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The Civil Rights Quarterly

# PERSPECTIVES

SPRING 1981



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## Overcoming Language Barriers to Equality

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Sacred Air Over  
Big Sky Country

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Fluctuating Interest In  
Women Bankers

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For Blacks: Fancy Titles  
or Real Authority?



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## Guest Editorial

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### A Call For New Philanthropic Focus

by Raul Yzaguirre

Private philanthropy has been responsible for a wide range of achievements, including the elimination of yellow fever, the "green revolution" which greatly accelerated food production, and the genesis of the war on poverty.

When government assumed little responsibility for the welfare of its citizens, philanthropy attempted to fill the gap. There are few programs now being administered by public agencies that were not originated by private philanthropy. Yet despite these apparent successes, the concept of philanthropy is in trouble in a nation that values private and pluralistic approaches to human endeavors.

Philanthropy's essential nonaccountability to the public has made it vulnerable to government regulation. The Tax Reform Act of 1969 was a major blow to the private foundations. The law regulated certain foundation-financed activities such as voter registration and lobbying, activities that are vital to minority groups as they struggle for both the rights and responsibilities that are a part of full and equal citizenship.

Philanthropy suffers from the lack of a well-defined reason for its existence and too often follows where government leads. Innovation, risk-taking, and creativity are not the attributes one normally ascribes to this important source of financial support. As a result, minority programs and institutions, which because of their relative youth are innovative, creative, and often full of risks, do not receive the same level of philanthropic support that more established, "safe" programs and activities receive.

This problem is compounded by the lack of minority representation on the boards of philanthropic entities, despite the fact that the Ford Foundation is headed by a black and that there is a small but active organization of black foundation executives. Without representation at decision-making levels, philanthropic support will continue to be channeled primarily to those groups whose activities represent the broader segment of the population.

When philanthropic attention is paid to minority concerns, foundations seem to prefer to help minorities only through majority-controlled institutions, thus depriving minority groups of the opportunity to obtain expertise through experience, and encouraging instead the continued dependence of minorities upon majority institutions.

Some recent initiatives in the philanthropic sector offer a ray of hope that we may see some changes in the direction, make-up and accessibility of foundations. The growth of corporate philanthropy, which now exceeds the giving of foundations, may open new opportunities for reform in philanthropic patterns of giving.

The general public, as well as poor and minority groups, have a large stake in a reform movement within philanthropy. As government seeks to form partnerships with the private sector to solve social problems, the role of philanthropy becomes more significant. This is all the more reason why philanthropy should undertake a concerted effort to involve the nation's minorities in the distribution of its funds. Without equal access to these private pursestrings, minorities will continue to face the struggle of forming their own institutions and operating their own self-help programs from a severely disadvantaged position. ♦

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*Raul Yzaguirre is president of the National Council of La Raza.*



The Civil Rights Quarterly  
**PERSPECTIVES**

SPRING 1981

VOLUME 13 NUMBER 1

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by Thelma E. Kandel

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# Letters

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## Three Cheers for *Perspectives*

The Summer, 1980 *Perspectives* was the first issue of your publication that I ever received but I found it to be very readable and informative. *Perspectives* disseminates important information in an attractive format that makes you want to read the magazine cover to cover.

I'm looking forward to the next issue.

**Linda B. Rule**, Communications  
Director  
Future Business Leaders of America  
Washington, D.C.



The new *Perspectives* format is exciting. We distributed some copies at the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly, a gathering of 1,300 persons, last June. In my new position at UUA, I will find articles in *Perspectives* useful.

**Loretta J. Williams**, Director  
Section on Social Responsibility  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
Boston, Massachusetts



It has recently been brought to my attention that your excellent magazine is available at no charge.

Please add my name and address to your mailing list. And keep up the good work!

**Tony Glaros**  
Silver Spring, Maryland



## Two Exceptions to "Pink Collar Blues"

We have just completed reading the Summer 1980 edition of *Perspectives* and your interesting and excellent article entitled "Pink Collar Blues." Although we are in support of and in agreement with

your points, we would like to bring to your attention at least one exception to the record of the Job Corps. The author states "And when the Job Corps does accept women trainees it segregates them into all-female centers and gives them training in only stereotypical areas such as secretarial, clerical, childcare and health. The young men are taught electrical appliance and auto repair and given construction trades training."

The YWCA of Los Angeles has been the contractor with the Department of Labor and its predecessor organizations for the Los Angeles Job Corps Training program since 1965. Although this program was indeed started as an all-female center, it accepted men into the program in 1974 so that today, of the 735 corpsmembers in the project, two-thirds are women and one-third men. Actually, almost all of the Job Corps Centers have been co-ed for the last several years.

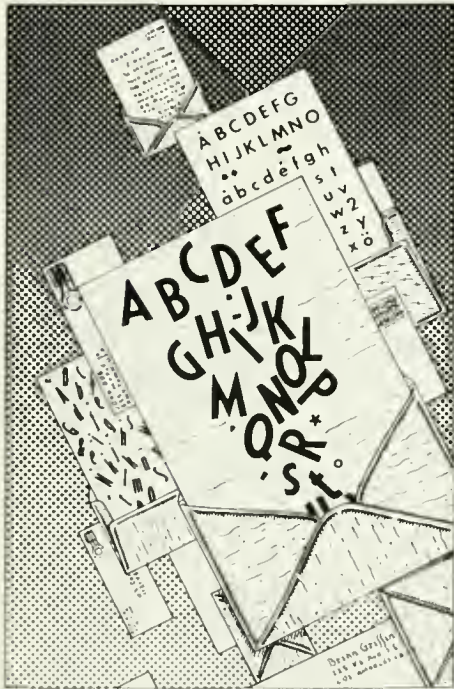
The training program today encompasses some sixty different jobs ranging from licensed vocational nurse to surveyor, welder and so on down the line. We have women trained or in training in every one of our career fields, and indeed encourage them to enter the so-called non-traditional job because of the vast wage differential they will find out in the employment world.

**Winifred R. Hessinger**  
Executive Director  
YWCA of Los Angeles  
Los Angeles, California



It was with tremendous anticipation that I picked up the Summer issue of *Perspectives*. The new format is impressive, the articles varied and informative. Unfortunately the article I read on the subject of working women, "Pink Collar

# Letters



Blues," was a disappointment.

It was disappointing on several levels. I found myself adrift in a sea of unrelated statistical flotsam and jetsam. Such a varied cargo should never have been shipped on one vessel. The article could have addressed one of its issues—government employment, for example—with one set of data and made a stronger case.

Some of the points made by the author are either fallacious, or, at the very least, misleading—for example, teaching is classed as a "lower-paying job." I have statistics that show otherwise. Other issues were introduced, but not developed. "It is the children who pay," says Ms. Strum. How? To what degree? She doesn't explain.

I would have found the article far more interesting if Ms. Strum had tempered her use of numbers with some in-

sights into the psychological state of the working woman. Many more women work and many more are successful now than ever before. Tell us who they are and how they have managed to beat the system.

**Virginia Larrain**, Executive Editor  
School Department  
Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.  
New York, New York



## Positive Response to "Affirmative Action"

At a time when the media is full of anti-EEO columns, the insight contained in your *Perspectives* (Summer, 1980) guest editorial, "Putting Down Affirmative Action," reminds us that affirmative action is the law. Mr. Fleming's analysis puts affirmative action on its rightful solid foundation.

The article, reprinted in our *EEO Report*, supports the National Institutes of Health—Division of Equal Opportunity effort to provide a continuing and fresh approach to information about and for equal opportunity in employment.

We thank you and wish you continued success.

**James Hadley**, Public Information Specialist  
Division of Equal Opportunity  
National Institutes of Health  
Bethesda, Maryland



## Pass the "Coffee, Tea and Dignity"

I am forwarding the article, "Coffee, Tea and Dignity," from the Spring, 1980 issue of *Perspectives* to Ms. Sharon Bar-



thelness, the Federal Aviation Administration's Cabin Safety Specialist. Since this was published by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, I am sending another copy to our Office of Civil Rights for good measure.

**Fred Pelzman**, Chief Community & Consumer Liaison Division  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Washington, D.C.

Editor's Note: Reader response to *Perspectives* articles is welcome. Address letters to: Editor, *Perspectives*, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1121 Vermont Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20425.



## Next: An Asian American Bakke Case?

If it's true that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions," look for a lot of traffic coming out of California. According to a recent *New York Times* dispatch from San Francisco, there's a sticky situation in the works across the Bay in Berkeley—one that portends a dilemma for advocates of affirmative action.

It seems that in a state where 6.2 percent of the population is of Asian descent, the number of students enrolled at the University of California/Berkeley of similar stock has more than tripled over the past 15 years to more than 20 percent of the college's undergraduate population of 21,000. By itself, that is not surprising, seeing as how Berkeley draws 60 percent of its undergraduates from the Bay Area counties, 9 percent of whose combined population, according to preliminary 1980 Census data, is of Asian descent. (Asian Americans represent the largest single ethnic group in San Francisco—22 percent of the total population).

No, what worries the higher education establishment is that what's happening in Berkeley is also happening downstate, that Asian Americans are starting to crowd the Hispanics for classroom seats. And Hispanics account for 19.1 percent of the state's population.

Both groups have "language barriers" that have a direct bearing on how college applicants score on their high school Scholastic Aptitude Tests. California state policy holds that a place will be found on one of the seven campuses of the University of California for any student in the top 12.5 percent SAT testing percentile. It so happens, however, that high school students of Asian descent do especially well in math, canceling out

whatever low scores are racked up in language skills. Hence the fact that 39 percent of Asian American California high school seniors tested in the top 12.5 percent—compared to other groups (16.5 percent whites, 5 percent of blacks, and 4.7 percent of Hispanics).

Watson Laetsch, vice president for undergraduate affairs at UC/Berkeley, recognizes the explosive potential of the current situation. He can already foresee the day, in 1990, when 40 percent of the entering class will be of Asian descent. The bottom line, of course, isn't only educational but economic. Laetsch says that what most worries other minorities is that the Asian American bent for math could give them a monopoly on the "glitter majors"—like computer science. As he speaks, he gazes out across the Bay in the direction of San Francisco Penin-

sula's fabled Silicon Valley, the acknowledged center of American hi-tech.

## Giving Thanks For What?

If you, like millions of other citizens, harken back to the Good Old Days, when America was a far simpler, uncomplicated country, you will not like what William B. Newell has to say about the first Thanksgiving. That's alright, because Newell doesn't like what millions of school children have been taught about what *really* happened at Plymouth Colony back in 1637. Not a celebration by the Pilgrims of their deliverance from religious persecution, but the celebration of an Indian massacre.

Newell, former head of the U. of Connecticut's anthropology department, happens to be a Penobscot Indian. He will graphically recount how English and Dutch mercenaries came upon a group of Indians during one of *their* religious rites—the annual green corn dance. Ordered out of the building in which they had gathered, writes Newell in a recent issue of *Akwesasne Notes*, the Indians were shot down as they ran. Those staying behind were burned alive. "The very next day the Governor [of the Massachusetts Bay Colony] declared a Thanksgiving Day [and] for the next 100 years every Thanksgiving Day ordained by a governor [was] to honor a bloody victory, thanking God that the battle had been won."

This new perspective on colonial history, rarely taught in schools, is part and parcel of the new consciousness raised last year by Frances FitzGerald in her book, *America Revised* (see *Perspectives*, Spring 1980).

Those interested in doing something about it should contact the Council on Interracial Books for Children Inc., 1841 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023, which





has worked up a complete Thanksgiving lesson plan that teachers may want to reach for, instead of the nut cup and the cranberry sauce.

## Good News & Bad News From The Executive Suite

This being the season of annual reports, there are two that are particularly intriguing. The first is Exxon's, the second that of Colonial Penn, the big Philadelphia insurance firm that caters to America's burgeoning elderly.

First things first. Exxon often gets a bad public rap. It goes with the oil refining and marketing territory. So it's with pleasure we report that Exxon gives more than a footnote to its equal employment opportunity efforts. Its 1980 annual report treats EEO as it does its drilling activities, indicating that minority

employees accounted for 16 percent of Exxon's total work force and that women accounted for 26.5 percent. It could have let it go at that—but no, it wants its shareholders to know that in 1980, Exxon hired a total of 13,000 people in the U.S., of which 21.2 percent were minorities and 38.7 percent were women. Of the college grads it recruited, 15.4 percent were minorities, 19.3 women. Exxon "also continued to recruit women for blue collar jobs traditionally held by men." In 1980, women held 20.3 percent of such jobs.

As to Colonial Penn: buried in its 1980 report is the revelation that it will charge off \$18 million for "unusually high marketing and administrative costs" incurred in trying to retain customers in two retirement organizations that will be moving their group health insurance out of Colonial Penn this year. The two are the National Retired Teachers Association and the American Association of Retired Persons—well over 3 million strong.

It's the story behind the latter's move-out that is particularly noteworthy, and not merely because the annual report makes no mention of it.

It seems that back in 1974, a retired California apartment house manager named Elmer Norman, blind in one eye and partially deaf, went for a hearing test. Insured by Colonial Penn, he filed for a \$48 claim. Colonial Penn rejected the claim, saying this was an "office visit," and gave him 40 percent less. In a covering letter, Colonial Penn explained that Norman had a new policy that offered "substantial improvements."

Norman wasn't impressed and sued Colonial Penn for "fraudulently switching" his policy. Why? Well, according to his lawyer, Pomona attorney William Shernoff, CP figured to reduce its claim payments by \$4.5 million a year by re-

ducing coverage 40 percent. He supported this charge with ample evidence, apparently convincing the jury in Pomona Superior Court last fall, and calling for a payment to plaintiff Norman, now 73, of \$70,000 in compensatory damages and \$4.5 million in punitive damages. At the same time, the AARP announced it had already switched to Prudential, effective this summer—sending a mighty chill down the backs of many other firms selling health insurance to the elderly.

For his part, Norman "broke down and cried" when the verdict came down, his lawyer said at the end of the three-week trial. During cross examination, plaintiff had testified that he hadn't sued for himself "but to help other members of [the] Association who have similar policies and don't know they're fraudulent." At a news conference afterwards, Norman said he wouldn't be at all surprised if the insurance company's appeal took another five years. "At my age, the chances are I will never see one cent. In other words, my eyes aren't glued on the pot of gold."

Even if the matter stands, Norman intends to donate most of the proceeds to consumer protection groups who have long been after Colonial Penn.

## Footnote To Executive Order 9066

In an attempt to assuage the fears of Hispanics that 1980 Census data might be used against those who are here illegally as "undocumented aliens," outgoing U.S. Census Director Vincent P. Barabba may have dredged up some past-imperfect history. Not that it will do any good, however.

For the past 40 years, Japanese-Americans seeking legal redress for the wrongs inflicted upon them by FDR's Executive Order 9066 (see "Haunting Ech-



oes of the Last Roundup," *Perspectives*, Summer 1980) have been wondering about how easy it was, back in 1942, for the War Department to corral so many of them for internment. Many Nisei had suspected complicity on the part of the Census Bureau.

Their suspicions may not have been groundless, after all. A native of Berkeley, Calif.—Raymond Okamura—had been sufficiently intrigued by the Census Bureau's claim that any data on Hispanics would be kept confidential and would not be shared with INS to write a letter to Barabba, asking in effect, "Are you sure?" To his credit, Barabba checked and lo and behold, found that "after (Pearl Harbor)...a bureau statistician was assigned to the West Coast to assist in the statistical work of the War Relocation Authority. Officials at bureau headquarters prepared a duplicate set of punch cards which were used to tabulate information on the geographical concentrations of Japanese-Americans, primarily in California.

"These cards contained no names or other identifiers for individuals, but provided sufficient geographical information to use for planning purposes in the evacuation program..."

But, added Barabba, it was all "strictly legal" in that the 1942 War Powers Act suspended a number of statutes, including one enacted in 1929 to ensure confidentiality of the Census rolls. So even had the zealous bureaucrat gone so far as to release actual names, he'd have been in compliance with the law. The fact that no names were provided can hardly be viewed as a mitigating circumstance. As things turned out, the War Department didn't need names; they had enough to go on with the data turned over to them.

## When Ignorance Of The Law Can Be A Good Excuse

Back in 1853, land in Oregon sold for \$1.25 to \$2.50 an acre, so it sounded like a pretty good deal to the elders of the Umpqua Tribe when the U.S. Government signed a treaty with them on Sept. 19th that year, calling for the following: a down payment of \$12,000, with \$1,000 going for 20 blankets, 18 pairs of pants, shirts, shoes, hats, 3 coats, 3 vests, 3 pairs of socks, 3 neckerchiefs, 40 cotton flags, 220 yards of cloth, 1 gross of buttons, 2 pounds of thread, 10 papers of needles "and such other goods and provisions" as the Indian agent thought necessary.

Additionally, the Government offered 2 houses not to exceed \$200 each, a field of five acres, fenced and plowed and seeded. The rest of the money was to be doled out as the Government saw fit. "Finally," according to *The Oregonian*, the Portland daily, "the Indians were to have a permanent reservation on their ancestral lands. In return, they were to give up most of their property, be good neighbors and promptly bring to justice any Indian who stole a white man's horse."

So much for promissary notes. It now turns out that, insofar as the Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua is concerned, the Government reneged. "Not one dime ever reached my clients," says attorney Dennis Whittlesey, mainly because at the time the treaty was signed, the Cow Creek hadn't made clear their relationship to the Umpqua. He blames ignorance of the law—white man's law as well as Indian law.

Which is why Whittlesey is now in the U.S. Court of Claims asking for nearly \$130 million for the 800 square miles of timber and mineral-rich Cow Creek land

near Canyonville, as well as other "unspecified property" that his clients feel was seized in violation of the 5th Amendment. At that, the Cow Creek are being positively magnanimous: rather than demand compensation based on current land values, the Cow Creek are only asking for what the land was worth back on Sept. 19, 1853—plus interest.

It could be an offer the Government could hardly refuse, given the alternative demands.

Not that the Cow Creek are slow to file. They'd tried, repeatedly, back in the 1920s and 30s, being rebuffed thrice by Congress, once by presidential veto (Herbert Hoover)—all due to not being able to prove their relationship to the Umpquas. Last year, largely on account of this case, Congress decided to give the Indians another crack (the Indian Claims Commission having expired back in 1951).

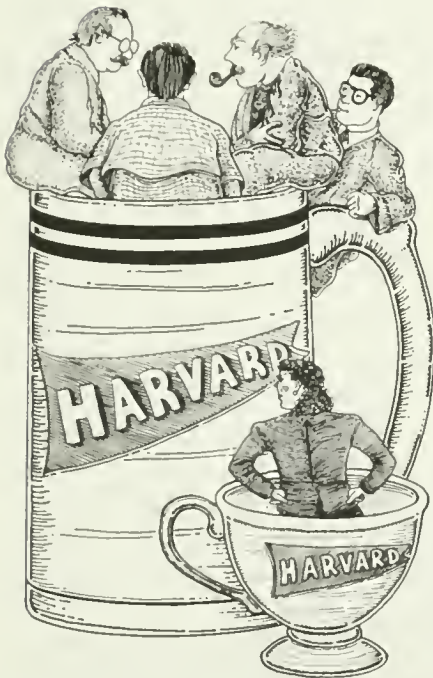
Beyond the cost attraction, there's also another consideration favoring the Cow Creeks: the fact that even before the 1853 treaty had been signed, Washington had encouraged non-Indians to grab the Indian lands for the gold beneath the surface.

## The Gender of Tenure

Earlier this year, a Harvard U. grievance committee concluded that 33-year-old Theda R. Skocpol, an associate professor of sociology had been unable to present "direct evidence" of sexual discrimination. It had reached its conclusion after reviewing the record, one replete with "patterns" of discrimination. It said it would now reconsider her tenure application.

Fine, said Dr. Skocpol. Meanwhile, she would snub Harvard and accept a post from one of the four colleges that had made her offers: Stanford, Univer-





sity of Chicago, University of North Carolina and the University of Wisconsin. She might later consider Harvard again.

In the editorial on the case, the *New York Times* observed that "too many women (find) college and university faculties...exclusive men's clubs. Trying to enter them is like climbing a mountain with no footholds." The National Center for Education Statistics finds women hold only about 25 percent of the full-time (tenured) faculty jobs in the U.S., invariably at lower salaries than their male counterparts. And in 1979-80, while 66 percent of male faculty members up for tenure received it, only 48 percent of women faculty did. The administrators can't blame this discrepancy on any shortage of candidates: the unemployment rate for women with Ph.D.'s in his-

tory is ten times that of men; in the realm of science and engineering it is five times that of men.

### Three-Ring Circus

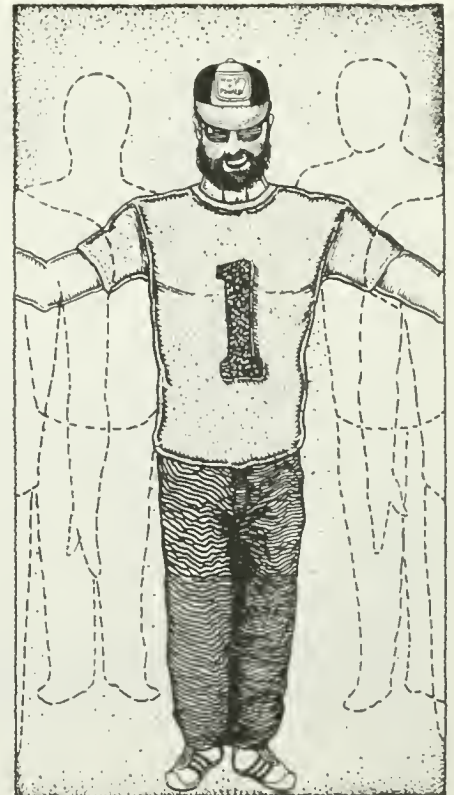
What if they gave a white-power rally, and nobody came?

Don't expect this to happen in upstate New York where, earlier this year, "they"—rather, *he*—gave a rally and *everybody* came, all of them the wrong people.

Karl Hand, Jr., who claims to be Western New York State Coordinator for the National Socialist Party of America—the neo-Nazi group involved in last year's fatal shootout down in Greensboro, N.C.—wanted to celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday by calling on "100 white men with guts" to rally with him in downtown Buffalo. This in a city suffering chronic unemployment and struggling to reduce racial tensions triggered by the murders of seven blacks during the past year.

City and county officials panicked. And the media responded in kind. The upshot was a sight that, under any other circumstance, might have been amusing: a lone protestor, holding a "Whites Have Rights" placard, surrounded by a ring of newspaper, magazine, and wire service reporters, photographers and TV crews—more than 100 men and women, jammed together a dozen deep. They, in turn, were surrounded by nearly 400 Buffalo and Erie County policemen and state troopers, some mounted, others straining to hold onto leashed K-9 dogs. And surrounding *them*, a ring of angry anti-Nazi and leftist protesters, joined by curious onlookers.

Afterwards, a spokesperson for Buffalo's Black Forum hailed the anti-rally rally as a "devastating rejection of Nazism." But the antagonist wasn't at all put



out. In fact, lapsing into the editorial plural, Karl Hand crowed, "We accomplished a good deal...we got our message across."

Thanks to the messengers. Clearly, good news doesn't sell newspapers, or boost TV news ratings. ♦

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# Speaking Out

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## Accessible Transportation for Mobility-Impaired People: A Civil Right

by John M. Williams



**T**hey can work. They want to work. And they produce when they do work. Yet, in spite of our national goal to increase productivity, too many mobility-impaired people cannot get to work.

That is their plight despite United States participation this year in the International Year of Disabled People which has as its theme "Full Participation and Equality."

And that is their plight despite the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which states:

"No qualified handicapped person shall solely by reason of his handicap

be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Two cases illustrate the obstacles faced by our nation's mobility-impaired population.

Wheelchair-bound, William Holt was waiting for the scheduled lift-equipped bus to take him home from his Washington, D.C. office. It was a bitter cold January day, but when the bus arrived, the driver told Holt that the lift bus broke down and was not replaced. Other passengers boarded the bus, but Holt was

left behind. It was the fourth time in less than two months that the scheduled lift bus Holt was waiting for did not show up. Since then, Holt has given up trying to use public transportation.

Mary Alice Gregory of Columbus, Ohio is also wheelchair-bound. She has a chemical engineering degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and would rather work than collect \$1,200 a month in government benefits. But, she says, "I can't get a job because there is no mainline accessible transportation in Columbus."

Throughout the United States there are stories similar to those of Holt and Gregory. In every community, qualified disabled people are being forced to become dependents of our local, state and Federal governments because services provided by transit operators to mobility-impaired people are too limited and specialized. It costs too much to provide regular accessible transportation services and too few people would benefit from it, argue the transit operators. They do not see this as a civil rights issue, but Holt, Gregory and many others, with and without mobility impairments, insist on readily accessible transportation as a civil right.

The cost of making rail and buses accessible to handicapped people between 1980 and 2010 is estimated to be \$6.8 billion, according to a 1979 Congressional Budget Office report. However, the amount of Federal, state and local tax dollars paid to keep mobility-impaired people dependent on tax-supported programs could be even higher. Witness the case of Harrison Cargo, who lives in an El Paso, Texas suburb.

A computer programmer, Cargo lost his legs and partial use of his right hand in 1976. But artificial legs which he was outfitted with and learned to use through

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*John M. Williams is a project manager working on an educational training program in the transportation area for the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, a civil rights organization for disabled people headquartered in Washington, D.C.*



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# Speaking Out

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a rehabilitation program launched him on a three-year job search. Yet the lack of accessible transportation that could get him to and from a job proved to be too large an obstacle. He started receiving \$1,200 a month from state and Federal support programs.

And then accessible transportation came to the El Paso area. Cargo started working as a computer scientist and stopped drawing most of his government benefits.

"It was a welcome relief," he says. "I have two friends who are mobility-impaired who got jobs the same time I did. The money saved by the Federal government by stopping our benefits amounted to over \$30,000 a year. There is also a reduction in our medical dependence programs. If each of us works 30 years, we will save taxpayers at least a million dollars."

There are over a million mobility-impaired people out of work today because accessible transportation is not available to them. If they had jobs, they would pay more in taxes in 30 years than the \$6.8 billion it would cost to have fully accessible transportation systems. Furthermore, there would be a reduction of billions of dollars in government benefits that would not be paid to mobility-impaired workers.

The CBO report and transit operators say that even if mainline accessible transportation is made available to disabled people, especially those in wheelchairs, too few disabled people would use the system to make it cost effective.

True, there are mobility-impaired people whose transportation needs are better met by special services such as vans and taxis. People who live in regions in the country where there are heavy and frequent snows, bitter cold temperatures and where the terrain makes it impossi-

ble for them to get from their homes to bus stops and those who are disabled and elderly and have difficulty adjusting to the heat would benefit from door to door service. Where special paratransit services are needed, however, transit authorities, in most cases, do not meet the demand.

At the same time, there are hundreds of thousands of mobility-impaired people who want to ride buses but cannot because not enough buses are equipped with features that facilitate their getting on and off the bus. What is needed is a combination of special services and lift-equipped buses that complement each other and will provide the basic mobility necessary for mobility-impaired persons who want to work.

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## Three mobility-impaired persons with jobs could save taxpayers \$1 million.

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The transit authority in West Palm Beach, Florida discovered that by having every bus lift-equipped during the entire service day, by replacing a disabled lift-equipped bus with another lift-equipped bus, by publicizing their routes, and by cooperating with representatives of disabled people, they were able to achieve a dramatic increase in ridership from disabled people, particularly people in wheelchairs.

Other transit authorities need to follow suit. The results can be the same.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 imposes an obligation upon recipients of Federal funds, including transit operators, to remove barriers that have the effect of excluding persons. It prohibits the provision of separate services which are not equally effective. It places very firm obligations upon the extent to which

compromise on this issue is possible. And it requires that even though it may take 30 years to make buses and other means of transportation accessible, as required by the U.S. Department of Transportation's regulations implementing the Rehabilitation Act, steps toward accessibility must be taken.

The civil rights of disabled people to have access to mass transit services have been reaffirmed in a number of court decisions made in the middle and late seventies. One landmark case involved George Lloyd and Janet Wolfe, both disabled people, who sued the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) in northeastern Illinois and the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) for violating the Rehabilitation Act, the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, and the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968.

Judge Walter Dillon Cummings of the Federal District Court in northeastern Illinois ruled that RTA and CTA had violated the Rehabilitation Act. His ruling made two key points: (1) The Act imposes "an affirmative remedial action" upon recipients of Federal financial assistance. He said that the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 contained language identical to that found in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, with respect to handicapped people; and (2) the Act suggests a commitment to "affirmative remedial steps of substantial scope."

Equality of opportunity leading to full participation in our society is a civil right of all Americans. But for disabled Americans, inaccessible transportation makes a cruel mockery of that right. ♦





# Women Can't Bank On Affirmative Action

by Thelma E. Kandel

It's almost funny. Despite the huge amount of female spending power that courses through its channels, days, nights and weekends—its computers never sleep—your friendly neighborhood bank remains one of the country's last bastions of male chauvinism.

Never mind how many women bank officers you may encounter; just ask any one of them to talk about how they feel about equal pay for equal work (and responsibility) and you're apt to run into a wall of reticence as thick as those lining the vault downstairs.

"Oh, it's strictly against bank policy to discuss salary matters," you're likely to hear, or "I'm afraid you'll have to ask our personnel director that question." Do, and you'll run into more evasion. Personnel people would much rather talk about the "significant progress" banks have made in employing women. And, of course, they'd prefer not to mention that the pressure to comply comes not so much from within as from without. Even women in positions of high responsibility tend to lower their eyelids when the conversation turns to "discrimination." One gets the distinct feeling that now that they're "one of the boys," they agree

that what the bank does within its own house is none of the public's concern.

Tradition certainly does die hard. Banks are run by white men at the top, with women and minorities making up the bulk of the office and clerical ranks at the bottom. There's been little forward movement since 1975, when the Council on Economic Priorities, a non-profit organization that compares the performance of corporations in areas affecting society, found that while 63 percent of all bank employees were women, only five percent of them held middle-management posts, and less than one percent held "top executive" jobs. At the time the CEP issued that report, Senator William Proxmire, D-Wisc., former chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, called banking "the most discriminating, prejudiced business in the world." He now says he has seen no new information that would cause him to temper his belief.

In 1976, the Council on Economic Priorities updated an earlier study of 24 leading banks across the country. It found few women near the top. "The higher we go, literally and metaphorically, in the main offices of the big banks, the scarcer the faces of women

and minorities become," it said. "When we reach the topmost floors, where an executive hush pervades the air, there are effectively none." CEP also found that while there is visible progress in putting women on the board of directors, there is no consistent relationship between this action and actual improvement in employment opportunities for women. Bankers appear to be more interested in presenting the proper appearance of progress than in making actual gains in employment and promotion.

Lynn D. Salvage, former president of the First Women's Bank of New York and now president of the Katherine Gibbs School, agrees that women have not yet arrived in banking. "They are mainly in staff, not line, management jobs and they lack direct responsibility for profits," she says. Women who do make it into the officials-and-managers category are seldom put in charge of operations departments, although those staffs are overwhelmingly female.

Even Emily Womach, head of the Women's National Bank in Washington, D.C., who described herself as a "hard-nosed banker" in a March 1981 interview with the *Washington Post*, says "I wouldn't want anyone to go through what I went through."

Ironically, banks blew the chance to be in the forefront of affirmative action by their failure to tap the pool of women already working for them in

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clerical jobs. These employees could have provided a steady supply of trainees for advanced positions. Unfortunately, the trend has been to hire outside people to fill the lower ranks of middle management instead of promoting those women already working in the banks.

Says an assistant vice president at Citibank, "It's better financially and career-wise to come from the outside than to try to work your way up in the organization. Those women who come in from other industries are perceived by management as potential leaders and get line positions. But women who are working in low-prestige jobs in the banks find themselves at a dead end....They're not given an opportunity to show their abilities or improve their credentials." Even more unfortunately, the most-qualified women are lost when they opt for higher-paying jobs and better advancement opportunities in other industries. A woman who was formerly vice president of a midwestern bank said, "I knew I couldn't go any higher and I wasn't content to let my career stay at a mediocre plateau. That's why I left banking for business."

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## **Women control most of the wealth, but sexist policies keep them from being responsible for the money in banks.**

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One of the few women who heads a lending department in a large bank says, "You have to be better than men, not just as good as they are, to get somewhere. Most banks make only a token effort to be fair in promoting women and minorities. They just want to look good. Smaller banks are somewhat less uptight than the giants, but progress is slow. It's a steady process, like eroding a rock. It would be great if results would come overnight, but they won't."

Women have been successful in displacing men in lower positions, but the big breakthrough into positions of authority and responsibility for profits remains to be made. Despite the fact that women control most of the wealth

in the country today, sexist policies keep them from being responsible for the money in banks. Catalyst, a New York-based organization that seeks to promote employment opportunities for women, reports that despite some progress in entering banking's managerial levels, "women have largely been excluded from the mainstream of the more lucrative aspects of banking because of a general distrust of women as money managers."

The American Bankers Association claims that major banks have quadrupled the number of women and minorities in the "officials and managers" category in the past ten years, and that women now account for 32 percent of such jobs (up from 5 percent). However, these figures, released last August, do not present a true picture of the increase of women in actual supervisory capacities, according to Ellen Cassidy of an organization known as Working Women. Rather, she said, they probably reflect the inclusion of lower-level jobs in the "officials and managers" category. It is difficult to accept the ABA's report of a 47 percent increase in women managers when the industry as a whole has only grown by 14 percent. Too often a title is bestowed without added responsibility or salary. Doling out promises in lieu of substantive change often cloaks creeping tokenism with respectability.

As banking expands its scope to include a wider range of consumer and corporate services and the trend of branch banking continues, new career opportunities will open up. But will the banking industry make them available to women?

There seems to be some cause for optimism. At long last, the banking community is beginning to recognize that the continuation of discriminatory employment, training and promotion policies simply doesn't pay. By excluding women and minorities from better jobs, banking works at cross-purposes with itself. Simply put, it is good business to seek, hire, train and promote loyal workers from these under-utilized segments of the workforce. The exclusion of these groups is a waste of human resources and thus has a negative effect on profitability. Banks—along

with other industries—are beginning to understand this. The banking community is now actively seeking women with basic management skills and financial knowledge, as well as looking to other industries in its recruiting efforts. That's the good news.

The bad news is that women officers who have been recruited as professional or technical specialists enter middle-management and rarely get the more generalized base of experience which is a prerequisite for the policy-making positions farther up the ladder. Furthermore, more than two-thirds of banking's chief executive officers have climbed to the top via commercial lending experience. Other members of management come from international and trust departments, all of which are nearly devoid of women except in clerical and secretarial roles. These practices have effectively kept women out of the pipeline leading to managerial positions.

Discrimination in the selection process is also responsible for the substantial under-representation of women and minorities in the top management of banking, according to economist Robert L. Heilbroner. Bankers deny charges of prejudice and cite a lack of "qualified" women and blacks to move into higher positions. But Heilbroner contends that, "Qualification consists mainly in the early selection and deliberate grooming of 'promising' young people. The suspicion then arises that blacks and women are not looked on as constituting as promising a body as whites and men."

Banks are also looking for women to join their internal management development programs, which train recent college graduates for managerial spots. But the trick is getting into a training program in the first place. In the past, most banks have not given women an equal chance, and again, those already employed by banks are hurt the most. For example, a recent survey conducted by Women Office Workers, (WOW) an organization seeking to improve the status and job conditions of more than 800,000 clerical workers in the New York metropolitan area, showed that almost two-thirds of women bank employees either didn't





## The Willmar 8

*CBS News, in its February 22, 1981 "60 Minutes" program, unravelled the story of eight women who were the first to go on strike against a Willmar, Minnesota bank. Herewith are edited excerpts from a transcript of that broadcast.*

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**HARRY REASONER:** When you think of women's lib, what comes to mind are names like Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, Germaine Greer. Now, a new name—"The Willmar 8." What's the Willmar 8? It's a group of average, non-political women who were working for a bank in a small city in Minnesota. Like many women who work, they felt discriminated against because of their sex, but unlike most women who feel that way, they did something about it. It gets pretty cold in Minnesota in the wintertime. For instance, on this December morning in Willmar it's 25 degrees and, locally, that would be regarded as pretty mild. But three years ago, almost to the day, eight Willmar women walked off their jobs and began to pace up and down these icy streets. They kept it up all the rest of that winter and all of the next. They were on strike against the bank they worked for....

For nearly a year and a half the eight women kept a picket line moving back and forth in front of that bank all day, every day the bank was open. The strike ended last spring, but before it was over, some women in New York and Los Angeles heard about it, got together some money and made a film about the story. It was completed a few months ago, and it's beginning to attract quite a bit of attention. We'll show you some of it. I'll be commenting from time to time, but mostly the voice you will hear is narrator Lee Grant, the actress, who was one of the producers of the film and also directed it.

**LEE GRANT:** If you look up Willmar in the Encyclopedia, you will find it was once a center for the Great Northern Railroad. The population is 18,438... It has three banks....

**REASONER:** Willmar is not the kind of town where you'd expect to have the first bank strike ever in Minnesota. And the eight women were unlikely candidates to be the first strikers against a bank. But what they had in common was a history of individual grievances which they began to share.

**GRANT:** On coffee breaks they started to talk—tellers and bookkeepers. They were treated unfairly, passed over for pro-

know what kind of training programs there were at their banks, or said that none was available. Three out of four felt that sex discrimination, as well as racial and age bias, existed. More than 64 percent said that job openings were not posted in their banks. In light of this information, WOW has called upon banks to take "positive action to upgrade, train and promote their women and minority employees and begin to treat them in the same way as white males have been treated."

Fortunately, women in banking are not totally without organizations to aid them in their struggle against discrimination. For example, Working Women, an advocacy group for women office workers, has affiliates in 12 major cities and monitors personnel practices of banks across the country. One of its recent national surveys found that banks were among the lowest paying employers for all clerical occupations. Salaries for secretaries ranked 10 percent below the national average; stenographers, 18

percent lower, typists and accounting clerks, 12 percent lower; and file clerks, 7 percent lower than salaries paid in other industries. Manufacturing companies, on the other hand, pay salaries 3 to 10 percent higher than the national average, and 10 to 46 percent more than banks pay. These disparities may well add impetus to efforts to unionize bank employees.

Another group, called "9-to-5," which represents over 200,000 women clerical workers, recently won a campaign for higher pay against First National Boston, the largest commercial bank in New England. The group also recently announced its intention to have the state's Attorney General investigate the practice of salary information swapping by major financial institutions in an attempt to set wage ceilings. They labeled the salary-fixing "a conspiracy and violation of antitrust laws."

In the legal arena, class action suits have been settled in favor of women

employees who cited unfair hiring and employment practices, particularly concerning the lack of potential for job advancement. The first sex-bias suit, for example, was settled in 1974 by the Bank of America at a cost of \$3.75 million. And a suit against Chase Manhattan Bank was settled for some \$2 million in 1978.

Such cases make waves in the entire banking community. Indeed, many civil rights advocates contend that litigation is the best ammunition for the battle. They feel that expecting "voluntary compliance" with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulations is as realistic as believing in Santa Claus.

Hopefully, supporters of affirmative action policies will no longer have to depend upon voluntary compliance. Enforcement of Equal Employment Opportunity regulations has been lax until recently, but the EEOC has begun to crack down on the banking industry. A compliance program focusing on

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## The Willmar 8

motion, paid less than men, and expected to give overtime without pay when needed. Slowly, their small talk turned to issues.

**WOMAN:** It was the last straw when they hired another man and wanted us to train him for a management position.

**ATTORNEY:** The bank never conceived of these women as possible managerial material. They got the best possible women they could for their jobs—and these were some pretty high qual—caliber individuals—and then it forgot about them.

**WOMAN:** If we're qualified to train them in, then why aren't we qualified for the job?

**WOMAN:** We had done this many times in the past, and the men would move right up the ladder to management and the women were still down at the bottom, training everybody that came in.

**ATTORNEY:** The gentleman involved was hired for reasons having to do with the usual reasons people get hired in a bank like this. Family connections: Leo knew his father; his father knew Leo.

**QUESTION:** Leo?

**ATTORNEY:** Pirsch, the president of the bank.

**WOMAN:** I mean, he flat out told us we are not all equal, you know.

**ATTORNEY:** I had the pure case of discrimination. There was just no doubt about it. The bank had been discriminating against these people, and was saying so. You had the bank president making speeches, saying things like, "You aren't the

chief breadwinner here." And you had eight people who were willing as a body to get up and say, "Go jump in the lake, bank!"

**GRANT:** News and television stations picked up on the small drama played out in a small town, and suddenly they were asked to speak—to labor groups, schools and the media. None of them had ever spoken in public...

**REASONER:** For a while, the women were celebrities, but as the strike wore on month after month, they were no longer a novelty for the press. What they were left with was the reality that they were without jobs and without incomes...

Rumors about the bank began to circulate and then were confirmed. The bank had been sold.

**GRANT:** It was the first time the women knew they'd had an effect. The Citizens National Bank was the only bank in Willmar to show a loss in its growth rate, which went from plus 12 percent in 1976, when the action started, to minus 6 percent in 1979, which seemed to indicate that people in Willmar were not as indifferent as they seemed. Leo Pirsch's words—"We're not all equal, you know."—had sent eight women to the picket line. In February, he retired as president of the bank.

**REASONER:** It would be satisfying, from the women's standpoint, to report that the strike ended on a note of triumph. It didn't. Soon after the bank was sold, the women got word on a suit they had filed with the National Labor Relations Board. They hoped for a ruling that would confirm their grievances,





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*Clara Serra*

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## The Willmar 8

reinstate them in their jobs, and award them back pay. But when the NLRB finally acted in March of 1979, the decision was unfavorable, largely because of a technicality. Although the women are appealing, they were left without jobs and without back pay. The strike was over. The bank had won.

The Willmar Bank Employees Association still exists, but it's down to one member, Doris Boshart, still acting as a teller after having been head bookkeeper. The other women are all working at different jobs now, but they still keep in close touch. Glennis Terwissha, the youngest of the group, has moved to St. Paul, where she's working as an organizer for a union representing public employees.

We've heard a lot, so much, in the last dozen years about women's lib and feminism. Was this a feminist or women's lib movement?

**TERWISSHA:** No, we—we didn't call ourselves that until people started calling us that. (Laughs) That's kind of the way that works. None of us were feminist, women's libbers, at the beginning. We were just angry. And it wasn't until we started really reading letters that other women in the same situation were writing to us that we realized how widespread it was.

**REASONER:** Do you think women in—particularly in clerical areas, are generally an oppressed group?

**TERWISSHA:** Yes, I do. I definitely do. And it's mainly because secretaries and clerical workers, I think, are easy to be taken advantage of, taken for granted. Women with 21 years' experience making three dollars and thirty cents an hour, it's unheard of. It shouldn't be.

**REASONER:** What about the argument that's been around as long as I can remember—that the man is the breadwinner and needs and deserves the higher pay?

**TERWISSHA:** The way it is now, I can't see how a family can make it with just one income. About two-thirds of the working force of women are either the chief breadwinner, as you put it, in the family, or else their husbands make less than \$10,000 a year. And I'd call that a very vital income and very necessary.

**REASONER:** You stuck it out for a year and a half and then you lost, but did you gain anything from the experience?

**TERWISSHA:** Maybe the thing that was gained—most of it—was the inner satisfaction of doing something that you knew was important to you and important to other people. The growth, like being in a dead sleep for so long and then all of a sudden coming out of it, and you're seeing things in all these different perspectives, and it's—it's great.

**REASONER:** According to the *The Wall Street Journal*, of the nearly 15,000 banks in the United States, only 30 are unionized. Banking spokesmen say that the conditions that led to the strike at the Citizens National Bank in Willmar are not representative of their industry, but they're not taking any chances. Since the release last October of the film about the Willmar 8, the biggest demand for screenings has come from the banking industry.\*

\*The film, *Willmar 8*, may be obtained from California Newsreel, 630 Natoma St., San Francisco, Calif. 94103, (415) 621-6196.

training opportunities, promotion potential and equal-pay protection was recently put into operation.

Donald E. Elisburg, formerly the chief enforcer and Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment Standards says, "It's no longer sufficient for a bank to compare women's advances against their former lack of progress. Their advances now must be measured against those made by men. It's not just getting into the industry; it's where they go from entry-level jobs."

Elisburg feels that the entire personnel system must be reviewed—including recruitment techniques, hiring, testing, and promotion and salary criteria. The responsibility of the banking industry is to eliminate the effects of past discriminatory practices as well as to prevent future ones. What's needed is a visible commitment by top management; development of a system for motivating managers and supervisors; analysis of how women and minority employees are utilized, and the establishment of goals and timetables for action. "Affirmative action is altering compensation and management techniques in the banking industry," Elisburg says, "but there is a long way to go before the personnel practices that stacked the deck against women are eliminated."

"The 1960's was a period of lawmaking. The 1970's was a period for law development. The 1980's will be for law application," says former EEOC head Eleanor Holmes Norton. The real impact of affirmative action has not yet been felt by the banking industry, but the momentum is building. When it no longer makes headlines that women have been appointed to vice presidencies or heads of departments and when such appointments become the usual route for women of ability, the day will have arrived when affirmative action has indeed accomplished its goals. Until then, it is not enough to shed light on the situation. We must also apply heat to end the waiting game. ♦





# Overcoming Language Barriers to Equality

Many blacks, Hispanics, other minorities and women have long maintained that they are victims of language discrimination. Their basic contention is that by encouraging "standard English only" policies in our public schools, political institutions and marketplaces, this nation's English language standard bearers share some of the blame for keeping language minorities and women in a subordinate position in our society.

Few members of the affected groups would question the mastering of English as an important step on the road to individual well-being in America. What many do question, however, are assumptions about how schools can best equip language minority children with English language proficiency and whether "sexist English" is a proper standard for anybody.

Each of the following three articles traces some of the contours of language discrimination in the U.S. One identifies sexist language traps and shows how to avoid them. Another explores the background and significance of a recent court decision concerning the use of black English in classroom teaching. The third provides vignettes of Hispanic life in our English-dominant culture. Together, they suggest that language policies and practices in and out of classrooms can indeed contribute to denials of civil rights.

# SOLVING THE GREAT PRONOUN PROBLEM: Sexist Singular

Twelve Ways to Avoid the

by Marie Shear©

**W**hen we write, sexual bias clings to our words, unbidden—as fleas accompany a dog. Yet according to a body of opinion, sexist language is unfit for public consumption. Sexist language has been deplored by such disparate observers as the United Technologies corporation, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Alan Alda. Whether we write as business people, professionals or government officials, the argument goes, we shouldn't accidentally transmit sexually-biased messages along with the messages we *mean* to send.

The argument is persuasive thrice over. On intellectual grounds, scholarly literature has shown that sexist language is pernicious; it not only reflects but perpetuates prejudice. On pragmatic grounds, sexist language violates standard business etiquette by gratuitously offending clients, colleagues and members of the public. On ethical grounds, sexist language undermines, rather than improves, the quality of public discourse. On all three grounds, then, words that demean women are unbecoming to us all.

Sexist language is no less noxious than racist usage. As Kett and Underwood say in their recent book, "Avoiding *he*...is equal to taking down the 'whites only' sign in a restaurant."<sup>\*</sup> They're wise to stress the word "he." For no form of sexist language is more common—and supposedly more difficult to avoid—than The Great Pronoun

Problem: finding substitutes for *he*, *his*, and *him* when the person referred to is unidentified, may be female or male, or is archetypal. We encounter this problem with those third-person singular pronouns many times each day.

Statistically speaking, the unknown, indefinite, or archetypal person (the third-person singular) in the United States is likely to be a white Protestant. Yet we instantly see the folly of inserting "WP" into every sentence. Male pronouns are similarly ludicrous, though we may be slower to perceive that fact: They imply that everyone who is anyone is male.

Their defenders insist that male pronouns are indispensable. Without them, they lament, prose becomes awkward and ostentatious. They warn feminists of the apocalypse, as fifteenth-century cartographers warned Columbus about sea monsters.

Despite such humbug, we can conquer The Great Pronoun Problem. Identifying nonsexist substitutes for male pronouns does require a bit of thought, but the effort pays dividends. Once we solve this omnipresent problem, less common forms of sexist usage are comparatively easy to correct.

I have based the accompanying 12-point guide to pronouns upon my experience as a writer, editor, and analyst. Practicality was essential; given the

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<sup>\*</sup>Kristin Lems, "'Talkin' Gender Neutral Blues," Carolsdatter Productions, Urbana, Illinois, 1978.

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*Marie Shear, director of research and development for a New York City firm that translates jargon into plain English, has contributed articles and reviews to more than a dozen magazines and has lectured on sexist language. She was formerly a public information officer for the New York State Division of Human Rights.*





press of daily business, a guide that wouldn't fit into a crowded day would be useful only in theory. I have applied this one, taught others to use it and found that it works.

After some practice, you should be able first to correct, and later to prevent, The Great Pronoun Problem. Singly or in combination, these twelve techniques permit sensible solutions for most variations of the problem. They should leave your writing as accurate and graceful as before, perhaps more so.

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## Language that neglects or disparages women is tainted.

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As you look at the techniques and the examples of their application, bear these guidelines in mind:

### Avoid "Company Manners"

Nonsexist language should not be viewed as a party hat or an affectation meant for special occasions, but as an integral part of one's ordinary work. Memos, letters, reports—and speech—should be as unbiased as the most formal prose. A double standard is hypocritical.

Besides, if you save nonsexist pronouns for special occasions, you won't develop enough skill to use them smoothly and swiftly. Be consistent. Then they'll become second nature. You'll develop the necessary craft and spare yourself laborious remedial effort later on. It's more efficient to avoid sexism in the first draft than to make corrections as a separate step that keeps the last draft from leaving your desk on time.

### Ignore the Ridicule

Critics of nonsexist usage often resort to ridicule, picturing its advocates as infidels who would torture the pure, prostrate form of English and impose thought control. The critics are overwrought. Language that neglects or disparages women isn't pure; on the contrary, it's tainted at best and corrupt at worst.

Oddly enough, critics who complain that nonsexist language is clumsy or imprecise overlook those same failings in sexist language. Certain writers whose work is otherwise elegant will use the word *he* six times in two lines, oblivious to the monotony—then argue that a single use of "he or she" is tedious.

Moreover, the critics overlook the farcical inaccuracy of sexist usage. They're not startled by statements like "the average American loses some of his teeth by middle age" or "everyone should decide for himself whether or not to have an abortion," although the first is technically askew because the majority of Americans are females and the second is biologically absurd.

By preventing such anomalies, nonsexist pronouns should enhance, not diminish, the accuracy of your writing.

### Consider Context

The context of a sexist sentence will affect the changes you make. Context determines which of the techniques is most apt. For example, you may not want to repeat the noun or pronoun if there's a lot of repetition immediately before and after the sexist sentence.

Check the preceding word or words to which the pronouns refer. When you change from singular to plural, pronouns may become ambiguous. If it's

not clear whether *they* or *their* refers to the new plural or an old one, consider changing an old plural to a singular. It's simpler to do than it sounds.

Avoid accidental inconsistencies. You may purposely use both the third person and the first or second, or the singular and the plural—if you are, for instance, stating a generalization and then applying it to an individual: "*Tenants* and *their* family members may not damage the plumbing. If damage occurs in my apartment, *I* must pay for repairs." When you vary the person or number like this, see if the rest of the text needs minor changes for the sake of agreement.

### Keep It Simple

Don't make a big production out of it. Look for a deft solution to the particular problem, then get on with it. Make the minimum necessary change instead of entangling yourself.

Don't overlook the obvious, either. There's no need to rack your brains if something handy will do the job. The example of "Business English" at the end of this article illustrates the point.

### Take Advantage of the Side Effects

The attempt to eliminate sexist pronouns has agreeable side effects. It can provide a fresh lens through which to examine your prose.

The alert writer who deletes a pronoun may simultaneously delete the cluster of words around it. Crisper language results. For example, "a tenant needs a roof over his head" can become "a tenant needs shelter." Five words are replaced by one.

When you replace *his* with *his or her*, you can also lessen the monotony in wording like "his employees, his

# SOLVING THE GREAT PRONOUN PROBLEM: 12 WAYS TO AVOID THE SEXIST PRONOUN

## 12 Ways to Avoid Sexist Pronouns

## EXAMPLES

- 1 Add the female: he or she, his or hers—or the reverse.
- 2 Use the first person: I, me, my, mine.
- 3 Use the second person: you, your, yours.
- 4 Move the noun.
- 5 Repeat the noun.
- 6 Use a new noun.
- 7 Use the plural.
- 8 Delete the pronoun.
- 9 Use a new pronoun.
- 10 Use articles and conjunctions: a, an, the, but, and.
- 11 Use "one": one, anyone, someone, no one.
- 12 Recast.

The techniques are not listed in any particular order. But the twelfth one, which requires the most work, is least often needed. The number preceding each of the following examples corresponds to the techniques listed above.

### 1

The tenant must not keep gasoline or other explosive materials in *his* apartment.

- 1 *his or her* apartment.
- 2 I must not...in *my* apartment.
- 3 *You* must...*your* apartment.
- 5 (monotonous)
- 7 *Tenants* must...*their* apartments.
- 10 in *the* apartment.
- 12 Gasoline...must not be kept in the tenant's apartment.
- 4, 6, 8, 9, 11 (not applicable)

### 2

Any repairs to the plumbing resulting from misuse by the tenant, *his* employee, *his* guests, or members of *his* family may be made by the landlord at the tenant's expense.

- 1 the tenant or *his or her* employees, guests, or family members
- 2 by *me* or *my* employees, guests, or family members...at my expense.
- 3 by *you* or *your* employees, guests, or family members...at *your* expense.
- 5 the tenant or *the tenant's* employees, guests, or family members
- 7 by *tenants* or *their* employees, guests, or family member...at the *tenants'* expense.
- 11 the tenant or *anyone whom the tenant allows into the apartment...at the tenant's expense.*
- 5 + 10 + 12 by the tenant or *the* employees, guests, or family members of *the tenant...at the tenant's expense.*
- 4 + 6, 8, 9, 10 (not applicable)





### 3

If the buyer requests a delay of the closing, *he* must pay any expense caused by the delay.

- 1 *he or she* must
- 2 If *I* request...*I* must
- 3 If *you* request...*you* must
- 5 (monotonous)
- 11 *Anyone who* requests...must
- 8 + 12 *A buyer requesting*...must
- 8 + 12 *A buyer who* requests...must
- 8 + 12 *Whoever* requests...must
- 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 (not applicable).

### 4

The bankruptcy clause is not necessary because it is extremely unlikely that a landlord would ever discover *his* tenant was bankrupt. Furthermore, even a bankrupt tenant needs a roof over *his* head.

- 1 (repetitious)
- 7 + 10 a tenant was bankrupt...bankrupt *tenants* need a roof over *their* heads.
- 1 + 10 a tenant was bankrupt...needs a roof over *his or her* head.
- 8 + 10 a tenant...needs a roof *overhead*.
- 7 + 10 + 12 a tenant was bankrupt...needs *shelter*.
- 2-6, 9, 11 (not applicable)

### 5

If the highest bidder defaults, *he* will lose *his* deposit. In that case, however, *he* will not be liable for any amount in excess of *his* deposit.

- 3 *you* will lose *your* deposit...you will not be liable...*your* deposit.
- 12 (unnecessary)
- 1 + 8 + 10 *he or she* will lose *his or her* deposit *but* will not be liable for any amount in excess of *the* deposit.
- 1 + 5 + 8 + 10 the *bidder* will lose *his or her* deposit *but* will not be liable for any amount in excess of *the* deposit.
- 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11 (not applicable).

### 6

Don't let *him* begin work before *he* provides you with certificates of insurance.

- 1 (repetitious)
- 6 + 8 Don't let work begin before *the contractor* provides you with certificates of insurance.
- 6 + 8 Don't let *the contractor* begin work before *providing* you with certificates of insurance.
- 2-5, 7, 9-12 (not applicable)

# SOLVING THE GREAT PRONOUN PROBLEM: 1001 Ways to Avoid the Sexist Singular

## EXAMPLES

### 7

Hold the cat in you lap and allow the leashed dog to advance slowly so that *he* can sniff *his* future friend. The cat will probably arch *her* back and hiss and have claws ready to defend *herself*.

5 (monotonous)

9 *it* can sniff *its* future friend. The cat will arch *its* back ... to defend *itself*.

12 (unnecessary)

1-4, 6-8, 10-11 (not applicable)

### Business English: From Sexist to Nonsexist

- 1 If <sup>A</sup>the buyer <sup>WHO</sup> requests and receives a postponement, he must pay the resulting expenses.
- 2 This deposit will not be returned to the buyer if he <sup>or SE</sup> does not pay the rest of the price on the transfer day.
- 3 We jointly and severally guarantee to the seller <sup>the seller's</sup> and his assigns all payment on which the buyer has defaulted.
- 4 If [ Name Of Buyer ] does not pay the money <sup>she or</sup> he owes, I will pay it when it becomes due.
- 5 The buyer and his guarantor do not require any notices about payments.
- 6 I guarantee the seller the payment of any <sup>this</sup> amount the buyer owes him as required by his contract. My guarantee includes credit already given to the buyer as well as <sup>future</sup> credit ~~to be given~~ to him.
- 7 The ~~landlord~~ <sup>you</sup> and his <sup>your</sup> employees may enter this apartment to make emergency repairs to protect <sup>the</sup> his property from damage.
- 8 The landlord may sell or assign his interest in the building, and the tenant agrees to recognize the new owner as landlord.
- 9 The landlord may substitute another party as landlord. <sup>in that case,</sup> ~~if he does this~~, I will continue to live up to the terms of this lease.





## Are-You-a-Sexist Checklist



Sexism may be showing up in your language and attitudes if you find yourself answering yes to most those of these questions. Psychologist Sharon Lord's checklist:

Do you:

- ✓ Refer to adult females as "girls," but adult males as "men?"
- ✓ Call women "ladies" but, on the same occasion, men "men?"
- ✓ Call women by their first names but men, with equal positions, by their titles?
- ✓ Say "lady lawyer, lady doctor?"
- ✓ Automatically write, "Dear Sirs?"
- ✓ Expect the man to be the boss, the woman the secretary?
- ✓ Expect men to touch women in the office, but not vice versa?
- ✓ Introduce women by using only their husband's name (Mrs. Jay Jones)?
- ✓ Use male labels for a whole group (congressmen, newsmen)?
- ✓ Think gender-free language is a trivial subject?
- ✓ Still tolerate sexist jokes, but not racist ones?
- ✓ Announce that you're a "Male Chauvinist Pig?"
- ✓ Avoid calling yourself a "feminist"?

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- 10 If I go bankrupt, the landlord may end this lease. If ~~he does so~~, I agree to give up the apartment <sup>at that time.</sup>
- 11 The landlord and ~~those working for him~~ <sup>the landlord's employees</sup> can enter the apartment to make repairs.
- 12 What the landlord (Or ~~His~~ Agent) Has a Right To Do: ~~He~~ <sup>or she</sup> can enter my apartment <sup>without notice</sup> to make repairs to protect ~~his~~ <sup>the</sup> property. But ~~he~~ <sup>the landlord</sup> can do this only at a reasonable hour. ~~He doesn't have to give me notice that he is coming.~~
- 13 The tenant agrees not to damage, destroy, impair, or remove any part of the dwelling ~~himself~~ or let anyone else do so.
- 14 The ~~tenant~~ <sup>I</sup> will immediately pay the cost of clearing any plumbing obstruction caused by ~~the~~ <sup>my</sup> negligence of ~~the~~ <sup>or that of my</sup> tenant, ~~his~~ <sup>my</sup> family, guests, agents, or employee.
- 15 I agree to pay my rent to ~~the landlord~~ <sup>the landlord's</sup> when it is due without ~~his~~ <sup>the landlord's</sup> having to ask for it.

# SOLVING THE GREAT PRONOUN PROBLEM: Twelve Ways to Avoid the Singular

guests, or members of his family.” “His or her employees, guests, or family members” will correct the sexism, cut the repetition, and add pace.

But don’t expect miracles. If your prose is flabby, dull, and sexist, it will still be flabby and dull when the sexism is removed. Moreover, biased readers will cite your writing as proof that nonsexist prose is labored and artificial.

If, however, you can improve your eye and ear for language, you should be able to remove sexist pronouns with ease and your prose will remain clean and graceful.

## Avoid/Slashes—And Dashes—

Several proposed methods of correcting sexist pronouns are forced or fussy.

*He/she* and *his/her* are visually distracting when they are read silently. Read aloud, they are hiccups. So are *s/he* and *(s)he*.

It’s a time-consuming nuisance to alternate between *he* and *she* as you move from paragraph to paragraph. Whenever you shift a paragraph for reasons unrelated to sexism, you must tinker with the pronouns.

*He (or she)* and *his—or her—* and *he, or she,* look too busy. They also sound like a grudging concession, a cute curtsy, or a patronizing bow to “the ladies, God bless ‘em.”

The exclusive use of *she* is occasionally recommended, on the grounds that it includes the word “he” and that turnabout is fair play. As a feminist song puts it, “Don’t fret, friends. Take it like a woman. You’ll get used to it, just like we all did!” Despite its ironic charm, the idea is intellectually inde-

fensible. It slights the largest minority in the United States—males.

Coined pronouns seem synthetic. None of them has any chance of winning the popular acceptance already enjoyed by *they*, *their*, and *them*. Even I don’t use the ones I invented ten years ago.

## “They” As a Singular (Gasp!)

While erudite folk have stationed themselves at the barricades to ward off changes in sexist language, millions of people have been using *they*, *their*, and *them* as third-person singulars all along. Most of these uses have been eminently sensible.

As a reformed purist, I don’t say this lightly. After all, I once wrote to the makers of Winston cigarettes, complaining that the company’s slogan—“Winston Tastes Good Like a Cigarette Should”—would precipitate the Collapse of the Republic. I agreed with Tom Wicker of the *New York Times* that the singular *they* is “grammatically repulsive.” I looked down my nose at people who said things like “Everybody should wash their hands,” considering them fundamentally uncouth. But I’ve seen the light.

The singular *they* has been gaining adherents. It’s been adopted by Casey Miller and Kate Swift, authors of two books on sexist language. “Anyone who performs a heroic deed is a hero, regardless of their sex,” they write. They buttress their argument on behalf of *they* by citing four centuries of precedents.

Merriellyn Kett and Virginia Underwood, authors of another book on sexist language, say that *they* and *their*

will eventually become the standard singulars.

The advertiser of a six hundred-dollar watch concurs. The ad croons, “Someone close to you is hoping for a Longines. Don’t disappoint them.” A direct mail advertisement from the Smithsonian Institution—which is charged with preserving our nation’s heritage—says, “If a friend wishes to become a member, please ask them to write for information.”

With these and other winds of change blowing, it’s reasonable to conclude that *they*, *their*, and *them* will become “correct,” just as *you*, *your*, and *yours* serve as singular and plural alike. Then articles about nonsexist pronouns will be superfluous.

It’s unrealistic to assume that writers with good intentions will spontaneously use nonsexist language effectively. Good intentions are no substitute for craft. Like all first-rate writing, nonsexist writing requires skill placed in the service of an educated eye. But we needn’t exaggerate the degree of skill required. A practiced pen is needed; genius is not.

Is it worth the bother? Isn’t it all just trivia? Alan Alda, himself a writer, answered both questions with a question of his own: “Why don’t people realize that words hurt?”

As “public writers”—people who write for more than one reader at a time, whether it’s memos, reports, legal briefs or articles—we should realize that they do. ♦

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\*Merriellyn Kett and Virginia Underwood, *How to Avoid Sexism*. Chicago: Lawrence Ragan Communications, 1978.



# GIVING GOOD WEIGHT TO BLACK ENGLISH

by R.C. Newell

Use of black English phrases often results in teachers labeling black students as learning disabled, or even mentally retarded. "When a child is silenced or feels he has no way of expressing himself in the classroom," says linguistics expert William Labov, "it simply makes it very hard to learn." Such a reaction, says Labov, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, indicates the children have been made sensitive to their use of language and thus seldom speak up in class.

When some children were so labeled in Ann Arbor, Michigan, a few years ago, their parents sued the school district for failing to teach them standard English. In a far-reaching and controversial decision, Federal Judge Charles W. Joiner ruled the school board had violated the civil rights of 11 black students by failing to take appropriate action to overcome barriers to learning that impede equal participation in education.

Joiner's decision was based on the 1974 Equal Education Opportunities Act which forbids state denial of equal educational opportunity on account of race by failure to overcome language barriers. His decision requires school boards to aid teachers in recognizing black English as the home/community language of many black students and to then use that knowledge in teaching standard English reading skills.

When issuing his decision, Joiner said, "The language of black English

has been shown to be a distinct, definable version of English, different from standard English of the school and the general world of communications. It has definite language patterns, syntax, grammar and history. The plaintiff children do speak at home and in their local community a language that is not itself a language barrier. It is not a barrier to understanding in the classroom. It becomes a language barrier when teachers do not take it into account in teaching standard English."

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## Black English becomes a language barrier when teachers do not take it into account in teaching standard English.

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"This case is not an effort on the part of the plaintiffs to require that they be taught black English or that their instruction throughout their schooling be in black English, or that a dual language program be provided..." said Joiner. "It is a straightforward effort to require the court to intervene on the children's behalf to require the defendant school district board to take appropriate action to teach them to read in the standard English of the school, the commercial world, the arts, science and professions."

The decision is far-reaching in that it may set the stage for similar discrimination suits across the country. The controversy is over several facets of the case, which include interpretation (or misinterpretation) and possible effects of the decision. Though Judge Joiner seemed to make himself clear,

some critics question whether the decision means black English should be taught, whether it requires such students to learn standard English and if black English should be used in teaching other subjects.

Black English, according to linguists such as Geneva Smitherman, professor of speech communication at Wayne State University, who was a key witness in the case, is a carryover from African heritage. "The slaves adapted their own language to fit English," she told the court. "They took their native West African sound and syntax and hung new words on it. In most West African languages and in black English, for instance, there are no hard, final consonants. 'Going' becomes 'goin.' And there's no 'th' sound, so 'then' becomes 'den.'

"Probably the most distinctive difference between black and standard English is the use of the verb 'to be.' If you say, 'The coffee bees cold,' that means that the coffee's cold every day. But if you say, 'The coffee cold'—omitting the verb—that limits the time frame and means it's just cold today. So if you're working as a cook and 'the coffee cold,' it's no big thing. But if 'the coffee bees cold,' pretty soon you ain't goin' have no job."

As reading and articulation tests are culturally biased toward standard English, she added, many kids who speak black English fail them. Smitherman singled out a test which shows pictures of deer running singly and in pairs. "The child is asked to point to the pictures that illustrate 'the deer is running' and 'the deer are running' to see if he can distinguish singular from plu-

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R.C. Newell is a Washington, D.C. freelance writer.

# GIVING GOOD WEIGHT TO BLACK ENGLISH

ral," she said. "But in black English, the difference is not evident in the verb but in the noun. The child would say, 'the deer running' or 'the deers running'—no verb at all. The test thus falsely indicates a deficiency."

Black English was used during slavery and later as a means to communicate around whites. With the migration north to better economic opportunity, it was preserved in the ghettos by de facto segregation, especially among poor, lower class blacks who had less contact with the white world. Although some blacks would leave their language roots behind, to others, even among middle and upper class blacks today, it's a badge and used as a social language.

Though the Ann Arbor school involved in the suit is excellent, the economic and housing patterns of black students at the school fit the historical generalization. The issue addressed by Judge Joiner wasn't poor black children subjected to segregated schools, faculty or poor facilities. The Martin Luther King Junior Elementary School is 80 percent white, 13 percent black and seven percent Hispanic or Asian. Three of its 20 teachers are black and a speech therapist, a linguist and psychologist are among consultants available. But the 11 children involved in the suit live in a low-income, scatter housing project amid an upper-middle-class, white residential area.

In examining the evidence, the court found mitigating circumstances on the part of the school and contributing factors such the lack of proper role models in the community. Plaintiff students, said Judge Joiner, "were provided with assistance in reading and

## Getting Down

by William Safire

One of the joys of American English is black slang. Inventive, humorous, evanescent, its coinages are here today and abandoned tomorrow—unless the meanings are taken into general usage. Most Americans now say "to make it" when they mean "to succeed," and know that "kicks" means "pleasure"; those locutions, from black slang, are now in the general slang vocabulary. A few black slang words—"jazz," for example—have been doing their gig long enough to become part of standard English....

Old-fashioned slang used mainly by blacks has held its place over the years: *Onliest* is useful when "only" needs emphasis, and there is no worry as worrisome over a long period as a *worriation*. Finality is expressed with *That's Law*.

Some black slang is alliterative; you head for a party to *get some grins*, and express your satisfaction with *sure shocks*. Some is descriptive: *Face* is used as a salutation when you remember the face but not the name—"Hey, Face, what's goin' down?"—and may have led to the change of "whatsisname" to "whatsisface." Some slang improves an adjective: A "murderous look" has become a *murder-one look*, which you get from someone contemplating murder in the first degree. And some varies with inflection: *I hear ya* can mean "I understand," or "I agree," or "Now go away," depending on the tone of voice.

Black slang, as I use the term, is distinct from "black English," a dialect that J.L. Dillard holds is rooted in various Creole and West African languages. Other linguists argue that such dialect usages as the perfective *done*—as in "I done told her"—grew out of Middle English. This controversy has led to claims that dialect forms like "I be sure," rather than "I am sure," are "not incorrect" and should therefore be accepted in schools.

That's a mistake. A dialect is useful for communication within a group, but in dealing with the outside world, a knowledge of the larger community's language is needed. Contrary to an alarmed impression held by many educators, Federal Judge Charles B. Joiner did not tell Detroit teachers that black English is acceptable; rather, he held that teachers should learn the rudiments of black dialect so as to better teach standard English to black students. That makes good sense to me; it would be just as foolish to treat any dialect as if it were gibberish as it would be to insist that any dialect should be treated as standard English.

Are there any words that are "basic black"—coined by, and used mainly by blacks only over a long period of time? Thanks to the Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE), the most exciting linguistic project going on in the United States, we may soon find out. Associate editor Jeffrey Hirshberg reports that some 50 words





and phrases have been found that qualify as long-lived black vocabulary, and are well beyond the street-hustle vocabulary most commonly quoted. Among them: *Airish*, inclined to put on airs.

*Foreday*, the earliest morning hours.

*Behind a dime*, absolutely anywhere, as in "I wouldn't trust him behind a dime."

*Cheese-eater*, one who tries to ingratiate himself; a toady. (Does this come from "rat"? Or from one who says "cheese" to appear to smile?)

*Excuse*, or *skusin*, to mean "except for," or "not counting." An 1887 citation: "The greatest gent'man in the county skusin him...."

*Fat-mouth*, to talk too much. Perhaps an intralingual calque of "poor-mouth" or "bad-mouth."

*Jackleg*, amateur, as in "jackleg preacher."

*Later*, to mean "goodbye." A 1954 citation in *Time* magazine reports this "catchall word for 'I'll be seeing you.'" Today, "lay-tuh," from "see you later," is the vogue farewell on most college campuses.

*Natural*, an Afro haircut: "There's a lean young cat wearin' a natural," reported *Ebony* in 1969.

*Nose open*, to be obviously in love.

*Ticky*, exacting. Probably from "particular."

One black expression that puzzles the researchers at DARE is *dead cat on a line*, which means "something suspicious." If anybody can figure out where that is comin' from, alert the troops at DARE, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis. 53706.

This column will surely offend some people who think any discussion of slang derogates its users, or who feel the meaning is demeaning. Take it slow, Bro. Dialects flow in and out of the mainstream of English, enriching the mixture all the time.

That's Law. Or as more current black slang puts it: That's Word.

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William Safire is a New York Times columnist.

some of them have been offered tailor-made programs in oral reading and phonics.... The evidence suggests that each teacher made every effort to help and used the many and varied resources of the school system to try to teach the students to learn to read."

Joiner also noted that plaintiff students suffered from a variety of problems such as "absences from class... (and) a lack of parental or home support for developing reading skills in standard English, including the absence of persons in the home who read, enjoy and profit from it."

One of the better known critics, syndicated columnist Carl Rowan, used these factors to admonish black parents in general and Judge Joiner in particular for his decision. "This court decision strikes me as far-fetched," Rowan wrote. "I am going to regard Joiner's sociological assumptions as dubious at best until we do something about the absences from school, until we make more black parents understand the value of reading in the home, until more teachers force ghetto students to read newspapers and magazines and at least try to resist peer-group pressures to downgrade standard English. 'My teacher was insensitive to my black English' is an alibi that black youngsters can use forever to explain why they did not aspire to excellence, and thus never learned to read—or to prepare for a decent life."

While valid in many respects, such criticism overlooks the major focus of the court decision and the qualifications Joiner made. Joiner emphasized that the "barriers to learning" of his decision was not black English but the negative attitude of teachers in the

# GIVING GOOD WEIGHT TO BLACK ENGLISH

school toward the children's use of it. "The unconscious but evident negative attitude of teachers toward the home/community language causes a psychological barrier to learning by students," said Joiner.

Joiner added a qualifying phrase, suggesting that the barrier "may be [only] one of the causes of the children's reading problems." And then he came down hard on the school board: "The evidence suggests clearly that no matter how well intentioned the teachers are, they are not likely to be successful... unless they are helped by the (board) to recognize the existence of the language system...and to use that knowledge as a way of helping the children to learn to read standard English."

## "The case is really about teaching children to read."

Emphasis on the responsibility of the school board rather than the teachers is notable. Smitherman says she sympathizes with the teachers as "they don't get the proper support from policymakers. Nonetheless," she added in reference to negative attitudes, "I've seen teachers correct [black] kids over and over, getting angrier all the time. 'What do you mean by saying 'my mother do,' they ask the child, 'it's 'my mother does.'" After a while, the child turns off, becomes non-verbal, listless."

Labov notes that "research in recent years indicates that the most powerful influence on the teacher's view of the child is the child's language. A non-standard dialect creates an image in

## Ann Arbor School Board Report Cites Gains Using Black English

A report by the Ann Arbor School Board on the initial results of the black English program ordered by Judge Joiner found that students' attendance improved slightly and that some of the students in the program showed an improvement in attitudes toward school. It could not be determined, however, whether the program accomplished its main goal—improving students' reading abilities.

The report, according to the *New York Times*, found that teachers had understood the need for a course to help them learn about black English. The report covered the 1979–80 school year and was issued last December.

The report discussed several ways in which teachers react to black English. The wrong way, it said, was by interrupting students in mid-sentence to correct them, and generally treating their form of speech as inferior. The desirable approach, the teachers were taught, is to avoid treating black English as an inferior manner of speech so as not to create an atmosphere in which children might draw inferences about their own abilities. This approach does not mean accepting black English as proper, said the report.

the teacher's mind that unconsciously prejudices the teacher against the child's intelligence, honesty and reliability."

In reference to the parents, Smitherman says they should reinforce the schools to the degree that they have the skills. But in most cases, the parents aren't equipped to help with standard English. "Parents' responsibility," she said, "is to give love, moral support, spiritual and cultural values and to see that the kids get to school."

Rowan, like much of the media, seemed to have gotten the impression that Joiner's decision either meant black English was to be taught, used for other studies or that the opinion encouraged its use. Rowan implied as much by writing: "What black children need is an end to this malarkey that tells them they can fail to develop vocabularies, ignore syntax and embrace

the mumbo-jumbo of ignorance and dismiss it in the name of black pride."

Washington *Post* columnist William Raspberry takes a different view.

"Judge Joiner's basic ruling, for all the misapprehensions, misconceptions and ridicule that have surrounded the case, makes some sense," he said.

"It seems reasonable to warn teachers against misinterpreting speech patterns or test scores of the children they teach. Some speech patterns— mishandling of certain diphthongs, dropping copulative verbs or final consonants, for instance—may indicate speech defects or even learning disability in a child whose home language is standard English.... The same patterns in children whose home language is black English may indicate nothing pathological whatever," said Raspberry.

"The case is really about teaching





children to read," he insists. "It is not an accident that King is an elementary school. If these children had been in high school, I wouldn't have brought the suit.

"What we are talking about is teaching children to read without turning them off, without teachers deciding on the basis of their speech patterns that they cannot learn."

As to what methods were to be employed, Joiner recognized that this is not the prerogative of the courts to decide. "Its remedies involve pedagogical judgements that are for the educator and not the courts," he said. He ordered the school system to devise a plan.

Under the plan approved by the court, the teachers at the school would undergo specialized training designed to make them more aware of the children's use of black English. "It is hoped that as the staff acquires knowledge and understanding of the children's linguistic heritage," Joiner said, "they will come to recognize the children themselves, not as deficient or detracting but as competent and contributing members of the learning community."

There are a number of methods available for teaching students who speak black English to read standard English. One is peer tutoring, where a child who has acquired the skill helps those who are weak in it. One of the most successful methods has been the "bridge" system. It uses stories from the black oral tradition written in the black vernacular and moves gradually into standard English. It teaches kids to switch from black to standard English.

The ability to change speech patterns in the context of a group is sophisticated but common. Most of us, especially professionals such as doctors or engineers, use jargon in our work that we drop in social contexts.

The bridge system was used in Chicago several years ago with success. Some children advanced two years in reading development in one semester. It was abandoned, unfortunately, after critics charged the schools were teaching black English.

There is also thought of using Federal bilingual-education funds to aid students who use black English, just as they are used for Chinese or Hispanic children. Labov says this is justified by the law that requires states to take action to overcome whatever language barrier prevents equal education. Peter Roos of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund tends to agree. He noted that students who speak black English, like those whose primary language is Spanish, are confronted with a cultural barrier to equal educational opportunity.

Despite the law and the possible use of Federal funds, school boards around the country have taken a hard line on use of anything but standard English. Even after the Ann Arbor decision, a poll conducted by the *American School Board Journal* found that 69 percent of the respondents opposed use of other than nonstandard English. Such adamance could prompt more court cases. ♦

# BILINGUAL LIFE IN AN ANGLO Seventeen LAND: Hispanic Voices

**D**ebates over the merits of bilingual and multicultural education in our nation's schools continue unabated at the national and community levels. Yet relatively little media attention has been given to views on the issue held by members of the minority group that would be most affected by "English only" educational policies: Hispanic Americans.

Herein is a collection of observations by bilingual Hispanics—Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Central and South Americans—from many walks of life who support bilingual education as a means by which educational equity for their children can be achieved. The viewpoints are varied: some address the bilingualism issue directly; others underscore the role that language plays in maintaining one's ethnic identity; still others focus on linguistic and cultural differences among Hispanics. Together, they offer a glimpse into why most Hispanic Americans, the nation's second largest and fastest growing minority group, are insisting that their sons and daughters be guaranteed access to bilingual and multicultural school programs.

C.E.

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## JOSUÉ GONZÁLEZ

In *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), the U.S. Supreme Court found that to require knowledge of English "before a child can effectively participate in the educational program...is to make a mockery of public education."

In *U.S. v. Texas*, a Federal District Court in Texas said: "Unless they receive instruction in a language they can understand, pending the time when they are able to make the transitions to all-English classrooms, hundreds of thousands of Mexican American children in Texas will remain handicapped for life...."

For non-English-speaking youngsters, the alternative to bilingual instruction is the "sink or swim" method, even if 80 percent of them never come back up for a second chance. This "method" is not only inhumane, it is also illegal.

To suggest that English instruction may suffice is to suggest that the child must stand still and wait for educational access while the schools fumble with the lock on the other door.

It is like suggesting that children in wheelchairs must learn to walk before enrolling in school so that they can climb the steps to the schoolhouse door, or that a blind child must learn to see before he or she can have access to the contents of books....

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## ARMANDO RODRÍGUEZ

Who's Hispanic? I am, but...I wasn't always. In fact, for most of the '60s and into the '70s I was Chicano. And in the '50s, I was Mexican American. Before that? Well, in the '40s, I was Latino. In the '30s, I was mostly called "kid" or "jóven"—sometimes "Pancho"—and in the '20s, I was Mexican. I was born in Gomez Palacio, in the state of Durango, Mexico.

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## LUIS ALVAREZ

"*Nuyorican*" is a derogatory term for New York Puerto Rican. It has caught some favor now, but I don't like it because it stereotypes us as aggressive, uncouth, and falsely implies that we don't accept the cultural mores of the island.

It's tactically wrong for us to use descriptions and adjectives that divide us. A Puerto Rican is a Puerto Rican whether he or she resides in San Juan, New York, or Hawaii.

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## JOSE' ANTONIO BURCIAGA

Down to the tiny details, I can remember 1949 and the third grade in El Paso, Texas. I was one of the "Mexican children." We were different and we knew it. Many of us were proud of it. I would sit in the school yard eating a *burrito* of *chorizo con huevo* that stained my brown lunch bag and my khaki pants. Across the way, a girl named Suzy would open her Roy Rogers lunch box and remove a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

The Anglo-Saxon nuns understood Suzy pretty well, but our culture, with its language, was a mystery to them. So was theirs to us: Dick and Jane, their two-story house, a father with a coat and tie; Spot, who barked in English, "Bow Wow!" My dog always barked in Spanish, "*Guaa Guaa!*"

In our Catholic grade school, the Eleventh Commandment was, "Thou shalt not speak Spanish." When we were caught speaking that forbidden





"foreign" tongue, it was either a swatting, staying after school, or writing, "I will not speak Spanish" 100 times. My brother Pifas could hold three pencils in his hand at once and finish his punishment in record time:

I will not speak Spanish  
I will not speak Spanish  
I will not speak Spanish

Our music teacher, who also taught us Latin, told us that the Spanish language did not allow us to exercise our facial muscles sufficiently. That's why old Mexicans had so many lines on their faces, she explained.

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## ALICIA VELÁSQUEZ ANGELO

Many of us who spoke only Spanish when we started public school quickly learned, of necessity, to ask the English-speaking teacher, "May I be excused?" when we had to go to the bathroom. We assumed that the English word for "bathroom" was "b'scused." Today, when visiting old friends, we'll leave the living room conversation circle sometimes with the explanation that we're "going to the b'scused."

I remember one super-cool Chicano in high school who was forever trying to make *movidas* with every female he saw. His opening line, inevitably, was, "Hey, girl, what's your front name?"

Then there was my materialistic girlfriend who used to vow, "One of these days, I'm going to own a porch." She went to college, majored in English, and today owns a house with a front porch, a back porch, and a Porsche in the garage.

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## BIENVENIDO MARTÍNEZ

Five years ago, when I was 12, I came to the United States from Santo Domingo. I was enrolled in the District of Columbia public schools until February of last year. I was not a bad student, but I started to ditch many classes. Then an experimental multicultural high school was opened up in Washington's Hispanic neighborhood. I transferred to it. We have students here from 18 different Latin American countries, from Vietnam, Cambodia, Zambia, Ethiopia and Somalia.

In public school, students sometimes made me feel dumb by laughing at my accent and the words I used. Some teachers wouldn't want to talk to me. I wanted to run for student body office, but was afraid to. In our multicultural school, we all have accents. I ran for school president last spring and I won. My grades are good, too. Language affects more than a student's grades. It affects his confidence.

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## RAÚL YZAGUIRRE

In the mid-'50s, my high school in Pharr, Texas, was about 70 percent "Mexican" and 30 percent Anglo. But we Mexicans subdivided ourselves even further. We were either Chicanos or *Chicas Patas*. Literally, Little Feet. Hicks. Rubes.

Because I was born in the States, I was a Chicano. The *Chicas Patas* were the new ones, the fresh immigrants from Mexico. They could hardly speak English when they arrived, and even

their Spanish was different than ours. They called the movies *películas*, not *vistas*, and popcorn *palomitas*, not *esquite*.

They wore clothes we made fun of. As soon as they could raise some money, they bought the styles and colors that helped them blend in. But even after they learned that movies were *vistas*, they still stood out. How? They became the leaders. The doers. The ones who hung in there and got their high school diplomas. Some even left the valley and went on to college.

How did those students from Mexico survive? They brought an educational foundation which was complete. Because there was a common cultural denominator among student, teacher, and parent in Mexico, they were able to learn. Second, they brought a history of classroom success with them. They were conditioned to keep up. Self-image, it's called. The grammar schools of *El Valle de Tejas* gave us neither of those qualities.

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## JOE OLVERA

*Simón*, the *Pachucos* were bad dudes, man! They struggled and survived in the *barrios* of *Aztlán*, content in their misery, and miserable in their contentment. They were a constant paradox, and from them there emerged a totally new language which some people call *Calo*, but which I refer to as *Pachucano*.

*Pachucano* is a distinctive dialect used by Chicano rebels of the turbulent '40s and '50s when *Pachucos* were the scourge of Chicano neighborhoods. This linguistic ability to create a whole

# BILINGUAL LIFE IN AN ANGLO Spanish LAND: Voices

new form of communication based on existing dialects—Spanish and English—was generally frowned on. The *Pachuco* dialect had no prestige whatever. At the Conference on College Composition and Communication held in the spring of 1974 at Anaheim, Calif., it was discovered by a select committee of educators that:

...In a specific setting, because of historical and other factors, certain dialects may be endowed with more prestige than others. Such dialects are sometimes called "standard" or "consensus" dialects. These designations of prestige are not inherent in the dialect itself, but are externally imposed, and the prestige of the dialect shifts as the power relationships of the speakers shift....

Not knowing, then, that he had a right to his own language, the *Pachuco* became alienated, thus reinforcing his obvious linguistic revolution. The *Pachuco* period of Chicano history was more than a rebellion against the restrictions of the dominant society. It was also an intellectual underground movement which rationalized the alienation of Chicanos by creating a new style of pride, of walk, of talk.

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## JOE ORTEGA

The kids who belonged to our group in East Los Angeles used to call each other *carnal*. We thought of the word as meaning "brother." More than just an ordinary brother, it had the connotation of a blood brother, coming as it

does from the root *carne*, meaning "of the flesh." It meant a special relationship; we used *hermano* to speak of a real brother, and *amigo* to speak of a friend. But when we wanted to address one of our gang, one of our group, we addressed him as *carnal*. It is probably no different from black kids calling each other "blood," meaning brother, or no different from union members referring to one another as "brother" and "sister," or college kids uniting in fraternities and sororities.

Now the barrio kids use "homeboy" or simply "homes" when referring to a close friend. They seem to be using less Spanish and more and more English, but the word "homeboy" is as native to their culture as *carnal* was to ours. It's really not an English word. You won't find it in any dictionary. Not yet, anyway.

As far as I can determine, it was first used by boys who were sent to youth camps by the juvenile courts. When a boy saw someone from his old neighborhood, he immediately formed a bond with him. The boys from his hometown became his "homeboys." They became his family away from home, his emotional support. When released, the boys continued to use the term "homeboy" to refer to those close to them. Soon other kids who had never been to camp started using it. Inevitably, it was shortened to "homes."

Now it's spreading, like pebble-rings on water. Sometimes it's used to address anyone you feel friendship for. Recently, I heard one kid tell another one, "Lend me ten cents, homes." Translated, all that means is, "Brother, can you spare a dime?"

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## JORGE SANDOVAL

MI CHULA...PIRATA...QUE PASA...JEFE... Personalized license plates are becoming the graffiti walls for our tidy middle-class. Nationwide, there are now about 20,000 vanity license plates in Spanish. California alone has 6,500 such *placas* traveling its highways. They make statements: HUELGA...PAZ...BASTA. They express emotions: TE AMO... CORAZON...QUE LOCO...

They tell their owner's roots: CUBA...SAN JUAN...GUAYMAS...and reveal our migration patterns. CHICANO, CHICANA and LA RAZA were snapped up long ago in California, but they're still available in New York. Florida lacks a CHICANO, but not surprisingly has a CUBANO. BORICUA has been claimed in New York for a long time, and now it's in California, too. North Dakota hasn't sold a single Spanish-language plate.

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## RON ARROYO

My grandparents left Puerto Rico in 1901. I have never been there. My Spanish is, at best, basic. And here in California, to stay out of arguments, I have on more than one occasion masqueraded as a Chicano.

Yet, when I filled out my U.S. Census form last year, I checked that little box marked "Puerto Rico." I did, because that's what I am. Admittedly, 79 years makes for a long trail. And it's highly unlikely, if there were little boxes for Hoosiers or Sooners, that





they'd be checked by Californians with turn-of-the-century roots in Indiana or with kinfolk who fled Oklahoma's Dust Bowl in the '30s. The difference is while we Puerto Ricans acceded to some cultural adjustments for the sake of survival, we hung tough. We stayed Puerto Rican not because of any specific benefits offered. The contrary was usually true—the rewards went to those who blended in.

We stayed Puerto Rican because of a cultural attitude which stands apart from financial reward or politics or race (Puerto Rico is a multiracial island). Not long ago, a Chicano political candidate in San Jose was addressing a mixed Hispanic crowd and tried to stir us to unity with, "We are all *Pochos*." No way. *Pocho* is a term applicable to Mexican Americans only. If you want to move me, call me *Boricua*, an appellation derived by the Spaniards from the Borinquen island natives.

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## JOAQUÍN SULLIVAN

There is an adult fantasy across the land that America is a cultural island tucked in neatly on all sides by a security blanket woven of English twill. Fortunately, there is no reality today that can support that fantasy.

In 1964, some 26 million Americans were native speakers of 80 foreign languages. Since then, although the number of languages has increased only slightly, the number of Americans who speak them has almost doubled, to 50 million. They are our bilingual resource. Or are they? True bilingualism

is a relative term based on how well one performs within the four major subsystems of language: lexical, grammatical, phonetic, and semantic. Persons with large vocabularies often perform poorly on the grammatical level. Likewise, persons with excellent pronunciation often have limited vocabularies. Americans who learn modern languages in school tend to be linguistic robots. They can understand when directly spoken to. Yet they know very little about the culture of the language they are trying to speak.

No one has yet established just how much one must understand and speak in order to be deemed a true bilingual.

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## JOSÉ ANTONIO BURCIAGA

In English, we say, "The clock runs." In Spanish, we say, "*El reloj anda*." The clock walks. In English, we say, "I missed the bus." In Spanish, we say, "*Me dejó el camión*." The bus left me.

In English, we blame ourselves and in Spanish we blame the inanimate bus.

Which is better? Which is right? The assumption has generally been, here in U.S. America, that the English was always right. That's why, until recently, even educators used the term "culturally deprived" to describe citizens like me, of Indo-Hispanic heritage.

Back in Texas, I remember being told more than once by New Yorkers stationed at Fort Bliss that El Paso was a cultural desert. It took my departure from that bicultural oasis to realize that those New Yorkers were

accustomed to buying their "culture" at a Broadway theater or at the Madison Square Garden. Culture is not a spectator sport that you can buy a ticket to watch. It has to be lived. El Paso's culture was alien to them.

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## JOE ORTEGA

Should we Latinos resent the superior attitudes of those who tell us that we lack polish or that we speak funny? Should we counterattack? When they make statements like, "The bottom line is that I can relate well to a macho type but I freak out when someone does not interface within the parameters of the whole scene," should we tell them that they speak funny?

Teachers, bureaucrats, and others who grind up English with sentences like that jump all over a Chicano kid who says, "sorry. I ain't got no money." Teachers would immediately point out that the double negative must mean that he does have money. They are so righteous about their logic that they overlook the obvious fact that if the kid had any money, he wouldn't be standing there apologizing. In Spanish, as in many languages, the double negative is not only correct, it serves to emphasize the fact that *no tengo nada*.

Non-English-speaking Hispanics buy Big Macs, hot dogs, and Twinkies at the *beisbol* game. It is also O.K. for Anglos to buy *burritos*, *tacos*, and, of course, *chile*. They can refer to their *amigo* as a *macho*, as *simpatico*, or as a *loco*. They can call their suburbs *El Rancho*, *Loma Linda*, or my favorite, *Vista del Freeway*.

# BILINGUAL LIFE IN AN ANGLO LAND: Seventeen Hispanic Voices

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## RICHARD AVENA

A Border Patrolman testified before the Texas Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights about bully tactics allegedly used by a fellow officer. The second officer was reportedly "pushing the alien around, trying to ask him his name.... He was asking in Spanish, 'Cómo me llamo yo?' He kept pushing him around and the Mexican alien wouldn't answer him..." The undocumented worker wouldn't respond because the officer was mistakenly inquiring, "What's my name?", and the poor man didn't know. Could that be called cultural conflict?

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## CARMELO MELÉNDEZ

The victorious Anglo candidate for alderman in a heavily Hispanic Chicago ward was asked her platform proposals on Latino education. She responded that she had always favored teaching Latin in the public schools.

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## HERMÁN SILLAS

Traditionally, the American judicial system has tolerated nothing less than competency in its pursuit of truth. It has, that is, in every corner of the courtroom except one: the seat where the interpreter sits. Hispanic lawyers have complained for years, with varied results, that untested and often unqualified interpreters were being used by the courts at all levels.

Testing was rare, and if offered, often unscientific and certainly not standardized. In the lower courts, judges have been known to ask, "Can anybody here who speaks Spanish help us out with this witness?" Witnesses for the prosecution, including police officers, have interpreted for witnesses for the defense, and vice versa. One now-legendary example of what can occur when language is a courtroom barrier is where the Spanish verb *molestar* was conveyed to the court as meaning sexual harassment when the witness intended it to mean only that her husband picked on her daughter. Obviously, the interpreter plays a key role.

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## RICARDO CHAVIRA

Eduardo Martínez, a 44-year-old businessman, is a lot like any Hispanic you might meet in Los Angeles, San Antonio, or New York. He slips effortlessly from Spanish to English and back again. He is thoroughly bicultural—at ease discussing deals with Latino businessmen, socializing at Anglo parties.

Martínez doesn't live in the United States. He resides just inside Mexico, in Mexicali, a city of 600,000. He is Mexicali's mayor. He and a growing number of Mexicans who live along their country's northern border are what University of California at Santa Barbara anthropologist Manuel Carlos calls "*Chicano del otro lado*"—Chicanos from the other side (of the border). Similar to their counterparts to the north, Mexican Chicanos sprang from the meshing of cultures along the

Mexico-U.S. line.

They are a cultural hybrid, neither thoroughly Mexican nor what Mexicans scornfully refer to as *agringado* or *gringoized*. Most are natives of Mexico and have spent years in the U.S., usually receiving a formal education in the process. But unlike their bicultural brethren in the United States, these Chicanos from south of the border often are influential in the political and social life of their country.

Manuel Carlos observes that Mexico is far ahead of the U.S. in spanning the cultural gap between the two nations. He adds: "Mexico has followed a conscious policy of creating bilingual, bicultural people. There, children receive instruction in English at an early age."

The U.S., after a tentative start on bilingual education, seems intent on drawing away from it in ethnocentric blindness.

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## TERRI VILLA- McDOWELL

The trip was billed as a chance for two dozen Southern California Chicano businesspersons to reacquire themselves with their roots and culture and to establish lines of communication with our professional counterparts in Mexico. It was to be my reencounter with Mexico, the land I, but for a chance move on my parents' part, might have been born in. Growing up in California's Orange County, I got the message long ago that the goal was assimilation. The whole world was a blond surfer then, and I wanted to be long. But what I discarded as a child,





now I wanted back. My facility with Spanish—a clue to my condition—was poor. To prepare for the trip, I did what many Chicanos and Chicanas are now doing: I hurried to Berlitz and took a crash course...

An official in Mexico City told us matter-of-factly: "Remember, we invited you here. That shows that we in Mexico are not embarrassed by the Chicano, with his *norteamericano* ways and poor Spanish. The word 'Chicano' should not have a derogatory meaning, nor should it be used in a derogatory sense by the Mexican."

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## JOE OLVERA

The *Pachuco*, then, is still amongst us. He is the leader behind the novelist, the playwright, the politician. The *Pachuco* is now and ever will be.

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## JOSE' ANTONIO BURCIAGA

If our culture has been our damnation, it has also been our salvation. ◆

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# A Title on the Door ... But Little Else

by Phillip L. Clay

I was given an impressive title, a comfortable office, but nothing substantial to do," said a black program officer in one of the new service professions. "I had no program and no real budget line. I had to ask permission to do everything from the director's assistant who made less money than I did."

A black field staffer in a community relations job added that "it gets embarrassing. Community people see my title and think I know what's going on or that I control something...(I don't). I get sent out on a limb as a community liaison officer with little understanding of or input in decisions. I resent it..."

These are just two reactions of black executives in the new professions that provide greater opportunity but similar frustrations for blacks in gaining success as the old ones (law, medicine, etc.). In both, the means of getting ahead often are similar to "the oldest profession."

Though there has been an increase in the number of black professionals, there has not been a significant increase in the proportion of blacks in professional jobs. Census figures show the proportion of blacks in professional jobs as five percent. This is roughly the same as in 1970 and only slightly higher than the three percent in 1960.

And the gap between earnings of white and black professionals is as wide as ever. According to a recent National Urban League study, 57 percent of white professional and middle class families earned over \$15,000 a year in 1977 compared to 30 percent of blacks in the same category. This 27 percent gap is down only one percent since 1967.

Nor is the number of black entrants into the professions

likely to change much through 1985. The proportional increase of blacks in colleges and graduate schools that lead to professions has ceased. This means that affirmative action must focus increasingly on advancement in professional jobs as well as access.

The study—launched at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1975—focused on the experiences of 40 well-trained black individuals in professional jobs and assessed discrimination they encountered. They expected a professional career to lead to increased responsibility, earnings and status. The first of these is as important as the others as an ultimate measure of success.

It is important here to distinguish between the old and the new professions. The old ones, such as law, medicine and engineering, are steeped in tradition and have their own standards of education, practice and socialization. The new professions having emerged over the last 20 years include such diverse areas as urban planning, policy analysis, systems analysis and social services. These new professionals are often in staff positions such as government relations specialists, project officers and analysts of various types.

Major differences between the two include:

- New professionals rise or fall based on how their decisions are received by the publics they serve, not just their own colleagues.
- There is little accepted methodology or techniques in the new professions.
- Senior positions are held by relatively young persons in the new professions, which feature fast occupational mobility compared to years of apprenticeship in the older ones.
- Political, organizational and personal skills are more important to the new professions, which are less insulated from the consequences of their activities.

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*Phillip L. Clay is an associate professor in the Urban Studies and Planning Department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge.*



D. V. HARROD  
VICE PRESIDENT



- New professions have no academic requirements or licenses; professional status is based more on experience and reputation and sometimes education.

The net result is that superiors or colleagues have no usual ways to judge competence in the new professions. Their members are forced to package themselves to gain the exposure, experience and opportunity that normally go with a traditional professional degree or license. Objective measures are unclear; subjective ones dominate.

Blacks have made inroads in the new professions for several reasons. Such professions have been growth areas in recent years; they are often concerned with social policy with which young blacks are concerned; barriers to access are fewer; and they are more responsive to affirmative action pressure. While blacks have made inroads in these professions, advancement is difficult and reflects the racism still widespread in our society.

The major problems blacks encounter are the stereotypes of blacks held by whites and institutional racism in job settings. Respondents in the study said there were stereotyped views of them by their white colleagues. The first stereotype is that of the "super Negro" who is presumed to be more highly qualified and intelligent than most blacks.

In this situation, blacks are expected to perform exceptionally and consistently well. They are dealt with quite formally, even deferentially, but not as colleagues. They might be invited to some business meetings and lunches but not to the most important ones—and certainly not to the private club where the "old boy network" makes the real decisions. If blacks viewed this way are able to succeed, it is because they develop effective personal styles and relationships that take advantage of the white stereotype.

For most blacks viewed this way, the stereotype limits their opportunities for integration in the job setting and prevents growth. Often, white colleagues have their unrealistically high expectations dashed. To keep that from happening, blacks must work extra hard—often in vain—to be viewed as competent. Simple mistakes and shortcomings that might be attributed to youth or inexperience become reinforcement for racial prejudice.

A young analyst noted, "It's the old case of 'the exception.' I have real mixed feelings about being looked at as something strange. I'd give anything for a good job where I could be myself."

The other stereotype respondents reported was that of blacks viewed as generally incompetent and undeserving of increasing responsibility and growth opportunity. Such a view has its origins either in prejudice or resentment against affirmative action.

With this model, blacks are simply put in positions that the organization views as unimportant or, if they are put in normal positions, it is not before these jobs have been stripped of meaning, staff or responsibility. They become token or visible blacks. Several of the blacks in the study said that they felt their first job was just this kind of "showcase" position. They differed, however, on how they

dealt with it. Some sought other positions and tried to negotiate a better arrangement with their new employer.

The same professional who lamented lack of responsibility added, "In my second job, I pressured the director of my division to be more specific about my responsibility. I asked for a budget line, supervisory powers and direct access to him. He seemed irritated and so were my colleagues—including black ones. I didn't get everything, but I got a better deal by being a little pushy. That's not my style, but it worked." Some confronted their supervisors with mixed results. Others struggled to prove themselves, often with resentment and bitterness.

While a small majority of those surveyed noted that neither of these stereotyped views seem to be applied to them personally, they did confirm the view of a minority of our respondents that whites often held these views of other blacks.

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**"I'd give anything for a good job where I could be myself."**

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Another problem is that many blacks feel that they have access only to the formal channels of influence within their organizations. They recognize that the informal and social relationships are important both to decisionmaking and professional practice within the agency and to personal opportunities for career growth. A program analyst observes, "I feel that when I get to meetings, people already know each other, that things are already pretty much decided and that the meeting is a mere formality." Another said he felt like a "consultant" in the agency when, in fact, he was a mid-management employee. "Everybody is chummy and familiar. I'm an oddity."

First jobs in most professions are often more technical and narrow. Professional growth means access to experiences in a wider range of activities. It is success in the broader range of activities, as well as certain social and interpersonal skills, that typically leads to executive and management responsibility.

While many of our respondents admitted they were naive on this dynamic at first, they now realize more clearly what they are up against. "I thought that being the best damn cost accountant in the hospital would be great for me," a black hospital administrator said. "What I found was just the opposite. Promotions came but never the type that leads anywhere." This hospital administrator was only able to break into a senior management job by taking a job in a community health clinic. "I made it in the clinic, but I was not happy. Managing the hospital is my goal and I resent having to take an uncertain backdoor approach to the job I really want."

A majority of the respondents, felt that they were consulted less, involved less, and under utilized (except with respect to issues that related to race). This was especially true with activities which most organizations viewed as essential for promotion to senior management—resource



allocation, finance, operations, research, program development, etc.

A few respondents said they were bold enough to force themselves into the center of things, but they admitted this was not always successful. Blacks who express the least problems with respect to this issue of professional growth were the ones who had one or more senior sponsors or mentors. The mentors helped them to become involved in activities, led them beyond the immediate area of their job assignment or areas of technical specialization, and advised them on leveraging their experience into additional opportunities.

One young black who took a job as a "special assistant" to an agency head who had taught him in graduate school was helped in getting specific technical and administrative skills and some exposure. This guidance resulted in his getting a significantly better job—albeit in a different city. Frequently, these mentors were outside the organization. "None of these whites here will tell me anything," he said. "They are all climbers themselves. They resent blacks anyway, and feel that help to me, and affirmative action, will doom their chances of success."

For blacks I interviewed, professional status is a relatively new experience in their family. Those blacks who have, in fact, made it into the professions, feel that elements important in their success include self-confidence, strong interpersonal skills, an ability to be critical in a constructive way and the ability to accept criticism. It also includes an ability to analyze and to put intuition and empathy in perspective, to understand context and make decisions where risk is involved.

Most of these are, in fact, intangible and immeasurable attributes. Nevertheless, in management situations, they are often more important than such tangible evidence of achievement as an advanced degree or years of experience. "It wasn't until I visited a white family and saw them involve their 10 and 12-year-old kids in discussions about work that I realized what I had missed," a black economist said. "All the things about how 'to deal' that have come painfully and slowly to me are part of growing up for whites. I see what I have to do to help my kids—and the kids in my community."

The more successful respondents noted that they had some career support and guidance. Even so, they noted that they had to have two separate faces. One face gives them comfort and is effective in still segregated social and family settings. Another face is reserved for professional relationships. They note that at times the two conflict and produce tension. A systems analyst in a conservative financial environment noted the subtle hints to dress the part and to abandon his "hip talk."

The respondents reported difficulty in dealing with racial attitudes of white organizational and professional settings. Their feelings go beyond the existence of racism to a more practical dilemma. The respondents feel most whites in such situations would prefer to avoid racial issues even when such issues are both real and relevant. The blacks in such cases feel torn between raising the issue anyway (and

being labelled "too sensitive" or a "troublemaker" by white supervisors and colleagues) or letting the issue go by (and incurring the wrath of black colleagues, clients, and community people). A city planner noted, "I feel caught between a rock and a hard place. Whites say I'm too sensitive. I say, sure I am, they ought to be as well. They go home to suburbia but I get called to account."

When serious issues on race come up, many blacks express the feeling that they are often pressed to align themselves on racial issues, while whites don't have to do that or at least don't have to be held personally responsible for policy positions. Many blacks feel that they are perceived by other blacks to be agents of change. With the black public and with black clients, they are called to account—often in rather specific ways. A failure to deliver—even an unavoidable one—is viewed as a personal shortcoming. "Quite frankly, I tried to avoid the issue," one black executive said. "I can't honestly act, and I'm not close enough to trust the whites in my agency. Some of them are right for the wrong reasons and we get hung up in motives. I can't talk about it and I know I'll be blasted if I stand behind them."

The respondents to my survey feel that for the near future, blacks entering the professions will have at least as much difficulty as they have had in the recent past and in some ways more. But there is an even larger concern. A black professional who grew up in the South and now works in the Midwest noted, "Most black college students I see don't have the survivor instinct that we had in the 60's. They buckle under too quickly. They give up rather than get even. They would not have survived the summer of 1964 in Mississippi and they probably can't survive the cold and often subtle white racism of the 1970's. Both the target and the weapons of racism are more sophisticated. I know that a lot of my friends agree with me, but what can we do?"

What this means is that in addition to keeping up activity on affirmative action, there is a need to get young blacks who go to college to understand the new professional context. "I went to a black college where my advisor told me a lot that cleared my head," the black professional continued. "Most of our young people today are not in black colleges. Who is telling them the stuff that is not in the book?" The respondents feel that they have some responsibility for getting the lessons of their experience out. "If we don't tell," a young new professional noted, "they will have to invent the wheel again. Some folks will needlessly fail."

A lot of effort has gone into helping blacks enter the professions. Modest success has not been reinforced such that individuals are able to build on initial success in ways that will lead to even more success. We act as though racism is confined to hiring. A lot more attention needs to be given to opportunities for growth among those who have initial success. As one of the respondents noted, "We are beyond the point where we act like a bunch of crabs—each one pulling the other one down. We still are not very supportive of each other. If self-help means anything, it ought to mean we go about helping each other..." ♦

# Keeping the Big Sky



by Michael Parfit

In the village of Lame Deer, under the broad skies of Eastern Montana, the Northern Cheyenne tribe gathered solemnly in the tribal gym. On the floor there were chairs, tables, microphones, a row of tribal council members, a television camera, and an interpreter with a booming voice. As the meeting began, a small crowd of high school students filed slowly into the room and up into the bleachers, the younger generation brought to witness the making of history. Outside, sleet splattered on the dirt roads and on the small homes of the reservation town, and wind tossed the dark pine trees on the hills. As the day continued, the wind grew colder, the sleet turned to bitter snow and, in the gym, a succession of speakers marched past the microphone, each pleading in English or Cheyenne for the thing that concerned this tribe most: clear air.

To a city resident who occasionally regrets the stinging,

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*Michael Parfit is a freelance writer living in Montana and is author of the book, Last Stand at Rosebud Creek.*

beige sky that envelops him while he pursues matters that seem more important than atmosphere, clean air as a cause doesn't have much urgency—it seems a bit like worrying about litter in the street after a parade. But to the Northern Cheyenne Indians, the word for air is the same as the word for breath—“*Omotome*”—and they cherish being able to breathe clean air. Why else would this small tribe on a remote reservation have spent several years and thousands of dollars struggling to preserve the quality of their air—air which is now threatened by industrial pollution?

The Northern Cheyenne live on 446,784 acres of low hills and prairie that lie a few dozen miles east of the meadow on the Little Big Horn where General George Armstrong Custer earned fame for foolishness in the summer of 1876. The reservation's towns, Ashland, Busby, Birney and Lame Deer, are dusty little villages in which a total population of about 3,000 lives a collective life of struggle against common reservation evils: poverty, disease, alcoholism, unemployment and despair. Two matters of geography, however, make this reservation and its people unique. The land,





which lies on and among some of the richest coal fields of the West, is a tribute to the historical persistence of the Northern Cheyennes. Today, the unusual degree of unity and the morale of the tribe are based on that determination.

The Federal government did not plan to have Cheyennes in Montana at all. After the Custer fight all Cheyennes were rounded up and lumped together in a reservation in Oklahoma, but in 1878 about 300 members of the Northern Cheyenne tribe broke out and began to walk home as described in Mari Sandoz's *Cheyenne Autumn*. Most were captured and then killed in a sordid episode of starvation and murder at an Army fort in Nebraska, but a remnant survived. In response to this tenacity, the Federal government eventually gave the Northern Cheyennes their present reservation. But the walk itself gave them something almost as lasting. Today when you talk to members of this tribe about their history, their culture, or their present struggles, one phrase recurs: "the long walk back." In the past few years the memory of that time has been repeatedly evoked to support the Northern Cheyennes' struggle for clean air.

The situation which has brought Cheyenne history to bear upon such an unlikely issue is deceptively simple. Since 1974, a group of five utilities has been planning to build a 1400 megawatt power plant adjacent to coal mines about 15 miles north of the reservation at a place called Colstrip. Two plants, Colstrip I and Colstrip II, have already been built. In 1977, efforts to build Colstrip III and Colstrip



IV met opposition when the Northern Cheyennes, using an opportunity offered all Indian tribes by Federal clean air laws, asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to cover their land with the legal umbrella of designation as a Class I air quality area. A Class I area, in EPA terms, is a refuge for the cleanest air in the country, purity undefiled. The request was granted. The reservation joined national parks and wilderness areas under this ultimate protection, and the Northern Cheyennes celebrated.

In 1978 and through part of 1979 the EPA backed up its promise by repeatedly telling the power consortium that its plant would unduly soil the atmosphere of the reservation and thus could not be built as designed. Later, in 1979, however, despite negative data from a smaller power plant already running nearby, EPA reopened the issue. The agency agreed to hear renewed requests from pro-power plant interests because of improvements in plant design and pressure generated by the national energy crisis. Finally, it approved construction of the plant.

The hypothetical city resident, whose skies are murky all day, would consider this action to be positive—a useful compromise. Although it is probable that the reservation will on occasion be polluted beyond the limits of the Class I definition, how much, he or she would ask, does that matter? Isn't this more a case of sacrificing a group's marginal interests in the name of national need, rather than an infringement of rights? Or the promise—if not fact—of job opportunities in a depressed economy as opposed to some esoteric value tenaciously held?

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### Memory of the "long walk back" is evoked to support the Northern Cheyennes' struggle for clean air.

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The trouble is that these initial impressions have roots in America's system of economic and social priorities in which clean air obviously does not rate highly. In times of recession or energy need, pollution laws are usually the first to be swept off the tables. Clean air is labeled an environmental issue, and in the prevailing system, environmentalism, in all its varied glory, is considered a game of affluence, like golf. Who cares about air quality if your landlord sells your home or your job is threatened due to an energy shortage?

But to the Northern Cheyennes the landlord has already sold most of the place to outsiders. And for Indians, there just isn't much work—winter unemployment on the Northern Cheyenne reservation runs from 50 to 70 percent. And still they fight for clean air. Their priorities are simply not the same.

"Our ancestors regarded the ground as sacred," said Joe Bear, trying to explain. Bear is a tribal vice-chairman who ranches on the eastern side of the reservation. "A Cheyenne is right next to the earth. All we're asking is just to keep our air clear. That's what it takes to grow things. Land, water, air."

"Long ago," said Harry Littlebird, a Cheyenne elder who lives in Lame Deer, "the elders when they prayed, they said, let good clear air touch every one of us. The meaning







of the term was, in essence, let us have one hundred percent good health. That was important, that clean air."

"I get sick when I go to Billings or somewhere else with polluted air," an anonymous Cheyenne is quoted as saying in a tribal report. "I can really feel it."

There is, of course, more than one way to read this rhetoric. Those who favor the power plant argue that the Cheyenne are manipulating an emotion-laden issue for reasons that are remote from actual air quality—political power, tribal cohesion, revenge, and financial gain. The extensive Cheyenne coal reserves might well feed the Colstrip furnaces under different circumstances.

The Cheyennes themselves point out that the drive for clean air is partly based on a fear of the social problems that the polluting power plant would bring, and not just the smoke. However, since oil development would be significantly cleaner and less disruptive than the power plant and strip mining, a recent tribal referendum gave overwhelming support to oil exploration on the reservation.

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### In the Cheyenne Circle, the slice which represents air is as large as that for living things.

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A Cheyenne report which was prepared in order to support the request for Class I status said:

...you can see we are concerned about the direct results of a deterioration in the quality of our air. We are [also] worried about any large influx of outsiders associated with the construction and operation of power plants. Partly we fear the overcrowding, crime, and inflation as more affluent people compete with us for limited housing and services. But our fear is even more basic. Nearly all Indians have personally experienced prejudice and discrimination, and we worry about becoming a minority on our own reservation, in our own towns.

The Cheyennes express their philosophy of relationships in life with a design called the Cheyenne Circle, which is cut into wedges like a pie graph showing the allocation of a tax dollar. In the Cheyenne Circle, however, the four wedges are equal in size (and hence importance), and the slice which represents air is as large as that for living things. The Cheyennes' actions over the years support this description of their clean air as more than a lever to obtain other goals. The "long walk back" was not only a search for living space, nor just for old freedoms, which the Indians knew were gone, but for a cherished land, for the special air of home. "Up north," a dying Cheyenne woman said in Oklahoma before the walk, "the pines make a rustling sound in the wind and the trees smell good."

Twice in the past decade the tribe has chosen to put long term environmental concerns ahead of immediate financial gain: once, in the early '70's when it quashed an attempt by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to lease over half the reservation for strip mining; and once with the request for Class I

air. Both actions cost the Cheyenne thousands of dollars in legal fees and millions in lost revenues and jobs.

So it is probably fair to say that the scale of values other Americans might place on matters such as those raised by the construction of a power plant—giving more weight, for instance, to social concerns than to what we would call environmental ones—would misrepresent the Cheyennes' own priorities. It is more likely that the Northern Cheyennes—as driven by self-interest as any other group—see the air, the land, and their health as webbed together by the forces of life; an assault on one damages all the rest. If there is truth anywhere in the words of Joe Bear and Harry Littlebird, it is that the Northern Cheyennes, reacting to the industrial world from the point of view of a culture in which respect for the land has played a central role for centuries, consider the quality of their air to be a fundamental right, as necessary as work and respect to human vitality.

From this perspective, the construction of the power plant close to the reservation becomes less a matter of sacrificing niceties to need and more a matter of oppression. And, unfortunately, this incident is not unique. The pattern of energy development in the West—in which rural areas are being dug up, polluted and subjected to devastating social turmoil, while the coal and electricity produced are carried away to fuel cities—can only be described as avaricious, and Native Americans are among the people most badly used. The Navajo and Hopi tribes in Arizona, for instances, have been so roundly exploited for their coal, oil, natural gas and uranium that the terrible phrase "national sacrifice area," a concept that should have been abandoned with the burning of witches, has recently been resurrected to describe their homelands.

In self defense, and perhaps out of aggressive instincts as well, the Northern Cheyennes and 24 other tribes recently formed an organization called the Council of Energy Resources Tribes (CERT), which splashed itself across front pages in 1979 when it hired a former Iranian oil minister to help negotiate contracts. The inference that the Native Americans were going to act like OPEC nations was inescapable, and perhaps that's the image the tribes wanted. But if the energy companies who wish to mine the coal, gas, uranium and oil that the CERT tribes control find the Indians difficult to handle, they may learn that money alone is not the answer.

If the Northern Cheyenne experience is any indication, company executives may find themselves dealing with a new set of priorities. While measured development is appreciated, the list of priorities does not begin and end with the word profit. On that basis, at least, the Northern Cheyennes may have something to offer to the value systems of all Americans.

Back in 1977 when a tribal judge in Lame Deer was asked why the Northern Cheyennes were so determined to have clean air, of all things, she smiled. Her tone mocked the question. "Don't you like to breathe also?" she asked. "You shouldn't even ask us why we want clean air. *You* know. Other people through this whole world should want that." ♦

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# The Media

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## Juvenile Journalism

by Joshua E. Mills

**S**cholastic Magazines, the nation's largest publisher of student newsmagazines (weekly circulation: 10 million) commemorated its sixtieth anniversary last fall with a banquet and a self-congratulatory ad on the back page of *The New York Times*. But even as the celebrating was going on, the New York-based publisher was under fire from civil rights groups for an article in one of its thirty-three publications that took a distinctly nonchalant view of the Ku Klux Klan.

On April 3, *Junior Scholastic*, a weekly read by 800,000 junior high school students, featured a cover story on "Kids in the KKK." It was a natural topic for the magazine, which, like others in the publishing group, does not shy away from controversial subjects. But in its effort to provide "evenhanded" coverage, as is its policy, *Junior Scholastic* went astray.

The cover of the issue showed a blond, blue-eyed child, in robe and hood, standing in front of a Klansman. The accompanying article, which focused on the activities of the Klan Youth Corps in New Jersey, provided a useful description of the Klan's new recruiting effort in the nation's schools. In the process, however, the article, written by associate editor Jeffrey Shear, glossed over the Klan's tradition of violence and intimidation. That aspect of its record was dispensed with in a brief paragraph that set the group's grisly activities firmly in the past:

The KKK is a secretive organization that preaches the superiority of white people over all other races. The burning cross is a part of their secret ritual. In the past, such crosses have

been burned on the lawn of black families to frighten them—and to warn them that the Klan could strike their homes. For years, the Klan used its robes and rituals to terrorize people.

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### The article glossed over the Klan's tradition of violence and intimidation.

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Nowhere did the article indicate that the violence continues. No mention was made, for example, of the bloody shootout involving Klan members that occurred in Greensboro, North Carolina, in November 1979. Instead, the piece presented an almost wholesome picture of today's Klan as seen through the eyes of children. One Youth Corps mem-

ber is quoted as saying, "The Klan talks about the threat of communism. They also talk about the need for tightly-knit families—that's what keeps kids from going astray."

Soon after reaching the nation's classrooms, the piece drew fire from the Council on Interracial Books for Children, a watchdog group for teachers, librarians, and parents. The Council's Summer 1980 *Bulletin* also contained statements of protest from the N.O.W. Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Anti-Defamation League, and the National Anti-Klan Network, among other groups.

*Junior Scholastic* editor Lee Baier agreed to meet with members of the council in December and to publish a corrective article in February. Aware that a problem existed at the time of publication, Baier had included, on the April 3 contents page, a short background on Klan violence, but he now concedes that the addition wasn't sufficient to right the balance. "We are deeply disturbed that the main article appears to make the KKK look benign, perhaps even attractive, to young people," says Baier.

The flap over the Klan article reflects to some degree the problem children's newsmagazines can have in covering topical issues in such a way as not to offend parents and educators. On that latter score, at least, the Klan article was a success: Baier received complaints from only three librarians and four teachers. ♦



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### Immigration Waves

#### **THE ONE AND THE MANY: Reflections on the American Identity**

Arthur Mann

Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979, 222 pp., \$12.95

#### **ESSAYS AND DATA ON AMERICAN ETHNIC GROUPS**

Thomas Sowell, Editor

Washington: Urban Institute, 1978, 415 pp., \$15 hardbound, \$7.50 softbound (abridged)

#### **AMERICAN MOSAIC: The Immigrant Experience in the Words of Those Who Lived It**

Joan Morrison and Charlotte Fox Zabusky

New York: Dutton, 1980, 478 pp., \$19.95

#### **RACIAL AND ETHNIC RELATIONS IN AMERICA**

S. Dale McLemore

Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1980, 394 pp., \$15.95

by Martha Farnsworth Riche

Americans are the product of the largest folk migration in history. Starting with the inflow of Native Americans from Siberia thousands of years ago, poverty and oppression have peopled this country through successive waves of immigration from countries all over

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the world. With some stops and starts, this process has been continuous; Russian Jews, Southeast Asians, Cubans, Haitians, Mexicans, and Central Americans head the current list of arrivals. Whether they come by plane, boat, or foot, whether they come legally or illegally, Americans, particularly those at the bottom of the economic ladder, are worrying about how this new wave of immigration will affect them.

A New York Times/CBS news poll found last fall that resistance to refugees was growing along with the unemployment rate, particularly among whites who faced or feared joblessness. The slowdown in economic activity just when more people want to work is already undermining the expectations that equal opportunity and affirmative action programs raised for women and minorities over the last decade. Will the new immigrants, by and large members of minority groups themselves, make it even harder for blacks, Hispanics, and others to advance economically and socially?

Immigration as a strictly bread-and-butter threat is a relatively new focus for this nation. Until the Depression, immigrants were welcome additions to the pool of unskilled labor that was extending America's frontiers and developing the resources contained within them. Throughout most of our history, the major concern immigrants aroused was cultural, not economic, as Arthur Mann discovered in his research for *The One and The Many*.

Curious about the burst of ethnic assertiveness that appeared in the early 1970s, Mann looked beyond the immediate context of civil rights, women's liberation, the sexual revolution, and the counter culture that triggered this particular reassertion of group iden-

tity. Examining data from the first census (conducted in 1790) Mann found that, mythology to the contrary, the American population has never been homogeneous. Unlike other colonial powers, England allowed people from other countries to emigrate to its American colonies. As a result, at the time of the American Revolution less than half the population was of English origin; a fifth consisted of African slaves and the rest of other Europeans, mainly Scots-Irish and German.

Although these groups, with the exception of the Africans, are nowadays joined together under the label of Anglo-Saxon, they did not see themselves as sharing a cultural identity before the Italians, Poles, and other Southern and Eastern Europeans arrived in growing numbers in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Until then, the English derided and mistrusted the Scots-Irish and Germans for their cultural differences just as much as they all, as Anglo-Saxons, later derided and mistrusted the new arrivals.

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#### **Immigration as a strictly bread-and-butter threat is a relatively new focus for this nation.**

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If the idea of Anglo-Saxon hegemony was coined retrospectively, the concept of America as a melting pot was developed prospectively. Mann shows how the melting pot was more a statement of what some Americans thought ought to be happening during the first part of this century than what actually was happening. That is, one way to handle the friction that people from different cultures caused people still



seeking a common culture of their own was to assume that they would learn to blend into the resident population.

Many of the immigrants who came to the United States before the doors closed in 1929 made enormous efforts to do just that, as the gripping oral histories recounted in *American Mosaic* show. A lucky few learned our language and customs at school, while others had to do it on their own. One Austrian woman said, "I read constantly the funny papers—the Katzenjammer Kids. From their motions I learn. I never saw the inside of a school. How could I? I had to make a living." A Chinese carried a dictionary in his back pocket for years, "just like a pack of cigarettes," until he mastered English: "I walk on the street and I see a word and I bring out my dictionary and I find out what that word means." An Italian, now a surgeon, described how he and his cousin learned English at the movies, watching "the same movie three, four, or five times" until they could connect the action with the words.

Others, less motivated or less fortunate, clung to their own language and ways—and watched their children being transformed by the pressures to assimilate. No matter which route they chose, their grandchildren tried to reclaim their ethnic identity during the 1970s, causing consternation in a variety of quarters.

Both Mann and S. Dale McLemore say that according to ethnic history, the new ethnicity wasn't new at all. Mann cites Marcus Hansen's Law of the Third Generation: It is an "almost universal phenomenon that what the son wishes to forget the grandson wishes to remember." Hansen was explaining the Swedish American ethnic

revival of the 1930s by comparing it with the Scots-Irish of the 1880s and 1890s and the German of the decade before World War I. McLemore says that it took six to eight generations before the Germans and Scots-Irish merged with the Anglo Americans. According to history's timetable, then, we can expect to hear the Cambodian Americans and the Haitian Americans making demands on the basis of their ethnicity early in the next century.

In the meantime, Americans, even the hyphenated ones, have realized that cultural assimilation is inevitable to some degree and that we would do better to enjoy our diversity while it lasts, as the big turnouts for ethnic festivals all over the country witness. For, as Mann points out, unlike other multiethnic nations where large groups occupy a particular territory and keep their language, here people are residentially mobile (even ethnic neighborhoods shift location over the course of a generation), and English is the dominant language. As a result, Americans of Anglo-Saxon stock aren't English or German any more than Italian Americans are Italian—a point many of the immigrants who speak their piece in *American Mosaic* make when they recount their visits to the old country. The melting pot has been transformed into a mosaic, say these authors, at least as far as cultural differences are concerned.

The ethnic revival of the 1970s had an economic as well as a cultural dimension, and Mann thinks that is why it disturbed so many people. The population as a whole equated white ethnics with big-city blue-collar workers who feared and resented black competition for housing and jobs. People from the same ethnic groups who had

joined the professional class or had found a home in rural or small-town America had other interests; they joined the movement peripherally, if at all.

Still, the white ethnics' demand that attention be paid to their concerns, as well as the affirmative action movement that it both paralleled and responded to, represented a new stage in America's evolution. The traditional goal of American policy has been to encourage equal opportunity for individuals, not equal achievement for groups. For both immigrants and minority group members, this has meant removing barriers to achievement through special education programs and legislation barring discrimination in housing, education, and employment. The failure of minority groups, particularly blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans, to improve their status substantially once these barriers began to fall has been the major rationale for affirmative action efforts.

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**The traditional goal of American policy has been to encourage equal opportunity for individuals, not equal achievement for groups.**

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Not everybody agrees that affirmative action programs really help minority groups, or that minorities really need such programs to climb the economic ladder. People who are interested enough in this question to consult a densely written, data-packed book—in contrast to Mann's easy-flowing narrative or *American Mosaic*'s hard-to-put-down oral histories—should take a look at *Essays and Data*

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## In Review

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on *American Ethnic Groups*. Edited by Thomas Sowell, a prominent black critic of what he terms black “special pleading,” this book describes, analyzes, and compares the experiences of twelve ethnic groups in America from 1619 to the 1970s. The essays by historians, psychologists, economists, and sociologists focus particularly on blacks, Chinese, Irish, Italians, Jews, and Japanese. The data—158 tables arrayed to show how indicators such as income vary among ethnics with the same education, age, sex, or occupation—are not included in the paperback version, which is intended for the general public.

The overall conclusion of this substantial effort is that the economic achievement pattern has been different, but parallel, for every ethnic group but one. This group—the descendants of African slaves—is the only one that was not drawn to America by a vision of a better life but brought here against its will. Its history, not its color, Sowell thinks, is the key to its relative failure to advance under conditions of equal opportunity.

Sowell came to this conclusion after he divided American blacks into three groups—the descendants of free blacks, slaves, and West Indians—and found that they had widely varying patterns of socioeconomic attainment. For instance, “free persons of color” and their descendants made up the major share of successful blacks well into this century. Earlier theorists thought that the black middle class was a mulatto, or biological phenomenon.

However, Sowell’s data show that the descendants of West Indian blacks have been successful relative to both the black and the white population in terms of income, education, and occu-

pation. They have also experienced social disaster—as measured by crime, unemployment, and divorce rates—less frequently. Since this group is both genetically and culturally more African, Sowell thinks that its experience both demolishes the biological “explanation” and undermines blacks’ accusations of white discrimination as the major cause of their present poverty. Instead, he thinks, we should consider the harmful effect of such aspects of slavery as “regimented dependence, as contrasted with economic incentives and market experience,” in looking for ways to help those blacks who, though American for generations, have yet to be assimilated into American society.

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### Sowell thinks that the history of black Americans, not their color, is the key to their failure to advance.

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Sowell’s book presents data for, but does not fully analyze, the other groups whose assimilation has lagged: Native Americans and Hispanics. Building on the work of earlier writers, S. Dale McLemore’s comprehensive introduction to *Racial and Ethnic Relations in America* offers, if not answers, at least some theories for the different pace of assimilation for nonwhite ethnic groups.

McLemore uses Japanese Americans as a touchstone, since this is one of several nonwhite ethnic groups that have come closest to attaining socioeconomic parity, though not full cultural assimilation, within three generations of its arrival here. By contrasting groups that immigrated with groups that were conquered, some people have theorized that conquered groups that

have been able to stay together have preferred to remain apart from the dominant culture. This theory could apply to Native Americans on reservations, for example. But once the group is dispersed within the culture, as the Chicanos were after industrialization brought them off Southwestern farms into the cities, the group loses its solidarity and asks to be treated like other Americans.

But, as *American Mosaic* shows, assimilation is easier for some individuals than others within any given ethnic group. Some of the people who tell their stories here, such as Edward Teller or Alexandra Danilova, came to this country with talent and education that would have made them a success in any country that did not reject or affront them on political or religious grounds. Others, such as John Daroubian, the Armenian survivor of Turkish atrocities, had such personal drive that they only needed a favorable environment in which to exercise it.

*American Mosaic* contains material for years of heartwarming TV series, scores of tragic movies, and at least a dozen light comedies. (See Alastair Cooke’s account for a start.) But the analytical reader can’t help but reflect that the people who succeeded here were the ones who had the means—education, family or community support, or special personality traits—that enabled them to help themselves. Those immigrants who fall to the bottom of the heap, just as those Americans who fail to rise from it, will continue to be the ones who lack those means, whatever their ethnic background. These books all say implicitly that policies to help individuals, not groups, might still be the best answer. ♦





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