political projects, linked to different segments of the community, sought either integration in the (reformed) mainstream, or more radical transformation of the dominant racial order.

After initial victories against segregation were won, one sector of the movement was thus reconstituted as an interest group, seeking an end to racism understood as discrimination and prejudice, and turning its back on the oppositional "politics of identity." Once the organized black movement became a mere constituency, though, it found itself locked in a bear hug with the state institutions whose programs it had itself demanded, while simultaneously isolated from the core institutions of the modern state.

The radical sectors of the movement were marginalized in cultural arenas or on the left. Cultural nationalists disdained engagement with the racial state. Those who confronted the state from radical positions (SNCC, the Black Panther Party, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, and others) were met with intense repression.

Beyond this, organizationally, the minority movements of the 1950s and 1960s nearly ceased to exist. Yet, as we have argued, the complex of racial meanings had been irrevocably altered by years of political activity, by intense campaigns for racial equality and democracy, by the transformed character of "blackness," "whiteness," and all other racial identities that the movements had initiated. The specter of racial equality, and beyond that, of an end to racial oppression itself, continued to haunt American dreams and nightmares.



7

# Race and Reaction

## Introduction

In March 1985, some 2500 people gathered in Alabama to commemorate a dramatic chapter in the history of the civil rights movement. Twenty years before, Martin Luther King, Jr. had led more than 4000 demonstrators on a fifty-mile march from Selma to Montgomery, a major turning point in the struggle for black voting rights. Twenty years later, Rev. Joseph E. Lowery, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, told the crowd gathered at the commemoration, "We have kept the faith but the nation has not kept its promise." Political forces, including the Reagan administration itself, were trying to "turn back the clock of racial history."[1]

Lowery's comments were painfully accurate. The state of black America was worsening when measured by indicators such as unemployment rates, number of families falling below the poverty line, and the widening gap between white and black infant mortality rates.[2] Yet despite these continuing problems, the American populace remained callous about the situation of blacks and other racial minorities. A new mood of "social meanness" pervaded the U.S., and many Americans resented having to provide for the "underprivileged." Indeed many felt that far from being the victims of deprivation, racial minorities were unfairly receiving "preferential treatment" with respect to jobs and educational opportunities.

How, after several decades of attempts to eliminate racial inequality, had we arrived at this point? What political and ideological shifts had occurred to bring about such a tragic reversal?

Although much has been written about racial minority movements, little attention has been given to the way racial issues have shaped political movements on the right. Certainly there has been an explicit revitalization of the racist ideologies of the past, but there are also new currents which seek to reinterpret the meaning of race in the U.S., to *rearticulate* racial ideology once more, this time in a conservative direction. These currents have incubated and developed in the political space created by the racial minority movements of the past several decades. They include a wide range of perceptions about racial politics and the meaning of race in American life.

Among the welter of reactionary and conservative tendencies, we focus our attention on three main currents: the *far right*, the *new right*, and *neoconservatism*. While varying widely in perspective, these currents share a similar ambition to discredit the key ideas and objectives of the 1960s minority movements. In attempting to do so by advancing their own vision of race, they have transformed the terrain of racial politics once again.

In this chapter, we first examine the historical context for racially based reaction; we then survey these three currents with an analytic focus on the processes of rearticulation they employ; we conclude with an examination of the Reagan administration's role in consolidating and abetting the racial reaction which these currents advocate.

## The Context for Reaction

On the surface, the 1970s seemed relatively quiescent, a decade without a firm identity. In fact, those years ushered in a period of profound social transformation and dislocation in American life. During these years, many of the themes of racial reaction, of opposition to the egalitarian ideals of the 1960s, were developed and disseminated. For the first time in a sustained and programmatic way, setbacks in the domestic economy and U.S. reversals on the international level were "explained" by attacking the liberal interventionist state. Many of these criticisms had racial subtexts.

The 1970s were shaped by profound sectoral and regional economic dislocations. Jobs and industry fled the "frostbelt" (formerly the industrial center of U.S. prosperity and progress) for the conservative "sunbelt" of the South and West. The "sunset" industries of steel, rubber, and auto production of the Northeast gave way to the "sunrise" electronic and emergent technologies of the sunbelt. The issue of "deindustrialization" gradually





moved to the center of economic debates, as workers faced plant shutdowns, redundancy, and limited hi-tech occupational opportunities.[3]

Inflation also surged to unprecedented levels, eroding consumer purchasing power and curtailing investment. The problem of "stagflation," which Keynesian policies were helpless to overcome, came to seem a permanent feature of U.S. economic life.[4]

The state was the obvious target of criticism for the economy's poor performance. The state was apparently unable to act as its New Deal lineage obliged it to do, to solve or at least ameliorate economic problems. Indeed, the state was blamed for obstructing the economy's "natural" tendencies toward recovery. Once state programs had been seen as treatments for the disease of economic crisis; now they began to appear as the disease itself. Meanwhile, economic sluggishness persisted, state revenues remained low, and demands for state intervention were heard from every social and economic quarter.

Thus arose the "fiscal crisis of the state," which manifested itself on local, state, and national levels.[5] The near-bankruptcy of major cities, the property tax revolt (exemplified by California's Prop. 13 tax-cutting initiative), and the soaring federal deficit provided further fuel both for the crisis and for growing antistatist sentiment.

In the international arena, the country suffered the humiliating "losses" of Vietnam, Nicaragua, and Iran in the 1970s. The formerly uncontested hegemony of the U.S. was slowly being eroded, not only on the world stage, but also in the American popular imagination. The Bretton Woods system, the structure which formerly dominated postwar international finance, had collapsed by 1973.[6] With it went the unique advantages which the U.S. had previously enjoyed in international trade. Suddenly, it seemed, the U.S. was being "held for ransom" by the OPEC nations, which controlled "our" vital energy resources—a thought not taken lightly by Americans waiting in endless lines for gas. The Iranian revolution also came to typify this fall from grace. America was suddenly "held hostage" by politico-religious forces far beyond popular comprehension.

As the decade ended, no relief was in sight. U.S. manufacturers were losing their markets to foreign competitors and the trade deficit grew alarmingly. People in the U.S. painfully contemplated the idea that perhaps we were not "No. 1" anymore.

Many of these changes which began during the 1970s—and which continued and deepened in the 1980s—have been discussed by other observers, but few have appreciated their implicit racial dimensions. Popular ideology often makes use of racial themes as a framework by which to comprehend major problems, be they the declining U.S. dominance in the world, dislocations in the workforce, or the fiscal crisis of state. Some examples:

- Domestic economic woes are attributed to unfair foreign competition—with Japan receiving an inordinate amount of blame.[7] National polls show an increase in unfavorable attitudes toward Japan, while labor leaders and politicians employ racist cliches redolent of World War II propaganda in their demands for restrictions on Japanese imports.[8] Asian Americans are particularly sensitive to, and affected by, this shift in climate.[9]

- The current influx of immigrants and refugees from Mexico, Cambodia, Vietnam, Haiti, and Cuba (among other countries) has been met in a climate of scarcity with "fear and loathing." Many blame job loss and dislocation on the seemingly endless stream of "illegal aliens."[10] Rising unemployment, scarce housing, and social program cutbacks have contributed to demands for restriction, if not outright exclusion.[11]

The reversals of the 1970s called into question the scope and capacities of the so-called "welfare state." During the pre-crisis era, the Great Society had promised the elimination of poverty and of the invidious effects of racial discrimination. Yet the problems remained—indeed some had intensified throughout the 1970s. It was time, conservatives argued with increasing popular support, to stop "throwing good money after bad." In attempting to remedy problems of poverty and inequality, the state, they charged, only made them worse and instilled a parasitic dependency in its clients.[12] The tax revolt was but one popular indication of this sentiment. Taxes, it was argued, replenished and expanded the welfare state, and its stereotypically minority clientele, at the expense of "productive" (i.e., white) taxpayers.[13]

Another target was affirmative action policies. Through its reckless intervention, conservatives alleged, the state committed "reverse discrimination"—*whites* were now the victims of racial discrimination in education and the job market. The dislocations which began in the 1970s, then, were often understood *racially*. This racial connection has various implications; for example, it has fed into random acts of racial violence. But perhaps more importantly, "racial" issues became central to the agenda of those forces and projects seeking a rightward realignment in U.S. politics. The far right, the new right, and neoconservatism reopened the 1960s debates about racial identity and racial equality, and questioned once more the role of racial issues in the democratic political process. The effectiveness of a right-wing challenge to ideals promoted by the racial minority movements of the 1960s hinged on its ability to rearticulate the meaning of race in contemporary American society.





## The Rearticulation of Racial Ideology

As we noted in Chapter 6, the racial minority movements of the postwar period dramatically reshaped the political and cultural landscape of the nation. They imparted new meaning to established traditions and ideas. Equality, group and individual rights, and the legitimate scope of state activity were reinterpreted, *rearticulated*, by these movements in a radical democratic discourse. Ironically, by challenging the racial verities of the past and revamping the old political terrain, the racial minority movements set the stage for the racial reaction which first appeared in the late-1960s, grew and developed in the 1970s, and reached maturity in the 1980s.

There were clear limits to any attempt to undo the effects of the "great transformation." In the aftermath of the 1960s, any effective challenge to the egalitarian ideals framed by the minority movements could no longer rely on the racism of the past. Racial equality had to be acknowledged as a desirable goal. But the *meaning* of equality, and the proper means for achieving it, remained matters of considerable debate.

With the exception of some on the far right, the racial reaction that developed in the last two decades claimed to favor racial equality. Its vision was that of a "color-blind" society where racial considerations were never entertained in the selection of leaders, in hiring decisions, and the distribution of goods and services in general. As the right understood them, racial problems from the 1970s on consisted of new forms of racial injustice which originated in the "great transformation." This new injustice conferred group rights on racial minority groups, thus granting a new form of privilege—that of "preferential treatment."

The culprit behind this new form of "racism" was the state itself. In attempting to eliminate racial discrimination, the state went too far. It legitimated group rights, established affirmative action mandates, and spent money on a range of social programs which, according to the right, debilitated, rather than uplifted, its target populations. In this scenario, the victims of racial discrimination had dramatically shifted from racial minorities to whites, particularly white males.

Beginning in the 1970s, the forces of racial reaction seized on the notion of racial equality advanced by the racial minority movements and *rearticulated* its meaning. Racial reaction repackaged the earlier themes—infusing them with new political meaning and linking them to other key elements of conservative ideology.

The different currents of reaction were not all equally successful in shifting the terms of racial politics. The far right for the most part revived the racist ideologies of previous periods. Yet even this current employed processes of rearticulation in its attempt to attack the liberal state as the

perpetrator of a racially unjust society. The new right's use of "code words" (non-racial rhetoric used to disguise racial issues) was a classic example of rearticulation, geared to mobilize a mass base threatened by minority gains, but disinclined to embrace overtly racist politics. Neoconservatism represented the most sophisticated effort to rearticulate racial ideology. It developed a limited but real coherence in challenging the underpinnings of the 1960s quest for social justice. It sketched out a vision of an "egalitarian" society where racial considerations were no longer the concern of state policy. We now turn our attention to each of these three currents.

## The Far Right

In 1980, Tom Metzger, a television repairman from San Diego County, California, won nomination as the Democratic candidate for Congress in the 43rd Congressional District. His bid received national attention when it was revealed that Metzger, among other posts he held on the far right, was once Grand Dragon of the California branch of the Ku Klux Klan. An embarassed state central committee subsequently stripped him of his Democratic Party membership.[14]

Metzger was always civic-minded. He first garnered public attention when he offered to help the U.S. Border Patrol hunt down "illegal aliens." He also offered Klan members as a "goon squad" against the organizing efforts of the United Farm Workers union in the fields of California. He later dropped the Klan affiliation to found the White American Resistance (WAR) and he began to produce "Race and Reason," a "white man's talk show" which was broadcast on public access cable television in San Francisco, San Diego, Orange County in California, and in Austin, Texas.

Metzger was not alone in his efforts. A range of white supremacist groups appeared in the 1980s—Aryan Nations, the Silent Brotherhood, the Church of the Creator, the Order—joining forces with various sects of the Ku Klux Klan. Most were interconnected and constituted an underground network which embraced neo-Nazis, survivalists, and militant tax resisters, among others. These groups came to public attention through a series of dramatic crimes such as the killing of Jewish radio talk show host Alan Berg in Denver, a Brinks armored car robbery in Ukiah, California, and numerous shoot-outs with federal police.

Since the Civil War, white supremacist groups have periodically resurfaced on the American political scene. As D. W. Griffith's epic *Birth of a Nation* (1915) effectively conveyed, there was a "populist" impulse in such politics which resonated with whites who felt dislocated by the changes





around them. In the view of such groups, racial "justice" (i.e., white supremacy) is perpetually threatened and the legitimate authorities are always too weak, naive, or corrupt to maintain America's "true" identity. Such logic has often inspired vigilante action as white supremacist groups sought to restore "white honor" and a "just" racial order.

In the past, the targets of such actions were racial minority groups themselves—groups which had to be terrorized into "knowing their place." In the 1980s, however, the target expanded to include the federal government. For example, to the neofascists of the shadowy Order, the "Zionist Occupied Government" (ZOG) was now the problem. To the Posse Comitatus, the federal income tax represented the opening wedge in the government's assault on white rights. Klansman Thomas Robb, publisher of *The Torch* newsletter, summarized the historic difference between previous and current far right thinking:

> The Klan in the '20s made a mistake thinking that evil resided in men who came home drunk or in Negroes who walked on the wrong side of the street. Today we see the evil is coming out of the government. To go out and shoot a Negro is foolish. It's not the Negro in the alley who's responsible for what's wrong with this country. It's the traitors in Washington.[15]

Targeting the federal government was a direct response to the racial activism of the state in the 1960s. Busing, affirmative action, and other egalitarian measures created, in the white supremacist view, a racially unjust society. The society became "polluted"[16] and the federal government, and liberalism in particular, were responsible. Pastor Richard G. Butler of the Aryan Nations preached such a view at his "Church of Jesus Christ Christian"[17] in Idaho:

> When the Declaration of Independence talks about 'one people,' it's not talking about a nation made for Asia, Africa, India [or] the Soviet Union. That's a document based on a Christian people. We have watched like frightened sheep as do-gooders sniveling about the underprivileged gleefully grabbed our children by the nape of the neck and rubbed their faces in filth to create equality.[18]

As some commentators noted, the economic dislocations of the 1980s had much to do with the revitalized presence of the far right.[19] In the midst of massive farm foreclosures and the crisis of the American farmer as a whole, the far right fed on rural despair and formed such groups as the Farmers Liberation Army, the Christian-Patriots Defense League, and the new Populist Party.[20]

But economic arguments are insufficient to explain the growth and popularity of far right and white supremacist organizations. The revitalized presence of such groups was also a political response to the liberal state and reflected a crisis of identity engendered by the 1960s. The far right was attempting to develop a new white identity, to reassert the very meaning of *whiteness*, which had been rendered unstable and unclear by the minority challlenges of the 1960s.[21] Nor was it clear what "rights" white people had in the wake of challenges to their formerly privileged status.

The appeal of the far right project extends, therefore, to people who would normally disagree with extreme racist views. More moderate sympathizers can naively view such politics as merely the expression of "white interest group" politics. As a supporter of Metzger's congressional bid told a television interviewer:

> It's nice to have someone that represents the white people. It seems like nobody cares what the white people say anymore and all the candidates seem to run around and go out to all the minorities and never even once ask the white people how they feel so I guess we're turned around: the whites are now the minority and the minorities are the majority.[22]

Even as the far right gained a certain legitimacy with those more "mainstream" white conservatives who did not share its violence, the rightward drift of American politics as a whole also drew far right sympathizers into the newly emerging conservative consensus.[23] Conversely, as "moderate" right-wing demands against busing and affirmative action achieved success through legitimate political channels, hardcore extremists sometimes found themselves increasingly politically isolated. Observers feared that this isolation would push far right groups to adopt terrorist tactics.[24]

The effort to revive past white supremacist notions of race in the contemporary U.S., we think, has some serious limits. It would be difficult to attract a mass base to such an explicitly racist political project. The tenor of national debates about race—what we have called the *context for reaction*—precludes such a possibility. But if far right white supremacist politics remain marginal, this is not the case for more mainstream projects.

The right-wing initiatives which sought to overturn the minority achievements of the 1960s, therefore had to advance a new racial politics. Once again they had to *rearticulate*, and not merely reverse, the meaning of race and the fundamental issues arising from racial inequality. The far right is generally unable to do this and therefore represents a "failed" attempt at rearticulation. The far right has tried to reassert white identity and reaffirm the nation as "the white man's country." It has shifted the





blame for racial injustice from individual racial minorities to the state. But it continues to cling to biological notions of race and racial purity which render it fairly similar to the racism prevalent at the turn of the century. Its inability to part with these basic racist assumptions dooms the far right to political marginality.

Though incapable of rearticulating the radical democratic racial ideologies of the 1960s, the far right is hardly vanishing. The far right can act as a "conscience" for other parts of the American right, or serve as their "shock troops."[25] If our analysis is correct, its inability to establish a broad political base may indeed force its degeneration into terrorism.[26] Its numbers may be small and its political impact minor, but the far right may remain a frightening and highly visible reminder of the violence which has often characterized the enforcement of the racial order.

## The New Right: Origins

Walter Dean Burnham has noted that the political culture of the U.S. is highly influenced by the values of 17th-century dissenting Protestantism and that this has frequently become manifest in periods of transition and crisis:

> Whenever and wherever the pressures of "modernization"—secularity, urbanization, the growing importance of science—have become unusually intense, episodes of revivalism and culture-issue politics have swept over the American social landscape. In all such cases since at least the end of the Civil War, such movements have been more or less explicitly reactionary, and have frequently been linked with other kinds of reaction in explicitly political ways.[27]

The new right operates in this political space. It is a contemporary attempt to create an authoritarian, right-wing populism—a populism fuelled by resentment.

The appeal of the new right is based on the way many people experienced "the great transformation" and the transformations and dislocations of the 1970s and 1980s. These shocks inspired fear. They portended the collapse of the "American Dream"—the apolitical, perpetually prosperous, militarily invincible, and deeply self-absorbed and self-righteous "mainstream" American culture was, we think, shaken to its foundations by developments over this period. Commonly held concepts of nation, community, and family were transformed, and no new principle of cohesion,

no new cultural center, emerged to replace them. New collective identities, rooted in the "new social movements," remained fragmented and politically disunited.

In short, the U.S. was politically fragmented as differences of all sorts—regional, racial, sexual, religious—became more visible, while economic stability and global military supremacy seemed to vanish. A plethora of interest groups, it seemed, had suddenly emerged, invoking a bewildering array of new social and political values, creating unprecedented political disorientation, and leaving the "mainstream" with no clear notion of the "common good."[28]

In the face of these challenges, traditional conservatism seemed to have little to offer—society and politics, and the conventional way in which they were understood, had already been radically transformed. Only the appearance of the new right in the middle 1970s gave the millions of threatened members of the "silent majority" (Richard Nixon's phrase, let it be remembered, coined to steal some of George Wallace's thunder) any relief. The new right was a well-organized alternative to the moral and existential chaos of the preceding decades: a network of conservative organizations with an aggressive political style, an outspoken religious and cultural traditionalism, and a clear populist commitment.

Gillian Peele defines the new right as "a loose movement of conservative politicians and a collection of general-purpose political organizations which have developed independently of the political parties."[29] The main new right affiliates emerged in the 1970s: the American Conservative Union, the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC), the Conservative Caucus, the Young Americans for Freedom (whose origins were earlier), and a group of fundamentalist Protestant sects incorporating millions of adherents. Leading figures of the 1980s new right were fundraiser/publisher Richard A. Viguerie, Paul Weyrich (Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress), Howard Phillips (Conservative Caucus), and the late John T. Dolan (NCPAC), as well as activist Phyllis Schlafly (Eagle Forum, Stop-ERA) and fundamentalist evangelist Rev. Jerry Falwell (Moral Majority). Periodicals identified with the new right included the *Conservative Digest*, *Policy Review*, and *New Guard*. The key new right think tank is the Heritage Foundation, founded by brewer Joseph Coors and Paul Weyrich in 1973. Central to the new right's growth has been the use of direct-mail solicitation:

> Collecting millions of dollars in small contributions from blue-collar workers and housewives, the New Right feeds on discontent, anger, insecurity, and resentment, and flourishes on backlash politics.[30]





Much has been written about the new right's tendency to focus on controversial *social* issues as a means of rallying and organizing its constituency. Left and progressive analyses have argued that the defining project of the new right is the reassertion of "patriarchy" by attacking the limited gains of the feminist and gay movements.[31] While much of this is true, such analyses understate the crucial importance of *race* as a defining issue. Race was crucial in the initial reaction against the progressive gains of the 1960s (then known as "backlash"; e.g., anti-busing movements),[32] central to the electoral perspective of the new right (the "southern strategy"), and continues to be a major, if at times disguised, issue for the new right today.

In this respect the racial politics of the new right cannot be seen as a simple "backlash" against the gains of the 1960s movements for racial equality. In the early 1970s, there was little awareness among progressive analysts that behind the "backlash" was a potentially innovative political project: *authoritarian populism*.

New right populism combined such venerable American ideological themes as respect for authority, mistrust of "big government," and defense of traditional morality, with resistance to minority demands for group rights. The latter concern should hardly be surprising. A striking feature of America's populist tradition, reaching back to Andrew Jackson, is that it has been fuelled by heavy doses of nativism and racism.

The new right cannot simply defend patterns of racial inequality by demanding a return to segregation, for example, or by reviving simplistic notions of biological superiority/inferiority.[33] As we have previously noted, the racial upheavals of the 1960s precluded a direct return to this form of racial logic.

The new right objective, however, was to dismantle the political gains of racial minorities. Since these gains could not be easily reversed, they had to be *rearticulated*. The key device used by the new right in its effort to limit the political gains of racial minority movements was "code words." These are phrases and symbols which refer indirectly to racial themes, but do not directly challenge popular democratic or egalitarian ideals (e.g., justice, equal opportunity). Beginning with the Wallace campaign of 1968, we can trace the pattern of new right experimentation with these code words, and with the rearticulation of racial meanings they attempt.

The first rumblings of the present-day new right agenda were heard in George Wallace's 1968 presidential bid. Wallace's initial role on the national political stage had been that of die-hard segregationist.[34] His entry into the presidential race was first seen as a replay of the Dixiecrat strategy which had led to the candidacy of Strom Thurmond twenty years before.

Few analysts expected Wallace to have mass appeal outside the South, yet in northern blue collar strongholds like Milwaukee, Detroit, and Philadelphia, he demonstrated surprising strength.

Although Wallace's image as a racist politician had originally placed him in the national spotlight, it did not make good Presidential politics, and he was forced to incorporate his racial message as a subtext, implicit but "coded," in a populist appeal. Wallace thus struck certain chords that anticipated the new right agenda—defense of traditional values, opposition to "big government," and patriotic and militaristic themes. But the centerpiece of his appeal was his racial politics. Wallace was a law-and-order candidate, an antistatist, an inheritor of classical southern populist traditions. He called for the stepped-up use of force to repress ghetto rebellions, derided the black movement and the war on poverty, and attacked liberal politicians and intellectuals. Wallace departed from his early 1960s style, however, by avoiding direct race-baiting.

During the same campaign, political analyst Kevin Phillips submitted a lengthy and rather scholarly analysis of U.S. voting trends to Nixon headquarters, arguing that a Republican victory and long-term electoral realignment were possible on racial grounds. Published the following year as *The Emerging Republican Majority*, Phillips's book suggested a turn to the right and the use of "coded" antiblack campaign rhetoric (e.g., law and order).[35] Wallace's success, the disarray in Democratic ranks caused by the "Negro socioeconomic revolution," and polling data from blue-collar districts around the country convinced Phillips that a strategic approach of this kind (dubbed the "southern strategy") could fundamentally shift political alignments which had been in effect since 1932.

These innovations bore rich political fruit. They coincided with the fragmentation of the New Deal coalition, the "loss" of the war on poverty, and the decline of the black movement. They represented an apparent alternative to ghetto riots and white guilt, to the integration of northern schools and the onset of stagflation. They effortlessly, if demagogically, appealed to a majority of the electorate—something which the new social movements of minorities, antiwar activists, and feminists had not succeeded in doing.

Most important of all, the "coded" racial politics of the late 1960s and after did not repudiate the legacy of the minority movements; indeed, they adopted a conservative egalitarian version of their demands.[36] Nixon advocated "black capitalism" and on the advice of Daniel Patrick Moynihan drew up a welfare reform plan featuring a guaranteed annual income.[37] While not a new rightist himself, Nixon set the stage for the later new right ascendance by simultaneously coopting *both* Wallace and suitably moderate blacks (and other minorities), by espousing *both* law and order and a negative income tax, neighborhood schools *and* black capitalism.





**Cultural Politics, Antistatism, and the "New Class"**

By 1980 the new right agenda was far more advanced. There was no longer any flirtation with the sort of centrism Nixon represented. The new right dream seemed within reach: to consolidate a "new majority" which could dismantle the welfare state, legislate a return to "traditional morality," and stem the tide of political and cultural dislocation which the 1960s and 1970s represented.[38] This project linked the assault on liberalism and "secular humanism,"[39] the obsession with individual guilt and responsibility where social questions were concerned (crime, sex, education, poverty), with a fierce *antistatism*. The political strategy involved was populist: use of the initiative process, for example, served as an "end-run" around the courts, the bureaucracy, the Congress and state legislatures. Traditional conservatives such as Alan Crawford have labeled this channeling of popular rage through direct democratic channels "antipolitical":

> A near-constant theme of conservative thought, from Edmund Burke to William Buckley, has been that unrestrained expressions of popular will militate against the orderly processes of government on which stable societies depend. . . . The New Right, impatient for short-run results, has rejected this dominant theme of conservatism in favor of direct democracy, threatening to shatter the safeguards against political centralization and, therefore, freedom itself.[40]

Crawford believes that "the New Right exploits social protest and encourages class hostility by trying to fuel the hostilities of lower-middle-class Americans against those above and below them on the economic ladder."[41] Some analysts see the new right as a status revolt[42] by those who, according to Ben Wattenberg, are "unyoung, unpoor and unblack"[43]—those whose identities and interests were articulated *negatively* by the social movements of the 1960s and the crises of the 1970s. They resent any mobility on the part of lower-status groups, and demand that the political process recognize the traditional values to which they subscribe. Their anger is directed at those who are "not like themselves"; this involves a racial dimension which is experienced as a *cultural* threat as much as an economic one:

> . . . [T]he fear of black power, "reverse discrimination," at the community level—associated with fear of crime, property devaluation, dirtiness and noisiness—reflects not only the direct economic crunch on white working-class people but also a less tangible sense of cultural disintegration.[44]

The failure of the Great Society and other liberal experiments also focused attention on members of the *new class* (educators, administrators, planners, consultants, network journalists, etc.) and revived traditional themes of *antistatism*. The new right believes that "pointy-heads" control the state and are responsible for the current political, economic, and cultural malaise. During the 1960s and 1970s the state was recklessly allowed to expand and intervene in every aspect of social life; it came to dictate social policy with disastrous results. In particular, it acceded to racial minority demands and gave minorities privileged access to jobs and social services. Ed Davis, a new right cult figure and former Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, put it this way: "I always felt that the government really was out to force me to hire 4-foot-11 transvestite morons."[45]

Critiques of liberal statism abound on the new right. The Supreme Court is criticized for liberal bias in matters of race relations. The electoral college system is opposed for restricting third-party efforts and, as Kevin Phillips has suggested, maximizing the influence of a "third world state"[46] such as California. While constantly calling for a return to the basics of the Constitution, new right activists also seem intent on revising it through amendents to stop busing, prohibit abortions, or encourage school prayer.

New right figures appeal to white racial anxieties. Spiro Agnew's acceptance by the new right was based on the way he "talked back" to black leaders. Sen. Jesse Helms built his reputation by refusing to pursue black votes in North Carolina and by his highly publicized smears of Martin Luther King, Jr. as a communist.[47] Years before his 1992 presidential bid, new right columnist Patrick J. Buchanan argued, as a headline put it, that the "GOP Vote Search Should Bypass Ghetto" since blacks have been ungrateful for Republican efforts to help and assist them.[48]

As we have suggested, race and class politics interface and overlap in the U.S. Individuals and groups interpret their conditions of existence and their subjective experiences in ways which draw upon both racially based and class-based meanings:

> On one side, threatening traditional values, are the feminists, the liberals, the university communities, minorities, residents of urban centers, and the media. On the other—the side of the angels—are the "pro-family" forces, the leadership of the New Right and its disguntled constituents, plus a growing political movement of fundamentalist evangelical ministers. . . . Both sides are competing for the soul of America.[49]

Thus the new right grafts together issues of race and issues of class. New right publisher William Rusher provides an apt illustration of the racial dimension "hidden" in much of the "new class" analysis on the right:





> A new economic division pits the producers—businessmen, manufacturers, hard-hats, blue-collar workers, and farmers—against a new and powerful class of non-producers comprised of a liberal verbalist elite (the dominant media, the major foundations and research institutions, the educational establishment, the federal and state bureaucracies) and a semipermanent welfare constituency, all coexisting happily in a state of mutually sustaining symbiosis.[50]

The "semipermanent welfare constituency" is implicitly non-white in the popular political imagination.[51] Rusher's approach conjures up anti–big government sentiments by blaming unemployment among minorities for parasitism at the expense of "productive" workers. His *ressentiment* is racial, even though his vocabulary is that of class. This rearticulation of racial ideology is, we believe, crucial to recent new right advances.

The new right generally does not display *explicit* racism. It has gained political currency by rearticulating racial ideology. As we have argued, rearticulation does not require an explictly racial discourse, and would in fact be severely limited by any direct advocacy of racial inequality. Some examples of this process:

*Busing*. The new right has opposed busing not as an overt effort to maintain residential or school segregation, but as an assault on "the community" and "the family." School integration, new right activists have argued, means that the state usurps the decision-making powers which should be vested in parents: deciding in what kind of communities their children will be raised and what kind of education their children will receive. A similar argument is made against busing on "pro-family" grounds. As Gordon and Hunter suggest, "The antibusing movement is nourished by . . . fears for the loss of the family. The loss of neighborhood schools is perceived as a threat to community, and therefore family stability, by many people, particularly in cities where ethnically homogenous communities remain."[52]

The formerly progressive themes of "community control" and "parental involvement" are thus harnessed to prevent race mixing in the schools, while charges of racism are blunted or avoided altogether. One measure of the success of this anti-integration strategy was the confusion it sowed even on the left during the Boston busing controversy of the 1970s.[53]

*Textbook Censorship*. The monitoring of books for public school adoption is another issue where a "hidden" racial dimension informs new right politics. As early as 1975, the Heritage Foundation formed the National Congress for Educational Excellence to coordinate the activities of roughly 200 textbook-protester organizations nationwide. This effort capitalized on the feelings of many whites that their values and lifestyles were being neglected by "multicultural" texts.[54] The new right, in this instance, can push a racial

agenda merely by arguing for "traditional" lifestyles and families, for the return to a more homogeneous image of everyday life, purged of "secular humanism" and the rest of the unsettling ambiguities of the 1960s and 1970s. Textbooks focusing on Dick and Jane and Spot, and avoiding any mention of Ahmad or Chabrika, Fernando or Nguyen, effectively *re*-marginalize minority cultures without ever having to invoke issues of race.

*"Reverse Discrimination"*. On the issue of affirmative action, the right has made significant advances in rearticulating the meaning of racial equality. The strength of this argument is its specific appeal to equality and "fairness." What has become unfair, the right argues, is the state's accommodation to the demands of racial minorities and other "special interests" at the expense of whites. The new right's ability to mobilize resentment against the "group rights" demands of racial minorities dovetails with the neoconservative argument that only "equality of opportunity" can be a valid objective of state policy. The ability of the new right to mobilize "grass roots" opposition to residential and school desegregation, to preferential hiring and school admissions schemes, and to minority "set-asides" in government contracting provides a populist counterpoint to the more abstract and theoretically developed critique developed by ethnicity theorists such as Nathan Glazer and Michael Novak. It is to this current that we now turn our attention.

## Neoconservatism

Perhaps worst of all from the ethnicity theory point of view, blacks and other racial minorities questioned the legitimacy of reforms based on the principle of equality of *individuals*, seeking instead a radical *collective* equality ("group rights") which ethnicity theory viewed as anathema to a democracy. Such a policy would break faith with the generations who had come before, break faith with the civic ideals which were the soul of American society. True, the ethnicity theorists had flirted briefly with the idea of "equality of result" during the early heady days of the Great Society. Moynihan, for example, was co-author of an important 1965 speech by Lyndon Johnson which contained these famous lines:

> . . . [F]reedom is not enough. You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying: Now you are free to go where you want, do as you desire, and choose the leaders you please.
>
> You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him (sic), bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, "you are free to compete with all the others," and still justly believe that you have been completely fair.
>
> Thus it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates.
>
> This is the next and more profound stage of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity—not just legal equity but human ability—not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and as a result.[55]

Very quickly, though, they drew back from the larger implications of this position. Glazer wrote during the same year that "a new national interest" in "the final liquidation of Negro separation" was being defined, and that blacks themselves had best not oppose it, for "When an ethnic group interest has clashed with a national interest, we have been quite ruthless and even extreme in overriding the group interest."[56]

By the 1970s, opposition to minority demands for "group rights" had become a centerpiece of the neoconservative perspective. The ethnicity theorists associated with the current did not ground their arguments, as some in the new right did, on "white rights." They minimized references to "reverse discrimination" or "reverse racism," preferring to center their critique on the illegitimacy of state policies which engaged in "race-thinking." Thus Glazer's objections to affirmative action policies centered on their ineffectiveness and their challenge to the fundamental civic ideals which had made the "American ethnic pattern" possible: individualism, market-based opportunity, and the curtailment of excessive state interventionism. Affirmative action, he wrote,

> . . . [H]as meant that we abandon the first principle of a liberal society, that the individual's interests and good and welfare are the test of a good society, for we now attach benefits and penalties to individuals simply on the basis of their race, color, and national origins. The implications of this new course are increasing consciousness of the significance of group membership, an increasing divisiveness on the basis of race, color, and national origin, and a spreading resentment among the disfavored groups against the favored ones. If the individual is the measure, however, our public concern is with the individual's capacity to work out an individual fate by means of education, work, and self-realization in the various spheres of life. Then how the figures add up on the basis of whatever measure of group we use may be interesting, but should be of no concern to public policy.[57]

He did not argue that white resentment against such programs was justified—in the manner of a William Rusher or a George Wallace—only that it was inevitable.[58] This distinguishes the neoconservative and new right oppositions to such policies: the neoconservatives fear the politics of *ressentiment* as an unwanted consequence of state over-involvement, while the new right mobilizes precisely such sentiments.

The power of the neoconservative critique of affirmative action is based on the ability of such authors as Glazer to present themselves as simultaneously opposed both to discrimination and to antidiscrimination measures based on "group rights" principles. The neoconservatives thus refocus the debate on the question of what *means* are best for achieving equality. Such an approach is attractive but misleading.

In the neoconservative view opposition to affirmative action is consistent with the goals of the civil rights movement; it is a challenge to "race-thinking."[59] According to this logic, only individual rights exist, only individual opportunity can be guaranteed by law, and only "merit" justifies the granting of privilege. Yet even the most cursory examination of such arguments reveals their deeper political subtexts. Glazer's concern about the resentments and heightened racial polarization any *abandonment* of traditional liberalism would inspire, for example, does not extend to the resentments and polarization which *adherence* to liberalism entails. Morris Abram, a former liberal partisan of civil rights who served on the U.S. Civil Rights Commission under Reagan, proposed the extension of unionization as a better remedy than affirmative action for alleviating minority poverty and powerlessness.[60] Thereby he merely indicated which groups he considered acceptable vehicles for political demands. Workers are apparently free to have collective interests, but racial minorities are not. Concepts of "individual merit," as Philip Green has shown, have the same shallowness. "Merit" is a political construct, by which employers, schools, state agencies, etc. legitimate the allocation of benefits to favored (i.e., organized) constituencies, and deny the validity of competing claims.[61]

Once we recognize that the attack on affirmative action is not simply about "fairness," but also about the maintenance of existing social positions and political stability, it becomes easier to explain its enormous appeal. The unpopularity of affirmative action by now extends far beyond the new right and the neoconservatives who originally authored the "reverse discrimination" critique. In our view the defeat of affirmative action testifies to two things: the subtlety and pervasiveness of the right's rearticulation of the meaning of racial equality as a matter of individual rather than group or collective concern, and the increasing convergence of the neoconservative and new right tendencies.





*Rearticulating the Meaning of Racial Equality*. The concept of "reverse discrimination" appropriated the demand for equality presented by the minority movements of the 1960s and stood it on its head. The neoconservative argument redefined racial meanings in such a way as to contain the more radical implications of the 1960s upsurge. Racial discrimination and racial equality—in the neoconservative model—were problems to be confronted *only* at an individual level, once legal systems of discrimination such as *de jure* segregation had been eliminated. Thus discrimination may be an illegitimate infringement on individual rights, but it can no longer be a legitimate source for group demands. What the neoconservatives opposed was therefore not racial equality, but racial collectivity.

By limiting themselves to considering discrimination against *individuals*, though, the neoconservatives trivialized the problem of racial equality, and of equality in general. Discrimination never derived its main strength from individual actions or prejudices, however great these might have been or might still be. Its most fundamental characteristic was always its roots in the racially organized *social* order. The minority movements of the 1950s and 1960s, even in their early, "moderate" incarnations, definitively questioned this social assignment of identities and racial meanings. It was this questioning, this challenge, that the neoconservatives sought to confine and reorganize in their assault on affirmative action. They did this by limiting the meaning of racial discrimination to the curtailment of individual rights, a distinction that could apply to whites and non-whites alike. The social logic of race was thus rendered opaque without any necessary recourse to explicit prejudice or institutionalized inequality à la the segregation laws of the past.

*Convergence of Neoconservatism and the New Right*. Neoconservatism incubated in the ever-widening division between liberals and radicals of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and drew further strength from the rise of the new right. In the eyes of the ethnicity theorists, not only were the black radicals and other new social movements upsetting the pluralist applecart of tolerance, individualism, accommodation of conflicting interests through established political processes, etc., but they were inspiring a right-wing intolerance equal to their own, and threatening to open a second breach in the body politic, this time to the liberals' right. As the 1960s drew to a close and the 1970s began, many ethnicity theorists felt they had to choose an alliance with the right in order to stem the tide of radical collectivism which the black movement had set in motion. They defined neoconservatism in the pages of *Commentary* and *The Public Interest*, and in editorials in *The Wall Street Journal*. In a series of publications emerging from Harvard, they spelled out the tragic implications of affirmative action.[62]

The neoconservatives originally polemicized against the politics of *ressentiment*, but by the 1980s they had made their peace with its chief practitioners, the forces of the new right. This was, in our view, largely a matter of political expedience. It must be remembered that the radical democratic demands (of "equality of result," etc.) typified by affirmative action particularly threatened certain vulnerable groups. Unionized workers benefiting from *de facto* segregated seniority systems, for example, or white ethnic residents of urban enclaves who felt themselves to be an "endangered species"—hemmed in by ghettos or barrios, fearful of crime—became potential conservative constituencies. These groups were certainly harmed by the implementation of affirmative action in employment, busing, and minority "set-asides," though the extent of the threat such programs represented remains a matter of debate.[63] By formulating a sophisticated counter-argument to minority calls for "equality of result," neoconservative scholars rationalized existing systems of racial inequality. They helped the beneficiaries of *de facto* occupational segregation, for example, to avoid confronting the disquieting implication of racism.[64] Thus the neoconservative scholars of ethnicity tacitly provided ammunition to the new right in its racially based mobilization of (ethnic, working-class, etc.) whites.

Having seen the radical challengers at home throw their support to communist revolutionaries fighting the U.S. in Vietnam and elsewhere, having experienced a series of threats to traditional values of family, the work ethic, and sexual discipline (in such new social movements as feminism, welfare rights, and gay liberation), the neoconservatives ultimately came to share many points of agreement with the new right. True, some divergent elements remained—for example some neoconservatives who had been associated with Hubert Humphrey and Henry "Scoop" Jackson continued to support certain welfare state programs and trade unionism, however much they detested affirmative action and were Cold War hawks—but in all the main points a new intellectual and policy-oriented realignment had occurred. Once more, the issue of race had played a crucial role in restructuring the central dynamics— political, cultural, and perhaps most important, intellectual—of U.S. society.

## The Reagan "Revolution"

During the vice presidential debate in October 1984, George Bush was clearly overwhelmed by questions on minorities and racial discrimination. As Jack White of *Time Magazine* reminded Bush,





> Many critics of your administration say that it is the most hostile to minorities in recent memory. Have you perhaps inadvertently encouraged that view by supporting tuition tax credits, the anti-busing amendment and siding with Bob Jones University in a case before the Supreme Court, your original opposition to the Voting Rights extension and so forth?[65]

Bush sidestepped some issues and made vague statements about others, but was clearly at a loss to justify the Reagan administration record.

Reagan's record on racial policy was not a particularly enlightened one. Since his emergence as a Republican leader, Reagan had opposed every major civil rights measure considered by Congress. He opposed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, denouncing it as a "bad piece of legislation," and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, opining that "The Constitution very specifically reserves control of voting to local governments. Additional legislation is unnecessary."[66] His consistency on racial issues extended through the 1980 and 1984 Presidential campaigns. On the campaign trail in 1980, Reagan told the South that he favored "state's rights" in the same Mississppi town where civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner had been murdered by Klansmen in 1964.

During that same campaign, Nancy Reagan told a crowd in New Hampshire that she wished her husband could be with her to "see all these beautiful white people."[67] It was a revealing *faux pas*. President Reagan, more than any other President in recent memory, had cultivated an image as "the white people's president." In the 1984 election, Reagan took 74 percent of the white male vote in the South, 68 percent in the West, and 66 percent in the nation as a whole:

> Reagan won every category of white males except white Jewish males. . . . He won rich and poor, Catholic and Protestant, young and old, North and South, Yuppie and blue collar. Generally he won them by overwhelming margins.[68]

The impact of Reagan's 1984 success among white men continues to resonate not only in the Republican but also in the Democratic Party. As Democratic pollster William Hamilton warned, the Democrats "can't very well lose [the white male vote] by 2 to 1 and expect to be serious players in a two-party system."[69] Many Democrats now argue that the Party has lost touch with a majoritarian constituency and needs to shed its image as the vehicle of "special interests." In such a context, racial minority demands are bound to be submerged. In February 1985, newly elected Democratic National Committee Chair Paul Kirk said that caucuses within

the DNC (representing such groups as blacks, Hispanics, Asians/Pacific Islanders, women, and gays) were "political nonsense" and promised to abolish them.[70]

On the policy level, the Reagan administration took its cue from both the new right and neoconservatives, arguing that the important forms of racial discrimination had been eliminated. Thus most civil rights remedies and mechanisms for achieving racial equality were suddenly considered to discriminate *against whites*. In January 1985, Reagan remarked that some civil rights organizations are no longer needed because they have accomplished their goals.[71] School busing plans and affirmative action policies came under attack by the Reagan "revolutionaries." Former Attorney General William French Smith dropped desegregation appeals in cities such as Kansas City and Houston and slowed integration efforts in Chicago, Phoenix, Albuquerque, and Rochester. Former Secretary of Labor Raymond Donovan issued new regulations in 1981 which substantially weakened the affirmative action requirements attached to federal contracts.

In an important 1985 Supreme Court case, the Justice Department opposed the city of Indianapolis' efforts to use hiring quotas to help minorities get jobs in local government.[72] In the same year, the Department urged over fifty states, counties, and cities to voluntarily modify their affirmative action plans to remove numerical goals and quotas. It was hinted that failure to comply "voluntarily" might result in court action.

The Reagan administration also tried to alter the perception of racial discrimination by eliminating record-keeping. In March 1985, the Office of Management and Budget ordered the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Veterans Administration to stop tracking the racial and ethnic characteristics of Americans who receive benefits from these two agencies. This policy would have severely hampered the administration of civil rights and fair housing programs. George D. Moerman, assistant director for loan policy for the VA, said that the lack of information "will put us in the position where, if abuse exists, we will not be able to find it."[73] During the same period, the administration opposed a bill (HR 1171) which would have required the FBI's uniform crime reports to include categories of offenses "involving the expression of racial, ethnic or religious prejudice." Reagan administration officials felt that it would be too difficult to include "hate crime" categories in national crime statistics. Hate crime legislation subsequently passed and soon became entangled in litigation.

While President Reagan departed from significant aspects of the new right agenda, he seemed in firm agreement with new right racial positions. He drastically reduced the welfare state with the rationale that such spending not only fails to ameliorate the problems of poverty, but actually exacerbates them.[74] These cuts disproportionately affected racial minorities.[75] Schemes such as urban "free enterprise zones" coupled with the attempt to deal with unemployment in the inner cities by instituting a sub-minimum wage echoed new right antistatism and arguments that only the "free market" can alleviate minority poverty.





Perhaps the Reagan administration's biggest policy shifts took place in the area of affirmative action. As we have argued, under the guise of creating a truly "color-blind" society, administration officials sought to define and eliminate the "new racism" *against whites*. As Reagan's U.S. Civil Rights Commission Chairman Clarence Pendleton, Jr. characterized it, the new racists were "supporters of civil rights" who "exhibit the classical behavior system of racism. They treat blacks differently than whites because of their race."[76] The tables had turned. It was now the liberals who were guilty of racism. Blacks, and other minorities, needed to be saved from liberal efforts to help them.

While Reagan incurred the wrath of some quarters of the right for his abandonment of, or slow-moving posture towards, some social issues (e.g, anti-abortion laws and prayer in public schools), his scorecard on racial issues remained nearly impeccable. Reagan harnessed the discontent which has been simmering among the large numbers of whites who have felt threatened by the racial politics of the past two decades. He opposed racial equality and civil rights for minorities in a manner which seemed on the surface "color-blind." After commenting on studies which suggest that racism motivates some people to become Republicans, political scientist Merle Black noted that:

> Reagan's kind of civilized the racial issue. He's taken what Wallace never could do and made it acceptable. It fits in with their [white students'] sense of perceived injustice, with what they see as the status of being a white person not being as high as it was 15, 20 or 30 years ago.[77]

Reagan "civilized" the race issue by being quite adept at rearticulating the issues of race and racial equality. Drawing on themes derived from both new right and neoconservative currents, Reagan successfully assaulted the racial policies initiated in response to "the great transformation." Under his leadership, the federal government reversed itself and switched sides on racial policy. This was accomplished by rewriting recent history to suggest that discrimination against racial minorities had been drastically curbed and by radically transforming the state institutions which were previously mandated to "protect" racial minority interests.

The racial reaction initiated in the late 1960s and early 1970s developed in the 1980s into a pervasive ideological effort to reinterpret once again the meaning of race in the U.S. As the Reagan administration adopted its major themes, the racial reaction achieved legitimate, if not hegemonic, status in "normal" politics. It attained maturity and power, operating behind a subtle and seductive veneer of opposition to "race-thinking."



# Conclusion

At the end of World War II, Henry Luce's designation of the coming period as "the American century" hardly seemed an exaggerated vision of things to come. The U.S. apparently had limitless opportunities: to develop and extend its unparalleled economic and commercial position, to project its political and military power globally, and to institutionalize its vision of political democracy and social justice as a model for the world to emulate. Americans delighted in their country's unprecedented preeminence; they viewed themselves as the world's saviors.

The American century was short-lived. In the 1980s Americans had to contemplate the painful possibility that the dream was over. The U.S. did not appear to dominate world affairs, but instead to cope with a prevalent climate of disruption in the global arena. Once the world's creditor, it had become its chief debtor; once the chief exporter of manufactured goods, it was now their main importer. Once the model of democracy for the underdeveloped world, the U.S. was now wracked with doubt about the proper level of support for "authoritarian" regimes there. Once able to guarantee a prosperous and secure future to its citizens, the U.S. now contemplated a minimum unemployment rate (in periods of economic expansion, to say nothing of contraction) of 7 percent, and a national debt which by 1984 had reached the $200 billion per annum range. Since 1970 the U.S. had experienced defeat in war, the impeachment and resignation of a President, an inflationary peak of 22 percent, peacetime shortages of oil and gas, and the fall of Keynesianism and the political alignment which it sus-

tained. It had also witnessed the election of a President whose chief commitment was to stem the tide of deterioration these events reflected.

Although no one factor, no single causative principle, could adequately account for the contemporary crisis, there was an aspect of recent U.S. history whose political importance in structuring the present situation had been systematically overlooked. We refer, of course, to the *racial* dimension of American life. In contrast to much of existing political and racial theory, the present work has emphasized the *centrality of race* in American society. We have sought to explain the process by which race has shaped, and been shaped by, U.S. politics.

We have approached race as a phenomenon whose meaning is contested throughout social life. Race is a constituent of the individual psyche and of relationships among individuals; it is also an irreducible component of collective identities and social structures. In American history, racial dynamics have been a traditional source, both of conflict and division, and of renewal and cultural awareness. Race has been a key determinant of mass movements, state policy, and even foreign policy in the U.S. Racial meaning-systems are contested and racial ideologies mobilized in *political* relationships.

Beginning in the 1950s and more intensively in the 1960s, racially based social movements initiated a "great transformation" of the American political universe, creating new organizations, new collective identities, and new political norms; challenging past racial practices and stereotypes; and ushering in a wave of democratizing social reform. The ability of racially based movements to *rearticulate* traditional political and cultural themes—first among blacks, and later among Latinos, Asian Americans, and Indians—permitted the entry of millions of racial minority group members into the political process. They initiated a trajectory of reform which exposed the limits of all previously existing political orientations—conservative, liberal, and radical. In transforming the meaning of race and the contours of racial politics, the racially-based movements transformed the meaning and contours of American politics itself. Political mobilization along racial lines resulted in the enactment of reforms which dramatically restructured the racial order, reorganized state institutions, and launched whole new realms of state activity.

In processing racial demands, the state demonstrated a tremendous flexibility and resilience. Using strategies of *absorption* and *insulation*, the state was able to accept moderate reforms while simultaneously containing the more radical potentialities of the minority upsurge.

In the effort to adapt to the new racial politics they themselves had created, racial movements lost their decentered political unity. Working within the newly reformed racial state was more possible, and confronting it more





difficult, than during the preceding period. Opposition to the backward and coercive racial order of the South had permitted a tenuous alliance between moderate and radical currents of the movement, an alliance which the winning of civil rights reforms ruptured. The "triumph" of liberal democracy failed to placate radicals who sought not only *rights*, but power and resources as well. The conferring of rights did not appreciably change the circumstances of a black youth in Harlem or a *vato loco* in East Los Angeles. What was heralded as a great victory by liberals appeared to the radicals as merely a more streamlined version of racial oppression.

The dominant paradigm of ethnicity, the centerpiece of liberal racial politics, fell into disrepute among radicals. Radical theories of race—the class-based and nation-based paradigms—challenged the explanatory power and political efficacy of the ethnicity perspective. Embracing these new paradigmatic conceptions, radical movement tendencies advanced their demands for a more throughgoing restructuring of the social order—one which would recognize the pervasiveness of racial oppression not only in "normal" politics, but in the organization of the labor market, in the geography of living space, and in the forms of cultural life.

Yet these challengers failed to consolidate a new political project of "radical democracy" which could expand beyond the issue of race and aspire to majoritarian status. This failure was due to factors both "internal" and "external" to the movement itself. Internally, the radical currents were increasingly plagued by fragmentation along class and political lines. Tensions developed between (and among) those engaged in electoral work, workplace organizing, "antipoverty" projects, and the "long march through the institutions"; activists politicized on the university and college campuses; and those, like the Black Panther Party, who sought to mobilize the "lumpenproletariat."[1] Some organizations became romantically fascinated by third world revolutionary movements whose "lessons" were largely irrelevant to U.S. conditions. This fragmentation resulted in an absence of unified radical politics and an inability to define a coherent political subject. Externally, the racially based movements were, by the 1970s, largely outmaneuvered by the new racial state which had responded to moderate demands and marginalized radical ones.

The 1980s bore ironic witness to the impact of the racial minority upsurge on the overall political terrain in the U.S. While failing to consolidate a new radical democratic politics with majoritarian aspirations, "the great transformation" provided the political space in which a right-wing reaction could incubate and develop its political agenda.

The new social movements inspired a profound reaction, even revulsion, in those whose political and cultural reference points they challenged. Intellectuals decried a "crisis of democracy"[2] in which the political system

was becoming "overloaded." The self-identification of the majority of Americans as "conservative" (as opposed to "liberal") emerged as people came to perceive the racial minority, women's, and peace movements as opposed to the "traditional" values they upheld. The new social movements were held responsible for the decline and dislocations Americans had experienced in the later 1960s and after. According to Jonathan Rieder, liberalism came to be associated with "profligacy, spinelessness, malevolence, masochism, elitism, fantasy, idealism, softness, irresponsibility, and sanctimoniousness," while conservatism acquired "connotations of pragmatism, character, reciprocity, truthfulness, stoicism, manliness, realism, hardness, vengeance, strictness, and responsibility."[3] Liberalism was seen as beholden to minorities, for whom it provided "handouts," while conservatism was thought to embrace traditional individualist (and thus "color-blind") values of hard work and sacrifice.

Amid a general decline of U.S. economic and political hegemony around the globe, the resurgent right adopted an "authoritarian populist"[4] character which sharply contrasted with traditional conservatism. The primary objectives of the right-wing were the containment of the demands and political vision of the new social movements, the restoration of "governability" to democracy, and the reassertion of traditional cultural and social values.

By the 1980s, the right-wing reaction had captured the popular political imagination. Its analysis of the ills which beset the nation and its prescription for reclaiming the "American century" had resonated with large parts of the American public. Popular support for the Reagan administration, reflected in Reagan's "landslide" electoral victory in 1984, testified to the eclipse of New Deal liberalism and provided political justification for the rightward trend in social policy. Racial policy was dramatically affected. The Reagan administration demonstrated its opposition to affirmative action, reconstituted the U.S. Civil Rights Commission in order to fight "reverse discrimination," relaxed or eliminated government action against racist practices and institutions, and in general attempted to reverse the political consequences of the "great transformation."

Yet right-wing initiatives could not really dismiss racial history. The accomplishments of the 1960s could not simply be reversed. Since 1965, for example, it has been impossible to argue *for* segregation or *against* racial equality. Any "legitimate" politics must claim to favor racial equality *in the abstract*, even if specific egalitarian measures are condemned. To argue for a return to the explicitly racist ideology of pre-civil rights movement days is to move to the proto-fascist fringes of the far right. An unabashedly "white man's government" would face severe opposition and would bring about an immediate crisis of legitimacy—at the very least it





would have to be presented as a state of emergency requiring the suspension of democratic rights.[5]

Racial reaction, therefore, also encountered clear limits in the wake of the political and ideological transformations of the 1960s. Both because of the successes of "the great transformation" and because the minority movements could not be consolidated as a permanent radical democratic political force, the right had been able to rearticulate racial meanings once again. This time, though, it was not the justice but the very *meaning* of racial equality which was at stake. The right, especially the neoconservatives, had institutionalized their interpretation—focused on "equality of opportunity" and explicitly oblivious to "equality of result"—as the national "common sense."

From the standpoint of racial theory, the 1980s witnessed the resurrection of the ethnicity paradigm in a new form. The theory which once justified state racial interventionism now presented itself in far more market-oriented terms.[6] The theory which once encouraged racial minorities (seen, of course as "ethnic groups") to organize along interest-group lines, in pursuit of greater political power and distributional equity in the allocation of public resources, now shrank from such prospects.

Of course, neoconservatism was but one of several tendencies on the right. If the far right could in general be characterized by an explicit racism, the new right could be located somewhere between these two tendencies. Unlike the far right, the new right was adroit enough to avoid overt appeals to white supremacy. Unlike the neoconservatives, though, the new right has not renounced the use of racial "code words," and continues political mobilization on the basis of an implicit racial agenda. This is not conscious manipulation for the most part, but rather a consequence of the "great transformation," which brought to light the ubiquity of race. Given that racial meaning inheres in every social relationship, given the "threat" to "traditional" values posed by the new social movements, and given the correspondence between the racial upsurge of the 1960s and America's seeming fall from divine grace, is it all that surprising that a "racial reaction" can be found on the new right? Our study suggests that no post-1960s political initiative can avoid being interpreted, to some degree, through the lens of racial ideology.

Given the atmosphere of economic, political, and cultural change that characterized the 1980s, then, the options for racial policy are rather bleak. The climate of anti-statism severely limited the expansion of state activity to deal with impoverishment and the invidious effects of racism in housing, education, and welfare. On the other hand, even Reaganism was unable to liquidate the gains achieved by racial minority movements during the

1950s and 1960s. In the contemporary period such a rollback would be unimaginable short of a "proto-fascist" policy.[7] Such an alternative, besides being abhorrent, is obviously untenable, since it would have to contend not only with constitutional and institutionalized opposition, but also with the enormous disruptive powers of racial minorities, particularly those of the underclass.

Jesse Jackson's two presidential bids suggested some lessons that those on the left would have to learn well if they were to seek a new rearticulation of racial politics.[8] Although Jackson's messianism and refusal to build a grassroots base were not promising, between 1984 and 1988 his strategic orientation developed dramatically. His 1984 run was largely a black campaign, and a beleaguered one at that. Jackson lacked black elite support to run, and was seen by many established black leaders as a spoiler who would drive a wedge between their local political machines and civil rights organizations on the one hand, and the mainstream Democratic Party on the other. Paradoxically, this division within the black Democratic establishment forced Jackson to adopt a more grass-roots message, and to develop a more populist/progressive political orientation than he otherwise might have taken. Jackson was hardly a stranger to the black political elite or the inner circles of the Democratic Party, and under other conditions could easily have transformed himself into a very moderate, almost Urban League style black capitalism spokesperson.[9]

Having entered the 1984 campaign under these circumstances, though, Jackson was inevitably marginalized beyond the black community, and embattled within it. He was constantly on the defensive in the mainstream media, in part because of his own errors and weaknesses (his anti-semitic "Hymietown" remark being the most egregious of these), and he only occasionally achieved any access to the national political audience. Thus his 1984 support was preponderantly drawn from the black community and the less than numerous remnants of the new left. The concept of the "rainbow coalition," the campaign's central theme, had at least a dual significance: first, it expressed—to be sure, in a positive and historically grounded fashion—the enduring significance of race in the Democratic Party[10] and U.S. society; second, in the theme of the "rainbow" the Jackson campaign sought to expand beyond its black constituents to address the mainstream of national politics, but this approach was *still based on the primary ground of race*. The 1984 campaign was, then, limited by a central contradiction: organized along racial lines, it had to transcend race in order to achieve tangible political gains. The media and the electorate perceived this problem in terms of the campaign's racial meaning: was Jackson the black candidate, or was the the candidate as well of other sectors of the "rainbow"?





By 1988 many of these questions had been resolved. In strategic depth, program, message, and style Jackson was able steadily to address a national political audience in 1988, something which could occur only fitfully four years earlier. He was largely able to overcome the defensive posture his errors and weaknesses had created for him in 1984. Most importantly, Jackson confounded his detractors by clearly enunciating a left alternative current within the Democratic Party.[11]

While in 1984 he had lacked mainstream black political support, in 1988 Jackson could count on a very solid black base, both "elite" and "mass." The black mayors, congresspeople, and civil rights organizations were generally behind him now. The midterm elections of 1986 were testimony to Jackson's centrality as a Democratic player, for his registration efforts in the South proved crucial in returning the Senate to the Democratic column. In preparation for the 1988 race, Jackson consulted with old hands on the Democratic left, and worked out a fairly detailed social democratic agenda, tame stuff for other countries, but radical in the U.S. context. He pulled in southern moderates (e.g., Bert Lance), who recognized the importance of black voters to any hopes of breaking what had become the Republican solid South. With a nearly monolithic black base, a formidable political style, and a message of realignment, Jackson's project could by 1988 continue to discuss race explicitly while addressing the mainstream American electorate from the left. The beginnings of the articulation of race and class, which had appeared in the "rainbow" of 1984, now were presented in terms that were far more class-centered and class-conscious: "common ground."

By no means do we wish to suggest that Jackson downplayed race in 1988; indeed it is instructive to compare his analysis of racial issues—South Africa, ghetto poverty, etc.—with those of his Democratic competitors. Jackson was the only candidate who could securely discuss racism in 1988, but the program and message of his campaign went far beyond that.

The Jackson campaigns displayed a refreshingly explicit racial awareness by emphasizing the "multicultural" nature of U.S. society. Yet the campaigns also faced the necessity of submerging overt racial appeals. The legacy of the "great transformation," which as we have seen limits the racial logic of the right, also limits the possibilities for the left.

By the end of the 1980s it was clear that a period of racially based mobilization such as "the great transformation" would not recur. The conjuncture in which the 1960s racial upsurge took place was almost certainly unique. The sophistication of the contemporary racial state and the transformed political landscape as a whole seemed to thwart any short-term radical political initiative based in opposition to the racial order. Rather, a sustained period of reconceptualization and regrouping appeared to be in order.

Racial minority communities underwent huge changes in the post–civil rights era. Ferocious debates took place about the dramatic class cleavages which have arisen *within* these communities, and about their consequences for political action.[12] For Asian American and Latino communities, the liberalization of immigration laws in the mid-1960s led to a vast influx of both "old" and "new" groups. Koreans, Vietnamese, Laotians, and Filipinos are distinct in ethnic and class composition from each other and from more "established" groups such as Japanese Americans. Salvadorans, Guatemaltecos, Dominicans, and even Brazilians now represent substantial and distinct minorities within the Latino population. An increasingly variegated "community" made it difficult to speak of a shared experience, common sensibility, or unified political outlook. In the face of these realities, political mobilization along presumed "racial" lines became an ambiguous project, even though state policy, and the majority of the American public, continued to identify the groups mentioned along racial lines (i.e., as "Asians").

While widespread racially based mobilization did not seem likely to arise, it was equally unlikely that the right-wing reaction could consolidate itself on racial grounds. The Reagan administration's attempt to create a "color-blind society" certainly exacerbated already wide disparities between whites and non-whites in economic and political terms. The neoconservative theorists who endorsed the Reagan strategy (and indeed helped to fashion it) continued to cling to a deterministic model of race which vastly overemphasized America's capacity for incorporating "difference." While such trends do exist, very powerful countertendencies toward permanent racial division simply cannot be ignored. The central argument of this work, the central issue in racial policy—that U.S. racial dynamics are the subject of permanent political contestation—cannot be addressed by "color-blind" theory or policy.

Thus, as the Reagan era ended, racial dynamics were adrift in the unsettled waters of an overall crisis in U.S. politics and culture. From the 1960s to the 1980s, racial politics profoundly transformed personal identity, collective action, the state, and American society as a whole. What would the contours and battlelines of racial contest be the next time around? This question remained open.



# Epilogue

# Closing Pandora's Box—Race and the "New Democrats"

> In the 1960s, the liberals were widely seen as having failed to deal with major questions of law enforcement, taxation, fiscal management and the role of government, as well as race. They were repudiated, and the Republicans moved into a 25-year period of executive hegemony.
>
> Twelve years of Reagan and Bush has not cured the problems, either. It hasn't given us morning in America. It's produced more columns of smoke rising from our inner cities.
>
> —Kevin Phillips[1]

## Introduction

The Los Angeles riot of 1992 marked the beginning of a new period in U.S. racial politics.[2] It served as a dramatic reminder for much of the nation of the continuing economic marginality, social decay, and human despair of the inner cities. Thanks to amateur cameraman George Holliday's videotape of the beating of black motorist Rodney King, police coercion and harassment were revealed in detail more graphic than mainstream America had witnessed in years.

groups were insufficiently concentrated geographically, or where minority communities were more heterogeneous. Homogeneity, of course, is never more than relative. See Chapter 1, above.

67. See for example Carlos Moore, "Marxism: A Prolet-Aryan Outlook," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XIX (1974-1975).

## 7. Race and Reaction

1. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 8 March 1985.
2. In April 1985, the black unemployment rate was 16.3 percent compared to the overall unemployment rate of 7.3 percent. (Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics). The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reported that the poverty rate among blacks is almost 36 percent, the highest proportion sice 1968. The Center also noted that while long-term unemployment among whites has increased by 1.5 percent since 1980, among blacks it has increased by 72 percent (cited in Roger Wilkins, "Smiling Racism," *The Nation*, 3 November 1984). For a more recent analysis of an essentially unchanged pattern of racialized poverty, see Gerald D. Jaynes and Robin M. Williams, Jr., eds., *A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1989) pp. 277–291.
3. Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).
4. Howard J. Sherman, *Stagflation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).
5. James O'Connor, *The Fiscal Crisis of the State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973).
6. "The advantages for the U.S. of this dollar-based system were formidable. Essentially, it created a unique, built-in demand for dollars, independent of the demand for U.S. products. This need for dollars meant the U.S. could buy more than it sold abroad without fearing that the oversupply of dollars would cause the value of the dollar to drop. U.S. multinationals and banks were in a strong position to invest abroad, since the dollars they were spending were in such demand. This in turn encouraged U.S. military expansion worldwide by allowing the U.S. to keep spending the money needed to support its troops overseas. In short, it was precisely through the enthronement of the dollar at Bretton Woods that the U.S. was able to finance the postwar Pax Americana." ("Bretton Woods: The Rise and Fall of an International Monetary Sytem," *Dollars & Sense* 102 [December 1984].) See also Fred Block, *The Origins of International Economic Disorder* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).
7. In 1984 the U.S. trade deficit with Canada was $20 billion, second only to the nation's $37 billion deficit with Japan. In spite of this, Americans did not harbor negative attitudes towards Canada.





8. Republican Senator John Heinz during a Congressional debate over U.S.-Japan trade relations stated that "In category after category they [the Japanese] are slicing us neatly and thinly off like a piece of sushimi [sic], which they so elegantly do." At a March 8, 1985 hearing, Sen. Heinz noted that when the "Japanese get their little fork into us—or chopsticks . . . they really do stick it to us."

   During a March 20, 1985 hearing, Democratic Senator Ernest Hollings said the Japanese "love all those bowings—they have been doing that for twenty-five years and getting away with it." Cited in *Hokubei Mainichi*, April 16, 1985.
9. Laura Chin and Ada Kan, *Where We Stand in America: A Report on Anti-Asian Violence and Anti-Foreign Sentiments* (Washington, D.C.: The Organization of Chinese Americans, Inc., August 1984). In 1982 Vincent Chin, a Chinese American man was beaten to death in Detroit by a laid-off plant foreman and his stepson who mistook their victim for Japanese and blamed him for the loss of their jobs. The incident further outraged Asian American communities when Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Charles Kaufman allowed the two men to plead guilty to manslaughter (the original charge had been second-degree murder), placed them on three years' probation, and fined them $3,780 each.
10. "Illegal aliens" are equated with "Mexicans" or the "brown flood" in general, even though undocumented workers from Mexico constitute at most 60 percent of the "illegal population." It is estimated that of the 1,086,000 undocumented workers in California between 1970 and 1980, 589,000 were from Mexico. See Thomas Muller, *The Fourth Wave: California's Newest Immigrants* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press, 1984). Despite the numbers, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service directs its enforcement activities at Mexicans. More than 90 percent of arrests of "illegal aliens" are made at the border with Mexico. See Ann Cooper, "Hazy Numbers Complicate the Debate Over How to Slow Illegal Immigration," *National Journal*, 8 June 1985.
11. A Gallup poll conducted in May 1980 revealed that 91 percent of the people interviewed felt that *all* immigration to the U.S. should be halted until the national unemployment rate dropped to 5 percent.
12. See, among a host of similar works, Charles Murray, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950–1980* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1984). For a good critical review of Murray's work, see Sar A. Levitan's review in *Society*, Vol. 22, no. 4 (May–June 1985); see also the debate between Murray and Levitan in *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 100, no. 3 (Fall 1985).
13. David Edgar has suggested that, "California's tax-cutting referendum Prop. 13 was as much a vote against black welfare as it was a vote for lower taxes." David Edgar, "Reagan's Hidden Agenda: Racism and the New Amer-

ican Right," *Race & Class*, Vol. XXII, no. 3 (Winter 1981) p. 231.

14. In 1982, Metzger ran for the U.S. Senate in the Democratic primary and placed fourth in a field of eleven candidates, garnering 73,987 votes. Bill Wallace, "Racist Group Using Computers and TV to Recruit in Bay Area," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 5 March 1985.
15. "Violence on the Right," *Newsweek*, 4 March 1985, p. 25.
16. Note the ecological language. Some far right groups, perhaps via survivalism, are rearticulating environmentalist themes. The original notion of race-mixing, which occasionally used similar terms, was not nearly as holistic or totalizing. Its frame of reference was eugenicist (i.e., Darwinian) or even Linnaean/Aristotelian.
17. "Jesus Christ Christian" means rejection of the Jewishness of Jesus, an important interpretation for far right antisemites.
18. *Newsweek*, 4 March 1985, p. 25.
19. Tom Metzger himself has suggested this: " . . . the only time you can get a white person's attention, a working person, is when things get tight. Then you can get him to sit down and listen. While he's got his beer, and got his dune buggy, and everything's going good, and he's got a job, he won't listen to you. Once things start to get tight, he starts looking around, what's the problem, and then you can get a foot in the door." ABC News Closeup, "Wounds from Within" with Marshall Frady, broadcast 18 Oct. 1981.
20. Bruce Maxwell, "Radical Rightist Groups Feed on Rural Despair," *San Francisco Examiner*, 5 March 1985.
21. Ethnic, class, national, and religious dimensions of "whiteness" have all been explored by the far right.
22. ABC News Closeup, "Wounds from Within."
23. Vincent Ryan, managing editor of the far-right publication *The Spotlight* said his paper's circulation has been cut almost in half, to 166,000, without "a Carter to push around." *Newsweek*, op. cit.
24. Sara Diamond, "Neo-Nazis in America," *The Daily Californian*, 30 April 1985. More recent confirmation of both this trend and the countertrend of "mainstreaming" neo-Nazis on the new right can be found in James Ridgeway, *Blood in the Face: The Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Nations, Nazi Skinheads, and the Rise of a New Right Culture* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1990); Elinor Langer, "The American Neo-Nazi Movement Today," *The Nation*, 16/23 July 1990; Julia Reed, "His Brilliant Career," *The New York Review of Books*, 19 April 1992.
25. Jeff Bale says that "highly visible hate groups like the Klan and Aryan nations serve to *distract* attention away from the far more dangerous activities of the 'respectable' authoritarians in positions of real power." Quoted in Diamond, "Neo-Nazis in America."
26. Ironically the only other analogy in recent U.S. history comes from the far left. The Weather Underground, the SLA, and the Black Liberation Army have played a similar role as "fringe groups" in American politics.
27. Walter Dean Burnham, "Post-Conservative America," *Socialist Review* 72 (November-December 1983) p. 125.
28. Of particular importance was the feminist movement which critiqued the patriachial family, inequities in sex/gender relations, and women's lack of control over their own bodies.
29. Gillian Peele, *Revival & Reaction: The Right in Contemporary America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) p. 52.
30. Alan Crawford, *Thunder on the Right: The "New Right" and the Politics of Resentment* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) p. 5.
31. The collapse of the family and the decline of traditional values and forms of authority are often cited by the new right as the causes of domestic ills and the decline of the American hegemony in the world. The new right's agenda is therefore filled with anti-abortion platforms, school prayer amendments, and other "pro-family" issues.
32. See Lillian Rubin, *Busing and Backlash* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).
33. More complex scientistic ideologies of racial inferiority are a different matter, and here the new right is actively engaged. See Leon Kamin, Richard Lewontin, and Stephen Rose, *Not In Our Genes* (New York: Pantheon, 1984)) for an excellent account of the modern application of biologism to social and political categories such as race.
34. As a young Alabama politician, Wallace was seen as something of a moderate. But after losing a close election early in his career he made a public vow to "never be outniggered again." He then rose to his second last stand, when as Governor of Alabama in 1962 he "stood in the schoolhouse door" to prevent integration. His third incarnation, as Presidential candidate, required him to moderate his white supremacy and to experiment with "code words." His fourth and current identity, which appeared in the aftermath of the Voting Rights Act and of a 1972 assassination attempt, is once again "moderate."
35. Kevin Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New York: Anchor, 1970).
36. Conservative egalitarianism was the principle advocated by ethnicity theorists (of whom Moynihan was a leading personage) in policy matters. Ethnicity theory, as we have argued above (Chapter 1) was and remains the dominant racial theory in the U.S.
37. The "Republicanized" version of minority politics strictly distinguished between moderate and radical features of the 1960s racial movements. Those that had challenged such anachronistic and inessential forms of racial inequality as legalized segregation and discriminatory employment practices (i.e.,

explicit discrimination against individuals) were easily jettisoned. Those features of the minority movements that had questioned the role of race in shaping the U.S. social structure, however, were rejected and marginalized. Collective demands, "institutionalized racism": these issues the Republicans opposed or ignored.

38. See Burnham, "Post-Conservative America."
39. The charge of "secular humanism" is directed at liberals in general, and the welfare state in particular, mainly by new right activists oriented to Protestant fundamentalism. The chief complaint seems to be that liberal (and radical) ideologies have desacralized morality, placing "values" on the same rationalistic terrain as politics, and subjecting them to the "culture of critical discourse." There are also important ties between the critique of "secular humanism" and new right/neoconservative hostility to the "new class" of knowledge workers. For an academically based statement of this critique, see Peter L. Berger, "The Worldview of the New Class: Secularity and Its Discontents," in B. Bruce Briggs, ed., *The New Class?* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction, 1979), p. 50; the concept of a "culture of critical discourse" fundamental to the ideology of the "new class" originates in Alvin Gouldner's *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class* (New York: Seabury, 1979). Gouldner's perspective, of course, is quite different from that of the right-wing "new class" theorists.
40. Crawford, *Thunder on the Right*, pp. 311–312.
41. Ibid., p. 5.
42. The concept of "status revolution" has its origins in the liberal historian Richard Hofstadter's rejection of the class-based categories of Charles Beard and others whose work on U.S. social movements had reached its high point in the 1930s. See Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR*, 2nd. ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965).
43. Crawford, *Thunder on the Right*, p. 148.
44. Linda Gordon and Allen Hunter, "Sex, Family and the New Right: Anti-Feminism as a Political Force," *Radical America*, Vol 11, no. 6 & Vol. 12, no. 1 (November 1977-February 1978) p. 12. See also Jonathan Rieder, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985.
45. Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Ed Davis, Toned-Down Favorite," *Washington Post*, 3 February 1978 cited in Crawford, *Thunder on the Right*, p. 104.
46. The term "third world state" is from Phillips who uses it to describe states which have an increasing racial minority population. Phillips writes, "Retention of the Electoral College would probably guarantee a minority-oriented presidential selection process for the 1980s." Kevin Phillips, "Abolish the Electoral College!," cited in ibid, p. 324.
47. These charges had their origins in the FBI's campaigns to discredit King, in which Robert Kennedy was also involved.
48. Patrick J. Buchanan, "GOP Vote Search Should Bypass Ghetto," cited in ibid, p. 258.
49. Ibid, p. 145.
50. William Rusher, *The Making of a New Majority Party* (Ottawa, Ill.: Greenhill Publications, 1975) p. 31.
51. We also wonder if the "liberal verbalist elite" is not implicitly Jewish.
52. Gordon and Hunter, "Sex, Family, and the New Right," p. 11.
53. Certain left groups allied themselves with the antibusing forces, arguing that the issue was one of class, rather than race. See the articles in *Radical America*, Vol. 8, no. 6 (1974), and Vol. 9, no. 3 (1975).
54. In attempting to portray diversity, the nearly absolute attention which textbooks had formerly paid whites had perhaps been "diluted," though hardly to the extent some groups claimed. Interestingly, a study by the National Council of Teachers in 1978 found that parent protesters were most concerned with books that presented attitudes and lifestyles of those of "different" cultural backgrounds. See Crawford, *Thunder on the Right*, pp. 155–58.
55. Lyndon B. Johnson, "To Fulfill These Rights," delivered at Howard University on June 4, 1965; in Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey, *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1967) p. 125.
56. Nathan Glazer, "The Peoples of America," *Ethnic Dilemmas, 1964–1982* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983) p. 27. This, of course, was the underside of the ideal of tolerance: implicit threats toward groups that failed to conform. It was precisely these kinds of formulations which led blacks to mistrust white liberals and to preserve "group interests."
57. Glazer, *Affirmative Discrimination*, p. 220.
58. Glazer even went so far as to suggest that if affirmative action programs were effective he might support them out of pragmatic commitment to equality.

    > For me, no consideration of principle—such as that merit should be rewarded, or that governmental programs should not discriminate on the grounds of race or ethnic group—would stand in the way of a program of preferential hiring if it made some substantial progress in reducing the severe problems of the low-income black population and of the inner cities" (ibid., p. 73).

59. A typical polemic is Morris Abram, "What Constitutes a Civil Right?" *New*

*York Times Magazine*, 10 June 1984. In a thoughtful reconceptualization, Lewis M. Killian argues that "From its inception, the Civil Rights movement was fundamentally and unrelentingly 'assimilationist.'" On the other hand, "Black power treated Blacks in the United States as a community, not as a category of individual Americans handicapped and stigmatized on the basis of their color." This distinction corresponds to our argument that the civil rights movement operated largely within the dominant *ethnicity* paradigm of race, while black power broke with the dominant view, invoking the *nation-based* paradigm (and to a lesser extent, the class-based) paradigms of race. If this distinction is recognized, neoconservatism emerges clearly as a reaction to the radical currents of the "great transformation," an attempt to confine racially based demands to an ethnicity-oriented model of politics. See Killian, "Black Power and White Reactions: The Revitalization of Race-Thinking in the United States," *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 454 (March, 1981) pp. 43, 47.

60. Abram, "What Constitutes a Civil Right?" p. 60. Of course, many opponents of affirmative action are also "right-to-work" advocates who find the same kinds of faults with the labor laws that those who charge "reverse discrimination" do with affirmative action. At the heart of the right-wing agenda, as James O'Connor has recently argued, is always an ideology of individualism. See O'Connor, *Accumulation Crisis* (New York: Blackwell, 1984).
61. Philip Green, *The Pursuit of Inequality* (New York: Pantheon, 1981).
62. The key work here is Glazer's, particularly *Affirmative Discrimination*, and the later essays in *Ethnic Dilemmas*. Many of the interpretive essays in the massive *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982) also share the neoconservative perspective.
63. In our view this threat reflected not so much the radical nature of the 1960s minority upsurge or the reforms it won, but indeed their fundamentally moderate and half-hearted character. A more comprehensive series of reforms, for example, might have extended to redistribution initiatives and full employment commitments, which could have cushioned the blow that whites located in marginal neighborhoods, school districts, jobs, etc. received when affirmative action and similar programs increased competition for semi-skilled work, public education, and affordable housing. But as it was, the threat was real enough.
64. As Rieder demonstrates, however, white ethnic appeals to "fairness" often segue into overt racism, especially as the perceived threats to community, family, and "way of life" increase. For one example among many provided in this work, see Rieder, *Canarsie*, p. 245.
65. Cited in Robby Cohen, "Reagan: A 'Neo-Segregationist,'" *The Daily Californian*, 18 October 1984.
66. Ibid.





67. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 18 February 1980. Her remark was made during a telephone conversation with Mr. Reagan broadcast over loudspeakers for the benefit of the diners. Flustered, Ms. Reagan tried to correct herself by saying " . . . all the beautiful black and white people." Unfortunately, there were no blacks in the room. Reported in Michael Kilian, "GOP Genie Rescues Republicans," *Chicago Tribune*, 25 February 1980.
68. "White Men Were Key to Reagan Landslide," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 27 December 1984.
69. Ibid.
70. Kirk made his remarks on February 3 on NBC's "Meet the Press." This may be in direct response to Kevin Phillips' hostile advice to the Democrats:

> If you Democrats do anything, try to get rid of the party's pervasive image of being the vehicle of every kind of cultural, sexual and ethnic fringe group with a letterhead and stationery. Jettisoning special-interest group caucuses would be a start (Cited in J. K. Yamamoto, "Democratic National Committee Chair Questions Need for Asian/Pacific Caucus," *Pacific Citizen*, March 8, 1985).

71. He argued that their persistence was merely a function of a self-serving bureaucracy:

> I think there are, there is a tendency of some individuals who have positions in organizations that have been created for whatever purpose but for some purpose to rectify some ill, that then once that gets going they're reluctant to admit how much they've achieved, because it might reveal then that there's no longer a need for that particular organization, which would mean no longer a need for their job. ("Rights Groups Unneeded, Reagan Says," *Pacific Citizen*, February 1, 1985.)

72. "Justice Dept. Taking A City to Court Over Hiring Quotas," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 30, 1985.
73. "Race Questions Cut From Federal Forms," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 25 March 1985. "Jerry McMurry, staff director for the housing subcommittee of the House Banking Committee, said the Reagan administration 'would rather not know' the racial composition of its programs so it cannot be challenged on its civil rights record." An early policy recommendation along these lines was the Heritage Foundation report "Agenda '83," a new right blueprint for the President. One of its major points was an attack on affirmative action—"Agenda '83" argued for a challenge to court-ordered quotas in hiring and promotion and for a new definition of discrimination.
74. The bible in this regard is Charles Murray, *Losing Ground*. See also George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).
75. See Gary Delgado, "Reverse Distribution: Fiscal Crisis and Black Resis-

tance," *Critical Perspectives of Third World America*, Vol. I, no. I (Fall 1983).

76. In contrast to the new racists, Pendletons stated that Reagan supporters were " . . . performing corrective surgery on the disfigured civil rights laws" (*The New York Times*, March 6, 1985).
77. Black's remarks were made in an interview with Haynes Johnson of *The Washington Post*. Cited in Wilkins, "Smiling Racism."

### Conclusion

1. At stake was who represented the legitimate voice of "the People." Community activists who were absorbed into the various state-sponsored bureaucracies were derided as "poverty pimps" who had been "coopted" by "the system" and now sought to preserve their jobs and expand their influence by making the community increasingly dependent upon them. College students were faulted for their often sporadic commitment (revolution according to the academic calendar) and their potentially upwardly mobile status. The "lumpenproletariat" was either glorified as the "vanguard" of third world struggles in the U.S. or denounced as criminal elements and/or "street people" with little collective political consciousness.
2. Samuel P. Huntington,"Chapter III—The United States," in Michel Crozier, Samuel P. Huntington, and Joji Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission* (New York: NYU Press, 1975).
3. Jonathan Rieder, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985) p. 6; see also Kevin Phillips' newsletter, *The American Political Report* (Bethesda, MD: The American Political Research Group), 17 May 1985, pp. 4–5.
4. Stuart Hall has used this term to characterize the Thatcher regime in Britain; it has obvious resonance on American shores as well. See Hall, "The Great Moving Right Show," *Socialist Review* 55 (January–February 1981).
5. Such a program would probably rearticulate racial theory in terms of a biologistic conception of race which would locate inequality in racial differences themselves. Some preliminary steps have been taken in this direction, for example in the uses of "sociobiology," but intellectual acceptance of a new biologistic racism has thus far not materialized.
6. According to the present version, state antidiscrimination activity is only justified when the practice of intentional discrimination on racial grounds can be demonstrated. This theory, however, still bears the marks of its liberal origins. For example, Nathan Glazer claims that he would favor more extensive state antidiscrimination activity, even in the face of principle, if on pragmatic grounds it could be shown to be effective. See Glazer, *Affirmative Discrimination* (New York: Basic, 1975) p. 73.
7. Orlando Patterson has described this solution with respect to the black community: "Ideally the proto-fascist scenario calls for the containment of the black poor in concentrated areas and the use of their labor for the menial but essential tasks that will remain even in the most highly advanced, post-industrial utopia: street cleaning and general sanitation, sewage disposal, hospital attendants, the less technical aspects of the transportation industry, and the filthier and more hazardous types of blue collar jobs." He doubts such a scenario could be implemented due to the "counter-leviathan power of the urban poor." Orlando Patterson, "The Black Community: Is There a Future?" in Seymour Martin Lipset, ed., *The Third Century* (Stanford, CA: The Hoover Institution Press, 1979), p. 280–281.
8. This section draws on Howard Winant, "Postmodern Racial Politics in the United States: Difference and Inequality," *Socialist Review* 90/1 (February 1990).
9. The heart of his organizational base, PUSH, in fact employed an updated version of Urban League tactics, pressuring large firms to grant economic concessions (chain restaurant franchises, hiring quotas and set-asides, programs for local community hiring and on the job training, etc.) to blacks under the threat of boycotts and other sanctions. We do not wish to disparage this strategy unduly, for we believe it did accomplish certain incremental changes, but it still must be seen as very moderate—black capitalism, movement-style.
10. Recall that the Jackson campaign had a major beef with the Democratic Party in 1984: the runoff primary system in the South, which in his view limited black electoral chances there.
11. Much of this account draws on the work of Manning Marable, who was one of the few analysts who recognized early on the significance of Jackson's challenge to the Democratic Party. While Marable is not uncritical, he understands the change Jackson represented from Democratic "business as usual." See his *Black American Politics: From the Washington Marches to Jesse Jackson* (London: Verso, 1985). In contrast, Adolph Reed's analysis failed to capture the Jackson campaign's potential for polarizing the party and posing sharply the question of its future direction and constituency. Reed's preoccupation with the lack of in-depth democracy in black politics led him to neglect the insurgent aspects of the 1984 Jackson candidacy, which was in fact an anti-establishment effort not only in the Party overall, but in its black apparatus as well. Reed's focus on elite competition is too narrow. See his *The Jesse Jackson Phenomenon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).
12. Two books by William J. Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), and *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, The Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), played an important role in catalyzing these debates.