

Copyright © 2004  
Steven L. Gardiner  
Word Count: 8,300

**THE MORE THINGS CHANGE:  
IMMIGRATION, DEMOGRAPHICS AND THE RISE OF  
WHITE IDENTITY POLITICS IN AMERICA**

Steven L. Gardiner  
Beloit College

I first became aware of the paleo-conservative cum white nationalist magazine *American Renaissance* (AR) in the mid-1990s while working as research director at the Coalition for Human Dignity (CHD), a Portland-based civil rights NGO. Founded in the late 1980s to counter neo-Nazi skinhead violence in Portland, CHD grew to become a Pacific Northwest center for research and activism in opposition to social movements of the extreme right. AR came to my attention shortly after the appearance of founder and editor Jared Taylor's book, *Paved with Good Intentions: The Failure of Race Relations in Contemporary America* (1992). An uncompromising attack on civil rights policy and racial politics, *Paved* was published by Carroll & Graf and received lavish reviews in the conservative press.

Taylor, a genteel-mannered graduate of Yale with a master's degree from the Institute for Political Studies in Paris, seems an unlikely front-man for so radical a right-wing venture. *American Renaissance* describes itself as “America’s premiere publication of racial-realist thought.”<sup>1</sup> It glosses its mission as follows:

Race is an important aspect of individual and group identity. Of all the fault lines that divide society—language, religion, class, ideology—it is the most prominent and divisive. Race and racial conflict are at the heart of the most serious challenges the Western World faces in the 21st century. The problems of race cannot be solved without adequate understanding. Attempts to gloss over the significance of race or even to deny its reality only make problems worse. Progress requires the study of all aspects of race, whether historical, cultural, or biological.<sup>2</sup>

Taylor has been highly successful. In the past decade *AR* has increasingly filled the role of think tank in the white nationalist movement, linking strategists, theorists and frontline activists.

Though I was initially fascinated with this new development in far right politics, in 1992 my attention was focused elsewhere. Skinhead violence and Aryan Nations organizing had reached troubling levels. The organizations of the Christian right were growing rapidly—the culture wars of a decade before reheating as President Clinton took office—and Oregon became ground zero in a new wave of activism, mostly focused on curtailing the civil rights of gay men and lesbians. At the same time, the Justice Department’s mishandling of high-profile confrontations with social outsiders at Ruby Ridge (1992) and Waco (1993) became the key events in the transformation of a loose collection of self-described Christian patriots and radical gun rights activists into what

---

<sup>1</sup> *American Renaissance* is a monthly magazine, published since 1991. The self-description quoted above is from the site information link on the organizational website at [www.amren.com/](http://www.amren.com/) as accessed on October 22, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> From the site information link on the *American Renaissance* homepage, [www.amren.com/](http://www.amren.com/) as accessed on October 22, 2004.

became known at the militia movement. This eventuated in the 1995 bombing of Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City (Levitas 2002).

Not long after the Oklahoma City bombing, I exchanged my position at CHD for graduate school and eventually ended up in Berlin, studying masculinity and civil-military relations. My interest in American far-right social movements, however, remained intact. Thus, when the opportunity to attend the bi-annual conference of *American Renaissance* came up, I jumped at the chance.

The conference in question was held at a hotel isolated in an industrial park—far from easy access by any potential protestors—in Herndon, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, D.C. It was late February 2002, only months after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The gathering was attended by an assortment of about 250 mostly well-dressed, mostly middle-aged white men—along with a smattering of women. Numbered in the audience was a surprisingly large selection of people with Dr. before their names or Ph.D. after. The presenters were similarly credentialed. Though I have attended more far right events than I care to recall, and I read up on *AR* before the meeting, I was still not completely prepared for the peculiar combination of uncompromising, biologically determined racism and nuanced intellectual, and even scholarly, arguments.

Nowhere in any of the on-stage presentations was there even a hint of the paranoid conspiracy-mongering, so characteristic of the militia movement. Perhaps more surprisingly, anti-Semitism (the traditional glue of rightwing extremist movements in America) was in abeyance. There were, in fact, Jews in the audience, and even one on stage. No one mentioned black helicopters.

Following his Saturday night keynote address, Nick Griffin, leader of the anti-immigrant British National Party, answered a tactical question about the political requirements of the movement with the pithy, and well-received comment, that it was imperative for “[white] nationalist organizations to move from being ‘booted’ parties, to being ‘suited’ parties.” White sheets and jack boots were out; business attire and a politics designed to influence the organs of state power were in.

In some ways Griffin’s call for mainstream electioneering was reminiscent of David Duke. Unlike Duke, the 2002 *AR* conference attendees, however committed to an explicitly racist worldview, seemed to be nurturing a genuine subculture of racist inquiry. The post-keynote conversations in the hotel bar were particularly illuminating, in the way that the opinions of ordinary movement activists so often are in comparison to the carefully pre-spun messages delivered from the podium. Though premises were thoroughly (and apparently unselfconsciously) racist, the discussion reached a level of sophistication and nuance I had rarely previously seen amongst hardcore white racial activists.

The dominant topic of conversation that night was immigration. Attention was focused on the racial vs. cultural aspects of integration—nature vs. culture—the “Hispanic problem.” Could Spanish-speaking, often dark-skinned immigrants from Latin America be considered racially white, as on the U.S. Census? The consensus of the gathering was an unequivocal negative. This crowd found the notion—current in some sectors of the Christian right—that Hispanic Christianity and “traditional values” ought to make them welcome additions to (white) America entirely absurd.

Whiteness has a special status that has to be categorically defended. Their academic colleagues had proved to their (often visceral) satisfaction that intelligence was a precipitate of genetic (which is to say racial) being. Simply put, Hispanics did not score well enough on standardized tests to earn their way to whiteness. The prospect of current levels of Hispanic immigration continuing, eventually remanding the white racial majority to the dustbin of history, was for them intolerable.

This essay is my attempt to open a window on the worldview of what I will call white nationalism, the ideology represented at the gathering described above, in order to see contemporary racial politics and demographic trends through its skewed lens. My primary purpose in doing this is corrective. The view of the (white) “mainstream” tends to obscure and or avoid important issues of structural inequality, hiding behind a liberal individualism that in fact camouflages systemic white privilege. Confronted with a perceived threat to white privilege, contemporary white nationalism reveals a race-based white politics that usually remains hidden. As we shall see, this is hardly the first time that this has happened in American history. My secondary purpose is to sketch some problems of democratic citizenship related to the currently unfolding demographic transition in light of the potential politics of white nationalism—and vice versa.

### **Demography as Destiny, or the Devil is in the Details**

According to the official projections of the United States Census Bureau, the next five decades will bear witness to an unprecedented shift in the racial and ethnic balance of the country.<sup>3</sup> In this relatively brief span of time, the percentage of the population

---

<sup>3</sup> Unless indicated otherwise, all current and projected population figures herein are derived from Table 1a. Projected Population of the United States, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2000 to 2050 ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)),

designated “white” will likely decline from its current super majority of 70-plus percent, to less than 50 percent of the population. Non-Hispanic whites will be, for the first time in United States history, a statistical minority. These numbers are considered to be conservative projections of current trends, particularly by white nationalist movement allies (Brimelow 1995, Beck 1996).

The decline in the relative percentage of white Americans, of course, is not an entirely new phenomenon. The fertility rate of white, non-Hispanic women in the United States has been dropping precipitously since the end of the post-war “baby boom” and current levels are well below replacement.<sup>4</sup> Yet as recently as 1960, whites constituted 88 percent of the population, a percentage which has been relatively stable since the Civil War (Gibson & Jung 2002, 19).<sup>5</sup> The decline in white fertility, however, is only a small part of the story. The narrative of white demographic decline is being written, primarily, in the language of immigration.

It is only since Congress passed the Immigration and Naturalization Act Amendments of 1965 that American racial and ethnic demographics have taken the turn

---

derived from the U. S. Census Bureau’s 2004. “U.S. Interim Projections by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin.”

<sup>4</sup> Replacement fertility is defined as an average of 2.1 live births per woman under extant conditions of infant mortality. The most current fertility level for white women of non-Hispanic origin in the United States is 1.8. The corresponding numbers for black women is 2.1, or right at replacement level fertility. For Hispanic women, as defined in the U.S. Census, the fertility rate is 2.5 (United States Census Bureau 2000, 4-2).

<sup>5</sup> The population was approximately 85 percent white in 1860, before the successive waves of large-scale European immigration during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Note that the Census Bureau did not begin to routinely inquire about Hispanic origins prior to 1970. Hence there is little in the way of hard data regarding the percentage of the white population which would, today, be counted in the census as “Hispanic” for the previous decades. Best estimates, however, suggest that prior to the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1965 (known as INA), the percentage of Hispanics permanently residing in the United States was relatively low, in the 1 to 2 percent range, mostly concentrated in a few border states. Data from the 1940 Census, for example, which asked a question about the “mother tongue” of respondents, indicates that approximately 1.4 percent indicated “Spanish” (Gibson & Jung 2002, 19).

sketched above (Office of Immigration Statistics 2004, 5). Passed during the Johnson Administration, during the height of the Civil Rights era, the 1965 Act repealed the most blatantly racist aspects of the Immigration Act of 1924. It abolished the national origins quotas which had, quite intentionally, limited non-white and non-European immigration to the United States.

The results are projected to be dramatic. Currently constituting a little less the 4 percent of the population, Americans of Asian descent are predicted to more than double to 8 percent by 2050. Likewise Hispanics, who currently make up about 12.6 percent of the total population—already up from 6.4 percent in 1980 (Gibson & Jung 2002, 19)—will nearly double as a proportion of the total population, to 24.4 percent, by the middle of the twenty-first century. Meanwhile, as the relative proportion of the population described as white goes down, and the proportions of Asians and Hispanics rapidly increases, the relative size of the black population will be stable. Again, according to Census Bureau projections, black Americans, who today constitute about 12.7 percent of the total, will increase modestly, to 14.6 percent.<sup>6</sup>

Another way to parse these data is to say that the demographics of race and ethnicity in the United States, which have been long been largely defined by a binomial opposition between a white majority (80 to 90 percent) and a black minority (10 to 20%), will, perforce, be redefined.<sup>7</sup> With ethnic “Hispanics” outnumbering blacks, and Asian Americans constituting a politically significant demographic, the politics of race will

---

<sup>6</sup> Though the percentage of the black population is projected to increase modestly mostly from immigration; fertility amongst African American women is 2.1 children on average, or replacement level.

<sup>7</sup> The relative proportion of blacks in the United States was significantly higher, approaching 20 percent at times, prior to the onset of large-scale European immigration in the mid-1800s (Gibson & Jung 2002, 19).

become a lot more complex. New inter-racial (and inter-ethnic) political alliances will become possible, the results of which are difficult to predict.

Demographer Harold Hodgkinson reminds us that the increased diversity will not be evenly distributed. In fact, only 230 of 3,068 American counties, concentrated in the three large border states—California, Texas and Florida—will absorb more than half of the increase (Hodgkinson 2000/2001, 9). Much of the rest of the growth in both population and population diversity will be concentrated in New York, New Jersey and Illinois, particularly in a relative handful of highly urban counties. With these demographic trends further exacerbated by the phenomenon of white flight, the emergent and polymorphous non-white majority, though statically characteristic of the country as a whole, will be geographically concentrated in a few large states, and skewed toward urban areas within those states.

One potential upshot of this concentration of non-white diversity is the foundation for a kind of new sectionalism, already presaged in the much remarked upon mapping of “red” and “blue” voting patterns in national elections. Typically cast as “middle-America” vs. the “coastal liberals,” the changing demographics lend this trend a potential racial/ethnic potency.

The demographic trend inaugurated by the 1965 Act was largely unintended (Graham 2001), and the results are potentially explosive. The United States has undoubtedly become a much more diverse place to live. As of yet, however, the consequences of this newfound diversity, particularly in terms of the politics of race, remain largely unexplored. Some observers have suggested that the combination of increased diversity and racial mixing are leading to a decline in the importance of race



per se in the United States, particularly in relation to class (Wilson 1999). This would seem to me to be a conclusion both premature and incomplete. As with the global “decline” in the importance of sovereign nation-states vis-à-vis super-national coalitions and multinational corporations (Hobsbawm 1990), the general trend is of but small consolation in those localities where the most vicious forms of nationalism are flourishing—so it is with race and racism in America.

It is hardly a secret that not everyone is ready to celebrate the increase in American diversity. This essay is an examination of America’s changing racial demographics with reference to the peculiar but, I contend, revelatory point of view of what I refer to as *white nationalism*. Possessed of an ideology grounded in biological determinism and an explicit white identity politics, white nationalists are relentlessly opposed to current demographic trends. Precisely because their political position is currently marginal, they are uniquely positioned to expose the grounding of white privilege in their attempts to maintain it.

### **White Nationalism, or the Politics of Essence**

By “white nationalism” I mean an ideology which has only recently emerged on the right flank of the American political scene. Its most fundamental orientation is a politics of white identity explicitly grounded in *biological determinism* and *innate racial hierarchy*. Valued social capacities—intelligence, morality, industry—are understood, in this context, to be genetically determined and distributed unequally amongst the races. Whites, (along with Asians), are seen to be abundantly and innately supplied with these desirable characteristics. Blacks, Hispanics and others are seen as essentially and fatally

lacking in these vital traits. According to movement ideologues, they lack the genetic prerequisites to participate successfully in white culture. What is more, their very co-residence threatens not just the success of the culture in the present, but its future through miscegenation.

Yet, if the movement's ideological orientation is most fundamentally racial, its strategic orientation is national. By this I mean that white nationalism consciously constructs itself as a movement intent on (1) arousing the self-consciousness (identity) of what it sees as a naturally constituted *people*, and (2) aiming its energies squarely at the United States government and other institutions of state, which, however subverted by pernicious multiracial ideas and internationalist treason, is nonetheless the only viable guarantor of whiteness.

For the most part, and unlike many of the white power and white supremacist movements of the past, it is neither traditionalist nor utopian. It seeks neither to recreate the racial order of Jim Crow, nor to forge a brave new Aryan homeland. Rather, its goals are to preserve (and hopefully expand) the white racial majority in American. There is, not surprisingly, considerable debate on how to go about this. The emergent movement consensus, however, is that halting the influx of non-white immigrants is the most critical, and most realistic, movement goal. To this end, white nationalists work closely with, and in fact often lead, "mainstream" anti-immigration organizations.

These anti-immigration organizations, groups like the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) and American Immigration Control (AIC) are not white nationalist organization per se, but they do play a crucial role in white nationalist strategy, consciously or no. Such organizations rely largely on a sanitized version of

white nationalism that calls itself “Middle American” (March & Nelson 1995; Francis 1997). The nationalist orientation remains and the supposed economic threat of immigrants—as well as threats to American national unity, health (“immigrants spread disease”), education, homeland security, and environment—is highlighted. Such rhetoric, however, almost always relies on a construction of immigrants as irredeemably “other.” This construction, of course, is facilitated by the well-known racial/ethnic demographics of the Middle America vs. the coastal elites and urban masses. The traditional big city corruption vs. small town purity divide in the American political imagination has been supplemented (and largely supplanted) by a white heartland vs. a multi-colored coastland dichotomy.

It is important to indicate what this movement is not. Contemporary white nationalism, as characterized by groups like Council of Conservative Citizens and the movement journal *American Renaissance*, is not a haven for suburban warriors longing to dress up in camo fatigues and play soldier. Nor is it rife with conspiracy theories, anti-Semitic or otherwise. For the intellectual theorists of white nationalism, many of them holding advanced degrees—e.g. Sam Francis, Wayne Lutton, and Michael Levin—the enemy is not international Jewry, international communism, or a vaguely occult group of insiders. Rather, the enemy is embodied, unconsciously, in the inferior but fecund black and brown-skinned peoples of the southern hemisphere and more consciously in the wrong-headed, self-serving policies of liberal elites placating the demands of business for cheap labor and pandering for minority votes. The results: the disintegration of American national unity and dilution of the precious white gene pool.

Movement activists Louis T. March of the Council of Conservative Citizens and Brent Nelson of American Immigration Reform, writing in a tract representative of the white nationalist genre, summarize their views as follows:

Third World colonization of the U.S. is well under way. The English Language and American culture are under unremitting multiculturalist attack. Lies taught to European American children are that the Founding Fathers were evil racists (“dead white males”), that American society is inherently unjust to “people of color,” and that freedom of speech for Americans must be curtailed to satisfy the demands of Third World colonists and multiculturalist elitists (March and Nelson 1995, 64).

Wayne Lutton, historian by training and editor of *The Social Contract*, recounts broadly similar views in his book *The Myth of Open Borders: The American Tradition of Immigration Control* (1988). In a 1994 speech to a sympathetic group of white nationalists he emphasizes the nationalist message. “There is no escaping the conclusion,” he told the crowd,

... that thanks to a massive influx of Third World people over the past thirty years, with their large numbers of American born descendents, what was a Black-White problem has now become a multiracial problem. We simply compounded our previous situation. And I don’t think it’s unfair to say on Memorial Day 1994 that the United States really is no longer a nation but is simply a collection of diverse peoples spiritually sundered by barriers of nationality, language, culture and religion.<sup>8</sup>

The reference to the fractioning of the nation is not accidental. The theme of cultural “Balkanization” is a key rhetorical trope in the white nationalist tool chest. Though the mainstream scholarship on nations and nationalism (e.g. Anderson 1983, Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1990), has long discredited the essentialist notion of nations as primordial extended families, grounded in a culture that flows either magically from the

---

<sup>8</sup> Lutton’s quote is excerpted from a videotape of his speech, which was given at the 1994 bi-annual conference of American Renaissance, a white nationalist organization run by Jared Taylor, publisher and editor of the journal by the same name.

landscape or biochemically from the genes, white nationalism takes this as a given.

Syndicated columnist Sam Francis puts it like this: “Like the real France, the real America is also a ‘country of a common blood’ (Jefferson used that very phrase in the original Declaration, as well as appeals to a ‘common kindred’ and ‘consanguinity’). In fact, every real nation is a country of a common blood. The only nations that claim to be defined by creeds are—come to think of it—totalitarian states” (Francis 2004).

Brent Nelson, here writing without March, offers his version of a specifically *national* message as follows: “If a nation is to endure, it must be based upon something more vital, and less ephemeral, than lines drawn upon a map. The annals of history and the new science of sociobiology both indicate that nationhood is sustained by a continuity of ethnic descent, and the sense of fellow-feeling arising therefrom, which cannot be conjured into being by the mere will of politicians” (Nelson 1994, viii).

Perhaps the best known public figure embraced by white nationalists is journalist and erstwhile presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan. In his 2002 book *The Death of the West*, Buchanan walks the movement line almost without resorting to euphemism. He writes:

If tens of millions of American girls and young women are determined not to have children, or to have no more than one, America either accepts mass immigration or the fate of Japan and Europe. But America has time to act. If Americans wish to preserve their civilization and culture, American women must have more children. While there is no guarantee that government incentives can change the mind-set of women, a pro-family, pro-child bias can be built back into national policy. For what is more important than the permanence of the American nation and people? (Buchanan 2002, 232).

Buchanan substitutes the more palatable words “culture” and “civilization” for race, but his *meaning* is clear enough: an America not demographically dominated by the children of current (majority white) Americans means the end of America as such.

### **Explicitly White, or Identity Politics Comes Full Circle**

The mere existence of white nationalist rhetoric, of course, is not intrinsically of much concern. To the extent that such rhetoric is confined to a small group of professional agitators, it is not even very interesting. However, the coincidence of white nationalist rhetoric with the reality of changing demographics *might* constitute the basis for a broader social movement with the potential to significantly impact the future shape of American politics. Whatever the future impact of such political tendencies, the white nationalist perspective offers us a uniquely skewed but nonetheless revealing view of both the present and the prospective future.

The particular shape of American racial politics developed in a context of both labor and regional conflict (Allen 1994, Marx 1998). The bi-racial white vs. black dynamic was by no means inevitable, however, even in the aftermath of slavery. Northern whites could conceivably have allied themselves politically with Southern blacks to form a viable governing coalition. In fact, something of this sort did occur during the brief, radical phase of Reconstruction.

As argued compellingly by Anthony Marx, however, the needs of nation building and economic unification eventually outweighed either liberal promises to enfranchise former slaves or party political efforts to woo black voters. In the wake of the massive rupture culminating in the Civil War, Southern whites had to be bribed back to nationalist loyalty. The coin of this bribe was white solidarity, grounded in a taken-for-granted white

superiority. The consequences were the introduction of de jure segregation in the South matched by continued de facto segregation in the North (Marx 1998).

The white coalition that emerged from the Civil War, however, became increasingly underwritten by a combination of the *presumptive* whiteness of America and the largely invisible but very real *privileges* that accrued to whites as such. In the post-bellum period, *whiteness* became what Linda Waugh (1982) has referred to as an “unmarked” category in a presumptively bi-racial economy of discourse and of politics. In this economy, *race* came to be equivalent to black (Hartigan 1999). In myriad *symbolic* ways, whiteness became the unstated, invisible pole of a white-black division wherein white was counted equivalent to the universal and positive and black to the negative and particular (Dyson 1999, 220).

Nor was the economy of race only symbolic. Political subjects in America were presumptively constructed as white. Only whites could be true political subjects and by extension real Americans, because they embodied the universal, and therefore lacked the particularistic, group-based interests of non-whites (Goldberg 1993). Thus, whatever the guarantees of the Constitution, the actual price of admission to full American citizenship was whiteness (Hurtado 1998).

Moreover, the racialized barriers to meaningful political participation led to a panoply of white privileges only rarely understood as such. George Lipsitz (1995) documents a range of such supposedly race-neutral “benefits”—from federally subsidized low interest home loans to “urban renewal” projects that gutted black neighborhoods to create upscale shopping districts for white suburban commuters—that amount to vast, unacknowledged race-based entitlements for whites. Combine these positive benefits

with the relative freedom from negative state-sponsored scrutiny (police harassment, for example), and the privileges that accrue to whites as a group, *however unevenly distributed to white individuals*, are vast indeed.

These benefits, however, have historically remained below the level of white consciousness—though often clear enough to blacks—because of a conjunction of the invisibility of whiteness as such and the radical “inadequacy of the language of liberal individualism to describe collective experience” (Lipsitz 1995, 381). Thus most white privilege is doubly invisible.

This invisibility has allowed for what might be called a non-identity politics by whites. On this view the North-South reconciliation on white racial lines became the model for “assimilating” European immigrants with the usually unspoken proviso that European ancestry is the necessary (though not sufficient) prerequisite to becoming American, in the sense of a “real American.”

The structure of white racial privilege, however its beneficiaries might strive to keep it so, is never *completely* invisible. Under threat, for example from intra-white conflict or in localities where non-white majorities emerge, whiteness appears (Hurtado 1998, 228; Fine 1997, 63). The Civil War was certainly such a moment, when intense intra-white conflict led to reconciliation. The visible residue of this was Jim Crow. The unintended consequence was that the very laws designed to guarantee white privilege also made it visible, and offered a plausible initial focus for race-based identity politics on the part of American blacks.

Identity formation is the indispensable prerequisite for group mobilization. For, as Anthony Marx puts it: “in the absence of a self-conscious group, there is no collectivity



that can interpret and act upon its situation” (Marx 1998, 19). Identity flows from two sources: One, an *awareness* of social substitutability (Kelly 2000)—that is, a recognition that for specific purposes one is interchangeable with some people and not others (e.g. *any* black man on the wrong street is potentially subject to police harassment, not just specific individuals); two, the proximity of an out group, the members of which are socially substitutable with each other, but with whom no member of one’s own group is substitutable as such.

The horizon of identity politics is the ability to recruit a socially significant number of categorical group members to join or support identity-based social movement organizations. African Americans pioneered this twentieth-century form of race-based identity politics in the United States in response to Jim Crow. These laws became the rallying point for an initial mobilization, the visibility and success of which in turn became the basis for the construction of a wider African American identity.

But the ironies of identity are many. Even as the very laws intended to cement white solidarity and insure white privilege became the visible targets for black identity politics and consequent black empowerment, black identity politics, once constituted, became a highly visible, and ethically salient model for political mobilization. Politics, as Benedict Anderson (1983) has argued with respect to the spread of the nation-state as an idealized political form, is modular. Once a particular form is seen to succeed, it becomes susceptible to imitation. The identity politics that emerged in the United States in response to a shared (if never identical) experience of racism, became the prototype for the so-called new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Larana, Johnston & Gusfield 1994)—as well as many less acknowledged social movements of the right,

including the Christian Right and what I refer to as white nationalism (Foss & Larkin 1986, Diamond 1989, 1995, Berlet & Lyons 2000).

These new movements recruited activists with *appeals* to a shared experience of oppression, and attempted to exert moral and legal pressure on the larger society by agitating for fair treatment and increasingly for the *sine qua non* of identity politics itself—recognition. To a certain extent this politics of group recognition has reorganized the social and legal policy structures of the country, supplementing legal rights accorded to the individuals with collective entitlements based on categorical membership.

By any aggregate measure, the actual value—economic, social or political—of these collective entitlements, e.g. affirmative action, equal pay and non-discrimination laws, hate crimes statutes and official “recognition” events such as Black History Month, has been slight. Certainly they have been insufficient to redress the actual lived experience of racism, were such a thing even possible, on a *quid pro quo* basis. Nor have they even marginally offset the structural entitlements of white privilege.

As argued above, however, white privilege, under most circumstances, remains invisible to whites. And it has been argued that the mere existence of such collective entitlements has generated deep resentments in the majority white population, both because they are seen as a departure from the liberal/individualistic tradition of fairness and meritocracy, and because white people typically have an unrealistic assessment of such collective entitlements. Carol Swain, for example, has argued that “the actual harm done to nonminorities by affirmative action is small, yet the policy causes great anxiety among whites, who have an exaggerated fear that they may become its victims” (Swain 2002, 136). Borrowing a finance metaphor, she describes such anxieties among whites as

“highly leveraged.” Hugh Graham (2001) implicitly reveals similar concerns when he carefully calculates the value of affirmative action programs, such as minority set-asides, but makes no attempt to compare the cost of such programs to exponentially more lucrative programs (e.g. low interest home loans, freeway construction and urban development), as enumerated by Lipsitz (1995) that continue to privilege white Americans as a group.

Assessments such as Swain’s and Graham’s suffer from either a structural naiveté considering the real benefits of whiteness and/or an undue reliance on the opportunistic arguments of white nationalists. Both Swain and Graham even reference bestselling movement author Peter Brimelow without contextualizing his ideological proximity to white nationalism. Swain writes, “Even Peter Brimelow, a senior editor at Forbes magazine, has stated that ‘the most amazing thing about current immigration policy is that it serves no economic purpose. It does nothing for Americans they could not do themselves.’ Thus, even some of America’s current and future elite agree with white nationalist leaders that immigration into the United states should be stopped” (Swain 2002, 103). It seems not to occur to her, in spite of what can only be described as thorough (if not longitudinal) research into the phenomena of white nationalism, that Brimelow could be both a respected journalist, writing for an elite economic publication, and a supporter of white nationalism. Though he does not accept the label personally, he certainly considers the white nationalist viewpoint as part of legitimate political discourse—as he has intimated on his V-Dare website.

While collective entitlements like affirmative action may well be seen to supply white nationalists with rhetorical ammunition, the basis of their ideology—and the

grounds of their politics—are found elsewhere. Swain at least is well aware of this. She elegantly summarizes the basic philosophy of white nationalism as follows:

The main reason black people today are plagued by such high incidence of criminal violence, out-of-wedlock births, poor school performance, and AIDS is rooted in their differential genetic endowment. The process of human evolution, as it has adapted to different ecological circumstances, has produced, they contend, a distinct racial hierarchy in terms of innate intelligence, the ability to delay gratification, to control emotions, and to plan for the future (Swain 2002, 18).

This view, so evident at the meeting of *American Renaissance* described above, has been well-developed by movement-friendly researchers, some of them tenured at prestigious institutions. Two of these are City University of New York Professor of Philosophy Michael Levin (e.g. Levin 1998) and J. Philippe Rushton, a psychology professor at the University of Western Ontario (e.g. Rushton 1995) and, since 2002, president of the controversial Pioneer Fund. Notorious for its Nazi-era funding of eugenic research, Pioneer maintains close ties with both contemporary racial science and anti-immigration cum white nationalist organizations in the U.S. (Tucker 2002).

Thus whatever their rhetoric, white nationalists per se are not upset (primarily) because they think they are being treated unfairly, but at the prospect of the loss of a white majority and the civilization they believe to be tied ineluctably to it. While arguments about “reverse discrimination” are deployed for mainstream appeal; the core ideology of the white nationalist movement is not directly derived from concern over the fairly minor impacts of affirmative action—except in the sense that the politics of affirmative action do threaten to expose white privilege as such.

There is, however, an element of identity politics which *has* been particularly energizing to white nationalists and which, *along with* the changing demographics, is

driving the emergence of a new politics of white identity. That element is not, as Swain would have it, primarily concentrated in resentment at collective entitlements. Nor is it grounded in a simple perception of direct economic “threat”—for example, from labor competition with newly-arrived brown-skinned immigrants—as common sense assumes and anti-immigration groups like Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) argue (Alvarez & Butterfield 2000, Hood & Morris 2000, Eatwell 2000). Rather, the principle connection of black and other minority group identity politics to the emergence of white identity politics has been (1) modular, as a political and cultural form to be imitated, and (2) an effect of the emergence of the politics of recognition.

### **Policy Consequences, or Dred Scott Brought Down to Date**

“Suppose,” wrote Peter Brimelow, bestselling author of the anti-immigration polemic *Alien Nation*, in answer to his critics, “I had proposed more immigrants who look like me. So what?”

As late as 1950 somewhere up to nine out of ten Americans looked like me. That is, they were of European stock.... In those days, they had another name for this thing dismissed so contemptuously as ‘the racial hegemony of white Americans. They called it “America” (Brimelow 1996, 59).

In its rhetoric, the white nationalist movement makes the *presumptive* (but invisible) whiteness of America visible.

In the face of both the demographic transition to minority status and the identity-based mobilization of blacks and other non-white minorities, white nationalists are choosing to risk the explicit exposure of white privilege in order to construct a new explicitly white identity politics. For committed white nationalists, the exposure is a

necessary risk, calculated to use the extant state institutions as a means to preserve white privilege and halt the demographic transition. The results thus far have been mixed.

White nationalists have made little headway on immigration. Their legal attacks on the collective entitlements of nonwhite minorities, for example affirmative action in hiring and admissions, have been relatively successful. American courts have tended to affirm the collective privileges of whites under cover of individual rights, as in the *Bakke*, *Croson* and *Wygant* cases (Lipsitz 1995, 383). This indicates a *de facto* alliance between explicit white identity politics and white universalism—regardless of the fact that representatives of the latter often express a heartfelt contempt for the former. The two are not necessarily at odds—rather the visible incarnations of white identity politics have been periodically necessary as supplements to invisible white universalism. In fact it is safe to say that at key moments of *threat* to white privilege, a usually invisible white identity tends to manifest.

A case in point: In 1857, three years before the start of the Civil War, the Supreme Court of the United States handed down what is known to history as the *Dred Scott* decision. More than a decade earlier, Scott, a Virginia-born slave, along with his wife Harriet, had filed suit against their owner in St. Louis Circuit Court. The Scotts, with the support of abolitionist lawyers, argued that they had been held as slaves illegally while residing with their owners in Free States. Then-existent laws in these states granted citizenship, and with citizenship freedom, to slaves residing within their respective territories. By the time the Scott case ended up in the Supreme Court, it had become symbolic of both the growing acrimony between Slave and Free States and of what it meant to be an American.

The notorious ruling in *Dred Scott* held that, as a slave, Scott was not a citizen, Scott was not entitled to the protections of citizenship, and he had no status to sue in federal court. According to the majority opinion written by Chief Justice Taney, citizens of the United States were of *two types*: white persons born in the United States as descendents of “persons, who were at the time of the adoption of the Constitution recognized as citizens in the several States and [who] became also citizens of this new political body,” or those who had been “born outside the dominions of the United States,” and had migrated thereto and been naturalized therein.”

The legal issue in play was the competence of the various states to confer citizenship. The Supreme Court ruled that while the various states had the authority to grant citizenship to any resident, the granting of such citizenship did not confer citizenship in the United States as such. Moreover, according to the Chief Justice, the “Negro,” or person of the “African race,” was by virtue of his race, ineligible to attain United States citizenship under any circumstances.

On July 9, 1868, eleven years and 620,000 deaths after the *Scott* decision was handed down, the issue of what it meant to be an American citizen was officially revised with the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment. Section 1 of that Amendment, the bedrock upon which all subsequent civil rights legislation stands, states as follows:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

The language of this Amendment, the subsequent laws passed by Congress, and the decisions made by the U.S. Supreme Court grounded in its provisions, codify two important principles of American citizenship. The first is referred to by the Latin legalism *jus soli*, meaning *by right of birth*. Unlike the situation in many European countries, under the explicit provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment and laws related thereto, citizenship in the United States is *not* contingent upon having ancestors who were citizens. The basis of “native” citizenship is place of birth, not descent—though the children of American citizens born elsewhere are also entitled to citizenship. The second principle is that the right of citizenship is not contingent upon race—it applies to *all persons*. Moreover, the various states *do not* have the jurisdiction to restrict such citizenship or to deny the basic rights of citizens.

These are principles of extraordinary importance, simple as they are, for they lay the basis for a democratic society. Even more than the machinery of voting and representation, meaningful democracy is based on the idea of *equal citizenship* which entails *equal protection under the law* and *equal access* to whatever machinery of representation exists. This is the point of the Fourteenth Amendment. What is more—and this is where the story circles back to immigration—under the provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment, the rights of citizenship are to be extended not *only* to persons born in the United States, but to those “born or naturalized.” With the sole exception of the constitutionally enshrined provision that the President and Vice President of the United States must be of native birth, all of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship are extended to immigrants after a minimal satisfaction of residency and appropriate application for naturalization.



It is here, around the nexus of laws that define citizenship and the rights guaranteed to citizens, that policy, identity politics and changing demographics are on a collision course. The relatively low barriers to immigration and citizenship are based in the same civic principles that ground civil rights. Yet they threaten to de-center the black/white racial binomial of the politics around civil rights—a politics that was made possible by black self-assertion and identity politics. The changing demographics are not just complicating race relations by adding “other” minorities into the mix; the demographics are also the potential engine for a white identity politics of a new kind.

Unlike the politics of presumptive whiteness, or universal subjectivity, wherein actual white supremacy was guaranteed by both a demographic super majority and the concentration of wealth and power in white hands, white identity politics is focused upon using the machinery of government to protect white majority status. White nationalism is the explicit articulation of essentially the same idea found in the Dred Scott decision: i.e., America is a white country for white people.

The American Civil War, and the Fourteenth Amendment in its wake, juridically replaced the explicit doctrine of white entitlement. Both *de facto* and *de jure* white supremacy continued, but inherent in the Fourteenth Amendment is the possibility that in the United States the prerequisite to recognition as a person, and thereby as a political actor, is not race but citizenship. To be sure, without the idea of a pure humanity or a universal subject, democracy is a much messier matter.

Identity politics *is* divisive—it is potentially horrific. But no democratic system, to the extent that it is driven forward by an inclusionary logic, can long sustain even the illusion that identity issues can be excluded from politics. Thus, from this point of view,

white identity politics should be anticipated as the natural development of the de-centering of whiteness, which turns whiteness into one more particular political faction instead of a presumptive universal. Actually-existing white nationalists, however, are not interested in obtaining a specifically white minority voice at the multi-racial table. The goals of the movement are to use identity politics as a vehicle for preserving white privilege and especially a white super majority. On the white nationalist view, blacks, Hispanics and other racial others *must not be allowed to settle in America in large numbers*, precisely because they represent a demographic danger to white civilization and its biological base in the racial genome.

### **Conclusions, or Redux without Reductionism**

Herein I have argued that a close study of white nationalism—a politics grounded *explicitly* in biological notions of white racial superiority and modeled on the style of identity politics pioneered by African Americans—affords a unique, and revelatory view of current tendencies in race relations. Where mainstream, which is to say white-dominated, institutions tend to obscure the reality of white racial privilege behind a rhetorical wall of individual rights, white nationalists openly pursue an identity politics that makes white privilege visible. They do this precisely because they see white privilege, white culture, and white-controlled resources as under attack, most ominously by the immigration-driven demographic trends which point toward the end of a white racial majority.

Unlike many of the far right white racialist movements of recent decades, white nationalism pursues a “realist” politics via alliances with “mainstream” anti-immigration

groups and common cause with a white liberalism which it purports to despise. Though racist social movements of all types, contrary to their popular image, have always attracted individuals from all backgrounds, white nationalism is remarkable for the number of institutionally well-positioned scholars it has attracted. These scholars support the white nationalist agenda through racial research that lends the movement a patina of academic respectability.

Though the movement itself is small, the changing demographics it points to as its primary concern are a potentially explosive issue. The potential for a further polarization of the United States, with geographic segmentation increasingly mapping as a racial divide between multiracial, multiethnic urban centers and a white “Middle American” heartland is all too real. White nationalists are, even now, attempting to exploit the changing demographics in furtherance of their own agenda.

Contemporary white nationalism, as I have pointed out, is not the first movement in American history where ostensible threats to white privilege have spawned a visible white rights reaction. The historic trend has been for the white mainstream to placate such white racist movements by offering “concessions” that appease the white nationalists (and their historic predecessors) at the expense of blacks and other minorities, thus re-inscribing the racial order of society.

The current challenge is first to understand the structural position of contemporary white nationalism in the context of the current opportunities afforded to it by demographic change. Only proceeding from such an understanding can analysts make policy recommendations grounded not in fear of a white nationalist backlash—which

should on the current analysis be anticipated—but in accord with the principles of civic citizenship.

### References

- Allen, Theodore. 1994. *The Invention of the White Race* vol. 1. New York: Verso.
- Alvarez, R. Michael and Tara L. Butterfield. 2000. The Resurgence of Nativism in California? The Case of Proposition 187 and Illegal Immigration. *Social Science Quarterly* 81(1): 167–79.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Beck, Roy. 1999. *The Case Against Immigration: The Moral, Economic, Social, and Environmental Reasons for Reducing U.S. Immigration Back to Traditional Levels*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Berlet, Chip and Mathew Lyons. 2000. *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Brimelow, Peter. 1995. *Alien Nation: Common Sense about America's Immigration Disaster*. New York: Random House.
- Buchanan, Patrick J. 2002. *The Death of the West*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Calavita, Kitty. 1996. The New Politics of Immigration: “Balanced-Budget Conservatism” and the Symbolism of Proposition 187. *Social Problems* 43: 284–305.
- Diamond, Sara. 1989. *Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right*. Boston: South End Press.
- Diamond, Sara. 1995. *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Dyson, Michael E. 1998. The Labor of Whiteness, the Whiteness of Labor, and the Perils of Whitewashing. In *Race, Identity, and Citizenship: A Reader*, eds. Rodolfo D. Torres, Louis F. Miron and Jonathan X. Inda, 219–24. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Eatwell, Roger. 2000. Ethnocentric Party Mobilization in Europe: The Importance of the Three-Dimensional Approach. In *Challenging Immigration and Ethnic Relations Politics*, eds. Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham, 348 – 367. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fine, Michelle. 1997. Witnessing Whiteness. In *Off White: Readings on Race, Power, and Society*, eds. Michelle Fine, Lois Weis, Linda C. Powell, and Mun Wong, 57–65. New York: Routledge.
- Foss, Daniel and Ralph Larkin. 1986. *Beyond Revolution: A New Theory of Social Movements*. South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey.
- Francis, Samuel. 1997. Racialpolitick. In *Revolution from the Middle*. Raleigh, N.C.: Middle American Press.
- Francis, Samuel. 2004. “When the State is the Enemy of the Nation.” V-DARE (July 19). [http://www.vdare.com/francis/enemy\\_state.htm](http://www.vdare.com/francis/enemy_state.htm)
- Gellner, Ernst. 1983. *Nations and Nationalisms*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Gibson, Campbell and Kay Jung. 2002. Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, for the United States, Regions, Divisions, and States. *Working Paper No. 56*. Washington, D.C.: United States Census Bureau Population Division.
- Goldberg, David T. 1993. *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Graham, Hugh Davis. 2001. Affirmative Action for Immigrants? The Unintended Consequences of Reform. In *Color Lines: Affirmative Action, Immigration, and Civil Rights Options for America*, ed. John David Skrentny, 53–70. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Green, Donald P. et al. 1998. From Lynching to Gay Bashing: The Elusive Connection Between Economic Conditions and Hate Crime. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 75(1): 82 – 92.
- Hartigan, John Jr. 1998. Establishing the Fact of Whiteness. In *Race, Identity, and Citizenship: A Reader*, eds. Rodolfo D. Torres, Louis F. Miron and Jonathan X. Ina, 183 – 199. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Herrnstein, Richard J. and Charles Murray. 1994. *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*. New York: Free Press.

- Hobsbawm, Eric. 1990. *Nations and Nationalism 1790: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hood, M. V. and Irwin Morris. 2000. Brother Can You Spare a Dime? Racial/Ethnic Context and the Anglo Vote on Proposition 187. *Social Science Quarterly* 81(1): 194–206.
- Hurtado, Aida. 1998. The Trickster's Play: Whiteness in the Subordination and Liberation Process. In *Race, Identity, and Citizenship: A Reader*, eds. Rodolfo D. Torres, Louis F. Miron and Jonathan X. Inda, 225–43. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kelly, Raymond. 2000. *Warless Societies and the Origin of War*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Larana, Enrique, Hank Johnston and Joseph R. Gusfield. 1994. *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Lee, Yueh-Ting et al. 2001. Attitudes Toward 'Illegal' Immigration into the United States: California Proposition 187. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 23: 430–43.
- Levin, Michael. 1998. *Why Race Matters: Racial Differences and what They Mean*. Westport, CN: Praeger Press.
- Levitas, Daniel. 2002. *The Terrorist Next Door: The Militia Movement and the Radical Right*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Lipsitz, George. 1995. The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the 'White' Problem in American Studies. *American Quarterly* 47 (September): 369–87.
- Lutton, Wayne. 1988. *The Myth of Open Borders: The American Tradition of Immigration Control*. Monterey, VA: American Immigration Control Foundation.
- March, Louis T. and Brent Nelson. 1995. *The Great Betrayal: The Elite's War on Middle America*. Raleigh, NC: Representative Government Press.
- Marx, Anthony. 1998. *Making Race and Nation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nelson, Brent. 1994. *America Balkanized: Immigration's Challenge to Government*. Monterey, VA: American Immigration Control Foundation.
- Office of Immigration Statistics. 2004. *2003 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*. Washington, D.C.: Department of Homeland Security.

- Ono, Kent A. and John M. Sloop. 2002. *Shifting Borders: Rhetoric, Immigration, and California's Proposition 187*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Quinton, Wendy et al. 1996. Personality and Attitudinal Predictors of Support of Proposition 187—California's Anti-Illegal Immigrant Initiative. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 26(24): 2204–23.
- Rushton, J. Philippe. 1995. *Race, Evolution, and Behavior*. New Brunswick: Transaction Books.
- Swain, Carol. 2002. *The New White Nationalism in America: Its Challenge to Integration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tucker, William H. 2002. *The Funding of Scientific Racism: Wickliffe Draper and the Pioneer Fund*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- United States Census Bureau. 2000. "Chapter 4: Motherhood: The Fertility of American Women, 2000." In *Population Profile of the United States (Internet Release)*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.
- Waugh, Linda. 1982. Marked and Unmarked: A Choice between Unequals in Semiotic Structure. *Semiotica* 38: 299–318.
- Weintraub, Daniel M. 1994. Crime, Immigration Issues Helped Wilson, Poll Finds. *Los Angeles Times* (November 9): 1A.
- Wilson, William J. 1999. *The Bridge over the Racial Divide: Rising Inequality and Coalition Politics*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.