

# Loosen them up with the RAQ

The mainstream, Eurocentric educational system in the United States teaches citizens to be ignorant of the racial dynamics of our past—and present. Instead, we are fed assumptions of innocence and righteous action on behalf of freedom and democracy.

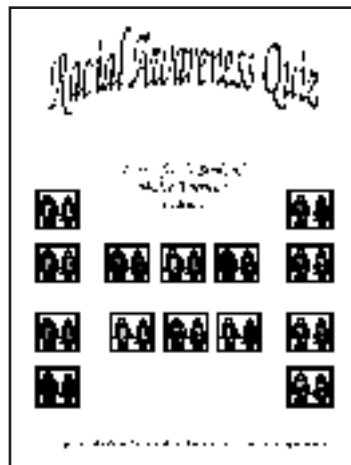
Of course we know it wasn't quite like that. But how to make this point? Teachers, trainers and workshop leaders encounter resistance and hostility when we try to dispel these deep-seated and tightly held assumptions among the general population.

Yet try we must, because these assumptions of innocence impede a critical examination of our society for what it is—racially structured, segregated, and anything but fair when it comes to color.

## **Center publishes learning tool**

Now at last, a tool is available. Developed over the course of the past 18 months, the Center's newly released *Racial Awareness Quiz* (RAQ) is a 3-hour exercise for classrooms, workshops and discussion groups. The quiz is designed to raise awareness of assumptions shaped by an Eurocentric system of education that people have formed about white culture in the United States. The contents are largely, but not entirely, concerned with United States history, and the material is appropriate for people with a first-year college level education.

The quiz packet consists of a set of 20 multiple choice questions, an answer booklet indicating the correct answer to each question with additional discussion, and a detailed, 17-page facilitator's guide for managing the quiz as a learning exercise. Typically it takes 20 to 30 minutes to answer the questions. The quiz is intended to encourage dialogue, and field testing indicates a period of 90 minutes to 2 hours should be allotted to discuss the answers.



## **Does it work?**

Yes. When used in a dozen different settings during development, the *Racial Awareness Quiz* almost always accomplished its goals of reducing resistance, revealing unconscious assumptions, and encouraging racial dialogue. Considering the serious and emotional nature of the material covered, the quiz is intended to be a brief, interesting, friendly and non-threatening challenge to learners.

## **Hoping to catch on**

The quiz is designed as a complete stand alone packet containing all the source material needed for at least one (and more, if desired) 3-hour class or workshop sessions. In the words of Charley Flint, the Center's President, veteran teacher and sociology professor, the *Racial Awareness Quiz* "has everything you need" to conduct a classroom session.

The Center has already received an order for 40 copies from the Black Concerns Committee of the New York Yearly Meeting (Quakers). One of the original groups testing the quiz and finding favorable results, the committee plans to make it available to members and congregations throughout their service area.

## **Fulfilling our mission**

The Racial Awareness Quiz fits with the Center's role of providing educational and consciousness-raising tools and forums for discussing whiteness and white culture according to principle developer, Jeff Hitchcock. "We hope it will catch on. It's really a simple tool. If people can learn a little more about the real history of the United States, then maybe they will begin to rethink their role in the racially structured society we now have."

## **Special offer to members**

We are making a one-time introductory offer to members receiving this issue of our newsletter. Return the enclosed coupon and payment and we will send you the Racial Awareness Quiz at 50% off the list price of \$19.95.

## 1999 Financial Report

Since we were founded in 1995, we have been steadily improving the financial foundation of the Center as an organization. Each year we had a smaller operating loss, and in 1999 the Center achieved its first operating surplus. Our total budget is still small, and our needs are great. We still have unpaid loans, and our computer equipment is aging. But we are beginning to develop some confidence in our ability to manage.

Last year we planned to increase our income through our new membership program, by our training and consulting, and through sales of new publications. The first two of these areas of support did increase substantially. Many thanks to the new and renewing members who have helped us with their contributions. Sales of publications lagged behind, but we launched a new product, the Racial Awareness Quiz, this month. In 2000 we hope to build on these trends.

We planned to keep expenses low in 1999. They did increase in areas such as printing and postage. This reflects our move toward direct mail and membership. Purchase of publications and office operations increased slightly. But our phone, Internet, and especially our travel costs were less than the prior year. Overall expenses increased moderately, while our income grew at a healthy rate.

## 1999 Operating Statement

### INCOME

Sale of publications	480.00
Contributions	28.00
Membership donations	2903.00
Training and consulting	2550.00
Reimbursed expenses	221.55
Amazon.com referral fees	85.03
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>6267.58</b>

### EXPENSES

Printing	947.86
Postage	982.43
Telephone	673.24
Internet operations	809.00
Travel	277.21
Unpaid invoices	30.00
Books and publications	380.27
Office supplies & equipment	972.01
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>5072.02</b>

**OPERATING SURPLUS 1195.56**

In the year 2000 we hope to build on our existing programs, offer new products, and keep expenses in line with the growth of our income.

## Members - new and renewing since last Issue

### Students

Carolyn Braley  
Nora E. Hyland

Glen Manery  
Amanda Ann Tucker

### Contributors

Meg A. Bond  
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Lorrie Smith  
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### Advocates

Charley B. Flint  
David Ludlow

Robert Terry

### Sponsors

Judith H. Katz



### White American Culture, Inc.

The *Membership Newsletter* is a publication of the Center for the Study of White American Culture, Inc. sent exclusively to its members 4 times per year. The Center for the Study of White American Culture is a multiracial organization whose mission is to define and examine white United States culture and to address its role in, and impact on, the greater American culture.

### Board of Directors

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# Survey gives first look at Center's makeup

Demographically speaking, that is. Members probably recall we have started asking for demographic information in our survey and on our renewal forms. Some have expressed an interest in the results. As of January 25 we received 26 responses from a total of 80 members. (See Figure 1.) While not a large sample, the returns give us an early look at the Center's membership.

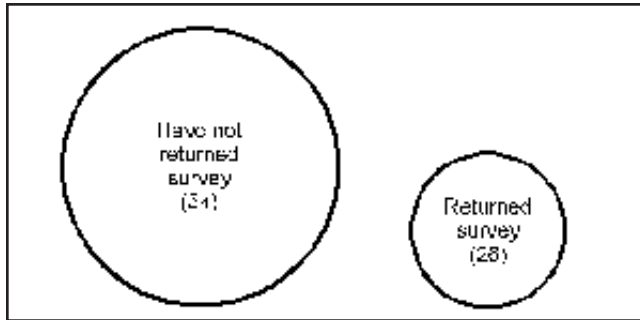


Figure 1. Proportion of members returning demographic information

## Ethnicity

Members had many different responses when asked their ethnicity. The largest single group reported no ethnicity at all. Of those reported, "Jewish" was the most common ethnicity, followed by several others tied for second place. One member reported five different ethnicities under the broader heading of European American. In Figure 2, responses are tabulated by each individual ethnicity reported. Since people commonly reported more than one, the total number of responses far exceeds the total number of respondents. Although the

None	7	Jewish	5
Afro-American	1	Lithuanian	1
Anglo	1	Pa. Dutch	1
Anglo-Appalachian	1	Russian	1
Anglo-Saxon	1	Scottish	1
Anglo-Saxon Protestant	1	Swedish	2
Austrian	1	Scott-Irish	1
Dutch	2	Unitedstatesian	1
English	2	Welsh	2
Euro American	1	White	1
European American	2	"white"	1
German	1	white American	1
Irish	2		

Figure 2. Responses to the ethnicity question, and number of people making each response.

combinations were themselves interesting, space does not permit their inclusion here. There seem to be several white people who either claimed no ethnicity, or claimed some version of white or European Americanness as an ethnic identification. This is consistent with a trend spotted by sociologists in the early 1990s. The practice of simply naming European nationalities is giving way to a more "race-based" form of ethnic identification among white people.

## Race

As Figure 3 shows, we're a predominantly white group. Personal knowledge leads me to believe white members are slightly over-represented in this

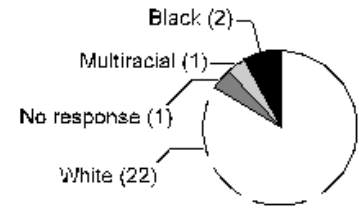


Figure 3. Race reported by members.

sample, but not by a lot. We also appear, based on these results, to be very much black and white, with little participation by people of other racial backgrounds. The one person reporting multiracial heritage combined European and American Indian roots.

## Gender

Females outnumber males by almost 2 to 1. Nearly all members answered simply female or male. One



Figure 4. Gender reported by members.

member chose to identify gender as "gay male." Another member chose not to report on this item.

## Age

We seem to draw heavily on the "boomer" generation, though we also have a healthy range of age groups represented. In August the

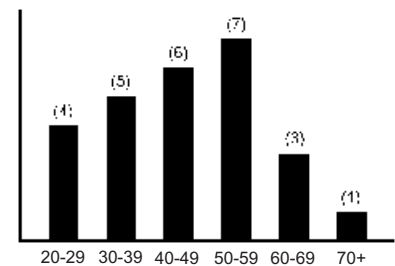


Figure 5. Range of ages reported.

Center's board discussed reaching out to youth, and that concern seems warranted. No member is younger than age 20. We may also need to reach out to our elders as well.

## Whiteness email list

Aside from our survey, it's possible to tabulate participants on the Center's whiteness email discussion list. This has proven to be one of our most popular services, with nearly two-thirds of our members joining the list.

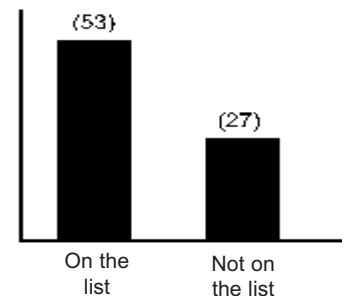


Figure 6. Participation of total membership on the whiteness email list.

## BOOK REVIEW

***Racial Situations: Class Predicaments of Whiteness in Detroit***, by John Hartigan, Jr. Princeton University Press, 1999, 345 pages.

The school board closed down a neighborhood school several years ago, even as the remaining schools became overcrowded. Recently, without talking to the community, they reopened it as a city-wide "Academy." Concerned neighbors asked for clarity and claimed race was an issue. The board replied city-wide concerns drove their decision and race had nothing to do with it. Sound familiar? Maybe.

Warrendale is a working class "white enclave" of Detroit, itself 70% black. Labeled by the press as racists, and facing a closed-mouth, city-wide black dominated power structure, residents experienced little sympathy or successful dialogue when the Malcolm X Academy opened in their neighborhood.

Across town in Briggs, one of the poorest districts in the city, black and white people maintained the most integrated lifestyles in the city and surrounding suburbs. There residents faced crime, unemployment and lack of city services. White "hillbillies" and black residents kept their own families and customs, but bars, public areas, housing patterns, friendship circles and the daily hustles of life were multiracial. Bluntness was the social norm, and the "N-word" was commonly heard. Yet the worst incident of white-inspired racial animosity came not from white residents, but from a visiting couple of social climbers who considered themselves too good to rub shoulders with black people.

Meanwhile, middle class white people in a predominantly white neighborhood with a community council where whites occupied 22 of 24 seats, try at all costs to avoid the title of "gentrifier." Relations between the community and city exist on an even keel, and residents do not see race as a factor in their community or their relationship to city government.

When, how, where and why white people are marked, or not marked, as white has a lot to do with class, says author John Hartigan, Jr. And the reactions of other whites carry as much definitional punch as the contrasting otherness of blackness. Where blackness is locally dominant, whiteness indeed becomes problematic. As the nation moves toward a multiracial future, a decentered whiteness promises to keep white people busy holding our own.

The outline of future possibilities already exists in Detroit, as Hartigan so thoroughly documents. *Racial Situations* is not an easy read for those unaccustomed to esoteric world of social and cultural criticism. Hartigan is, first and foremost, a practicing anthropologist and scholar who talks of "reductive racial interpretations," and "loaded objectifications of 'white culture'." But the human side comes through as well. Living more than a year among the people he describes, doing such things as playing dobro in an impromptu hillbilly band, Hartigan draws the portraits we need to see that the future of whiteness is unlikely to be either simple or monolithic.

The Center thanks John Hartigan, Jr. and his publisher for the review copy they provided.

## 4<sup>th</sup> Nat'l Whiteness Conference rescheduled.

The National Conference on Whiteness will take place on June 23-25, 2000 in Boston, MA. The conference was postponed from November 1999 due to difficulty securing resources. A site has now been obtained and planning continues along the same line as before. Aimed primarily at local concerns, the conference will limit participation to 180 people, with two-thirds of the openings reserved for local people. For up to the minute information, contact conference planners **Marian Groot** of the Women's Theological Center at (617) 536-8782, or **Paul Marcus** of Community Change, Inc. at (617) 523-0555.

## Board member publishes new book

Congratulations to Lowell Thompson, board member of the Center, humorist, social critic and the world's first whiteologist, for the recent release of his new book, **"WHITEFOLKS" Funny? Book**. Mixing satire and serious social commentary, Lowell's book approaches the topic of whiteness in a manner calculated to reach all those folks the whiteness studies phenomena has passed by. And recent reviews say he does.

To order your copy, either go to Lowell's website at [www.whitefolks.com](http://www.whitefolks.com) and click on "I GOTTA HAVE IT" or send a check for \$12 (\$10 + postage) to: Lowell Thompson, 1507 E. 53rd Street, Unit 132, Chicago, IL 60615.

## Getting the Center's name out there

Although we know of no new stories that have appeared since our last newsletter, we received calls from *The Philadelphia Inquirer Sunday Magazine*, The BBC (Radio), *The Home News Tribune* in central New Jersey, *Creative Loafing*, an alternative press in Atlanta, and the *Arizona Daily Star* in Tucson. Several reporters were working on stories about the changing composition of the population of the United States. One reporter, from the BBC, observed that after a flurry of stories on white studies in 1997 and 1998, not much new has been said. We have to agree. As to his question about what's happening next, we can't say. Hopefully the new century will bring some new level of visible activity with it.

# ***Special Offer***

Please send a copy of the Center's new Racial Awareness Quiz at the introductory price of \$10.00, plus \$3.00 shipping and handling, to:

\_\_\_\_\_

(Name)

\_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is my check for \$13.00.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please send the quiz and bill me.

Please send it to:

\_\_\_\_\_ The same address as my newsletter

\_\_\_\_\_ The following address:

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