



Queries: Answers to Questions from Concerned Readers

So you finished reading this book and are fuming.¹ You believe I have called you “racist.” You are certain that books like mine hurt rather than help and believe I am fanning the racial flames. You are mad as hell because I spelled the word America with three “k’s” in the original preface to this book and believe I hate America.² You also think I made numerous unfair generalizations about whites without knowing how most whites think and feel about race. You wonder why I said so little about the “racism” of blacks whom you believe are as racist, if not even more, than whites. And, lastly, you are sure my analysis is exaggerated and believe I am playing the “race card.” Well, although I believe my answers to all these questions may not satisfy you, I will attempt to answer all of them in a clear and straightforward manner. After all, as a professor, I am always interested in clarifying students’ doubts and misconceptions particularly when they are related to my own work and ideas.

First, if I had a dollar for every student (and a few colleagues) who has e-mailed me or told me that I am unfairly classifying them as “racist,” I would have enough money to buy a bottle of fancy Scotch. Hence, since this seems like a general misconception of my claims, I answer this concern first. My point in this book was not demonizing whites as a collectivity or as individuals. I stated this explicitly in chapter 1. More significantly, for those readers who may know a bit about sociological theories, my theorization of racism is structural or societal-wide and, hence, individuals are regarded, paraphrasing Marx’s words in *Capital*, as personifications of larger categories or embodiments of particular race relations. Thus, my standpoint on “racism” is larger than individuals and, as such, my analysis “can less than any other make the individual

responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains."³ Simply put, if racism is a collective phenomenon that precedes all of us, we are not individually responsible for its existence and must not feel guilty for its existence.

But why when one discusses structural inequality, whether based on race, class, or gender, the reaction of most Americans is the same ("Are you calling me racist, sexist, or accusing me of being class elitist)? I have experienced this firsthand in my own classes. When I lecture on gender inequality, male students become angry and accuse me of being antimale. When I discuss class inequality, wealthy and middle-class students accuse me of fostering class resentment and of being biased against them. And when I teach about race inequality, white students accuse me of being antiwhite and unfairly classifying them as "racist." I believe American students and Americans in general tend to react this way because in this country individualism⁴ is the glue that binds our interpretative field and, thus, we have a hard time understanding the centrality of larger social forces. For most Americans, individual-level explanations are the order of the day to explain class, gender, and race inequality. On class standing, we believe workers are poor because they are stupid and lazy; on gender, we believe women make less money than men because they do not wish to make more and prefer to have babies; and on race, we believe minorities are worse off than whites because they do not work as hard as whites and are also less capable than whites.

It is the task of introductory level sociology courses to teach students that we all participate in larger systems, systems that, for instance, create different opportunity structures for workers, women, and minorities. And if we do our job right, our students leave our classes understanding that there are larger social forces responsible for the patterns of inequality in America. Hence, they also realize that individuals are not personally responsible for the existence of a class, gender, or racial order in America. Thus, we help them understand that their individual-level explanations are, for the most part, deficient and incomplete at explaining big national and international issues.

Nevertheless, and this is the kicker, after we make students aware of how inequality is orchestrated in society, they become individually responsible for how their actions and behavior help perpetuate inequality. Because of its significance and clarity on this point, I cite at length sociologist Allan G. Johnson's words of wisdom in his *The Forest and the Trees* (1997: 16):⁵

As an individual, I can't undo the past and I can't undo my childhood (he had referred before to the racist imagery he saw and heard as a child). I can, however, choose what to do about race and racism *now*. I can't make my

society or the place where I live or work suddenly nonracist, but I can decide how to live as a white person in relation to my privileged *position* as a white person. I can decide whether to laugh or object when I hear racist "humor"; I can decide how to treat people who aren't classified as "white"; I can decide what to do about the consequences racism produces for people, whether to be part of the solution or merely part of the problem. I don't feel guilty because my country is racist, because that wasn't my doing. But as a white person who *participates* in that society, I feel responsible to consider what to do about it. The only way to get past the potential for guilt and see how I can make a difference is to realize that the system isn't me and I'm not the system.

Accordingly, individuals are not the ones who create larger systems such as "capitalism," "patriarchy," or "racialized social systems," but they are the cogs that allow these systems to run. If the "cogs" were to change their beliefs and, more importantly, their behaviors, these systems would not be able to run and risk the possibility of being destroyed. (But, unfortunately, most of us will not change our beliefs and behaviors because some of us benefit from how these systems are organized. For example, men seem unwilling to change their beliefs about and behaviors toward women because if they do, and patriarchy were to collapse, they would end up doing more work at home and cease to be the kings of society. Albeit men would, in the long run, be better off—patriarchy creates a lot of anomalies in the psyche of men and makes them ultimately unhappy—men, as most actors, tend to think short term.)

The second complaint I hear a lot is that I am not helping cure America of its racism and, if anything, that through my work I am fanning its racial flames. To this I answer the following. I wish I had as much power as some readers believe I have. Although I do not believe individuals are entirely powerless,⁶ I also know that it is ultimately through collective efforts that one can accomplish significant changes in society. But even if I had all the power that some readers believe I have, I still would tell these readers that my work is in no way hurting America. If anything, I believe that by seriously talking and addressing the realities of race and racism, we have a better chance of developing practices and behaviors to improve "race relations" in this country. The alternative to this—not talking straight about race and singing the song of "United We Stand"⁷—has not changed the reality of racial stratification and inequality in this country and it is akin to sweeping under the rug a "family problem" such as incest.

Third, to those who stopped reading the book after they saw my spelling of America with three "k's"—I received e-mails about this from a few students and had a former "colleague" up in arms about this and willing to veto my promotion to associate professor unless I removed this spell-

ing from the text—I say that they need to drink their prune juice and move on. If we, as intellectuals, are unwilling to engage arguments because of small things like this, then we are in the wrong business. The job of students and scholars is not to agree to disagree with what they read or hear, but to understand claims, evaluate arguments, and come up with a sophisticated “critique” (for or against). Lastly, I tell these readers what I told the students who e-mailed me regarding my spelling of the word America as Amerikkka.⁸ I will remove the three “k’s” from Amerikkka when America removes racism from the country.

To those who claim I made unfair generalizations about whites in this book I ask them to read carefully chapter 6, where I examine “white progressives.” There I stated that 10 to 15 percent of whites seem not to be in agreement with color-blind racism. I also stated in the original conclusion of the book that I believed that through political action it was possible to convince most whites of the folly of racism—color blind or otherwise—and create a large progressive movement in the country for social justice.

This said, I think I know what those who make this comment are thinking. What they want me to say is that I am “making most whites look bad” and that most whites are not “racist.” To this, I reply that (1) as I stated above, the problem of “racism” in America and elsewhere is not a personal or individual problem and (2) evidence presented in the book suggests most whites in fact subscribe to the basic tenets of color-blind racism. On the latter, as I stated in chapter 1 of the book, it is impossible to address a current ideology (racial or otherwise) without having some readers feeling angry about the project. Examining ideologies that are at play is always a risky business. Period. There is little I can do to ease those who believe that it is OK to be color blind and live in “normal” all-white neighborhoods, attend “normal” all-white schools, and have “normal” all-white friends and all-white this and that. If they still do not want to acknowledge the huge contradiction between professing to be color blind (“I do not see color”) and living in what I have labeled here as the “white habitus” (what are the chances that all these all-white settings or situations are random matters, particularly, when they seem to be the norm among whites?), then there is little I can say to appease these readers. They will just hate this book and keep on with their curiously contradictory self-proclaimed color-blind stance and exhibit racial apathy.⁹

To the many readers who have told me, “You say little about blacks and they are the *real* racists in contemporary America,” I ask them to reread carefully my comments on this matter in chapter 7. There I stated that blacks, or any other minority group for that matter, can be prejudiced and act on those beliefs. Hence, it is possible for someone like Colin Ferguson,¹⁰ a Jamaican immigrant, to enter a train and kill a number of people (whites and Asians). But prejudice is not the same as racism. Racism is

about a social system partially organized around the logic of racial superiority. Thus, if the United States was partially organized around the logic of black supremacy, then I would work hard to understand its coordinates and deconstruct its mythologies. Yet, as I think most whites would admit if they talk honestly about racial matters, this country is not even remotely organized around the logic of black supremacy. What we have in the country at worst is a few black leaders who exhibit defensive prejudice (“You called *me* ugly. You are the *really* ugly one!”). But none of these leaders has either the capacity or the desire to develop a social movement to impose such logic in the country. In fact, a dispassionate analysis of the speeches of, for example, Minister Louis Farrakhan (and they are stylistically beautiful and partially right), leader of the Nation of Islam, shows that his political agenda is nationalist at best and separatist at worst—neither of which would involve reversing the direction of racial supremacy in this country.

To make this pristinely clear, blacks can be (and many in fact are) prejudiced against whites. Yet, they are not in a position to reorganize the U.S. polity around their prejudice and develop a society that provides them, at the expense of whites, systemic benefits at all levels. The United States, however, was partially built around the logic of white supremacy and that pillar of the American edifice remains as part of its foundation. The cry by whites regarding blacks’ racism (“Blacks are more racist than whites” or “Blacks are the real racists in America”) is just another example of the pot calling the kettle black.

Lastly, to those who believe I am exaggerating the relevance of race in contemporary America and accuse me of playing the “race card,” I ask them to reread the section on the frame “Minimization of Racism” in chapter 2. And, as a freebie, I will narrate an incident that happened to me this summer which I believe epitomizes the new way race and racism work in this country. My wife and I moved from Texas to North Carolina in late June 2005. After living forever in small places and saving money for 12 years, we were able to purchase a very elegant home in a very prestigious neighborhood (our home is our retirement account). But nice homes with nice yards require lots of work and this has forced me to become a handyman—I am cheap and thus unwilling to hire anyone to do my yard work. On this particular Sunday evening (it was about 6:30 p.m.), while I was trying to finish the stone work in a dry river, two white women drove up our rather long and hilly driveway. I stopped working to see what the heck they wanted and approached them shirtless and in shorts. One of the women approached me, identified herself as a realtor, and asked me, “Do you work in this house?” Although I was not happy with the assumptions behind her question, I told her that I did and then she asked me, “Do you think the owners would mind if I show the house

to my client?" I smiled and replied, "Well, let me see if my wife minds showing our house to you." Although for some strange reason, given my knowledge about how race works in this country, I hoped she would express some remorse or apologize or at least feel confused or even somewhat uncomfortable, the realtor just told me without any hesitation whatsoever, "Oh, so you are the owner? Good for you!"

For those who, in the words of Flavor Flav, "do ignorance" and wish to believe we live in the best of all possible worlds, let me explain how race ordained this encounter from beginning to end. First, these women assumed I was a gardener¹¹ but this assumption was unwarranted for two very important reasons. I stated that this encounter happened on a Sunday at 6:30 p.m. These women should not have expected to see a "yardman" working on a Sunday night. Also, even if they suspected I was the gardener, the fact that I was not dressed appropriately (as I said, I was shirtless and working in shorts) should have given them pause and led them to ask me a different first question (e.g., "Sir, is this your home?"). Second, since I approached them when they entered the driveway, they should have suspected that I was the owner (How many gardeners stop working when they see visitors coming to the house in which they are working?). Third, when I revealed to them in what I thought was a creative way that I was the owner of the house, they should have apologized. Instead, the realtor (the other women just went along with everything the realtor said) pushed the knife a bit deeper into the wound they had just inflicted by telling me, "Good for you." The "compliment" was in fact an insult as it meant, "For you, a black-looking but Latino sounding person, having this nice house is a big accomplishment."

I know some readers will still doubt this analysis and say, "Relax man, it's not like these women called you the N-word or tried to lynch you." I also know that other readers will interpret this as a "southern" encounter and, thus, as an aberration. But what the former readers miss is that these microaggressions are, from a health perspective, the silent killers of people of color in this country.¹² And the latter readers miss the fact that the South in America, as Malcolm said a long time ago, begins in the border with Canada. (I could have narrated here racial encounters I have had in Wisconsin, Michigan, Washington, Texas, and California. But because of how recent this event was, I chose to include this one rather than events from my past.)

These are my answers to the main concerns raised by the (mostly white) readers who did not like my book. As a social scientist, however, I know well that few of these readers will agree or be satisfied with my answers. The reason for this is sociological in nature. I have addressed in this book an ideology that is alive and well and, therefore, most of my readers live and breathe pure color blindness. Thus, there is little space

for "understanding"¹³ when it involves those at the top of America's racial structure accepting that they are in such position. This is very unlikely because as I stated elsewhere quoting from William A. Ryan: "no one [wants to think] of himself as a son of a bitch." But if color-blind readers were to accept the fact that they belong to the racial group that is favored in America, a huge can of worms would be opened with potentially very serious consequences. Which ones? First, they would have to examine the possibility that a certain portion¹⁴ of their standing in society is likely unearned (i.e., based on the fact that they belong to the dominant race in society)—a very frightening proposition for folks who have been trained to believe that all they have in life is due to their own efforts.¹⁵ And second, at the personal level, their consciousness would be disturbed because their entire foundation would be shaken and they might even develop feelings of guilt. Hence, I am not surprised by the fact that most (white) readers of my book prefer to, like in the movie *The Matrix*, take the blue pill and live happy, happy, happy.¹⁶ But I hope that a growing minority of whites choose, as Neo did, the red pill and are willing to fight for a just world even at the risk of losing some of their standing and suffering the ignominy of been ostracized by their blue pill-taker white "friends" (please remember what the character who took the blue pill in *The Matrix* did to his "friends"). And those who choose to take the red pill know they have chosen the right, moral path and will sleep tight every night. To them belongs the future of a new, truly egalitarian and humane America.

NOTES

1. Since this chapter is written in response to readers that hated the book, my arguments, or me, I decided to write it in a more direct and personal way.

2. Since 1917 all Puerto Ricans (and I am Puerto Rican) are citizens of the United States regardless of whether they are born here or on the island. In my specific case, I was born in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, in 1962, which makes me a "legit" American no matter what. (Heck, according to our Constitution, I could even run for the presidency of this country. Wouldn't that be great?) Hence, if readers believe I am an American hater, they should refine their classification and label me a "self-hating American."

3. Karl Marx, "Preface to the first German edition" of *Capital* (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 10.

4. Explaining why American individualism is so pervasive and different from individualism elsewhere is beyond the scope of this book. A good book to understand how individualism frames how we interpret contemporary racial matters is Jennifer Hochschild, *Facing Up to the American Dream* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995). For a nice discussion debunking the notion that individu-

alism was a central value of the Revolutionary Era, see Edward Grabb, Douglas Baer, and James Curtis, "The Origins of American Individualism: Reconsidering the Historical Evidence," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 24, no. 4 (1999): 511–33. For an analysis of how 19th-century developments in American capitalism forged an individualistic American ideology based on the needs of corporations which was relentlessly pushed down the throats of Americans, read John Dewey's post-1930 work, particularly his *Individualism, Old and New*.

5. Allan G. Johnson, *The Forest and the Trees: Sociology as Life, Practice and Promise* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997).

6. Of course, because of inequality, the voices of some individuals have disproportionate effects in society. For instance, when Ross Perot ran for President, he stated that he was not going to accept money from anyone for his campaign so that he could remain "independent." But how many individuals could have spent \$50 million to run as an "independent" candidate for the presidency of the United States?

7. This was the slogan used by Perot in his failed attempts to win the presidency in 1992 and 1996 . . . and has been also used in the post-9/11 era as a sign of patriotic unity. Of course, Perot used this slogan and had lots of troubles with minorities (in 1992, he addressed the NAACP convention and kept telling the audience, "You people" this and "You people" that, which led commentators baffled by his lack of racial sensitivity) and in the post-9/11 period, the cry for unity has not led to meaningful policies to deal with real racial inequality.

8. Spelling America as Amerikkka is not my original creation. It became popular in the sixties and, more recently, rap singer Ice Cube used this spelling in his 2003 song "Amerikkka's Most Wanted."

9. Recent work on racial apathy shows that whites who claim they are indifferent or not interested on racial issues exhibit very traditionally racist attitudes on numerous matters. See Tyrone A. Forman, "Color-blind Racism and Racial Indifference: The Role of Racial Apathy in Facilitating Enduring Inequalities," in *The Changing Terrain of Race and Ethnicity* edited by Maria Krysan and Amanda Lewis (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), 23–66.

10. Colin Ferguson shot a number of whites and Asians (six of them died) who were on a commuter train in Long Island in 1995. By all accounts (and his trial was televised by *Court TV*), Mr. Ferguson, in addition to be prejudiced, was deranged.

11. The racial optic used by these white women is the same optic use by whites when they profile minorities in the streets, in stores, in neighborhoods, in short, in America. If I were driving a BMW, cops would think of me as a "suspicious looking man driving a fancy car around" (this has not happened to me yet because I drive relatively inexpensive cars). If I were handling merchandise at a fancy store, the white clerk would think I am trying to steal something (this has happened to me many times). Therefore, if I am working in my yard and white women see me, they believe I am the gardener. For a critique of the faulty statistical logic used to rationalized racial profiling of any kind, see Jody David Armour, *Negrophobia and Reasonable Racism: The Hidden Costs of Being Black* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

12. On the subject of racial microaggressions, see Joe R. Feagin and Karyn D. McKinney, *The Many Costs of Racism* (Lanham, Oxford, and Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003). On the effect these microaggressions have on people of color, see the excellent work of William Smith on "racial battle fatigue." One example of his work on this subject is "Black Faculty Coping with Racial Battle Fatigue: The Campus Racial Climate in a Post-Civil Rights Era," in *A Long Way to Go: Conversations about Race by African American Faculty and Graduate Students at Predominately White Institutions*, edited by Darrell Cleveland, (New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 2004), 171–90. Finally, on the connection between experiences of discrimination and negative health outcomes, see David R. Williams, "Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Health: The Added Effects of Racism and Discrimination," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 896: 173–88.

13. Inequities based on race, class, or gender are never remedied through education because they are based on systems that award benefits to some members of the polity (whites, capitalists, or men) and limits the rewards of others (non-whites, workers, and women) based on their ascriptive characteristics. Thus, those on top of these systems (whites, capitalists, and men) develop an interest in keeping the system as is.

14. In my *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (2001), I argued that racialized social systems were systems *partially* shaped by race. This is because all modern societies are ordered by a complex matrix of domination that includes class, gender, and race elements. Thus, understanding one's standing in society, net of one's talent, involves tabulating how much of our social standing is due to our class, gender, and race status.

15. On the matter of whites unwillingness to consider the possibility that their standing in life is at least partially related to their race, see Nancy Ditomasso, Rochelle Parks-Yancy, and Corine Post, "Whites Views of Civil Rights: Color-Blindness and Equal Opportunity," in *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism*, edited by Shaley Doana and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 189–98. Two books that also address this point are Deidre A. Royster, *Race and the Invisible Hand: How White Networks Exclude Black Men from Blue-Collar Jobs* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003) and Thomas M. Shapiro, *The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

16. In this movie, the main character called "Neo" is offered two pills (or two options) by his co-protagonist called "Morpheus." The red pill, which he took, allowed him to see reality as it really was—a disconcerting, confusing, and terrible situation as he discovered that humans had become batteries for a super computer. The blue pill, however, would have allowed Neo to "see" the virtual (and false) reality that the supercomputer had been feeding off humans for a long time.

Postscript: What Is to Be Done (For Real)

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Whenever I finish a sociology class, students invariably ask me the following: “So Professor, you have debunked [insert here the subject of the class] in the United States. Now, what should we do?” However, as a scholar¹ I always feel funny about dishing advice on practical policy matters. I was not trained in social policy and, more importantly, do not believe that good social policy comes out of the heads of enlightened social scientists. Moreover, we social scientists are trained to be analytical, but, at the same time, to remain detached. We are advised not to take strong positions and let our readers infer what might be done. But after a few years of having finished *Racism without Racists*, I have realized that even if my suggestions are wrong or seem pedantic or implausible to some, I have a responsibility toward my readers. If they spent their time, effort, and money on my book, why would I take the easy road out and avoid answering the burning question of what is to be done? Why would I hide behind the norms of science, particularly when I know that behind this “objective” lurks a pro-status quo position (see chapter 1)? Hence, at the risk of violating the norms of “scientific” sociology, I provide in this chapter a few suggestions² of what I believe we can do as individuals as well as members of groups and organizations to fight the new racism and color-blind nonsense.

I discuss first a few of the individual-level strategies³ that we can all do. In the original “Conclusion” of the book (now chapter 9), I said we needed to work hard to “nurture a large cohort of antiracist whites to begin challenging whites color-blind nonsense from within.” What did I mean by this? By this I meant that this country desperately needs whites who have seen the light to become activists in the struggle against racism. But before they join social movements against racism, I believe they have

a more urgent and immediate task before them. They should become “race traitors” (whites willing to tell the world when whites do or say things that disadvantage minority groups). Imagine what would happen in this country if even a small percentage of whites (let’s say, 1 to 2 percent) began “ratting” on their racial brothers and sisters (remember that “treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity”).⁴ And what kind of things could race traitors find out by doing undercover work in white-only spaces? Below is a list of the kind of things I believe race traitors could bring to light:

- That Uncle Johnny, a respectable member of the community who even gives money to the *United Negro College Fund*, uttered the word “nigger” ten times last Thanksgiving.
- That Freddie Krugger, a banker at Bank of Amerika, either denies loans to blacks or charges them more than equally qualified white applicants because he believes blacks are good for nothing.
- That Mr. Very Whiteman told his financial firm he wanted a white accountant because he did not feel comfortable working with black or Latino accountants.
- That Professor Jefe Blanc, a professor at the University of Midwest, believes his minority students are bringing down the graduate program because they simply “do not have it.”
- That Doctor Loveme Hard, who is a very nice and soft-spoken man, believes the problem with blacks is blacks, that is, he believes if they behaved like whites, they would be OK.
- That Professor Ven Defta, of Rutt University in New Jersey, said that Dr. Blackwoman, did not get tenure because, “That black B—— did not kiss my A——.”
- That Irene Bergman, a very rich old white woman, refers to blacks as “niggers” all the time when she is with her friends.
- That officer Paulice Brutality told his colleagues that he “Beat the crap out of that nigger” because he did not give him any respect.
- That Doctor White Teeth, a dentist in Poolman, Washington, does not treat black patients because he does not like touching them.
- That Matt Mad, President of the (Once Upon a Time) Young Conservatives at Crackerland University, believes minorities are inferior to whites. (He also believes that Mexican Americans should go back to their country.)
- That Plum Lady told her friends she is afraid of blacks and cannot be alone with black men because she thinks they want to rape her.

Imagine what would happen if whites could never know for sure if what they say or do in their private, white-only spaces could be poten-

tially leaked to the public. Imagine what old-fashioned racists, such as Uncle Johnny or Matt Mad do, or not do, if they could not be sure their racial nonsense would remain a secret. This, I believe, would have revolutionary consequences as it would force changes in the behavior and maybe even the practices of many whites. (Of course, this strategy would have little impact on color-blind racism per se since its language operates within the standards of proper racial discourse.)

Connected to the notion of racial treason was my suggestion of challenging whiteness wherever it exists. In the original “Conclusion” I stated that whiteness must be challenged in churches, job settings, bars, clubs, family gatherings, etc. Why not stand up for humanity and state in, for example, a company meeting where job candidates are being discussed that the reason why no one seems to support the black candidate is because all the people in the meeting are white? Why not tell your pastor you do not appreciate the fact that his church is all white and that you intend to leave it unless he works hard at integrating it? Why not tell your neighbors that you are concerned about the neighborhood being perceived as racist because it is all white and America is a wonderfully diverse country? Why not resign publicly to the *W Club* you belong because the club has not admitted black and Latino members ever? Why not tell your white coworkers that their comments about the new black worker are problematic and will not help her become a full member of the organization? Why not, ah, why not?

Another individual-level strategy I have suggested to young people is to create teams—one white and one black, two whites and two blacks, etc.—to test whether race affects a host of social transactions such as trying to rent an apartment, purchase things at the mall, apply for jobs, hail a cab, and the like. The teams could try to assess the “race effect” in these affairs by sending teammates alone to the various settings and then comparing notes afterward with their teammates. I would expect teammates to share things such as the following: “So, did they give you the cold shoulders when you inquired about the job opening at *Abercrombie and Fitch*⁵ as they did to me? Did he tell you that all the units were occupied or did he tell you, as he told me, that there were three openings?⁶ I can’t believe he told you the price of the car was \$14,000 when he told me it was \$13,000.” This strategy could bring to the fore clear and convincing evidence of how discrimination occurs in the streets of the United States. The significance of this work could be monumental because social scientists have, for many reasons, abandoned the study of existing discrimination and concentrated their efforts instead on assessing discrimination indirectly (i.e., examining the residual unexplained differences between racial groups in a particular matter after controlling for a number of characteristics known to affect the outcome).⁷ Thus, if this idea were to catch

on and thousands of young white and nonwhite people across the country were to do what I suggest, we could uncover not just the reality of discrimination but the many faces it takes in the real world. This evidence would also provide legal ammunition for lawsuits and serve as an embarrassment factor for those cases where there is no legal recourse.⁸ If nothing else, having this strategy in place would have a chilling effect on would-be discriminators.⁹

As important as individual-level actions are, I argued in the first edition of the book—and still believe this to be the case—that unless we are able to engage in collective action to eliminate racial inequality, racial stratification and its concomitant inequality will remain a problem in 21st-century America. I stated that we needed a new civil rights movement if we want to attack frontally the system responsible for the production and reproduction of racial inequality. However, I did not say much about what kind of actions it would take for such movement to develop. Now—with some trepidation—I take a leap and venture to offer a few “how tos” on this crucial matter.

First, I humbly suggest to my readers, particularly to my minority readers, that the civil right leadership we have at this historical juncture will not help us move forward, that is, they are not ready for prime time. Why? Because they are too old school—and some are simply too old, period—and are trapped in the battles and issues of the past. For instance, they all seem to have a hard time fighting new racism style discrimination precisely because it does not involve the overt, nasty practices of the past. Leaders such as Jesse Jackson, Louis Farrakhan, Reverend Al Sharpton, and others are children of the sixties and seem unable to understand the smiling face of the new racial monster biting our derrieres these days.¹⁰ Thus, I believe the new civil rights movement will require new leaders who understand the nature of contemporary racial dynamics.

Secondly, this new civil rights movement, unlike the old one, will have to deal with issues of class and racial diversity in a more straightforward manner. It is no longer possible for the black middle-class, who led the struggle of the past, to present *their* issues as *the* issues of all blacks and it is no longer possible for blacks to continue believing they are *the* most important minority group in this country.¹¹ On the former, the issues before us are, more than ever, the issues of the black, Latino, and Asian working class, i.e., the need for adequate and decent schools, jobs, social services, medical care, housing, and transportation. In this sense, the old framework of the struggle—the idea of equal opportunity—is not, if it ever was, enough. What this large segment of the minority community, a segment I claim is slowly becoming “the collective black” racial strata, need is a movement that deals in a straight manner with their class/race issues; what these folks need is not “equality of opportunity” but “equal-

ity of results!” The “collective black” segment suffers not just because it is comprised of mostly dark-skinned minority folks, but also because most of its members belong to the second-tier of the working class.¹² Therefore, understanding how the race/class nexus affects this growing segment in the United States and developing policies to address its concerns is the central task of the new civil rights movement.

On the racial diversity front, I believe the traditional view of “We blacks can represent everybody” will no longer work if it ever did. Demography is somewhat destiny and the fact that Latinos are already the largest minority group and will be twice the size of the black community in a few years can no longer be hidden from our discussions of minority politics. Blacks need to learn the lessons from the aftermath of Harold Washington’s death in Chicago in 1987, the election of Mayor Bill White in Houston in 2003, and many other similar cases that have surfaced in the last 15 years. Blaming Latinos or Asians for not supporting black candidates will not help at all.¹³ What all these cases show, I believe, is that blacks cannot expect Latinos and other minority groups to give them a blank check. If a black candidate wishes to represent the minority community viewpoint in the future, the politician will have to truly represent their collective interests and exhibit a pluralistic style during the campaign as well as after the politician is in office. And blacks must begin to understand that a Latino or an Asian can represent them, too.¹⁴ The era of the other minorities (Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans) following a black leader out of racial solidarity is over and the era of plural minority politics is in. The future of minority politics, I contend, lies in minority leaders understanding this new plural reality and developing real and solid coalition politics. If we all fail to understand the new racial reality, we will all play the silly “I want my bread crumbs now please” game rather than struggling to get our fair share of the American bread. (To be clear, I am not chastising blacks and ignoring that Latinos have many erratic positions vis-à-vis blacks, too. I believe both groups need to do a lot of work within and between their groups to accomplish the cultural revolution needed to work as partners for a new America.)

Lastly, the new civil rights movement will have to deal in a more systematic way with gender issues. The old rampant sexism of the civil rights movement which included revering women as mothers or icons of the movement (a la Rosa Parks) but giving them little space in leadership positions, having their issues excluded from the agenda because they were supposedly “divisive” (“Why do you bring up this feminist shit when the real shit is that we are all oppressed by the Man?”), and their sexual exploitation (sexploitation) by leaders has to go.¹⁵ If for no other reason, given that women of color are central to the new working class, particularly the organized segment of this class, the new movement will

have to be inclusive in its agenda and leadership. Hence, the masculinist Messianic tradition of the movement (Martin, Malcolm, Jesse, Al, Farrakhan, etc.) needs to be revamped for the 21st century. And, similarly to what I said above regarding blacks needing to deal with Latinos in a more open and democratic manner, blacks—men and women—need to deal with Latinas who have issues related to those of black women but also their own issues as Latinas.

But I still have not said much about how we may go about forging this new, racially pluralist, gender/class/race conscious movement. This, I confess, is the hardest thing to figure out and not too different from realizing, as many of us have realized, that the United States needs desperately a third party¹⁶ to challenge the Republican establishment but not having a clue about how to accomplish this goal. Nevertheless, I said at the outset of this chapter that I was going to be brave and venture ideas on all these hard and controversial issues no matter what. Hence, here I go:

- 1) We may begin this movement from below with small, targeted efforts to elect government officials in a number of localities. We might even steal a page from the “Rainbow Coalition” struggles of the past and organize a real rainbow organization to push these candidates to adopt a truly progressive agenda. (However, we must be clear that this is probably the least likely way to revitalize the civil rights movement as efforts such as the one I am suggesting here have been easily co-opted by the Democratic Party machinery.)
- 2) We may call for a national meeting of minority youth with the goal of developing a large “Minority Coalition” to draft a race/class/agenda for the future and cultivate new leaders. (Once upon a time, when I was young, I participated in a group called “The Minority Coalition” while I was a student at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. To this date, I believe their efforts and practices could guide the civil rights movement of the future.)¹⁷
- 3) We may use some of the ideas I offered above (e.g., racial treason, teaming up minority and majority youth, etc.) as springboards to generate this movement. How? We can use the organizational efforts of teaming up minority and majority students across the nation as the incubator for the new movement. Alternatively, the “data” produced by the strategies I articulated above can be used to mobilize people into action. We can piggyback on these efforts and form local organizations against discrimination and racism which may later on be united into a national coalition movement for racial and social justice.

These are just a few ideas and I am sure that many readers will come up with even better ones. But I have three other ideas that I am sure will be regarded by some as being on the “wild side.” I share them with my readers because I have been thinking about them seriously for the past few years and nothing has happened to convince me that they do not have some potential.

- 1) Why not use the enthusiasm and creativity of the Hip-Hop generation as a pillar for the foundation of this new movement? Hip-Hop artists are in a unique position to call for large rallies and attract thousands of young minority (and white)¹⁸ folks. The recent mobilization to try to stop the execution of Tookie Williams¹⁹ and the important participation of rapper Snoop Dogg clearly indicate the power these artists have to move and motivate youth. And, wouldn't it be great if big name rappers began rapping again about more directly political matters?²⁰ (Ah, I miss the power of the lyrics and the style of Public Enemy! Although I like the work of contemporary rap artists such as *Black Eyed Peas* and *Arrested Development*, nothing moves me like the work of *Public Enemy* in albums such as “It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back,” “Fear of a Black Planet,” and even in their 2002 album “Revolverlution” with its magnificent song “Son of a Bush.”)
- 2) I also believe that radical members of the Hip-Hop generation must begin a serious dialogue on how to make sure their cultural productions are used as vehicles for social change (but see footnote 19). To this end, Cultural Studies and African American Studies programs across the nation that have a Hip-Hop niche should sponsor these dialogues with the goal of setting up structures that may help the development the new civil rights movement.
- 3) And my “wildest” idea is to use a Michael Moore approach to raise consciousness about various racial issues in the United States. What do I mean by this? I mean that rather than having a rally against a store or company that does not hire minority folks—our old and dated tactics of the past, we should organize creative actions (post-modern actions if you will) that could be videotaped and serve as clear demonstration of how these organizations exclude minorities. Michael Moore has done T.V. shows and documentaries exposing irresponsible practices by corporate America (e.g., his unfortunately defunct show *T.V. Nation*) and by American politicians (e.g., *Fahrenheit 9/11*). I believe that if we were to use irreverent and humorous Moore-inspired tactics, we would be significantly more successful in our efforts to raise consciousness about racial inequities in this country and could mobilize thousands of young people to participate in

our stunts. Can you imagine what would happen if 100 young black men were to enter a store or a restaurant that is notorious for excluding blacks, or attend mass at an all-white church, or patron an all-white bar? Or what if 50 blacks with MBAs were to solicit jobs in person at a Wall Street firm known for not hiring blacks? Or what would happen if 50 interracial couples were to walk around the campus of Bob Jones University?²¹ Or what if 100 Latino professors were to . . . well, as you can see, the possibilities for subverting the racial status quo by relying on these tactics seems endless and, if nothing else, could generate effective documentaries for the struggle for social justice.

Lastly, at the very end of the first edition of *Racism without Racists*, I said that in order for this movement to have a chance to succeed, we had to “become militants once again.” This short statement, which I have repeated wherever I lecture on this book, causes fear and anxiety among many whites. They seem to interpret the notion of militance as black folks picking up guns and giving them some hell as retribution for the years they have been oppressed in this country. However, that was not what I had in mind. By militance I meant people of color and their allies engaging in a variety of social actions to effect change. Thinking and theorizing about change is good, talking about change is better, but working toward change is the only way it will happen.

We all must participate in the new movement and contribute in whatever way we can. Some will provide expertise, others money, others time, and others will craft and participate in the actions required to advance the new politics of change. We all need to regain the energy we seem to have lost, drop the pessimism that has filled our souls, and get over the individualism and materialism that has eaten so many of us from within.²² Our participation in this movement is a must. We cannot remain as spectators of the racial game being played before our own eyes in America. We cannot remain ostrich-like while the social and political gains we made during the civil rights era are being eroded; we cannot sit still while a concerted attack is being waged against affirmative action—a program that is likely to be dismantled soon with the confirmation of Judge Samuel Alito;²³ we cannot remain silent while police brutality, racial profiling, and McCarthy-like practices are on the rise legitimized as necessary by the so-called War on Terror; and we cannot, and should not, allow the limited but real economic gains made by blacks and Latinos in the seventies to be reversed.

The anti minority feelings in the white community that began in the late 1960s as a tropical depression have now become a category 5 hurricane. If we are unable to raise the height of our collective racial levees, the racial waters banging at the outskirts of our dams will flood our commu-

nities damaging them permanently. Hence, I believe we are at a very serious juncture similar to the end of the first Reconstruction (1865–1876).²⁴ We must be willing to take a stand and fight the reactionary forces who want to put us back in our historical place or face the possibility of a new genteel Redemption crystallizing in this country.²⁵ To prevent the latter from happening we need all people of good conscience to become activists. We need everybody with a good heart to join the next revolution because, like Gil Scott-Heron states in his song, “The Revolution will not be televised,”

The revolution will not be right back
after a message about a white tornado, white lightning, or white people.
You will not have to worry about a dove in your
bedroom, a tiger in your tank, or the giant in your toilet bowl.
The revolution will not go better with Coke.
The revolution will not fight the germs that may cause bad breath.
The revolution will put you in the driver’s seat.

The revolution will not be televised, will not be televised,
will not be televised, will not be televised.
The revolution will be no re-run brothers;
The revolution will be live.²⁶

I sincerely hope most readers choose to participate in this new civil rights movement and help bring racial change to our America. Only through the active efforts of thousands of people in the struggle for racial justice will the (Dis)United States of Amerika stand a chance of ever becoming the United States of America.

NOTES

1. I regard myself as a scholar-activist but this still does not help me feel comfortable offering ideas on political practice.

2. Certainly I am not alone in making suggestions of what we can do. Authors such as Andrew L. Barlow, Melanie E. L. Bush, Judith H. Katz, Himani Bannerji, and the excellent collection by Floya Anthias and Cathie Lloyd have advanced suggestions, programs, as well as critiques of the traditional antiracist movement. My suggestions, as you will see, parallel many of theirs. For example, Barlow suggests that despite globalization, we must focus the struggle at the nation-state level, something with which I agree wholeheartedly. Secondly, he urges to strengthen international human rights accords, which I do not address here, but have suggested elsewhere. Thirdly, despite recognizing the limitations of unions and traditional class politics, he endorses an expanded class politics that is cognizant and not afraid of ethnic politics. Lastly, he urges for a revitalized civil rights movement and documents a few examples. This, as I suggested in the first edition of the book, is the key for racial justice. Bush’s antiracist suggestions in her tome also parallel some of my ideas. For example, she shows some of the

“cracks” in the white’s imaginary and soul and I do too in a chapter in my book. Furthermore, like Bush, I argue that we need an inclusive social movement to fight contemporary racism. Katz’s handbook is very didactic and offers very specific ideas. One workshop that I find very useful is where she challenges whites to understand that “inaction is racism,” that is, whites who stay on the sidelines still benefit from the racial order and cannot pretend neutrality. Bannerji and various authors in the Anthias and Lloyd’s collection argue forcefully for the need of the antiracist movement to also be antisexist and socialist and I have made similar statements in this book and elsewhere.

See Andrew L. Barlow, *Between Fear and Hope: Globalization and Race in the United States* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003); Melanie E. L. Bush, *Breaking the Code of Good Intentions: Everyday Forms of Whiteness* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004); Judith H. Katz, *White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003 [1978]); Himani Bannerji, *Thinking Through: Essays on Feminism, Marxism, and Anti-Racism* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1995); Floya Anthias and Cathie Lloyd, *Rethinking Anti-Racisms* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

3. By this I do not mean that the actions will be taken by individuals as individuals per se. What I mean is that these strategies are unlikely to generate “structural” changes in the nature of the racialized social system (see chapter 1).

4. This is the motto of the people associated with the journal *Race Traitor: Journal of the New Abolitionism*.

5. This store was sued in 2003 because their hiring and employment practices discriminated against Latino, Asian American, and African American applicants and employees. In essence, the lawsuit charged that A&F tried to maintain an all-white look and thus avoided hiring minorities for sales positions. A year later they settled the class action suit, *Gonzalez v. Abercrombie & Fitch*, for \$40 million.

6. In January 12, 2006, Paula Zahn, in her the *Paula Zahn Now* show on CNN, interviewed a black man who narrated how he was put on hold (so they believed) while he was asking information about renting an apartment in this building. Then he narrated how he overheard the people in the office state that they did not want to rent units to blacks. Later on, when they spoke again to him, he was told that there were no units available. To clinch the story, this man asked a white friend to call to inquire if there were apartments available and his friend was told there were several units available.

7. Sociologists, economists, political scientists, and the like have for the most part abandoned realistic studies of discrimination partly because Human Subject Boards, concerned of universities being sued, are less likely to approve this type of research given that it involves some deception (the alternative they give researchers is to get “informed consent” from the research participants who are engaged in discrimination, something akin of asking wolves to take care of the lambs). Another reason for this trend is that too many mainstream researchers do not like the idea of getting out of the comfort zone provided by the examination of thousands of “cases” (in truth, these are just numbers with little depth to them) from “objective” sources such as the Census Bureau or other major surveys. This

development, however, is most unfortunate because even progressive social scientists have lost touch with the reality of discrimination and now enter the battlefield of ideas with their enemies almost naked. Thus, any analyst who disbelieves the analysis of residuals just needs to come up with a variable that was not “controlled for” in the original study or add more information to the equation or suggest that the residual difference measures “true differences” in effort, soft skills, or anything else between the racial groups compared to challenge the claim that the difference is due to discrimination.

8. By the latter I mean that there are a number of settings or situations where discrimination is legal albeit it still is immoral. For example, a private college, school, or club that does not accept any public funding can legally discriminate against certain people (e.g., Baylor College excludes open gays from their University or Augusta National Golf Club excludes women and admitted its first black member in 1990). In these cases, the strategy of action ought to be to shame these organizations and disturb their rosy do-good image as, for instance, the National Organization for Women did with the Augusta Club in 2002.

9. This strategy is called the “audit strategy” and is used by HUD and other organizations to uncover new style discrimination. But if we were to create organizations willing to do things such as what HUD does with apartments on a larger scale, would-be discriminators would have to think twice before they discriminate.

10. For example, these leaders get on the ball whenever an old-fashioned racial incident transpires such as the lynching of James Byrd in Jasper, Texas, in 1998, the murder of Amadou Diallo by police in New York in 1999, and the second-degree charge for attempting to lynch Isaiah Clyburn (he was not killed in this beating) against six white youth in South Carolina in 2005. All these incidents brought the attention of many of these leaders, but by doing so, they help reify the significance of racial practices that are no longer typical of the practices whites use to maintain white supremacy. That is, by reacting to mostly old-fashioned type of racial incidents, these leaders are unconsciously helping to sell the idea that most whites in the United States are beyond race and that the problem of racism is an aberration that remains in pockets of the country.

11. On this latter point, it is important to point out that they never were. If we were to play the game of “who has suffered the most,” a political game that we should not play, there is no question that Native Americans would win hands down.

12. Minority workers are concentrated in the worst jobs in the economy, receive less compensation than white workers in these jobs, are more exposed than white workers to a number of toxic matters, and are less likely to have health insurance. For recent data on all these matters, see Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein, and Sylvia Allegretto, *The State of Working America, 2004/2005* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005).

13. The first case refers to the fact that after Mayor Harold Washington died in 1987, blacks scrambled to get one of their own to replace him and become the next mayor. Although analysts seem to focus on the intrablack struggle between Alderman Eugene Sawyer and Alderman Timothy Evans, the real deal was how

these candidates mishandled the “Hispanic” leaders in Chicago, which at the time meant, the Puerto Rican leaders. Because the two black candidates did not want to work on good faith with the coalition that had helped elect Mayor Washington, Luis Gutierrez, a strong supporter of Mayor Washington, decided to throw his political support behind white mayoral candidate Richard Daley who in turn supported Gutierrez’s bid for Congress. The rest is history as both men have been Mayor and Congressman ever since and no black has come even close to challenging any of them for their respective positions. The other case refers to the election of a white candidate, Mayor Bill White, in Houston in 2003 when the minority vote split along racial lines, blacks voting mostly for the black candidate and Latinos for a moderate Republican Latino candidate. But in Houston the demographic changes suggest that if blacks want to have any direct representation, they will have to negotiate with leaders of the Latino community as it is their community that is growing by leaps and bounds.

14. A few years ago, I lost an election for president of the Association of Black Sociologists and a big factor in my defeat was how the old-guard in the organization framed me in various venues a person who could not be seen as a “bona fide” member of the Association, that is, as not truly black.

15. After all, Stokely Carmichael/Kwame Ture reportedly answered a question in the 1960s about his view on the position of black women in the movement as follows: “The position of women in the movement is prone.” On a similar vein, Eldridge Cleaver stated that women had “pussy power.” To avoid misunderstandings, I am not suggesting that black men are more sexist than white men, as white men in similar movements of the same era exhibited a similar patriarchal style.

16. On this point, I disagree with my good friend, Bill Domhoff, who has argued that we need to stop dreaming about a third party and work hard to radicalize the Democratic Party. See William G. Domhoff, *Changing the Powers That Be: How the Left Can Stop Losing and Win* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

17. Details on this organization, its leaders, and its history can be found in David Yamane, *Student Movements for Multiculturalism: Challenging the Curricular Color Line in Higher Education* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003).

18. The primary buyers of rap music are whites. And although this does not mean that they want to be black, it does open a space for potential communication and, hopefully, collaboration. On rap consumption, see Thomas Dunlevy, “The colour barrier is no more. So whose music is it anyway?,” *Montreal Gazette*, May 12, 2000, A1. On the limitations of rap consumption by white youth as a source of progressiveness, see Bill Youssman, “Blackophilia and Blackophobia: White Youth, the Consumption of Rap, and White Supremacy,” *Communication Theory* 13, no. 4, 366–91.

19. Stanley “Tookie” Williams, cofounder of the L.A. gang, *The Crips*, was jailed in 1979 accused of murdering four people—albeit he contended until his death that he did not kill them. While in prison, he became a new man and wrote books that inspired thousands of poor, young African Americans to rethink their gangster lifestyle. His life was portrayed in the movie, “Redemption: The Stanley Tok-

kie Williams Story,” with actor Jimmy Foxx playing the part of Tookie. On December 14, 2005, after California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger denied him clemency, and Tookie Williams was executed.

20. I am not one of those analysts who either idealizes Hip-Hop artists and sees them as the revolutionary vanguard or see them as pure evil. Hip-Hop, as all cultural productions, is a mixed bag of pleasure and pain, of creativity and silliness, of beauty and the beast. But it is also foolish to ignore the fact that Hip-Hop is the music that has become the vernacular of American youth and that oldies like myself need to understand it if we wish to participate in the cultural and political developments of the 21st century.

21. Bob Jones University, a fundamentalist college in Greenville, South Carolina, entered our national consciousness in 2000, when then-candidate George W. Bush spoke there. A controversy ensued because this university sanctioned southern racist practices, did not admit blacks until 1971, and officially banned interracial dating in 1975 (this ban remains in effect to date).

22. Although I have criticized the ideas of Cornel West and bell hooks, they are both right in pointing out the need for people of color to regain their spiritual and moral compass. Although our oppressors, whoever they might be, always navigate filthier waters than ours, we must always strive to keep our sense of dignity and humanity, to, as brother Bob Marley told us a while ago, emancipate ourselves from mental slavery.

23. As I was writing this chapter, the Senate confirmed this conservative judge as the newest member of the Supreme Court. His confirmation will tilt the balance of power in the Supreme Court to the right and threaten the legal standing of progressive legislation on class, gender, and racial matters.

24. This point was first made by Manning Marable in his, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945–1990* (Jackson and London: University Press of Mississippi, 1991) and, if anything, things have become much worse since.

25. The Reconstruction era refers to the period after the abolition of slavery where the federal government intervened in the South to help blacks get their feet in society. This period is to this date the most monumental in terms of passage of progressive legislation as well as in terms of election of black officials. The Redemption era (1876 to 1880s) refers to the end of the Reconstruction era and the beginning of Jim Crow in the American South.

26. These are the last two stanzas from the lyrics of “The revolution will not be televised.”