

# New WHITENESS PAPER

It's been a while. More than two years. We're now happy to announce the newest addition to our WHITENESS PAPERS series. Written by Judith H. Katz, Ed.D., the paper (Number 3) is titled "White Culture and Racism Working for Organizational Change in the United States." The abstract reads as follows:

White culture is the dominant culture in the United States. Although racism exists on institutional, cultural and individual levels, recent attention has focused on the institutional level, neglecting the other two. Seeing white culture is difficult for white people to do, but necessary to gain perspective, to understand choices, and to work to eliminate racism. The author offers her personal experiences in developing an awareness of whiteness, then provides a detailed list of aspects and assumptions of white culture. White people must come to own their power, their identity and their stories. This task is complicated by associations of white identity with white supremacy, but nonetheless necessary. For white people interested in working on racism at the individual level, the author lists and describes eleven "new competencies." Finally, she describes her experiences as an organization change consultant in United States corporations. Accountability is key. Measuring results, looking at attrition, providing positive and negative incentives, setting the right goals, and demanding results are each important for organizations seeking to change from a predominantly white cultural mode of operating to one amenable to a multiracial work force. In a large corporation, these changes can add millions in cost savings. Developing white awareness is key to organizational preparedness for the next century.

The WHITENESS PAPERS series offers a balance of perspectives, a focus on whiteness as a social, cul-

tural and political phenomenon, a concern for the personal experience of people and how they are racialized in society, and an avenue for writers, scholars and practitioners to offer new thinking about how whiteness may be transformed.

We're hopeful that the series will continue to develop. Presently the editors have another manuscript under review and they are on the lookout for additional submissions.

Members wishing to order a copy of WHITENESS PAPER No. 3, White Culture and Racism, should contact us and send \$5.80 (\$4.80 + \$1 S&H), or request that we bill you. The non-member rate is \$7 (\$6 + \$1 S&H). Purchase of the paper entitles the purchaser to make up to 30 copies for use in classroom, seminar, and workshop settings.

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**Register early.  
Space limited.**

**The 4th Annual Conference on Whiteness  
takes place final weekend of June.**

*(The following information is directly quoted or summarized from the conference announcement)*

**THINK AGAIN  
June 23 to 25, 2000  
Boston, MA**

A gathering for those who work with white people against systems of white power and privilege to come to deeper understanding, trust and connection so that together we are better able to work for racial justice and equality.

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**See Conference, page 2**

## Conference, from page 1

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### THE CONCEPT

IBM says, "Think."  
Macintosh says, "Think different."  
We say, "Think again."

What does it take for us, especially those of us who are white, to see white privilege and power? How can those of us who hunger for racial justice find ways to point at whiteness and to help white people see it?

The purpose of the fourth national conference on whiteness is to bring together those who work with white people against systems of white power and privilege in order to Think Again. To look and see again. To notice what had escaped our notice previously. Our intention as planners has been to create containers for looking and thinking again and for finding ways to work together.

The fourth annual conference will begin with visits to and a history of Boston which will ground our collective attention on one city's experience with white power and privilege and the ways it is preserved or challenged.

The middle portion of the conference will be devoted primarily to dialogue in small groups, in some cases, preceded by very brief presentations. Such presentations will be offered, not to showcase any particular individual, approach or project, but as a stimulus for the dialogues in which we share our wisdom and learn from each other.

The final sessions of the conference will give participants an opportunity to assess what they have learned and the implications they see for action. It will allow time for networking and strategizing for action.

### Who Should Come

If you are a parent, public official, student, artist, spiritual leader, community activist, educator, organizer, or anyone else who works and lives for racial justice and equality specifically with white people in white communities and organizations whether you get paid to do that or not please consider coming to this conference.

We ask that you come with an intention...

- to share with other participants what you know about white privilege and power
- to listen to the wisdom others bring
- to work with others to find creative and life-affirming ways to interrupt the power of systems that benefit some while punishing others
- to participate in all three days of the conference.

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See **Conference**, back page

## Members - new and renewing since last issue

### Students

Ismoon Maria Hunter-Morton  
Barry W. Magee

Norma Smith

### Contributors

Karen J. Clark  
Rosalind Dutton  
Laurie Harrison  
Allen E. Ivey

Sharon C. Price  
Linda Robinson  
Julie Vaisvil

### Supporters

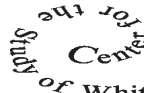
Scott A. Barrett  
Mary Ann Borkowski  
Peggy Nagae

The People's Institute for  
Survival and Beyond  
Pamela J. Thompson

### Advocates

Patti Derosa

Bill Gregory



### 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.

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### How to contact us

Center for Study  
245 West 4th Avenue  
Roselle, NJ 07203

Phone: (908) 241-5439, Fax: (908) 245-4972

Email: [contact@euroamerican.org](mailto:contact@euroamerican.org)

Web site: <http://www.euroamerican.org>

# Teaching about Whiteness

by Gregory Jay

## Why teach about whiteness?

- The question of race should not just be raised when studying "people of color" (or during Black History Month).
- Studying whiteness can change the dynamic of any classroom, whatever its ethno-racial makeup.
- Silence about whiteness lets everyone continue to harbor prejudices and misconceptions.
- Whiteness has been a significant legal and political category, and thus requires examination.
- Whiteness has been a significant aesthetic and cultural value (or symbol or commodity), and thus requires interpretation.
- Teaching about whiteness helps move classes beyond the "celebrate diversity" model of multiculturalism.
- Teaching about whiteness moves antiracist education in new directions by presenting difficult challenges to the very idea of "race."

## Approaches to whiteness, questions to ask:

- Always historicize: who invented white people? when was the term first used as a racial category? in Europe? in the United States? Who was included? Has the list of the included ethnicities changed since then? Why?
- Who are "Caucasians"? When was the word first used as a racial category? What associations or meanings does it imply? Are "Caucasian" and "white" the same thing? What about "Aryan"?
- Is "white" a term for a racial group or a cultural group? Is there any such thing as "white" culture? Are all its practitioners of the same skin color?
- Is "white" a "panethnic" category along the lines of "Asian American" or "African American" or "American Indian"? Or should we speak of "European Americans," even though not all of them are "white"?
- If "white" is not a coherent cultural or ethnic category, what kind of category is it? Social? Economic? Political?

## Exercises, Activities, Projects, Inquiries:

- Keyword exercises: have students collect the entries on "race," "white," "Caucasian," "Aryan," "black," and "Negro" (for example) from at least two dictionaries and two encyclopedias. Compare the results, and ask students to try now writing their own definitions of some of these terms. Or have them use an interview technique, in which they record definitions of these terms gathered by interviewing other students, family members, teachers, librarians, etc.

- Historical research: have students find uses of the word "white" and "black" (or "colored" or "Negro") in legal or political documents, such as acts of Congress, Supreme Court rulings, state and local statutes, etc. Discuss "whiteness" as a legal category (or legal fiction).
- Life analysis: have students make a list of ten things they normally do during the week. Then have them imagine that they woke up one day to find that their "race" had changed to [fill in the blank]. Going through their lists, students should analyze how each thing might be different for them were their "race" different. Would they be able to go to such places, talk to such people, enjoy such events, etc.? Would they feel comfortable doing so? What would be the chances that people of that race would be found doing these things in these places in these ways? What other things might they be doing instead? What real differences, in other words, does "race" make each day in our lives?
- Media analysis: look for images of whiteness in the media. What kinds and types of whiteness appear most often? Are there different classes of white people? If so, how are they represented differently by the media? How long can one watch television or read a newspaper or magazine without encountering anything but white people, or mostly white people? Have students bring in copies of major newspapers and magazines and analyze the distribution of images of whiteness and blackness. Make a list of the top grossing films of the last five years and consider whether their characters and presumed audience show a bias toward whiteness.
- Literary analysis: read portions of Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Using texts by white authors, analyze the way whiteness gets constructed through comparisons to a dark or black "other." Debate whether or not schools should offer courses with names such as "Major White American Authors" or "The White Tradition in American Literature." Compare texts by white and black authors to analyze what difference whiteness makes (for example, compare Franklin's Autobiography with Douglass's Narrative, or the poems of Langston Hughes with those of Robert Frost, or the stories of Alice Walker with those of William Faulkner). Have students rewrite particular stories or passages by changing the race of the narrator or main character.

Gregory Jay is Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM). The above essay is available at <http://www.uwm.edu/~gjay/Whiteness/>, and is reprinted here by permission. Professor Jay has organized a panel on "Teaching About Whiteness" for this year's annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, which will be held at UWM in Milwaukee, Nov. 19-23, 2000.

## Internet activities

Www.euroamerican.org continues to draw visits, now averaging over 100 per day. This still is minor league compared to many web sites, but it's exciting for us.

We are in the midst of our semi-annual update. The first installment included a complete revamping of our links, which had not been updated for a year and a half. Letters from web visitors tend to be critical. Many see us as being "racist against white people," etc. It seems as we are becoming more widely known on the Internet, we are attracting visitors less versed in issues of white awareness, antiracism, and working for multiracial inclusion. Instead, we seem to be encountering white people (though often they do not identify their race) intent on defending the privileges they deny they have. Still, our presence gives them something to think about. In time we may lead a few people to think about things a little differently.

The email list continues to slowly grow along with our membership. As of late, conversation has been sparse, but like many email lists, the whiteness list seems to have periods of high activity followed by periods of relative quiet.

## Final call for survey forms

Members will recall our survey asking "How would you define white United States culture?" The survey was enclosed in our Fall 1999 newsletter. Thus far we've received nineteen responses, for a response rate of 22% of our membership. This is still a little low, although we certainly agree the question is a difficult one. Many of the responses we received were thoughtful. Clearly the members who replied have given a lot of thought to the matter.

If you have not replied and would like to do so, there is still time to respond. We've included another copy of the survey in this issue. (If you already did reply, you can ignore the enclosed survey. Or, if you like, send us any additional thoughts that come to mind.)

Please send them soon, as we will begin to review the results in the coming weeks. Board members Charley Flint and Judith Katz have agreed to compile, analyze and report on the findings. Look for their report in our Summer issue.

## Conference, from page 2

The conference is scheduled to begin Friday at historic Faneuil Hall with a gathering at 8:30 AM followed by opening discussion and remarks. As has been characteristic of past conferences, keynote speakers will not be present. Emphasis will be placed on small group dialogue and processes. This year's event will use the Council Process, developed by Earth Drum Council. Inspired by council processes of many cultures (including Native American, African, and ancient European), and influenced by modern business facilitation practices, the Council Process creates a space for deep listening to others speaking from the heart. The closing session will take place on Sunday, from 1:00 to 2:00 PM. Meals will be provided on Saturday, along with Sunday lunch. Please note, the schedule is not finalized, and subject to change.

### Cost

We ask that individuals pay as much as they can between \$50 and \$175. We estimate that the average cost per participant will be \$75 which covers publicity, space, clean-up, telephone, food, printing, and so on. If \$50 is prohibitive, please call 617-536-8782 to discuss options. The sliding scale for those sponsored by their organizations is \$75 to \$175.

REGISTRATION / DONATION DEADLINE: June 9, 2000 or while space is available. Registration questions? Call 617-536-8782

NOTE: Please do not register if you cannot commit to participating in the whole event.

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The Center will be sending conference brochures, with registration form included, to you sometime in May. Members who would like a form in advance can contact us, or call the information number above.

## Getting the Center's name out there

In the last issue we neglected to mention a November visit and interview by reporter Joshua Adelstein, for part of a series on American culture in the *Yomiuri Newspaper*, the largest daily newspaper in Japan. On Wednesday, February 2, 2000, Jeff Hitchcock appeared as the guest on WJZD 94.5 FM in Gulfport, MS, during the 9:30 - 11:00 CST segment of *It's a New Day*, a talk program with call-ins, hosted by Rip Daniels. In March, Alex Nguyen of the *American Prospect* magazine in Boston interviewed a Center representative for a story on whiteness studies.

## MEMBER SURVEY

FINAL CALL: See article on back page of the newsletter

How would you define white United States culture?

(Please use back or additional sheets if needed)

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Please fill in your name. The demographic information will help us interpret survey findings and also understand the nature of our membership support. If you have already provided demographic information, or do not want to provide it, you may leave it blank.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_

(Allows us to automatically update age)

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Please return to 245 W. 4th Ave., Roselle, NJ 07203 (see enclosed **pre-addressed envelope**), or by **fax** to (908) 245-4972. Or, if you prefer, send us your reply—definition and demographic info.—by **email** to [DrCFlint@aol.com](mailto:DrCFlint@aol.com)

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