

"Race" and "Ethnicity": History and the 2000 Census

Theodore W. Allen

7. Is Person 1 Spanish/Hispanic/Latino? Mark the "No" box if **not** Spanish/Hispanic/Latino.

No, not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino Yes, Puerto Rican
 Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano Yes, Cuban
 Yes, other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino — *Print group.* ↗

Only by understanding what was peculiar about the Peculiar Institution can one know what is exceptionable about American Exceptionalism; know how, in normal times, the ruling class has been able to operate without "laborite" disguises; and know how, in critical times, democratic new departures have been frustrated by *reinventions* of the "white race."

(The Invention of the White Race, 1:1)

From the first year of its existence until the African-American civil rights struggles of the 1960s, the United States government defined the population strictly in "race" terms; you were "white" or you were not "white."¹ Now, in acknowledged reaction to effects of that struggle, the government has decreed that for the first time in its history, this country is to have an officially established distinct population category that is neither "white" nor not-"white."

As far as the popular media go, however, this historic change in statistical policy is honored only in the footnote -- "Hispanics can be either white or black," or, "Hispanics can be of any race" -- appended to statistical tables, charts, and graphs relating to social and economic issues, beginning in the 1980s. A simple question that any school child might ask seems not to have occurred to our media pundits and editorialists: If Hispanics can be of any race, then why not everybody else?² Can it be that too much American history is bound up in European-American "white" identity to allow it to be threatened through mere checking of boxes on a census form?

The purpose of this essay is to consider the significance of this change within the context of not just the history of the census, but of American political history. It is a change with a Janus face. One aspect turns toward new forms of "race-ethnic" political divisions, designed in effect to preserve the democratic gloss, if not a white majority,

then at least of a "white" *plurality*.³ The other aspect envisions the expunging of "race" as an official United States census and general statistical category.

At the conclusion of a wide-ranging three-and-a-half decade discussion involving social and political scientists, geographers, historians, sociologists, and statisticians, inside and outside the United States Census Bureau, and with the participation of representatives of census agencies of a number of other countries, and through a series of United States Congressional hearings, two basic facts appeared certain: First, there is no consensus on the meanings of "ethnicity" and "race"; and, second, census and other official formulations in regard to these concepts are political acts.

In 1992, the United States and Canadian governments organized an international conference on "the Measurement of Ethnicity. " After considering papers and discussions that produced a record of nearly six hundred pages, the Conference was forced to confess that "participants reached a consensus that there was no universally acceptable definition of ethnicity."⁴ Two top officials of the Census Bureau who had leading roles in the convening of that conference, after surveying the sociological and anthropological literature, were led to conclude that there is "a lack of consensus about the definition of ethnicity."⁵ When sociologist Charles Hirschman, was consulted on the subject, he declared that, ". . . the entire concept of race and ethnicity is based on a false assumption."⁶ What is ethnicity?," he asks, "The fact [is] that there is no simple answer to this question. . . ."⁷

Nevertheless, despite "the logical flaws in its categorization" expressed in the original 1977 Office of Management and Budget Order 15, and in the face of a growing "understanding of racial and ethnic identity as a social construct,"⁸ the OMB reissued Order 15 on October 30, 1997, elaborated on its definitions for "race" and "ethnicity," and ordered that "they be used by the Bureau of the Census in the 2000 decennial census," and by "other Federal programs . . . as soon as possible, but not later than January 1, 2003."⁹ Although the Order appeared to make a concession to the "race as a social construct" thesis,¹⁰ it still left open the back door for "biological or genetic" interpretations of race, by "explaining" that "The racial and ethnic categories set forth in the standards should not be interpreted as being *primarily* biological or genetic."¹¹ But, since, in the natural order of the world, genes and biology are precedent to "social constructs," if they are admitted into discussion they are necessarily primary. The "social construct" approach to "race" and "ethnic" categories, on the one hand, and biological theories of race as a phenomenon of physical anthropology, on the other, belong to different and mutually exclusive spheres, neither "primary" over the other. If that is not understood, the "social construct" approach to "race" cannot be sustained.

The "race" categories as established in OMB Order 15, were 1) American Indian (which is to include Latin American Indians) or Alaskan Native; 2) Asian; 3) Black or African American; 4) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; and 5) "White." Persons "of Spanish culture or origin" -- Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, South or Central Americans, and unspecified others, are collectively classed as an "ethnic group," "regardless of race."¹²

Aside from the questionable logic of this categorization, its application can result in gross inconsistency in statistical tables of key importance, as witness the figures provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics regarding total labor force, employed, and unemployed, and the unemployment rate. In these statistics, the sum of White, Black, and Hispanic, in 1998, for example, exceeded the "total," by the following respective extents: civilian labor force, by 5.6%; the number of employed, by 11.7%; and the number unemployed, by 5.8%. A footnote says these discrepancies occur because "Hispanics are included in both the white and black population groups."[13](#)

Correction might possibly be made by classifying the entire civilian labor force by "race." That would mean, however, that those classed as "Hispanic whites" would be excluded from the "protected groups" established under the civil rights laws. But, since many claims under those laws, as well as the political clout of the respective "protected groups" in the game of ethnic politics, are keyed to their numbers, Hispanic group spokesmen have rejected that option as a threat to the group's interest.

Or, why not permit those persons who have one parent of one "race" and the other of a different "race" -- who are estimated to make up nearly five per cent of the total population[14](#) -- to be listed in two "races?" That would, of course, result in some duplication, but certainly not any more, probably much less, than occurs in the such tables as that cited above from the *Monthly Labor Review*. But even that duplication in totals could be avoided if each such respondent was counted as two halves, adding accordingly to the counts of their respective parental "races."

Or, again, why not abandon the census category, "race," mired as it is in racial slavery and white supremacy, and replace it with "ethnicity", not just for "Hispanics," but for all?[15](#) Ethnicity could be broken down according to place of origin or descent, such as African-American, Asian, European-American, Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, Indigenous people, Latino, and "Other." Although that might encounter objection from those for whom their "white" identity is important, it would seem to present no obstacle to the maintenance of the positive race pride of African Americans in its many forms.

In advancing such speculative remedies of error of duplication, I do not seek to usurp the role of those properly credentialed in such matters. Rather, my purpose is to highlight the following problem: Why did the government decide to adopt such questionable principles of categorization, and to persist in applying those principles in ways that may seriously impair the accuracy of the statistics produced as a result?

Census-making Is, Above All, a Political Process

In any case, before the census can take the form of statistical tables, census makers must first decide, What counts in determining whom to count how? Are all respondents to be counted as to their "race?" Is classification to be according to self-identification of respondents, or by census-takers and other observers? How and to what extent is "ethnicity" to be a consideration? All these are matters involving fundamental political judgments.[16](#)

Eminent specialists convened at the 1992 Ottawa conference to consider the problem of "ethnic" classification in census-making, emphasized repeatedly the political character of the process. As Census Bureau officials put it: "[T]hroughout United States census history, socio-political factors have influenced the development of the ethnic questions, their categories and terminology . . . development of [census] questionnaire content is not an exercise in social science research conducted in a vacuum. . . . It also involves a sensitivity to data needs as expressed through the political process."¹⁷

It was, then, a political decision when the United States government, through OMB Order 15, contrived the exclusive "race-neutral" category and named it "Hispanic,"¹⁸ an appellation not encountered in Latin American censuses. An analysis of the "ethnic" composition of the seventeen Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America (not including Puerto Rico) indicates that only three -- Argentina, Uruguay, and Costa Rica, with only a combined nine per cent of the total Spanish-speaking population of Latin America -- had "Caucasian/white" ethnic majorities.¹⁹ The term "Hispanic" was imposed despite the historic fact that those countries were born to independence in a struggle against "Hispanic" colonialism.²⁰ Mexican-Americans, who in Mexico take pride in their *mestizaje*, their "mixed-race" tradition,²¹ are to be "Hispanicized," with no allowance made for any "*mestizo*," nor, indeed, for any other multi-ethnic category.

The Conventional Rationale

The conventional rationale for contriving the change from the strict white/not-white classification to the tri-partite scheme -- white, not-white, and neither white nor not-white -- is premised on the remarkable increase in the non-European proportion of the population of the United States in the last third of the twentieth century. The Academy of Sciences National Research Council concluded that this changed aspect of the population made necessary a "federal classification system . . . to reflect the realities of the U. S. society." The fact that "the United States population is more racially and 'ethnically' diverse than at any other time in our history" was a major consideration of the top-echelon functionaries of the U. S. Census Bureau.²²

It is true that of the 16.3 million immigrants entering the United States between 1971 and 1994, inclusive, 85 percent came from non-European countries: 47% from North, Central, and South America (including the Caribbean, but excluding Canada); 36% came from Asia; and 2% from Africa, while only 15% came from Europe and Canada.²³ This predominance of non-European immigration since enactment of the Immigration Act of 1965 and the Immigration Regulation and Control Act (IRCA) of 1985, and the projections of a United States population made up predominately of non-European-Americans by 2050 are matters that must be taken into account by demographers and census-makers, as well as sociologists and historians. It is a truism that "[N]ational statistics must change in response to social and political changes. . . ."²⁴ One may well agree with the judgment of Urban Institute demographers Passel and Edmonston that "the response to the new [predominantly non-European] immigrants will be a major determinant of the country's future."²⁵

But why should that response require a political decision to alter the fundamental categories of the population so as to produce this particular tri-partite form and do so at this particular time, establishing a distinct population category that is neither "white" nor "not-white"?²⁶ Non-Europeans have been added to the population of the United States, by territorial conquest (Mexico, Hawaii, Puerto Rico); by two decades of Chinese labor immigration (ineligible for U. S. citizenship under the Burlingame Treaty of 1868), until even this restricted access was closed by the passage of the (subsequently re-enacted) Oriental Exclusion Act of 1882;²⁷ and later by voluntary immigration, particularly from the European colonies in the Caribbean region late in the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth.²⁸

The fundamental answer, I would venture, lies in the problem of maintaining ruling-class social control, "insuring domestic tranquility," by manipulation of "race/ethnicity," in the face of this latest non-European immigrant wave that arrives in a country *transformed by the African-American civil rights struggle of the 1960s.*

The U. S. "Peculiar Institution" vs. the Tri-partite Social Form

In considering this intuition, let us take note of one particular social and political factor that has not received the attention it deserves, namely: the dissonance between the tri-partite, essentially class, form historically taken by the social structure in nations in Latin America, the Caribbean, and in Asia and in parts of Africa, on the one hand, and the strictly "race" social structure in the United States that supersedes "class" distinctions, under the "one-drop-of-blood" rule handed down from slavery times.²⁹

In the period 1971 to 1994, five countries accounted for almost 90 per cent of recorded immigration to the United States from Latin America: Mexico, 62%; Dominican Republic, 10%; Cuba, 8%; El Salvador, 6%; and Guatemala, 3%. According to official statistics, the "White/Caucasian" proportions of the population of these respective countries are: Mexico, 9%, Dominican Republic, 0%; Cuba, 37%; El Salvador, 1%; and, Guatemala, 0%.³⁰

Implicit in these figures is the signal fact that, in each of these countries, the middle class -- the essential intermediate social control stratum -- has historically been composed of persons of one degree or another of non-European ancestry.³¹ Immigrants from these countries are not accustomed to the "white race" system historically prevalent in the United States, which, on bi-polar "race" principles, blocks the path of social mobility of non-Europeans in this country.

The Caribbean Immigrants, 1900 to 1930: A Cautionary Tale?

The story of the immigrants from the Caribbean is suggestive of the potential social impact of the present predominantly non-European immigration into the United States. In the early decades of the twentieth century, immigrants from the British West Indies were so shocked by the U. S. system of "race" that, as sociologist Ira De A. Reid, himself such an immigrant, described it: "Many Negro immigrants had to go into a mental reverse to

accept such stratification."³² One out of every four re-emigrated. Some of those who stayed sought to make some quiet viable adjustment to the white-supremacist environment. But others -- some of whom came already radicalized, and some who were first radicalized by the American experience -- rejected the course of silent adjustment. Opening his study of this contingent, Professor Winston James states: "One of the most intriguing sociological and historical facts about American radicalism in the twentieth century has been the prominence and often pre-eminence of Caribbean migrants among its participants."³³

Considering the common characteristics of the two cases, it seems a reasonable conjecture that the ruling class policy makers might be concerned that the present and prospective preponderance of non-European immigration could foster an anti-white-supremacist radicalization, similar to that of the Caribbean immigrants of the early twentieth century, one of a much larger scale.

The Status of Mexican Americans

The predominant role played by Mexican-American leaders and organizations in the unfolding of the events attendant upon the adoption of the tri-partite categorization established by OMB Order 15 makes it appropriate and necessary briefly to note the history of the social and political status of Mexican Americans.³⁴

The Mexican Revolution that began in 1810³⁵ abolished slavery and ushered in the ascendance of the mestizo, while retaining the class/color social hierarchy inherited from the Spanish regime, wherein social mobility was provided according to the principle that "*el dinero emblanquece*" (money whitens).

In 1831, the United States government sought unsuccessfully to induce Mexico, in effect, to enforce the United States Fugitive Slave Law against African-Americans escaping to Mexican territory.³⁶ Under the terms of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo marking the end of the Mexican War, the Mexican government was forced to surrender more than half of the country -- a territory comprising the present states of New Mexico and California, and parts of Utah, Nevada, Arizona and Colorado -- thus opening the greater part of that territory to the expansion of the slave system.³⁷

But the Mexicans remained on guard against slave-catching intentions of the slaveholder-dominated United States government.³⁸ At Guadalupe Hidalgo, therefore, the Mexican government insisted that Mexicans in the annexed territories "at the proper time" were to be entitled "to the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States, according to the principles of the [U. S.] Constitution."³⁹

United States citizenship was at that time restricted to "whites"⁴⁰; therefore, as far as official statistics went, Mexican-Americans were to be, "like Europeans, classified as part of the foreign stock for two generations and then not distinguished as a separate grouping."⁴¹ This provision of the treaty would ever after be a reference point for

Mexican-American rights struggles; in the words of political scientists de la Garza, Falcon, and Garcia:

"Cognizant that U. S. society has been organized around a white-black dichotomy with white as the preferred category, Mexican American leaders have historically campaigned to have the Mexican-origin population identified as white to avoid discrimination."[42](#)

In practice, however, Mexican-Americans were indeed to be distinguished from the "Anglos" (European-Americans) for all social and civil purposes. As Professor David Montejano writes, although Mexican-Americans were formally "whites," "politically and socially, Negroes and Mexicans were considered basically as different factors of the same racial problem."[43](#) This was, and was regarded as, a "race" distinction, on which there was established a system of social control, whereby the laboring-class "whites" were enlisted to keep down the Mexicans[44](#) and kept themselves safely in the "white race" corral).[45](#)

In the late nineteenth century, Anglos might cite the legacy of the Alamo, in claiming immunity for killing Mexicans as "enemies."[46](#) Texans regarded Mexicans as subhuman, lower than dogs or worse.[47](#) On cattle drives to the railroad loading points, there was a clear "racial" hierarchy where Mexicans and Anglos were engaged together; the former were the workers, the latter, the bosses.[48](#) A visitor at the famous King Ranch found that it was a common practice that Mexican cowhands were not allowed to eat with the "white" cowhands, but were obliged to camp with the animals, and there to cook their food.[49](#) Typically, on Texas ranches where both Mexican and "white" hands were employed, the Mexican workers were paid one-third less than "any white man."[50](#)

The arrival of railroads in Texas, coincided with the rolling back of post-Civil War Reconstruction and the influx of capital and of many prejudiced "whites" from other parts of the United States.[51](#) The result was a rapid growth of towns and cities, in which the pattern of racial discrimination against the Mexican *vaquero* on the ranches was reproduced on this grander scale, with the formation of "two societies," one Anglo, the other Mexican.[52](#) In the early, "frontier days," Mexican landholders might be regarded as "good citizens" under the concept that "*el dinero emblanquece*."[53](#) Yet, Juan Seguin, a large landowner who had served as Mayor of San Antonio and fought for Texas independence from Mexico in 1836, was driven from the country by Anglo squatters in 1842.[54](#) Later, Mexican holders of Spanish land grants would be effectively eclipsed economically, and lose their former social standing as "whites."[55](#)

When sufficient European-Americans had arrived in southeastern Texas, they formed their own exclusive "white" society. Sharp "race distinctions" were established and "Mexican" was equated with "Negro" for segregation purposes.[56](#) Like African-Americans, Mexicans were to be regarded as incapable of assimilating in the North American "culture," or in civic life in the way that Italians and Germans were able to do.[57](#)

Mexicans were segregated in movie houses, pharmacies, restaurants, shops, banks and schools. At Anglo cafes, Mexicans could not stay in the premises, but were required to take out their purchases. School segregation was instituted, reflecting the established general pattern of racial discrimination. Not only were Mexicans forced into segregated inferior schools, few of them were admitted to high schools.⁵⁸ A white supremacist lexicon of degrading terms for Mexican, justified the restriction of Mexicans to agricultural labor.⁵⁹ The general tendency was to use ethnic or national prejudice as a basis for separation and control, says Montejano, who likens the establishment of the Texas system of racial segregation of Mexican Americans to that which occurred in "the segregationist South against the Negroes during the same period."⁶⁰

The contrast of the history of formal categorization of Mexican Americans as "whites" and their actual subjugation under white supremacist oppression appears to have cast the mold for the development of the Mexican American struggle for protection under the civil rights laws of the 1960s.

Census Politics -- the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

As early as the 1930s, and more particularly after the United States entry into World War II, the leaders of the middle-class organization, the League of United Latin Americans (LULAC), had appealed for acceptance by the "white," Anglo, society by stressing the "patriotism" of Mexican-Americans. They reminded the Anglos of the role of the Mexicans who at the decisive 1836 Battle of San Jacinto fought as allies of the Anglos in winning independence from Mexico. They pressed their appeal against the discriminatory practices and spirit of Anglos by stressing the valiant service of Mexican-American soldiers. They struck a defensive mode in the face of disparaging references to Mexican Americans made by Anglos against Mexican-Americans as not being "hygienic."⁶¹ They based their claims on their historical status as United States "white" citizens under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and United States censuses. Rather than demanding racial equality, as African-Americans have done historically, they sought accommodation with the system of white supremacy as "Latin American" citizens. Thus they were appealing to the long-since repudiated "citizenship" promise of Guadalupe Hidalgo, of equity with "whites," a pledge that had proved as worthless as an old Spanish land grant.

The African-American civil rights struggles of the mid-1950s and the 1960's not only made way for a general exaltation of the social philosophy of equalitarianism, they brought the beginning of reconsideration of the bedrock concept of "white" identity and of the camouflage of "ethnic politics" used to express that identity.

The Good

In the context of the experiences of Mexican American as members of the armed forces and their expanded industrial employment during World War II, and the effects of a marked increase in the urbanization of the Mexican American population, the upsurge of the Black-led civil rights movement was able to exert a powerful transforming effect

on the campaigns of Mexican-Americans against racial discrimination. As one commentator much-cited in the census debates observes, "Leaders of major Mexican-American voluntary associations were becoming more assertive in the late 1960s, following the successes of the black civil rights movement."⁶² Most important of all, was the participation of farm workers, urban proletarians, and students, who adopted militant tactics and mass action methods that had previously been practiced by the African-American civil rights movement. It was not until ". . . the Negroes of the South and the Mexican Americans in the Southwest mobilized and mounted an attack from below in the 1960s," writes Professor Montejano, that the breaking down of Jim Crow was completed.⁶³ The movement spread throughout the Southwest and produced an intensified focus on electoral politics.⁶⁴

The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, were crowning achievements of the African-American civil rights crusade. The former was based on the Fourteenth Amendment provision for "equal protection of the laws." The 1965 Act, taking language from the fifteenth amendment, outlawed discrimination in elections against persons "on account of race or color." Both of these laws provided for the establishment of administrative and legal criteria defining and determining practices of illegal discrimination.

Determined not to be excluded from the civil rights gains won by African-Americans, Mexican-American leaders in academia, other professionals, and political leaders mobilized to secure the Mexican-Americans a place as one of the "protected groups" for purposes of civil rights legislation.⁶⁵ A Census Bureau report to Congress in 1974 listed thirty-four "Spanish Organizations with whom its staff had met between June 1972 and May 1974 "to discuss program on statistics on persons of Spanish ancestry in the United States."⁶⁶ The 150-year struggle of Mexican Americans for equal rights had broken through to become a national concern of the United States official society.

The Bad -- "Ethnic" versus "Race"

Controversies arose, however, about how the term "protected group" could be made to apply to Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans. Were they covered by the protection against discrimination on account of "race or color"? The United States Department of Justice took note of the fact that the Census Bureau classed Mexicans and Puerto Ricans as "white," but said that "the meaning of 'race or color' for the purposes of the 15th Amendment is not necessarily the same as the meaning for census purposes. . . ." On the basis of legislative history and a host of judicial precedents, the Justice Department concluded that, "[I]t is fully consistent with the spirit of the [Voting Rights] Act as amended to treat Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans as racial groups."⁶⁷

However, this decision by the Justice Department for inclusion of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in the "protected group" was rejected by the Mexican American leaders most actively engaged in determining the terms of definition of Mexican Americans for civil rights law purposes. In the course of a protracted struggle with the Census Bureau, they demanded that Mexican-Americans "not be categorized as a race,"

but as "an ethnic group." They further insisted that the census form provide "a separate Hispanic self-identification item, not combined with other ethnic groups."⁶⁸ The option for "ethnic group" would serve to maintain civil rights protection for all Mexican-Americans, including those who were "white." And, the insistence on being the only "ethnic" group would serve to distinguish Mexican-Americans from European-Americans, who, as "whites," were not classed among the "protected groups" designated in the civil rights laws.

The need for Mexican-Americans to be distinguished from "white" ethnics was obvious. But what was the need to be distinguished in this way from African-Americans and others identified as "races," who, if it came to that, could with fully as much "phenotypic" justification be categorized as "ethnic" groups? If avoidance of the blood encrusted category of "race" is good for Mexican-Americans, why would it not be good for all? Incidentally, it would seem to present the inspiring effect of eliminating "white" identity from the census, and from use by the many agencies of information that follow its lead. Just as a way was found, indeed by a Congressional finding, to include Hispanics, along with the still "racially" categorized American Indian, Asian American, [and] Native Alaskan,⁶⁹ in the protected groups category by designating them a "language minority," so could a Congressional "finding" be formulated that would maintain the protection of African-Americans if classed as an ethnic group, and preserve their claims to benefits presently available to them in the "race" category. *Does not the institution of this "ethnic" versus "race" distinction tend to draw a politically divisive line through the ranks of the "people of color," rather than contributing to the common struggle against white supremacy?*

The Ugly -- Ethnic Politics, an Old "White" American Custom

The allocation of benefits of programs established under these Acts, and invocations of the law with regard to Congressional districts, school districts, etc. were to be dependent upon the proportions of an aggrieved population in a given jurisdiction. As a result, the Census Bureau was thrust into a key role in the administration of the civil rights laws.

That circumstance motivated all groups with claims under these laws to seek assurances that they be fully counted and protected against the continuation of the substantial undercount of recent censuses. This situation "convinced Mexican-American leaders of the necessity for better statistics."⁷⁰ But, if they were not to be qualified for civil rights protection under the "race or color" rubric, a common "ethnic" identity was needed whereby Mexican Americans would qualify for "protection" under the civil rights laws.

Rectification began with the introduction of House Joint Resolution 406 by Representative Roybal on March 5, 1973, aimed at securing more adequate economic and social statistics for Spanish-speaking Americans, "a large proportion of whom suffer from racial, social, economic, and political discrimination. . . ."⁷¹ Incidentally, that is the last time that the term "racial" occurs in the official record of the presentation of the case

for the "Hispanic" identity. This fact served to distinguish Roybal from Herman Badillo, Puerto Rican-born member of Congress from New York, who scrupulously avoided "racial" in his statement of support of the Roybal resolution.⁷² Badillo was explicit a year later in strongly opposing the classification of Mexican-Americans as a "race," citing the historical practice (noting the 1930 exception) of the Census Bureau of classing Mexican-Americans as "white."⁷³

Several years of intense discussion, over terms of identification, such as "Spanish culture," "Spanish heritage," and Spanish surname, finally ended with "Spanish origin,"⁷⁴ which then was translated for the census and other official statistics as "Hispanic,"⁷⁵ a term designed to bring the maximum number of people into the category.⁷⁶ It was indeed a "social construct" as Candace Nelson and Marta Tienda found in their critical evaluation of "the coherence of 'Hispanicity' as an ethnic category. . . ."⁷⁷ "Hispanic" emerged a single "ethnic" category, comprising Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, South or Central Americans, and unspecified others, that would almost triple from 10.0 million in 1970 to 29.7 million in 1997.⁷⁸

Some writers, have appeared to view this very growth in terms of social priority. "It is only a matter of time," said one commentary, "before Hispanics assume a dominant position among American minorities."⁷⁹ "America . . . is an increasingly Hispanic nation . . .", wrote another.⁸⁰ All the while, the government and the media have been drilling into the public consciousness the projected superseding of the Hispanic over the Black population, by 2005 becoming the "largest minority." "This . . . demographic shift . . . will have some significant political ramifications," says Eddie Williams president of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a research organization that studies racial issues.⁸¹ Peter H. Schuck, writing in the liberal Democrat organ, *The American Prospect*, does not even consider the possibility that the increase in the non-European population might serve to strengthen the struggle of the "traditional civil rights coalition." Rather, holding that "ethnic demography is political destiny," he sees only the ascendance of a new edition of "ethnic politics," wherein these new non-Europeans will compete with American blacks for jobs.⁸² Stephen A. Holmes, who has written on this subject, finds that some African-Americans "are fearful, sensing a lessening of black influence and an increase of tension" between Blacks and Latinos. Ronald Walters, University of Maryland political scientist, worries that the Latinos, "could end up being honorary whites," still a "minority" but a favored one.⁸³

White Supremacism and the Social Concept of "Minority"

The questions raised about OMB Order 15 and the 2000 Census relating to "race" and "ethnicity" are only a part, though not an inconsiderable one, of the fundamental issue that lies at the heart of United States history. After 210 years of the racial segregation of census categories, it would indeed be a very positive development if the invidious and divisive distinction between "race" and "ethnicity" were expunged from the United States census. At the same time, it is an issue that is obviously integral to the mobilization for the continuing historical struggle to end white supremacism in this country.

What is meant by "a minority"? It is obviously not to be understood as a simple numerical assessment. Just to mention one instance, it is often observed that in New York City "the majority is minority." More than forty years ago, social anthropologists Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris presented a study of Minorities in the Americas. Emphasizing that "neither term, minority or majority, in this technical sense, refers to a numerical minority or majority," they defined "minority" in the following classic formulation:

minority is a social group whose members are subject to disabilities in the form of prejudice, discrimination, segregation, or persecution (or a combination of these) at the hands of another kind of social group . . . called a majority.⁸⁴

Who, then, could want to be classed as a "minority," even the largest one, even the first in line? It's like aspiring to be the largest family to miss the train. Is it worth it to be certified as a "minority" whose "handicap on the socio-economic scale" is less than the handicap of another "minority"?⁸⁵ Must that status be accepted simply to receive the "protected group" benefits earned by the equal rights struggles of African-Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans?

Hispanics of "higher socioeconomic status," write Tienda and Ortiz, are those with "ambivalent social identity [which] derives from their desire to be recognized by the majority group (non-Hispanics) based on their socioeconomic credentials."⁸⁶ Are there some Mexican Americans of higher class and social rank who harbor a tendency such as that expressed by LULAC leaders of the 1930s and 1940s, the desire for "inclusion" in the "white race"?⁸⁷ It is not for European-Americans, nurtured on white-skin privileges, to pronounce judgments on such possible sentiment among some Mexican-Americans; after all, such Mexican Americans would only be aspiring to do what Anglo-Americans, Irish, Jews, Italians and other ethnic groups have claimed as their unimpeachable right. Judgments on that score are the exclusive right of the Mexican-American people alone.

Objectively considered, however, such a perspective would seem to be problematic. The effectiveness of any such a bid for "promotion" to the "white race" could succeed only if it derived from and were based on the strength of the movements representing the great majority of the Mexican-Americans whom the civil rights laws propose to protect against discrimination "on account of their race or color." Only time can tell what the prospect may be for a "white" middle and professional class maintaining hegemony over a population that disdains "white" identity.

Such a "white" Mexican-American middle and professional class, despite its socioeconomic credentials, would face a paradox. It could maintain that politically indispensable mass base only at the cost of abandoning the goal of "inclusion" in the "white race," and, instead, accepting "minorityhood" for themselves as well as for Mexican Americans in general. For, the very existence of the white race is dependent precisely on discrimination against "persons on account of their race or color," including not only African-Americans, but the majority of Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, and other

Latinos. Of course, some might individually opt for "passing," but, in doing so, they would forfeit their roles as leaders of their people and their rich cultural lives.

On the other hand, what believer in equal rights could wish to be in a "majority" like the one, for example, predicted by David Lind, Washington editor of *Harper's Magazine*?:

There is not going to be a non-white majority in the 21st century. Rather there is going to be a mostly white mixed-race majority . . . [W]hat seems to be emerging in the United States is a new dichotomy between blacks and nonblacks. Increasingly, whites, Asians and Hispanics are creating a broad community from which black Americans may be excluded.[88](#)

Such a perspective violates the pervasive sense of a common interest in fighting the white supremacist discrimination faced by Latinos and Blacks -- in education, in the legal system, in treatment by police, in "racial profiling," and in other ways. It is in conflict with the tradition of the "attack from below," by African Americans and Mexican Americans that ended Jim Crow in the 1960s.[89](#) It is contradicted by the sense of "what it is like to be a Mexican American or Black Texan seeking to participate in the electoral process," as recalled by Mexican American leader Lionel Castillo in Congressional testimony in 1974.[90](#) The difference is seen in the lack of regard that Mexican Americans show for "white" identity in their responses to census categorization, as described in 1993 by Sonia Perez, Director of Research for the National Council of La Raza, and Steven Carbo of the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund. "Many Hispanics have difficulty classifying themselves by race," said Perez, ". . . they self-identify principally by subgroup . . . and descent from multiracial origins."[91](#) Nearly half of Latino respondents in a U. S. Census Bureau survey, noted Carbo, "did not respond to the race question as anticipated by the Census Bureau. Rather than identifying themselves racially as White, Black, Asian or Native American/Alaskan, nearly half the Latinos surveyed identified themselves as being of an 'other' race."[92](#) That aversion to the "white" identity is projected by leaders of Latino organizations who "say the important point is that Hispanic and black Americans together . . . both suffer from greater poverty, discrimination lack of education and crime than whites," and who believe, as Sonia Perez does: "We should care about how both groups [African Americans and Mexican Americans] are doing, and not just whether one is doing better than the other or growing faster than the other."[93](#) The perspective of political division between Latinos and Blacks is implicitly rejected by the President of La Raza, Raul Yzaguirre: "The hope is that we [Latinos and African-Americans] can now begin to form alliances and it need not be a zero sum game."[94](#)

The issue posed -- between those who seek inclusion in the "white race," or to be first among "minorities," on the one hand, and those who understand the need make common cause with all those fighting to end white supremacy, on the other; between the "unifying and divisive elements inherent in the notion of 'Hispanicity,'" to borrow a phrase from Nelson and Tienda[95](#) -- that issue is not the interest of Latinos alone. It is the common concern of all who wish to add strength to the struggle against racial discrimination.

Appendix

The Status of Puerto Ricans

The treaty which formalized the cession of Puerto Rico from Spain to the United States differentiated between Spanish subjects from the Iberian Peninsula living in Puerto Rico, and "natives" of the island. "Spaniards" were to have full legal rights, "the same . . . as citizens of the country to which the courts belong." But "the civil rights and political status" of the "natives" was to be determined by the [U.S.] Congress.⁹⁶ Three quarters of a century later, the U. S. law similarly distinguished between Latinos, who were regarded as "groups defined by 'race or color,'" and "persons born or their descendants," who were not.⁹⁷ It is interesting to note a contrast between the treaties of 1848 and 1898 with respect to United States citizenship. In 1848, Mexicans living in the annexed territory were to have U. S. citizenship, "at the proper time (to be judged by the Congress of the United States)." In 1898, the treaty ending the Spanish-American War provided only that the "civil rights and political status of native inhabitants" of Puerto Rico "shall be determined by Congress"; nothing was said about U. S. citizenship. However, on 2 March 1917, presumably "in a bid for Porto (sic) Rican loyalty" in World War I, Congress extended an arms-length sort of U. S. citizenship to "native" Puerto Ricans.⁹⁸

The population of Puerto Rico in 1860 was reported as 51.5% "Blanco" ("White"); in 1940, the figure was 76.5%.⁹⁹ Since the population throughout that period was 99% native born, it would seem obvious that the nature of the "whiteward" drift was political, rather than genetic. The 1950 census of Puerto Rico tabulated "race" and "color" as significant characteristics of the population of Puerto Rico; but following the institution of the "Commonwealth" status for Puerto Rico in 1952, the Puerto Rico census omitted all references to such "characteristics."¹⁰⁰ The U.S. Bureau of the Census in 1980 made the general comment that where Puerto Ricans are concerned: "Puerto Rican may be white (mostly of Spanish descent), Negro, or mulatto." On the mainland, the Bureau said, Puerto Ricans were classified by race, "but the classification is of slight significance now and is not used in the census of the islands itself."¹⁰¹

Personal testimony confirms the point: "If you live in Puerto Rico, you're Puerto Rican, you are not asked to indicate your race, you are just asked to fill out the census form. If you move to the United States mainland, you're then asked to fill out your race [on the census form]."¹⁰²

Unlike Mexico, Puerto Rico is an outright colony of the United States, a power that will neither grant Puerto Rico independence, nor permit it to become a state of the United States (because it can not expunge the national language of Puerto Rico). The shadow of that colonial status of the homeland blights the existence of Puerto Ricans living in mainland United States, who, whatever the census books say, are generally denied the white-skin privileges accorded to European-Americans.

Notes

[1](#) The census of 1790 listed only "free white persons" (including those "bound to Service for a Term of years"), "all other free persons" (meaning the 59,150 free Negroes), and the 694,280 "slaves." "Indians not taxed" were to be excluded from the census. (*A Century of Population Growth, from the First Census of the United States to the Twelfth, 1790-1900*, Department of Commerce and Labor Bureau of the Census [Washington, D. C., 1909], pp. 43, 47. See also, United States Constitution, Article I, Section 2, subsection 3.) See also the schedule for the "Census of 1790," in Carroll D. Wright, *History and Growth of the United States Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900), p. 132.

[2](#) Representative Thomas Petri of Wisconsin, noting that, "it is a kind of compromise to say Hispanic origin," asked, ". . . [I]s there not some way of broadening it [the range of "racial/ethnic" categories] to cover people who don't happen to be able to put Hispanic down [in filling out census forms] . . . [?]" (*Hearings before the Subcommittee on Census, Statistics and Postal Personnel of the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, House of Representatives, 103rd Congress, 1 Sess., p. 276. [3 November 1993.]*)

[3](#) Charles Hirschman, agrees with S. Steinberg's assessment of the post-*Roots* spike of interest in "white ethnic" roots, as "an effort of the fairly established populations to resist integration and participation with the currently disadvantaged minorities, much in the way that the WASP establishment rejected the melting pot goals of new immigrants earlier in the century." (Charles Hirschman, "America's Melting Pot Reconsidered," *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 9 (1983), p. 415. His reference is to S. Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity and Class in America* (Boston, 1981).

[4](#) *Challenges of Measuring an Ethnic World: Science, Politics and Reality, Proceedings of the Joint Canada-United States Conference on the Measurement of Ethnicity, Ottawa, Canada, April 1-3, 1992.* (U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1993). p. 3. The printed Proceedings took up 576 pages. N.B. In subsequent references to this work, the title will be abbreviated, *Challenges*. . . .

[5](#) Nampeo R. McKenney, Assistant Division Chief, Population Division, Bureau of the Census, and Arthur R. Cresce, (Demography) Year 2000 Research and Development staff, Bureau of the Census, *Challenges*. . . p. 43.

[6](#) *Challenges*. . . . , p. 143. Hirschman is identified as a member of the Department of Sociology, University of Washington.

[7](#) Charles Hirschman, "How to Measure Ethnicity: An Immodest Proposal," in *Challenges* , pp. 547-557; 548.

Ira S. Lowry's offer of perhaps the most comprehensive, objective, and specific definition of ethnicity seems fatally amorphous. "Ethnicity", he said, ". . . is the social identity which derives from belonging to a group whose members share a common race, religion, language or national origin." (Ira S. Lowry, "The Science and Politics of Ethnic

Enumeration," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in San Francisco, California, January 3-8, 1980, cited in *Challenges*. . . , p. 100."

If, however, the matter is approached in terms of inter-group, rather than intra-group, relationships, order is brought to the search for a meaningful, easily understood, and categoric definition of "ethnicity." See the reference to Wagley and Harris at Note 84, above.

[8](#) *Spotlight on Heterogeneity: The Federal Standards for Racial and Ethnic Classification*, National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences, Committee on National Statistics (Washington, D. C., 1996), p. 1.

[9](#) *Office of Management and Budget Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity*, printed in *Federal Register*, October 30, 1997, pp. 58782-58790; p. 58782. This revision, followed a twenty-year period of discussion of OMB Directive 15 of April 1977, involving not only Congress and administrative agencies, but wide-ranging participation by academics and journals in the fields of demography, sociology, statistics, and by auxiliary public-interest agencies such as the National Academy of Sciences.

[10](#) "Race and ethnicity may be thought of in terms of social and cultural characteristics. . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 58782.)

[11](#) *Ibid.*, p. 58782.

[12](#) *Ibid.*, p. 58789.

[13](#) U. S. Department of Labor, Bureaus of Labor Statistics *Monthly Labor Review*, February 1999, p. 12, Table 15, "Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years and older, by sex, race, and Hispanic origin, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted."

[14](#) See Table 2 in Ann Morning, "Counting the Color Line: Socioeconomic Status of Multiracial Americans," paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Social Science History Association, Fort Worth, Texas, November, 1999. Correspondence should be addressed to the Office of Population Research, Princeton, 21 Prospect Avenue, NJ 08544.

[15](#) As proposed in the Congressional testimony of the Director of Research of the National Urban League, Billy J. Tidwell, July 29, 1993. (*Review of Federal Measurements of Race and Ethnicity: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Post Office and Civil Service, House of Representatives*, [April-November, 1993], 103 Congress, 1st sess. [Washington, D. C., 1994], p. 234.)

[16](#) Controversies over official statistics are, "only a manifest sign of the political choices

that otherwise lie latent and obscure in the cognitive organization of statistics." (Paul Starr, Princeton University, "The Sociology of Official Statistics," in William Alonso and Paul Starr, eds., *The Politics of Numbers* [New York, 1987], pp. 40-41.)

[17](#) Nampeo R. McKenney and Arthur Cresce, of the United States Bureau of the Census. (*Challenges.*, pp. 180, 181.)

The same point was made by other conference speakers. "The issues we are talking about are political to the core," said Audrey Koyabashi, Department of Geography, McGill University, Montreal: ". . . The words we use to reduce social groups to statistical categories are political inventions." (*Ibid.*, p. 128-29.) Lawrence Bobo, Department of Sociology, University of California at Los Angeles: "Everything is political. . . . We know that politics and the census get connected in potentially explosive ways. The census is tied to too many important resources for that not to be the case." (*Ibid.*, pp. 157-58.) Sociologist Charles Hirschman, of the University of Washington Sociology Department generalized even more broadly, asserting that throughout the Americas, "National systems of ethnic divisions and classification schemes seem more related to political history than to ancestry or cultural divisions." Charles Hirschman (*Ibid.*, p.549).

[18](#) "The White House [in 1968] instructed the Secretary of Commerce to add a Hispanic self-identifier to the census questionnaire, and this order was relayed to the Director of the Census Bureau." (Harvey M. Choldin, University of Illinois sociologist, "Statistics and Politics: The 'Hispanic issue' in the 1980 Census," *Demography*, 23:403-18 [August 1986], p. 407.)

"The contrived category of 'Hispanic' presents an appealingly simple view of the ethnic spectrum: all who speak any version of Spanish (though recognizably distinct for each of the three main groups [Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban-Americans -- TWA], or whose forebears came from no matter which Spanish-speaking country, are lumped together irrespective of cultural or racial differences . . ." (William Petersen, "Politics and the Measurement of Ethnicity," in William Alonso and Paul Starr, eds., *The Politics of Numbers* [New York, 1987], pp. 231-32.)

[19](#) *World Almanac and Book of Facts, 1997* (New York, 1997), pp. 739, 742-47, 752-61, 772, 804, 833.

[20](#) "To gloss over the living nature of culture," writes Sociologist Martha Gimenez, of Colorado University (Boulder, Colorado 80309), "to posit instead some objective 'Hispanicity' common to everyone remotely connected to Spain or born in a Spanish-speaking country, while glossing over the historical cultural differences that divide this population, is a state-imposed hegemonic project that culturalizes economic exploitation and political oppression." (See Martha Gimenez, "Latinos/Hispanics . . . What Next: Some Reflections on the Politics of Identity in the U. S.," *Cultural Logic*, Vol. 1, no. 2 (Spring 1998).

"While common ancestral ties to Spain indicate an underlying cultural affinity, the

diversity among the 20 or so Hispanic national origin groups which span countries from three continents and the Caribbean challenges the conception of Hispanic as a single ethnic groups. History accounts for the persistence of specific national identities, but the emergence of generic labels usually reflects statistical convenience." (Marta Tienda and Wilma Ortiz, "'Hispanicity' and the 1980 Census," *Social Science Quarterly*, 67(1):3-20 [March 1986], p.3.)

[21](#) See Krauze, *Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico, 1819-1996* (New York, 1997), chapters "The *Mestizo* Family" and "The Triumph of the *Mestizo*."

[22](#) *Spotlight on Heterogeneity: The Federal Standards for Racial and Ethnic Classification*, p. 2. "The most notable change in the past 30 years has been the dramatic increase in the number of immigrants from the countries of Asia and Latin America."

[23](#) Statistical Yearbook of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service. (Cited in *American Almanac, 1996-1997*, p. 11 [Table No. 8].) Percentages rounded.

[24](#) Choldin, "Statistics and Politics: The 'Hispanic issue' in the 1980 Census," p. 404.

[25](#) "Immigration and Race: Recent Trends in Immigration to the United States," in *Immigration and Ethnicity: The Integration of America's Newest Arrivals*, Barry Edmonston and Jeffrey Passel, eds., (Washington, D. C.: The Urban Institute Press, 1994), p. 57.

[26](#) Canada, a country whose volume and national diversity of immigration has matched that of the United States, has not followed that course. Indeed, as that government's census officials have said, in Canada since 1945, "race has remained a four-letter word" not fit for polite discourse. (Pamela White, Statistics Canada, and John Samuel, Director, Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, in *Challenges . . .*, pp. 46, 80, respectively.)

[27](#) A very informative study in this regard is Elmer Clarence Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California*, Illinois University Studies in Social Science, vol. xxiv, no. 3 (Urbana, 1939).

[28](#) With regard to the West Indian immigration, see Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (New York, 1998), pp. 12, 355.

[29](#) In colonial Hispanic America it was possible for a person to become "white" by purchasing a royal certificate of "whiteness." (Charles Edward Chapman, *Colonial Hispanic America: A History* [New York, 1933], p. 118.

Anthropologist Marvin Harris, in his study of variations in "racial" patterns in the Americas, noted that, in Brazil, it is said that "money whitens," so that one could move

from one racial category to another by prospering financially. (Marvin Harris, *Patterns of Race in the Americas* [New York, 1954], p. 118.)

Instructions for enumerators who conducted the 1950 census of Guatemala required that: "In deciding whether a person is Indian or Ladino, the enumerator must use as a base the social esteem in which the person is held in the place being enumerated." (*Methods and Materials of Demography*, [revised fourth printing] by Henry S. Shyrock, Jacob Siegel, and Associates, [Washington, D. C., June, 1980], p. 255. The term "Ladino" means the same as "*mestizo*," and it is generally applied to persons of Indio-Hispanic descent.

"In Puerto Rico," writes sociologist Clara Rodriguez, "racial identification is subordinate to cultural identification. . . . A 'black' or a 'negro' becomes 'white' by achieving economic status or one's friendship." (Clara Rodriguez, "Puerto Ricans: Between Black and White," *New York Affairs*, Volume 1, Number 4, Spring, 1974 pp. 92-101; pp. 94, 95.

[30](#) An analysis of the "ethnic" composition of the seventeen Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America (not including Puerto Rico) indicates that only three -- Argentina, Uruguay, and Costa Rica, with only a combined nine per cent of the total population Latin America -- had "Caucasian/white" ethnic majorities. (*World Almanac and Book of Facts, 1997* [New York, 1997], pp. 739, 742-47, 752-61, 772, 804, 833.)

[31](#) See Theodore W. Allen, *Invention of the White Race*, vol. 2, (New York, 1997), chapters 3 and 12.

[32](#) Ira De A. Reid, *The Negro Immigrant: His Background, Characteristics and Adjustment* (New York, 1939), pp. 216, 226. See also Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (New York, 1998), pp. 82-88, and 362-63 (Tables 2.1 and 2.2) relating to relatively high proportion of professionals and skilled workers among Caribbean immigrants. James says that Reid's book "stands unrivalled as an analysis of the Caribbean experience in the United States during the first four decades of the century" (p. 2).

A similar painful bafflement is experienced by "interracial" couples whose children are expected to choose one parent's lineage over the other's in classifying themselves as to "race." (See, for example, the testimonies of Susan Graham, Executive director of Project Race, and her 8-year old son, Ryan Graham; and of Carlos Fernandez, President of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans, However, the request of "mixed race" families for the institution of a "multi-ethnic" category for themselves was to be explicitly rejected in the 1997 revised OMB order 15, in *Review of Federal Measurements of Race and Ethnicity: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Post Office and Civil Service, House of Representatives* [April-October, 1993], *103 Congress, 1st sess.*, pp. 105-134.)

[33](#) Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early*

Twentieth-Century America, p. 1. That contingent merged with and further shaped the historical Black American struggle, radicalizing it as internationalists, Socialists, Communists and Garveyites. While it is true that European immigrants furnished a large proportion of the leaders of the Socialist, Communist and labor movements, the great significant difference of the two phenomena was that whereas European-American radicalism and trade unionism was fundamentally accommodationist with regard to white supremacism, the Caribbean-American radicalism -- socialism, communism, Garveyism -- was predicated on a rejection of and struggle against white supremacism. In addition to James's work, Jeffrey B. Perry's *Hubert Henry Harrison, Father of Harlem Radicalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, forthcoming) will be found especially informative on this subject.

[34](#) Two distinct national groups are part of the United States population due to the acquisition of former Spanish colonies -- Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans, of whom it is aptly said, "the border crossed them." Due to the limits of space for this presentation, to the fact that it has been the leaders and organizations of the Mexican-Americans who figured most prominently in the discussions regarding the establishment of the census category, and that the Puerto Rican case is like the Mexican-American case as far as the "race" categorization is concerned, I have felt justified in relegating to an Appendix my comments on the status of Puerto Ricans.

[35](#) Enrique Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power*, p. 98. See also pp. 111, for the disproportionate participation of persons of the "castas," Africans and Indo-Africans in the revolutionary struggle.

[36](#) "Due to "difficulties [that] occurred," that proposed provision was deleted from the treaty before it was signed in December of that same year. ("Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation," in *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949*, Charles Bevans, comp., 9 vols., [Washington, D. C., 1972], 9:775, 779-80, 779, n. 11.)

The "problem" was to continue. The United States Appraiser General in New Orleans reported to his superiors in Washington on 21 November, 1859 that "The frequent escape of slaves from the American side of the Rio Grande into Mexico, and the folly of any attempt to recapture them -- although you often meet your own property in Matamoras [in Cuahuila province of Mexico] -- has been one of the excitants of bad feeling between the citizens of Mexico and those on the frontier." (Reyburn to Hatch, November 21, 1859, House Executive Documents No. 52, p. 65; cited in Paul Schuster Taylor, *An American-Mexican Frontier: Nueces County, Texas* [New York, 1934; 1971 reprint] p. 32.)

[37](#) Bevans, comp., pp. 791-806. The annexed area totaled 1.2 million square miles. *Encyclopedia of American History*, Richard B. Morris [New York, 1953], p. 207.)

[38](#) Five years after the devastating loss of Mexican territory in the Mexican War, the eminent Mexican historian and political figure, Lucas Alaman, warned of the likelihood that the United States would make further encroachments, in order to bring in slaves, and

"subject Indians and Castas [Afro-Indians] to more or less rigorous servitude." (Lucas Alaman, *Historia de Mexico: Desde los primeros movimientos que prepararon su independencia en el año de 1808 hasta la, poca presente*, 5 vols., (Mexico City, 1985, 5:55. Cited by Krauze, *Mexico, Biography of Power*, p. 148.)

[39](#) Bevans, ed., *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949*, 9:797.

[40](#) See Theodore W. Allen, *Invention of the White Race*, vol. 1 (New York, 1994) pp. 185 and 295, n. 49.

[41](#) William Petersen, "Politics and the Measurement of Ethnicity," in William Alonso and Paul Starr, eds., *The Politics of Numbers* (New York, 1987), p. 223. The 1930 Census was an exception. That census classified Mexican-Americans as a not-white "race." Mexican-American leaders, with the support of the Mexican government, objected. Their protests won a guarantee that, except for Mexican Indians and Negroes, Mexican-Americans were not again to be categorized as "non-white" for census purposes. Accordingly, this aberration was eliminated in subsequent censuses, including revised tables relating to 1930. See *16th Census of the United States, 1940*, vol. II, "Explanatory Note," pp. 3-4. See also, Choldin, "The Hispanic Issue," p. 408.

[42](#) Rodolfo O. de la Garza, Angelo Falcon, F. Chris Garcia, and John Garcia, "Mexican Immigrants, Mexican Americans, and American Political Culture," in *Immigration and Ethnicity*, Edmonston and Passel, eds., p. 240. They cite San Miguel Guadalupe Jr., *Let All of Them Take Heed: Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981* (University of Texas, 1987) [Emphasis added--TWA].

"In Texas," writes Choldin, "'Mexican' was traditionally a term of opprobrium, labeling a lower-class, discriminated against group, almost a caste. Therefore, a person had in incentive to want to be called something else. Upwardly mobile Mexican Americans would attempt to disassociate themselves from the ethnic grouping by identifying themselves as Spanish . . . [T]he statistics categorized births and deaths as Anglo, Spanish, and Mexican. (Choldin, "The Hispanic Issue," p. 412.)

[43](#) David Montejano, *Anglos y mexicanos en la formación de Texas, 1836-1986* (Mexico, D. F., 1991), p. 320.

[44](#) Montejano, *Anglos y mexicanos*, pp. 105, 271.

[45](#) As happened with the Populist cause in the 1880s when the Texas Farmers Alliance denied membership to African-Americans, and joined the Louisiana Farmers Union, in identifying itself as "a strictly "white man's business association." (John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party* [Lincoln, Nebraska, 1931], pp. 108, 110.) See also Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley, 1997), Chapter 4, "Tom Hickey and the Failure of Interracial Unity: The Politics of Race, Class, and Gender in

the Socialist Party of Texas, 1911-1917."

[46](#) Montejano, p. 105, citing: William Hale, *Twenty-four Years as Cowboy and Ranchman in Southern Texas and Old Mexico* (Norman, 1959), p. 135; John H. Culley, *Cattle, Horses and Men* (Los Angeles, 1940), p. 103; J. Frank Dobie, *Vaquero of the Brush Country* (Dallas, 1929), pp. 54-56. Jovita González, "Social Life in Cameron, Starr, and Zapata Counties" (Master's Thesis, University of Texas, 1930)," p. 11; Marvin J. Hunter, *The Trail Drivers of Texas*, 2 vols. (Nashville, 1925; 1985, University of Texas reprint, 1985) 2:938-939.

[47](#) Montejano, p. 105, citing: Mary J. Jaques, *Texas Ranch Life* (London, 1894), pp. 361-62.

[48](#) Montejano, p. 106, citing: Marvin J. Hunter (comp.), *The Trail Drivers of Texas*, 1:187. J. Frank Dobie, "Ranch Mexicans," *Survey*, May 1, 1931, pp. 167-70; p. 168.

[49](#) Montejano, p. 104, citing: Jaques, *Texas Ranch Life*, pp. 361-362.

[50](#) Montejano, p. 115, citing: B. Youngblood and A. B. Cox, *An Economic Study of a Typical Ranching Area on the Edwards Plateau of Texas*, pp. 308-312; A. Ray Stephens, *The Taft Ranch*, p. 130; Hunter, *Trail Drivers*, 2:853-854; Dobie, "The Mexican Vaquero of the Texas Border," *Southwestern Political and Social Science Quarterly*, 3 (1) (June 1927), p. 20. See also Neil Foley, *The White Scourge*, Chapter 4, "Tom Hickey and the Failure of Interracial Unity: The Politics of Race, Class, and Gender in the Socialist Party of Texas, 1911-1917."

[51](#) Montejano, pp. 275-76, citing: Olive Estbrooke Quinn, "The Transmission of Racial Attitudes among White Southerners, in *Race: Individual and Collective Behavior*, Edgar T. Thompson and Everett C. Hughes, eds., p. 452.

[52](#) Montejano, *Anglos y mexicanos . . .*, p. 120.

[53](#) Montajeno, *Anglos y mexicanos . . .*, p. 107.

[54](#) Juan Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire* (New York, 2000), p. 167.

[55](#) Montejano, *Anglos y mexicanos. . .*, p. 117.

[56](#) Montejano, *Anglo y mexicanos . . .*, pp. 116-17, citing, Davis, *West from a Car-Window*, p. 27.

[57](#) Montejano, pp. 206, 271-72, citing: Eggleston, "Birthplaces"; Taylor Collection, number 20-530; Pauk S. Taylor, "Mexican Labor in the United States: Dimmit County, Winter Garden District, South Texas," *University of California Publications in Evonomics*, no. 5 (1930) pp. 438-439.

[58](#) Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Dimmit County, Winter Garden District, South Texas* (University of California Publications in Economics, vol. 6, no. 5 [Berkeley, 1930]), pp. 388-398, 416-418. Montejano, p. 208. Alfonso Pales, *En defensa de mi raza*, p. 34, 38-39. Taylor Collection, nos. 164-335, 166-337. Stirling W. Bass, "The History of Kleberg County" (Master's thesis, University of Texas, 1931), p. 179. Arthur Rubel, *Across the Tracks: Mexican Americans in a Texas City* (Austin: University of Texas), p. 3. Stephens, *Taft Ranch*, pp. 117, 178, 183, 185.

[59](#) Montejano, *Anglos y mexicanos . . .*, pp. 277-78.

[60](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 105, 276.

[61](#) Arnaldo DeLeon, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: A History of Mexican Americans in Houston*, Mexican American Studies Monograph Series No. 7, Mexican American Studies Program, University of Houston (Houston, 1989), pp. 164-65. Montejano, *Anglos y mexicanos . . .*, pp. 283-85.

[62](#) Harvey M. Choldin, "Statistics and Politics: The 'Hispanic Issue' in the 1980 Census," *Demography*: 403-418 (August 1986), 406.

[63](#) Montejano, *Anglos y mexicanos*, pp. 320-21. "By the mid-1960s," writes Rudolph O. de la Garza, member of the political science faculty and dean's staff at Colorado College, Colorado Springs, Colorado, "it was painfully evident that direct participation within the political processes and parties was not achieving the desired goals. . . . Influenced by black radicals, a small but significant number of Mexican Americans realized that no matter what they did, [that approach] would never be enough. This realization gave birth to the Chicano movement." (Arnulfo D. trejo, ed., *The Chicanos, As We See Ourselves* [University of Arizona Press, Tuscon, Arizona, 1979], p. 113.)

[64](#) Montejano, *Anglos y Mexicanos*, pp. 356-59.

[65](#) In 1973, the "Mexican American Population Commission of California" was formed to pursue that interest. (Choldin, "The Hispanic Issue," p. 408.)

[66](#) "Economic and Social Statistics for Spanish-speaking Americans": *Hearings before the Subcommittee on Census and Statistics of the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, House of Representatives, 93d Congress, 2nd sess.* (May 24, 1974), on House Joint Resolution 406, p. 5.

[67](#) Justice Department "memorandum on the meaning of 'race and color' as those terms are used in the 15th Amendment and in the Voting Rights Act of 1965 . . .," *Hearings of the U. S. Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights of the Committee on the Judiciary, April 8 - May 1, 1975*; p. 698-701 (April 20 1975). Readers willing to search it out and read the entire memorandum, will find their interest richly rewarded with detailed information, including numerous citations to case law.

[68](#) Choldin, "The Hispanic Issue in the 1980 Census," pp. 408, 414.

[69](#) As noted in *United States Statutes at Large . . . enacted during the first session of the Ninety-Fourth Congress [1975]* (Washington, D. C., 1976), Volume 89, Statute 400, Title II, Section 203.

[70](#) Choldin, "The Hispanic Issue," p. 406.

[71](#) House Joint Resolution 406, 93d Congress, 1st session. Printed in *Hearings of the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, Subcommittee on Census and Statistics, Tuesday May 28, 1974*, pp. iii-iv.

Roybal, a Mexican American, represented the 25th Congressional district of California from 1962 until his resignation in 1992. "Roybal was never a radical," writes Rodolfo F. Acuña, "but his strong sense of justice was ahead of his times." (Rodolfo F. Acuña, *Anything But Mexican: Chicanos in Contemporary Los Angeles* [New York, 1996], p. 107, n. 48.)

[72](#) *Hearings of the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, Subcommittee on Census and Statistics, Tuesday May 28, 1974*, pp. 144-46.

[73](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 144-46.

Abigail Thernstrom, "Statistics and the Politics of Minority Representation," in Alonso and Starr, *The Politics of Numbers*, pp. 323-24. Thernstrom cites "Hearings on Extension of the Voting Rights Act Before the Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights of the Committee on the Judiciary, U. S. Senate, 94th Congress, 1st sess., 1975, p. 698." However, I did not find Badillo mentioned on p. 698 of that subcommittee's hearing dated April 29, 1975.

[74](#) Representative Roybal, himself, in 1974 proposed to change the term "Spanish-speaking" "to a more comprehensive phrase like 'Spanish origin or descent,' or 'Spanish-speaking background.'" (*Hearings of the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, Subcommittee on Census and Statistics, Tuesday May 28, 1974*, p.75.)

[75](#) *Ibid.*, p. 81.

"One more or less fortuitous consequences of the experimentation with several indices of Mexican-Americans was that a new grouping, 'Hispanics,' came into being. . . ." (Petersen, "Politics and the Measurement of Ethnicity," in Alonso and Starr, *The Politics of Numbers*, p. 226.)

[76](#) "[T]he issue of numbers . . . is of primary concern for administrators and persons interested in the broadest definition of ethnic group status." (Jose Hernandez, Leo Estrada, and David Álvarez, "Census Data and the Problem of Conceptually defining the Mexican American Population," *Social Science Quarterly*, 53 [4]:671-587 [March 1973],

p. 676.)

[77](#) Candace Nelson and Marta Tienda, "The Structuring of Hispanic Ethnicity," in Richard D. Alba, ed., *Ethnicity and Race: Toward the Twenty-First Century* (New York, 1985), p. 51.

[78](#) The 1970 figure is for "Spanish Language" persons, as supplied by the Ethnic Statistics Branch, Population Division, U. S. Bureau of the Census, and presented in Jose Hernandez, Leo Estrada, and David Álvarez, "Census Data and the Problem of Conceptually defining the Mexican American Population," *Social Science Quarterly*, 53 [4]:671-587 [March 1973], Table 1. The 1997 figure is cited from the Census Bureau by Steven A. Holmes in *The New York Times*, August 7, 1998, "Hispanic Population Moves Closer to Surpassing That of Blacks."

[79](#) Joan Moore and Harry Pachon, *Hispanics in the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1985), p. 201.

[80](#) Mireya Navarro, "Latins Gain Visibility in Cultural Life of U.S.," *The New York Times*, September 19, 1999.

[81](#) See "Blacks Crunch the Numbers Figuring Out Hispanic Influence," by Steven A. Holmes, *The New York Times*, "Week in Review," August 16, 1998.

[82](#) Peter H. Schuck, "The New Immigration and the Old Civil Rights." *The American Prospect*, no. 15 (Fall 1993), pp. 102-111; 102. 104.

[83](#) Holmes, "Blacks Crunch the Numbers. . . ."

[84](#) Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris, *Minorities in the New World: Six Case Studies* (New York, 1958), p. 4.

[85](#) See Beverly Duncan and Otis Dudley Duncan, "Minorities and the Process of Stratification," *American Sociological Review*, 33 (1968): pp. 356-64; 364.

[86](#) Marta Tienda and Vilma Ortiz, "'Hispanicity' and the 1980 Census," *Social Science Quarterly*, 67(1):3-20 (March 1986), p. 15. See also: Candace Nelson and Marta Tienda, "The Structuring of Hispanic Ethnicity," in Richard D. Alba, ed., *Ethnicity and Race: Toward the Twenty-First Century* (New York, 1985), p. 84.

[87](#) Richard Rodriguez, author of *Hunger for Memory* and other books drawing upon his experience as a Mexican immigrant, wrote an article in the *Los Angeles Times* of August 15, 1991 that seemed to anticipate inclusion in the "white race." He likened the prospects of Mexican immigrants to those of earlier German and Italian immigrants, "who knew when they came, hopeful, to the tenement blocks of the East Coast. Life is work." (Richard Rodriguez, "Closed Doors," *Los Angeles Times*, 15 August, 1991, reprinted in Nicolaus Mills, ed., *Arguing Immigration: The Debate Over the Changing Face of*

America [New York, 1994], pp. 143-47; 147.) In his glance at history, Rodriguez seems to have overlooked a point of obvious, though negative, implications for his thesis. What of the Black Americans who knew nothing but hard work, and were in New York when these Europeans arrived, but for whom opportunities of upward social mobility were barred, while European immigrants, thanks to "ethnic politics," were getting jobs reserved for "whites"?

[88](#) Michael Lind, "The Beige and the Black," *New York Times Magazine*, August 16, 1998. (Lind is identified as Washington editor of *Harper's Magazine* and a columnist for the *New Leader*.) Recently, Lind has commented that, "We're back to the one drop rule . . . I'm disgusted with the whole thing." Noting that "Mexico got rid of its racial classifications in the 1820's," he blames "the black civil rights lobby" for the retention of the "racial" categorization in the U. S. Census. But, at least in this account, Lind does not suggest ways in which the the "race and color" protections in the civil rights laws could be preserved if the "race" category were dropped. (See "The Politics of Race and the Census." by Steven A. Holmes, *The New York Times*, "Week in Review," March 19, 2000.)

[89](#) See note 63, above.

[90](#) *Hearings on Extension of the Voting Rights Act Before the Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights of the Committee of the Judiciary, U. S. Senate, 94th Congress, 1st sess., 1975*, pp. 747-52 (29 April 1975). At the time of his testimony, Mr. Castillo was serving his second term in the office of Houston City Controller.

Castillo mentioned in passing how the Houston school board cynically responded to the Supreme Court decision of 1954 outlawing racial segregation in public schools, by pairing predominately Black and predominantly Mexican-American schools, defending the policy on the grounds, as Mr. Castillo said, "that Mexican Americans were to be defined as 'white,' and therefore they were integrating black and white schools." (*Ibid.*, pp. 749-50.)

[91](#) "Review of Federal Measurements of Race and Ethnicity:" *Hearings before the Subcommittee on Post Office and Civil Service, House of Representatives (April-November, 1993), 103 Congress, 1st sess.* (Washington, D. C., 1994), p. 175.

[92](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 180-81.

Nor are Puerto Ricans, the second largest Latino component of the United States population, aligned with American concepts of "race," but rather regard themselves, and are generally regarded by United States whites, as "non-white." On the basis of her own life experience as well as her observations as a sociologist, Clara Rodriguez writes, "Only a minority of Puerto Ricans are "unquestionably white. . . . What does the term 'non-white' mean?. . . Non-white is to New York Puerto Ricans what Puerto Ricans and blacks are, 'white' is what Puerto Ricans and blacks are not." (Clara Rodriguez, "Puerto Ricans: Between Black and White," in *New York Affairs*, New York in the Year 2000, 1:92-101

[Spring 1974]).

[93](#) Stephen A. Holmes, "Hispanic Population Moves Closer to Surpassing that of Blacks," *The New York Times*, August 7, 1998.

[94](#) Steven A. Holmes, "Blacks Crunch Numbers Figuring Out Hispanic Influence," *The New York Times*, "Week in Review," August 16, 1998.

[95](#) Nelson and Tienda, "The Structuring of Hispanic Ethnicity," in Alba, ed., *Ethnicity and Race*, p. 51.

[96](#) "Treaty of Peace [Treaty of Paris]," 10 December 1898, in *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949*, Charles I. Bevans, comp. (Washington, D. C., 1974), p. 619.

[97](#) *Hearings before the U. S. Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights of the Committee on the Judiciary, 84th Congress, April 8 - May 1, 1975*, p. 699.

[98](#) Bailey W. and Justine Whitfield Duffie, *Porto Rico: A Broken Pledge* (New York, 1931), p. 40. I thank William Vila Andino for sharing his copy of *Broken Pledge* with me.

[99](#) In the last Spanish census of the population of Puerto Rico, in 1887, 59.5% identified as "Whites" ("Blancos") and 40.5%, as "Nonwhite" ("De Color"). The first census conducted after Puerto Rico was made a colony of the United States, was done in 1899; it showed that 61.8 percent identified as "white" and 38.2% as "nonwhite." The "white" proportion grew in every succeeding census through 1940, when it was reported as 76.5%. (U. S. Bureau of the Census: *U. S. Census of Population: 1960. (General Social and Economic Characteristics, United States Summary. Final Report PC(1)-1C.* [U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington D. C.] p. 8: "Poblacion de Puerto Rico, por Zonas Urbana y Rural, y de la Ciudad de San Juan, por Raza, Lugar de Nacimiento y Sexo: 1860-1940.")

[100](#) *A Report of the Seventeenth Decennial Census of the United States, Volume II, Characteristics of the Population, Part 53, p. 53-v, 53-17, 53-26, 27, 29* (Washington, D. C., 1953). *The Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States Census of Population: 1960, Volume I, Characteristics of the Population, Part 53, Puerto Rico* (Washington, D. C. 1962), pp. 53-21.

[101](#) United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Methods and Materials of Demography*, (revised fourth printing) by Henry S. Shyrock, Jacob Siegel, and Associates, (Washington, D. C., June, 1980), p. 257. The island population is simply described as "99.9% Hispanic." (World Almanac and Book of Facts - 1997 [Mahwah, New Jersey, 1996], p. 682.)

[102](#) Testimony of Sonia Perez, Senior Policy analyst at the National Council of La Raza,

before the Subcommittee on Census, Statistics and Postal Personnel of the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, House of Representatives, 103rd Congress, 1 Sess., p. 189. [30 June 1993.]