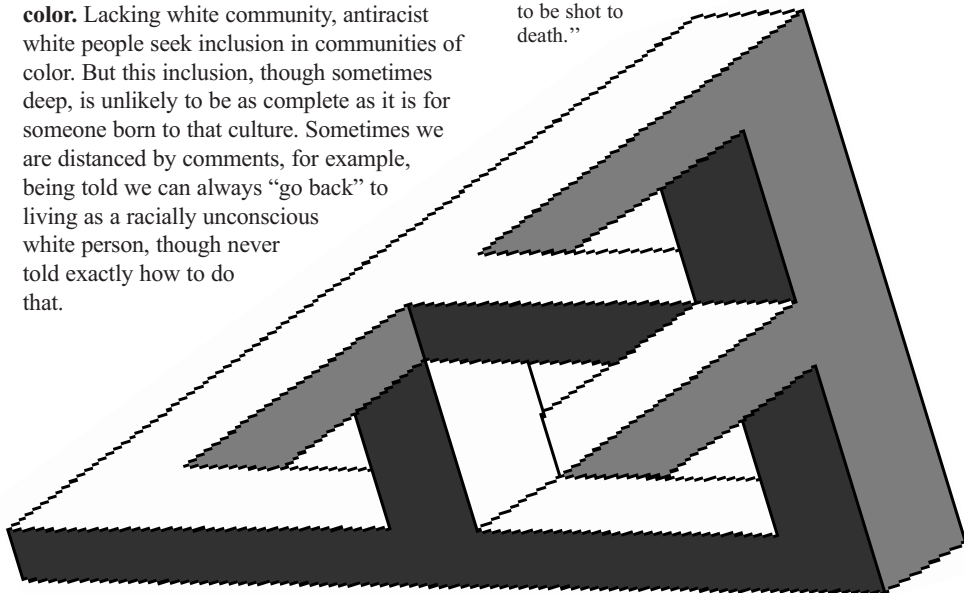
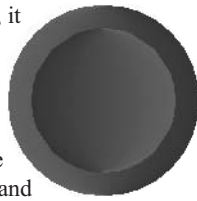
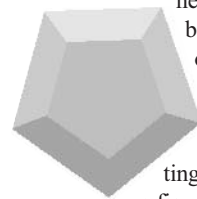
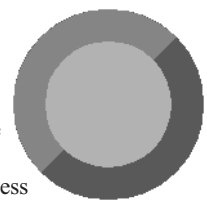
Feeling distanced from communities of color. Lacking white community, antiracist white people seek inclusion in communities of color. But this inclusion, though sometimes deep, is unlikely to be as complete as it is for someone born to that culture. Sometimes we are distanced by comments, for example, being told we can always "go back" to living as a racially unconscious white person, though never told exactly how to do that.

Forgiving, white on white. Sometimes we need to be a little kinder to people who may not have the experience we have, who are just coming along in the process of living and working multiracially. These white people may be involved and learning something from people of color, and may need a place to go heal some wounds, or try some new skills. We need to be ready and accepting of these processes.

Staying with the process. White people in multiracial settings sometimes get beat up figuratively and emotionally, far less often literally. It's tempting to leave, but important to stay. Knowing some processes like reconciliation, respect, and multiracial living require "staying power," this is one power white people should exercise more.

1 Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 11.

2 This has been a precarious undertaking for many white people. White culture applies negative sanctions to white people who "go native," — accepting the norms and expectations of a non-white cultural group as equally binding on their being — imposing even death upon those so inclined. According to a manuscript by Richard Williams, Dept. of Sociology, Rutgers University, in the spring of 1612 "Then Governor Dale of the fledging Virginia settlement took the time from the building of a fort near present day Richmond to deal in the following manner with some of the settlers, who had run away to live with the natives. 'Some he appointed to be hanged; some burned; some to be broken upon wheels, others to be staked and some to be shot to death.'"



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

1. (E) Though the roles of the founding fathers, European history and Enlightenment thinking are well known, the role of the Iroquois nation has only recently been recovered by historians working from primary source documents. It's no longer a question of whether the Iroquois nation had an influence, but rather how much.

The Iroquois nation, controlling land from New England to Michigan to the Carolinas, was a federal system with a central council. Representatives to the central council were appointed from the six autonomous tribes in the federation.

During the 1700s a rich complex of social relationships existed between settler and Indian peoples. Native lifestyles depended on European trade goods, but native groups retained autonomy in their regions of origin.

Europeans mixed among Indian communities, and vice versa. These transracial relationships, including marriage, helped foster cross-cultural contact.

George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine and Benjamin Franklin knew and studied Iroquois practices.

The United States' civic culture echoes elements of Iroquois government, including 1) rule by democratically elected officials; 2) ability to impeach office holders; 3) according to one anthropologist, "a central council that declared war and made peace, sent and received embassies, entered into treaties of alliance, regulated the affairs of subjugated nations, received new members into the League, and extended its protection over feeble tribes"; 4) local elected officials for local business, who in turn elect representatives to the national council; 5) elected officials who did not go to war, or resigned their office if they did go to war (government and military functions were kept separate and controlled

by civilians); 6) new members admitted on an equal basis; 7) people speaking one at a time in business meetings.

"Caucus," an essential element in American politics, is not a Latin word, but Algonquian. No similar European political and social practice existed. Europeans were ruled by monarchies, and the European citizenry could not impeach bad rulers. The state exercised singular control over its dominions rather than allowing its divisions free rule in their local affairs. Leadership was hereditary, not elective. Leaders often occupied both military and political office. New territories were accepted as colonies, not equals. Parliamentary debate was often a shouting match of opposing parties.

In 1744 Iroquois chief Conassatego complained to British and colonial delegates that thirteen different colonial administrations were too much. A union of colonies that spoke in one voice would be better, chief Conassatego declared. In 1754, chiefs of the Iroquois league met colonials, including Benjamin Franklin (then Indian Commissioner for the colonial government of Pennsylvania) in Albany, New York. Responding to the native request, Franklin submitted a plan to the Albany Congress suggesting the colonies set up a central council while keeping their state constitutions. The "Albany Plan" became the basis for the Articles of Confederation, and later the U.S. Constitution.

SOURCES: *Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World* by Jack Weatherford. New York: Fawcett Columbine (Ballentine), 1988; *Native American History* by Judith Nies. New York: Ballentine Books, 1996.

2. (B) American Indians systematically cultivated new varieties of agricultural products. Potatoes, an American mainstay, took 3,000 forms under Inca farmers alone. Plants were bred for specific characteristics such as light, altitude, and moisture needs.

Amaranth grew in the Andes and in Mexico. The Aztecs celebrated amaranth by eating cakes, shaped as their gods, made of amaranth mixed with human blood or honey. The Spanish, who had their own, less nutritional, grains thought the Aztecs blasphemous and banned the use of Amaranth upon penalty of death.

The second European discovery of Amaranth took place in the twentieth century. Since then amaranth has risen to occupy its worldwide prominence.

SOURCE: *Indian Givers: How the*

Indians of the Americas Transformed the World by Jack Weatherford. New York: Fawcett Columbine (Ballentine), 1988.

3. (A) In the late 1920s and early '30s Filipino men were the latest wave in a series of immigrations to the United States from Asia. Previous groups had emigrated from Japan, China, Korea and India.

Arriving always for the same reason, to supply cheap labor for large scale agribusiness, Asian immigrants seldom found a welcome in their newly adopted country. Once their economic usefulness had been served, immigrants met popular resistance from the native white population. Many viewed them as threats to white labor, lowering wages beyond what a white man would take. Capitalists found that foreign workers had a limit to the exploitation they would accept, and became less enthusiastic when immigrants moved to organize their labor force, or compete directly by purchasing and operating small farms.

These "threats" from previous Asian immigrant groups had been handled by passing legislation excluding immigration from China (1882, 1888, 1892, 1902), India (1917) and Japan (1924).

The Philippines, however, were a territory of the United States. Though Filipinos were not citizens of the United States, it was legally not possible to exclude their presence by legislation. The Philippines, exclusionists realized, would have to be granted independence.

In 1934 the U.S. Congress passed the Tydings-McDuffie Act granting independence to the Philippines in ten years time. Senator Tydings explained, "it is absolutely illogical to have an immigration policy to exclude Japanese and Chinese and permit Filipinos en masse to come into the country."

Upon passage of the 1934 act, in the middle of the Depression, all Filipinos in the United States were reclassified as aliens. Citizenship eluded them—in the 1922 *Ozawa* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled citizenship, limited by law to "whites," included only Caucasians—because they were not Caucasian. Filipinos on public relief were dropped from the federal rolls. Charitable groups offered Filipino aliens each a free steamer ticket back to the Philippines.

SOURCE: *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* by Ronald Takaki. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989.

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

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Test Yourself:

More questions that will never appear on the SAT

Answers appear on page 14.

1. Development of the Constitution of the United States was influenced by
- the founding fathers
 - the Iroquois nation
 - European history
 - Enlightenment thought
 - all of the above

2. In the 20th century, amaranth, a grain, has become a key nutritional component of diets in India, China, Pakistan, Tibet, Nepal and the South American Andes. Amaranth has higher protein content than rice or wheat, twice the lysine of wheat, and grows in mountainous terrain. How did the world come to find amaranth?

- Turn of the century botanists at a California agricultural station developed the new grain.
- Incas harbored a secret knowledge of the grain, developed through a controlled process prior to the Spanish invasion of the new world. European scientists and nutritional distributors then "discovered" the grain in the 20th century.
- American agribusiness developed the grain by sponsoring university research, but withheld the grain from American markets.

d) An American farmer, Elijah Ambercrombie, discovered the grain growing wild on his Montana farm in 1895. Cross-pollination with strains of wheat yielded a superior grain.

3. In 1934 the United States voted to grant the Philippines independence by 1944. What was the key issue that set the United States on this course of action, granting freedom to the Philippine people?

- The U.S. government could not restrict immigration by Filipinos so long as the Philippines were under U.S. protection. With the Philippines independent, immigration from there could be shut off.
- Native Filipino rebels had made military occupation of the Philippines unfeasible.
- A petition by native Filipinos to U.S. Congress, coupled with the relative economic insignificance of the Philippines, led a Depression-era Congress, looking to shed responsibilities, a means to solve some problems and look good.
- Isolationist sentiments led to the U.S. consolidating its position at home and shedding some foreign bases.

Center for the Study of White American Culture, Inc.
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